



UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
TWIN CITIES

All University Senate Consultative Committee

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MINUTES

Joint Senate Finance Committee and Senate Consultative Committee Meeting with Vice President Keller

December 2, 1981

Meeting was convened at 11:00 a.m. in the Regents' Room of Morrill Hall by Patricia Swan, Chairperson of the Senate Finance Committee. Others attending were Ken Keller, Bob Brasted, Walter Johnson, Hugh Kabat, Dave Lenander, Rick Linden, Gail Lorenz, Douglas Pratt, Irwin Rubenstein, Thomas Scott and Minnesota Daily reporter Betty McMahon.

Agenda

1. Budget principles consultation -- what kind of consultation and what do we intend to achieve?
2. Consultation on possible retrenchment to be effected within current academic year.

1. Budget principles. Pat Swan stated the concern of faculty colleagues who are aware of collegiate planning and find Keller/dean consultation appropriate but question by what means the vice president can then prioritize between units.

Vice President Keller stressed that if the budget executive is working correctly it represents the whole University. He summarized the remainder of the planning/consulting schedule, saying, "We've been at great pains to protect this process against the crisis." Internal consultation on budget principles will occur in January, and the Regents will receive the proposal in February. Vice President Keller is emphasizing to the deans the separation between the two-year programmatic prioritizing plan and plans for more immediate retrenchment. Walter Johnson said the faculty are confused between the planning which includes de-emphasizing programs on the one hand and the threat of emergency cuts on the other hand and urged that the distinction be emphasized strongly and often.

Irwin Rubenstein asked how widely or narrowly 'program' is defined. Keller said the faculty involved are in the best position to determine what within their department, or across departmental lines, constitutes a program and the Budget Executive does not want to impose a rigid definition. There is a legal aspect to 'program' only if the administration intends to attack the tenure system,

which it does not. The University can, however, legitimately announce it will de-emphasize a certain area. The University is ready to offer two-year severance pay, or early retirement or partial retirement options to people whose specialties are being de-emphasized.

Social Work provides an example for the kind of advice Keller is seeking: He has consulted publicly on this area, of which at least five units of the University have programs, seeking opinion on the best organizational system for this collection of offerings.

Comparisons between entirely different sorts of programs have to be made and the Budget Executives' decisions will be made public for discussion in January. He re-emphasized that each judgment is made relative to something else since choices are required, even though every program considered in isolation is justified.

Keller proposed meeting privately with the group of six from SFC and SCC to discuss his list before he takes it to the Budget Executive. The faculty-student group will have a chance to affect what he takes forward. He said that meeting would be his "informal accepting of your advice in my executive process." He acknowledged that the present abstract criteria lead to nervousness and said the private meeting would be "an attempt to bridge the gap between the abstraction and the reality before the reality is made public." He foresees a possible second private meeting between the small group and the Budget Executive when that body has sifted through the prioritized lists of both academic and non-academic units.

Swan asked if it might be useful to have a public consultation to discuss the criteria applied in non-academic units. Keller replied that cost-effectiveness is the criterion in non-academic areas and those decisions should be less controversial. Scott pointed out that faculty believe more money can be saved in physical plant services and it would help to show evidence that those areas are being cut. Keller reported that the budget executive's meeting of this date would address cost-saving measures, beginning with plant services.

It was agreed the joint SFC/SCC meeting of December 9 with Keller should also include Vice Presidents Bohlen, French, Hasselmo and Wilderson, who will be asked how the criteria are being applied to non-academic budgets. Swan will extend those invitations.

Irwin Rubenstein noted that he as a faculty member is not as aware as he would like to be of the definition of programs and their prioritizing in his own college and questioned the degree of faculty input in the ordering.

Keller said what is important is to have general agreement of what emerges towards the top of a list and what emerges towards the bottom in searching for 5% to 10% reductions. He added that he will not have all collegiate priority lists within December. CLA's, for one, will come on January 15, but it will result from extensive internal consultation and so should necessitate less later consultation.

