

Minutes*

**Faculty Consultative Committee
Thursday, September 19, 2013
1:30 – 3:00
Room 238A Morrill Hall**

Present: Will Durfee (chair), Linda Bearinger, Avner Ben-Ner, James Cloyd, Eva von Dassow, Janet Ericksen, Maria Gini, Joseph Konstan, Russell Luepker, Alon McCormick, James Pacala, Paul Ranelli, Rebecca Ropers-Huilman, Chris Uggen, Jean Wyman

Absent: Jigna Desai, Karen Mesce, Ned Patterson

Guests: Professor David Satin (replacement for Professor Pacala 10/1/13 – 1/30/14); Provost Karen Hanson

Other: Deb Cran (Office of the Provost)

[In these minutes: (1) Faculty Senate docket approval; (2) strategic planning; (3) discussion with Provost Hanson]

Professor Durfee convened the meeting at 1:30 and announced that Professor Kohlstedt had resigned from the Committee in order to be able to meet her obligations as Acting Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School. He also introduced Professor Satin, who will be replacing Professor Pacala for the period October 1-January 30 while Professor Pacala is on leave.

1. Faculty Senate Docket Approval

Professor Durfee noted that the Committee must approve the October 3 Faculty Senate docket. The docket includes guidelines for awarding sabbatical supplements (for action) and a 45-minute period for discussion of factors that facilitate and inhibit interdisciplinary research and teaching.

The effort to address problems with interdisciplinary research and teaching will move fairly fast, Professor Durfee said; Professor von Dassow asked what that meant. It means the administration would like to address them, Professor Durfee said, but there is nothing concrete at hand; this administration, however, will move quickly. Professor von Dassow asked how the Faculty Senate discussion would feed into the presidential/provostal process for dealing with any problems that are identified. Professor Durfee said it is his understanding that the discovery process will take more than a month but the president would like a preliminary report soon; the Committee will have discussions on the topic with department chairs at the end of October and with the deans in November.

The Committee voted unanimously to approve the docket.

2. Strategic Planning

* 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.

Professor Durfee reported that he, Professor Konstan and Professor Uggen were at the first meeting of the Strategic Planning Working Group earlier in the day with President Kaler and Provost Hanson. The clear message from the president is that the process should be as open as possible. The majority of the group is faculty members. The president reviewed material that has been previously presented to the Board of Regents and this Committee and made several observations, a few of which Professor Durfee highlighted for the committee. One, the University has a lot of Ph.D. programs, of variable quality, so, Professor Durfee surmised, there will be attention paid to Ph.D. programs. Two, the Medical School needs improvement. Three, the president has consistently said that he is interested in intercollegiate athletics, so whether or not one views them positively, they will be part of the strategic-planning process. Four, the consultation process at this University is involved, more so than at other institutions with which the president is familiar, so the Committee should be ready to talk about it.

Professor von Dassow asked if the president believes that a lot of consultation is bad. Professor Durfee thought not but said the president likely wants to be sure people are not wasting their time and that the process is effective.

The president wants the plan to be concrete, with recommendations that can be acted on, and not one that will be received with cynicism, Professor Durfee said.

Professor Cloyd said he was surprised, when he asked the president by email if he would bring in outside eyes, that the president said not. The risk is that if the plan is developed only internally, it could be limited, but the president thought outside involvement was not necessary. Does the Committee wish to talk with him about that matter?

Professor Konstan said the Work Group had discussed obtaining views from outside constituents but the discussion was focused less on where the University is and more on the scope of the report and where the University wants to go, with the idea that it controls its destiny. Part of the goal at this stage is to start with objectives and ground them in the constraints later in the process.

Professor Durfee said that much will happen fall semester, including a session at the Board of Regents in October, and then the initial vision and metrics over the winter and spring, so the effort will take place in a fairly short period of time. Three of the members of this Committee are on the Work Group (Professors Durfee, Konstan, and Uggen); it is important that communication be open and they would appreciate receiving any comments Committee members might have.

