

CLASSROOM ADVISORY SUBCOMMITTEE
MINUTES OF MEETING

February 7, 2010

Morrill Hall Room 300

[In these minutes: scheduling initiatives; classroom technology overview; OCM statement on funding]

[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 represent the views of, nor are they binding on, the Senate, the Administration or the Board of Regents.]

PRESENT: Susan Wick (Chair), Gordon Duke, John Comazzi, Keya Ganguly, Kevin Smith, Roberta Juarez, Jed Overmann, Jeremy Todd, Jeff Lindgren, Melissa Cathcart

REGRETS: Patricia Schaber, Emily Bramschreiber

ABSENT: Michael Hannon, Michael Garza, Mary Hable

OTHERS ATTENDING: Toni Pangborn, Classroom Support Manager

Professor Susan Wick called the meeting to order and welcomed those present. She asked the committee members to introduce themselves.

Scheduling Initiatives

Jeremy Todd, Director of the Office of Classroom Management (OCM), began the meeting with an update on OCM's scheduling initiatives. He stated that he met with the Senate Committee on Educational Policy and the Faculty Consultative Committee regarding the recommended policy changes to the "Class Scheduling for Undergraduate and Graduate Classes: Twin Cities, Crookston, Morris, Rochester" policy. The changes will come before the Faculty Senate on February 24, and a copy has been provided to the President's Advisory Committee for review. It will likely be implemented in fall 2012. Professor Wick asked how the colleges and units were receiving the initiative. Mr. Todd said he had been asked to confirm that he had met with each of the colleges. He also noted that there are some exemptions in the policy. For example, because the Academic Health Center (AHC) does practicum and its courses do not line up with the standard scheduling policy, they are exempt from it. Additionally, graduate level and post-baccalaureate professional programs may have nonstandard start times if they are in a departmental space, but if they are in a general-purpose classroom they must have standard start times. The policy currently applies to scheduling from 8:00 to 5:00. But OCM is beginning to look at nighttime utilization to see if there are opportunities to make better use of the buildings. This initiative is at the request of University Services to assist it in meeting energy efficiency and staff resource needs in the buildings that are open during the evening.

Professor John Comazzi commented on the impact of the standard class scheduling policy on the architecture department. He stated that the architecture department reformulated its curriculum so that its three credit seminars must be taught within two standard blocks. This places these seminars in the category of an abnormal meeting time, gives them low priority for general-purpose classrooms, and has resulted in courses being placed outside of the architecture building. He also noted the broader issue that the movement toward nonstandard meeting times, nonstandard meeting spaces, and variety of content delivery systems will make determining what constitutes a standard meeting time more difficult. Mr. Todd stated that the problem Professor Comazzi noted depends on how the course was initially set up. And the new scheduling policy is intended to improve scheduling flexibility. He stated his staff is good at handling these types of issues and would be happy to work with Professor Comazzi.

Mr. Todd reported that OCM had scheduled 13,000 events outside of regular course activity. This is a large increase in events, and going to the standard meeting times helps in scheduling events. He noted, however, that class activities are the highest priority and events are the lowest.

Professor Wick asked if there are plans to install smart lights with occupancy sensors. Mr. Todd stated that OCM is partnering with Facilities Management and Energy Management to do return on investment calculations for classrooms and examine activity and use in the space. Occupancy sensors are in all of the new buildings. If there is inactivity for twenty minutes, the room lights will turn off.

Professor Keya Ganguly noted the issue of projectors being left on after use. Mr. Todd stated that there is a four-hour use window on the projectors. If there are four hours of inactivity then the projectors shut down.

Professor Gordon Duke asked for a ballpark estimate of a classroom's energy consumption for an hour. Mr. Todd stated that OCM did not have a measurement by classroom, but energy usage has been measured by building. This information is published on a website, and Mr. Todd stated he could provide Professor Gordon with the link.

Classroom Technology Overview

Toni Pangborn, OCM Classroom Support Manager, began with a discussion of technology system changes that are impacting the classroom. She discussed document cameras, DVD and VCR attrition, HDMI cables, and wide screen projection.

