

Minutes*

Senate Committee on Educational Policy
Wednesday, April 24, 2013
2:00 – 4:00
238A Morrill Hall

- Present: Alon McCormick (chair), Karla Hemesath (for Barbara Brandt), Thomas Brothen, Lee-Ann Breuch, Megan Chock, Charlene Ellingson, Robert McMaster, Nic McPhee, Thomas Michaels, Kristen Nelson, Leslie Schiff, Eva von Dassow, Susan Wick
- Absent: Janine Grebin, Henning Schroeder, Elaine Tarone, William Ziegler
- Guests: Professor Serge Rudaz (Director, University Honors Program); Belinda Cheung (Graduate School); Tina Falkner, Susan VanVoorhis (Academic Support Resources)
- Other: Suzanne Bardouche (Office of Undergraduate Education); Marlo Welshons (Office of the Provost)

[In these minutes: (1) update on the University Honors Program; (2) academic program reviews; (3) Twin Cities Curriculum Committee; (4) summer calendar; (5) 2017-18 calendars]

1. Update on the University Honors Program

Professor McCormick called the meeting to order at 2:00 and welcomed Professor Rudaz to provide an update on the University Honors Program (UHP, which is a Twin Cities campus program).

Vice Provost McMaster made a few introductory comments. UHP has been a remarkable success, he said, and one measure of that success is that UHP students have an average ACT of 32; in the College of Science and Engineering the average is about 34 (out of a possible 36). There are spectacular students coming into UHP. The program started in 2008 and its first class of students graduated last spring; the 4-year graduation rate was 78%, compared to 58% for the Twin Cities campus as a whole.

They recently conducted an external review of UHP that included the participation of Professor Nelson, Dr. McMaster reported, and he and provost are reviewing the document. It was overwhelmingly positive and includes a few suggestions. Professor Rudaz, he concluded, is doing an outstanding job as director of UHP.

Professor Rudaz noted that he had been appointed founding director of UHP in 2007; UHP was created following a task force report recommending it and they have been following the task force recommendations since. It is University policy that students who wish to graduate with Latin honors, from any college, must participate in UHP. If there is to be any degree of uniformity and expectations, UHP was needed.

* 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.

The goal of UHP is to recruit students who want to engage in the intellectual life of the University, Professor Rudaz said, and UHP students are also raising the profile of the University because they match the characteristics of the students at the very best liberal-arts colleges. In the College of Science and Engineering and in the College of Biological Sciences the UHP students are on the level of students at Cal Tech and MIT. UHP students are winning more and more national and international prestigious scholarships—for example, Minnesota leads the nation this year in combined number of Goldwater and Udahl scholarship winners. Recruiting outstanding students from Minnesota, its neighboring states, as well as from across the country, was one of the original motivations for establishing the program; last year about 20% of UHP students were non-resident, non-reciprocity students, so the University is achieving a reach across the nation.

They have set up a program unique to Minnesota that emphasizes honors advising in order to open the entire University to students so that they are aware of the wide variety of learning experiences the University offers outside the classroom, Professor Rudaz said. The program has 11 honors advisers who do an excellent job.

UHP will be moving to Northrop Auditorium space this fall.

They have been adding to the honors curriculum, Professor Rudaz reported, which does not replace the University's splendid curriculum but provides enrichment for the UHP student experience. They are adding more honors courses and seminars every year.

They have also had a very successful residential experience in Middlebrook Hall; about two-thirds of incoming UHP students live there, Professor Rudaz said.

Professor Brothen asked if students were selected by ACT score because the average was so high. Professor Rudaz said not—students are not selected solely on the basis of test scores, as is the practice of many other honors colleges and programs. There is no minimum cutoff and they do not have the same expectations for a student in dance or landscape architecture that they do, for example, in biology. All students, once admitted to the University, are holistically reviewed for admission to UHP; it is a three stage review (for admission to the University, for invitation to UHP, and for merit-based financial aid). They are looking for students whose records indicate that they are seeking a challenge.

About 590 freshmen are expected to join UHP this fall—and they are spread across all the freshman-admitting colleges, Professor Rudaz said. It is University policy that no more than 10% of a graduating class may be awarded Latin honors, and they have about 600 out of 5400 students each year, or approximately 11%, so they cannot admit many more students to UHP. Professor Brothen asked if there are 99th-percentile students who are not in UHP, so they could select a few more? Professor Rudaz said that they need more honors courses, in which case they could admit a few more, but he reiterated that they are near the upper limit in the number of students who can be admitted to UHP. But if students admitted to the campus are getting better, then more should be eligible for UHP, Professor Brothen suggested. They do admit rising sophomores and juniors, Professor Rudaz pointed out.

