

CLASSROOM ADVISORY SUBCOMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING

February 25, 2013

[In these minutes: Departmental needs for flexible classrooms; Classroom capacity and utilization; Future agenda items.]

[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 represent the views of, nor are they binding on, the Senate, the Administration or the Board of Regents.]

PRESENT: Patricia Schaber (Chair), William Garrard, Chris Isett, Barbara Jensen, Jeff Lindgren, Errin McIsaac, Peggy McCarthy, Kevin Smith, Jeremy Todd, Christine Swartwout

GUEST: Professor David Arendale, Post Secondary Teaching and Learning; Sarah Kussow, classroom scheduling manager, Office of Classroom Management

REGRETS: Roberta Juarez, Thomas Wolfe

ABSENT: Aisha Ahmed, Nathaniel Anderson, Katherine Kroph

WELCOME

Professor Schaber welcomed the committee members and called the meeting to order. She announced that despite low attendance at the Open House she hosted to showcase the active learning classrooms used by the Occupational Therapy program, the dialogue was valuable and she still sees that there is interest in flexible classroom spaces.

DEPARTMENTAL NEEDS FOR FLEXIBLE CLASSROOMS

Professor Arendale agreed to present regarding the flexible classroom needs of his department, Post Secondary Teaching and Learning (PSTL) within the College of Education and Human Development (CEHD). Professor Arendale is also the chair of the Senate Committee on Information Technologies. He explained that the active learning classroom (ALC) is critical for his department's pedagogy.

He distributed a handout titled, "Active Learning Classroom Use and Preferences," which outlined his presentation. The handout listed the following three questions he asked of approximately 30 faculty members of PSTL and their responses:

- What do you do in an active learning classroom that makes learning better than a traditional classroom?
 - Fosters small group projects, discussions, and the creation of media projects during class

- Small groups of 4-5 are preferred over 9-10
- How do you use technology during class in the ALC?
 - Students quickly share multimedia projects
 - Easier use of Apple TV units
 - The incoming CEHD students will be given iPad Mini's in the fall and will utilize technology in the classrooms.
 - Students create and share digital storytelling and video projects
 - Internet access, displaying projects
 - Audio amplification – Professor Arendale appreciates being able to share at least one microphone with students. Research shows that raising the volume level of a speaker by 10 decibels raises learning outcomes.
 - Wifi capabilities for large amounts of usage
- What is missing in the current ALC's?
 - Each faculty member has different needs. Some have requested larger capacity ALC for classes of 75 students or more.
 - Table setups for small groups of 4-5 students
 - STSS tables are hard to pull apart to create smaller groups.
- Appleby Hall, Room 219 – Example of preferred flexible seating
 - Tables are on wheels, easy to reconfigure seating.
 - Video projector and wifi capable
 - Whiteboards
 - Professor Arendale noted that this room does not have STSS level technology, but the flexible seating actually makes it a better classroom.
 - Lower ceiling creates an atmosphere more conducive to learning

Members discussed anecdotal information from students regarding ALC's:

- Increasingly, incoming students expect settings that are conducive to small group work as a result of a higher frequency of project-based learning at the secondary level.
- Projection screens in larger classes help students to view the instructor and front of classroom.
- Small group interactions enable student learning, engagement, and experience of diverse cultures within the student body.
- Rooms outside of the classroom to meet with groups and continue class discussions are increasingly important.

Members discussed how the role of the instructor is changing in the ALC:

- Professor Arendale still lectures approximately 60% of class time, while some colleagues lecture 50% or less.
- Professor Schaber agrees that reducing the seating barriers in the classroom creates greater student engagement in both small groups and large class discussions. The focus is more on the student than the instructor. She felt she could challenge their thinking and provide feedback in a positive way.
- Professor Arendale noted that interactive learning does not require the high investment in technology that is seen in rooms similar to those in STSS.

ADJUSTED CLASSROOM CAPACITIES AND UTILIZATION

Jeremy Todd and Sarah Kussow led a discussion of classroom capacities, some of which will be adjusted in the summer and fall, and classroom utilization. Mr. Todd explained that faculty surveys and student focus groups are just two of the ways that information is gathered around classroom needs. He has noticed that flexible seating and the ability to reconfigure classrooms are increasingly in demand.

Mr. Todd distributed handouts and projected them for members to view. The first handout depicted how increasing flexible seating reduces room capacity.

- Room 250, Existing and Alternate Seating Configurations (purposes of discussion only)
 - 12 square feet per student = 85 total seats
 - 18 square feet per student = 60 total seats
 - wider aisles
 - 22 square feet per student = 48 total seats
 - room configuration similar to Appleby Hall, room 219
 - 50-74 seat classroom sizes are primarily used and 126 seats

The next handout discussed utilization of Twin Cities Campus classrooms.

- ALC utilization is higher during primetime. “Primetime” refers to the peak hours of the day during which a classroom is used.
- The standard scheduling week for the University is 70 hours and the primetime scheduling week is 24 hours.
- Mr. Todd explained that the measurement of classroom utilization is also a measure of how well a course is matched to a classroom. If a department requests a room with a larger capacity than they actually need, the following year the data will be provided for the department to choose a different capacity.
- Ms. Kussow explained that class durations are an important factor in classroom scheduling. Standard class length is 50 minutes and classes meet 3 times per week. A growing number of classes are requesting to meet twice a week for 75 minutes each. This longer duration means that only 7 classes can meet in a particular classroom in one day, a reduction from the 9 classes with 50-minute periods. Professor Schaber agreed that this is a growing trend because it enables a deeper exploration of course content.
- Mr. Todd displayed a utilization report that can be viewed by any college at: www.classroom.umn.edu. OCM met with a subset of the colleges to affect change in classroom scheduling and discuss how resources can be shared. Professor Smith suggested developing a quick set of queries that instructors can ask themselves regarding their course schedules, for example: How do I schedule my liberal education course to optimize enrollment opportunities? Ms. Kussow suggested referencing the report from the previous year to assess if the time slot was successful.
- Mr. Todd responded to a question regarding the scheduling of events. He stated that courses change through the first week of the term so events cannot be scheduled until after this time, since academic courses are the first scheduling

- priority. The new scheduling system allows OCM to remove buildings if they cannot be used for instance, because of construction. There is demand for the spaces for internal events and over 13,000 events are scheduled each semester.
- The dashboard was used to display the utilization of departmental classrooms. The spaces are used an average of 30% for scheduled courses, but this could be higher because departments do not always need to input the schedule since it is privately owned.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Professor Schaber asked Mr. Todd if there are any recommendations that the committee could make to aid in the effort of OCM. He responded that there is already discussion regarding a system-wide pool of funding for ALC's, so the committee might better serve another cause.

Mr. Todd went on to explain that in 2011, OCM was charged with advertising centrally managed study spaces. This mandate does not have recurring funding therefore, routine maintenance and repairs are not occurring. There is no funding to replace furniture in these spaces. He suggested the committee discuss whether or not the study spaces should be incorporated into the general-purpose classroom cost pool. Currently, OCM requests one-time funding from the Provost and Vice Provost. Professor Schaber suggested that there should be lifecycle scheduled funding. She noted that these spaces serve as an extension of the ALC and enable small group meetings. Members agreed that this is a topic that should be discussed in the future. Ms. McCarthy added that funding for cleaning the spaces was not changed to accommodate the features of carpet and furniture.

In the interest of time, Professor Schaber adjourned the meeting.

Jeannine Rich
University Senate Office