Document Cameras

- Document cameras are digital overheads. They have a higher resolution than overhead projectors and can be used as a fixed-point web camera. But they must be connected to a laptop to act as a web camera.
- OCM installed document cameras in 96 classrooms (32% of the overall inventory has document cameras)
- Document cameras will also be installed as part of renovation to Folwell Hall.
- Approximately 65% of the rooms still have old style overhead projectors.

- By reducing overhead projector use OCM also reduces maintenance costs.
- Acetate rollers are no longer available.

DVD and VCR Attrition

- VCRs and DVD's are being discontinued in the market place.
- Last May, OCM issued a notice that combination DVD/VCR players would be installed when individual VCR's failed.
- The last combination units will be installed in the Folwell Hall renovation.
- Overall video playback usage in classrooms had dropped on average 37% since fall 2008
- DVD and VHS usage represents 5% of overall system usage
- OCM is maintaining the VCRs first by replacing them from a stock of spare combination DVD/VCRs, and second by selectively substituting high use machines for low use machines.
- Ms. Pangborn does not foresee the need to provide a notice that the DVD and VCR's will no longer be available on a specific date. Rather, she believes DVD and VCR use will discontinue over time. Professor Duke noted that faculty are not losing functionality; it is just the older technology that is coming to an end.
- Professor Comazzi asked about transferring rare video to digital format. Ms. Pangborn suggested Scott Spicer in the Libraries would be a good resource for answering this question and addressing the potential copyright issues.

Ms. Pangborn stated that additional modifications for the projection-capable classroom system are updating it to include digital input capability and wide screen projection capability.

HDMI Cables

- Digital input is through using high definition multimedia interface (HDMI) cables.
- VGA is currently the standard connector, between laptop computers and projectors.
- HDMI will be the standard digital connector.
- Many of the newer laptops have just HDMI connectors, and those that have VGA connectors have an additional pin.
- This is producing synchronization issues between projectors and computers.
- In response, OCM is installing "black boxes" and signal paths to insure a connection between laptops and projectors in the classroom.

Wide Screen Projection

- Wide screen format projection is being installed where possible.
- It has been installed in the Cooke Hall classrooms, STSS classrooms, Folwell Hall, and the first and second floors of Blegen.
- There are some limits on installation of wide screen projectors due to screen sizes and physical dimensions of the classrooms.

- When rooms are due for their technology updates, the transition to wide screen aspect ratio will occur.

Ms. Pangborn stated that overall, OCM is trying to keep older technology operational in classrooms while looking forward to upcoming technology. But this is becoming increasingly difficult with the current budget constraints.

Professor Comazzi asked if it is possible to use mobile devices to bridge between old technologies and new technologies in a classroom. Ms. Pangborn responded that this does happen and gave an example of multi-standard VCRs on carts being used when the Folwell Hall rooms were decommissioned. Professor Comazzi also asked who is responsible for acquiring and maintaining equipment in classrooms. And noted that his department had funding to acquire some new technology. Mr. Todd stated that OCM could help interface new technology acquired by a department into the classrooms where it will be used.

Professor Wick asked how OCM informs faculty about the technology available in a particular classroom. Ms. Pangborn replied if there is an enhancement to a classroom, OCM e-mails the faculty directly to inform them and offers training and orientation. But she stated this is a service that will be hard to continue with limited resources, and she asked the committee for feedback on what services to maintain.

Professor Duke suggested announcing retirement dates for old technology rather than continuing to support and maintain it. He further stated that from a cost perspective, it makes sense for classroom technology to be Internet based. Several committee members agreed that there should be sunset dates for old technology.

Jed Overmann asked about OCM's involvement with the AHC classrooms. Mr. Todd responded that the AHC uses the enterprise scheduling system. But AHC has a separate smaller support group that supports their classrooms. This was done because a determination was made that the AHC has specialized needs that are better handled locally.

Professor Kevin Smith stated that in a time of declining resources, OCM should let professors know when classrooms are assigned, and where to get information on what is available in the classrooms, but OCM should not send individual e-mails. Ms. Pangborn noted that instructors already receive this information through a welcome back e-mail at the beginning of each semester. She went on to note that the first two weeks of the fall semester are the busiest period, and OCM handled 93% of trouble calls in a day or less. But with fewer resources this level of responsiveness cannot be maintained.

Statement on Funding

Next, the committee discussed the draft Statement on Funding for Classroom Facilities and Technologies.

