

Minutes*

Senate Committee on Educational Policy
Wednesday, January 19, 2011
2:00 – 4:00
238A Morrill Hall

Present: Thomas Brothen (chair), Barbara Brandt, Brittany Edwards, Robert McMaster, Cody Mikl, Kristen Nelson, Alon McCormick, Peh Ng, Jane Phillips, Peggy Root, Jessica Schroeder, Paul Siliciano, Donna Spannaus-Martin, Elaine Tarone, Cathrine Wambach

Absent: Norman Chervany, Sean Finn, Joseph Kirchner, Henning Schroeder, Alfonso Sintjago, Michael Wade

Guests: Tina Falkner (Academic Support Resources); Jeremy Todd (Office of Classroom Management); Suzanne Bardouche (Office of the Vice Provost and Dean of Undergraduate Education)

Other: none

[In these minutes: (1) correction to 12/15 minutes; (2) Classroom Advisory Subcommittee; (3) update on classrooms; (4) credits for degrees with distinction; (5) Graduate School policies; (6) syllabus policy and an academic-freedom statement; (7) resolution on academic civility; (8) awards committees]

1. CORRECTION TO 12/15/10 MINUTES

The four-year graduation-rate goal for the Twin Cities campus is 60%, not 50%.

2. Classroom Advisory Subcommittee

Professor Brothen convened the meeting at 2:00, welcomed Mr. Todd from the Office of Classroom Management, and distributed copies of a proposed revision to the charge of the Classroom Advisory Subcommittee. The changes provide that the subcommittee would be a subcommittee of this Committee only, not a joint subcommittee with Finance and Planning (a change that the chair of the Finance and Planning Committee has concurred with), and that it would advocate for adequate support of classroom facilities.

It was agreed that the faculty and student membership should be "at least" six and four, respectively, with two P&A members, and that students might be sought from college boards. Dr. Brandt suggested that the Academic Health Center student board also have a representative on the subcommittee.

3. Update on Classrooms

* These minutes reflect discussion and debate at a meeting of a committee of the University of Minnesota Senate; none of the comments, conclusions, or actions reported in these minutes represents the views of, nor are they binding on, the Senate, the Administration, or the Board of Regents.

Professor Brothen turned now to Mr. Todd to provide an update on classrooms. Vice Provost McMaster informed the Committee that the term "interim" has been dropped from Mr. Todd's title and that he is now Director of the Office of Classroom Management (OCM). OCM is within Academic Support Resources (ASR); ASR reports to the Office of the Vice Provost and Dean of Undergraduate Education.

Mr. Todd reported that the campus has added 17 new classrooms with 1,639 seats, and 10 of them are active-learning classrooms in the Science Teaching and Student Services building. There will be 28 renovated classrooms and study space in Folwell Hall (the renovation lasts from June 2010 to August 2011). Akerman Hall classrooms received new finishes and new windows last summer and will be air-conditioned in summer, 2011.

They have proposed projects in several buildings, but do not have funding beyond predesign; they are Humphrey Center 20 and 30, Ruttan Hall (formerly Classroom Office Building, in St. Paul) 25, 35, and 45, Vincent Hall 16, Keller Hall 3-111, 3-115, 3-125, and 3-230, and Borlaug Hall 335 and 365.

One problem they face, Mr. Todd explained, is that furniture in many classrooms is well beyond its life expectancy and they are not achieving the necessary renewal cycles for classrooms. The Classroom Advisory Subcommittee will be presenting a resolution highlighting the funding issues; funding peaked in 2008 and is now at about 37% of what they need to maintain classrooms. They did use one-time funding to convert a number of departmental classrooms to general-purpose classrooms (which is a major benefit to the University).

