

Minutes*

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

- Present: Alon McCormick (chair), Michael Anderson, Karla Hemesath (for Barbara Brandt), Thomas Brothen, Lee-Ann Breuch, Charlene Ellingson, Gayle Golden, Sally Gregory Kohlstedt, Keith Mayes, Robert McMaster, Nic McPhee, Kristen Nelson, Moshe Volovik
- Absent: Janine Grebin
- Guests: Professor Will Durfee (chair, Faculty Consultative Committee); Vice Provost Arlene Carney, Chris Bremer (Office of the Vice Provost for Faculty and Academic Affairs); Associate Dean Melissa Anderson (Graduate School)
- Other: Suzanne Bardouche, Leslie Schiff (Office of Undergraduate Education); Tina Falkner (Academic Support Resources)

[In these minutes: (1) welcome, introductions, review of charge, and issues pending; (2) discussion with Professor Durfee, chair, Faculty Consultative Committee; (3) Morse-Alumni and Grad-Professional award procedures]

1. Welcome, Introductions, Review of Committee Charge, and Issues Pending

Professor McCormick convened the meeting at 2:00, welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the year, and asked for a round of introductions.

Professor McCormick noted the appointment process for Committee members, suggested that they canvas colleagues in their home departments and colleges about issues before the Committee, and pointed out that issues can come from a number of sources (the senate, the Faculty Consultative Committee, the administration via the ex-officio administrative members, the environment in general) and that Committee members are welcome to suggest items for consideration as well. The work of the Committee is usually forwarded to the Faculty Consultative Committee and, in some cases, the Faculty Senate; proposed policies or policy changes also go to the President's Policy Committee for final action. He reminded Committee members that the final minutes go to about 1500 people on campus and are then posted for public view in the University Libraries' Digital Conservancy website, so it is important to review the draft minutes to ensure they are accurate.

Professor McCormick then turned to the meeting schedule and agenda items scheduled thus far, which include strategic planning in both the vice provostal undergraduate and graduate education offices, policy issues related to e-learning (including credit by examination), academic program reviews, discussion of University of Minnesota SERU data (Student Experience in the Research

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University, a national survey originally administered out of the University of California at Berkeley but now administered by the University of Minnesota), possible revisions to the student-rating-of-teaching form, who (regular faculty, graduate assistants, P&A teaching staff, adjunct faculty) teaches undergraduate courses, Twin Cities campus accreditation, undergraduate student financial aid, spring and summer calendar issues, the work of the Special Committee on Graduate Education, and graduate student learning outcomes.

There are other issues from the "issues pending" list that have not been scheduled but that may be of sufficient importance that they should be, Professor McCormick said. He itemized them; comments and conclusions if any are noted in brackets:

- update on matters related to grading
- update on the charge to and work of the Twin Cities Campus Curriculum Committee
- update on encouraging faculty to release the student-release data from the student-rating-of-teaching forms
- consider whether a policy is needed with respect to a D grade counting in a prerequisite course of a course required in the major [currently it is program by program; moreover, the question was raised in discussion, can prerequisite checks be done electronically?]
- update from Associate Vice President Furco and Professor Nelson on matters of public engagement [there will be two matters brought to the Committee]
- update from the Classroom Advisory Subcommittee
- consider whether updates are needed on extra-collegiate degrees [let the Twin Cities Curriculum Committee start the discussion], the course-approval process [problems with timeliness may rest at the college level], and barriers to/encouragement of interdisciplinary teaching [the Faculty Consultative Committee will take this up and this Committee will await FCC's lead]
- update on the international student academic services fee
- maintaining personal contact in teaching
- career and salary advising and "career insurance" academic advising.

Vice Provost McMaster asked that credit by examination be taken up quickly and, in response to a question, reported that transfer-student issues would be a big part of his office's strategic planning.

Ms. Golden said she wanted clarification about the student-release questions. Vice Provost McMaster explained that students are frustrated by the low percentage of instructors who authorize the release of the data; they either do not think of the question or do not want the data released. Several Committee members indicated they were unaware the data existed and could be released. Ms. Golden observed that many faculty, including her, probably do not take the time to go through the steps to release the data because it comes at a very busy time of year.

