Minutes*

Senate Committee on Educational Policy
Wednesday, April 4, 2012
2:00 – 4:00
238A Morrill Hall

Present: Thomas Brothen (chair), Lee-Ann Breuch, Emily Combs, Eva von Dassow, Norman Chervany, Alon McCormick, Robert McMaster, Cody Mikl, Kristen Nelson, Peh Ng, Jane Phillips, Peggy Root, Leslie Schiff, Elaine Tarone, Cathrine Wambach

Absent: Kirsten Barta, Barbara Brandt, John Cwodzinski, Amanda Koonjbeharry, Henning Schroeder

Guests: Professor Nita Krevans (Chair, Graduate Education Policy Review Committee); Professor Susan Wick (Chair, Classroom Advisory Subcommittee)

Other: none

[In these minutes: (1) revised graduate-education policies; (2) new policy: University-Administered Graduate Student Fellowships and Traineeships; (3) B.A. versus B.S.; (4) recommendation and statement from the Classroom Advisory Subcommittee]

1. Revised Graduate-Education Policies

Professor Brothen convened the meeting at 2:00 and welcomed Professor Krevans, who returned with four revised graduate-education policies and one new one. Most changes were minor, she said, made following the last discussion with the Committee. She noted major points.

-- They felt that with changing technology, it is no longer necessary to require that everyone be physically present for oral examination. The policy permits remote participation, subject to a set of conditions that must be met. The conditions require that everyone agree; if there is a recalcitrant committee member, the policy permits last-minute replacement of any committee member except the adviser. Historically, it is the responsibility of the staff of the department hosting the oral examination to make the technology arrangements; if the student will not be present, he or she must make arrangements with the staff to be sure the technology is robust enough. (There are a few cases where requiring that the student be present would cause great hardship, such as a student who is working in a remote area of the globe after completing his or her dissertation.) Committee members discussed with Professor Krevans various potential problems with technology but accepted the conditions proposed. [The proposed required conditions are appended to these minutes.]

-- The policy proposals generally are clearly within the national norms. They surveyed peer graduate programs, both centralized and decentralized (e.g., Stanford, Ohio State, Michigan, Washington, Berkeley), and learned that all have policies similar to the ones she has brought to this Committee.

* 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.

-- Time to degree is part of the quality metrics; for the present, the Graduate School has looked only internally at the trend within each program. Eventually there will be external comparisons, but programs have not been asked suddenly to benchmark themselves against external standards. Programs can ask for exceptions from the 8-year limit for the Ph.D., either for individual students or for an entire program if the nature of the students in the program warrants a programmatic exception (e.g., almost all the students are full-time employees elsewhere who cannot complete a doctoral program in 8 years). If there are programs where students seem to linger, they will be evaluated and, if necessary, provided help in getting students through. The time-to-degree standard is actually similar to the one currently used, simply measured differently.

-- Programs are required to provide students a handbook with all the information and policies they need, including the policy on the time limit on obtaining the degree.

The Committee voted unanimously to approve the four revised policies.

2. New Policy: University-Administered Graduate Student Fellowships and Traineeships

Professor Krevans next introduced a new policy, but one that is, she said, very basic: It provides that departments must follow the rules for each fellowship and that they must have a fair, transparent procedure for considering students for each opportunity. A number of points were made in the discussion.

-- There should be a link to the definition of "immediate family" when members of an immediate family of a student holding a fellowship are eligible for one or more benefits. Even if these are long-standing policies, they are often not well understood by people who need to know about them.

-- The policy does not propose any changes to existing policy and practices.

-- It is better to provide links to other policies, where applicable, than to quote other policies; what if the other policy changes but the language in this policy is not updated—and people rely on the version in this policy? (Professor Krevans said she would check with the Director of the University Policy Office on how this can best be handled.)

-- Committee members asked for clarification of the circumstances when someone would be asked to repay all or a portion of a fellowship if they terminate their graduate program before the end of a semester in which they hold the fellowship. The original letter of appointment should stipulate the conditions.

-- One reason for this policy is to provide a foundation for due process for students. There were policies in place in the past but no place for a student to go when faced with a problem. The policy provides that programs cannot provide differential benefits to students receiving the same fellowship—and it alerts students to that requirement. It is a fairness policy. (A department may be "unfair" if it is transparently so, such as choosing which students will receive a particular fellowship—it just cannot give it to one student rather than another without reasons.)

