

Minutes*

**Senate Committee on Educational Policy
February 7, 1991 (Afternoon)**

Present: Thomas Clayton (chair), Martin Conroy, Joanne DeMoss, Edward Foster, Roland Guyotte, Ken Heller, Robert Jones, Karen Karni, Marvin Mattson, Clark Starr, Jennifer Wesson

Guests: Geoff Gorvin (Footnote), Patricia Kovel-Jarboe (Minnesota Extension Service), Mark Luker (Acting Chief Information Officer)

1. Report of the Chair

Professor Clayton began the meeting with announcements. He circulated a copy of the letter concerning reallocation sent to Dr. Kuhl on behalf of the Committee. He also distributed copies of a memo from Professor Gary Joselyn concerning teaching evaluation.

He reported that he has received a request from the School of Management to use, on an experimental basis, plus-minus grading. He recalled for Committee members that when a proposal to adopt plus/minus grading had been placed before the Assembly it had been voted down.

The Morse-Alumni selection committee is at work and will receive nominations before the Committee later in the month.

There has been a request from the Civil Service Committee for the placement of one of the floating holidays during the 1993-94 calendar; it suggests the fourth floating holiday be on March 25. The Civil Service Committee has asked that it have a role in setting the holidays on the calendar, Professor Clayton reported, which seems reasonable. Rather than have a calendar subcommittee, he suggested, it would be appropriate to have the Civil Service Committee review proposed calendars and make recommendations to SCEP--which could then, annually, recommend a calendar to the Assembly. Unless there are fundamental issues to be addressed, he urged, there is no need for a standing committee. **It was moved, seconded, and voted unanimously to consult the Civil Service Committee each year when the calendar is being developed.**

Inasmuch as SCEP did not know what the alternative date for the fourth floating holiday might have been (rather than March 25), it was agreed to defer action on the specific request until the next meeting.

2. Policy on Finals Week and Study Day

There has been an evolution in how the policy should be administered, Professor Clayton reported. Meantime, there have already been requests for exemptions to which responses must be made. Suggestions have been made that there be a standing subcommittee, something that Professor Clayton again commented might be unnecessary. He assumed, he said, that exceptions would be rare, granted

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only in genuine emergencies; if so, there is no need for a subcommittee. And if not true, there is no need for the policy.

One Committee member suggested a "czar" be appointed, perhaps the chair of SCEP, to make the decisions. This would be make sense, it was contended, if most requests for exemptions will be made on an emergency basis; assembling a subcommittee would be a cumbersome procedure. These decisions, in turn, could be reviewed by the full Committee.

3. Discussion of Telecommunications

Professor Clayton next welcomed Patricia Kovel-Jarboe and Acting Chief Information Officer Mark Luker to the meeting to discuss telecommunications.

Ms. Kovel-Jarboe said she wished to hear from the Committee any concerns it might have, to obtain its suggestions about appropriate uses of telecommunications during the pilot period (when a system linking Morris and the Twin Cities campuses will be established), and to be advised who should be involved.

The impetus behind the effort, she explained, is the need to deliver courses and programs, via telecommunications rather than travel, to areas where they are currently unavailable. It is in part related to the State of Minnesota STARS system (a statewide telecommunications system), which has been planned for about two years and is now close to implementation. A number of University people were involved in the discussions of the development of STARS; as a result, there have been an increasing number of internal discussions about how the University might use telecommunications. A plan has emerged to connect the campuses of the University; the first phase would create an interactive video connection between the Twin Cities and Morris. The equipment has been ordered and the system will be operational; a graduate education course will be delivered during Spring Quarter (a course normally offered at Morris, by having a faculty member drive to Morris).

One set of questions, Ms. Kovel-Jarboe told the Committee, is who ought to be made aware of the project, who ought to be involved in its use, and for what purposes. What, she added, will be the appropriate evaluation of the system? One Committee member inquired what the structure will be for making decisions on how to use the system, how often, and whether for courses or other activities.

