

Minutes*

**Senate Committee on Educational Policy
October 8, 1992**

Present: James Tracy (chair), Victor Bloomfield, James Cotter, Megan Gunnar, Michael Handberg, Kenneth Heller, Robert Johnson, Andrea Mack, Clark Starr

Guest: Vice President Anne Hopkins

1. Morse-Alumni Awards

Professor Tracy began the meeting by recalling that last year the Morse-Alumni committee had forwarded to SCEP a set of recommendations for slight changes in the process and criteria for making the awards. SCEP concluded it did not support the recommendations, preferring to let each committee make its own decisions. The changes, nonetheless, appeared in the revised description of the award to be distributed to departments. Professor Tracy reported that he had asked Academic Affairs to delete them (except as noted below), which it has done.

He did propose acceptance of two minor changes. The curriculum vitae is to be no more than 2 - 4 pages and there is to be included a statistical overview of undergraduate courses taught.

The Committee accepted the proposals to curtail the size of the vita and seeking a statistical summary--but was uneasy about related language calling for information "drawn from at least five specific undergraduate courses." This language, in the view of one Committee member that was supported by others, violates the spirit of the agreement the Committee reached last year: While in most cases a Morse-Alumni award winner would regularly teach undergraduates, it should be possible for someone to make a profound contribution to the improvement of undergraduate education without having taught (e.g., a new curriculum). The language as it stands appears to REQUIRE that there have been a significant amount of teaching.

Even though it was explained that the CRITERIA used by the selection committee make it clear that teaching is only one, it nonetheless appears from the information to be provided to departments that a nominee must have taught some specified minimum number of undergraduate (or predominantly undergraduate) courses. It was agreed that departments might very well decline to nominate someone on the basis of the language--someone who would in fact be qualified to be considered for the award.

After having dealt with other agenda items, the Committee returned to this matter later in the meeting and agreed upon a proposed revision in the language that would make it clear that teaching courses is not a prerequisite to being nominated for the award, but that if courses have been taught, the nominating committee wants information about them.

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2. Discussion with Vice President Anne Hopkins

Professor Tracy welcomed Vice President Hopkins to the meeting and asked her to lead the discussion on items upon which she sought Committee advice.

POLICY ON TEACHING EVALUATION The Committee worked very hard last year to bring the teaching evaluation policy to the Senate, Dr. Hopkins commented, but there is much unfinished business. While the momentum remains, that business should be completed; she said people are expecting it and she feels bound to follow through on what the Senate has enacted. Unless additional steps are taken, however, she cannot instruct the deans to proceed.

The Senate adopted the questionnaire to be used in the student evaluation, but not rules on its use. Dr. Hopkins proposed that Dr. Dallis Perry, in the Counseling Bureau, draft a set of guidelines for Committee review and then Senate action (presumably in Winter Quarter). If there are to be statistical norms developed, the questionnaires will have to be processed centrally; the place it would be done would be Dr. Perry's office. The Committee accepted this suggestion; a draft will be prepared for the November 12 meeting. There is also need for guidelines on how student evaluations are administered, and Dr. Hopkins agreed to ask Dr. Perry to propose language on this point as well.

The second item in the policy requiring Senate action is the protocol for peer review. Unlike the questionnaire--where there is a sizeable professional literature on both the statistical analysis and the protocols on administering it--the protocol for peer review will be more complicated and there is less well-settled understanding of how it should be accomplished. One possibility would be for SCEP simply to require peer review--and let the units develop their own protocols. It would perhaps be wiser, Dr. Hopkins said, for the Committee to establish some parameters. She also clarified, in response to a comment, that there would NOT be institutional norms developed for peer reviews.

It was agreed that a subcommittee consisting of Professors Gunnar and Wick would develop a draft protocol on peer review for the November 12 Committee meeting.

The Committee also discussed language in the policy that has been adopted by the Senate. It was agreed that the subcommittee would also consider the slight revisions necessary to clarify language relating to one part of the policy.

FACULTY WORKLOAD PRINCIPLES The other document Dr. Hopkins wished to take up with the Committee was the draft faculty workload principles. It was noted by one Committee member that the taxonomy appeared to include everything--precisely, replied a Committee member who was also a member of the task force that drafted the report. The intent of the taxonomy of faculty activities is exhaustive because of the complexity of the University. Each unit, in turn, will define its own policies within the principles; some of the activities will be emphasized over others. The taxonomy serves both as an "aide memoire" and an explanation to the world why faculty members aren't spending all their time in the classroom.

Faculty workload, Dr. Hopkins reported, is the hottest academic issue in state legislatures, including Minnesota. The University must be systematic in explaining what faculty do--or its critics will try to put its house in order.

Concern was expressed about the following language: "For the purpose of dealing with faculty who may be abusing the professional prerogative, an expectation of 40 hours work per week is reasonable." While it is understood that the legislature will want a number, this is a slippery slope--if one can ascertain a faculty member is not working 40 hours per week, he or she can be fired. One alternative that could be considered is "persons of talent and energy will have difficulty accomplishing all that is expected of them within the limits of a 40-hour week."

Dr. Hopkins explained that several of the task force members wanted that language because they felt strongly there ARE abuses and the document should come down hard on those who abuse professional prerogatives by saying something about a minimum. The principles clearly call for measuring accomplishment, not time spent, but for those who abuse their privileges, time can be a standard. She and another Committee member argued that no faculty member would be fired because of time; the question has to do with accomplishments and abuse. All else besides quality and quantity of effort is peripheral, argued another Committee member; it may serve some useful public relations purpose to have the number in the document.