-- Perhaps the Committee should think about a parallel policy for awarding financial aid to undergraduates.

Professor Krevans said she would provide a revised version of the policy that incorporates points raised in this discussion.

3. B.A. Versus B.S.

Professor Brothen said the question has arisen: Which colleges get to give a B.A. and which a B.S.? There is nothing written down.

Vice Provost McMaster reported that there are three policies that get close to the question but he agreed there is nothing on point. There is lore that only CLA may offer the B.A. degree, but that's not necessarily true. There is also lore that a B.A. must require a second language, Ms. Phillips said. Dr. McMaster said that proposition has never been tested—whether a college other than CLA could offer a B.A. but not require a second language.

There are examples, Professor Brothen said, such as the B.D.A. in architecture, which is a B.A. except for a language requirement. CLA is concerned about some B.A. degrees disappearing (e.g., in Chemistry and Math). Professor Schiff reported that there used to be a B.A. in Microbiology but it was eliminated because the requirements for the B.A. and B.S. evolved over time to be the same and it was an administrative nightmare to have two different degrees. The proposal to eliminate the B.A. went through the CLA curriculum committee.

Professor Chervany asked what problem is to be solved. Perhaps there should be principles governing the establishment of B.A. and B.S. degrees, he suggested. This is reminiscent of the kind of problem to be solved by the campus curriculum committee. Dr. McMaster said they can be inferred from the degree requirements; Professor Nelson commented that she did not know what a B.A. and B.S. is any more—in an interdisciplinary world, the distinction may not mean as much as it did in the past. Professor Breuch reported that her department offers one of the six B.S. degrees that exist in CLA (it came when Rhetoric was folded into Writing Studies).

Professor Nelson and Ms. Phillips both commented that there is need for a definition of a B.A. Professor Chervany asked how the University would benefit if there were a policy with a specified definition of the B.A. and B.S. What is the problem, he asked again. In the case of Science and Engineering, Dr. McMaster said, they are asking what the justification is for CLA to offer a degree where almost all of the courses and faculty expertise are in another college. And because the bulk of the curriculum is in another college, Professor Schiff added, that is where the student would receive the best advising. CLA advisers do a good job but they don't have all the information they need about the sciences, so the CLA students are at a disadvantage. There is also a problem with cohorts: When students were seeking a B.A. in Microbiology, they were CLA students and not with a cohort of CBS students. Professor Nelson said that the discussion has suggested the difference is the language requirement for the B.A.; she suggested that it is more than that, it is also a discussion about what constitutes a major versus a degree where a student can take courses in different fields.

Ms. Phillips asked two questions. One, are there definitions of a B.A. and B.S. elsewhere, at any of the University's peers? Two, it is not clear who the consumer is for the terms B.A. and B.S. Does it matter when a student is applying for a job or to graduate/professional school? Professor McCormick commented it would be useful to know what peer institutions do, not just because that’s

what they do but because the University could perhaps learn from any lessons or mistakes other institutions have learned or made.

Professors Breuch and Ng both suggested it would be helpful to know what degrees exist now and how they are different. Professor Tarone inquired if there are similar issues at the master's degree level.

What is overlooked is allowing departments to stop sponsoring duplicate degrees, Professor Wambach said, such as the B.A. in Physics; it is an administrative burden to have a degree program that has only five students per year in it. Ms. Bardouche provided data from 2010-11 for the B.A. degrees in the sciences that are offered:

Chemistry	28
Computer Sci	13
Geology	2
Mathematics	30
Physics	5

Professor von Dassow commented that on the one hand they are hearing that departments want to stop offering the B.A. because of the administrative burden and because there is no logic for the separate degree, but the Committee has also heard that other departments outside CLA want to start offering a B.A. degree in order to increase market share. It would be a good idea for the University to characterize and define the B.A. and B.S. But the reason the Committee is being asked to do so has nothing to do with the substantive content of the degrees, so the motive isn't very good. The Committee should think from a University perspective, on behalf of the student, not because there are competing fiefdoms.

Professor Chervany said the only reason to engage in the conversation is to improve the brand and to make it clear; the B.A. stands for X and the B.S. stands for Y. If the Committee cannot do that, it should stay out of the matter. But the University should be very concerned about departments offering degrees to recruit students. That is not an educational policy question.

Professor Schiff said that issue can affect policy. If a college or department has a limited number of seats (e.g., lab spaces), CBS students will receive priority registration in CBS classes and everyone else will be on a waiting list. Professor Chervany agreed that it is a resources question but asked what the educational policy question is and what happens to students. Other questions are about fairness and the use of resources.

