

Minutes*

Senate Committee on Educational Policy
Wednesday, April 17, 1996
1:00 - 3:00
Room 626 Campus Club

Present: Laura Koch (chair), Avram Bar-Cohen, Anita Cholewa, Paul Cleary, Megan Gunnar, Robert Leik, Judith Martin, W. Phillips Shively, William Van Essendelft

Regrets: Elayne Donahue, Robert Johnson, Thomas Johnson, Jeffrey Larsen, Mark Schuller, Gayle Graham Yates

Absent: Darwin Hendel, Glenn Merkel, Ryan Nilsen, Helen Phin

Guests: Provost C. Eugene Allen, Dean Mary Heltsley, Professor Naomi Scheman

[In these minutes: CEE course reductions; liberal education requirements; semester conversion standards; the role of GC in a research university (with Professor Scheman); possible merger of Human Ecology and Education and Human Development (with Dean Heltsley and then with Provost Allen)]

1. CEE Course Reductions

Prior to the arrival of Professor Scheman, Committee members discussed the factors that have led CEE to propose elimination of certain courses. One of the problems has been that this decision has been imposed by Provost Shively. He agreed that he had been involved in making financial decisions that affected CEE, and had negotiated different financial arrangements with respect to tuition income and the colleges that report to him, but observed that he had no authority to make financial or other decisions for CEE. One of the concerns of the Committee was that these course eliminations will have a negative impact on students, some of whom may not be able to continue immediately in sequence courses they had already begun.

2. Liberal Education Requirements

Professor Koch then reported on a conversation she had had with Vice Provost Louise Mirrer about the Council on Liberal Education. CLE had proposed that all CLE courses be four credits, which runs contrary to the SCEP semester conversion standards. She said she and Dr. Mirrer have agreed that science courses could be four credits, but those in the arts and humanities, history, and the social sciences would be three credits, and three courses (for nine credits in each area) would be required. This will leave the Semester Conversion Standard at 39 credits, exclusive of writing intensive courses, although this may need to be revisited later.

This would continue to allow "double dipping," Professor Koch pointed out in response to a

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comment. The Committee cannot require that one-third of a student's credits be in liberal education requirements, because for those fields that require more than 120 credits for a degree, that would mean one-third of the credits over 120 would have to be devoted to liberal education requirements.

3. Semester Conversion Standards

Professor Koch reported there will be a proposal to amend the Semester Conversion Standards, to change the length of the class period from 50 minutes to 55 minutes. Is the issue worth a fight on the Senate floor? Two Committee members expressed a preference for the 50-minute hour, one supporting it if it would bring the University into conformance with the practice at Wisconsin and one expressing doubt that a difference of 70-75 minutes per semester would make much difference. It was recalled that a majority of Committee members had voted in favor of retaining the 55-minute period.

4. Discussion with Professor Scheman: The Role of GC in a Research University

Professor Koch next welcomed Professor Naomi Scheman. Professor Scheman explained that her visit to the Committee arose because of comments she had made at a meeting of Senate committee chairs earlier in the month about the role of General College in a research university. She had followed those comments with a letter to President Hasselmo and Provost Shively about the issue, and had also spoken to the Board of Regents (in her capacity as chair of the Senate Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity for Women) about tenure and diversity.

Professor Scheman recalled that Provost Shively had visited Women's Studies and that there had been discussion about the kind of students that should be at the University. She agreed with his remark that the University has features that make it a great place for some students but not for others, and thought should be given to which students are served well if they are to receive a high-quality education. However, those discussions took the research mission of the University as a given, and asked the question which undergraduates are better off here. It is important to run the discussion the other way, she said, and to think collectively about the research mission and what forms of research should be highlighted here (this does not mean telling the faculty what research they should do). This thinking should draw on the student body at the University.

Some of the difficulties the University has is with its combination of missions--it may be unique in the country in this respect. It seems to have too many missions and to be tugged in too many directions. But one could think about such a concatenation of missions as saying something about what kind of research university Minnesota can be. Professor Scheman drew on her own experience to discuss the ways in which research, as well as teaching, can be shaped by interactions with diverse students, many of whom are older and most of whom have work, family, political, and community commitments. These commitments do not just take time away from school work: they positively inform perspectives on the world that need to be engaged by faculty, both as teachers and as researchers.

Research today--more than at any time since the 17th century--needs to confront a general crisis of confidence in the authority of an intellectual elite. Those of us in that elite need to learn how to communicate with (including how to learn from) those who have been excluded from it.

