

Minutes*

Faculty Consultative Committee
Thursday, October 21, 2004
1:15 – 3:00
510 Morrill Hall

Present: Marvin Marshak (chair), Gary Balas, Jean Bauer, (Terry Roe for) Charles Campbell, Carol Chomsky, Tom Clayton, Dan Feeney, Mary Jo Kane, Morris Kleiner, Scott Lanyon, Judith Martin, Jeff Ratliff-Crain, Martin Sampson, John Sullivan, Carol Wells

Absent: Susan Brorson, Gary Davis, Emily Hoover, Fred Morrison

Guests: President Robert Bruininks

Other: Kathryn Stuckert (Office of the Chief of Staff)

[In these minutes: (1) report of the chair (strategic planning, Ed Prescott, vice presidential searches, commencement weekend, merit scholarships); (2) role of the committee; (3) protocol on chairs/vice chairs who are candidates for administrative positions; (4) closing meetings to administrative ex officio members of a committee; (5) Nobel Laureates; (6) discussion with President Bruininks; (7) task force on financing graduate education; (8) recognizing campus assemblies; (9) closing/merging graduate programs; (10) searches; (11) health care coverage for retirees; (12) rule on missing committee meetings]

1. Report of the Chair

Professor Marshak convened the meeting at 1:15 and reported on the meeting that he and Professor Kane had had with the President the day before.

- The strategic planning website is now operating. The President will send a letter to the University community about the process in the near future.
- They discussed the loss of Professor Ed Prescott, who just won the Nobel Prize in economics.
- They discussed the search for the Vice President for Research and the Vice President for University Relations.
- The President is interested in the possibility of a commencement weekend. Professor Marshak is to speak with Provost Sullivan about appointing a small working group to examine whether it would be possible, starting in the spring of 2006. One possibility might also include disaggregating the Graduate School commencement so post-baccalaureate degrees are granted in college commencements.
- They discussed raising money for merit scholarships.

* These minutes reflect discussion and debate at a meeting of a committee of the University of Minnesota Senate or Twin Cities Campus Assembly; none of the comments, conclusions, or actions reported in these minutes represents the views of, nor are they binding on, the Senate or Assembly, the Administration, or the Board of Regents.

2. Role of the Committee

The Committee discussed its role vis-à-vis the administration.

3. Protocol for Committee Chairs/Vice Chairs who are Candidates for Administrative Office

Professor Marshak drew the attention of Committee members to a draft protocol addressing the steps to be taken if a committee chair or vice chair becomes a candidate for an administrative position.

The Committee concluded that there would be one protocol providing that any committee chair or vice chair who becomes a finalist for an administrative post at the level of dean or above should step down from the position of chair or vice chair for the remainder of his or her term (although he or she would not have to resign from the committee). If the individual is appointed, then he or she must resign from the committee.

The Committee debated whether to ask individuals to step aside if they are candidates for a position (but not yet finalists) but concluded that such a provision would be difficult to enforce, that a conflict of interest really does not arise at the earlier stage because the appointing authority does not know who candidates are during the search process until finalists are identified, and that such a rule could have strange results (e.g., what if someone is nominated for a position but does not know it?). The rule would also require candidates to make his/her candidacy somewhat public at a time when the names of candidates are considered strictly confidential and known only to the search committee, which does not seem wise.

Professor Chomsky, who drafted the proposal, agreed to redraft the proposal along the lines the Committee discussed. It was also agreed that the proposal would be presented to the Senate as an amendment to the Rules.

4. Rules Amendment on Closing Meetings to Administrative Ex Officio Members

The Committee approved without dissent the following amendment (addition) (and Comment) to the Senate Rules:

- A committee chair may exercise discretion to close all or part of a meeting to administrative ex officio members of the committee in order to permit candid discussion of matters that include, but are not limited to, personnel or administrative organization matters. The reason for the closed session should be included on the agenda for the meeting.

COMMENT:

There are rare occasions when a committee needs to discuss items without administrators present. For example, the Senate Research Committee wished to discuss the candidates for Vice President for Research as it prepared its advice to the President, but since the Vice President for Research is an ex officio member of the committee, as are several administrators who report to the Vice President, it would have been awkward or impossible for the faculty members of the committee to have an open discussion. The Senate Consultative Committee believes that

committee chairs should have the option to close meetings to administrative ex officio members when required. It is assumed that this authority would be exercised only rarely.

5. Nobel Laureates

Professor Sullivan reported that he has, with Professor Marshak's consent, invited Professor Ed Prescott to come to an FCC meeting to brainstorm with the Committee about what the University can do to retain star faculty.

Professor Wells said this item brings up a larger issue involving the role of the faculty in assessing the performance of a chair/head.

6. Discussion with President Bruininks

Professor Marshak welcomed the President to the meeting. The Committee and the President discussed a number of matters.