Several ideas have been considered, she said. Some administrative uses have been envisioned, such as for the governance system or search committees. The implicit assumption has been that the Chief Information Officer would make the decisions on the uses of the system, although the "instructional telecommunications working group" will have to address these issues.

What does this cost by comparison with conference telephones, Ms. Kovel-Jarboe was asked. This is probably about 20 times as expensive as audio conferences, she said. Administrative uses alone would not drive the development of the system; there would have to be substantial instructional use. She agreed that visual contact would have to be necessary to justify the system.

Has the UNITE link with Rochester worked out well, Ms. Kovel-Jarboe was asked. She said that those involved with it believe it has. Instructor satisfaction and learner outcomes are comparable to those

of a traditional classroom setting. There is considerable inconvenience for delivering instruction in this way, one Committee member observed, such as needing to teach in a television studio. There were, moreover, only two people in Rochester to receive the instruction--compared to 33 in the Twin Cities.

There will be inconveniences during the pilot period, Ms. Kovel-Jarboe agreed. [Inconvenient in that faculty will not be able to teach from their normal classrooms but rather from a studio.] There will be a studio in Rarig to originate the broadcast, and there will be a comparable facility in Morris to receive it. Since there will be only those two facilities, classes will have to be moved to them. In the long run, if the system were to be fully developed, there would have to be many more classrooms equipped for origination.

Is there an outstanding call for this service, Ms. Kovel-Jarboe was asked; are people beating down the door, saying they desperately need the system to meet obvious educational needs? Or is this a technology which exists and for which people are now trying to find a use? No doubt the technology has improved since the early days of television, but given the millions of dollars of educational needs on the campus, do we really need this?

One Committee member, who has participated in the telecasting of classes to two different cities, said he would confront as much "rigmarole" in preparing for the telecast as he would just driving to the two cities. He also asserted, on the basis of work with companies and corporations, that if the University is not there in person, some other organization will be. There are, however, also good reasons for interactive TV, although the University has not led the way in letting application drive development.

Ms. Kovel-Jarboe responded that a number of people have argued strongly that there is a demand, although there are many "ifs" and unknowns; it is their hope that during the pilot project it will be possible to better assess the demand. Questions about convenience and instructional utility can also be addressed through this small-scale effort.

Is there any sense of how many courses or how much activity would be required to make this a worthwhile effort? She said she has not thought about that question but the working group clearly will have to do so. The \$80,000 cost of the pilot will allow for purchase of the equipment to "digitize" the video signal and to send it out over existing telephone lines between Morris and the Twin Cities. This is, Ms. Kovel-Jarboe agreed, a different technology from that used in UNITE: It is audio and video in both directions (UNITE is one-way video with an audio return). Will the system permit scanning of a classroom, essential to effective teaching? Yes, she said.

Dr. Luker told the Committee that the University has avoided investment in telecommunications for years; with the previous technology, the cost of communication from city to city was too high. Now, with the signal compressed and sent on a cheaper line, it has become more practical; this is the same technology that is used by the networks to interview reporters on the evening news. The reduction in cost, by a factor of 30, allows the University to make the test. For this test the communications cost is basically zero because extra space on a computer data line is being used. Costs will be cut in a number of ways, he said, so that a judgment about the experiment can be based on educational benefits rather than financial costs. Part of the project, of course, is intended to do precisely that--and the place where SCEP will play a central role. The other reason for the pilot project is to try to determine what it would cost to move to full production: How many classes would be required for pay-off? Is pay-off even possible?

What does that mean?

As far as supervision of the pilot project is concerned, he told the Committee, it is basically in his office. This new technology crosses many University offices so falls within his responsibilities. If the University went into full production, however, allocation of the resource would have to be decided on the basis of priority or resources, and the questions would certainly have to be brought to SCEP for consideration.

