

Minutes*

**Senate Committee on Educational Policy
February 9, 1989**

Present: John Clark (chair), Doug Biggs, John Clausen, Jean Congdon, Roland Guyotte, Robert Jones, Marvin Mattson, Timothy Mazzoni, Aron Pilhofer, Shelley Thomas

1. Change in Meeting Date

Inasmuch as the next scheduled meeting of the Committee coincides with the specially-scheduled meeting of the Faculty Senate with Governor Perpich, it was agreed that the meeting on February 23 would be cancelled.

2. Report of the Chair

Morse-Alumni Teaching Award Professor Clark reported that he had carried to the Senate Finance Committee the recommendation from SCEP concerning the enhancement of the Morse-Alumni Teaching Award; SFC, he said, had enthusiastically voted to support the SCEP motion. One remaining piece of business is how the enhanced awards will be funded; a meeting is being set up with representatives of the Alumni Association, the Foundation, SCEP, and central administration to address this issue.

Transition to new committee structure Professor Clark told the Committee that he had had breakfast with the chairs of some of the committees which report to SCEP and which would be folded into SCEP under the Senate committee reorganization; the purpose of the meeting had been to discuss the transition to next year and to develop ways to ensure that issues with which the committees dealt were not overlooked.

Morse-Alumni Awards Professor Clark announced that Professor Congdon had agreed to chair the committee to decide on the award winners for this year; Professor Mazzoni and Mr. Biggs had also agreed to serve.

3. Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the January 12 meeting were approved as written.

4. Ratio of Class Hours to Credits Awarded

Professor Clark opened the discussion with a brief review of the history of the issue and how the Committee had dealt with it in the past (it had gone on record as approving a 1:1 ratio between credits and class hours). The Committee had held its discussion of the issue in abeyance pending a decision on the conversion to semesters; since that change did not appear to be imminent, it seemed appropriate to return to the 1:1 ratio as a separate matter. Professor Clark distributed a rough draft of a statement endorsing the

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1:1 ratio which he said the Committee might wish to consider revising and adopting.

One of the Committee members declared that students would oppose the change: They work as much for a 4-credit course as for a 5-credit course, most work and learning is outside the classroom, most lectures simply repeat the materials in the books, and another class hour would not be helpful. MSA, the Committee was told, has taken no action on the issue and discussion will depend on the action taken by SCEP and other bodies.

Several points were raised in the discussion:

- Although adding a fourth hour to a 4-credit class would be intended to increase interaction with the faculty, and provide the opportunity for smaller discussion groups, it was argued that this does not occur before the fourth year of enrollment. The student members of the Committee expressed profound reservations about the proposition that an extra class hour would improve the quality of undergraduate education.
- There was concern for those students who currently take M-W-F classes and use Tuesdays and Thursdays to work; to add another class hour would make it difficult for those students to earn sufficient income to remain in school. One possible resolution to this problem would be to schedule two two-hour blocks on M-W or T-Th; another view was that the schedules of working students are not as inflexible as many believe.
- Moving to the 1:1 ratio, especially if the classes were reduced to three credits rather than a fourth contact hour added, would mean that it would take longer for students to graduate.
- The problem was being approached in the wrong fashion; if the University is serious about undergraduate education, it should design a system to enhance it and then let the students adapt to it. The system should not be built on the points being raised in this discussion. Both faculty and student members suggested that the educational value of the 1:1 ratio would be disputed as a means to enhance undergraduate education; it was also asserted that the system had to take into account the needs of students, such as those who must work (and there are many such students). A response was that the main mission of the University is education, that the University should demonstrate leadership in responding to the current mess that is education in this country, and that for students who insist on working three days a week education is their second priority.
- There was no clear understanding of why the change in 1972 had been made; it was the view of several Committee members that the original intent had been aborted: When the change from a 3-credit to a 4-credit module was adopted, it carried with it the implication that there would be a fourth "seminar" hour added to the existing 3-credit courses, or a guest lecturer, or field work. What occurred instead, however--in the view of some of the faculty on the Committee--was that the faculty saw it as an opportunity to gain time for research and the net result was simply credit inflation. Student members of the Committee said that if that were specified, they would see it as improving the quality of their education, particularly if it could be worked into a credit module schedule such as the M-W or T-Th 2-hour blocks. One faculty member observed that students should be

demanding the fourth contact hour and that they had been hoodwinked by the faculty when the change was made in 1972. Committee members agreed that both faculty and students should be complaining about what has happened.

- Everyone wants the University to provide a better undergraduate educational experience; the 1:1 ratio is slight tangential to the broader issue: Sitting on the cement floor in Anderson Hall and not hearing the lecture four times per week rather than three times is irrelevant to the other issue which contribute to quality of education. A majority of both faculty and student members of the Committee appeared to agree with this view; questions of workload, access, diversity, instruction, and materials, to name a few, are harder to deal with but are more critical to the quality of education. It also appeared that a majority of the Committee members were prepared to vote against adoption of a recommendation to return to the 1:1 ratio of class hours to credits (as had been the norm before 1972).
- One reason this issue is being considered is because there is anecdotal evidence to suggest that Minnesota is out of line in comparison with its sibling public institutions in the Big Ten, where the 1:1 ratio is the norm.

It was agreed that Professor Clark and Mr. Engstrand would try to rework the motion to make it conform to the sentiments expressed at the meeting.

5. Committee reorganization

Professor Clark said the Committee needed to consider how the "absorption" of the other committees would take place, what the new structure would be, and the process by which it would be achieved. There would be a need for overlap and continuity as well as a need to avoid confusion.

Committee members debated briefly the merits of standing subcommittees, how SCEP would handle recommendations from whatever standing or ad hoc subcommittees it might appoint, and the possibility of broadening the membership of SCEP. After some discussion, it became apparent that SCEP will have to treat the next year or so as an evolutionary period in order to determine whether or not the extensive use of subcommittees would be wise and the extent to which SCEP itself would address issues.

The Committee adjourned at 4:40.

-- Gary Engstrand