

Minutes^{*}

Faculty Consultative Committee
Thursday, February 20, 2014
1:00 – 3:00
Room 238A Morrill Hall

Present: Will Durfee (chair), Avner Ben-Ner, James Cloyd, Eva von Dassow, Jigna Desai, Janet Ericksen, Gary Gardner, Maria Gini, Tabitha Grier-Reed, Joseph Konstan, Alon McCormick, Karen Mesce, James Pacala, Ned Patterson, Paul Ranelli, Chris Uggen, Jean Wyman

Absent: Linda Bearinger, Russell Luepker

Guests: Provost Karen Hanson, Vice Provost Robert McMaster, Associate Dean Jennifer Windsor (CLA); Professor Susan Meyer Goldstein (chair, Faculty Academic Oversight Committee for Intercollegiate Athletics)

Other: Emily Lawrence (Office of the President); Steven Hawks, Joseph Shultz (Office of the Provost)

[In these minutes: (1) accreditation and assessment; (2) athletic policy revisions; (3) election of 2014-15 committee chair; (4) brief discussion of student learning outcomes and liberal education requirements; (5) approval of Faculty Senate docket; (6) update on review of clinical research practices]

1. Accreditation and Assessment

Professor Durfee convened the meeting at 1:00 and welcomed Provost Hanson, Vice Provost McMaster, and Associate Dean Windsor to the meeting to discuss accreditation and assessment. He noted that the Twin Cities campus will be going through the accreditation process in 2015, and much of that process by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC: the University's regional accrediting agency) is focused on outcomes and assessment. He said it will be useful for the Committee to learn background information about accreditation and assessment and the approach the University is taking to them.

Provost Hanson began by noting that Dr. Shultz is the University's liaison to the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) and that institutions must go through the accrediting process every 10 years. There have been many changes in the foci of accreditation since the last time the University went through the process and she urged Committee members to look at the HLC website. [<https://www.ncahlc.org/> and in particular <https://www.ncahlc.org/Information-for-Institutions/criteria-and-core-components.html>, 4B] Accreditation is of the entire campus, not just undergraduate or graduate education or research. The basic framework for accreditation is that institutions of higher education have deliberately taken the stand that they should be engaged in self-reflection about their quality, but the process has led sometimes to a tussle between higher education on the one hand and the public and the federal government on the other. Accreditation is also tied to financial aid for students, the provost noted, which means it is important for students and the taxpayers.

* 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.

The accrediting agencies themselves are subject to review, both by the federal government and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation [<http://www.chea.org/>], Provost Hanson said. If the accreditors cannot demonstrate that they hold institutions to the standards the accreditors have articulated, they can lose their status as accreditors. The system is one of self-policing by the higher education community.

Provost Hanson said that accreditation is a major undertaking for an institution and is not just a set of internally-generated tasks and requirements. Whether one thinks accreditation is good or bad, it is a matter of public concern about ensuring quality. When one thinks about the number of institutions that may not deliver instruction of quality, it is important that the academic community police itself. While accreditation can be seen as a huge burden, it is important.

Even first-rate institutions can run into difficulties in the accreditation process, Provost Hanson said; there is no doubt about their accreditation, but the HLC can call for a return visit a few years after accreditation to be sure that the institution is correcting things noted as concerns. There was a question about assessment of learning at her previous institution, so a return visit was scheduled. A return visit entails a lot of institutional work.

Professor Konstan asked if accreditation is about the entire campus or about undergraduate education. It is the entire campus, Provost Hanson said. Professor Konstan said he looked at the HLC website and saw a number of great requirements and standards, but it is been 15 years or more since some of the programs on the Twin Cities campus have been reviewed; he wondered how much of what is done is to satisfy accreditors—or can an institution assume it will be accredited and focus on areas that it believes to be important and ignore standards or requirements that may be overlooked. Provost Hanson emphasized that institutions cannot overlook the requirements, and they submit huge binders (now electronic) to the accrediting agency responding to all of the standards and criteria of the agency.

Professor von Dassow said that the faculty are told the University must do X in assessment because of accreditation, but no accreditation agency designed the Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs), which she described as vacuous, and at the Faculty Senate meeting in 2007 when the SLOs were approved, there was no mention of linking them to accreditation. Vice Provost Carney at the time said that the Faculty Senate was not endorsing a process of assessment. Provost Hanson and Professor von Dassow debated the meaning and implication of the Faculty Senate endorsement.

