

Minutes*

**Senate Committee on Educational Policy
Tuesday, February 21, 1995
1:45 - 3:30
Room 626 Campus Club**

- Present: Kenneth Heller (chair), Jeff Bauer, Anita Cholewa, Elayne Donahue, Laura Coffin Koch, Judith Martin, Gayle Graham Yates
- Regrets: James Cotter, Megan Gunnar, Sara Hornstra, Robert Johnson, Manuel Kaplan, William Van Essendelft, Darren Walhof
- Absent: Darwin Hendel, Ryan Nilsen
- Guests: Vice President Mel George

[In these minutes: Legislative efforts; U2000; the need for cluster planning; review of Senate educational policies; Twin Cities campus calendar]

1. Discussion with Vice President George

Professor Heller convened the meeting at 1:45; before inviting Dr. George to make his presentation, he reminded Committee members that he still needed volunteers to sit on the cross-committee group considering the critical measures. He also announced that his term on the Committee ends in June, so Committee members should think about recommendations they might wish to make to the Committee on Committees about who should chair next year.

He then welcomed Vice President George to discuss issues associated with the legislative request and with U2000. [Note: Dr. George made similar presentations to the Senate Committee on Finance and Planning (2/14) and the Faculty Consultative Committee (2/16); only those points different from the ones recorded in those minutes will be reported here.]

Asked what the plans ARE to get from the vision of U2000 to the accomplishment of the performance goals of the critical measures, Dr. George said the President expects that as the plans from the colleges develop, much of what will go on in the units to achieve the goals will be identified. It is not clear what will happen in terms of institutional goals. He said he has raised this issue himself, because he believes faculty participation in the process of reaching INSTITUTIONAL goals is also important. The President has been frustrated, he commented, that what he wanted to see happen has not. The critical measures are important and the University must give thought to how it will make them happen.

There are also things running at cross-purposes, observed one Committee member. One goal is to make the University more user-friendly; at the same time, colleges are talking about cutting small classes and teaching more that are larger. One cannot teach all 3-student classes, to be sure, but these pressures

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do not go in the same direction. Nor is it reasonable to expect people to be pleased when the message is that budgets will be cut and programs eliminated.

The partnership proposal, Dr. George observed, includes more reallocation. If the University is to be what most want, it will be smaller and have fewer programs. That, he said, is the only way it will be able to compete in an era of tight funds. Also frustrating is that the significant investments to be made in a number of areas trails behind the reallocation, so that one only now sees the reallocation and not the investment. One must keep in mind the bigger picture; the programs that remain will be better supported.

There is no new mixing of departments and colleges in the planning process. Instead there are goals and critical measures, and no clearly defined way of achieving them. There needs to be a REPRESENTATIVE group--not all faculty--to address what must be cut and what the University can dispense with. Dr. George said he has suggested that faculty leaders hold a retreat for three days and develop ideas for the University.

Faculty did that several years ago; it was called the Campbell Committee, and the faculty members serving on it nearly got lynched, recalled one Committee member. They put in a lot of time and recommended hard choices. Once one tries to make decisions, one steps on toes. Real decisions will require stepping on powerful toes. It is the bigger units that have to be eliminated; cutting a department with three faculty and half-time secretary will not be enough. The University must take big programs and say it will not do this any more. Dr. George said he was not convinced this was the only thing the University could do.

Everyone says more can be obtained by increasing efficiency. The University has no more efficiencies left, argued one Committee member; it has been "sucked dry the last twenty years." The biggest heroes in the place are the staff; how they do their jobs under the conditions of no resources is a wonder. There are a lot of people juggling very fast to keep all the balls in the air.

Dr. George agreed, but said that the University is doing things it could stop doing. Has any group ever tried to think about a realistic picture of what the University should be in fifteen years, if it is to remain a major player among research universities? One Committee member said it is too hard to think that way unless one is guaranteed that one's own unit won't be cut. Wise people would participate in such a group if they were guaranteed their work would be taken seriously.

A serious effort to take the long view could lead one to think about abolishing some departments and replacing them with interdisciplinary centers. That is the direction knowledge is taking.

It is better to start with a positive vision, said one Committee member. The faculty now are concerned about what will be cut; students are concerned about how high tuition will be. That is the way information comes down from the deans; there is no discussion of the big vision or about doing better, only about surviving with less.

When she entered the profession, one Committee member recalled, "the faculty" ran the university in terms of what would be taught. Now, the faculty are factionalized so badly, and the situation is students versus faculty, with the faculty feeling they must look out for themselves, and there is a greater distance between faculty and administration. As a result, this and other committees feel like they must

scream and stamp their feet to get attention, rather than to serve as a steering committee for educational policy. The sense of trust has been harmed.

