

Minutes\*

**Senate Committee on Faculty Affairs  
Tuesday, October 22, 2013  
2:30 – 4:30  
300 Morrill Hall**

Present: Joseph Konstan (chair), Chris Bourland, Kathryn Brown, Randy Croce, Tabitha Grier-Reed, Heath Himstedt, Frank Kulacki, Scott Lanyon, Theodor Litman, Peh Ng, Nicholas Poggioli, George Sell

Absent: Teri Caraway, Arlene Carney, Dann Chapman, Carl Flink, Sam Gill, Sophia Gladding, Karen Miksch

Guests: Professor Victoria Interrante (co-chair, Women's Faculty Cabinet), Vice President Katrice Albert; Associate Vice Provost Ole Gram (Faculty and Academic Affairs)

[In these minutes: (1) "professor parent" issues: work and children; (2) online faculty activity reporting system update; (3) changes to the student-rating-of-teaching (SRT) form]

**1. "Professor Parent" Issues: Work and Children**

Professor Konstan convened the meeting at said that the first hour would be devoted to a discussion of "professor parent" issues; the Committee will need to decide what it wants to do. He noted that a number of faculty members had written to the Faculty Consultative Committee (in response to its request to the faculty for suggestions of issues that need to be addressed): about child care, faculty job demands and the need for emergency child care, parents (in particular mothers) who face the challenge of attending a professional conference to help their careers who are also raising children, and the use of research grant funding for leave payments. Professor Konstan invited Professor Interrante to provide information from the Women's Faculty Cabinet (WFC).

Professor Interrante reported that the WFC had held listening sessions earlier in October that asked women faculty "what change would you make (or what initiative would you support) to advance satisfaction with your career, or the careers of UMN women faculty in general, in each of these three categories: personal, department, university? They found that responses broke down into three categories: leadership opportunities, salary equity, and family issues. The WFC has a subgroup looking at family/worklife issues, in concert with Vice Provost Carney, to see if there could be a service reduction for faculty members who are teaching. For example, a faculty mother receives 6 weeks off, but what is to happen the other 10 weeks of the semester? It has been the burden of the faculty women to find an alternate in some cases; in other colleges, they just give the mother the semester off.

Professor Konstan said he wished it on the record that there are a number of University policies that are designed to make the situation better for faculty members who become parents, such as parental leave. They are designed to support faculty choice to be parents. But he is not surprised to see comments coming in about the needs of faculty parents. What should be the priority? What he has heard about most

---

\* 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.

is childcare; what do other Committee members hear? What is the University not doing that could help it recruit and support faculty who have or intend to have children?

"Childcare," Professor Interrante said. Professor Lanyon agreed, and said that faculty members become extremely stressed about dealing with childcare because the stakes are so high. There are universities that have childcare on campus, but that does require resources. There is a large childcare business in the Twin Cities that seems not to be responding to the need; perhaps one role the University could play is in communicating that need to the industry.

Mr. Croce reported that his unit is hiring a new instructor and the chair has two young children; it costs her a considerable amount, for example, to attend evening search committee meetings and it creates a lot of stress.

Another solution is an au pair, Professor Lanyon said. Could the University develop a relationship with one or more au pair organizations to facilitate faculty taking advantage of this solution? This might be of interest to the organizations because au pairs are required to take courses while in the states and a relationship with the University would make this very easy. Professor Kulacki said that even with on-campus childcare, with emergencies or extra-curricular activities, pulling someone away the last three hours of the day, there will be negative impressions, the view that the person is not doing the job. Professor Caroline Hayes, now at Iowa State and formerly in his department, Professor Kulacki said, believes this is a major issue. It is not just a question of hiring someone; the faculty member has to get the child if he or she is sick in the middle of the afternoon, and the faculty member's work day is done. He continued that junior faculty members generally do not have the money to hire an au pair; childcare should be part of faculty recruitment and perhaps negotiation at the time of hiring should the faculty member have very young children.

Mr. Poggioli asked about the tenure process: when evaluation occurs, is the assumption that someone does or does not have children? Professor Kulacki said that unless there are extenuating circumstances vis-à-vis a child, the promotion-and-tenure process is blind to family issues. So the assumption is a workload for someone without children, Mr. Poggioli asked? Professor Kulacki said it is the same for everyone.

Professor Sell said he was unsympathetic to the cry for help. They raised several children. It is a choice people make. The basic problem is that parents make the choice to have children.