In the fall of 2009 the Provost appointed the Office of Undergraduate Education as the responsible office for identifying and managing student study space on the Twin Cities campus. OCM has been charged by Vice Provost McMaster to be responsible for student study space. They have received one-time funding to upgrade student study space. Vice Provost McMaster commented that study space is a problem; responsibility for it was put in his office, in the Office of Classroom Management, but no funding came with the responsibility, so they have struggled to identify the spaces and maintain them. It does wear out; how do they maintain the furniture, painting, carpeting? Moreover, OCM has had significant budget cuts, so is unable to devote funding to study space. The drop from 79% to 37% of the funding needed for replacement cycles in classrooms is not sustainable, Dr. McMaster added, because classrooms and technology deteriorate—and then the faculty get angry because they cannot teach effectively in the classrooms. They are using one-time money now, but the funding model needs to change or the University will find itself back where it was many years ago, with extremely inadequate classrooms.

Or departments will take back the classrooms they have put into the general-purpose classroom inventory, Professor Wambach added. The reasons departments made them available is because OCM provides better maintenance. If it does not, departments will take them back.

Professor Wambach asked if the University owns the building at 1701 University Avenue. It does, Mr. Todd said, and the plan is to vacate and demolish it. And to demolish Klaeber Court, Norris Gymnasium, and the Field House. It will not be renovated for classrooms, to which Professor Wambach rejoined that that was good because the classrooms in the building are terrible.

Dr. Brandt asked if there is an interface between security and study space. Mr. Todd said that they have a subcommittee of three on study space, and that group has engaged with security monitors to be sure that study spaces are on their rounds. Students want privacy but they do not want to be enclosed so they are in a dangerous position, and they desire communication about spaces and available features. Around the clock, Dr. Brandt asked? Whenever a building is open, Mr. Todd said.

Professor Tarone pointed out that high-school students use Wilson Library, so security issues arise because it is not just University students who are using study space.

Students may also use classrooms, Mr. Todd said. STSS has displays and there will be displays in the renovated Folwell Hall, outside each classroom, that tell students when the classrooms are open; students will be invited to use the space (e.g., rather than sitting on a floor somewhere). Professor McCormick recalled a time when classrooms were locked; now they are unlocked. Is that deliberate so students can be encouraged to use them? It is, Mr. Todd said, and they are open whenever the building is open and the rooms are not being used for classes.

Professor Nelson asked if study spaces can be used for class break-out sessions. They can, Mr. Todd said, although OCM is not at the point where they can schedule or otherwise formalize such use.

What is the biggest issue, Professor Brothen asked—the budget? The budget and classroom scheduling, Mr. Todd said.

Professor Brothen thanked Mr. Todd for his report.

4. Credits for Degrees with Distinction

The Committee turned next to a question that had been raised by one of the colleges. The policy Undergraduate Degrees with Distinction and Degrees with Honors provides that "to qualify for either a degree with distinction or a degree with honors, a student must have completed 60 or more semester credits at the University. For the purposes of meeting the grade point average standards set forth in this policy, only University course work will be counted." The question was how many of those credits must be on the A-F grading system, as opposed to S-N: Should the 60 credits all be GPA-bearing?

Ms. Phillips observed that some majors have required S-N courses, such as entry and capstone courses. A caveat may be needed. Professor Siliciano asked if such a caveat would make calculation difficult. Dr. Falkner said the GPA would be calculated by using the student's more recent 60 credits, but an S would not count in the GPA.

Are there inconsistencies across colleges or a lot of S-N credits being included, Professor Wambach asked? Dr. McMaster said he did not have data but that it makes sense that one would want the credits to be GPA-bearing. He said he could see including a caveat, such as providing that at least 54 of the credits must be A-F.

Professor Ng said that most required courses are not taken S-N unless the department requires it and she agreed with Dr. McMaster that an S should not count unless it is required that the course be taken only S-N.

The Committee agreed that at least 54 of the 60 credits required for a degree with distinction should be A-N, subject only to the caveat that the APAS system could handle the calculation. Dr. Falkner will research the capability of APAS to track the necessary calculations and will report back to SCEP. If approved, this proposed policy change could go into effect no sooner than the fall of 2013.

5. Graduate School Policies

Professor Wambach explained how she and Professor Brothen envisioned the two new bodies in the Graduate School (the Graduate School Council and the Graduate and Professional Education Assembly) interacting with the senate governance system. It is assumed that the two Graduate School bodies would report to this Committee on policy issues, and this Committee would then propose changes that would go into the University's policy-making mechanism like all other policy changes (that is, for educational policies, from this Committee to the Faculty Consultative Committee via the Policy Advisory Committee and then to the Faculty Senate and the President's Policy Committee).

