

Minutes*

Senate Committee on Faculty Affairs
Tuesday, September 13, 2011
2:30 – 4:30
510 Morrill Hall

Present: George Sheets (chair), William Beeman, Ben Bornsztejn, Arlene Carney, Dann Chapman, Linda Chlan, Kathryn Hanna, Joseph Konstan, Frank Kulacki, Theodor Litman, Christine Marran, Benjamin Munson, Jason Shaw, Geoffrey Sirc, Roderick Squires, James Wojtaszek

Absent: Kathryn Brown, Randy Croce, Barbara Elliott, Pamela Stenhjem

Guests: none

[In these minutes: (1) introductions and committee charge; (2) faculty productivity; (3) update on New Faculty Orientation]

1. Introductions and Committee Charge

Professor Sheets convened the meeting at 2:30, asked for a round of introductions and reviewed the Committee charge. He noted that the charge directs the Committee to focus on factors and policies that affect the worklife of the faculty, both items brought to the Committee from the administration or faculty members or items the Committee takes up on its own initiative. The Committee recommends changes to the Faculty Consultative Committee but also reports directly to the Faculty Senate. It is normal to have ex officio members on Senate committees, both faculty and administrative, and this Committee has several: Professors Elliott and Marran, co-chairs of the Committee on Academic Freedom and Tenure, Vice President Kathryn Brown (Human Resources), and Vice Provost Arlene Carney (Faculty and Academic Affairs).

2. Faculty Productivity

Professor Sheets turned to the issue of faculty productivity, raised by a recent report at Texas A&M University that measured faculty members by the external grant funding they brought in, the tuition revenue they generated by teaching classes, and subtracting from the total of those two figures the faculty member's salary—to determine if the faculty member generated a "profit" or a "loss." This approach was instituted by the Texas legislature and governing board to try to promote greater efficiency, particularly among the faculty. Because there are similar interests in other statehouses, there is a concern that such an analysis could be sought in Minnesota. There is a sense on the part of the chair and vice chair of the Faculty Consultative Committee that the faculty here should try to get out ahead of such an initiative.

The general goal in the discussion, Professor Sheets related, is to try to ensure that when or if issues are taken up in a public forum, they are there in an informed way rather than as a proxy for certain

* 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.

unfavorable views of faculty members and higher education. The faculty need to take ownership of the issues, and there are four general points in the discussion.

First, determining who the audience is to be informed.

Second, explaining to the audience what faculty members do; the terms teaching, research, and outreach do not convey self-evident content. Professor Sheets referred Committee members to the report of the 1992 Faculty Workload Task Force (which can be found here: <http://conservancy.umn.edu/bitstream/48661/1/Report%20of%20the%20Faculty%20Workload%20Task%20Force.pdf>), which contains an itemization of faculty tasks associated with teaching, writing, advising, and so on. It is almost too detailed to have any impact in the public arena.

Third, explaining how the faculty are already accountable, explaining to interested stakeholders that faculty members are already evaluated several times per year (the 7.12 statements are used to evaluate faculty members for promotion, tenure, salary increases, and post-tenure review; student ratings of teaching are used; and so on). This evaluation includes significant reporting, including the annual Faculty Activity Report, so there is a system in place, although it may not be well-enough known to prevent hostility to the faculty.

Fourth, identifying the appropriate metrics for faculty efficiency and productivity. The most controversial part of the Texas answer is that the metrics are only external grants funds and tuition generated by classes, plus student evaluations of teaching. Each of those three items has significant problems. Dollars generated in grants takes no account of research that is not grant-funded. How does the institution inform stakeholders that there is more at issue than grant funds? As for student evaluations, the University went through an extensive revision of its process, and the measures contemplated at Texas are not good measures of anything except popularity. If there are to be adequate measures, they need to take into account learning and students' perceptions of what they learned.

The most immediate reason to take up this matter, Professor Sheets concluded, is because the Faculty Consultative Committee asked it to.

Committee members had a discussion about reporting to legislatures and about public perceptions of university finances. Professor Beeman observed that the public believes that their tax dollars pay faculty salaries; if there is an effort to reach out to the public to explain everything that faculty members do, the message should also point out that much faculty work is self-supporting. Professor Konstan said that most faculty salaries outside the Academic Health Center are paid with state funds and tuition, but not many of the staff—people who are essential for the faculty to do their work. The University has set up its books so it appears that the faculty are on state funds. Professor Kulacki said that the primary interest of legislators is teaching and graduation rates.

In terms of teaching evaluations, Professor Konstan said, often students do not know the value of a course until later, but the University does not follow up to find that out.