Mr. Croce said that "we are responsible for raising the next generation," which is difficult to do on one income now. Economics makes that very hard. It is an important part of the obligations of the current generation to raise the next one.

Professor Konstan said the question has never been about providing advantages to a certain set of people; the question is whether the University is trying to provide support to people who it wants to be here if they need to work 60 or more hours per week to get tenure. If so, and the University does not provide the support they need, it is discouraging women—and men—from coming to the University of Minnesota. He posed two questions. One, what level of contribution is expected during the probationary period (if one is also expected to have a life, unless one believes the University is a monastery)? Two, has the University chosen to allocate resources so people are not blocked (e.g., they need childcare close and available when needed, such as to work on a grant proposal)?

Professor Ng said that there is much that can be done to improve University policies but it has tried to improve the promotion-and-tenure process, for example, by allowing extension of the tenure clock while not expecting additional work. With respect to childcare, she observed that there is a large child psychology program on this campus; is there not a large group of students who might be looking for internships in childcare programs? The University could be creative, even granted that there are legal issues to be addressed.

Professor Grier-Reed asked if the University is responsive to changes in the workforce. The professoriate was a male-dominated field but now there are more women; there is an overlap of the tenure clock and the biological clock for many women, and while one can get a leave, is a woman stigmatized for doing so? How have universities responded to more women in faculty ranks? Research makes it clear that children detrimentally affect women's careers more than men's; men can stay productive after children are born but for women, children are detrimental to their careers. Ms. Bourland pointed out that the Committee had been provided an article about that research, "When Scientists Choose Motherhood" in *American Scientist*.

Professor Lanyon said that the Committee could recommend that departments re-evaluate their procedures from the perspective of a parent with young children. When are faculty meetings, seminars, committee meetings? And when are people disadvantaged because of the scheduling of meetings? If a faculty meeting or department seminar is at 8:00 in the morning, faculty, especially women, with children may be disadvantaged. Evening and early morning events disproportionately affect certain groups. Departments need to evaluate their practices.

Professor Interrante said that with respect to childcare on campuses nationwide, the most common problem is lack of physical capacity (buildings). When she worked at NASA, there was on-site childcare and there was never any doubt that one's child would be accommodated. She noted that while the Twin Cities offers many off-campus options, the University provides some resources on campus, such as parking and food service, to allow faculty members to be more productive; childcare could be viewed in a similar light.

Mr. Poggioli said when thinking about benefits for child- or elder-care, it might be useful to realize that the current benefits package in some ways reflects who was in faculty positions when employment benefits first came up. It was mostly men who were either without children or, if they had children, likely had a housewife who took care of them. Because of this, child-care issues were not part of the initial employment benefits for faculty. The University is still struggling to make employee benefits match the diversity of people who are now in the profession.

Professor Konstan said if a faculty member does not show up at the department seminars, and someone mentions the absence, that can be an opportunity to bring up the possible problem of scheduling for the faculty member who's a parent. The greater problem is when no one says anything—but then at promotion-and-tenure time people are thinking about the absences, which can then become career-damaging. From what he has read, Professor Konstan said, he is at an advantage as a male because he has children [the research suggests male faculty with children do somewhat better than faculty members without children]. These biases also happen in the surrounding community outside academia. Yahoo hired a woman CEO, but anyone making \$X million per year, or a university's president or provost, can probably make childcare arrangements without a great deal of trouble. But the University needs to find

an alternative that faculty members who want to be involved in rearing their children can afford. Au pair childcare should not be seen as an alternative that can be used generally because some parents may want to be more involved with their children.

Vice President Albert said, vis-à-vis the point Professor Lanyon made about departmental practices and promotion and tenure, that her office is sponsoring a lunch conversation on November 15 about how to change a department's culture in order to accommodate most people. Or if someone is not attending meetings, to discuss the absence.

Professor Kulacki said that all the issues raised in this discussion are also known to law firms, the federal government, and corporations. He said he was not sure the benefits package would ever be as robust as people would like and the institutional response to a societal issue is a tough problem.

Professor Grier-Reed said that there is a role for University policy because societies do change laws in order to change attitudes. The emails that the Committee was provided included discussion about how differently departments handle maternity leave; in some cases, the department heads handle teaching arrangements but in others the faculty member must work them out. There are areas in which the University can be involved to help faculty mothers with children.