Ms. Phillips inquired if there should be a proviso governing who on this Committee could vote on certain policies. She noted, for example, that her work is devoted entirely to undergraduate education, and it might be that other Committee members work only in graduate or professional education. The Committee decided that everyone would have a vote on all issues that come before it.

Dr. Falkner noted that some of the existing educational policies already specifically exclude graduate education (e.g., the rule that an S equals no less than a C-).

Professor Brothen suggested that Dean Schroeder be asked his view of how the process should operate; Professor Wambach agreed and said that the Faculty Consultative Committee and the Graduate School Council should also be asked. She added that there will be arguments about whether there should be institutional policies at all, but those arguments can be made at the Faculty Senate.

Professor Root inquired why the membership of the Graduate and Professional Education Assembly is defined as (only) all tenured and tenure-track faculty. Professor Wambach explained that the report from the Graduate Education Work Group recommended that the councils be made up of graduate faculty. She assumes, but is not sure, that non-tenured/tenure-track faculty who are members of the graduate faculty are also eligible. Dr. Brandt said that this is a big issue in the Academic Health Center, where there is a large number of non-tenure-track faculty who are core to teaching practice; some of them feel left out of the conversation. And there are more and more non-tenure-track faculty and fewer and fewer tenured and tenure-track faculty, Professor Root added. That situation is true nationally in the health sciences, Dr. Brandt said.

Must one be a member of a graduate program, Professor Siliciano asked? Professor Wambach said that all tenured and tenure-track faculty are and that clinical faculty may be. Professor Tarone said that graduate examining committees may contain non-tenure-track faculty, but they will be left out of the governance structure as it has been proposed. Some of this goes to the distinction between graduate and professional education, Dr. Brandt commented, and the structure does not come to grips

with the distinction. Professor Wambach said the Assembly could be broadly constituted; the question is the Graduate School Council.

It was agreed that Professor Brothen would forward the question of policy approval process to Dean Schroeder, the Graduate School Council, and to the Faculty Consultative Committee.

6. Syllabus Policy and an Academic Freedom Statement

The Committee agreed that the syllabus statement on academic freedom should be added to the syllabus policy, under the list of policies that instructors are required to mention. It was noted that a syllabus need not include the language, only the URL that will be provided by Vice Provost McMaster's office.

The proposal will be forwarded to the Faculty Consultative Committee for placement on the docket of the Faculty Senate.

7. Resolution on Academic Civility

Professor Brothen recalled that the Committee had made suggestions to the Committee on Equity, Access, and Diversity about the latter's "Resolution on Supporting the Efforts of the Work Group Promoting Academic Civility." He received proposed revisions but did not believe that very much had changed in response to this Committee's discussion.

What is the difference, Professor Tarone asked? The proposed resolution still conflates incivility with harassment, Professor Brothen said, it does not address the budget question, and it continues to suggest that advising be included in annual faculty reviews.

Professor Siliciano observed that much of the language applies to graduate students; is it aimed only at them? Dr. Falkner recalled that she had suggested it apply to everyone, even though the statement might have a more profound effect at the level of graduate education. Ms. Phillips pointed out that there is a difference: An undergraduate may encounter "hostility" in one course, finish it, and get on with his or her education, while a graduate student is in a department with a faculty mentor and it would be difficult to escape a hostile or uncivil environment.

Professor Wambach recalled that Professor Wade, at the previous discussion, had pointed out that there is a difference between being uncivil and harassing. One can be uncivil (e.g., grumpy) and not harass someone. The survey of graduate students focused on harassment; the language of this resolution is very broad. Everyone agrees that harassment is not to be tolerated, but at what point does one say someone is too grumpy? And sometimes advisors get on a graduate student's case to get something done; a student could claim that is harassment. It could be very good advising, Professor Root agreed. So did Professor McCormick, but said that sometimes advisors need to be stern. There is already a harassment policy, Ms. Edwards said; why is this being added?