Professor Michaels asked whether the process of approval of a new honors course was the same as for a traditional course or whether there were additional requirements. Professor Rudaz said that UHP and the proposing department consult; if it is a new course, it must go through the usual departmental, collegiate, and campus procedures for undergraduate courses. While the UHP program must have courses

in the arts, sciences, and so on, they do not say that a course must be lecture-based or have a lab; they do require that it be taught by a faculty member or by a "certified expert" and they require a statement from the department on how the course conforms to honors expectations and how it differs from a regular course.

Are honors courses an area where there can be experimentation, Professor McCormick asked? That is occurring, Professor Rudaz said. UHP asked the Department of Psychology for an honors version of 1001; Professor Brothen developed it, a hybrid course. Others can be conventional courses, discussion-based, and so on; UHP is flexible. The important point about honors courses is one-on-one contact with faculty members, which is part of honors student expectations. Many departments piloted honors courses that subsequently became part of their regular curriculum, and yes, UHP is open to experiments. They see them as an opportunity for faculty members to try new things without program guidance.

Dr. McMaster noted that in the new liberal-education document, there is a new provision that allows UHP students to design their own liberal-education requirements. That process has not been established yet. They want to explore it, Professor Rudaz said; it is complicated by the number of students who come with college credits, which makes it difficult for the University to design a consistent set of expectations.

Ms. Chock asked if Professor Rudaz has any information about variations in retention and graduation rates for students who transfer from community colleges. Professor Rudaz said that UHP welcomes transfer students and they receive applications from community colleges and other colleges and universities.

Professor Rudaz reported that for the students invited to join UHP in fall 2008, their 4-year graduation rate was 78%, as Dr. McMaster noted. Of those, about 50% graduated with honors. UHP is a voluntary, intentional path for students and they allow students to come and then decide they do not want to graduate with honors.

One way that faculty members can help UHP is to nurture honors students to do their thesis, Professor Nelson commented, which honors graduation requires.

Vice Provost McMaster said that Professor Rudaz has underplayed his role in creating the honors curriculum. With an economic struggle in recent years, departments often wanted to eliminate honors courses, so Professor Rudaz had to work hard to protect the honors curriculum.

Professor McCormick thanked Professor Rudaz for his report.

2. Academic Program Reviews

Professor McCormick turned to Vice Provost McMaster to provide information about the evolution of thinking about academic program reviews. [Part way through this discussion Professor McCormick had to leave the meeting for a plane flight; Professor Brothen assumed the chair.]

Dr. McMaster began by introducing Dr. Cheung and Ms. Welshons, who will play a coordinating role in academic program reviews; he distributed copies of a document entitled "Guiding Principles for Academic Program Review at the University of Minnesota" (between the * * *):

* * *

The goal of a university-wide process for conducting academic program reviews is to *evaluate quality* and *aid planning*. Primary outcomes include:

- an objective assessment of the health and vitality of our academic programs;
- recommendations that lead to programmatic improvement, from maintaining strengths to remedying weaknesses;
- alignment with institutional priorities and values.

Additional potential benefits provided by program review include:

- opportunities for our faculty and staff to engage with and learn about programs outside their unit, leading to an increase in cross-collegiate and cross-disciplinary collaborations;
- opportunities for outside constituents to learn about the strengths of our programs, leading to enhanced external visibility and reputation of the University of Minnesota.

To achieve these goals, the academic program review process should be defined with the following characteristics.

Collaborative

Program reviews are conducted through a partnership between the Provost's Office and the colleges, and involve the provost, vice provosts, college dean and associate dean(s), program faculty and students, and relevant staff. Program reviews should be guided by a central University policy and set of procedures that allow colleges a high degree of flexibility. The process may be tailored to fit individual program needs, but must also include a core set of system-wide, discipline-independent criteria and questions that indicate the value and purpose of the program to the broader institution.

Comprehensive

Program reviews should include all of a unit's academic programs, both undergraduate and graduate or professional. Reviews should also consider all aspects of the unit that contribute to or have an impact on its programs, including organizational structure, budget, facilities, and affiliated centers or institutes.

Developmental

The reviews must indicate how programs can improve as well as how they contribute to the overall strategic goals of the University. The process must therefore provide a safe space for faculty to examine areas where improvement is needed while also providing information needed for administrative decisions. Program reviews should be seen as part of a continuous improvement process, and it should be clearly stated when program review products may also inform resource allocation or program closure/merger decisions.