Professor Ropers-Huilman asked how much time will be spent on "where are we heading?" That is key. Professor Konstan said that he expected that most of their time fall and winter would be spent on that question and they will launch task groups to identify ways to get there. They will try to figure out the University of Minnesota is different from everyone else—or they could end up with the same strategic planning statement and goals that everyone else has. All of the University's peers share the national and international research mission but not all agree on the educational mission and who the institution serves. That part will take more time.

Professor Bearinger asked if there will be any discussion about how to incorporate the research strategic planning effort, which is slightly ahead of the institutional effort. Professor Durfee said that the president has acknowledged the existence of other strategic planning efforts and asks that information from them be incorporated in the institutional effort—and that they not be duplicated. Professor

Bearinger recalled that there was an external consultant who advised on whether the structure and function of the Academic Health Center was optimal but it is not clear that all of the data provided were used. She said she would like to be sure that information will not be ignored in the process. Professor Durfee said that any reports or activities that are relevant to the whole University will presumably be part of the database of information for Work Group members. He asked Committee members to let him know of any reports that should receive attention.

3. Discussion with Provost Hanson

Professor Durfee welcomed the provost to the meeting and reviewed for her the discussion of strategic planning that had just taken place. He then recalled that in the pre-FCC meeting earlier in the week, he and Professor Ropers-Huilman had suggested the provost discuss the proposal to merge two colleges and the process that would be used.

Provost Hanson said the idea is to examine the potential creation of a new college devoted to agriculture, life sciences, natural resources and the environment that would integrate faculty principally from the two colleges, the College of Biological Sciences (CBS) and the College of Food, Agricultural and Natural Resource Sciences (CFANS). It would be something like a merger, and it was discussed before she arrived at Minnesota; there was a robust discussion between the two deans. She said she was uncertain how much discussion there had been among the faculty but the department heads and chairs were aware of it.

One motivating factor for the proposal is the intersecting interests/overlap in faculty activities between the two colleges because of the way in which genomics has changed many aspects of research on various life forms, the provost related. The consideration of a realignment will be driven principally by the direction of the life sciences and by trends in research and higher education in agriculture, biological and natural resource sciences. There are many joint and cross appointments and a lot of interweaving of activities—but there are also areas that are not part of that interweaving. For example, one of the colleges (CFANS) is importantly positioned in the state because agriculture is extremely important in this state and important economically, so there are many external stakeholders who also take an interest in the proposal.

Provost Hanson said the process will encompass a vigorous process of consultation to include careful consideration of whether consolidating existing strengths will advance excellence of our teaching and research, benefit students, enhance partnerships, and strengthen opportunities to address critical challenges. With Dean Elde stepping down and an interim dean in CFANS, these leadership transitions make this discussion timely, and the searches for the deans have been put on hold. There could eventually be a search for two deans, or one dean, or two deans of colleges different from the ones that now exist. She is creating a task force in charge of leading the conversations with internal and external stakeholders that is co-chaired by faculty members who have appointments in both colleges; the task force will also include students, both graduate and undergraduate. It will work this semester and develop a report that weighs all of the issues from all relevant perspectives, to include a summary of benefits, potential concerns, and advisory recommendations.

Professor Bearinger asked if alumni will be involved. They will be consulted but will not be on the task force, Provost Hanson said. Professor Bearinger (later) said that each college has its own brand, important to fund-raising, and alumni need a voice. They will not be on the task force but that group will

be sensitive to the need to hear a wide range of voices. The provost said she believes, however, that this should first be approached as an academic question.

Professor Durfee asked the provost if the task force would pay attention to economic efficiencies or to the programmatic (teaching and research) aspects of a merger. Provost Hanson said that all of the discussions thus far have been about the latter. This effort is taking place in parallel with discussion about St. Paul campus facilities, for which a vision is needed, and the University will likely ask for both state and industry help with facilities.

Professor McCormick said the question of the St. Paul campus has come up before, both at this Committee and at the Committee on Educational Policy. At the least there is need for office space for faculty members who have responsibilities on both campuses. If a new college emerges, that could be a way to provide resources for those faculty members. Provost Hanson agreed that this is a problem and that people in her office have been talking especially about providing "hotel" space on the Minneapolis campus for faculty from St. Paul. That discussion will go on irrespective of programmatic discussions concerning the two colleges. Professor Cloyd urged that the "hotel" provisions include parking as well.