Professor Brothen suggested that Vice Provost McMaster explore what the University's peers have done and then he could decide if the Committee or a subcommittee should explore the matter further.

4. Recommendation and Statement from the Classroom Advisory Subcommittee

Professor Brothen welcomed Professor Wick to the meeting to bring the Classroom Advisory Subcommittee (CAS) Recommendation on Funding for Faculty Development and Statement on

Funding for Classroom Facilities and Technology. Ultimately CAS wishes both to go to the Faculty Senate for action. [Both documents are appended to these minutes.]

Professor Wick began with the recommendation on funding for faculty development in the use of active-learning classrooms and technology. She noted that the University has the most active-learning classrooms in the country and that research shows students in such classes learn better. The issue CAS identified is that many who teach in the active-learning classrooms do not know how to use them effectively. Both faculty and students have indicated in surveys that they would like instruction on how better to use the facilities.

CAS thus proposes to set up a more robust system of instruction on the use of technology. The bottom line is that they propose in a very general sense a funding model that could rely on a cost pool, on student fees, and on building funds analogous to those provided for art. The Committee on Finance and Planning has seen the recommendation and asked for more detail about the funding plan. They have also obtained examples from Dr. Langley, Director of the Center for Teaching and Learning, of various kinds of programs that could be put in place.

Ms. Phillips said that part of the issue is changing the materials from a course one has taught for 5-10 years into materials that are suitable for an active-learning classroom, to a different way of teaching. It helps to have colleagues who can assist in the process.

Dr. Higdon inquired if what is being proposed is increased funding for the Center for Teaching and Learning to provide more support for faculty. That could be, Professor Wick said, or it could involve funding for departments for a more intensive program of instruction and perhaps faculty released time. Professor Breuch said she participated in an 18-month program that was quite expensive for a small group of people and said it would be better to have small training sessions with a large number of people in order to maximize the benefit. She asked (1) what the models would be and what the options would be for small learning sessions and (2) about surveying those who are using the technology and learning more what students are expecting and what instructors are doing.

Professor von Dassow said she could not oppose funding for faculty development but observed that the University spent a lot of money on the active-learning classrooms and now must spend more teaching people to use them. She said she was also disturbed at the notion that technology is required in order for active learning to take place and that money must be thrown at it, because it seems that technology becomes an end in itself. Professor Schiff said one must distinguish between the joy of technology and the benefit of students facing each other. There are things that can be learned in these classrooms but she agreed that it is not all dependent on technology.

Professor Nelson inquired how collaboration with the Center for Teaching and Learning would work. Professor Wick said the proposal would lead to an enhancement of the work between the Center for Teaching and Learning and the Office for Information Technology that currently takes place. The statement does not go into detail about what could be done or the optimal use of the space.

Professor Chervany said it could make sense to have money available, assuming positive answers to several questions. One, is there a lot that could be done that is not being done? It would be helpful to see data. Two, the proposal supposes that specific programs could be identified to fill gaps in what is currently being done. Three, this is not merely a matter of PR, and that if the faculty are

told about the opportunities, they will come running. If there is to be a fund, there needs to be a commitment from colleges and departments that they will support the program—there need to be faculty members who will use the funds. And even if there are good answers to those questions, the University still must decide where to put incremental increases in funding. This could be a good idea whose time is not now.

Professor Wambach recalled that when STSS was built, the faculty who would be using it were not consulted about what classrooms they would use. So it was designed for one innovative model, not from a ground-up process, and people must fit in the facility and must change their teaching to fit it. It was not an organic process. Ms. Phillips disagreed and said there were many faculty members involved; it was not top-down. Professor Wambach said she was on the committee to review the building and many people raised questions about the fact that it was not designed to accommodate a variety of teaching styles.

Dr. Higdon encouraged CAS to consider a partnership between a central unit and the colleges; the latter are doing a number of things, and it might be possible to accomplish the CAS goal with the funding now available.

Professor Wick turned to the statement on funding for classrooms. She noted that a statement went to the Senate last spring that made a similar point. She noted the funding situation and that the Office for Classroom Management (OCM) has now been given responsibility for student study space in addition to classrooms. OCM has been told it will be given a loan to deal with some of the major problems, but that will not solve the problem because it will have to repay the loan starting in 2014. So CAS is making a plea to the administration to consider the recurring costs of classrooms and technology.