Professor Konstan suggested the University should do a journalistic study of the life of a faculty member, a la Tracy Kidder.

The problem, systemic to higher education, Professor Konstan said, is that productivity is measured as inputs used instead of outcomes. Doing research with a \$2-million grant is seen as much more

productive than with a \$1-million grant, even if the same knowledge and research papers are produced. The same is true of tuition; the faculty would be more productive if the University simply raised tuition—because the faculty would then generate more revenue. That is an absurd measure, since it leads to trying to have higher costs rather than real efficiency. Part of the challenge is to devise better measures for output—how does one measure the value of research or instruction? Higher education feeds the problem when universities in general, and this University internally, use measures such as research funding or tuition generated as surrogates for quality or productivity.

Some projects cannot be done without a lot of grant funding, Professor Munson pointed out. He also pointed out that studies have shown that there is reason to believe that student ratings of teaching are dangerous because they are very sensitive to factors unrelated to teaching (e.g., women are treated less well).

Professor Sheets said that on Professor Munson's latter point, one hopes that is less likely with the new student rating system at the University. It should be more immune to those kinds of negative influences. There was also a proposal at the Faculty Consultative Committee retreat that students might prepare five-minute videos that track a faculty member's day (in different disciplines). That could be a much more powerful medium to inform the public than a position paper or analysis. Legislators do not want to know all the details, Professor Kulacki said; anything more than basic statements are difficult to convey to legislators and the public.

Vice Provost Carney said that the student ratings of teaching are the last thing the faculty at Minnesota need to worry about. There are about 150,000 ratings per semester; the average ratings for faculty members are sky-high. On a 6-point scale, the average rating is 5.8. These are huge Ns. She presents these data to the Board of Regents. Instead of decrying student ratings, the faculty should be proud of them. Professor Sheets is correct, she said: The new ratings are less susceptible to extraneous factors. There are four questions that are instructor-centered and two that are learner-centered, and one open-ended question about the instructor and one about the student. When students are asked what they could have done to learn more, the most frequent answers are "I could have gone to class," or "I could have bought the book," or "I should have stayed awake in class." Her office has looked at the results across groups of disciplines (social sciences, engineering, etc.) and is doing an analysis; she said she would be glad to bring the results to the Committee. This is a very good story. This is a research university where students find the instruction to be superb—the University should use these data. (There is also no significant difference in rating results between large and small classes, Dr. Carney added.)

In terms of communicating good news and educating the critics, Professor Sheets said, perhaps there should be five-second public-service announcements. "Because" ads, Dr. Carney suggested.

Professor Beeman said he would introduce an economic concept, the Baumol Effect, which, basically stated, provides that productive activities that cannot, by their nature, be made more efficient relative to other productive activities must rise in cost.¹ Some instruction cannot be made more

¹ Per Wikipedia at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baumol%27s_cost_disease (**emphasis added**):

It involves a rise of salaries in jobs that have experienced no increase of labor productivity in response to rising salaries in other jobs which did experience such labor productivity growth. This goes against the theory in classical economics that wages are always closely tied to labor productivity changes.

The rise of wages in jobs without productivity gains is caused by the necessity to compete for employees with jobs that did experience gains and hence can naturally pay higher salaries, just as classical economics predicts.

efficient, Professor Beeman pointed out. Language classes, studio arts classes, and lab sessions do not educate well when they are larger than optimal. That is one bad flaw in the Texas evaluation (as well as the SUNY decision to eliminate language classes). If one wants to have LEARNING, especially in the languages, arts, and labs, and graduate education, more intensive contact with instructors is required. Understanding economic scale is important for understanding instructional costs.

Dr. Carney said that there was an eloquent response to the Texas analysis by University of Texas Arts and Sciences Dean Randy Diehl (a Minnesota alumnus and outstanding scholar in speech perception). (That response can be found at <http://7solutionsresponse.org/index.php?unit=introduction>.)

Professor Sheets said that Professor Beeman's point about the Baumol Effect is another one that can be communicated in a public-service announcement: University outreach dollars could be used; the observation is thought-provoking and could help to shape more informed public discussion of faculty productivity.

The message is about false efficiency, Professor Konstan said. One could put 500 art students in a studio and none of them would become artists. What is needed is a message delivered by successful alumni on why they are successful. Professor Beeman noted that one voice instructor at Minnesota had three finalists in the Met Opera finals—something unheard of. Many intensive educational situations have developed very successful people.

That is true of most of graduate education, Professor Konstan said, and if graduate education is largely off the radar for the legislature and public, the University must make the point that graduate and professional education is what creates the talented workforce that fuels the state's existing businesses and creates new ones.

