

Minutes*

**Senate Committee on Educational Policy
Wednesday, December 14, 2011
2:00 – 4:00
238A Morrill Hall**

Present: Thomas Brothen (chair), Kirsten Barta, Lee-Ann Breuch, John Cwodzinski, Norman Chervany, Alon McCormick, Robert McMaster, Cody Mikl, Peh Ng, Jane Phillips, Leslie Schiff, Henning Schroeder, Paul Siliciano, Elaine Tarone, Cathrine Wambach

Absent: Barbara Brandt, Emily Combs, Jude Higdon, Amanda Koonjbeharry, Peggy Root

Guests: Professor Nita Krevans (chair, graduate education policy review committee)

Other: Suzanne Bardouche (Office of Undergraduate Education); Elizabeth Eull (Office of the President); Tina Falkner (Academic Support Resources)

[In these minutes: (1) subcommittee on the "top 30%" proposal and getting more information to students; (2) Twin Cities campus curriculum committee; (3) graduate-education policies; (4) update on retention and graduation in undergraduate education]

1. Subcommittee on the "Top 30%" Proposal & Getting More Information to Students

Professor Brothen convened the meeting at 2:00 and asked Professor Chervany to provide an update on the work of the virtual subcommittee agreed to at the last meeting.

Professor Chervany reported that he had sent a message to the members of the subcommittee outlining the questions and constraints; the high priority question, in his view, is this: How can students efficiently get more information about courses they are considering taking? He asked Committee members to send him suggestions.

2. Twin Cities Campus Curriculum Committee

Vice Provost McMaster brought back to the Committee the notion of an all-campus curriculum committee for the Twin Cities campus. He said it is needed to address a variety of issues that have been bubbling up from the colleges. He recalled that about a year ago the Committee agreed with his recommendation to appoint small ad hoc committees to deal with problems. They have used such ad hoc committees twice; he has concluded that the process does not work well. He said he believes there is need for greater faculty weight on the issues if the process is to work.

Virtually all of the University's peer institutions have a faculty-led campus curriculum committee, Dr. McMaster said, and he is recommending that the University move away from the ad hoc committees and create a standing committee for the Twin Cities campus that would be a subcommittee of this Committee. The new curriculum committee would deal with all curriculum

* 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.

issues relevant to the campus, including down to the level of courses (e.g., approve new courses). That may sound like an impossible task, he said, but the vast majority of courses would be straightforward; there will be cases, however, where the committee role would be needed, to consider whether a proposed course crosses boundaries. Given the University's tuition-drive budget model, there may be more and more problems, so he sees the need for a 12-15-member faculty committee. It is, he said, long overdue.

Professor Wambach asked how the new committee would function vis-à-vis the existing committee structure. Dr. McMaster said he would see it as advisory to the Provost when there is a critical issue to be resolved. Its recommendations could flow through this Committee if that were thought desirable. He said he did not see involvement by the Faculty Consultative Committee. Professor Wambach said that would need to be made clear, because the Faculty Consultative Committee does weigh in on faculty issues. Dr. McMaster concurred.

Dean Schroeder said that a curriculum committee is not needed for graduate courses. Graduate education is decentralized and such a committee would be re-creating the Policy and Review Councils—which did good work but the perception is that they slowed things down considerably. What a curriculum committee could do, however, is deal with larger issues relevant to graduate programs and curriculum; there would be value for graduate education, just not at the level of individual courses. Dr. McMaster agreed.

Professor Tarone asked about scope and mission. If a central committee, could it deal with identical courses in different colleges and ask whether they should continue to be offered? Or similar degree programs? There are contentious issues. Dr. McMaster said he did not envision the committee looking backward, only at new course proposals. But it would deal with conflict and mission creep. There are examples of challenges because of perceived duplication of courses, which is where the curriculum committee would step in.

Professor Chervany said the proposal makes great conceptual sense. With a tuition-driven model, he could see that one college might offer a course to which another college objects; it is not clear, however, how a group of well-intentioned faculty members, without context, could make a judgment about the differences between the colleges. The deans will go to the Provost once a recommendation is made; politics will play a role. The politics are already there, Dr. McMaster commented, and sometimes there are contentious issues; the campus needs a group to adjudicate them. There will be boundaries that need to be sorted out and it may be that the curriculum committee would need to bring in experts. It could also generate a series of decisions that would create "case law" precedents that would help define differences, Professor Chervany said; but he was uncertain the committee could make decisions but it could offer evidence in its role of advising the provost—and provide him/her with clout in making a decision. Such a committee would put the responsibility for evaluating courses where it belongs, with the faculty. Dr. McMaster said he would expect the committee to identify a solution in most cases; in a few it might not, in which case the matter would go to the provost for a decision.