Dr. George said he understood. Part of it is the professionalization of the administration, and the increased need for accountability. Corporations have learned what every university in the country knows: that the people who do the work must be involved in the planning.

A discussion of where knowledge is going is attractive, Dr. George said. Forget about budgets and talk about the shape of knowledge, about what the University should look like and what students should learn. Could SCEP pursue this, he asked? He agreed that there is a loss of trust, and there must be a sense developed again that "we are all in this together." That must include an honest exchange of opinions.

Professor Heller thanked Dr. George for joining the Committee.

2. Committee Discussion

Committee members then continued a discussion of some of the points raised with Dr. George.

- Comments were made that cast doubt on the commitment of some departments to the planning process. Some may be doing two plans--one, what the University wants to see, and another, what it really needs to do. Departments hear that the University will be smaller and better supported; they are afraid of the former and may not believe the latter.
- Committee members were puzzled about the disappearance of cluster planning. This seemed to be a useful way to involve faculty in planning without the constraints of department and collegial boundaries.
- One hears that the faculty must be more efficient; does that mean larger classes? Faculty could be more efficient if the University would hire people to do jobs so that faculty members don't have to be their own secretary and administer their own research budgets. It is to be hoped that this is what the administration means when it says units will be better supported.
- How will the departments accomplish the objectives of U2000? There is no driving plan in U2000. The critical measures have been created without departments being asked how they will accomplish them. At the central level, it was said in response, the President and vice presidents are asking the deans about the measures.
- The pyramidal structure of the University is the problem. Reporting is from provost to dean to department, and the departments exist in isolation. In real life, work goes across lines. One sees more and more of a corporate structure being put in place, but that is inappropriate to the work of the faculty and departments. The University is ORGANIZED incorrectly to achieve the objectives it has established.

The last point served as the springboard to continued discussion of the need to recharge the clusters, so planning is not necessarily divided by colleges or departments. Diversity in perspective,

outside the department level, is needed. It may be that clusters would not be static, or some would be static and others would evolve, and that units should be permitted to be in as many clusters as they deemed appropriate to their work. Perhaps models from other institutions should be sought, and they should come from peer institutions rather than small liberal arts colleges.

It may be that the Senate should become involved; it could, for example, adopt a policy or resolution calling for restarting the cluster planning process in a meaningful way. One Committee member suggested structuring it around people doing different kinds of work, including the top students and faculty members recognized as outstanding teachers and researchers, who could be gathered in groups to work on filling in the details of U2000. One argument against that might be that those who are most successful under the current structure may not want to see change. The clusters will not succeed, it was agreed, at any higher a level than that at which they are appointed (e.g., if the deans appoint them, the work will be confined to that college). The question is how to get the correct mix of people involved-- and those who are must be convinced the work is valuable and that something will come of it. What is it the clusters could implement?

One idea might be to have six clusters, one around each of the goals of U2000; members could be nominated by Senate committees. The exact membership would be less important than how the clusters were motivated and how they were charged.

Perhaps it was too early for cluster planning last year, but now that units and colleges have gone through the planning process, the timing would be better. The clusters do something with the plans that presumably now exist.

There was broad agreement on the Committee that cluster planning is needed.

Two issues need to be considered. One is how the members of the clusters are chosen. It was, for example, a fight to get any students involved last year. That must change. The other big problem was the lack of direction for clusters; they cannot simply be charged to talk. Should THEY decide, however, on their assignment, or should that be part of their charge? That needs to be made clear.

Having goals for the clusters would be desirable, but if the people in clusters don't want to do what is assigned, they will not. The administration, however, feels uncomfortable setting goals, because people feel railroaded. Perhaps the SENATE should set the directions. This Committee could suggest what the goals might be.

Professor Heller asked for volunteers to craft a resolution that might be taken to the Senate, including both goals and how the clusters would be appointed. Ms. Cholewa and Professor Graham Yates agreed to do so.

3. Review of Senate Educational Policies

Professor Heller distributed copies of additional Senate policies that need to be considered, and reviewed the charges to each of the subcommittees considering different groups of policies. In short, the subcommittees are to summarize existing policies, identify gaps where policies may be needed, identify which existing policies should be eliminated, and which existing policies should be amended.

The goal is to present to the Senate, perhaps next quarter, the full set of Senate educational policies, and to void all other policies, whether or not discovered in the search of Senate minutes for policies. The intent is to start with a clean slate.