What will the role of this University-wide faculty-student group be in January in addressing the priorities list which is to then become public? Pat Swan suggested this group (1) might ask Keller or the budget executive what information has been used to determine the priorities, (2) might then comment on the process, and (3) should be able to say something about the informedness and even-handedness of the process.

Keller believes evaluating the decision process will raise an enormous problem since there is no totally objective basis for making the decisions. There will be delegations and protesters of affected individuals who will not themselves have the information he had to arrive at the decisions. He suggested this consulting group could be most helpful during January by addressing the question of even-handedness in the application of criteria for all departments.

Swan asked for brief comments at this point from the participants. Remarks made:

(a) it is hard to know when you have enough information and must make the decision;

(b) the decision-makers have to keep on listening;

(c) it is possible for Keller and the budget executive to miss significant information in the screening process (Keller: there are discrepancies in information we get - for example, the letters of effusive praise unsupported by other indicators; many assertions, such as about work-load, are not demonstrable; unevenness in teaching load even within a department; one must screen out what is unsubstantiated.)

(d) consider the shape of the whole, the distribution of the cut burdens, rather than the individual parts, which should have had unit concurrence.

2. Dealing with the prospect of severe cuts in current academic year.

Keller said the budget executive's planning process remains relevant to immediate cuts "if the price is right." In any case, the biennial process should continue and should be protected. The public expects some action in response to the cuts even though their magnitude is not yet known. The administration is beginning to talk about what the cuts will be if they are required. On December 2 the Budget Executive will begin discussing cutbacks of support services. Keller is discussing with the deans and asks advice from this group on methods to control spending: Should we freeze some functions? Assign each unit a figure to cut, and let the unit figure out how? Confer with each dean on how each can take the cut? There must be a decision on a plan by January 1, he said. Swan described this approach as building a central reserve to deal with the cuts when they are actually made.

Pratt said that while there are good arguments against a hiring freeze, it does serve as a concrete public demonstration that the University is acting. The University may have suffered from defacto retrenchment, but the public doesn't see it in the same light as it sees other state agencies' announcements of hiring or travel freezes. Some flexibility, however, must be retained. Keller said

faculty searches need not and should not be halted during a hiring freeze, otherwise, damage is irreversible. Swan observed that it is hard to take seriously a search committee assignment in current circumstances.

- Cut or scale-down the educational development program?
- Reduce numbers of sections? (Keller has already recommended 82-83 funding same as 81-82.)
- Freeze on hiring TA's? Civil Service? , with ground rules for exceptions?
- Halt physical plant maintenance for six months, except where it would produce most costly long-range repair?
- Freeze all but essential travel?
- Cut publications?
- Cut course evaluations? (Keller has asked SCEP for an early evaluation of the Student Course Information Project.)
- Raise user fees charged to the community? (Keller said possible next year to initiate some changes.)
- Freeze library acquisitions, for symbolic value? (Problem - surcharge was dedicated to library acquisitions.)
- Reduce course duplicating costs, such as lengthy examination sheets, and return students to buying their own blue books?
- Cancel University membership in numerous organizations?

There is a problem in distinguishing between and weighing two aspects of such gestures: (1) public perception of seriously addressing need to cut and (2) doing what will least injure the departments.

Keller pointed out that while it is good to allow flexibility in choosing how to make cuts, that requires that people be willing to make judgments. He noted that all such emergency steps could not yield over \$4 to \$5 million, although they could be outwardly visible. Rubenstein said it is important to make clear to the public that the University is planning now for the cuts it will take in the second year of the biennium.

This discussion will be continued at the next meeting, December 9. Agenda for December 9:

1. Discuss with five vice presidents the application of criteria in support areas.

2. Define better the process this group will undertake in January and the achievement it hopes re regular biennial planning.

3. Continue to discuss planning for immediate cuts, with the goal of making a rather formal statement to Vice President Keller regarding cuts in the academic sphere.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Meredith Poppele
Secretary, Senate Consultative Committee

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