A public, land-grant, urban, research university is better placed than elite universities to pursue that

research agenda. The University needs to embrace diverse research findings; it needs to diversify in a lot of ways, including across students and faculty, to be a respectful community, to understand how the world looks to the less privileged. General College plays an important role as a critical mass in this respect, as a community of those who have not felt they belong, as a place where they can make a difference, including affecting the University's research mission.

Asked how GC should be measured, Professor Scheman said that is difficult and that she was not the right one to think about that. What needs thought is the integration of the GC mission into the University; it must take seriously what GC is doing. GC students are supposed to be indistinguishable from other students once they leave GC. If GC sees as its mission to provide a multicultural learning environment, GC students have all learned something they can bring to their other classes. The question is how good the rest of the University is in valuing differences, rather than simply seeing GC students as brought up to speed.

If a student leaves higher education altogether, or goes to another college, they are both counted as failure; they are not differentiated. That needs to be done. There is also a need to get away from the tendency to measure only how GC students do and start measuring how the rest of us are doing. If GC students feel a very different atmosphere outside GC, that is not a GC failure. If GC is to be measured, what it is doing in knowledge creation has to be spread to the rest of the University.

It would be nice to not measure, said one Committee member, and offer education for the sake of education, but the University is being measured. If students from a unit do not fit into the rest of the institution--for whatever reason--one must ask if the function of that unit should be continued. To the extent it is not, Professor Scheman inquired, does the major explanation lie within GC?

The truth is that "we don't know," said one Committee member; one cannot assert that the problem lies inside or outside of GC. There is a special opportunity at this university; its location as a major urban land-grant university gives it opportunities for community and for the kinds of students who are here; it is worth thinking about how to take advantage of those opportunities.

The GC proposal was not aimed at changing the student body or narrowing the education offered at the University, it was said; the question is how best to offer the education it does. The issue was redefined on both sides: it was to narrow the University's mission, and it was racist. That is different from the question of whether the University should serve students at risk. The University has special opportunities to have a kind of student body it is particularly good at working with.

If the University is not succeeding as well as it would like to, the question is where the problem lies, Professor Scheman said. A large part of the question lies outside of GC. It is presumptively true that something is being done outside of GC to make GC students less welcome.

One Committee member refused to accept the proposition that anything was presumptively true, and that therefore should drive policy decisions.

The creation of knowledge has to be democratized, Professor Scheman maintained. There is an enormous crisis of authority that must be confronted broadly, not narrowly, she said. To presume that major problems facing GC students lie outside GC commits us to doing what we need to be doing

anyway.

5. Reorganization of Human Ecology and Education

Professor Koch next welcomed Dean Mary Heltsley to the meeting to discuss the restructuring of the colleges of Human Ecology (CHE) and Education and Human Development (CEHD). Professor Koch noted that the Committee would be hearing about the reorganization issues and their impact on educational policy.

Dean Heltsley began by noting that the proposal to merge CHE and CEHD was not her decision and it was one she would not defend. She related the events that led up to the announcement and expressed dismay at the manner in which people were treated. People were more angry at the way the process was carried out than at the announcement. She does not like the decision but is willing to work with Provost Allen on it.

Dean Heltsley discussed the circumstances surrounding the press conference announcing the merger and the inability of people to get information in advance, and said she would prefer that her faculty know something is happening before they read about it in the paper.

She and Dean Bruininks are trying to work cooperatively, she reported, and are presenting similar things to the faculty. They have worked together before, and have a great deal of respect for each other. Her concern is that two of the four CHE units (Family Social Science and Social Work) work frequently with two of the six CEHD units; the other two rarely work with CEHD. They are caught in the situation where two of the four CHE units may not fit, and three or four of the CEHD units may not fit. She expressed concern that the working philosophy of CHE and CEHD be preserved. The two colleges have a different conceptual base, and CHE students do different things than do Education students when they graduate from the University.

Dean Heltsley also expressed concern about what would happen to students; CHE admits freshmen and has put a lot of money into student affairs, including gift money. All four of the CHE departments are ranked in the top ten of their fields. They also have a large CEE program. It would be a shame to destroy the programs CHE offers.

Yet another concern is that CHE has a long history of working well with its alumni; those alumni have contributed a lot of money, and CHE has one of the largest proportion of alumni who are donors. Dean Heltsley expressed concern that she is trying to close on major gifts; it will be difficult to do that if the colleges are to be merged.

