

MINUTES
Senate Committee on Educational Policy
April 28, 1988

Present: John Clark (chair), Jean Congdon, Sheila Corcoran, Roland Guyotte, Marla Johnson (staff), Ian Maitland, Marvin Mattson, Gary Nelsestuen, Aron Pilhofer, Crystal Schlosser, Steve Joul

Absent: Amy Kaphingst, John Clausen, Robert Kvavik, James Moller

Guests: Betty Grundner and Sam Lewis

The Minutes were amended as follows:

- March 31st: Page 2, item #9. "front end costs" to replace "garbage tasks."
- Page 2, item #11. Insert "investigate consortia arrangements" after "but we will...."
- Page 2, item #12. "cannot" to replace "would."

April 15th: Page 2, Academic Priorities: "the student body represented in the Senate" to be inserted after "...considerable support for it among..."

The minutes were approved as amended.

New SCEP Members for 1988-1989

Bob Jones, Agronomy and Plant Genetics, Tim Mazzoni, Educational Policy and Administration, and Marvin Mattson has been reappointed.

Comments by the Chair

The AIDS recommendations from SCEP went to the Senate Finance Committee which will make its recommendations at their next meeting. Members were asked to bring to SCEP educational concerns that come to their attention which might be appropriate matters for discussion. John sent letters on student morale and perspectives and on the reorganization of Senate committees to Phil Shively, Chair of the Senate Faculty Consultative Committee. Darwin Hendel has requested that, if possible, SCEP members attend the conference on improving undergraduate education.

I-F Issue

GC and CLA are not in agreement with the vote in the Senate on this issue, and are writing an appeal to Vice President Roger Benjamin to see whether something can be done. A SCEP member asked whether an I/F grade could be devised, in order to clarify

the fact that an F was a result of not having completed a course rather than a professor's grade. John Clark will contact Vice President Benjamin to report on SCEP's discussion on the I-F issue.

John Clark will write a summary of this year's activities for the Senate. He suggested holding one of the 1988-89 SCEP meetings at another campus to emphasize broad UM representation.

Grade Inflation

John Clark will send a letter to Phil Shively stating the following: There is no real basis for setting an optimal grade point average for the whole University at this time, but we do need a system for monitoring it, such as having an annual report showing current data. This information should be provided to departments and all faculty. SCEP should also be a recipient of this report, and inter-institutional comparison would be helpful.

1:1 Classroom/Credit Hour Policy

John Clark reported on the colleges' responses to his inquiry on this issue. Several were received which were generally favorable. It was suggested that SCEP recommend as official Senate policy that one credit hour be awarded for one standard class period per week and that college curricular and administrative bodies have authority to implement this policy with regard their educational objectives and to special circumstances. SCEP would annually look at how this policy is being carried out through reports from Darwin Hendel's office.

Concern was expressed about the extent of upheaval which might accompany the adoption of the 1:1 issue along with a switch to the semester system. Since a move to the semester system might resolve some of the 1:1 problems automatically (4 credit courses would become 3 credits), a motion was made to table the 1:1 issue indefinitely to allow time for a decision to be made on the quarter to semester matter. It was noted that this does not reverse SCEP's previous support of the 1:1 issue in principle. The motion was seconded and passed. John will write a summary statement of SCEP's current position on this issue to refer to when the issue is reconsidered.

Quarter to Semester Issue

Tim Erickson from MSA indicated that UM students do not feel the need to change to a semester system, but are willing to listen to arguments for making a switch. He noted that even students who have attended schools on semesters were split in their support for that system. Students are concerned that 6 months is too long a time period to have 90% of one's grade based on the final exam. Size of courses was brought up, and the related situation of students who don't graduate in time because they don't have access to required courses. It was asked whether data exist showing to what extent this is a problem, and whether there are any data to identify high-demand classes at the University. Apparently no hard data now exist.

The compelling educational argument for a switch to the semester system concerns the quality of written work, the depth that can be gained in a course; the rest of the issues seem to be administrative, tactical kinds of issues that are not as directly concerned with educational quality. Another comment addressed the somewhat higher quality of the semester experience in that the pace and the mode of learning is more reasonable.

Several SCEP members indicated that there does not appear to be adequate reason to justify the change to a semester system. Two years ago the EPC studied data compiled in a faculty survey done by Darwin Hendel and later incorporated in a 1985-86 SCEP Annual Report. John Clark will locate the report and distribute it to SCEP members to help clarify the perspectives. He noted that the change to the semester system is part of the Academic Priorities document and that CLA strongly supports a change to the semester system.

Schedule of Meetings

It was decided to devote the May 12th meeting to further discussion of the quarter to semester issue.

Respectfully submitted,

Marla Johnson