

Minutes*

Senate Committee on Educational Policy
Wednesday, November 3, 1993
2:30 - 4:30
Room 608 Campus Club

Present: Kenneth Heller (chair), Craig Bursch, Thomas Clayton, Sue Donaldson, Darwin Hendel, Robert Johnson, Manuel Kaplan, Carla Phillips, William Van Essendelft

Absent: Daniel Boler, Anita Cholewa, James Cotter, Megan Gunnar, Gayle Graham Yates

Guests: Elizabeth Grundner (Office of the Registrar), Rabbi Joshua Gutoff (Director, Hillel House)

Others: None

[In these minutes: Possible change in the Twin Cities calendar; strategic planning]

1. Resolution on Planning

Professor Heller distributed the draft resolution requested by the Committee at its last meeting. It was agreed that any request should be made to the Senate Consultative Committee, and to the Faculty Consultative Committee first because it would be meeting the next day. The resolution adopted by the Committee without dissent read as follows:

The Senate Committee on Educational Policy requests that the Faculty Consultative Committee (on behalf of the Senate Consultative Committee and the governance system) ask the administration to consult with the faculty, students, and staff through the Senate governance system before it publishes or publicly circulates materials, statements, or proposals that deal with substantive or procedural issues associated with strategic planning.

The present method of advancing the strategic planning process, while doubtless well intended, has left many governance committees adrift in their attempts to deal with issues and questions made public in a steady stream prior to consultation. This inevitably conveys the impression that the faculty, students, and staff are disconnected from and unimportant in the planning process.

Professor Heller, later in the meeting, reported that discussion with Vice President Hopkins at the next meeting, on November 17, would include the strategic plan as well as a possible policy prohibiting students from registering in classes that meet concurrently or that overlap.

* These minutes reflect discussion and debate at a meeting of a committee of the University of Minnesota Senate or Twin Cities Campus Assembly; none of the comments, conclusions, or actions reported in these minutes represent the views of, nor are they binding on, the Senate or Assembly, the Administration, or the Board of Regents.

2. Possible Change in the Twin Cities Calendar

Professor Heller then recalled that the Committee had discussed the typical Fall Quarter Thursday starting day as one of the "user unfriendly" elements of the University. He invited Elizabeth Grundner to join the meeting to talk about Twin Cities calendar issues. [It had been proposed that classes start on a Monday and that Thanksgiving week be a break, permitting students to write papers, catch up, or do research and faculty to hold departmental retreats and perform other functions lost in the rush to prepare for Fall Quarter.]

The Thursday start day began a long time ago in order that would be 10 of each day of each week in the quarter; the Thursday start accommodates the lost Thursday and Friday of Thanksgiving week. There was a scheduling committee that proposed calendars to the Assembly; it has been dissolved and the responsibility passed to SCEP. At one point, however, the scheduling committee recommended and the Assembly approved a Fall Quarter starting on Yom Kippur; President Magrath directed that that calendar be recast. There is, however, no Senate or Assembly directive of any kind on this matter. There has not been any concession to Jewish holidays in terms of the quarter, but it has been the practice NOT to start the quarter on either Yom Kippur or Rosh Hashanah because Jewish students could lose their places in classes due to absence.

(At Crookston, a student MUST attend the first day of class or loses the spot--but a telephone call to a faculty member explaining an absence will be honored. Such a policy could be considered for the Twin Cities campus, it was suggested.)

Based on the minutes of the previous meeting, Rabbi Guttoff contacted Professor Heller, who then invited him to the meeting. Rabbi Guttoff explained the objections to beginning classes on a Jewish religious holiday. For the majority of Jewish students, they are experienced less in RELIGIOUS ways than as very powerful defining days of their ethnic identity. There is also great pressure on students on the first day of classes; it is very hard not to attend. He related what the practices are at three other Big Ten schools, which do make appropriate accommodations. It is his sense, he said, that for the University to avoid scheduling the first day of classes on Yom Kippur or Rosh Hashanah would not entangle the University in First Amendment questions; not doing so would send a strong message about the welcome to Jewish students and tolerance for Jewish cultural identity. To begin classes on a religious holiday, on the other hand, sends a message about the place of Jewish people at the University.

In terms of making Monday the first day of classes, in 1996, 1998, and 1999 classes would start on a Jewish holiday (if the schedule were set so that there were one week of classes and then finals week after the Thanksgiving break). Beginning a week later, thus avoiding the religious holidays, means that finals would end on December 21. No one on the Committee appeared to like that solution.

Committee members touched upon a number of points in the ensuing discussion.

-- What about holding classes on Monday of Thanksgiving week--making the rest of the week a break week--when the Jewish holidays fall on Monday? Committee members saw that as even less desirable and also user-unfriendly.

