

Minutes*

Senate Committee on Educational Policy
Wednesday, October 21, 1998
1:00 – 3:00
Room 229 Nolte Center

Present: Judith Martin (chair), Shumaila Anwer, Darwin Hendel, Gordon Hirsch, Laura Coffin Koch, Kathleen Newell, Martin O’Hely, Jeff Ratliff-Crain, Palmer Rogers, Richard Skaggs, Thomas Soulen, Craig Swan

Regrets: Robert Johnson, Christine Maziar, Tina Rovick

Absent: none

Guests: J. Peter Zetterberg (Office of Planning and Analysis); Professor Kent Bales (Academic Appointments Subcommittee)

Other: Ann Cieslak (Office of the Board of Regents)

[In these minutes: academic performance expectations and tuition banding; academic appointments subcommittee report; college autonomy on offering degrees with distinction/with high distinction]

1. Academic Standards and Tuition Banding

Professor Martin convened the meeting at 1:00, welcomed new student member Martin O’Hely, and turned to Dr. Zetterberg for a discussion of tuition banding.

Dr. Zetterberg began by saying that consideration of tuition banding, the advertised agenda item for this portion of the meeting, is less important than larger issues related to it.

When the University decided to change to semesters, it faced the question of what to do with the curriculum. This Committee said that most courses should be 3 credits. Dr. Zetterberg said he understood that that was the wisest decision, made so that students who now take 40-45 courses to graduate would take about 35-40 courses on semesters; if the primary credit module is 4 credits, students could take as few as 30 semester courses to graduate (as is usually the case for Morris students).

The 3-credit module is appropriate, but there are potential problems. The largest problem is what students are accustomed to doing: on the quarter system, most full-time students can have a full load with 4 courses. They are comfortable with this pattern. Some students take only 3 courses per quarter. If they are accustomed to taking 4 courses in order to enroll for 15-16 credits (on quarters), they are likely to continue to enroll for 4 courses on semesters – which will mean, at 3 credits per quarter, they will only be enrolling for 12 credits per semester. This will mean students could need five or six years to graduate.

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There are also tuition revenue implications from the change to a 3-credit module and possible decline in the number of credits for which students enroll. In the worst case, the University could see reductions of \$20-25 million. Tuition, however, is not the only concern; Dr. Zetterberg said that in his judgment, if the University sees a decline in the student credit load of more than 1/2 a credit, resulting in poorer retention and graduation rates, the University will have failed in its calendar conversion effort. A decline in student credit load would be good neither for students or the institution.

There have been conversations about how deans might talk with students about keeping their credit loads up. It is extremely important that there be communications with students about this. It is also important that all faculty and staff understand this issue, not just advisors. It will be necessary to get everyone's attention and repeat the message over and over, so that students think about the number of credits for which they enroll, not the number of courses. Advising will be the most important strategy.

One incentive the University might use to keep student credit loads up is tuition discounting or banding, to encourage students to take 15 or more credits. (For example, the tuition charge for 13 credits would be the same as for 15 credits, or 16 credits, or whatever the appropriate range is determined to be.) The current tuition structure provides such an incentive. There is a financial justification for such a plan: it DOES cost the University more to educate part-time students, because more part-time students requires that the University's infrastructure be larger – more food services, more registrations, more dorms, and so on.

Dr. Zetterberg told the Committee he has developed a plan (that could be changed, although it was not casual). A straight transformation of the quarter per-credit tuition charge to a semester per-credit charge would mean a change from \$90 per credit to \$135 per credit. His recommendation is that the change be from \$90 to \$145, with the tuition charge the same for enrolling for 13, 14, or 15 credits. This would provide the University with the same tuition revenue as the 90 => 135 change. (The calculation of revenue is modeled on complex data.) If a discount is provided to one set of students, Dr. Zetterberg pointed out, other students must be charged more to keep tuition revenue constant; that is why the charge would have to be \$145 rather than \$135 for students not taking 13, 14, or 15 credits.