Professor Wambach wondered about the workload of the committee and whether it might not also slow things down, a la the Policy and Review Councils. Dr. McMaster thought not; the Council on Liberal Education reviewed 600-700 new courses over two years, and the new curriculum committee would only be vetting new courses, most of which would be uncontroversial. Professor

Wambach warned that there will be dollars involved in the decisions; Professor McCormick said he agreed with Professor Chervany and added that the committee needs to be isolated from the funding issues and focus its recommendations on educational issues; it will not be able to decide in isolation but it would be good for it to have its discussions in isolation. The Committee discussed further the potential workload of the new committee; Professor Schiff, who served on the Council on Liberal Education during its review of all liberal-education courses, said that the workload would be manageable because many would not be controversial and because presumably college curriculum committees are doing their job. Professor Tarone urged that the needs of students across colleges be considered and that the committee be charged to make decisions on the basis of the good of the whole. Dean Schroeder agreed that the process should not be slowed down and suggested that perhaps there could be a fast track for non-controversial courses.

Ms. Phillips asked if the new committee would be a policy committee. Dr. McMaster said the committee would identify policy issues and bring them to this Committee. It could also interpret policies, but some role for this Committee would also be appropriate in those cases, as needed. He also suggested that the new committee could look at degree programs as they go through the provost's office on the way to the Board of Regents for approval.

Committee members discussed with Dean McMaster the mechanics of how the new committee would function and offered advice.

In terms of membership, Dr. McMaster said he would want well-respected members of the faculty and would ask the deans for names. He agreed that the committee should probably be weighted to some extent by the number of undergraduate offerings in the colleges. Professor Wambach suggested that former chairs of the Faculty Consultative Committee would bring an all-University perspective. The committee would be appointed by the provost and he and Vice Provost Schroeder would serve as ex officio members, Dr. McMaster said, and the nominees would be approved by this Committee.

Professor Chervany suggested that Dr. McMaster bring a proposal back to this Committee. He agreed to do so.

3. Graduate Education Policies

Professor Brothen now welcomed Professor Krevans to present the policy on readmission and changes to master's or doctoral degree objectives.

Professor Krevans explained the background for the policy and said the goal is to make readmission and changes to degree objectives as streamlined as possible. The proposed policy makes clear that there are different kinds of readmission and allows programs to require less information if the change is a simple one (e.g., changing from a master's degree to a doctoral degree in the same program).

Committee members had a brief discussion about student options if they are denied readmission by a program. The Committee reached no conclusion; Professor Krevans said that all the graduate-education policies stress the importance of not allowing active student status to lapse because there are severe consequences if a student does so.

The Committee approved the policy unanimously.

4. Update on Retention and Graduation in Undergraduate Education

Vice Provost McMaster next presented extensive information about undergraduate retention and graduation. He began with national trends.

- Flagship campuses are becoming academically more competitive.
- R1 publics have placed renewed emphasis on the importance of undergraduate education.
- Public support for higher education has been eroding, fast.
- The costs of a college degree, and the supporting financial aid, have risen quickly.
- There is a national-level scrutiny on the need to improve graduation rates.
- Students are more career focused than in the past.
- Many freshmen arrive with college credits (AP, PSEO, College in the Schools). Some arrive as juniors.

In the case of the second bullet, Dr. McMaster commented, this has been a significant change in the last 10-20 years and there is a multitude of ways that undergraduate education has been affected in a very positive way.

The strategic questions that his office (the Office of Undergraduate Education) is focusing on are these:

- What are the challenges to reaching the Board of Regents retention/graduation goals, and how can we address these?
 - Careful monitoring of the curriculum; review of degree requirements
- How can the Office of Undergraduate Education (OUE) best assist each of the colleges in improving their retention and graduation?
 - Yearly four-year-graduation retreat
- How can the OUE enhance student support (advising, study space, service learning, UROP)?
 - Investment in CAPE, A Plus, enhanced UROPs
- How can the University community and campus culture support four-year graduation?
 - Messaging to student groups, faculty governance, Council on Undergrad Education

Dr. McMaster then reviewed a number of graphs recording various data for the period 2003-2011: campus enrollments: 28,747 to 30,610 undergraduates, 12,796 to 13,562 graduate, 2,758 to 3,625 professional); new freshman applications (17,355 to 39,721), offers (13,116 to 18,506) and enrollees (5,186 to 5,368); the number of new freshman and external transfer students (numbers over the period are fairly steady at just over 5,000 new freshman while the number of transfers has fluctuated more, between 1,645 and 2,508). The number of applicants reached a record high for the fall of 2011; the number of enrollees is 90 more than they projected, but Dr. McMaster agreed with Professor Chervany's observation that plus or minus 90 is normal variation. Dr. McMaster surmised that it is unlikely the campus will the number of applications continue to grow as they have in recent years, given the demographics of high-school graduating classes (the Midwest is projected to lose population through about 2018). Minnesota is near the top of the Big Ten now, and the number of

applications for the fall of 2012 is down slightly, for the first time in ten years; the number may have reached its high last fall.