Dr. Foster explained to the Committee that there are continual pressures on the University to mount new kinds of outreach programs and to provide education in non-metropolitan areas. HECB is pressing the University to expand its capacity to deliver its expertise. President Hasselmo, independently of HECB, has been the one voice in central administration contending that the University cannot sit by and let the expertise in telecommunications fall to the other higher education systems--some of which are much more involved in it than is the University. The President argues that the University must at least know enough to decide whether or not it should become more active in telecommunications. Others in the administration are closer to the view that there are a lot of problems in the University and wonder whether this is necessary. There was finally central administrative agreement that the pilot project would be undertaken; if it seems to be valuable, then links to the other campuses can be established.

There are, Dr. Foster observed, considerable pressures which will push the University in the direction of expanding its telecommunications capabilities. A new graduate program in Toxicology has been approved, between the Duluth and Twin Cities campuses; faculty and students on both campuses will participate and the program assumes a video linkage. There will also be a strong push for telecommunications if the Crookston campus moves toward an arts and science program (as has been suggested in the reallocation plan).

Would the system be geared to graduate, professional, and specialty classes rather than more ordinary undergraduate classes? Ms. Kovel-Jarboe said it probably would be oriented to programs which are unique or close to it.

The system will have to be evaluated in part on whether or not the technology works but more on whether or not it is educationally effective, it was said by one Committee member. That may be problematic, because the University can hardly evaluate its educational delivery now; how will they know if the system is performing? This is a problem that will have to be tackled, Dr. Luker agreed; professional evaluators will be used. Professor Clayton observed that while it is not SCEP's responsibility to devise a technical evaluation system, it would be willing to advise the administration on approaches to evaluation, and the issues to be addressed, once a system is outlined by the experts concerned.

In terms of staff required, Ms. Kovel-Jarboe said, at first there would likely be a need for a technician on each end; as students become more experienced, however, they can be instructed to turn on the equipment when they come to class. With experience, she said, the faculty members also become adept at manipulating the cameras for their teaching. During the pilot, since the broadcasts will take place in studios, there will likely be technical people around.

One Committee member expressed doubt about the project, maintaining that it would consume considerable money but provide dubious benefits. It was also argued that this is being done "because

everybody else is doing it." Another individual, however, said there are a lot of uses for the system. But given the enormous needs of the University, it was rejoined, funds devoted to this would be diverted from other, more pressing uses. If, however, telecommunications can do something essential that nothing else can, then it should be considered.

About \$65,000 of the cost, Dr. Luker told the Committee, is for the purchase of equipment, which would be required only periodically. The communications cost is about \$8,000 for three months; it would be this latter cost that would recur. But cost is an important issue, he agreed.

Moreover, one Committee member noted, a case must be made by users for the necessity of visual interaction. In many cases it may be necessary; in many others, however, an audio connection should be sufficient for effective teaching. Ms. Kovel-Jarboe concurred; both interactive video and audio "conferencing" are effective. The advantage to interactive video, she explained, is that it requires the least adjustment in instructional style on the part of the faculty member; a course need not be redesigned for interactive television.

Will the University react to forces calling for this service, or will the University package and sell the courses? Is it responding to a need or aggressively pursuing a new dimension in education? In the case of the initial courses that will be offered, the University will be responding in a different way to needs to which it has been responding for some time, Ms. Kovel-Jarboe said.

As part of the evaluation process, one Committee member urged, account must be taken of the time faculty members must put into preparation for these courses. They will be worried, it was said, because going in front of a camera can be intimidating.

Dr. Luker informed the Committee that the College of Education is in favor of this project because it provides them a means to become experienced with the technology--a technology used in many K-12 networks around the State. He also commented on several other institutions which have become actively involved in telecommunications.

Professor Clayton thanked Ms. Kovel-Jarboe and Dr. Luker for their comments. The Committee agreed it wished to review the evaluation plans, once they have been developed.

One Committee member inquired of Dr. Foster if support for the telecommunications effort could be obtained through a State Special allocation. He said it would be very unlikely, because the State prefers to funnel funds for telecommunication to the STARS system rather than for independent system activities.

4. Discussion of Reallocation

Professor Clayton next turned the attention of Committee members to the reallocation plan.