Value-added

The reviews must be neither so superficial as to be meaningless nor so demanding as to be disruptive to the academic programs. The process cannot be perceived to be "homework" assigned by administration to faculty and staff of programs under review; it must be considered useful by producing valuable outcomes and actionable recommendations.

Sustainable

All academic programs must be reviewed; however, the review cycle may vary by college and should depend in part on collegiate and institutional priorities. The review cycle schedule must not be so frequent as to over-evaluate programs nor so infrequent as to risk programs becoming outdated or of lower quality.

Adaptive

The review process itself must include opportunities to reflect on the effectiveness of the process and to identify areas for improvement.

* * *

Vice Provost McMaster explained that Provost Hanson has asked him and Vice Provost Schroeder to develop a new process for academic program reviews. There is a long history of program review at the University, mostly coordinated through the Graduate School, but a significant number of undergraduate programs must go through accreditation as well. This year he and Dr. Schroeder are considering what a process might look like; the document he provided to the Committee is a draft, there have been no decisions made, and they are talking with the deans and Provost Hanson about it.

Dr. McMaster also provided copies of a schematic of the conceptual framework for academic assessment at the University (which is oriented to accountability and improvement). There are four elements to academic assessment: the approval process of new, changed, or discontinued programs; academic program review; assessment of student learning; and regional and specialized accreditation. He noted that academic program reviews are also related to the Higher Learning Commission accreditation visit to the University in 2015, which the provost's office is coordinating. But program improvement is the more important part of academic assessment—how to improve student learning.

The approval process of new, changed, or discontinued academic programs goes through the provost's office to the Board of Regents, Dr. McMaster noted, and it involves significant change (e.g., not just adding or dropping a class). This happens on a regular basis.

The Board of Regents discussed the assessment of student learning in February; it involves a number of activities.

Regional and specialized accreditation includes a number of agencies and disciplines.

As for the principles for academic program review, a group has developed the draft over a number of months, Dr. McMaster reported, and in his view it is essential to get the principles right if the program reviews are to accomplish anything. He reviewed the elements of the draft.

Professor McPhee asked if the proposal includes other campuses. Dr. McMaster said there is not a clear answer to that question. It is their sense that this is predominantly for the Twin Cities campus, but they hope it would be helpful for all of the campuses.

Dr. McMaster reiterated that the reviews would be comprehensive, not just pick out one element of a program or department. He also noted, apropos of the "developmental" point, that if departments go into a review believing the administration is seeking to find weaknesses, the faculty will not engage in the process. They want to support departments and help them work better. In terms of frequency, some programs have not been reviewed for a very long time because the Graduate School imposed a

moratorium on reviews when it was being restructured, so there is catch-up to do. They have reached no conclusion about whether reviews should take place every 5 years, 10 years or if there should be a trigger mechanism that provokes a review. The reviews also need to be "culturally sensitive" because the review of a laboratory science department, for example, could be very different from the review of a humanities department. There will be standardized criteria but also very different criteria, depending on the field.

The language and word choice in the document creates uncertainty around the process, Professor Nelson said. The proposal identifies program review with department, but there are many programs that cross departments. It will be important to think about programs as well as departments and to be clear which the proposal is referring to. Dr. McMaster concurred.

Professor Schiff said that some undergraduate and graduate programs span departments and even colleges. If an undergraduate review cannot be approached as a department because of a very vertical curriculum, it makes sense to think about how to do it at the college level.

Professor von Dassow asked what a program is. The term is used many ways, she pointed out. Dr. McMaster said that "program" mostly correlates with "department," and they have, for example, three undergraduate programs in his department. But he agreed that semantics are important and the document will have to address the definitions. An added complication is inter-collegiate programs, Dr. Cheung observed. The Committee discussed the need to deal with inter-college programs, to not reinvent the entire process for them, to learn what happened previously, and to identify a coordinated plan that is aligned across colleges.

Professor von Dassow commented that the language under "developmental" sounds good but there is no process to be sure that happens. There must be a mechanism to implement the principles, to turn them into action. There are resource implications, Dr. McMaster said. Professor von Dassow agreed but said resources aren't the only problem. Also, regarding semantics, the document begins by speaking of "principles" but then describes "characteristics"; the right terms must be chosen to articulate the desired meaning.

Dr. McMaster said the conversations he has had have been about the elements of the process that involve undergraduate education; Dr. Cheung will speak about the graduate-education elements, and these are only in a preliminary stage.