- The process of reviewing department chairs and heads; the President suggested that Professor Marshak work with Vice President Carrier and Senior Vice President Sullivan to put together a small working group to examine the review process, and possibly use outside experts. Professor Martin noted that the process for senior officers (e.g., vice presidents and deans) might be different from that for chairs and heads, especially when the appointment terms and conditions for chairs are so variable (from 3-year "elected" terms to indefinite appointments). There is also a need to convey information between reviews so that issues do not fester, Professor Chomsky said; a management consultant could help to identify "release valves."
- The situation at the Crookston campus and the pending resignation of Chancellor Burton.
- The biennial request and the politics of the upcoming session.
- The departure of Professor Prescott; Professor Sullivan said the FCC discussion would be to look at ways the University might change. It is the job of people who run departments and colleges to keep Nobel Laureates (and very bright faculty in general), he said.
- The searches for the Vice President for Research and for the Vice President for University Relations.
- The need to make decisions to protect the University in the long term, making down payments to ensure the future excellence of the University in 10-15 years.

Professor Marshak thanked the President for joining the meeting and wished him well on his upcoming trip to China.

7. Task Force Report on Financing Graduate Education

Professor Marshak reported that the task force report has been sent to the members of the Policy and Review Councils of the Graduate School. The Provost said that he has been receiving comments on the report and that the task force will meet again to update the report in light of those comments.

Professor Balas said he would like to see people added to this later discussion who have experience as a Director of Graduate Study in major fields. Professor Wells added that there should be someone from the Medical School involved. Professor Marshak said he would make those recommendations on behalf of the Committee.

8. Recognizing Campus Assemblies

Professor Marshak reported that the Crookston faculty have asked a question about recognition of their Faculty Assembly by the Faculty Senate. The Senate constitution provides that it may recognize campus assemblies and delegate responsibilities to them.

Professor Chomsky suggested the Committee ask for information about the UMC Faculty Assembly before making a recommendation to the Faculty Senate. Professor Marshak promised to obtain the information and bring it back to the Committee.

Professor Ratliff-Crain said that Morris has its own constitution and bylaws and he was not sure that it needed to be recognized by the University Senate.

9. Closing/Merging Graduate Programs

Professor Marshak reported that at the last meeting with the Provost, the Provost reported that he and the Dean of the Graduate School have been looking into graduate programs that have very small numbers of students and degrees granted. Using criteria they developed, they identified between 50 and 100 such programs; letters have been sent to the deans listing the programs that do not meet the threshold and asking for their views about closing or consolidating such programs.

Professor Martin said she was not surprised at the number of small programs because a lot of interdisciplinary programs have been created over many years. The question is what they cost beyond faculty time (which seems never to be counted). If the programs cost nothing, they are harmless. Professor Bauer said that the task force on financing graduate education raised that very question; in some cases, there are Directors of Graduate Study who receive released time, so there is a cost associated with these small programs. There may also be people who feel very strongly about the programs and who would not stay at the University if they were eliminated, Professor Martin said.

Professor Kleiner asked about market demand; should the University retain programs where the students have no job opportunity once they obtain their degree, and its cost in not funding other more highly-valued degree programs. Professor Balas took issue with this criterion; he said he thought it was great if someone wants to get an advanced degree in an esoteric field irrespective of whether or not they would get a job in that field. He maintained that the market should not be a criterion for evaluating the programs.

10. Searches

Professor Balas noted that the application process for the position of Dean of the Graduate School is still open; he encouraged Committee members to nominate individuals or to apply for the position. Professor Wells asked for a brief summary of the kind of people the search committee is looking for. Professor Balas noted that the position is full-time, 12 months, so would require someone to give up their research career for a period. They are looking for a scholar who has some administrative experience (the search committee is open on the administrative experience part) and who has a passion for/has a vision for where he or she wants to take the Graduate School.

Professor Martin noted that the application process for the Vice Provost for Faculty and Academic Affairs is also still open; she, too, urged her colleagues to nominate individuals for the position.

11. Health Coverage for Retirees

Professor Marshak said he has been asked about health coverage for retirees. He said he has been told there are group plans retirees can buy into but there is no University subsidy. It provides group purchasing power but nothing else. Some employers provide retiree health coverage; according to press reports, however, many are restricting or dropping such programs. With limited funds, the choices become a tradeoff between current employees and retirees.

One is also encouraged to put away pre-tax money for health care, Professor Balas pointed out, which is now permitted under law.

Professor Wells noted that the Committee on Faculty Affairs wrestled with this issue for a long time; it should be sent back to that committee if there is interest in pursuing it.

What raised this issue, Professor Ratliff-Crain asked? What has changed? Professor Kleiner reported that Professor Feeney is chairing a committee that is looking at retiree health care coverage; he will attend the meeting to talk about the issue.

12. Rule on Missing Meetings

Professor Marshak asked Committee members to review a proposed revision to the Senate Rule regarding individuals who miss committee meetings (and who lose their membership as a result). He said if there are any objections, people should let him know; otherwise he will propose it as part of a consent package at an upcoming Senate meeting.

Professor Marshak adjourned the meeting at 3:00

-- Gary Engstrand