Professor Lanyon pointed out that the University provides opportunities for food companies to set up shop on campus; has the administration thought about leasing space to an outside company to provide childcare on campus? Vice President Brown said that over the years they have explored various alternatives for providing childcare on campus. It has been difficult to find a vendor, which seems illogical, she agreed. It seems that childcare vendors want to be open from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. and people drop off and pick up their children during those hours—the business model appears to want all-day care because of revenue uncertainties. Professor Lanyon suggested it might be worth revisiting the idea with outside companies.

Ms. Bourland said that Fairview has a childcare service in house and her infant children were two floors below her when she worked there. All industries must deal with this issue. As a healthcare clinician, she has had to take a sick child home and could not work any more that day, using PTO or vacation time to cover the absence. She is in a P&A position and does not consider a tenure-track appointment feasible because of family commitments and because, in her current role, she has the flexibility to work offsite at times.

Professor Lanyon noted that the University's rule is that a faculty member must have a 67%-time appointment or greater to receive benefits. He said he has met several faculty members who would have been happy to have a 50%-time appointment for part of their career and would be happy to go through the tenure process at that level of appointment to achieve tenure. He said he did not know of any institution that had such appointments.

Professor Konstan commented that there are three elements to Professor Lanyon's suggestion. One, it is possible to have a half-time position and tenure with a special agreement. Two, a major question is the level of benefits associated with a reduced-time appointment, and such benefits are generally tied to salary. Three, and the biggest issue, is the person occupying a 50%-time tenure line or is the person occupying a tenure line and entitled to return to full time when the children get older? That is a significant consideration when it comes to department planning: half-time for 40 years versus half-time

for 15 years and then the department hopes there will be funding to pick up the other half of the line when the person returns. Some professions have solved this problem because of the nature of the work involved. People in those other lines of work are not tenured, Vice President Brown observed.

Professor Kulacki said that someone on a half-time appointment uses University resources full time. What about the University's capacity to absorb people on half-time appointments? His department, for example, does not have the space for a significant number of half-time faculty. In most departments there will be issues of capacity and infrastructure. Professor Lanyon said that matter might be easier in science departments with open labs, but it is nonetheless a possibility the University should explore because some leave the academy because it has not come up with solutions that work for people.

Professor Konstan summarized. The Committee could urge the administration to explore the availability and flexibility of childcare around or on the campus, emphasize the need for faculty members with children to know that there will be a regular place for them to bring the children as well as a place for emergency and odd-hours care. The Committee can ask the administration to raise awareness about departmental culture issues related to evaluation and promotion and tenure, including through mentoring and training for unit leaders about ways to conduct business and evaluate faculty and to determine if some of the practices may be unduly biased against faculty members who are raising children (and this could be an issue with faculty members who have responsibilities for the care of older parents as well). The Committee can consider recommending flexibility in appointments, but to do so will require that it think in more detail and perhaps a small subcommittee could be appointed to work with the administration; the idea is options that can be provided across the University rather than only by special arrangement.

What he has not heard suggested, Professor Konstan said, is a proposal that parental leave be structured financially as fringe benefits rather than direct costs. Part of the challenge, reported by a PI in a note to the Committee, is that when a PI has an employee on a grant go on maternity leave, the grant is responsible for paying the leave cost, leaving no extra money to pay a replacement worker. Making such leaves a direct cost not only causes problems for some PIs or units (who lack the funds to backfill, or who are hit with an unusual number of births in a year), but may also create a less-supportive relationship between the employee and the supervisor/PI/unit head. His inclination, he said, is pass this question to the Senate Research Committee with the suggestion that this Committee believes there would be benefits to removing it as a burden on individual PIs option and make it a centrally financed benefit (through the fringe pool). Is parental leave a fringe benefit at other universities? Vice President Brown said that institutions handle it in different ways.

Mr. Croce said that resolving conflicts between childcare needs and academic job responsibilities can be very difficult; support for doing so should be seen as supporting families and as a communal responsibility, not solely a mother's problem. While the basic costs and practices of child rearing are the responsibilities of families, the University can help so that women are not unduly disadvantaged when emergencies or circumstances beyond their planning and control happen. For example, the University could assist with arrangements when children get sick or women must be out of town for academic conferences. As this might be a difficult burden for some departments, particularly smaller ones or those with more young faculty, such assistance could be spread out across the University as a central responsibility. Parents will clearly have the greatest responsibility, in any case, but the University could provide help.