Professor Sirc asked if the institution is doing all it can to provide Board of Regents members the knowledge they need about what the faculty do. He also noted that the University of Washington has its

For instance, if the banking industry pays its bankers 19th century style salaries, the bankers may decide to quit and get a job at an automobile factory where salaries are commensurate to high labor productivity. Hence, bankers' salaries are increased not due to labor productivity increases in the banking industry, but rather due to productivity and wage increases in other industries.

The original study was conducted for the performing arts sector. Baumol and Bowen pointed out that the same number of musicians are needed to play a Beethoven string quartet today as were needed in the 19th century; that is, the productivity of Classical music performance has not increased. On the other hand, wages of musicians (as well as in all other professions) have increased greatly since the 19th century when not adjusted for inflation.

In a range of businesses, such as the car manufacturing sector and the retail sector, workers are continually getting more productive due to technological innovations to their tools and equipment. In contrast, **in some labor-intensive sectors that rely heavily on human interaction or activities, such as nursing, education, or the performing arts there is little or no growth in productivity over time. As with the string quartet example, it takes nurses the same amount of time to change a bandage, or college professors the same amount of time to mark an essay, in 2006 as it did in 1966.**

Baumol's cost disease is often used to describe the lack of growth in productivity in public services such as public hospitals and state colleges. Since many public administration activities are heavily labor-intensive there is little growth in productivity over time because productivity gains come essentially from a better capital technology. As a result growth in the GDP will generate little more resources to be spent in public sector. Thus public sector production is more dependent on taxation level than growth in the GDP.

own public access television channel and puts on it speeches, lectures, etc. The University of Minnesota could do something like that because it certainly has enough content to offer almost non-stop programming.

It would be best to do both, Professor Sheets said, including 15-second announcements for people who would never look at a university channel.

Dr. Carney reported that at the last Board of Regents meeting, Board members asked questions, but the attitude was not like Texas. Their questions were more in the vein that "we do not know enough about what faculty do, and we need to know more, because we want to be able to better represent the University in the community." So there are things the University might do for Board members. The Board members were not asking the questions because they want to micromanage departments but because they want to be able to say that what the faculty are doing is important. It is likely there will be discussions at the Board level, but not in the manner at Texas. Professor Sheets, who had been at the Regents' meeting, agreed with Dr. Carney's assessment. He said the comments of Board members were very positive. But there are critical voices. And the University must have answers, Dr. Carney responded.

The discussion has provided some good ideas; what vehicle is there to put them into practice, Professor Beeman inquired? Professor Konstan suggested starting with University Relations and talking about targeted messages. Professor Kulacki said the University has a lot of distinguished alumni and distinguished faculty members, so having subjects for announcements will not be a problem.

Professor Kulacki asked what happened with the recommendation in the 1992 Faculty Workload Task Force report about units establishing workload policies. Professor Sheets said that CLA did require them from every department, including a statement about what was considered productivity. Work was done and it was not trivial. Professor Kulacki wondered if some fact-finding might be worthwhile, to see if there are data, but Dr. Carney said that data from 1992 may not reflect what faculty members do now.

Professor Sheets said that the Committee should carry the conversation forward with University Relations, with Ms. Phoenix and Ms. Harvey in the President's Office, the two individuals most responsible for University Relations. The Committee can talk about the feasibility of public-service messages and other strategies to communicate to the wider public in ways that are not simply responsive to potential legislative criticism.

Professor Beeman said he has been trying to get a small TV studio on campus, something that would be very cheap, so that University faculty and staff can be on national TV—and with the University logo behind them. Most major universities have such a studio (e.g., Paul Krugman appears at Princeton). There is a facility in Rarig but it is not set up. The production quality of materials to be broadcast will need to be very high, Professor Sheets cautioned.

Professor Munson said he does not know any legislators but wondered what they value. It is not difficult for the University to argue that the faculty work hard, but legislators may want to hear that the faculty are producing something that produces jobs. Any outreach effort should not downplay the economic impact. Professor Kulacki said that legislators like economic impact information, such as about agriculture and medicine, but they also ask why it takes more than four years to get students out the door. There are issues of curriculum spread, working students, and degree requirements—the subject is too dense to bring to the public but there are technical issues the institution must deal with.

The University brags about things that cause headaches for legislators, Professor Konstan said. This fall the Twin Cities accepted 5,000 students from 40,000 applicants, which means there were 35,000 disappointed people. Legislators ask why tax dollars are going to an elitist institution. One would like to see higher education institutions in the state arguing together that higher education takes everyone. Legislators want to know if students graduate and get a job, and they wonder why degrees are offered in X field when no job is available so the student can pay off loans.