Asked what departments would be lost, Dean Heltsley said she did not know; she assumed the two colleges would merge and decisions about departments would be made later. Of the two units that have only rarely worked with CEHD, they may not feel this would be a good fit, and believe that they might prosper more elsewhere. It is not possible to simply transfer departments and college and expect that things will work.

One Committee member noted that the CHE departments have been actively trying to improve the way they do things while having less money. What is being seen around the University, it was said, is

that (1) it is not receiving the money it has in the past, so that it is important to identify programs that should be saved and programs that should be reconsidered, and (2) administrative handling of these issues has been inept. People could accept the changes were they not being treated badly.

One Committee member reported that the order had come to get rid of 20 doctoral programs--but it had nothing to do with anything except that there are too many. What possible rationale is there for these rash decisions? There could be a merger of the two units that has nothing to do with content and is based only on numbers.

Asked what rationale was given for the merger, Dean Heltsley suggested the Committee ask Provost Allen. She believed he thought the two colleges worked well together, had a common philosophy, and worked together on the Consortium for Children, Youth, and Family. The Consortium has been successful at outreach, and was sponsored by, and the funding shepherded by, Provost Allen; it provided a common dimension that Provost Allen believed would perhaps be stronger in the University and with the legislature were it one unit. What is lost, she said, is the issue.

Asked if there are positive aspects to the proposal, Dean Heltsley said there are. The close working relationship of the units is important, and there are other ways to do some of the things the two colleges are doing, perhaps with a greater payoff. If one could ever get to the point where the elements of the unit were all physically located in one place, that would be helpful. CEHD is all over the place, and CHE is in four different buildings on the St. Paul campus and one on the Minneapolis campus. It does not appear that the merger will help in terms of physical proximity or cost savings, although Provost Allen has plans for moves.

Asked how important the sense of identify of CHE is in terms of prospective donors, Dean Heltsley said it was critical. Donors want to know what they are giving to, she said, especially those who give larger amounts. The older donors and alumni will not like this proposal.

Professor Koch thanked Dean Heltsley for joining the meeting, and then welcomed Provost Allen to discuss the proposals. One Committee member asked him to explain what problems he is trying to solve by the merger proposal.

Provost Allen distributed a handout with questions and answers about the proposed merger of CHE and CEHD. He noted that during the last five years, University funding has declined in a number of areas. There are administrative structures in place that may have been appropriate in the past but that now must be questioned. That includes the three-provost model; he said it is effective for now in moving things forward, but said he did not believe the University would continue to have it a few years hence if units are closed or consolidated as they should be.

He said he started thinking about this as he has visited with the units that report to him. There are common themes among the units. One is the program issues that revolve around children, youth, families, and education with CHE and CEHD. It is in the news a lot, and this is a critical land-grant issue in this era for the state and nation. These two colleges have VERY good programs and have opportunities that are not captured in youth and family issues. There is both competition and cooperation between the two units, and he learned with the Children, Youth, and Family Consortium there were things that could be done in outreach that the would not have otherwise been accomplished. As he looks at this theme and

outlines the process for going forward, it may be that parts of the colleges will not be in the new unit, and others could be brought in.

Everyone thinks the first issue is budget; it is not, Dr. Allen said, but there may be savings to invest in programs to make them stronger. His hypothesis is that if nothing is done, it will be necessary to cut more faculty positions than would otherwise be necessary if units are not consolidated. There are a lot of hidden costs with more administrative units, which is why it is necessary to take a hard look at departments and their consolidation, or consolidation of services provided to them.

There should be no sacred cows, he said. There are a number of units that are below critical size but that are not low priority and should not be eliminated. They have to be made more viable and sustainable.

Attention must also be paid to the external world in two areas. One is what is happening to higher education and the expectations of higher education on the part of the people and the state. There are very few universities such as this one, a major research, land-grant, urban institution in a rural state. The University has everything one could imagine in the way of programs, but faces major challenges in the state, as well as great expectations of accountability.

Also a big issue is what will happen to higher education in the next five to fifteen years, and to major research universities. It is difficult to make the case that new educational technologies will NOT have a significant impact on all of higher education. His grandchildren, he commented, will not recognize college like people do today. There will be a lot fewer campuses; the question is which ones will survive. The ones who do not have quality will not.

Dr. Allen related that he had talked with a CEO about programs that would be useful for the company. His comment was that the University should not think about trying to serve them unless it thinks about computers first. This is an international corporation, and having employees come on-site to the University is a low priority.