Dr. McMaster noted the change in average high-school rank percentile for new freshmen (for the same 2003-2011 period); it increased from 79.9 to 85.5. Similarly, the percentage of new freshmen in the top 10% and top 25% of their classes has increased noticeably (the top 10% increased a small amount 2010 to 2011; the top 25% was stable 2010 to 2011). Dr. McMaster noted that the 10% is one of the major metrics used by U.S. News & World Report in their rankings as an indicator of quality. Minnesota had 45% of its new freshmen in the top 10 in 2011; the University of Washington, by comparison, had 85% in the top 10%, so Minnesota has work to do in that regard.

The Committee and Dr. McMaster noted the decline in the number of high schools calculating high-school rank and the problem the decline creates for the admissions office in comparing students.

The average ACT composite score for new freshmen has risen from 24.8 to 27.5% over the period; the goal is to have that number reach 28. Wisconsin is at 28; Michigan is closer to 29.

Dr. McMaster noted that the number of National Merit Scholars admitted to the campus has increased dramatically over the 2003-2011 period, from 40 to 166, and Minnesota now admits more National Merit Scholars than any other school in the Big Ten except Northwestern.

The percentage of new freshmen who are students of color (using federal categories) is largely stable over the period, fluctuating between 18 and 21%. The number of new freshmen who are international students has risen from 47 to 310. The percentage of freshmen who are males has increased slightly over the period (in 2003, there were 2,352 males and 2,834 females; in 2011 there were 2,565 males and 2,803 females). These numbers vary by college; Dr. McMaster said he did not know why the gap between males and females is narrowing.

In terms of the home state of incoming freshmen, the percentage from Minnesota fluctuates up and down a percentage point or so around 64%, which is within the target for that number. The number of reciprocity students has declined from about 27% to 19%; the number of students from other states has increased from 6.4% to 11.4%, a change that reflects increased national recruiting. The number of international students has increased from 1.3% to 5.8%; the students come primarily from China, Japan, and Malaysia.

Dr. McMaster turned next to retention and graduation issues and noted that the Office of Undergraduate Education has retention and graduation strategies, to which his office (as well as the Board of Regents, president, and provost) is very attentive:

- Maintain incentives provided by 13-credit registration rule
 - Consider change to 14 credits
- Target financial aid to students most in need
- Enhance first-year programs, including freshman and transfer orientation and freshman Welcome Week
 - Continue to strong messaging in the 1st year
- Conduct earlier interventions with students who are showing signs of difficulty (e.g., mid-term alerts)

- Positive change with A Plus Advising tool
- Continue development of Grad Planner and other tools for advisors and students
- Monitor curriculum and course scheduling to ensure student access to needed courses
 - 5 departments have reviewed and reformed their degree requirements
- Increase education in fiscal planning and literacy

One great step forward, he told the Committee, is decreasing degree requirements (as five departments have done). Ms. Bardouche reported that about 12 departments now have degrees that require more than the standard 120 credits, down from 20 in the past (all of which were in the College of Science and Engineering and in the Academic Health Center).

In terms of the culture and expectations:

At the University of Minnesota we will:

- Value intellectual exploration, but within boundaries (plan for a 4-year graduation from Day 1)
- See 30 credits per year as “normal”
- Help students make a clear decision on major and direction by end of sophomore year (use CAPE and other services)
- Help students see themselves as part of a defined cohort
- Use Grad Planner and revise grad plans
- Recognize the fiscal concerns created for students by taking longer than four years to graduate (indebtedness)

As a result of the many efforts that have been made, there have been improvements in graduate and retention during the strategic-positioning process, Dr. McMaster noted.

From 2004-05 to 2010-2011

- First-year retention increased from 86% to 90.5%
- Four-year graduation increased from 33% to 54%
- Five-year graduation increased from 56% to 69%
- Six-year graduation increased from 57% to 71%
- U of M is now in the middle of the Big 10 four-year graduation rates

Dr. McMaster noted a graph of four-, five-, and six-year retention and graduation rates from 1992 to 2010. The first-year retention rate goal of 90% has been achieved. It is unclear whether the four-graduation-rate goal of 60% will be achieved by this year (for the class that entered in the fall of 2008), although it continues to increase (it was at 54% for the class of freshmen that entered in fall, 2007). He said he believed the four-year graduation rate for the entering class of 2008 would probably be around 57-58%.