Professor Ben-Ner inquired what peer institutions do. Provost Hanson said she did not know what each does, but the CIC provosts have talked about accreditation a number of times and the larger institutions appear to take the approach that Minnesota has: they take a lighter touch and do not get deeply into each discipline, but instead look to more general obligations and outcomes.

Professor Gardner asked if there would likely be interest on the part of the state government in the accreditation; Provost Hanson thought not unless the HLC called for a return visit, which might lead to questions. Most of the discussions about the accreditation process are at the national level.

Vice Provost McMaster next walked the Committee through a set of slides outlining the accreditation process on the campus and began with academic assessment. Academic assessment is composed of four elements, a set of related activities: approval process for program changes, academic

program reviews, regional and specialized accreditation, and assessment of student learning (the focus of the discussion at this meeting). The last element is a critical part of the accreditation process, he said.

The new accreditation model is the Open Pathway Model, as defined by the HLC, and includes a quality initiative, assurance review and comprehensive evaluation in 2015-16, and an assurance review four years later. Vice Provost McMaster reviewed the HLC criteria [explained at length on the <https://www.ncahlc.org/Information-for-Institutions/criteria-and-core-components.html> website] and noted especially Criterion Three and Criterion Four: Teaching & Learning: Quality, Resources, and Support, and Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement. Both of them are related to assessment, he said. He cited some of the language in Criterion Four: "The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs, learning environments, and support services, and it evaluates their effectiveness for student learning through processes designed to promote continuous improvement."

Dr. McMaster recited the core components on assessment, from the HLC criteria (items 3.B. and 4.B.) and turned to the University's strategies for assessing undergraduate education. They are taking a three-pronged approach: assessment of the campus' seven Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs), the Writing-Enriched Curriculum (which is beginning to have spectacular data on its effects), and the results of the Student Experience in the Research University (SERU) survey (a national survey also administered at a number of the University's peer institutions). There are a number of questions about the SLOs (and Student Development Outcomes) included in the SERU survey.

In terms of the SLOs, Dr. McMaster said that colleges will have flexibility in the process and programs select 3-4 outcomes per year. This does not mean that every course at the University must document student exposure to all seven SLOs. The expectation is that over time, a program will expose students to three or four of them. The administration is not going to be checking on how this is done. In the past this was a more centrally-driven model; they are trying this time to provide colleges and departments with maximum flexibility in assessment.

Professor Desai commented that while the administration may not check, the processes have built into them a substantial amount of work demonstrating where the SLOs are being met, the syllabi have a lot of language students don't read, and there is a lot of labor required to make the syllabi comply. This is empty work—the syllabus is supposed to tell what SLOs are met, how they are met, and what they will do. There is a lot of back and forth about LEs and SLOs in the approval process, most of it quite useless in actually improving the course. SLOs don't help faculty really explain what students will learn and adding a lot of empty verbiage means that faculty members are wasting a lot of their time getting courses passed, and they are encumbered from designing innovative courses by SLOs but especially CLEs. Dr. McMaster said that is good feedback and noted that in the process of re-certification of liberal-education courses, the Council on Liberal Education decided to ask faculty members to certify that a course is exposing students to one or two of the SLOs. He said he takes the criticism seriously.

Vice Provost McMaster outlined the assessment governance groups (the Executive Committee, consisting of himself and individuals from his office as well as institutional research, and the Steering Committee, consisting of individuals from his office, collegiate associate deans, assessment coordinator, institutional research, and student affairs for the development outcomes). He described the assessment activities and consultation that has taken and will take place.

The University must submit an assurance argument, which is a type of self study, to the HLC in August, 2015. The campus visit will occur sometime in the 2015-16 school year.

Dr. McMaster reviewed the seven campus SLOs and information about SERU and how questions in the latter can be mapped to the SLOs.

Each of the 8 undergraduate colleges is engaged in assessment activity; Dr. McMaster provided (but did not review) information on what each is doing. He did note activities in the College of Biological Sciences as an example, and said that two key elements of the collegiate activities are discussions around student learning and improvement and conversations by the faculty about the learning outcomes in their college.