One Committee member said he found, reading the case statements, that there is insufficient detail to be able to determine very much. It is not clear how the money will be reallocated. Nor is there continuity among the plans, another individual noted; comparisons among the plans cannot be made.

Another, however, observed that these documents once again serve to emphasize the complexity of the University; they were developed by many offices and it is possible to see the pain involved, the astounding effort put into them, and the general directions that units intend to move in. The short notice required for their production, and the level of intangibles involved as far as where the reallocated funds will come from, must be taken into account. Some funds, for instance, will come from retirements--but the units do not know when the retirements will occur.

One Committee member said he looked at two of the plans in detail. In IT, he said, and Because the IT plan is college-wide, he said, it is difficult to tell if funds will be going into the sciences or into engineering, or both. In Education, by contrast, there is a massive cut; the cut, however, does not appear to be programmatic--it appears to be all based on retirements. The impression one gets is that the cuts will be across-the-board. Dr. Foster said he believed that the choice of retirements to reallocate was based on programmatic decisions. There will not be, he understood, a reduction within programs which are unique.

One common denominator in the plans, it was said, appears to be the analysis of educational plans in terms of industrial efficiency: Make more gadgets in the same amount of time with the same number of people.

On the level of detail, Dr. Foster reminded the Committee, the documents were written for the Board of Regents. The problem is one of trying to focus the attention of Board members on policy issues rather than on administrative decisions; the same may be true for SCEP. How to deal with the policy questions without the details of the administrative decisions is a problem, he acknowledged, and it may require placing much trust in the administrators. Even if the colleges did know what they intend to do for the next five years, however, they would not have put all the details in these documents.

So what is the Committee supposed to do, Dr. Foster was asked. The Committee is being asked if it approves of the ideas, he said, and the general direction of changes that are being recommended. More of the details are filled in each year through the budget process, he pointed out. These are plans that are still in motion, another Committee member agreed; they are not final. Dr. Foster concurred, noting that these plans are a replay of Academic Priorities--they set out directions that the University is determined to move in and recommend that a few irrevocable decisions be made. If the Board of Regents approves the directions, the administration will continue to develop the details in the year-by-year budgetary process. The particulars for the first year, in fact, will be seen this Spring in the 1991-92 budgets.

While these documents may continue to represent hypothetical good works, one Committee member observed, he is in favor of what they propose--even though he is no closer to the actual good works than he was before. The point about the details is a valid one, he agreed, but at some point the Committee will need to know more in order to continue to express its approval. Even with a five-year plan, and plans in development, more information needs to be provided.

In one way the documents are negative, one Committee member observed, because they only specifically identify what will be closed or phased out. The vagueness tends to attach to the plans of the survivors. The Faculty Consultative Committee, it was said, has urged that the benefits of the plan, and the results of spending the money in different ways, be a much larger part of the process and the presentations, and the President agreed with FCC's view.

If there is to be a plan to improve undergraduate education, presumably the funds will go into those things that need to be strengthened. The Task Force on Liberal Education is one document which identifies where money might be spent--although the report has not been adopted. In a broad sense, however, it is clear where the shifts of funds will be made--except that more details are needed on the system-wide initiatives. On the last point, Dr. Foster told the Committee, the administration has agreed to provide "case statements" on the system-wide initiatives.

Individual colleges, presumably, have plans which underlie the case statements. The CLA "Agenda for Action" is a corollary to reallocation, and identifies where money might go within the college. Can one put them together? Dr. Foster commented that in the case of CLA the situation is complicated by the search for the dean; no one will set in concrete the CLA plans before a dean is hired. There is also the understanding that until CLA reallocates internally there will be "not one dime" of new money made available. Those conversations, however, have taken place between Anne Hopkins and the CLA people. (Academic Affairs, he pointed out, is much more decentralized than it used to be; the appointment of the Vice Provost means that many things are accomplished outside the central office of the Vice President.)