In the past, this kind of proposal has been controversial. His view, Dr. Zetterberg said, is that the culture on the campus, because of the way students behave – and because of the way faculty and staff behave – is that students are encouraged to be part-time. Many believe it is fine to take six or seven years to graduate. But increasingly, many students who come to Minnesota are also accepted at other institutions – Macalester, Concordia, etc. – and would have behaved differently had they attended one of those other institutions (where it is not so acceptable to be part-time).

Some students, it is true, cannot take 15 credits per quarter, because of financial or other obligations. But many could, many who do not now enroll full-time, if the expectation were set. His question, Dr. Zetterberg said, is whether the Committee is willing to set that expectation. It is not worth fighting for a tuition band unless there is a change in the culture. But it is no service to most students to allow them to be at the University longer than they need to. Dr. Zetterberg maintained that the pace of a college education affects its quality and that four years are better than seven.

What about poor students? There is a myth, Dr. Zetterberg said, that many University students are poor. That is simply not true; the poor student at the University is the atypical student. Many believe

there is something unique about students here, and that they must work more than if they had gone elsewhere to college. The reason they work more, he said, is that there are more employment opportunities in the Twin Cities.

One Committee member said it is frustrating to have students who were advised to take 12 credits per quarter, so they (the students) would be competitive in getting into graduate or professional schools – but who then must take 18+ credits per quarter and fail. Dr. Zetterberg agreed, and pointed out that the CLA credit load for Fall, 1998, are higher than those in IT. It is to be hoped that the advising staff, which has probably long felt neglected and isolated, now understand that people are paying attention. The advisors are not at fault more than the culture; there are distinguished faculty who disagree with him on this issue, Dr. Zetterberg commented.

The point is not to focus on a specific tuition plan, but on the larger question of setting academic standards for students, such as the expectation that students will be out in 4 years, in 5 years at most, with the understanding that a few will take longer. Right now the culture is set for the exception. Dr. Zetterberg noted that the significant majority of students who come to campus say they intend to graduate in four years – and then immediately start taking 12 credits per quarter or they get a job.

The notion that 12 credits is full time is a federal rule governing financial aid, but makes the situation very confusing.

One Committee member observed that the University would be asking students (on semesters) to take one more course per term than they are accustomed to – but they would be taking fewer courses per year (10 on semesters rather than 12 on quarters). The focus must be on the credit load, Dr. Zetterberg repeated, and on the entire academic year – 10 versus 12 courses, 2 rather than 3 examination periods, 5 courses over 15 weeks rather than 4 courses over 10 weeks. People simply do not realize how hectic the quarter system is, he concluded.

One Committee member related hearing that other schools that have changed to semesters had tuition shortfalls because the continuing students take the same number of courses they did on quarters. That is not true, Dr. Zetterberg said; the problem goes beyond the continuing students; even new students take only 4 courses. Berkeley had this problem, it did not go away, and they resolved it by requiring students to be full time.

Another Committee member emphasized that the University can set standards, but enforcement by jawboning will not work. There must be teeth in the standards. One way would be to substantially increase per-credit tuition for enrolling only for a few credits. Or require permission to enroll for fewer than 14 credits. That was the case before the Vietnam War, Dr. Zetterberg recalled. The private institutions solve the problem by having only one tuition rate; it is any student's prerogative to pay \$15,000 or \$20,000 and take only 3 credits.

Is there any evidence that tuition banding leads students to take more credits? Dr. Zetterberg said the current band is bizarre, because the band covers 18-20 credits – it is intended to get students to take MORE than 15 credits. He said he did not know if the existing band was effective, and did not know if the 13-15 band would have an effect. It would probably need to be coupled with other things to work; financial and other incentives should be part of the solution.

Other versions of a band were discussed, such as a band for 9-15 credits and per-credit charges for 1-8 credits, which would mean VERY high charges for those taking only a few credits. There is always a risk the University could outsmart itself, Dr. Zetterberg cautioned; if the charges get too high at low levels, students could go from 12 to 7 credits, rather than 12 to 15, to save money. Or they could make more money working than they would save by taking advantage of the band tuition discount, said one Committee member.

