

CLASSROOM ADVISORY SUBCOMMITTEE
MINUTES OF MEETING

April 4, 2011

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), Jeremy Todd, Melissa Cathcart, Kevin Smith, Michael Hannon, Peggy McCarthy, Jed Overmann, Roberta Juarez, Keya Ganguly, Brad Cohen

REGRETS: Jeff Lindgren, Gordon Duke, John Comazzi

ABSENT: Mary Hable, Patricia Schaber, Emily Bramschreiber

GUESTS: Sarah Kussow, Scheduling Coordinator for the Office of Classroom Management

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

Final Exams Scheduling, Policy, and Procedures Review

Sarah Kussow, Scheduling Coordinator for the Office of Classroom Management (OCM), provided the committee with a copy of the Administrative Policy entitled Scheduling Examinations, Final Examination, and Study Days: Twin Cities, Crookston, Morris, Rochester. She outlined the current scheduling policy for final examinations, section B of the policy, and how OCM implements this. Section "B" states:

B. Final Examinations

1. All classes that normally permit undergraduates to enroll will follow the standard examination schedule. Final examinations on the Twin Cities campus will extend over a six-day period. It is not a violation of this policy for a faculty member to use secure online test-taking, authorized by the academic unit, that permits students to take an exam at a time of their choosing rather than at a scheduled final examination time. Coordinate campuses will each determine the length of their final examination period.
2. Final examinations normally will be two clock hours (120 minutes) long.
3. Instructors may offer take-home final examinations (but see 7(c) below).
4. Instructors may schedule longer examinations with the approval of their department, which will arrange longer use of the examination room with the appropriate campus scheduling office. Instructors and departments must decide in advance of scheduling a course if the examination is to exceed two hours, and must work with the campus office that schedules central classrooms on scheduling the location of the exam. Any examinations that exceed two hours must be noted in the class schedule, in order that students are informed and can try to fit the longer examination in their schedule of final examinations. Accommodation must be provided by the examining department to

- any student who encounters a conflict with another final examination because of this lengthened examination time.
5. For courses that do not run for a full semester, the final examination will be administered (or due, in the case of take-home or other out-of-class examinations) on the last day of the course, except that short courses that end with the semester may use the final exam time scheduled for that course.
 6. The requirement that the final examination period on the Twin Cities campus be six days will not apply to units that have been granted an exemption from the University calendar by the Senate Committee on Education Policy.
 7. Final examinations at times other than regularly scheduled.
 - a. **Examinations outside the final examination period.** Instructors are permitted to schedule their final examinations outside of the scheduled examination days only under extraordinary circumstances and with the approval of their dean and the campus academic officer. (For the Twin Cities, this is the Vice Provost and Dean of Undergraduate Education.)
 - b. **Moving an examination within the final examination period.** When an instructor and students conclude they wish to move the final examination for the course to a different time and/or day during the final examination period, the change must be (1) proposed by the instructor, (2) have the concurrence of the department chair, and (3) must be approved unanimously by written secret ballot by students in class when the vote is taken.
 - c. Laboratory practicums may be given during the final week of classes during the normal lab period, and take-home or other out-of-class finals may be distributed prior to the final exam week but may not be due before the scheduled final exam for that course.
 - d. Students with final examination conflicts, or with three (or more) final examinations in one calendar day, will be expected to notify and provide documentation to instructors as soon as possible during the term. Instructors are expected to make appropriate accommodation to eliminate the conflict. In the event none of the instructors agrees to make appropriate accommodation, the student should contact his or her advisor. If a student has three or more examinations in one day because one exam date was changed, the instructor who changed the exam must make the accommodation. Note: this section does not cover cases where a student has three (or more) examinations within a 24-hour period, only cases where he or she has three (or more) examinations from morning to evening the same day.
 - e. **Summer term final examinations.** Final examinations for summer terms will be scheduled during the regular meeting time of the course on the last day.