Mr. Chapman said there is another problem, a sea change in the general outlook on a college education; it has gone from being a public good to a private good. He said he could not imagine a new land-grant university being started. The Regents understand that the University is a public good, but the public asks why it should be funding an education for other kids. The situation is partly driven by the current economic situation.

Professor Sheets agreed that there was probably some truth in what Mr. Chapman said. It would be possible that a message that education is a public good could be communicated. He said he is also not sure that the public as a whole is so hostile to the University and the intellectual enterprise. There are critics who are strident and prominent, but he said he believes it would be wise as an institution and society not take those voices as representing the views of society.

Professor Konstan said he believed the University needs to worry whenever society believes it is in a zero-sum society: "My paying for something that benefits you hurts me." That was not the situation when the Morrill Act was adopted. Society must believe it can invest and grow and the University has to make that case. He said he also did not believe it was only current economic circumstances; this started with the election in 1980 and has continued since. If society does not believe the pie is growing, everyone will try to get his or her own share.

Part of the message has to be about creating a place where people want to live. There are decades of University graduates who are making a living in the arts in the state—nowhere else in the country are such a large number of people making a living dance). Companies are attracted to a literate and vibrant community. If the University stops training people in the arts, classics, philosophy, and the languages, what is left will be Las Vegas.

Professor Sheets said the Committee would return to the subject at its next meeting.

3. Update on New Faculty Orientation

Vice Provost Carney provided an update on the New Faculty Orientation (NFO). This is the sixth year of NFO, she said, and is a three-day event; she provided copies of the agenda for the three days. The reason it was established was because of a recommendation from the Faculty Culture task force that was part of the strategic-positioning effort. The task force interviewed faculty members from across the University and one item was about faculty identification with the University. Most identified with their department or discipline, some with their college, but few with the University as a whole. She said that while she identifies herself as a professor at the University, many say they are a professor of X. They wanted new faculty members to identify more with the University—they are individual entrepreneurs but their paycheck is from the University, and faculty members receive many services from the institution.

Before the current NFO was started, the University provided a two-hour reception for new faculty to meet with the President and Provost, and some colleges had an orientation. So the decision was made to

try NFO. It falls over three days, so at least once in the life of a Twin Cities faculty member he or she will see where others work—the East Bank, West Bank, or St. Paul. Participants are given a stipend of \$200 per day to attend because NFO takes place before their contract begins.

Dr. Carney reviewed the activities that the new faculty participate in over the course of the three days. This year there were 59 new faculty members, including tenure-track, tenured, contract, and visiting. NFO provides a great networking opportunity, and over the three days people get to know one another. The goal, she said, is a 30,000-foot view of the institution, and then also very practical information to reduce the amount of time new faculty members need to spend acclimatizing themselves to the University. New faculty members have said that NFO is very helpful and saves them a lot of time later.

There have been 59-60 new faculty members each year for the last three years, with the hiring pause; before that there were about 110 per year. She invited more than attended, but a number of contract faculty are MDs in the community, so not a lot of the NFO activities pertain to them.

Professor Sheets asked Professor Wojtaszek if there is a similar program at Morris. There is, he responded. Dr. Carney said the other campuses are offered the materials used at NFO, and every new faculty member receives a flashdrive with all the materials they are given during NFO. Duluth has its own program, and she provides a program at Crookston. She has not been to Morris in a while and agreed that it is time to return.

They change what seems not to work based on surveys of the participants, Dr. Carney said. People say NFO is too long—but they also say they do not know what they would cut out.

She also has lunches with new faculty during the year, just to touch bases, and so that if she learns of a problem she can help with, she intervenes. Or they have a quick lunch and then offer practical training in some aspect of faculty life.

Professor Bornsztejn asked Dr. Carney if she mentions the Women's Faculty Cabinet in her presentations. She does, and other groups, Dr. Carney said. She added that there have been some very distinguished senior faculty members recruited from other institutions who have attended all three days of NFO—and they paid attention. Professor Konstan asked if there has ever been discussion about doing something for faculty members who have been her a long time and never had an orientation. She has actually thought about starting a program next year, Dr. Carney said; she has learned that new faculty members sometimes inform older colleagues about things at the University.

Dr. Carney noted that day one of the orientation is getting to know the University, day two is about creating excellence in the classroom, and day three is about resources for research and faculty life (e.g., promotion and tenure). They could try to cut something, but they are saying "here's the mission: teaching and learning." Colleges are very serious about teaching; people sometimes say they are not, but she pointed out that she reads the promotion-and-tenure files and know what those files look like—and there is a lot of material on teaching.

Professor Sheets adjourned the meeting at 4:10.

-- Gary Engstrand