Dr. Himstedt said it is someone's choice to have a child; it is the University's responsibility to provide the opportunity for childcare—but not to pay for it. It is not the community's job to raise a child, it is the parents' responsibility. The University provides parking, cafeterias, and so on, but does not pay for them for the University community.

Dr. Gram said that any proposal to allow for a reduction of effort during the probationary period would require more consideration. When the probationary period is extended for childbirth/adoption, illness, and so forth, faculty is simply given extra time to satisfy the criteria for tenure because it is assumed that those qualifying life events have an adverse effect on scholarship. There is no reduction in effort and the University is still operating with the principle of a criterion-referenced system under which each probationary faculty is given the same amount of time to satisfy the criteria. Extending the probationary period is not a reduction in effort, whereas a system that would allow for reduced appointment may have the effect of providing those faculty who have the financial means to reduce their appointment additional time to meet the tenure and promotion criteria.

Professor Konstan agreed and said that the matter relates not only to the tenure process; it also affects tenured faculty members. Everyone has heard comments about faculty members who extend the probationary period in order to obtain more time, which suggests that not all faculty members who vote on granting tenure understand the reasons behind extending the probationary period.

Professor Interrante observed that with respect to the question of paying for services that support families, the University has short-term disability insurance that faculty members can buy to cover such expenses. Vice President Brown agreed and said that it is good for up to 90 days. Does it exclude maternity leave, Professor Konstan asked? It covers the recovery period and complications with the birth of a child, Vice President Brown said, and can come into effect after two weeks.

More generally, Professor Konstan said, in terms of conferences and the burdens associated with travel, the greatest effect is on mothers with young children: the added cost of the trip means they must reduce the number of conferences they can attend, which means their visibility in the profession is reduced. If someone has a medical condition, the University allows extra support; is a two-year-old a medical condition?

Professor Interrante said that support would not require a lot of resources; nursing infants fly free and can stay with the mother. Someone needs to stay with the infant when the mother is attending conference sessions. But a four-year-old could add \$1000 to the cost of a trip, Dr. Himstedt observed.

Mr. Poggioli said, apropos of childcare, that one can choose not to have children. Have a number of faculty members have chosen not to, given these issues? Is there any idea how large the demand is for a vendor? Professor Konstan said he knows about the large demand for places in the University's childcare center, and a number of faculty members do not sign up because they are discouraged by the long waiting list. It is clear that there is demand for childcare of the quality of the University's center. He said he has no idea about the number of faculty members who may have chosen not to have children. Both Professor Lanyon and Dr. Himstedt said that it is not the University's business to know why faculty members choose not to have children.

A related question is how many people choose not to take faculty positions because they cannot fulfill all the responsibilities and have children, Ms. Bourland said.

Professor Konstan said that another reason the University loses faculty members is because of the lack of a tuition benefit for dependents of employees; he said he knows of a case where a faculty member left for that reason. But the Committee will not take up that issue.

Professor Konstan said he would circulate a draft resolution by email to Committee members for consideration at a future meeting. He thanked Professor Interrante and Vice Presidents Albert and Brown for joining the meeting.

## **2. Online Faculty Activity Reporting System Update**

[Shortly after this discussion began, Professor Konstan left the meeting to teach and Professor Lanyon assumed the chair.]

Professor Konstan now invited Dr. Gram to review the status of the faculty activity online reporting system and noted that the Committee has been tasked to monitor progress in implementing the system. As background, he said one question is "why bother?" If a reporting system is done well—it is the Committee's job to hold the administration's feet to the fire to be sure that it is—it will serve aggregate information about which the faculty are expected to report annually, it will produce things the faculty need in the formats needed (e.g., NIH format versus NEH format), and it will enable the University to pull together information it needs to highlight institutional successes. The project is going forward; it is the Committee's job to comment wisely on it and to keep it on a clear track.

Dr. Gram first outlined the key elements of an online faculty activity reporting system:

1. Reduce redundant data entry by only entering data once and using it for many purposes;
2. Pre-populate data with information from existing databases allowing faculty to enter annual accomplishments more easily;
3. Streamline processes around report routing, the merit process, P&T, accreditation;
4. Let faculty quickly produce CVs and bio-sketches in sponsor approved formats;
5. Be flexible to allow for college and campus customization;
6. Provide new data that will allow the University to highlight better the effects of its activities regionally and internationally.