She noted that the OCM's scheduling unit prepares the final exam schedule that is adhered to across campus. There are six days of exams with six finals on each day. Students typically have no more than two exams on a given day. The final exam information is posted on the One Stop Page. All finals are currently scheduled in two-hour time blocks. Instructors can request longer exams and alternate times for exams. She stated OCM schedules approximately 3000 exams per semester. Typically about 100 instructors request larger spaces for their exams and approximately 25 request alternate times. The scheduling is done manually and takes two staff people four to five weeks. The exams are scheduled for all undergraduate courses that meet in general classroom space unless the department notifies the scheduling unit ahead of time that an exam will not be taking place. Ms. Kussow stated OCM believes that many classrooms that are scheduled for exams actually sit vacant. She indicated OCM is planning an audit to determine how often this is actually occurring. OCM believes that only about 2000 exams are taking place. OCM would like to find a method to more efficiently schedule exams and eliminate scheduling classroom space for exams that do not take place. She noted that the electronic course authorization system e-CAS allows instructors to indicate

whether there will be a final examination occurring. But this system works at a class level rather than the course section level; therefore, OCM is not comfortable using this mechanism as a guideline for determining whether an exam is occurring.

OCM is considering ways to change the scheduling of final exams. They are considering an opt-in system, but have received feedback from some instructors that indicates they do not understand the final exam policy and believe that they are required to schedule a final exam. Professor Kevin Smith commented that it is possible that some exams are occurring during the regular semester rather than during the final examination period.

Jeremy Todd, Director of the Office of Classroom Management, stated the policy should be updated to reflect changes in pedagogy around issues such as take home examinations and capstone projects. Professor Wick stated it is not clear to instructors that filling out the e-CAS form triggers the scheduling of a space for final exams. She noted that many instructors may just be indicating that some type of final project is occurring in their class not that there will be a final examination during the final exam week. Mr. Todd asked the committee for feedback on what specific areas of the final exam scheduling policy OCM should focus on.

Professor Wick asked whether OCM wants instructors to indicate they would be giving a final exam when the class schedule is posted. Ms. Kussow stated this would be helpful, but noted that a number of core courses are initially scheduled without instructors. Professor Smith asked when final exam scheduling currently takes place. Ms. Kussow responded that it takes place during the semester. But she noted that some of the University's peer institutions have opt-in provisions for scheduling examinations. Under these systems, instructors must communicate by the first week of class whether they will be scheduling a final examination. Mr. Todd also noted the challenge of what instructors indicate on the syllabi.

Professor Wick noted a problem that occurs when a professor is teaching two sections of the same class. She stated it is important for security reasons that both sections have exams at the same time, and the exam scheduling system that is adopted needs to provide a mechanism for this. Ms. Kussow responded that there is a form that can be filled out for alternate times.

Professor Smith noted that a scheduling system that required instructors to opt in by the first week of the semester would work well. Michael Hannon asked if it would be possible to alter the e-CAS form. Ms. Kussow explained that OCM is considering this, but it would require a scheduling request earlier than some instructors are aware that they are teaching. Jed Overmann commented that he could imagine a scenario where some instructors indicate they did not know they needed to schedule a classroom. He advised that the scheduling process be active and not passive. Professor Wick opined that it might be better if it is done at a department level rather than communicating with individual instructors.

Mr. Todd mentioned that another possible approach to the opt-in policy of scheduling exams would be to automate the common exams and then manually schedule the remaining exams.

Professor Wick asked if other campuses have problems similar to those of the Twin Cities. Ms. Kussow replied that the coordinate campuses are also scheduling manually, and she is unsure if they are having problems similar to the Twin Cities. But she opined if there is a problem, it is probably less severe because they are smaller.

Ms. Kussow stated there is a course matrix based on the time and day the course meets. It rotates over a six-year period. The purpose of the rotation is to create equality, so that the same instructors do not always have the last final exam on the schedule.

Ms. Kussow stated that most of the time change requests are related to instructor availability. There are only about 25 time change requests per semester. The University policy for allowing a time change requires a vote with unanimous agreement by the students. Professor Wick commented on a situation where some departments are inflexible with regard to exam times, and asked who enforces the policy that allows for accommodations. Mr. Todd stated the department should work with the Dean of Undergraduate Education as he is the policy owner. He noted the students would have the same advocacy route.

Mr. Todd stated that the policy needs to be reviewed and updated to take into account take-home projects and capstone projects. It should address questions like whether it is necessary for instructors to schedule a final exam if there is a capstone project. Professor Wick commented that some instructors do not understand section 7c. of the policy regarding the due date for out-of-class finals. And there is tendency for some instructors to have final projects due the final week of class rather than during finals week. Mr. Todd stated that this could be done if there is consensus among students. But he noted that it is a violation the policy to make the final project equivalent to the final exam.

