

Minutes*

Senate Committee on Educational Policy
Wednesday, February 19, 2014
2:00 – 4:00
238A Morrill Hall

- Present: Alon McCormick (chair), Gifty Amarteifio, Michael Anderson, Charlene Ellingson, Timothy Gears, Gayle Golden, Kenneth Leopold, Robert McMaster, Nic McPhee, Thomas Michaels, Kristen Nelson, Moshe Volovik
- Absent: Nicola Alexander, Lee-Ann Breuch, Elaine Darst, Erich Beckert, Janine Grebin, Karla Hemesath, Sally Gregory Kohlstedt, Keith Mayes, Susan Wick
- Guests: Vice Provost Arlene Carney, John Kellogg (Institutional Research); Suzanne Bardouche, Leslie Schiff (Office of Undergraduate Education), Susan VanVoorhis (Academic Support Resources)
- Other: none

[In these minutes: (1) who teaches what; (2) Student Experience in the Research University (SERU); (3) educational policy revisions; (4) policy language for cancelled or missed classes]

1. Who Teaches What

Professor McCormick convened the meeting at 2:00 and welcomed Vice Provost Carney and Mr. Kellogg to provide the Committee with information on who (faculty, staff, graduate students, others) teaches what courses (at what level).

Dr. Carney and Mr. Kellogg distributed data for fall 2010 and fall 2013 for each campus of the University; the data are broken out by course level, whether they are lecture or discussion, by enrollment versus section counts, and whether taught by tenured faculty, tenure-track faculty, other faculty, academic professional (P&A), civil service, graduate student, or other. They provide these data each year, Dr. Carney recalled, and they are intended to respond to the question of what percentage of classes, at different levels, is taught by tenured and tenure-track faculty members versus the percentage taught by other types of faculty or by non-faculty. She noted that the data are only as robust as the information entered in PeopleSoft.

Mr. Kellogg noted several technical points about the data, including how they are filtered and pointed out that they do not include, inter alia, labs, independent study, honors theses, dissertations, etc.—they only include classes. Those teaching are sorted by their primary appointment (so, for example, Vice Provosts Carney and McMaster, if they were to teach a course while holding their administrative appointment, would show up as a P&A instructor). So a simple question has a lot of complexity, Dr. Carney concluded, and while the data have improved over time, there are still matters to be cleaned up.

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Dr. Carney made a number of points about the data.

- There are different practices in teaching in different colleges.
- The data are stable between 2010 and 2013.
- On the Twin Cities campus, about 53% of all lecture classes (all levels) were taught by tenured or tenure-track faculty in 2010 and about 50% in 2013; the difference is not statistically significant. At the 1XXX level, 35% of lecture classes were taught by tenured/tenure-track faculty in 2010 and about 33% in 2013.
- On the Morris campus, the large majority of all courses are taught by tenured and tenure-track faculty members. At Duluth, there is significant reliance on "other" faculty, most likely under terms of the union contract; there are fewer tenured and tenure-track faculty in lecture courses than on the Twin Cities campus. Crookston has a larger percentage of course taught by tenure-track faculty because that campus has increased the number of tenure-track faculty members; they also have a larger percentage of academic professionals teaching courses because of their large online program. At Rochester there are no tenured faculty yet; the model there is that the faculty teach the lectures and academic professionals do the labs and discussion sections. Each campus has a different model.

Vice Provost McMaster inquired about courses without a level indicator (they are the very few non-credit/remedial courses available, primarily in math, and only enrolled 201 students) and about whether it would be possible to differentiate between graduate and undergraduate students (that could be done).

Vice Provost Carney said that the SRT (student-rating-of-teaching) data are important to consider in the context of these data: she has looked at the ratings for faculty, P&A instructors, and graduate students, and the ratings for each group are nearly identical—and all are very high. (There are about 160,000 SRT responses each semester covering about 97% of courses—a few instructors do not submit them, usually because they are sick or the forms were not timely.) It would be disturbing if ratings for courses taught by non-faculty were lower, but they are not, which result is both impressive and reassuring.

Mr. Volovik observed that the most important difference between 2010 and 2013 is that slightly fewer courses on the Twin Cities campus were taught by faculty. Dr. Carney said the difference is very small and the decisions start at departments: they are the units that make teaching assignments. It may be that more faculty members obtained grants, and had to buy out some teaching, or there were more on leaves/sabbaticals, and so on. She said she did not see the difference as significant.