Ms. Phillips said the Committee has been making this request since 1996 when OCM was set up: It has asked the administration to pay attention to classrooms. There have been models suggested (e.g., 2% of tuition revenue). This is enough to drive people crazy; the University should support classrooms because it is what students see and learn in. Always in her teaching evaluations the quality of the classroom is rated rock bottom, Professor Tarone related. It is not fair to students who are paying high tuition, Professor Wick said, environment matters and students should not have to be in classrooms where the chairs are broken.

Professor McCormick asked if OCM directs dollars where they are needed most. Professor Wick said that they do; they go through all the general-purpose classrooms each year and assess carpeting, technology, walls, etc., and have a rolling schedule on what should be replaced.

The Committee voted unanimously in favor of the statement. Professor Brothen adjourned the meeting at 4:00.

-- Gary Engstrand

University of Minnesota

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Required Conditions and Best Practices for Remote Participation in Graduate Examinations

I. Required Conditions

The following conditions must be met in order to allow the remote participation (e.g., telephone conference call, Skype, etc.) by graduate examination committee members and/or the student in the doctoral preliminary oral examination, and the master's and doctoral final oral examinations. The chair of the examining committee is responsible for guaranteeing that all of the conditions outlined below have been satisfied.

-- All members of the examining committee and the student must agree to the remote participation.

-- The Director of Graduate Studies must approve the request to allow remote participation in the examination.

-- All participants must be able to hear each other at all times.

-- Appropriate versions of all visual or text materials (e.g., slides, videos, handouts) must be available to all participants.

-- The integrity of the examination process must be guaranteed by some form of proctoring if the candidate is not physically present on the University campus or if no other committee member is physically present with the candidate.

-- Provisions must be made for secret balloting during the votes by examiners and for signing the examination report form.

-- For doctoral final orals, arrangements must be made for a public presentation by video link, with opportunities for question and answer from the audience.

-- The chair of the examining committee must recess the examination immediately if any technical problems interfere with the proceedings for more than a few moments.

-- All participants must be notified ahead of time of the options for recessing the examination.

-- The chair of the examining committee must guarantee that all the above conditions have been satisfied.

II. Best Practices

The following are guidelines for managing remote participation in ways that will ensure fair and correct procedures in doctoral and master's examinations.

-- Ideally, the student will be physically present on campus for the examination except in circumstances that pose a hardship.

-- It is recommended that no more than one committee member participate remotely in the examination.

-- The student should file a written notice with the DGS informing her/him of the fact that there will be remote participation in the examination, and specifying who will participate remotely. Ideally, the notice should be filed two weeks in advance of the scheduled exam.

-- The most reliable, robust technology should be used to facilitate remote participation.

-- The following are suggestions for proctoring an examination in cases where there are no committee members physically present with the student:

To be added

-- The student and all members of the committee should be aware in advance of the potential problems that could arise in the examination, and the actions that will be taken to address potential problems should they arise (e.g., recessing the exam).

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RECOMMENDATION ON FUNDING FOR FACULTY DEVELOPMENT

In recent years, the University of Minnesota has provided substantial capital investment in new technology-rich Active Learning Classrooms (ALCs) on campus. Evidence to date suggests that the impact on teaching and learning is considerable, and this impact is further and dramatically enhanced by appropriate course redesign to fit these new spaces. Indeed, with appropriate faculty development support, redesigned courses in ALCs lead to statistically significant learning gains across the student population. See http://www.oit.umn.edu/research-evaluation/selected-research/learning-environments/index.htm for more details. To fully leverage investment in new classrooms, the university teaching community will need to fundamentally redesign traditional courses by partnering with pedagogy and academic technology experts. The scale of this transformation is significant, and transition costs supporting this form of professional development are not typically a component of building or classroom redesign projects.

Central service units like the Center for Teaching and Learning and OIT's Collaborative for Academic Technology Innovation offer regular programming and a suite of services to help instructors improve their practice in any learning environment. At present, the fiscal commitment of these offices has resulted in support for a limited number of instructors who are new to ALCs. The demand for services is likely to grow substantially in future years. For example, in the 2010-11 academic year, 35% of all undergraduates enrolled in at least one course in ALCs in the new Science Teaching and Student Services Building. Over time, the hundreds of courses taught in this building and other ALCs across campus can potentially reshape the undergraduate experience. Indeed, we see a powerful iterative process for guiding the evolution of learning spaces on campus through which research guides new space design, and faculty development and further research feed into future iterations of classroom design and faculty support services.