One problem, Dr. Hopkins emphasized, is that the principles must speak in the language that means something to people outside the University. The University, it was rejoined, should resist speaking as outsiders want it to, at least on certain points. Some things are worth fighting for, and the University should not use language that permits others to define workload in hours. Then one danger, Dr. Hopkins replied, is that she will be unable to effectively carry the policy to the legislature--which might, in turn, then legislate a 12-hour teaching load. The alternative language, and the fact of the policy itself, is not sufficient to answer all legitimate questions. The University's strategy is to deal with legitimate questions and fend off legislation on workload. The right policy will document that the institution has control and can tend to the matter.

The legislature, Dr. Hopkins warned, does not believe the University has been accountable--the faculty do not teach enough. Why is the criticism focussed on the University and not Mankato or some other institution? Because the University has not been effective in explaining what faculty do.

The language about the 40 hours, nonetheless, is the ONLY place in the document that speaks to abuse; reading it would imply that the University doesn't have control. It is implicit in all the statements in the document that if there is a problem, it will be dealt with--this is the only place where a specific number is prescribed.

The reason the language was put in, explained another Committee member involved in drafting the principles, was to respond to an external audience and because the task force did not believe it unreasonable to expect faculty to work as much as the rest of the world--40 hours per week.

After some additional discussion, there appeared to be general agreement that the substitute language should be proposed to the Faculty Consultative Committee, and also that the paragraph in which it appears should be reworded and then placed later in the document. It was agreed that Professor Tracy would bring the proposed revision to FCC at its meeting on October 15.

Another concern about the workload policy was the language which suggested that faculty work

"requires substantial time spent at the department office." The issue, Dr. Hopkins explained, is availability, not necessarily hours spent in an office. If students need 7 hours in a week, a faculty member should be available 7 hours.

One Committee member argued that "substantial" should be left in; there are attitudes and stereotypes about faculty that must be addressed, and isolated incidents damage the whole profession. Other Committee members suggested various alternative wording ("involves" substantial time; "requires time at the office appropriate to the mission of the unit," etc.) Professor Tracy promised to bring this issue to FCC as well.

A few other points were also made: The taxonomy does not include the instance when labs and lectures are combined, nor does it accurately depict the amount of time required for field trips. These comments, Dr. Hopkins observed, simply point out the need to develop a mechanism to regularly update the taxonomy.

MINNESOTA TRANSFER CURRICULUM Dr. Hopkins then told the Committee that there is a need for its representatives to attend a workshop on the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum at Craguns' resort. The Curriculum is a general education curriculum that all systems will agree on; if students have completed the work it calls for, they will be considered to have met distribution/liberal education requirements for all institutions. If there are to be changes in competency levels or the curriculum it will be easiest to make the changes now. The proposal will come to the campuses for review later, but change will be much more difficult.

The Committee agreed on who their most appropriate representative would be.

3. Morse-Alumni Nominating Committee

Professor Tracy explained that the Committee needed to act soon on naming the members of the Morse-Alumni nominating committee (which forwards the nominations for approval to SCEP). He asked that Committee members think about possible nominees and said this item of business would need to be completed at the next meeting.

Questions about the statue to be given to award winners have been raised by the University Foundation; the Committee's reactions were as follows:

- The Committee has no strong feelings about the number that should be ordered.
- The design contest should be open to graduate students, faculty, and alumni.
- Past recipients should be asked to help in fund-raising to pay for the statue.

4. Changes in the Bush Sabbaticals

Professor Tracy then reviewed for Committee members the sequence of events that began with SCEP proposing changes in the Bush Sabbatical program, reactions from Associate Vice President Carol Carrier, and redrafted language that he and Dr. Carrier had worked out to answer her objections. The

issues at hand were these:

- SCEP recommended changing the name, deleting the reference to the Bush Foundation, because the program is now funded entirely from institutional resources. Inasmuch as the University remains involved with the Bush Foundation, the name change was seen as perhaps an unnecessary slight; the Committee concurred.
- SCEP proposed that faculty members be eligible for a Bush sabbatical a second time, although at a lower priority than first-time nominees. The Faculty Consultative Committee had declined to endorse this change when it was proposed earlier, and Dr. Carrier also voiced objection. The Committee agreed that this change was not the most important issue, but it may wish to bring the matter up again.
- The major change SCEP had proposed was severing the link between the Bush sabbaticals and undergraduate education.

The last change received attention from the University's central officers, who believed that while some separation from undergraduate education would be acceptable, a complete divorce would not be. As a consequence, Professor Tracy and Dr. Carrier redrafted the language setting forth the criteria for receiving a Bush sabbatical.

The Committee discussed this language for some while, particularly that which relates the award to the mission of each unit and of the University, and agreed on rewording that it could support. Professor Tracy agreed to forward the new language to Dr. Carrier.

There was concern that there has been some "stretching" in the past on the part of faculty members seeking a Bush sabbatical in attempts to link their proposed work to undergraduate education. To continue to tie the award to undergraduate education would, it was argued, continue to produce at least mild duplicity in applications. The one additional change in the proposal, to require a report to the faculty member's dean on how the sabbatical enhanced their teaching or outreach activities, was seen as building in the same possible duplicity at the back end of the system rather than in the application process. Other Committee members, however, expressed the view that it was not unreasonable to expect faculty to report how a sabbatical will affect their teaching; presumably, it was said, ANY sabbatical will affect teaching, and the current proposal does not require that the sabbatical be devoted to undergraduate education.

The Committee adjourned at 3:20.

-- Gary Engstrand

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