

Minutes\*

**Faculty Consultative Committee**  
**Thursday, January 26, 2012**  
**1:00 – 3:00**  
**238A Morrill Hall**

Present: Chris Cramer (chair), Linda Bearinger, Avner Ben-Ner, Peter Bitterman, Elizabeth Boyle, Thomas Brothen, Colin Campbell, Carol Chomsky, Nancy Ehlke, Caroline Hayes, Walt Jacobs, Sally Gregory Kohlstedt, Russell Luepker, Jan McCulloch, Richard Ziegler

Absent: Janet Ericksen, Elaine Tyler May, James Pacala, George Sheets, Kathryn VandenBosch

Guests: none

Other: none

[In these minutes: (1) committee business; (2) department chair/head terms; (3) information to faculty]

**1. Committee Business**

Professor Cramer convened the meeting at 1:05 and turned to a number of items of Committee business.

-- Professor Hayes asked the advice of Committee members about organizing faculty events related to capital request items.

-- The Committee voted unanimously to appoint Professor Ratliff-Crain to serve on the Committee during Professor Ericksen's sabbatical next year. (The bylaws of the Faculty Senate provide that in the case of absence, the remaining members of the Faculty Consultative Committee fill a vacancy.)

-- Inasmuch as Professor Jacobs will be on leave next year, it is necessary to elect a replacement for him for the year. Committee members suggested the names of several individuals; Professor Cramer agreed to contact them.

-- The Senate Consultative Committee (SCC) appoints the chair of the faculty advisory committee for the Office for Conflict Resolution; Committee members suggested several names and Professor Cramer agreed to contact them after first soliciting input from the chairs of the other consultative committees who sit on SCC.

-- The Committee nominates the vice chair of the Faculty (and thereby University) Senate; Committee members suggested several names and Professor Cramer agreed to contact them.

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\* 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.

## **2. Department Chair/Head Terms**

Professor Cramer noted that several Committee members had had lunch with several department chairs the day before this meeting and one of the topics that came up was the terms for chairs/heads. The chairs/heads at the meeting provided useful feedback and the Twin Cities Deans' Council has asked for the Committee's views on the subject. He said that he will raise the issue with the remaining three lunches scheduled with chairs and heads and bring back the results of the discussions to the Committee.

Professor McCulloch asked what the goal of the discussions is. The knowledge that the practices are very different across and even within colleges? To develop guidelines or standards? Professor Bitterman said it is helpful to know what is normal; the discussions are helping to establish norms. Once that is done, it will be possible to make comparisons with peers across the country. Professor Cramer said that the goal is to assess whether a system that has grown organically, without outside evaluation, over a number of years, has allowed undesirable practices to creep in. The conversations thus far have not uncovered anything egregious. What seems to be the case, however, is that chairs who serve short terms (e.g., three years) have inadequate preparation and exit the office at the point they have become fully conversant with doing the job; implementing better training for such chairs might be a useful undertaking. He said he did not believe, however, that there should be a University-wide standard.

Professor Jacobs said that knowing what happens across colleges is useful and helps to identify what units are doing differently. The knowledge can also suggest that units should build leadership transition practices.

Professor Chomsky said the Committee could say there should be a standard: The faculty should be engaged in a discussion of what the practice in their unit should be after being informed about the practices that do exist.

Professor Bearinger suggested that the requirement should be that the chairs/heads should be full professors with tenure because it can make a difference if those with higher rank will be voting on the promotion of the person serving as their chair/head. The chair/head should hold the highest rank and title that exists in the department at the time (excluding Regents Professor). Professor Jacobs said the practice varies across departments; some departments do not have full professors who can serve (they may already have served, for example), but he agreed that Professor Bearinger's standard is the ideal. Professor Cramer agreed that, *ceteris paribus*, the chair/head position should be held by someone with the highest rank held in the department.

The point is that there is a potential conflict, Professor Bearinger said. Professor Chomsky noted that the tenure procedures do contemplate an associate professor serving as chair or head because there are provisions about voting when that happens. This is fundamentally a conflict-of-interest problem, Professor Cramer agreed. He said he will ask the chairs about it at upcoming lunches.

## **3. Information to Faculty**

Professor Cramer next commented that there is an "information canyon" between the members of this Committee and the faculty at large. The Committee sends an email at the beginning of the academic year asking for concerns and issues that it should take up, there are periodic short updates, and the

lengthier minutes of the committees are distributed. Would there be value in doing something more frequently but something that is less weighty than the minutes?

Professor Chomsky said the Committee has discussed this in the past, and in particular the misinformation that sometimes appears; it would be a good idea to share less but more frequently, perhaps after Senate meetings and once per month or so on Senate committee issues. People may read short blips. More regular small messages might be best. Professor Kohlstedt commented that she appreciates the headers in the minutes indicating the content; that works for many. But she suggested messages only after Senate meetings unless there is a compelling reason to communicate about an issue.

Inasmuch as the Committee's guest, a member of the legislature, was unable to attend the meeting as scheduled, Professor Cramer adjourned the meeting at 2:00.

-- Gary Engstrand

University of Minnesota