The Classroom Advisory Subcommittee supports commitment to evidence-based course design, faculty development, and ongoing research into the impact of space and pedagogical innovation. Very consistently, in 07 and 09 and this year's faculty and undergraduate student technology surveys, students ranked "Instructors not using educational technologies well" as one of the top problems they face. In our 2007 survey, the last time we asked this question, students ranked using their tech fees to support faculty development among their top three priorities. When faculty were asked about priorities for spending university resources, they listed "providing support for faculty using educational technology" and "providing technology training for faculty" as two of the top answers. See http://www.oit.umn.edu/research-evaluation/selected-research/technology-surveys/index.htm for details.

We recommend that the administration provide robust financial support for faculty development in effective use of new learning spaces and their technology. We propose a tiered funding model that would include base funding as part of the cost pool, additional financial support from a percentage of student fees and special funding from a small percentage of new building construction costs (analogous to an existing commitment to fund public art projects by using a small percentage of the total cost of new building construction--more at http://www.arts.state.mn.us/other/percent.htm).

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STATEMENT ON FUNDING FOR CLASSROOM FACILITIES AND TECHNOLOGIES

Students and instructors deserve classroom space that contains technology that is working and furnishings that are not broken and are in reasonably good and safe condition.

Classroom facilities and technologies require periodic maintenance and replacement, and identification of and planning for lifecycle costs is a fiscally prudent approach to management of classroom facilities and technology infrastructure. Deferred maintenance is expensive in the long run.

We note with great concern that classroom upgrade work continues to be funded primarily with one-time funds (e.g., capital projects like STSS). The recurring lifecycle costs for these classrooms have not been funded. We are, however, accruing these costs. Given the importance of general-purpose classrooms, we cannot continue to defer these costs without jeopardizing our teaching and learning mission.

Central classroom operational recurring funding levels had risen to 79% of requirements (FY08) then fell to 37% of lifecycle need with recurring cuts in FY09, 10, and 12. Concurrently, the amount of managed learning space grew with new buildings and the addition of student study space. Because of low funding levels and increased demand for resources, faculty and students will be required to use facilities and technologies that have outlived their planned lifespan. This will degrade the learning experience.

In addition to classroom responsibilities, OCM has been assigned the management and maintenance of over 29,000 square feet of student study space. These study spaces represent an additional $2.4 million in OCM-managed assets. In January 2011, OCM received one-time funding for the update of multiple study spaces on the St. Paul campus but has not received funding for recurring maintenance and renewal requirements.

The following charts illustrate a problematic trend: that OCM's funding is decreasing while assigned space and tech equipped rooms is increasing.

Recurring Funding		% Change
FY08	4,325,530	
FY09	4,221,824	-2.4%
FY10	3,063,551	-27.4%
FY11	3,048,664	-0.5%
FY12	2,648,013	-13.1%

Square Footage w/Study Space		% Change
FY08	340,000	
FY09	355,800	4.6%
FY10	363,430	2.1%
FY11	374,714	3.1%
FY12	389,328	3.9%

The University of Minnesota invested in its learning spaces, but without recurring maintenance and renewal, at some point the technology, fixtures and furnishings will be inaccessible due to failure.

Given the budget reductions and future uncertainty, OCM has placed the following projects on hold:

Project	Cost	Notes
20 Tech. Lifecycle Renewals	$350k	Deferred technology updates to 20 Projection Capable Classrooms
Vincent Hall 16, EB	$250k	Remove fixed seating; ADA, Fire/Safety, carpet & finish upgrade
Borlaug 335 & 365, St. Paul	$475k	Replace 230 seats (no longer made); carpet & finish upgrades
Ruttan Hall B25/35/45, St. Paul	$700k	Replace 445 seats (no longer made); carpet & finish upgrades
Keller 3111/3115/3125/3230, EB	$925k	Replace 315 seats (no longer made); carpet & finish upgrades
TOTAL	$2.7M	

The Classroom Advisory Subcommittee (CAS) supports the Office of Classroom Management and its planning for lifecycle maintenance and renewal. CAS recommends no further cuts to the classroom lifecycle funds to maintain the basic-level of maintenance and renewal of classroom infrastructure. CAS furthermore recommends restoring funding to the FY08 levels by the 2016-17 biennium, in order to provide a quality standard for classroom facilities, technology and support that is appropriate for a major, nationally ranked university.