One Committee member inquired how Senate policies are approved and enforced, and noted one policy that is not being enforced. The administration, it was said, is to report to the Senate on the disposition of Senate policies, and whether or not they are being enforced. In the case of the particular policy, it was suggested that this Committee could take up this issue, or the Senate could take it up with the President. If this is not an isolated incident--which one suspects it may be not--then the larger question could be brought up on the floor of the Senate, under "Questions to the President." No Senate policy **MUST** be enforced by the administration, it was pointed out; they are all recommendations to the administration.

Will there be a procedure, in the future, so that Senate policies are tracked, and the Senate knows whether or not its policies are approved and enforced. The intent is that there will be Senate policy manual. [Note: There is now in place, and has been for three years, a protocol whereby the Senate's policy actions are formally forwarded to the President's office, and the President's office notifies the Senate what action has been taken on the item.]

Asked if Senate policies are only guidelines, Professor Heller said they are more than guidelines, but if the administration declines to approve or enforce one, the Senate can "make a fuss," or work with the administration to revise the policy so it is acceptable, or, in the extreme case, start action to remove the administration. The governance system will not work, however, unless both sides approach it in good faith; the Senate cannot just lie down and be ignored and the administration cannot simply ignore the Senate's actions. When both approach it positively, however, it will work. The administration takes Senate policy seriously.

Are there collegiate or administrative policies that are also educational policies, asked one Committee member? Can the Committee obtain access to them, especially the central administrative policies? The Senate should not set policies on everything that takes place, said one Committee member; colleges and departments are different and there need to be different policies in different places. The Senate should set broad guidelines that apply to everyone.

The question one subcommittee had, it was reported, was "where are these policies coming from?" Are they Senate policies or are they administrative policies? Subcommittee members are concerned that they are not seeing all the educational policies that may exist, and wish access to administrative educational policies in order to have a better sense of what they are doing. The problem, it was said, is that no one has assembled administrative policies in one packet.

The Senate office is doing the best it can to dig up the existing policies, Professor Heller noted, and there may be a long process of locating all of them. The majority of them, however, are probably already in the hands of the subcommittees, and SCEP can identify both places where policy is needed and instances where it knows policy exists but does not have the policy; in the case of the latter, it can either find the policy or adopt one.

Professor Heller asked that the subcommittee reports be circulated by email, before the next SCEP meeting if possible. It was agreed that the subcommittee on classes and schedules will report at the next meeting.

Professor Heller noted that among the new policies distributed at this meeting, one identifies SCEP as the body with authority to review the proposed creation of new colleges. It is perhaps helpful to remind people of this, inasmuch as there could be proposals, under the new provostal system, to rearrange colleges.

4. Twin Cities Calendar

Professor Heller reported that he had mentioned to FCC the possibility of an early-start calendar for the Twin Cities campus; the reactions, he said, were not positive.

Perhaps consideration should be given to splitting Winter Quarter, so there are five weeks before and five weeks after the holidays, and the Twin Cities calendar still only runs for nine months. The reactions to that proposal generally, however, have also not been positive.

The majority opinion on FCC, he reported, was that the principal thing to be accomplished is getting the year completed earlier. THAT is what is most important; that is what puts the University "out of synch" with the rest of the country. The Thanksgiving holiday was not a concern; the early ending was the concern. Opinions were split on the viability of the quarter system.

The only solution is to move to semesters, it was said; that is the ONLY option if one wants the academic year to end earlier and one is opposed to splitting Winter Quarter. Semesters should be proposed, it was said, although the President asked for a five-year moratorium on that discussion. It wasn't certain when that moratorium will end.

The splitting of Winter Quarter could be considered, as could the traditional calendar. The Senate would probably like to hear that SCEP considered three options: ending Fall Quarter at Thanksgiving and beginning Winter Quarter after the New Year, splitting Winter Quarter, and the traditional calendar. That is the universe of possibilities within the quarter system; SCEP will then probably recommend the traditional calendar. But it would be helpful to itemize the options, if the quarter system is to be retained, and to point out that the only way something different can be accomplished is if the semester calendar is adopted.

The State Fair would NOT be a constraint on the calendar, it was pointed out; that is a rumor that has no basis in fact. Since there have been parking spots added, and transit improved, most problems with State Fair parking problems could be accommodated.

The problems with budgets and dorms and so on would arise with the option to end Fall Quarter at Thanksgiving and not begin Winter Quarter until January. Those problems would likely NOT arise with a split-quarter system.

Each of the choices, with its implications, and SCEP's recommendations, should be presented, and let the Senate simply reach a conclusion.

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Professor Heller adjourned the meeting at 3:30.

-- Gary Engstrand

University of Minnesota