-- While educational considerations should be paramount in considering a calendar, they can and should be reconciled with questions of user-friendliness. Beginning on Thursday is user-

unfriendly; it is also educationally unsound because labs and recitations begin "out of synch" with lectures.

-- If the concern is about having 50 instructional days Fall Quarter, why does not the same concern extend to Winter and Spring Quarters, which typically have 49 instructional days (each lose one Monday to [non-religious] holidays)? Sometimes the last week of classes is "wrapped around" to include a final Monday, although that shortens the exam period or the break period between Winter and Spring quarters. Dealing only with Fall Quarter, however, does not address the educational policy problem for the entire year.

-- CEE, with classes that meet once per week, loses a full week when a Monday is lost and will usually add a Monday even if the rest of the University does not.

-- Lab courses are probably most seriously affected by the Thursday start. A number of Committee members expressed considerable dismay at the loss of a week of labs with the late-week start; considerable discussion was devoted to the timing and teaching of labs.

-- The student members of the Committee, and those with whom they spoke, generally liked the idea of a Thanksgiving break week and a Monday start date.

-- Faculty members were less certain about the wisdom of a Thanksgiving week break, expressing concern about a loss of momentum in classes.

-- There appeared to be support for the Monday start date, with Tuesday being substituted when Jewish holidays fall on Monday and a 10th Monday added at the end--or simply having 49 instructional days in those quarters.

Committee members continued to have reservations about the impact of the abbreviated quarter--all year long--on lab courses. There appear to be no compelling solutions available. One Committee member observed that the solutions would come with the semester system--and suggested that at some point the University will HAVE to face that issue.

After the discussion there appeared to be no strong sentiment for making a change from either the student or faculty members of the Committee. The Fall Quarter start was recognized as a problem but given the various constrictions that exist, there was no recommendation to change the calendar at this time.

3. The Strategic Planning Process

Discussion then returned to the strategic plan. One Committee member reviewed the proposed schedule of events between now and next fall; Committee members also realized how pressed for time they were, in discussing the planning documents, before the November 18 Faculty Senate meeting.

One Committee member reported that the CLA Assembly met on October 26 and discussed the U2000 plan with CLA senators. There were a lot of complaints and a motion adopted not to approve or disapprove the plan until the particulars were known--the motion in essence called for abstention. The feelings at the meeting were very negative; the resolution was strong in tone but neutral in effect.

Another Committee member said it appeared that there is no organized way to participate in the planning process--but that at the same time it appears amenable to "input." Things do change after consultation. What this Committee should do, it was suggested, is begin to formulate specific recommendations to the administration, even if it is not ready for them. The Committee appeared to agree. Then the Committee must decide what it sees as the major educational issues--it must define the problems and identify the model solutions.

One Committee member said that there is a distinction between identifying problems and establishing mechanisms to address them. Identifying problems would help determine where the Committee and administration disagree--and should help minimize the problem of focusing on details of implementation.

Committee members then took up the proposed mission and in particular the proposition that the University must ensure its position as one of the leading global research universities offering a world-class educational experience. The first issue, not articulated by the administration, is that a research university has educational advantages that should be emphasized. The University should not try to be like a residential liberal arts college--it can't be--and must emphasize a research university education as the BEST education in the world for a sizeable fraction of students.

Discussion turned to the meaning of the term research; one Committee member inquired if it was intended to mean the "hard" sciences and not the traditional liberal arts. Other Committee members quickly averred that the term, in this context, included the liberal arts. There was agreement that the term must be construed to include scholarship and artistic expression--it was noted that one can create new ideas without doing "research" in the sense of the sciences. The broader understanding was accepted.

Whatever the Committee does, it should be concrete. Part of the problem is that the administration appears to have no priorities in these plans. If "ensure its position as a leading global research university" is first priority, then there should be specific recommendations on how to do so. It was noted that at the Finance and Planning Committee meeting Associate Vice President Kvavik had said that the research mission must be seen as central. His comments at that meeting were important, said another Committee member, and should be emphasized.

To maintain a leading position as a research university, maintained one Committee member, the plan must focus on ensuring support of the faculty as the primary objective. One cannot have a research university without faculty. If that support must be primary, then concrete recommendations about what that support must consist of should be developed--including such things as working conditions, salaries, libraries, and so on.

Even though this Committee is to deal with how planning will affect the educational experience, it was also argued, the University will not be able to deliver a first-class educational experience without first-class faculty--the two conditions must exist simultaneously, even though they cannot perhaps be defined simultaneously.

Another characteristic of education for students in a research university is recognition that knowledge is a moving target, that one does not obtain an up to date education from the literature. Knowledge is generated by the faculty. Part of the definition, it was agreed, is that faculty are "alive" in

their disciplines. A few faculty, said another, do not stay abreast in their fields--and it must be the FACULTY'S responsibility to deal with that problem, not the central administration's.