Is this a policy, Professor Tarone asked? A resolution? Why is this Committee being asked to act on it? And what practical effect will it have, Professor Root asked? It will be advice to the administration, Professor Brothen said.

Professor Wambach said there are three important points in the draft. One, the Work Group developed learning materials for best practices in advising and mentoring that the resolution asks be provided to departments; this Committee agrees with that. Two, the resolution suggests how to include graduate advising in faculty reviews; Dr. McMaster said that that decision is guided by departmental 7.12 statements. Three, the University should continue to collect data; the Committee agrees. It is difficult to argue with those three points, she concluded.

Professor Nelson said she was reluctant to meddle in personnel reviews and assumes that good departments will include graduate-student advising in their evaluations of faculty members.

Committee members continued to discuss the draft resolution and agreed on the following edits (language to be deleted in [brackets], new language in CAPS):

Resolution on

Supporting the Efforts of the Work Group Promoting Academic Civility IN GRADUATE EDUCATION

WHEREAS: [Academic incivility is a serious concern on] campuses across the country.

ACADEMIC CIVILITY IS AN ESSENTIAL ATTRIBUTE OF

[WHEREAS: Academic incivility can be defined as hostile, intimidating or offensive behaviors by faculty, staff, or students within the institution, to the extent that it interferes with the ability to work or study, and carries high costs to affected individuals and the institution.]

WHEREAS: The Senate Committee on Equity, Access, and Diversity (EAD) supports the efforts of the Work Group Promoting Academic Civility (The Work Group).

[WHEREAS: The Work Group grew out of the Student Conflict Resolution Center's (SCRC) Graduate Student Experience Survey. The Workgroup is an ad hoc group of interested individuals representing several offices across the campus.]

WHEREAS: The Work Group supports the Academic Civility Initiative and envisions a University culture that fosters academic excellence and promotes civil and respectful relationships through effective prevention of, and response to hostile, offensive, or intimidating behavior.

WHEREAS: An effective and respectful student/adviser relationship is a critical factor in the success of graduate students and fosters academic excellence.

WHEREAS: The Workgroup has prepared helpful materials identifying strategies for addressing incivility as well as resources that support effective and respectful advising relationships. These are being distributed to interested departments and units where they are customized to meet their needs.

BE IT RESOLVED: That EAD requests:

1. That units and departments be encouraged to support the Academic Civility Initiative by providing a positive, [and] supportive, AND CONSTRUCTIVE working and learning environment, and by responding to reported instances of hostile, intimidating, or offensive behavior.
2. That units and departments adapt and utilize materials developed by the Work Group that support best practices of advising and mentoring. [That programs consider using the template survey "Graduate Student Adviser Evaluation" (which currently exists on the SCRC website under "Strategies for Improving Advising and Mentoring of Graduate and Professional Students.").]
- [3. That excellent graduate advising be recognized in annual faculty reviews.]
4. That a comprehensive review be conducted of the research and surveys, e.g. the 2007 SCRC survey, "Pulse" survey, exit interviews, COGS SURVEY, and institutional research to provide additional analysis of these data and possible direction for further efforts to create a culture of mutual responsibility and respect.
- [5. That the Work Group be encouraged to conduct a new study to provide some comparisons with the 2007 data.]

COMMENT:

We [would encourage further efforts to disseminate the results of the Graduate Student Experience Survey and] would like to see more support for the vision and recommendations of the Work Group. We would like to see more substantial changes to support a culture of respect for graduate students by addressing the University Faculty and Staff attitudes and behaviors in a systemic way.

Professor Tarone suggested the resolution also be sent to the Graduate School Council for its comments.

Professor Siliciano said that the Committee needs to think more about undergraduate education as well to be sure it is covering all the bases.

Professor Brothen said he would send the revisions to the Equity, Access, and Diversity committee for review.

8. Awards Committees

Professor Brothen announced that the Morse-Alumni and Graduate-Professional awards committees needed members from this Committee. Appointments were made.

Professor Brothen adjourned the meeting at 4:00.

-- Gary Engstrand