There is much information about faculty activities floating around the University, Dr. Gram observed, in CVs and paper reports and so on. But it tends to be in silos in departments and reports, not aggregated. Faculty members are asked to provide biographies for a department website, or for NIH, or asked to update their CVs, or asked for a faculty activity report: one goal of the system is to achieve efficiencies and reduce redundant requests for information from faculty, so that one can enter information once and use the entered information for multiple purposes such as CVs, promotion and tenure material, faculty activity and merit reports, Web site profiles, NIH or NSF biosketches, and accreditation agency reports.

This has been on the agenda for some time, Dr. Gram noted, and referred to a Faculty Senate resolution in April 2008 calling for adoption of an integrated software system that would serve as a comprehensive repository of faculty and staff activities that would also support annual reporting, the promotion-and-tenure process, and other reporting requirements. The present timeline call for systems integration and customization during FY14; the original contract was signed on October 1, 2013, and

there are early-implementation partners: Duluth, Public Health, Management, and Education and Human Development.

Dr. Gram provided a schematic of how the system would work; in essence, faculty members would provide/enter data, existing University demographic (teaching, grants, human resources, etc.) would be drawn on, and information from University libraries on publications, citation data, patents, and so on would be drawn in as well. The products of the online activity repository are expected to include such things as department webpage profiles, CVs and annual activity reports, biosketches, reporting and accreditation, and search and expertise.

Dr. Gram provided a few screen shots of how the information would be available and noted that universities use the database in different ways. The key, he agreed with Professor Konstan, is to do it well. This system has great opportunities for efficiencies for faculty members, chairs, and others, but it must be done right. A CV is a personal document, so it is not easy to set the system up, and one could talk for a long time about information fields should be included and whether a faculty member must enter certain information. There are different approaches to implementing this system. At Penn State, for example, probationary faculty members and associate professors are required to use their system for promotion and tenure, but the full professors are not required to use it. It can be tricky to import citations, Dr. Gram cautioned, and they want to set expectations low, but there are real benefits.

Professor Konstan said there are two things easy to get wrong with a database system, which is what this is. First, if one does not specify what is to be researched, it will not be in the database (e.g., research in Minnesota counties or the number of undergraduates involved in research), so he suggested gathering a group of faculty members to imagine what they might want reports on. Second, within disciplines, if certain elements are not included, the data will be worthless for promotion and tenure (e.g., in his field, conferences are extremely important). He said he hopes that can identify what can be tweaked after reports come out and there is a way to be sure that information that is needed will be captured. Dr. Himstedt said is why the ability to customize at the department level is required.

Dr. Gram said that they have a template for promotion and tenure that has been widely adopted that makes the process more transparent and ensures that files are complete. He said they know that each college has additional questions or fields they want to add, so the files are customized, and presumably the same has been done at the departmental level as well. This is a big task and they have just started mapping fields; they are also talking with CIC colleagues and with people at other institutions who have done the job well. They have a small project team, a steering committee, and—to be formed—a data governance committee. The general principle is that the people who can look at CVs and merit reports on the system are the people who can look at them now. At the central level, it is expected there will only be aggregate data. But there will be issues that arise, which is why it will be critical to have a small governance group that should include one or two members of this Committee.

Professor Kulacki said that if one looks at various websites across the institution, many faculty members put their CVs or large parts of them on the web, so many are already allowing open access. That is helpful when one is trying to establish coalitions for research, for example. Are people guarding their CVs? What is the open-access policy? Dr. Gram said that there are differences in department cultures and he surmised that not many faculty members put their full CVs on the web; he suggested that decision should be left to colleges and departments.

Professor Ng said that when she talks to colleagues about human-resources information and promotion-and-tenure documents being included in the system, that arouses concerns about privacy. The question is, who can run reports? Dr. Gram said that the data privacy principles that are currently in place must form the principle about who can run reports. That is, chairs and heads and review committees (e.g., for annual review) should be able to run reports pertaining only to the activity with which they are charged. Similarly, the institution might be interested in aggregate data for reporting purposes as it is now and not any individual personal data. The use of the system for promotion-and-tenure material will likely be incorporated, although not immediately.

Professor Grier-Reed asked what the timeline is for systemwide implementation. Dr. Gram said they will start with the early-adopter colleges; after that, it depends. The goal is to have some degree of customization and they have started the process. Many are using the faculty activity report as a vehicle to begin implementation, which they hope to do this year.