The web could be set up with screens to caution students about the need to enroll for 15 credits per term (although one student member of the Committee pointed out that students quickly become immune to screens). Students could also be informed about the opportunity costs of additional years in school (versus the potential income from working at a career during those additional years once done with school).

It was said that many students find ridiculous reasons to stay longer than four years (e.g., to participate in student governance), and that a standard of graduation in 4 years needed to be set. The advising element must be very strong, because more students go to an advisor than to a web site. Dr. Zetterberg agreed that the most effective way to convey the message is to talk with students.

There are programs in the AHC that REQUIRE students to be full time; the allied health programs have set, lock-step programs that students must go through. That raises the question of whether the University should allow or encourage colleges or departments to think about a similar requirement. Some units might be able to impose such a requirement; in other cases, it might be "a mess."

Dr. Zetterberg concluded by saying that he was not asking the Committee to do anything, certainly not at this meeting, but that he could not deal with these issues by himself, and did not want to present a tuition plan without support. The issue of student success needs to be everyone's problem, not just his or SCEP's.

Professor Martin thanked Dr. Zetterberg for joining the Committee and said that it would revisit this issue in the near future.

2. Academic Appointments Subcommittee

Professor Martin now turned to Professor Kent Bales, chair of the Academic Appointments Subcommittee, to lead a discussion of the draft report of the subcommittee.

Professor Bales reviewed briefly the contents of the report, and noted that the number of tenured and tenure-track (TTT) faculty is down across the United States. While one cannot be certain, it appears that the University may have been affected less by this trend than others. The subcommittee was charged to investigate varieties of academic appointments and policies and recommend revisions and to ensure that faculty hires are according to needs identified by bodies responsible for educational policy. The subcommittee included representatives from the P&A staff as well as a representative of part-time/adjunct faculty.

The subcommittee had a difficult time identifying the number of people who perform faculty or faculty-like tasks, and had a hard time defining what faculty do (especially in the case of those who only

do research). Except for those who have been hired as “term” faculty under provisions of the tenure code – a number that has been declining – those who do faculty-like work have been hired as P&A staff.

The subcommittee developed a set of resolutions. The major one is that all who teach substantially should be counted as faculty. This recommendation is NOT to increase the number of TTT faculty, but to get all those who perform teaching together in one category so they can be counted, and so further hiring in that category can be regulated – by a body outside the deans’ offices.

Professor Bales said the subcommittee recognizes that such a recommendation is contrary to the current practice and ideology of decentralization, but believes strongly in having a hiring policy that is not local. One problem is that local decision-making on this matter has had disastrous effects on the University in the past (e.g., the rest of the University had to bail out the AHC because it hired faculty without funds to pay their salaries). The subcommittee makes this recommendation with the conviction that a regulatory mechanism is needed, in order to account for all those who do faculty-like work.

The subcommittee also recommends that the hiring of non-TTT faculty be constrained by a ratio to the number of TTT faculty, with exceptions allowed by appeal to a senior administrator and reviewed by this Committee and the Committee on Faculty Affairs (no more than 25% in any college, no more than 15% of the total faculty). This would require a unit to know a considerable while in advance if they would need non-TTT faculty, Professor Bales agreed, but that would be a matter of good policy. The subcommittee does NOT recommend that the administration or committees pass on individual cases. There are legitimate needs for exceptions, but there is a need to keep control over the total numbers. The ratios, he reported, were adopted primarily because those are the national AAUP standards; the subcommittee could not obtain local data.

Were the proposals adopted, units that now exceed the limits would not have to be changed immediately, but they would need approval, and future hires would be subject to the limits. The unit could make the case for exemption as soon as the policy is in effect; in some cases, the exemption might not be granted. Professor Bales said he could understand that this might create problems, and said that implementation might not be immediate, but the policy would be a first step. Without it, it is impossible to get numbers; only those who have appointments of 2/3 time or greater are counted; those who teach part-time or on temporary appointments are not.