The units that report to him, Dr. Allen said, are looking for opportunities to serve students on campus and professionals out in the field. This means they must think and act differently; more cooperation will be important, and there will be a need for more programs and courses that cross disciplines and departments.

Anytime the University faces massive changes, said one Committee member, the uncertainty drives people crazy, so it should be done fast to get it over. People are reacting to the uncertainty. In a quick move, are there issues of educational policy that he believes SCEP should worry about?

Dr. Allen said there were. He said there are a lot of people in the same discipline but in separate departments; it would be best for students and programs to get them together so they can create a curriculum for all students who will take courses in the field. It would be helpful if SCEP could advise on how to initiate that effort. There are very successful models in the Graduate School, but this integration has been less successful at the undergraduate level. This could be done with a relatively small amount of money.

Research must be tied to the curriculum, it was said. And to the other parts of the mission as well, Dr. Allen responded; he and Provost Shively and the President are interested in service learning, and several units have it. This could capitalize on the metropolitan area, and one-on-one service learning experiences could be tied to outreach programs.

Some see service learning as babysitting rather than education, where students get paid and get credit. Dr. Allen agreed that they have to be educational learning experiences. Many students have never worked for anyone else, and few have done so in other cultures or a foreign environment or volunteered to do something for society. All these are missing parts of education that the University typically does not give credit for. Thought must be given not just to degree requirements, he said, but what is being given as a stamp of University education; for many, the effect will last a lifetime.

There are opportunities to do things that are meaningful international experiences, not just travelogues. UROP should be brought to another level; 300-400 students participate, but a lot are employed in labs that could make use of it as well. Each experience internationally or in research or in the land-grant mission focuses on one dimension; SCEP could help by thinking of other opportunities. He said he believed such requirements should be a part of every undergraduate program.

One Committee member said that technology is a way of looking at education that transforms it dramatically. Campuses may not exist, but technology will not eliminate interactions; it just means they will occur in different ways. It will mean 18-22-year-olds do not interact only with each other and with faculty, but also with the community.

Dr. Allen noted that the average age of students in some programs is well above that of the traditional college student. He said he was not convinced students should graduate in five years; that is not the reality of education. Too many think of college students as aged 18-22. One Australian university has stopped graduating students; it tells them they will be with the university for the rest of their life, occasionally away from campus. Think of the potential with University alumni, he said.

He said he has been with a number of groups and is always interested to hear what they remember about their college experience. Many have positive recollections; they may remember a few professors or classes. The same is true even for those with less favorable memories. As the University is more involved in educational technology, it will change how students who come to class are taught, and there will be a difference between the student and the learner. Faculty will guide, not be on stage; learning is more powerful when cohorts teach each other.

One Committee member said there are two items for SCEP to consider. With respect to distance education, there are no criteria for what is an acceptable distance education course. There are no criteria for judging all the proposals being made. The other issue is with interdisciplinary work; one wants to foster it as much as possible, but how will standards be established so there is adequate advising and appropriate courses? One has seen programs thrown together without meeting any standards.

This raises the question of standards for in-class learning and courses, said another Committee member. The University thinks it has standards, it was agreed, but it does not. The in-class and distance education courses should be looked at together. The question is about the collegiate experience; one is not convinced that email fosters the scholarly exchange that face-to-face/across the table interactions do.

The frantic efforts to get on the World Wide Web are worrisome; it is overtaxed, it is not cheap, and it is hard to use. Nor, added another Committee member, is anything done about the validity of the materials used.

Another role for SCEP in terms of distance education, Dr. Allen observed, is the role that accrediting associations play in setting the agenda. This is a reasonable body, and has enough experience to say something about classes that are taught. Classes offered to both 18-22-year-olds and to older learners, through distance education, do not have different evaluation results and the diversity can frequently enrich them.

Minnesota and Wisconsin will have identical calendars, Dr. Allen noted. SCEP will face several issues, such as joint Graduate School appointments and educational planning. Some units have joint planning on hiring in areas of specialization, and there have been joint meetings. One way of remaining a research institution is to have partnerships, such as one with Wisconsin.

With respect to service learning, one Committee member observed, there are two points to remember. One, fewer faculty have research support in the biological sciences; without it, they cannot offer internships. Second, "winners"--those will be those with national support and funding--are often too busy to WANT to offer them. But faculty should HAVE to do this, and there should be a way to funnel money for supplies to support students.

There is also a need to check with the community, said one Committee member; will it know what to do with all these students? One advocates service learning, but it will require a lot of work and personnel to be sure they are worthwhile experiences. The University has not been willing to commit the resources to do that. Dr. Allen said that is why there have to be a number of options; he agreed with the concern about the capacity to provide the opportunities.