Professor Luepker asked how people feel about the recent merger which became CFANS. If he counts right, with a merger there would be one college and one professional school on the St. Paul campus. It was noted that part of Education and Human Development and part of Design is also on St. Paul (and also Extension, the College of Continuing Education, and other academic programs). Provost Hanson observed that most of the faculty on the task force have lived through college reorganization and bring their knowledge of that process to this discussion.

Professor Pacala asked Provost Hanson what her experience is in merging two successful colleges or programs. How does that work out? He said that while he knew less about CFANS, he knows that CBS is very highly regarded and respected; if one merges two really good colleges, will they get even better? Or is it perhaps better to merge two not-so-good colleges so they can get better?

Provost Hanson said she doubted there is a generic answer to the question. It depends on how and why the merger is effected. In this case there are very strong elements in each school that certainly must not be lost—and that understanding must be on the table at the outset. Merging two weaker units would not mean they would become stronger, Provost Hanson surmised; it would depend on the facts of the case. It was the judgment of Deans Elde and Levine that these considerations could make the two colleges stronger because of the changed nature of the biological and agricultural sciences.

Professor Satin said that when some are for something, some are against it, and some are neutral, it may depend on what those people have to gain or lose from the proposal. What is to prevent the views of only one side prevailing, irrespective of what is best for the University and the state? Provost Hanson said she hopes and has every reason to expect that the task force members will not be driven by what is best for them but instead they will address what's best for the work of the colleges and their central missions, and where their fields are going. Change is hard for most people, after all, but she believes she will receive from the group a statesman-like approach. It will be charged to consult widely and people can explain their fears about what might be lost and their expectations about what could be gained, and she counts on the task force to pay attention to what they say. It can then make a recommendation.

Who decides, Professor Satin asked? Provost Hanson said that is her responsibility.

Professor Durfee said he understood that if the colleges are combined, departments would not change. Provost Hanson said that it's not off the table that departments might change. That will be a more complicated discussion, Professor Durfee observed. And involve interaction with a number of units, the provost added. There would be a need to work through policy documents if departments were merged, and promotion-and-tenure processes would have to be adjusted. All of that, however, is way ahead of where the process is now, the provost cautioned; there would be much that would need attending to if a new college is pursued, but it's too soon to know how a new college would be structured or whether there will even be a new college. At this time they are considering the option and exploring opportunities.

Provost Hanson said she had stressed in her message about the proposal that students do not have anything to worry about—they will be able to finish whatever they are doing and they will ensure that there will be no disruptions in the educational programs of current students. In CBS, there is an integrated undergraduate program that begins before the fall semester of the freshman year, and a relatively small cohort compared to incoming classes in CFANS. One question will be how to integrate those approaches.

Professor Konstan tied the discussion to interdisciplinary opportunities. It seems like a chance for a case study: if the merger occurs, will there be a way to track what became easier because of having one dean rather than two, or one department instead of two, and a way to reverse engineer what happened to the rest of the University? Provost Hanson thought there might be—but said she did not view this proposal as a case study. If there is a decision to create a new college because of academic discussions and directions, they can see what happens. It could be that if one puts an interdisciplinary proposal in front of two deans, there is a problem, Professor Konstan said, or it may turn out that there are problems even with only one dean.

Professor Uggen said, apropos of Professor Konstan's question, that there is administration at the University, in a college, and in departments. In larger colleges, students' identification is more attached to their department than the college. The question is where to put functions and how many barriers are due to the middle layer of the administration, the college. In CLA, it is often difficult to get students to identify with the college. If there will be lean administration in some areas and growth in others, they need to think about what should be provided centrally, locally, and at the intermediate level.

Provost Hanson said that was a good point and one that will be salient for the task force—but only after a decision whether to create a new college makes sense.

Professor Satin asked if the task force will have access to data about whether there could be administrative savings from a merger. It will, the provost replied, but the first discussion should not be about whether there is money to be saved. That is not what frames the debate, but the task force can consider it as it gets further into the discussions. The primary motivation to explore a possible consolidation of resources is to strengthen the excellence and impact of research and teaching.