Associate Dean Windsor explained what is being done in the College of Liberal Arts, the largest of the undergraduate colleges. She said that CLA faculty are very committed to student learning; the curriculum is always evolving and there is always faculty oversight of it. CLA has 69 majors that span the arts, humanities, social sciences, and the sciences in some cases, and student learning outcomes mean different things in different fields. She explained the broadly different approaches for fields that emphasize mastery of a body of knowledge (often the sciences) versus fields that emphasize the creation of new knowledge and perspectives (often the arts and humanities). Student learning outcomes may be more useful to capture mastery of knowledge and may be seen as general and obvious for fields in which creating new perspectives is intrinsic to the discipline. Given this, she said that CLA has appreciated the flexibility that Vice Provost McMaster has permitted, rather than imposing a one-size-fits-all model. The flexibility falls into three categories: respecting the qualitative and quantitative approaches that already exist in the college, defining the scope of the work to be doable given other aspects of faculty workload, and letting departments and majors decide which SLOs on which they will be assessed. They are trying to focus on using accreditation as a moment to have reflective curricular discussions within the disciplines.

Dean Windsor described the approach that CLA is taking to the assessment of student learning for the Higher Learning Commission, a hybrid approach involving both the college and the departments. They are looking at an early, middle, and endpoint of the curricula across majors. Student learning outcomes are built into the college's First Year Experience course and departments have been asked to assess learning outcomes in two 3xxx-level courses in the major and the capstone senior project. There already is assessment of student language learning through the college's second language requirement.

There are some challenges. One, it must be recognized that the SLOs mean different things in different disciplines; in some they are very instrumental while in others the definition of student learning outcomes is close to the core of how disciplines view their scholarship. Two, this is the first time the University's Annual Progress Report has been in place, so working through that is new. Three, there are over 500 faculty members in CLA and the specifics of the college's approach to assessment and outcomes have evolved over time, so it is difficult to keep every faculty member up to date. There also have been some great conversations about student learning and a broad range of interesting ways in which departments have chosen to use the student learning outcomes, including student self-assessment, input on student learning from alumni, and programmatic curricular review.

Dean Windsor concluded by saying that the department chairs must be brought back into the loop and related elements of conversations that they have had with CLA faculty about what they would like to do.

While it is too late for this time, looking to 2025 and the next accreditation review, Professor Konstan asked if the University could say it wants to shift the focus of assessment to look at what happened to its graduates 10-15 years after graduation. Does it have the freedom to define assessment that way? Professor Konstan also inquired how graduate and professional programs are incorporated in the accreditation process.

On his second point, Provost Hanson said that the charge to prepare for accreditation is not solely in the Office of Undergraduate Education; it is in her office as well as other central offices (such as Institutional Research). As for his first question, about institutional leeway in changing the modality of assessment, she said she could give a qualified "yes." It is an iterative process, and HLC specifications may change. The last few years, for example, have seen a significant emphasis on student learning. It is understood that institutions will tailor the HLC criteria to their mission.

Professor Gardner said he didn't see any faculty members in the assessment governance structure and that in the University's faculty governance system, associate deans are considered administrators even though they may hold faculty appointments. It is important to have faculty members involved, people who are in the classroom, so the discussion is not all about workload.

Professor Gardner said that as far as he is concerned, the SLOs are pretty good for majors as long as they are not directed at specific classes but instead at the courses collectively. Trying to link SLOs to specific courses is make work. Dean Windsor said that in CLA the focus is course-based because the University has identified SLOs at the course level for re-accreditation. Each CLA major has identified SLOs in three courses. In some disciplines, however, a course-based approach does not make sense, so where they need to, they will use a hybrid between the major and the courses. Professor Gardner expressed the view that the SLOs can rarely be expected at the level of the course, and it should be the responsibility of the major coordinator or committee to determine, in the aggregate, which courses address the SLOs. Dr. McMaster said that in some fields they can be identified at the course level, such as in engineering, but that doesn't work for all majors.