Another element that the Committee has taken up before, it was observed, is the "reinforcing energy" that comes from having a first-rate faculty and student body--there must not only be a good faculty to stimulate the students but also a good student body to stimulate the faculty. Faculty concerns are NOT outside the purview of this Committee because they affect the student experience.

Ensuring a good educational experience also suggests that the University wants a more homogeneous student population in terms of all being better prepared and of high ability, which would mean a better classroom experience. The Committee, however, should NOT address the issue of higher salaries or number of sections to be taught. True, responded another Committee member, but if those concerns are not articulated they will not be addressed--having a first-rate faculty and student body is an abstract concept; the Committee must get beyond platitudes.

In thinking about the process, commented another Committee member, one must break it down into parts. First there must be a mission that all buy into; does it include the goal of REMAINING a "leading global research university"? Is the University NOW a world-class research university, trying to ensure the stability of its position? It is more than the latter, suggested another. If so, it was then said, an improved structure to support research must follow. It is difficult to address different levels of the problem at the same time. The comments by Dr. Kvavik at the Finance and Planning meeting suggest that the "bottom line" IS becoming or remaining a "leading global research university."

But is it? inquired one Committee member. The institution is here to educate students. Another Committee member argued that the first and primary responsibility of a research university, land-grant or otherwise, is research. It was noted that in a famous speech on the creation of a chair in Celtic at a British university, Matthew Arnold argued that the position was important even if no students took Celtic--and while that may be an extreme position to take for a land-grant university, the point should not be missed. Students are requisite, without doubt; in this case, both a first-rate faculty and student body are necessary.

In terms of the research mission, said one Committee member, one needs to ask what is required to accomplish it. One must consider the resources, structure, and the power base needed to accomplish the mission. Of course there must be an excellent faculty; does the University have what it needs? From what one hears, the University has been losing ground in this respect; what is needed to address the problem? If the Committee accepts the mission as suggested, it should address point by point what is required to carry it out.

This is not a non-controversial issue, pointed out another Committee member. Most legislators and the public consider research and teaching to be contradictory--they do not see research as contributing to education. They only see education as equivalent to teaching. The University must show the link between research and teaching.

It is not clear how explicit the University must be, said one Committee member. The world is rapidly changing and much of that change has come from research: today's technology is a product of yesterday's research; no research today, no progress and practical results tomorrow.. There is a limit to how much one should have to say about these matters to reasonable people. If they cannot see the

importance and consequences of research in such connections, they are probably not reasonable people. If that's the case, the University HAS got problems.

One need not try to persuade the President or the administration about the importance of research, observed one member of the Committee; they have been given opportunities to back off on that issue and have repeatedly declined to do so. Perhaps, however, the Committee DOES need to make explicit the research-teaching links. It may be public relations to demonstrate the benefits of research to people's lives but that may also be necessary.

There is a danger, responded another Committee member, that the emphasis on research will make it seem everything flows from technology. It is crucial that the University conduct research in the broad sense and contribute to the intellectual life of the country. One could conclude that there is a need for a German model, a research institute apart from the University (where one would have full-time researchers in medicine, chemistry, soils, and so on) and also have teachers at a University, a different group of people with a different function.

That is one reason why there needs to be both a research-oriented faculty and student body--the faculty to provide an example to students of what's to be done. Faculty should serve as a model for emulation in their research activities and in their classrooms. The implication of that view, observed another Committee member, is that students will understand the strengths of a research-based education. The essential point, said another, is that knowledge is not static and that students learn most from those who generate the knowledge. There are two views of continuing education: first, that one didn't get it all the first time around so one comes back; second, that one understands that knowledge evolves and one should try to keep up. It is the second that is important in a research university. It is not only that one learns "the latest stuff," however; it is learning HOW to generate knowledge--learning "habits of mind and a way of life." What students must learn is that they generate their own knowledge. It must be demonstrated to them that education does not end with graduation. After they leave the University education becomes their own responsibility.

These observations, said one Committee member, have implications for how the University structures the student experience and "who does what when." How, inquired another Committee member, does one ensure that active researchers teach at all levels? That will vary across the University, rejoined another--in some cases faculty must obtain grants to pay at least part of their own salary. They essentially are required to buy themselves out of teaching--which is the antithesis of what the Committee sees as valuable for a research university education.

But that is reality as seen by those doing strategic planning, commented one Committee member; this Committee should recommend a change. If one is in a field where one must live by grant proposals, it is a fact of life. Flexibility of perspective and prescription is necessary so differences in disciplines can be reasonably accommodated. Is it ALWAYS desirable that ALL "active researchers teach at all levels"? Surely not, said one Committee member.