One Committee member asked if the Committee had anything further to say about the hard choices that were made. It has communicated its views about the College of Education (to which it will soon receive a response, Dr. Foster reported). Is there anything more about which there are strong feelings?

One item raised was the cut in CEE funding for the global campus. There have long been plans to increase study abroad by Minnesota students, and existing programs are very limited by comparison to peer institutions. There is, in addition, a system-wide initiative identified as international education. Why, in light of all this, is the CEE program being cut back? Dr. Foster suggested that this concern should also be directed to Dr. Kuhl. He explained that the international education item in the system-wide initiatives does mean study abroad. Associate Vice President has been trying to centralize and rationalize the many study-abroad programs offered by the University; he is not especially unhappy with the cut proposed by CEE. Much of the CEE subsidy subsidizes students at other institutions who register through the University of Minnesota to go abroad. CEE Dean Miller, moreover, made sure that Dr. Kvavik was aware of the proposed cut.

The plan to increase the number of Minnesota students who study abroad, Dr. Foster assured the Committee, has not been lost. If funding can be provided, through the system-wide initiatives, the number will be increased. It was reported also that Dr. Kvavik hopes to address the problem of having these programs scattered through a large number of units--which has meant that there are considerable funds tied up in overhead rather than devoted to the study-abroad programs themselves.

The Liberal Education Task Force, one Committee member reported, will include a call for international education among its recommendations, so a certain part of that education can take place on this campus. Dr. Foster also told the Committee, vis-a-vis the report, that if the document receives fairly wide support, the administration has virtually committed itself to supporting the recommendations; there is, hypothetically, money tucked away in the reallocation plan which could be used to implement them. If there is a will, there will be a way, in all probability.

The "bottom line" of the reallocation plan does give some cause for concern. Minnesota has ranked at the bottom of the Big Ten in terms of dollars spent per student; does this report address those overall issues? Spending per student does not by itself guarantee that one will receive a good education, but will the University's position be improved as a result of the plan? Could not those global measures be prepared to show improvement? Dr. Foster pointed out that the plan proposes to shift about \$8 million from administrative and service units into academic programs; that alone would improve instructional funding significantly.

It is assumed that the costs of these services would not be shifted to the departments; the responsible administrators have promised to try to ensure that the central reductions are not accompanied by increases in unit expenses. There are specific hopes (that are close to being plans) in the finance areas in which reorganization will actually save a lot of money without imposing more responsibilities on colleges and units. In Academic Affairs, the 10% cut is a reduction in the number of people on the staff--and this will mean a reduction in workload as well. What one must do is identify things now being done which do not need to be done. A number of such things have been identified. Dr. Foster also clarified that the costs of instruction will not be affected by these changes--because funding for overhead costs will be transferred to instructional units--and thus remain a part of instructional costs. This transfer will change the ratio between overhead and programs.

Professor Clayton asked if the Committee, taking account of the additional documentation, wished to reaffirm its support of reallocation and to communicate its views to the Board of Regents (with the reservation, of course, that the Committee again reserves the right to express its views as more of the specifics become available). **It was moved and seconded to compose and communicate these views to the Board of Regents. The Committee voted unanimously in favor of the motion.** Mr. Conroy abstained, explaining that the official position of his student association is that it will not take a position on reallocation.

It was agreed that the Committee should continue to play a role in the development of the plans and that it would perhaps review the budget documents (to the extent that implementation of reallocation plans could be identified in budgetary decisions). The Committee also agreed that it would, when appropriate, invite academic vice presidents to discuss the more specific plans that each unit will carry out.

Dr. Foster warned the Committee that there will be another process going on parallel to the reallocation plan: "the base-budget-cutting plan that will come to us when we get hit over the head by the Governor's budget for next year." The President has been absolutely firm in saying that such cuts will require other programmatic reductions in addition to those specified in the reallocation plan. It is possible, however, that the University may have to give up the positive part of reallocation in the first year--because it may be necessary to come up with a great deal of money on July 1. Reallocation is not quite as urgent as that.

The Committee adjourned at 3:00.

-- Gary Engstrand