Professor von Dassow said that what Dean Windsor described for CLA is not how the faculty are experiencing assessment. She said, echoing Professor Desai, that every time faculty members want to make any change to a course, they must provide verbiage explaining how the course meets an SLO and even how particular assignments do so. When she gives students assignments, she thinks about how they will learn the subject matter, not SLOs. There is a disconnect between what faculty members do in their classes and the SLOs. The point of studying a subject is to learn about the subject; if assessment of student learning is done by filling in the empty boxes that are the SLOs with the specific content of courses, it becomes an exercise in tautology that serves no one.

Professor McCormick said that it can be difficult to map learning outcomes to current courses and that it would be very useful if the University could track students a few years from graduation into their early career—and then engage in assessment.

Professor Ben-Ner concurred with Professor Gardner about the fulfillment of SLOs as part of students' education at the University, not in individual courses. He suggested that the courses required for a degree should, collectively, satisfy the SLOs, in a manner similar to LE requirements.

Professor Mesce said that while her work is primarily in graduate education, she has been concerned that, for example, biologists do not take enough work in the humanities and the languages. She did so when she was an undergraduate biology major and has found that coursework to be of great value. Sometimes students do not know what is best for them and she said there needs to be a better alignment between the sciences and humanities. She would like to see the University go in the direction of creating more Renaissance students. If it were up to her, she would require science students to take three courses in the humanities—and vice versa—and that would enhance undergraduate education. Vice Provost McMaster said that Professor Mesce's view is in part why the campus has liberal-education requirements (but they do not address the question of a language requirement, because only one college requires a language). With seven core courses required that focus on the epistemology of the disciplines, biology students do have to take courses in the arts and humanities.

Professor Durfee thanked Provost Hanson, Vice Provost McMaster, and Associate Dean Windsor for joining the meeting and said the discussions on the topics raised today would continue later in the semester.

2. Athletic Policy Revisions

Professor Durfee welcomed Professor Goldstein to the meeting to present two athletic policy revisions. The Faculty Academic Oversight Committee for Intercollegiate Athletics (FAOCIA) is responsible for, inter alia, eligibility and compliance; Professor Goldstein, the FAOCIA chair, brought two policies for revision. The bylaws of the Faculty Senate provides that the Faculty Consultative Committee has responsibility for approving such policy changes and reporting the changes to the Faculty Senate for information.

Professor Goldstein turned first to the Policy on Eligibility and reported that the revisions are intended to accommodate the fact that more and more student-athletes graduate before they exhaust their eligibility to compete in their sport, so they compete as graduate students. Professor Goldstein and Committee members got into a lengthy and friendly exchange about what the proposed language meant and was intended to achieve; in the end, Professor Goldstein agreed that the language should be redrafted. Professor Konstan volunteered to help, if she wished.

The second item was the Policy on Scheduling; Professor Goldstein reported that the changes were intended purely to clarify the intent of the policy. Following Committee review and brief discussion, the Committee approved the revisions unanimously.

Professor Durfee asked to whom these policies belong; they are Senate policies, not on the University policy website. Professor Goldstein observed that the University is obligated to follow NCAA and Big Ten rules; these are additional rules the University has adopted. Professor Cloyd suggested that the policies should be easy to find on the University's website, given the interest in University athletics.

3. Election of 2014-15 Committee Chair

Committee members elected Professor Ropers-Huilman chair for 2014-15.

4. Discussion of the SLOs and Liberal-Education Requirements

Committee members returned to the topics discussed with Provost Hanson, Vice Provost McMaster, and Associate Dean Windsor. Committee members discussed the extent to which faculty across the campus agree with the objections that a number of faculty members in CLA have raised to the SLOs, where the matter should be taken up (the Senate Committee on Educational Policy or this Committee), how faculty members experience the SLOs and liberal-education requirements, the extent to which other issues may be involved (e.g., academic freedom), whether the SLOs are of value and the problem for some has been in the implementation, how the faculty should take up a mandate from the strategic planning process to look at the curriculum to see how well it matches the strategic plan and the campus mission, the extent to which the University's budget model has driven the liberal-education requirements from educating students to competition among units, and the extent to which and ways the current liberal-education system might be changed

5. Faculty Senate Docket

The Committee took up the docket for the March 6 Faculty Senate meeting.