Dr. McMaster provided retention and graduation-rate data for all University campuses. Committee members discussed the retention rate at the Morris campus; Professor Ng explained that a number of Morris students transfer because they want to go into engineering and some students just decide they do not like being in a small town. But the fact is that a large percentage of Morris students do graduate, not just from Morris, but from other U of M campuses as well, Professor McCormick

suggested the University devise a way to count transfers to the Twin Cities campus; Morris likely prepares students well and the transfer may be what is best for students and the data should not be counted as "bad" for Morris. And the Twin Cities receives no credit for the timely graduation of such students who transfer from Morris. Dr. McMaster said that they can provide those data now but have no way to report them institutionally because such measures are not recognized nationally. Mr. Cwodzinski asked why graduation rates for Crookston and Duluth are lower; Dr. McMaster said he could not speak for the coordinate campuses but observed that graduation rates depend in part on the metrics of incoming freshmen and the metrics for the Twin Cities campus are higher. Ms. Barta commented that she has lived and worked outstate and that some of the reasons for the lower rates are cultural: students may work more and may receive less family and community support. There are reasons that it is difficult for the University to control.

At present Minnesota is about in the middle of its peer group in its four-year graduation rate (Big Ten plus a few others), comparable to Wisconsin, Washington, and Texas.

Dr. McMaster reported first-year retention rate data by college. The numbers vary; he noted that the rate for "Access to Success" students, those who are at risk, compares favorably with most of the college retention rates. As with retention rates, the four-year graduation rates vary by college; with the exception of the College of Biological Sciences and the Carlson School, all of the colleges have seen increases in their four-year graduation rates. Education and Human Development, which has had the lowest rate, increased dramatically and will do so again. This is a "great news" story, Dr. McMaster concluded.

Committee members next considered differences in graduation rate by student ethnic groups and international students. Professor Tarone asked Dr. McMaster about data that apparently show a growing 'achievement gap' between the four-year graduation rates of whites and all other groups. For example, 62% of international students entering in 2003 graduated in four years compared to 49% of whites, but for those same groups entering in 2007, the rates were 48% for international and 58.5% for whites. Professor Tarone expressed concern that increasing numbers of international students are being admitted at the same time that the four-year graduation rates for this group are not rising at the same rates as for white students. Issues of language and the high schools were raised, as was the need for high-level writing instruction to support international and other English language learning students.

Dr. McMaster reviewed the progress of the 2005 and 2006 entering freshmen cohorts, noting that the retention and graduation rate for the 2005 cohort was not as good and suggested that there may have been a cohort effect that has now dissipated. He also highlighted retention and graduation rates after three years by cohort; there is a small number of students who graduate after three years (about 4.5% of the 2008 freshman cohort), and the combined graduation and retention rates after three years has increased steadily from 2002 to 2008. Committee members discussed whether students will continue to drop out after their third year, something the colleges are looking into, Dr. McMaster said.

They are also now starting to track retention and graduation rates for transfer students by entry year. The first-year retention rate for transfer students has increased from about 80% (+/-) in the early 2000s to 86-87% in 2008/2009. Second- and third-year retention and graduation rates have remained about the same for the 2007/2008 and 2006/2007 entrants, respectively. Dr. McMaster noted that the four-year graduation rate for transfer students has risen—but he pointed out that that is effectively a

six-year graduation rate because most transfer students come in with two years' of work. So most transfer students do not graduate in four years (total college work).

This answers the question about why it is advisable to restrict the number of transfer students, Professor Chervany commented. Ms. Phillips said that most transfer students do not expect to graduate in four years; they aim for five years. Dr. McMaster said he was not disturbed by transfer students taking five years to graduate because there is a discontinuity when a student transfers; it is the large number who take an additional FOUR years to graduate that is problematic.

The Committee and Dr. McMaster talked about the 13-credit rule. Dr. McMaster noted that one needs to take (or average) 15 credits per semester to graduate in four years, which suggests that the rule should be a 15-credit rule. Part of the message to students is that they will not graduate in four years if they only take 13 credits per semester. He also reported that transfer students with fewer than 24 credits do less well than students with more and that many of the University's peer institutions will only admit transfer students who have at least a full year's worth of credits completed.

Professor Brothen thanked Dr. McMaster for his presentation, wished everyone well for the holidays, and adjourned the meeting at 4:00.

-- Gary Engstrand

University of Minnesota