Dr. McMaster outlined data and information elements that would be included in a review:

- a brief history of the program, how it evolved, and any new pieces that have been added
- curriculum and advising, degree requirements, sample plans
- courses offered, including liberal-education and writing-intensive, and data and descriptions from ECAS (the provost and college will gather much of this information)
- how writing in the major works
- who teaches which courses and the philosophy of pedagogy
- how the major addresses student learning outcomes
- retention and graduation rates and a profile of the students in terms of study abroad, awards, student organizations, labs/facilities and space (and whether they are adequate)
- future plans/possibilities
- points of pride

- what makes the program distinctive
- challenges

Professor McPhee reported that when he worked on program review, statistics (numbers supplied by the University) seemed to be inaccurate. Professor Breuch commented that numbers move with the semester and point in the semester.

Dr. Cheung next discussed review of graduate programs and said there are three key questions across all programs:

- Define the purpose of the program and the desired outcomes for the program (not necessarily learning outcomes; need the program need be a graduate degree-granting program or could it just be a research center, for instance?)
- What is the rationale and educational purpose for each element of the program: coursework, research, other training and professional experience, etc.
- How would you know what kind of evidence tells you that the program is achieving its outcomes?

Vice Provost McMaster asked if there would actually be a program that would say "no" in response to question 1, whether it needs to be a graduate program? Dr. Cheung said that a unit might determine that the graduate program isn't the highest priority. Sufficient training may be provided through a postdoc program, for instance.

Dr. Cheung pointed out that the process does not include "first professional" graduate programs. At this point, the "first professional" programs are considered to be in a different category as graduate and graduate professional programs. It is still unclear how the first professional programs may fit into the plan for academic program review. She explained that the list of "first professional" programs is a dynamic one and subject to change.

Professor von Dassow said that Dr. Cheung had said that a program might be too focused on research to be a graduate program. Could it also be too focused on pedagogy? The purposes of "learning" and "credentialing" are two different purposes that are being conflated. The purpose of graduate programs is not just to grant degrees. Dr. Cheung said it is a balance; the intended purpose of a program may be to meet a market need but the numbers in the program may not actually justify that purpose, so the review would a way to help faculty think through the purpose again.

Professor Nelson said that in program evaluation there are some factors that are part of the original program development and the subsequent evaluation periods. It is good to understand how the program will be evaluated from the start. Of course some programs began seven years ago and others fifty years ago. Ms. Welshons responded that that is why the interval between reviews can't be the same for all programs. There needs to be some other type of trigger other than once every 10 years; it must be based on the needs of the program.

Professor Breuch recalled that in the subcommittee on graduate program assessment, they heard Dr. Shultz (from the provost's office) present a different list [of what?] Dr. McMaster said that Dr. Shultz was specifically addressing assessment of student learning, which is a piece of academic program review.

Professor Brothen thanked Drs. Cheung and McMaster.

3. Twin Cities Curriculum Committee

Professor Brothen turned now to Vice Provost McMaster for a discussion of the Twin Cities Curriculum Committee.

Dr. McMaster said that the creation of a comprehensive campus curriculum committee had been discussed for several years and he pointed out that most of the University's peer institutions have had such a committee for decades. Support for creating the committee came from the Faculty Consultative Committee, this Committee, the president and the provost, so it was established. The committee began meeting in October, 2012, and meets once per month. In the fall it set up processes and procedures; they also developed membership of committee, which is selected by academic deans. Appointments flow through the deans, which is important, Dr. McMaster said.

The charge to the committee:

- advisory to provost
- work with colleges mediating conflicts among colleges
- maintain strong communication with the Council on Liberal Education and the Writing Board
- review possible duplication of courses
- indicate final approval of classes after collegiate committees
- evaluate the impact across campus of pulling courses out of a program

As of April 1, 2013, the committee will look at new course proposals and will aim for a one week turnaround. Dr. McMaster reported that the committee has already begun to look at specific instances of course duplication. It works confidentially so that committee members may speak candidly.

Professor Schiff commented that the process of dealing with thorny issues has been perceived by some as being slow, but the committee is only meeting once per month and also has been operationalizing course review. Dr. McMaster said the committee has been very deliberative at first and so is taking perhaps more time than it will take in the future. He said he has confidence that the committee is and will be working well.

Professor Brothen asked what the minutes of the curriculum committee will show. Dr. McMaster said they will document what items were discussed but not the details of who said what. Any group whose course is addressed will be provided with decision and rationale.