Professor McCormick reported that one suggestion from the Committee last year, to take a new approach (in addition to the reminders regularly sent by Vice Provost Carney), had been for the Office of Undergraduate Education to encourage the associate undergraduate deans and directors of undergraduate study to talk with faculty about releasing the data. Dr. Hemesath observed that there is a systemic problem if members of this Committee are unaware of the questions. Vice Provost McMaster recalled that his office had discussed an "opt out" approach, but the Office of the General Counsel said that would not be permissible under state law. Dr. Schiff said that there will be a meeting in October to look at the possibility of changing the focus of the questions so they are oriented

to the class, not the instructor, and thus perhaps not private data under the terms of state law. Dr. Falkner observed that the students thus far have not endorsed such an approach; Professor Brothen asked if doing so would be "breaking a deal" with the students, who developed the student-release questions. Dr. Falkner thought not.

[Following the meeting, Vice Provost Carney noted that she has, every semester every year for about four years, sends an email message to each instructor of record of every course that encourages them to release their data for the Student Release questions. There is a link provided for them in the e-mail. Last year the Committee discussed the practice and she reminded Committee members that they receive it each semester for every course. Some said they delete the message because it is too long; Dr. Gram noted that it consists of 120 words.]

Dr. Falkner urged the Committee to discuss the question of counting D grades in prerequisite courses in the major. If there is no consensus here, she said, it is unlikely any institutional-level proposal would be adopted.

Professor McCormick said he would try to ensure that the additional items come to the Committee at some point.

2. Discussion with Professor Durfee, Chair, Faculty Consultative Committee (FCC)

Professor McCormick now welcomed Professor Durfee to the meeting to discuss the issues that FCC will be dealing with that will be affected by deliberations of this Committee

Professor Durfee thanked Committee members for serving and then observed that there will likely be considerable overlap in issues that this Committee and FCC will be looking at. He noted three major topics: (1) graduate education, through the Special Committee on Graduate Education that has been jointly charged by the provost and FCC; (2) barriers to interdisciplinary research and teaching (a subject of discussion for years, one that is high on the provost's agenda, and one on which he hopes there will be some progress this year); and (3) e-learning, work on which will fall primarily to this Committee, including any appropriate revision of University policies. As for topic (3), it is one that General Counsel Donohue mentioned at the FCC retreat because of issues related to intellectual property ownership, copyright, and so on.

Professor McCormick repeated a point he has made previously: If this Committee starts the conversation about e-learning but it becomes larger than SCEP can handle, it will bring the issues to FCC. Professor Nelson concurred but urged that SCEP not take up issues that FCC has already discussed or made decisions about. Professor Durfee said he will try hard to avoid repetition across committees—some issues are large and require many eyes on it, but he will seek to minimize repeated discussions of the same topic.

Professor Durfee outlined for Committee members some of the other major issues that FCC will be addressing: the number of tenured and tenure-track faculty in relation to instruction in undergraduate courses, salary equity, and strategic planning (more in the spring, because the president has indicated he wished to rely on the existing governance structure rather than create new committees, so it is likely that strategic planning will be a large part of FCC agendas later in the year).

Professor Brothen recalled that in the past, colleges were required to keep track of the percentage of non-tenured/tenure-track faculty; is that still the case? It remains the policy, Professor Durfee said, but the policy is being reviewed by a subcommittee appointed jointly by the Senate Committee on Academic Affairs and the Senate Committee on Academic Freedom and Tenure and a recommendation is expected this fall. Professor Brothen said it is his sense that that things are changing and that there are more contract faculty than in the past. Professor Durfee responded that it is a great question but that it is difficult to identify who "faculty" are beyond those covered by the tenure policy; there is an effort afoot on the part of the governance system and several administrators to develop a set of numbers that all can agree on and that provide longitudinal data. Vice Provost Kohlstedt said the question gets complicated because graduate students are also teaching, some are part-time faculty, some P&A staff teach courses, and so on. One can ask about categories of people and who is teaching courses. It also depends on the nature of teaching, Dr. Hemesath said; in the Medical School, much teaching takes place in clinical settings off campus. There are many stakeholders, Professor Durfee agreed, so it is important to have a consistent set of data. Dr. Kohlstedt observed that with respect to teaching, it is important to distinguish between undergraduate and graduate/professional courses. Ms. Golden pointed out that some programs, such as hers (the School of Journalism), need professionals from the field and adjuncts to help deliver instruction.