In terms of internships and faculty support, Dr. Allen commented, the majority of internships are funded externally; they do not tend to be internal research projects. More come through partnerships; that is part of their beauty. Some are voluntary, some are paid. With these internships, moreover, there will be more money brought to the University.

One likes the vision of where education could go, said one Committee member, but it is not clear how the structural changes Dr. Allen has proposed will forward that agenda. Structural changes do not create acceptance of the vision.

The answer is simple, Dr. Allen said; if the University does not consolidate units, they will be lopped off completely. There is a need to put units together, where it makes sense in terms of mission, so the University is stronger when cuts are made, rather than just making scattered cuts all over. He said he was worried that the situation in five or ten years could be worse than anything people imagine; how many student credit hours will the University lose in the biggest 25 classes it teaches? That loss has already started, and the University lacks the capital to spend on faculty to prepare the first-class courses that are needed. Not all institutions will be competitive in the market, and if the University tries to do it cheaply while others spend a lot, the University will lose. Maricopa Community College has about 100,000 students, and each course costs \$125. Students from Arizona State take a lot of the courses. Why? Because they balance quality and cost.

Another part of the answer to the question about structural changes, Dr. Allen said, is that when he got into his present job, he had the sense that there were commonalities among the units that they had not realized before; he subsequently learned that he was right. There is an opportunity to offer better programs and to raise revenues to buffer the University from cuts. Cuts are "old," and they are debilitating the University; there has to be thought about increasing funding. One can take the bad-case scenario; it is not clear what to do. Or one can be optimistic about doing a better job with programs and bringing in more students.

One does not see the human commitment to this, said one Committee member, in the faculty. Dr. Allen said he did not believe that in his 29 years at the University, any group of faculty wanted change more than now. Another Committee member said these proposals have generated a tremendous energy to do more things faculty care about that they have not been able to do before; there is some excitement about the change.

Another Committee member recalled hearing people were energized about the changes proposed at the biennial budget retreats, but that was negated by the process being used. The faculty must be enthusiastic, not ground up in the process.

Dr. Allen said that after the announcement of the merger, there were a series of meetings planned, both individual and collective, shortly after the press conference. The leadership of the effort was delegated to Professors M. Janice Hogan and Richard Weinberg; they will decide how to go forward. There will be faculty, student, civil service, and P&A meetings on each campus; the charge will be to offer advice about issues, concerns, and problems by June 1, and IF the process is to go forward, what it will be.

He said it is his working hypothesis that the merger will occur, and said he has invited everyone not to be bashful in making alternative proposals. Units that do not feel welcome in the merger are free to look elsewhere. Everyone is welcome to participate in the process.

One Committee member pointed out that while Dr. Allen has not closed off possibilities and has not said the merger must occur. Dr. Allen responded that he has not heard anything yet to persuade him the merger should not take place, but acknowledged he could be wrong.

Another Committee member said that the attention has been on the process, and the Committee has not thought about the educational policy.

Dr. Allen recalled that he also has overall responsibility for outreach, while Provost Shively has similar responsibility for undergraduate education. Dr. Mirrer, in Provost Shively's office, will be a key player in this, he said.

With respect to tenure, Dr. Allen concluded, he said he wanted to sure that it is more explicit that faculty are evaluated on teaching, research, and outreach, and service in support of the three. There is great confusion among the faculty if outreach is even included as an evaluation criterion.

Professor Koch then thanked Dr. Allen for joining the meeting.

Committee members then discussed several issues.

- There will be time to revise the appropriate policies and standards to accommodate distance education, as it becomes more widely used, although in some areas it may be desirable to act preemptively.
- Distance education is more problematic when it comes to advising students.
- The Committee can await issues from central administration, or it can focus on educational policy items, and affect them if it can stay focused.
- The process of merging the colleges has been seriously flawed, which is of interest to this Committee; it cannot divorce itself from the process.

But it must keep its interest linked with educational policy; if everyone is concerned about the process, there will be a lot of noise but little accomplished. The Committee should comment on the process and use it as background to determine the impact on educational policy.

The Committee should determine if the process affects education, but should not simply listen to complaints people have.

There are a lot of decisions made without assessing their impact on educational policy; the Committee must be articulate in identifying the educational BENEFITS of decisions.

Professor Koch then adjourned the meeting at 3:30.

-- Gary Engstrand