Mr. Croce asked if any thought has been given to including P&A staff, many of whom make contributions across the state. There has been, Dr. Gram said, and some P&A staff in Education and Human Development and in Public Health will be included, but they are trying to avoid doing too much right away. They are starting with the annual review of faculty reporting, but there is no reason the system could not be expanded to some P&A staff in the future. Every customization, however, takes time.

Professor Lanyon asked what the experiences of other institutions have been. The database is only useful if faculty members keep it updated, so they have to be required to do so; what has the response been elsewhere? Mixed, Dr. Gram said. It is not to be expected that one turns the system on and then require everyone to update all the information. They have ideas about how not to do things. Has anyone learned to do it right, Professor Lanyon asked? Dr. Gram said that those institutions that have implemented the system in stages and used the system to replace annual faculty activity reporting mechanisms have done well. University of Kansas, University of Kentucky, and Penn State have all done large scale implementation and used different approaches, from which a lot can be learned.

Professor Lanyon observed that the University is already doing promotion and tenure. The value of this system, presumably, is that it can answer questions that cannot now be answered. But that is only true if everyone uses the system and everyone maintains the files. That can be done, but it requires a commitment from every dean and department head: information will only be gathered using this system. Does the University have the stomach to adopt such a requirement? Dr. Gram said he could not answer the last question, although he noted that all faculty members must complete a faculty activity report. Professor Lanyon said that he could see, as a department head, saying that everyone must use the system for their activity reports—but all department heads will have to do that for the system to work the way it is supposed to. Dr. Gram agreed but said that the system will be owned by the colleges, not the central administration, and that it is crucial that the system creates efficiencies in the processes at the department and college level.

Dr. Gram suggested that this is an iterative process and that they will learn from the first year of use, and what the deans tell their colleagues they can get out of the system, rather than think about any central mandate.

Mr. Poggioli said it appears that the system will provide many benefits at upper levels and create a lot of work at lower levels, and could lead to units making up numbers in order to get reports done. If the system includes fine-grained details, there needs to be a procedure put in place so that people can remember and report those details. Dr. Gram agreed and observed that right now such details may be on a piece of paper somewhere in a department or in a Word document. Some faculty members will see the system as an advantage: they will be able to log on and record ongoing activities throughout year rather than only updating during the time that a faculty activity report is requested of them.

### **3. Changes to the Student-Rating-of-Teaching (SRT) Form**

Dr. Gram turned now to proposed changes in the Student-Rating-of-Teaching (SRT) form. Professor Lanyon inquired what Dr. Gram expected from the discussion; "feedback," Dr. Gram replied, and they will then think about additional consultation.

Dr. Gram provided copies of the current SRT form and noted the six core questions (the results of which are used in faculty promotion, tenure, and merit decisions, and promotion and merit decisions about teaching staff) and the student-release questions on the reverse side of the form. It is because the data from the core questions are used in personnel decisions that Vice Provost Carney has been insistent that proposed changes go both to the Senate Committee on Educational Policy (SCEP) as well as this Committee. The student-release questions were developed by the students and it was agreed, a number of years ago, they could be added to the SRT form; faculty members have the option to release the results of the responses to the student-release questions. Over the last eight years, since the student-release questions were added to the form, students have complained that few faculty members release the results (around 5% of the faculty and staff do so). There has been continuous pressure to increase the release rate and provide more information to students. The Minnesota Government Data Practices Act, however, forbids the release of personnel data.

Last year, Dr. Gram related, SCEP asked Tracy Smith from the General Counsel's office what information can and cannot be released, and was told that data not related to the instructor (class environment, information about the class) could be. The Board of Regents received a resolution from the Minnesota Student Association saying that students are not receiving enough information so must rely on RateMyProfessor.com and word of mouth. As a result of these events, Vice Provost Carney asked him and Drs. Dohm (Office of Measurement Services) and Langley (Center for Teaching and Learning) to start a discussion and develop a new SRT form that retained the core items as well as additional questions, the responses to which could be released to students without violating Minnesota law.

Dr. Gram laid out the proposed revision (between the \* \* \*):

Overview of a proposed revision:

- Make the results of six items from the revised SRT available to students
- Retain six core items from the current SRT; add seven additional items
- Incorporate, as far as possible, questions similar to those in the Student Release Survey
- Eliminate the Student Release Survey and release a subset of SRT results for all courses and instead identify a subset of SRT results that can be released to students without violating the Minnesota Data Practices Act.