STATEMENT ON FUNDING FOR CLASSROOM FACILITIES AND TECHNOLOGIES

The Classroom Advisory Subcommittee (CAS) recommends retaining funding for the Office of Classroom Management (OCM) at the level of approximately 50% of lifecycle requirement to allow a minimum level of renewal of classroom facilities and technologies. CAS further recommends eventually restoring funding to 80% of need in order to provide a quality standard for classroom facilities, technology, and support that is appropriate for a major, nationally ranked university.

The Classroom Advisory Subcommittee expresses alarm that the recurring allocation to OCM for FY2011 will meet only 42% of facility and technology lifecycle needs. The projected allocation for FY2012 was cut back and is 37% of lifecycle needs. At such low levels, faculty and students will be required to endure facilities and technologies that are substantially beyond their planned lifespan, and whose failure will result in degradation of the learning experience. The University of Minnesota invested in technology, but without maintenance and renewal, at some point this technology will be inaccessible due to equipment failure.

In concrete terms, our concern is that situations like the following may be more frequent:

A faculty comes to class prepared to utilize PowerPoint notes, photos, DVDs, and internet links. Much to his/her dismay, the projector won't work and a quick fix is not possible for that class period. The faculty scrambles to make this class period as effective as possible, considering the circumstances. Both faculty and students are frustrated. Reflecting on the experience, the faculty wonders to what degree she/he will plan to integrate technology in future classes.

COMMENT:

OCM Director, Jeremy Todd, presented a study of OCM funding history and FY2011 projections to the Classroom Advisory Subcommittee in April 2010. The study summarized the change in recurring allocations to OCM from FY 2004 to FY 2010 with projections for FY 2011. Funding as a percentage of lifecycle requirements for classroom facilities and technologies peaked in FY 2008 at almost 79% of lifecycle requirement, but subsequently dropped over the next two years to 48% of lifecycle requirement in FY 2010. The projection for 2011 was a further reduction so that the recurring allocation meets only 42% of facility and technology lifecycle needs.

Mr. Todd projected that 60% of the FY 2011 recurring allocation to OCM would be utilized to address minimum levels of required technology maintenance, minimum levels of required facility maintenance and salaries. The remaining 40% of the recurring allocation could be utilized to fund either Technology Renewal at 50% of need or Facility Renewal at 50% of need, or a combination of each that is substantially less than 50% of need. The CAS believes that timely technology and facility renewal is essential to a quality teaching and learning experience, and therefore, asks the University Senate to encourage retention of the OCM's funding at or above 2010 percentage levels – 50% of lifecycle requirement.

Submitted by:

Susan Wick, Chair

Classroom Advisory Subcommittee

Approved by the Classroom Advisory Subcommittee on _____, 2010.

Mr. Todd explained that the statement was updated to reflect a 14% reduction in funding which resulted in classroom facilities and technology being funded at only 37% of lifecycle requirement. He stated that this funding reduction would also cause slower response times to get rooms “up and running” when there are technology failures. Professor Wick noted that technology failures in active learning classrooms have an even bigger impact than in traditional classrooms. Further discussion of the statement followed, and the committee members suggested the following changes to the Statement.

- Information could be added about the impact on night classes and active learning classrooms.
- Information could be added that documents the level of usage over time – how many thousands of hours equipment is used.
- The statement should include a date by which OCM should be returned to 80% of funding.
- Information should be added about the impact of funding on current plans for changes and updates to classrooms.
- The statement should be given more immediacy by including items in the OCM budget that will be cut.

Mr. Todd indicated that OCM has a list of projects that have not been funded such as classrooms that are not receiving technology updates or classrooms where renewals are delayed. Several committee members agreed that a bullet list of these items would improve the statement. Ms. Pangborn noted that OCM has already selectively deferred technology updates in 12 classrooms and the pace of deferrals is likely to increase. Mr. Todd stated that he would incorporate the committee's suggestions.

Professor Wick stated that she is scheduled to meet with the Senate Committee on Finance and Planning (CAS's parent committee) on March 1. So the revised statement would be e-mailed to committee members for a vote.

Hearing no further business, Professor Wick adjourned the meeting.

Dawn Zugay
University Senate Office