One concern about the limit on the number of non-TTT faculty is that when a unit reaches 25%, the implication is that any additional faculty to be hired would have to be TTT faculty. That is not so, Professor Bales said; a unit could seek an exemption. “Poor” units could make the case that they do not have the funds to hire TTT faculty but face student demand for instruction; presumably the committees would allow an exemption while insisting that the college make alternative plans to correct the financial problem. When a department has a temporary position for nine or more years, said one Committee member, that suggests the need for a faculty member and the need to put the house in order.

About a possible classification system, Professor Bales reported that what colleges want seems to vary. Some want to retain education specialist, senior education specialist, teaching specialist, and so on, so there is room for promotion; others want different titles, such as research professor. Asked if the criteria for advancement in rank and compensation would be the same as for faculty, requiring the same full range of activities, Professor Bales said they would not. Research expectations could be less; so could outreach activities.

The P&A system was created because of problems people had with being advanced when measured against traditional faculty criteria; this recommendation has the potential to return to those same problems, it was said. The potential for P&A staff to advance should not be limited; perhaps other solutions should be considered. Professor Bales said that is why the subcommittee is being asked to be empowered to create a classification system, because they do not expect everyone in the category to do what TTT faculty do. A classification system could describe subcategories or call for contracts with specified work and rewards for it – not for acting like TTT faculty. It would not be anticipated that the tasks performed by non-TTT faculty would be changed as a result of the change in status.

There is a difference between faculty and those who do not perform the full range of faculty activities, averred one Committee member; these recommendations would blur that distinction. Professor Bales said he agreed that this was a concern, but the greater worry is the unrecognized bleeding of funds from the regular faculty to non-regulated faculty positions. That bleeding, he predicted, will continue under the trauma of IMG.

Other points raised by the Committee included:

- It is difficult to maintain a research program as the number of TTT faculty declines
- Departments might make appeals to the Provost or the Committees for an exemption outside college processes (Professor Bales said they assumed that such an appeal, without college support, would not be heard)
- The unit to which the limits would apply would not necessarily be colleges; there could be groups of departments in a similar position (e.g., the languages) which could be permitted to go to the Provost for an exception
- One worry about the limit on numbers is that administrators might see it as a quota to fill before any new TTT lines would be approved
- The report should be taken to the deans for review before any final action is proposed to the Senate.

The Committee concluded it wished to think more about the report before taking any action on it. Professor Martin thanked Professor Bales for making a report to the Committee.

3. Incompletes

Professor Martin distributed a redrafted policy on Incompletes; the Committee made one change and then unanimously voted to approve it for the Senate.

4. Degrees with Distinction/With High Distinction

Professor Martin recalled that Professor Koch had raised the question of why, if degrees come from the University (not the college or campus), it should be discretionary for colleges and campuses to offer degrees “with distinction” or “with high distinction”? If it is a University degree, why do some

students who achieve a certain GPA receive distinction while others who achieve the same GPA not receive a degree with distinction?

One Committee member said the matter was not quite that simple. This question reflects the tension between standardization and the desire for uniformity, on the one hand, and the sense that colleges have good reasons to have different degree regulations, on the other. To a certain extent, degrees do come from colleges; CLA requires a language, so that is a "CLA degree." Some require more credits, or a concentration, or other things. There are other recognitions for students, such as deans' lists, honoraries, and so on, and it is legitimate to allow colleges to make decisions that would result in degrees not being identical.

Some campuses or colleges do not compare themselves with the Twin Cities campus, moreover, and offer a different path to a degree. This policy should be left as is, so those differences can continue, said one Committee member. A well-developed honors program in a college is another alternative that should permit a college to say "no" to degrees with distinction, it was said.

The Committee, by inaction noted by the chair, took no action to change the existing policy.

5. Applied Partnership Degree Guidelines

The Committee reviewed briefly the revised guidelines and voted to put them on the docket of the Senate for information.

Professor Martin then adjourned the meeting at 3:00.

-- Gary Engstrand

University of Minnesota