Professor McCormick asked Professor Durfee and the three ex officio Committee members what they see coming down the pike that will affect the Committee. Vice Provost McMaster said that there are fundamental questions to be addressed as the Office of Undergraduate Education engages in the strategic planning process: how to enhance the undergraduate experience and how to improve graduation rates. All the questions they address will be driven by those two considerations. He recalled that he had told FCC, at its retreat, that the governance system can help with the messaging on graduation. Vice Provost Kohlstedt said that the Graduate School is also engaging in strategic planning and focused on the quality of the student experience and time to degree; there is a continuing goal of reducing the time required to achieve a degree. In the case of undergraduates, Dr. McMaster commented, graduation rate goals are driven in part at the federal and state level as well as by the Board of Regents, and while there is an upper limit to what can be accomplished, and the institution must be reasonable, there remains room for improvement.

Dr. Hemesath said that as the University embarks on e-learning, the Academic Health Center will be interested in having a robust infrastructure that makes it as easy as possible for the faculty to deliver online instruction. This is a problem they struggle with constantly.

Professor McCormick thanked Professor Durfee for joining the meeting.

3. Morse-Alumni & Graduate-Professional Award Procedures

Professor Durfee welcomed Vice Provost Carney and Dr. Bremer to the meeting and said that the Committee, following Regents' policy, periodically looks at how the process for identifying recipients of the Morse-Alumni and Graduate-Professional awards for contributions to education is working.

Dr. Bremer presented an overview of the schedule for deciding on the 2014 recipients (the deadline for nominations to the provost's office is January 9, 2014, and the awards ceremony will be April 14) and then reviewed briefly the procedures that are in place describing eligibility, nominations,

criteria, organization and presentation of dossiers, review of dossiers, and selection of award winners. [The procedures can be found at <http://www.scholarswalk.umn.edu/awards/aoce/>.]

Vice Provost Carney noted that the biggest change in the awards occurred last year, when P&A staff became eligible for the awards. There was only one P&A nominee for the Morse-Alumni award (for undergraduate education), who was selected for an award, and none for the Graduate-Professional award. She said the Committee could encourage more nominations of P&A staff.

Ms. Golden asked who makes the nominations. Dr. Carney said that some departments have long-standing committees that prepare nominations; in other departments there are ad hoc committees. Dr. Bremer clarified that there are two separate nominating committees (for the Morse-Alumni and for the Graduate-Professional) to evaluate candidates and recommend award winners to this Committee (which has final authority to approve winners). Professor McCormick pointed out that most major University awards are governed by Regents policy; for these two awards, SCEP is charged by the Board policy to approve the nominees.

Professor McCormick asked for an overview of where candidates for the selection committee are found. Dr. Carney said there is now a large cadre of Academy of Distinguished Teachers members who have won the awards and they have records of which faculty members have served on the nominating committees. A certain number of former award winners are required for each of the nominating committees, as are SCEP members, P&A members, students, and so on.

Professor Mayes noted that the award used to include a \$3000 annual stipend and now it is a one-time \$15,000 award. What was the reason for the change? Dr. Carney explained that it was financial; the president and provost discussed the change at length with senate committees because the awards use O&M funds—they are not endowed, as are the McKnight professorships. Vice Provost Kohlstedt agreed that the change had been discussed and approved by senate committees, and observed that the \$15,000 award still puts the University ahead of its peers. Dr. Carney added that some of the savings will be directed to updating and maintaining the Scholars Walk.

Professor Nelson asked what changes in the process had been made. Dr. Carney said it had mostly been a matter of streamlining it, such as providing for uploading files electronically rather than providing paper copies. Files for former winners are also now online, Dr. Bremer said, so that departments can see what they look like. Ms. Ellingson served on the Graduate-Professional award nominating committee last year and said she thought it was a very impressive process, one she enjoyed being a part of. She said the awards also have well-defined criteria.

Ms. Ellingson inquired if a student may nominate someone for the award. Dr. Bremer explained that nominations must go through a college; Dr. Carney observed that they usually start in a department, but a student or group of students could ask a department to consider nominating someone; the practice probably varies across departments. But the process is that nominations go from a department to a college to the provost's office for referral to the nominating committees.

The Committee voted unanimously to endorse the changes to the process.

Professor McCormick thanked Drs. Bremer and Carney for joining the meeting and adjourned it at 3:50.

-- Gary Engstrand

University of Minnesota