Professor Nelson said she will be interested to see the data over the next five years, with changing demographics. She is seeing more contract faculty hiring to bring in more students without the commitment of tenure. That doesn't seem to be the case with these data. Dr. Carney agreed and she pointed out that the provost does not hire any faculty members; deans will need to be vigilant about changes in faculty hiring patterns, and if there are significant changes, they will need discussion with the provost. She noted that there is a revised policy being developed requiring colleges to file a

personnel plan indicating who is delivering the instruction; the existing version requires approval of a variation if the number of non-tenured/tenure-track faculty exceeds 25% of the tenured/tenure-track faculty providing instruction. The revised policy will likely eliminate the number because it is unrealistic in some of the professional schools that rely on contract faculty; it may be that there will be different provisions for the "arts and sciences" colleges and the professional schools (e.g., schools want practicing architects or graphic designers to help deliver instruction). Those situations are indicative of why the college personnel plans are important. Mr. Kellogg said they do plan to develop a sort of dashboard of these data in the future.

Dr. Carney said she did not know what is appropriate for tenured and tenure-track faculty to teach. Large 1XXX classes? Many senior faculty do teach those courses because they love to teach. It would be problematic if there were no tenured/tenure-track faculty teaching 1XXX courses, but that's not the case here, although it may be at some universities. In the languages, the academic professionals teach the introductory courses and the faculty teach the more advanced courses.

Professor Michaels observed that these data represent an aggregate of individual decisions made by departments. The one can say for now is that this is the way it is and one cannot say if there should be more or fewer tenured and tenure-track faculty doing the teaching. One good question is about what will happen over time. Another question is about the difference between the Twin Cities and Duluth. A third question is whether there are similar data from other Big Ten schools and would they be interesting. It is difficult to say what a target should be, so the Committee can only accept the data, but comparisons would be helpful.

Dr. Carney said that comparative data are difficult to obtain because institutions the University compares itself with are equally decentralized and have their own ways of coding and use different terms. One way the University is different from many institutions is that the contract faculty here are usually full time and have full benefits—they are not adjunct faculty teaching several courses for a few thousand dollars each. What would be worrisome is many faculty teaching only one course: it is fine if a practicing architect conducts one studio course, but she would be concerned if 50% of a departments courses were taught by adjunct faculty members who teach in a course-by-course manner.

Professor Leopold asked if there is any policy requiring department oversight when contract faculty or academic professionals teach courses. Dr. Carney said the curriculum in each department is in the hands of the tenured and tenure-track faculty and the department chair, and they should be exercising the oversight. There is probably more oversight in some departments than in others—and it would be problematic if there were none. In departments that must be accredited, it is more likely that the faculty know what is going on in every course.

Professor McCormick thanked Vice Provost Carney and Mr. Kellogg for the report.

2. Student Experience in the Research University (SERU) Data

Professor McCormick recalled that the Committee heard briefly in the fall about the SERU consortium data and is now revisiting in order to ask any questions Committee members may have.

Vice Provost McMaster commented that SERU is increasingly a backbone for information about undergraduates at research universities. There used to be a myriad of surveys; SERU attempts

to consolidate the information in one place and avoid survey fatigue for students. SERU is becoming the standard national survey for research universities and a number of the University's peers have joined it. The University of Minnesota is the administrative and intellectual home to the SERU consortium.

In addition to core components used by all members of the consortium, there are also "wild cards" that institutions can use to measure campus-specific initiatives, Dr. McMaster reported. The University is honing questions about the Student Development Outcomes and the Student Learning Outcomes, which will go to 60-70 of undergraduates and provide a rich source of data for accreditation.

New in 2013 was a technology module, inquiring of students how many of their professors "effectively used technology to impact your academic success." The responses by college ranged from 45.6% to 90.9%; of the 9 colleges, 7 were in the 60-70% range. The data also revealed the percent of students who owned various pieces of technology, by college; between 94 and 100% of students in all colleges own a laptop; large majorities own a smartphone; smaller percentages own a desktop or a tablet.

Committee members conversed with Dr. McMaster about some of the data from the survey (e.g., the University has been doing much to increase a "sense of belonging" and there likely has been improvement, but longitudinal data are needed and there remains considerable variation across groups, such as students of color, freshmen, and transfers; in terms of high impact educational practices, the University ranks above peer AAU schools in such areas as writing-intensive courses, themes related to diversity or global learning, capstone or senior theses; and so on).

