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by Patricia Thomas*

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATIONAL POLICY

Minutes

December 3, 1987

Attendance: Andy Collins (Chair), Sheila Corcoran, Steve Joul, John Clausen, Patricia Thomas (staff), and Marvin Mattson.

Guest: Dr. Robert Kvavik

Minutes: The minutes were approved as written.

Announcements: Andy Collins met with Patricia Dean concerning the Morse Amoco Awards. The Alumni Association will fund nine awards per year (\$1500.00 per recipient) on a continuing basis and seems to be open to being flexible on the number of awards. The selection process will still be under the aegis of SCEP, but the subcommittee will now include an alumnus. Andy also suggested that the subcommittee recommend that the award name be changed to the Horace T. Morse Minnesota Alumni Award.

Andy wrote a follow-up letter to Vice President Benjamin, concerning the large enrollment courses. Dr. Benjamin agreed with the concern about the perception that Commitment to Focus and Strategy for Focus would remove funds from lower division education. He asked SCEP to structure its concerns about increased funding and quality education for the lower division. Dr. Kvavik pointed out that John Wallace was preparing the final draft of his task force, and this would provide an opportunity to include SCEP's concerns in the report.

Andy reported that the Academic Support Services Committee is gathering information on the plus and minus grading system. When a straight simulation of Duluth transcripts is done, one-half of the grades are higher, and one-half are lower. The plus and minus system allows for greater differentiation of "B" grades. Last Spring's motion also included a recommendation on incomplete grades. On an A/N grading system, an incomplete equals an N. On an A/F system, the incomplete equals an F. The recommendation stated that the incomplete must be made up the next quarter the student is registered. The ASSC was not persuaded by the argument that students should be allowed to make up the incomplete the next time the course is offered. The committee will, however, consider SCEP's concern. John Clausen said the committee should clarify when an "I" could be given. If the system is tightened up, faculty would consider more carefully when to give "I" grades.

In response to Jeff Polak's request, Andy is appointing Steve Joul as the student representative and Gary Nelsetuen as the faculty representative to SCIP.

GRADUATION RATES

Dr. Kvavik consulted with Vice President Benjamin about the concerns of Academic Affairs. He said that on December 4 there would be a dry run for President Keller and the Vice President on enrollment management,

recruitment, and graduation rates. Dr. Kvavik offered to report to SCEP the outcome of this meeting and offered to be a liaison between SCEP and the administration. He said Dr. Benjamin was not rejecting graduation rates as a criterion of outcome measurement. Andy said that there should be other criteria as well. Dr. Kvavik stated that President Keller tends to look at progress in terms of minorities and graduation rates and in absolute numbers.

John Clausen asked how graduation rates were evaluated. Some students only want one year of education. Other students transfer to other colleges. Some students drop out and return later. Bob Kvavik asked if graduation rates were goals or criteria for something else. What should be a desired graduation rate? How can such a goal be reached? Goals and graduation rates vary over time with the composition of the student body. Students who stay six or seven years completing a degree have almost no less debt than those who go through in four years. They have only a slightly higher standard of living, but they lose two-to-three years of work in a higher paying job. Many factors can skewer the data.

Andy asked how SCEP could get a handle on the appropriate uses of graduation rates. Sheila Corcoran pointed out that many kinds of criteria were needed to measure outcomes. The underlying assumptions must be identified. Dr. Kvavik pointed out that it was also important to separate the political rationale from good educational sense. Information is needed so logical arguments can be presented when someone else raises questions. Steve Joul noted that the attitude of the students at the University is different from that of other students. Minnesota students expect to be here five-to-seven years.

John Clausen stated that students' work experiences are important and so are their GPAs. Vice President Kvavik said that the University should incorporate student work experiences, internships, and co-ops into academic progress. Andy suggested that SCEP get guidance from the Provost's office on what will be useful. Sheila also suggested that SCEP check with the North Central Accreditation Association to see if it has any criteria for graduation rates.

INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

The Committee on International Education reports to SCEP. Dr. Kvavik expressed some concerns he has about international education. Is it so distinct it belongs in a special area, or should it be mainstreamed? If international matters are important to the University, then shouldn't the University be recruiting those with strengths in this area? Should the University be recruiting top language students from the high schools? He suggested building the international component into a four or five year experience; the University is not giving the students a rationale for taking a language because the language does not tie into the major program. The University should be creating a pool of fourth year students who can carry this component over into careers. He suggested creating a program for international student scholars, comprising of 15-20 % of the student body, which would have defined goals and challenging coursework. The University has the seventh largest foreign student body in the country. Fifty to sixty