Professor Gini said there are many similarities between CBS and the College of Science and Engineering; are they thinking about those as a possible merger? Provost Hanson said she heard that question the day she sent out the message. Her immediate reaction, however, is that the question posed has arisen from CBS and CFANS discussions and the directions their disciplines are taking and their missions.

Professor Durfee asked about other topics the provost might wish to raise.

Provost Hanson said she is responsible for presenting the University's accountability report once per year to the Board of Regents, something she did last week. It is a very lengthy report. Professors Durfee and Ropers-Huilman asked if there is a way that faculty governance can help with the report, and this could be a year to change its form. Some information must be included because the Board needs it to carry out its responsibilities. It can be difficult to wade through and use the report, but it is very inclusive and provides a useful context; it is used at the legislature but for most, it is something one dips into rather than reads from end to end. It would be helpful if the Committee could think about what should be reported and the form it should take. The administration agrees that the report may contain too much, and it is an administrative burden to assemble it. She and the Committee could think together on what the broader community needs to know and what faculty members think should be in a report about the University.

Professor Durfee said that last year the Board of Regents finance committee wanted a dashboard on how the University is doing by various metrics, which is important because they are how the institution is evaluated. So the institution needs to think carefully about what it wants reported. And how it wants to be held accountable, the provost added.

Professor Cloyd speculated that if one polled all 4,000 faculty at the University to ask them what they should be held accountable for, it is likely their knowledge will be very low. It could be a problem if the "workers" don't know.

Professor Ropers-Huilman noted that the provost had mentioned having the report in a more accessible form. She said that if there is a dashboard with major indices, and a 3-4 page document that is easy to read, there would be a significant number of faculty who could articulate what should be in it. Provost Hanson said her office did provide a four-page brochure for the Board and others that was cross-referenced to the accountability report.

Professor Cloyd said it seemed to him that it is useful for this group to know what the University should be doing. He knows what he should be doing in his own silo; this group should know about what the University as a whole should be doing and where it should be going.

Professor von Dassow agreed with Professor Cloyd that if asked, most faculty probably don't know what they should be held accountable for. She would like to be held accountable for teaching students ancient history, at different levels, but if the legislature wants to hold her accountable for raising graduation rates, that performance metric potentially conflicts with the objective of teaching. The best way to meet the legislative goal is to pass every student; if the goal is to teach students, the faculty do not simply pass them all.

Provost Hanson said there are a few legislative performance metrics but that is not what most of the accountability report is about. It contains reports on teaching, what good-quality education is about, what people are doing, but added that there is no necessary relationship between passing and failing students and good teaching. Professor von Dassow responded that there is no inherent relationship between grades and graduation rates and a quality education. Provost Hanson concurred and then noted that the faculty are not accountable for the administration of the University, which someone must do, and the accountability report addresses administration as well. She pointed out that if students are not

graduating because the University not helping them meet their financial planning needs, or their advising needs, or it is not offering required courses in a timely manner, those would be administrative problems for which the institution should be held accountable.

Professor Ben-Ner said this is an important discussion. One reason the previous strategic-planning process did not go as well as it could have is because it took place at the strategy level and the "workers" were not involved in implementation. Faculty will ask what the strategic planning outcomes imply for them. Fail more students? Publish more? Quality before quantity, or vice versa? How will this and other possibilities be grounded in individual and department chair incentives? This is too complex an organization to manage it from above; practicality alone requires that the faculty be involved in the process. That is not so say the process should be dragged out for several years, but they must be involved.

Provost Hanson agreed. She has talked about how faculty members are held accountable in teaching and research, but the accountability report is large and not just about faculty work. She does not want students to drop out of the University because of financial problems, for example, but that is not really a faculty responsibility— but it is someone's and they need to be held accountable for graduation rates and student financial packages and the like .

Professor Satin commented that clinical medicine has seen a revolution in performance metrics in recent years and there is a robust literature on the changes. Some accountability measures are descriptive, some are prescriptive, and it could be that not all of the University's accountability measures would be prescriptive but instead report on what the University is doing. Provost Hanson agreed and noted that the accountability report in its present form is largely descriptive.

Professor Durfee thanked Provost Hanson for joining the meeting—and adjourned it at 2:50.

-- Gary Engstrand

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