Professor Keya Ganguly stated the University must be more stringent about the distinctions between final projects and final exams. She noted that some instructors give take-home finals that are due on the final day of class. This is a violation of policy, but there seems to be no consequence to the violation. This undermines the policy.

Mr. Overmann asked about the history of section 7c. and why it mattered if a final project takes the place of a final examination. Mr. Todd stated he was not sure of the genesis of the section, but he believed it is intended to assist students in scheduling, and to avoid schedule conflicts.

Brad Cohen asked if it is appropriate for the committee to request review of the policy regarding the timing of final projects. Mr. Todd responded that CAS could recommend to SCEP that it review the policy.

He stated that from a scheduling perspective, review of this policy would provide an opportunity to more efficiently use staff time required to schedule final exams. Dr. Cohen stated a policy amendment CAS could recommend to SCEP would be that if there were no need for a final exam that should be communicated to OCM. Professor Wick suggested the CAS recommendation could also include establishing a process for departments to notify OCM within a certain period of time (such if a final would not be given. Mr. Todd stated that direction could come from the department level that every semester, two weeks after the first class, OCM should be notified whether a final exam would be given and if a space is needed for the course section. Professor Smith stated he thought that instructors would not read a policy change, and it would be beneficial if the policy were conveyed from the department level.

Update on Statement on the Funding for Classroom Facilities and Technologies

Professor Wick stated that on March 1 she met with the Senate Committee on Finance and Planning (F&P) regarding the Statement on Funding for Classroom Facilities and Technologies (Statement). She reported that some F&P committee members questioned why the Statement was being brought to the committee rather than proceeding through the compact process. Mr. Todd explained to the committee that OCM is funded through the service cost pools in Vice Provost McMaster's office. F&P asked Professor Wick and Mr. Todd to consult with Vice Provost McMaster on the Statement. They met with the Vice Provost on March 15. The Vice Provost was very sympathetic to the need to fund classrooms, and acknowledged that OCM received a sizeable budget cut, but he felt he was required to choose between maintaining positions and funding classrooms. The Vice Provost indicated he does not want the cuts to continue and he supports the Statement. He encouraged CAS to seek the support of the F&P and the Senate Committee on Educational Policy (SCEP), and recommended that all three committees bring the Statement to the University Senate.

When Professor Wick spoke to SCEP, its members were generally supportive of the Statement, and indicated they did not want to see a boom and bust-funding scheme for OCM. They advocated better planning and management for a steady funding process, and unanimously supported the Statement. In two weeks, Professor Wick will return to F&P.

Mr. Hannon asked how the OCM cuts compare with cuts to other cost pools. Mr. Todd stated that all the cost pools were all adjusted. He noted that the general purpose classroom cost pool for FY 12 would show an increase due to the debt service. But the operational budget would decrease by \$400,000. He noted that it is difficult to tell from the percentage change in the cost pool what is happening at the operational level.

Dr. Cohen asked what policies govern the obligation of other resources when new classrooms are created. He stated that it would be beneficial to set funds aside for support and maintenance during the life cycle of the space. Mr. Todd responded that OCM creates internal documents that account for the funds necessary to maintain an environment during the life cycle of the space, but the budget is not necessarily tied to the

life cycle. Dr. Cohen asked if this is an area where CAS could suggest a change in practice. Mr. Todd stated that last year, CAS recommended that classrooms be more ingrained into the planning processes of the institution, and that classroom-development planning should integrate operational costs such as maintenance upkeep and faculty support. The University Senate passed the resolution requiring the funding of classrooms to be more ingrained in the University planning process. But Mr. Todd stated that he is not sure what response was received from the President's office.

Mr. Cohen asked if there was a way to secure an untouchable pool of funds (like that for public art) for major classroom development that supports faculty development and infrastructure maintenance. Mr. Todd responded that this is difficult to do from a Facilities Management standpoint because it is difficult to account for all of the costs on the day a building opens. But he agreed that it is important for funds to be present for support of facilities. He stated further that there should be stronger connections across the institution in order for the University to meet its mission of teaching and learning. Professor Wick echoed this stating it is important to integrate people, buildings, and support for facilities and people.

Professor Wick stated the committee's last meeting of the semester would be May 2 and that she would report back to the committee at that time regarding her meeting with F&P.

Hearing no further business, Professor Wick adjourned the meeting.

Dawn Zugay
University Senate Office