Professor Schiff said that the committee will ask course proposers to do due diligence in searching for duplication.

Professor Nelson asked how many new courses come through in a year; Dr. McMaster said about 100, and the committee will be able to handle that volume. He affirmed that the committee would keep statistics on the number of courses and trends.

4. Summer Calendar

Vice Provost McMaster turned now to the possibility of re-thinking how the summer calendar is structured. A new summer calendar was devised in 1998, when the University changed to semesters, and it included about 8 different summer terms; the Twin Cities campus summer calendar has not been revisited since, to consider its logic and coherence. The president suggested it was time to look at it again; Academic Support Resources studied it and did great work in compiling information.

Dr. McMaster said that he wished to discuss one aspect of the summer calendar: the lack of standardization. When courses in the core curriculum are taught, it would be a benefit to students not to have to take one in May, one that ends in August, one that has a four-week term, one that has an eight-week term, and so on. There are dozens of different start and end dates for summer terms; his goal is to try, as much as possible, to ensure that most (perhaps 70-75%) of the core undergraduate curriculum courses fall during the regular eight-week summer term.

He also suggests that the Committee might wish to look at timing. Right now the "May" term may start in middle or late May and run to middle or late June—that is not a May term. There is a week between the end of spring and start of May term; perhaps that can be eliminated and the regular summer term moved a little earlier in the year.

Ms. VanVoorhis reported that her office will look at the types of students who take summer courses and what they take. There are not many entering freshmen who take courses before their first fall term.

This is a work in progress, Dr. McMaster concluded, and the discussion can continue.

Professor Nelson pointed out that the May term is a very big deal for field courses. Dr. McMaster said they would not propose to touch field courses.

Professor Brothen asked if there continues to be discussion about a year-round schedule. Dr. McMaster said the campus will try to have as much of the regular curriculum available in the summer as possible, but he said he does not believe there is appetite for a full third semester. Purdue has looked at that option for a number of years and has hesitated to adopt it. There are many complexities.

Ms. Ellingson asked if they have considered the needs of career people who need continuing education credits. Not right now, Dr. McMaster said; the attention is on undergraduates and about perhaps banding the spring and May terms or the May and summer terms.

One bone of contention, Dr. McMaster said, is whether always to start spring semester on the Twin Cities campus after the Martin Luther King holiday. This year the MLK holiday is so late that some commencements are not until the third week in May. He said he saw no reason why the spring semester start date could not be adjusted.

5. 2017-18 Calendars

Dr. Falkner presented the proposed 2017-18 academic calendars for the four campuses (counting Rochester and the Twin Cities as one). She noted that the Crookston and Duluth calendars are presented for information and the Morris and Twin Cities calendars for action.

Professor Brothen asked what the earliest year for adopting a start date before the MLK holiday might be. Dr. Falkner said it is not unheard of to change an approved calendar but said she did not believe it could be done before 2017-18—and if there needs to be longer discussion about the alternative, then perhaps not before 2018-19. Dr. Falkner, when asked, said she had no idea what kind of opposition there might be starting spring semester early.

Dr. Falkner noted that the Twin Cities campus calendar follows the normal design, allowing a study day during the week because Labor Day comes early enough. It would be possible to eliminate the study day that occurs after the last day of instruction, but students say they appreciate having it.

Professor Nelson said that for her department, study-abroad programs need three full weeks during the winter break. One of their major objectives is to increase study-abroad participation; moving the start date of spring semester earlier would be a big change. And study-abroad could not easily be moved to December, Professor Wick added. Study-abroad could also be part of the discussion about the May term, if that changes, Dr. Falkner noted.

It was agreed that Professor McCormick would initiate a discussion at the Faculty Senate meeting about starting spring semester early when the calendars are presented for action.

Ms. Ellingson asked about the motivation for starting fall semester before Labor Day and then having a 3-day break. Most institutions start before Labor Day, Dr. Falkner said; the Twin Cities campus does not because of the conflict with the State Fair. Professor McPhee said the Morris campus has been starting before Labor Day for a number of years because it allows them to end the semester early for people who need to travel. There would be opposition if his campus were asked to start later in the fall.

Dr. Falkner commented that if the University were to move to a full-year calendar, there would be minimum opportunities for breaks for students.

The Committee voted unanimously to approve the 2017-18 Twin Cities and Morris calendars, which will be placed on the docket of the Faculty Senate for approval on May 2.

Professor Brothen adjourned the meeting at 3:55.

-- Gary Engstrand