Is it the view of the Committee that even without outside funding, all faculty should be engaged in research? The Committee appeared to concur that they should. Then one consequence, it was said, is that as part of its educational mission the University must support the research work of the faculty--and NOT create the attitude that every faculty member must obtain his or her own funding and buy themselves out of undergraduate teaching. Right now the more successful faculty members are in

research, the more they buy themselves out of teaching. If the Committee wants researchers closer to teaching, that situation must change; where will the money come from?

One model is that of the University of Chicago, where undergraduate instructors are separate from the graduate school faculty--they are almost distinct faculties. That may be the extreme model but it should perhaps not be dismissed entirely; perhaps there are cases where faculty members at Minnesota should only do research. That, responded another Committee member, raises a question about the link between research and teaching. Yet another Committee member said that it was self-destructive to take that position.

Further discussion clarified that even if one took the Chicago model, it could mean that there would be two almost-distinct faculty, both of which would do research. One does "large scale" research with external funds and the other "small scale" research with internal funding. But that nonetheless may not be the appropriate model for the University. To a small extent a mechanism for a Chicago-type of model already exists at the University in that there is graduate faculty status. Here, however, all on the graduate faculty must be on the undergraduate faculty; the converse is not the case.

One Committee member inquired if there are faculty who teach but do not do research; the response was that there are. What does it mean when one says it is desirable that "active researchers teach all levels and all sizes of classes at the undergraduate level"? Does "active researcher" mean principal investigator? Must one have an independent research program? A broad definition of research could include faculty in a supporting role in a team research effort generating knowledge--not necessarily only the person who obtains grants. Researchers should be accessible to the educational process, observed another Committee member, which could involve planning strategies without necessarily including many teaching hours.

The Committee appears to be saying, said one member, that all teachers should be involved in research and all researchers should be involved in teaching. Those are separate propositions. They are important, said another member of the Committee, because they say that no faculty member should be disassociated from either activity. If those principles are accepted, how does one develop policy from them? What should the University do?

If researchers must be involved in teaching, cautioned one Committee member, it cannot be at the expense of threatening their careers--so there is a financial component to the principle. While the principle is a good one, researchers will need help in order to retain their viability as researchers. How the University would be involved in providing that help is a huge question.

One faculty member pointed out that his son has been attending the University and has never seen a professor. The faculty take a bad rap on that, argued one Committee member, because in at least one department faculty numbers are so reduced that they have a hard time retaining their reputation. Every department has lost line items and in some cases they have lost the necessary critical mass to keep up with the field. In those cases, TAs are used extensively for teaching. Departments do not like to do this but what else are they to do at this university? When funding shrinks every year?

This cuts to the heart of the U2000 plan--it is in essence about resource allocation, said one Committee member. If all teachers are to do research, there must be a critical mass of faculty, which will require either reducing the number of students or increasing the number of faculty. If a department

cannot give a first-rate education to the numbers of students it has, those numbers should be reduced. Not to do so has implications for the University as a whole. Without such quality control, there is the possibility of "deceptive advertising" to students about their education.

That is what U2000 is about, agreed another Committee member, but within the plan student credit hours will not be reduced. Instead it appears that adjunct faculty will be hired to reduce the load on faculty in departments that have too many students. One may not LIKE that idea, but it appears to be part of what is driving the plan. Does such hiring defeat the purpose of having a research university? Can a solution be found within the goals and ideals of the University and within the context of the parameters that are set forth in U2000?

It is bothersome, said one Committee member, that these questions are deferred; the administration wants the faculty to vote on principles--which will then mean the administration can do whatever it wants, *carte blanche*. Perhaps, responded another member of the Committee, the faculty can look at the ideals and then confront them with concrete suggestions for implementation. The consultative process will be a "legislative history" so faculty know what they are voting on. The Committee and the faculty must put on the table what they believe is implied by the plan. One MUST assume that we are dealing with a central administration that cares about the educational process.

If one doubts that, pointed out another Committee member, this entire effort is a waste of time.

It is incumbent on the Committee to formulate statements on those issues about which it is concerned or those concerns will be lost. For example, if the Committee believes all teachers must be involved in research, it should say so or it has not done its job. The mission of being a global research university will not be achieved without clarifying what that means from the point of view of the faculty and the students; the administration is not having this discussion.

One must be careful about defining research if it is to be proposed that all teachers must be involved in research; there are units on the campus where faculty spend 25 hours per week in the classroom--not counting the time necessary to prepare, grade papers, and participate in departmental and university activities. It would be refreshing, it was said, if those faculty were to be given time and support to do research.

By the next meeting, Professor Heller said, Committee members should formulate questions on what the mission statement implies are needed (e.g., smaller classes, a larger faculty, research support, etc.). The Committee needs to try to shape U2000 so that these good ideas fit in--and not let the plans be formulated in such a way that they do NOT fit in.

Professor Heller then adjourned the meeting at 4:40.

-- Gary Engstrand