Professor McCormick asked Dr. McMaster whether there are any matters about which the Committee should worry, given the data. Dr. McMaster said the question is a good one and he needs to do some comparative analysis before he can answer fully. One possible worry is student interactions with faculty members, something that has a significant effect on student success and satisfaction. There may also be questions in the future about advising and the "student affairs" side of life. There is need for longitudinal data and the comparisons with AAU schools are important.

Professor Leopold asked about the question on effective use of technology. Dr. McMaster said that students increasingly are coming to the University with advanced technology and tend to want faculty members to use it in classes, but that doesn't mean those classes are better. Professor Leopold reported that a focus group discussion in his college (Science and Engineering) suggested that students are fine with technology and also fine with classes without it—but they are not fine with courses with technology when the instructor fumbles its use. It sounds from the survey like the University is encouraging everyone to use technology. That is not the case, Dr. McMaster said; it was provided more for information.

Ms. Golden asked about data on ratings of the cultural diversity of the student body; what information do the results provide? It appears that the students think the University is doing very well. Dr. McMaster said the results were of interest to the Office of Equity and Diversity and they get at the question of campus climate; by themselves, the data do not tell a lot. They contain both good and troubling news: half the students say cultural diversity is very good or excellent but 5.6% say it is poor or very poor. Professor McPhee said it would be useful to know which students are saying what;

is it the students of color who rate the campus as poor? Dr. McMaster agreed and said the data can be disaggregated by college and even department (if N is greater than 8) and the data can be compared with peers.

Professor McCormick asked if deans and departments will be provided reports or if there will be a repository where the data can be examined. The latter, Dr. McMaster said; his office will not be providing reports. Some colleges are using the data extensively.

Professor McCormick thanked Dr. McMaster for the discussion.

3. Educational Policy Revisions

The Committee returned to the three policies it had reviewed at the previous meeting dealing with transfer credits, credits by departmental examination and for nationally-recognized exams. Ms. Bardouche explained that since the last meeting of the Committee she had consulted with individuals on the Crookston and Morris campuses and made a few minor changes in the language as a result. She repeated the point she had made at the previous meeting: she does not see any controversial points in the policies because the changes really only clarify existing practices.

The Committee voted 10-0 (with 1 abstention) in favor of the changes to the policy "Transfer of Undergraduate Credit."

After brief explanation from Ms. Bardouche of the changes in the other two policies, "Departmental Exams for Proficiency or Credit for Undergraduate Students" and "Credit for Nationally Recognized Exams for Undergraduate Students," the Committee voted unanimously to approve the changes.

All three policies will be forward to the Faculty Consultative Committee for placement on the Faculty Senate docket for action.

Professor McCormick thanked Ms. Bardouche for her work on the three policies.

4. Policy Language for Cancelled or Missed Classes

Professor McCormick reported that the question has arisen whether there should be general policy language addressing instructor responsibility when classes are cancelled or missed for various reasons (e.g., a campus closes because of weather, a building is evacuated and classes cancelled, accident, an instructor is ill). Provost Hanson has indicated an interest in seeing the existing policy language broadened so it is clear that instructors are responsible for providing full course content and perhaps alternative activities when a course is cancelled. Her concern is that the policy as written only covers instances when the instructor knows in advance that a course will not meet on a certain date or dates.

Ms. Bardouche provided the Committee the existing language from the policy "Teaching and Learning: Instructor and Unit Responsibilities":

D. Observe Scheduled Class Times

1. Instructors are expected to meet their classes at the scheduled times, to be prepared for all class sessions, and to start and end classes at the scheduled times.
2. When instructors know in advance that they will be unable to attend particular class sessions, they are responsible for working with their academic unit to make appropriate alternate arrangements.

She provided possible new language:

When instructors are unable to attend particular class sessions, or if classes are cancelled for other reasons, instructors are responsible for working with their academic unit to make appropriate alternate arrangements.

The University expects students to make up work when they miss class, Ms. Bardouche observed, but the policy does not explicitly say that faculty and academic units should do the same, although most do so.

Ms. VanVoorhis reported that after the recent University closings, she checked with colleagues at Big Ten universities; most leave the decisions up to departments.

Committee members discussed various alternatives and concluded that a revision to #2 might read as follows:

2. When instructors are unable to attend particular class sessions, for whatever reasons, they are responsible for working with their academic unit to make appropriate alternate arrangements.

It was agreed that Ms. Bardouche would develop final draft language and bring it back to the Committee for action.

Professor McCormick adjourned the meeting at 3:40.

-- Gary Engstrand

University of Minnesota