-- Professor Gardner asked about the pairing of the candidates in the election to be held to fill positions on this Committee beginning next year. Professor von Dassow, who chairs the Nominating Subcommittee, explained that nominees were paired in part on college size, so that a faculty member from a large college was not paired against someone from a small college. Professor Cloyd explained the process that the Nominating Subcommittee used to identify colleges and candidates, including recency of representation on this Committee, gender, ethnicity, and so on. He suggested that if the Committee has questions about that method of proceeding, it could take up the matter. Professor Durfee thanked the Nominating Committee for its good work.

-- The proposed Open Access policy is the big item for discussion at the meeting, Professor Durfee said, and is only on the docket for discussion, not action. If the discussion suggests the body is comfortable with the proposed policy, and whatever amendments might arise from the discussion on March 6, it can be taken up for action at the April meeting. Professor Konstan suggested that one point needs to be clarified or it could become an unnecessary focus of discussion: as written, the policy talks about the University having the right to allow others to archive for open access purposes. The policy should be clear on whether this is proposing to create an institutional repository (which the University may want to contract with third-parties to set up and maintain), or whether it is really retaining the rights to deposit faculty work in outside collections (which many publishers would normally not permit).

Professor Gardner asked what the policy means and inquired if it is linked to page charges, which many faculty cannot pay. Professor Konstan said the situation varies publisher by publisher and discipline by discipline, but noted that experiences with Harvard and other institutions has generally showed publisher agreement to allow institutional or self-archiving (even with copyright transfer), but not necessarily outside archives. Also, this policy is based on articles targeted at journals; as the policy is written, it presumably would apply to books as well, which is a whole different situation. He suggested that the Senate Library Committee, the author of the policy, set up a town-hall discussion for people with concerns; that could address a lot of questions that need not come to the Faculty Senate.

The Committee approved the docket unanimously.

6. Update on the Review of Clinical Research Practices

Professor Durfee provided an update on the response to the Senate resolution in December calling for a review of human subjects research clinical practices. President Kaler wrote a charge letter to Vice President for Research Brian Herman asking that he take responsibility for the review. The University has issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) for a review of clinical practices, which follows from a decision the president made that the review must be by an independent panel. In his role as chair of this Committee, along with Professor Gini as chair of the Senate Research Committee, he reviewed the language of the RFP, and they will both be involved in the selection of a contractor.

The desired date of the report is about July 1; it was important to give the contractor sufficient time to do a good job, Professor Durfee said. It would have been possible to set a September deadline, but the IRB system at the University is undergoing its accreditation review and the contractor report can be incorporated in that review.

Professor Ranelli inquired who wrote the RFP. Professor Durfee said it was based on the president's letter to Vice President Herman. He and Professor Gini reviewed it. Professor Gardner asked if the Committee could receive a copy. Professor Durfee said it can be viewed on the web, but because he is part of the process and because formally through the bid process, the RFP must be viewed as a whole, he did not want to print out an excerpt for the Committee. However, anyone can view the RFP at the University bid site, which is <http://purchasing.umn.edu/mbid/login.html>

Professor Cloyd said the Faculty Senate had emphasized that the review panel must be independent, but the University is paying the contractor. Professor Durfee observed that people do not do this work for free. Some do, Professor Cloyd said, but asked if the RFP arrangement meets the spirit of what the Faculty Senate asked the president to do.

Professor Durfee said the contractor is paid a fee for service, and there are several firms around the country that conduct independent assessments that are highly regarded. Professor Konstan said this is similar to the question of how an organization gets an audit. It would be possible to get the University's friends to do it for free, but that would not make it more independent.

Professor Durfee said it is his sense that both President Kaler and Vice President Herman are exceptionally serious about the independence of the review and understand that if it is not perceived as independent, the effort will not have been worth it.

Professor Gardner asked who will be on the committee to evaluate the proposals. Professor Durfee said that he and Professor Gini will be among the members.

Professor Cloyd said he did not object to the process, only that he wants to be sure it is within the spirit of the resolution the Faculty Senate adopted. Professor von Dassow reported that she had circulated President Kaler's letter to the members of the Faculty Senate who called for an independent review; in response, they wrote to Vice President Herman urging that any panel look not only at present practices but also at the history.

Professor Durfee adjourned the meeting at 3:00.

-- Gary Engstrand

University of Minnesota