**DRAFT of Revised SRT**

All new or revised items in bold  
Items marked by an asterisk may be released to students  
1 to 6 scale except where noted

1. The instructor was well prepared for class.
2. The instructor presented the subject matter clearly.
3. The instructor provided feedback intended to improve my course performance.
4. The instructor treated me with respect.
5. \*I have a deeper understanding of the subject matter as a result of this course.
6. \*My interest in the subject matter was stimulated by this course.
7. **The instructor actively engaged me in learning the content.**
8. **\*Instructional technology employed in this course was used effectively (1 2 3 4 5 6 NA)**
9. **\*The grading methods for this course were fair.**
10. **The instructor set appropriately high standards for mastering the content.**
11. **\*The physical environment for this class enhanced my ability to learn the content.**
12. **I would recommend this instructor to other students.**
13. **\*I would recommend this course to other students.**

#### WRITTEN COMMENTS SECTION

- What did the instructor do that most helped your learning?
- **What suggestions do you have for improving this course?**

#### New SRT Release Items

*Items from above that may be made publicly available and released to students (course related items):*

1. \*I have a deeper understanding of the subject matter as a result of this course.
2. \*My interest in the subject matter was stimulated by this course.
3. \*Instructional technology employed in this course was used effectively (1 2 3 4 5 6 NA)
4. \*The grading methods for this course were fair.
5. \*The physical environment for this class enhanced my ability to learn the content.
6. \*I would recommend this course to other students.

\* \* \*

Dr. Gram reported that SCEP members had a number of comments about the draft proposal. The guiding principle is that there be one SRT form with 10-15 questions and the results from those not related to the instructor will be released to students.

Professor Kulacki observed that in certain curricula, students have no options about a course—they must take it—so #13 doesn't apply in those cases. Dr. Gram agreed that was a fair point and said that those kinds of global questions do not always provide very useful formative feedback, but the students want something like that as part of the information they receive.

Dr. Himstedt said that it would be possible to change the current six core questions to the passive voice and achieve the results Dr. Gram said are being sought, and in order to avoid duplication. Dr. Gram observed that the first 4 questions are instructor-related so the results are, under the law, personnel data; he agreed that there is some degree of redundancy in the questions but they reflect a compromise with what the students want. He also noted that there is a very large existing database, based on the responses to the six core questions that have been used for a number of years, and to change the wording of the six core questions would mean there would be no continuity in the data. Dr. Himstedt said he would like to see the form as short as possible because students always want to get out of class quickly. Dr. Gram agreed but said the proposal reflects what students want and what faculty need.

Professor Lanyon pointed out that the students really want this information, so the question before the Committee is not whether it believes the information will be useful but whether the Committee objects to the release of the results of the responses to the asterisked questions.

Mr. Poggioli asked if students want information about the instructors or the course workload. Dr. Gram said the students would like to have all the information but the University cannot release some of it, and while he and his colleagues have reservations about the usefulness of some of the questions, they are what the students have requested.

Dr. Gram affirmed, in response to a question from Professor Grier-Reed, that there would likely only be 13 questions and they would be kept together on a single form.

Dr. Himstedt inquired if the written comments are used in the promotion, tenure, and merit process. That varies by college and is up to each college to decide, Dr. Gram said.

Professor Sell asked what the objective in total is of the SRT form: to understand what happens in a particular course or in a department overall. The goal of this particular revision is to provide some information to students, Dr. Gram replied, based on what they provide through the forms. Students can use it for course selection. It is also used to judge the difficulty and workload of a course, Professor Lanyon said, although not specific sections of a course.

Professor Ng said that one way to solve the workload question is to release the responses to current student-release questions 1-3 ("1. Approximately how many hours per week do you spend working on homework, reading, and projects for this course?" "2. Compared to other courses at this level, the amount I have learned in this course is: [with a scale]" "3. Compared to other courses at this level, the difficulty of this course is: [with a scale]"). It was noted that the handout from Dr. Gram explained at greater length why those questions were not included in the proposal. Dr. Gram explained that the goal was to incorporate as much of the information sought in the student-release questions as possible.

Professor Lanyon inquired if the Committee was uncomfortable with the idea of releasing the information proposed. The Committee agreed that it wished to revisit the question at its next meeting.

Professor Lanyon thanked Dr. Gram for the report and adjourned the meeting at 4:30.

-- Gary Engstrand