

## SENATE CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

October 16, 2014

Minutes of the meeting

*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 reflect the views of, nor are they binding on, the Senate, the Administration, or the Board of Regents.*

[In these minutes: Purpose and Charge of the Senate Consultative Committee, Strategic Plan Discussion on Reject Complacency, Office of Classroom Management Update]

Present: Rebecca Ropers-Huilman (chair), Chris Uggen (vice chair), Katherine Cramer, Susanne Vandergon, Bill O'Neill, William Durfee, Eva von Dassow, Gary Cohen, Susan Wick, Colin Campbell, Dale Carpenter, Jigna Desai, Janet Ericksen

Regrets: James Cloyd, Karen Mesce, Jean Wyman, Valkyrie Jensen, Nick Dalton

Absent: Gordon Fisher, Laddie Arnold, Martin Caride, Cedric Citrowske, Robert Stewart, Olivia Stiller

Guests: Jeremy Todd, director, Office of Classroom Management

1. By way of introduction, Professor Ropers-Huilman said that she and Bill O'Neill, chair, Civil Service Consultative Committee (CSCC) and Katherine Cramer, chair, P&A Consultative Committee (PACC), will be co-leading the SCC meetings this year. At today's meeting, Mr. O'Neill will introduce and lead the discussions.

Mr. O'Neill said he appreciates Professor Ropers-Huilman offer to have him and Ms. Cramer co-chair the SCC meetings with her. He then turned members' attention to the SCC charge (<http://www1.umn.edu/usenate/committees/scc.html>) and suggested members review it in order to fully understand the duties and responsibilities of the committee.

2. Mr. O'Neill introduced the next agenda item, a continued discussion on the Strategic Plan. He said he had the pleasure of serving as the Civil Service representative on the Reciprocal Engagement Issue Team. With that said, Mr. O'Neill invited Professor Uggen to talk about one of the four goals in support of the vision in the Strategic Plan, support excellence and reject complacency.

Professor Uggen began by providing background information on the make-up of the Reject Complacency Issue Team. He said in his opinion it was a bold move on the part of the issue team to use the verbiage "reject complacency" because this acknowledges that complacency exists. The basic premise behind reject complacency is an "uncritical sense of self satisfaction and disregard for actual deficiencies or threats." The University faces a number external threats such as declining state support for higher education, mounting student debt, disruptive technologies. While acknowledging the University also faces internal threats, everyone on the issue team believed in and respected the greatness of the University. Despite the belief by many that the University is a great place to work, there is room for improvement. In a call for comments/feedback, the team received numerous comments from faculty and staff about where changes/improvements should be made, e.g., departments feeling they cannot compete,

particularly with private institutions, supervisors not dealing with personnel problems, students failing to revise papers and still being given good grades, ridiculous delays in getting supplies.

Money/resources will solve some of the external and internal issues, but the University also needs to make better use of its existing resources by making changes in how things are done, said Professor Uggen. He noted that the Strategic Plan is a University-wide effort and, as a result, there needs to be a move toward mutual accountability. Another issue the team felt that should be looked at is the University's risk aversion, which many thought was too extreme. Professor Uggen said fostering creativity will be critical to the success of making necessary changes. The issue team took seriously the issue of time is money and also suggested a "stop doing" list. Other issues the team talked about were campus climate and frustration with the University's progress related to its diversity goals as well reducing the amount of red tape one needs to deal with to get simple things done. All of these issues in one way or another represent lost opportunities for the University.

Mr. O'Neill thanked Professor Uggen for the update and solicited members' input about what Professor Uggen reported on and their thoughts on the Strategic Plan in general. Member questions/comments included:

- There are complacent students too, and, while the University has policies in place to address student complacency, not all faculty adhere to these policies, including, for example, grading standards. Regarding grade inflation, noted Professor Uggen, there may be a way to handle this centrally, and he referenced a Wellesley College study, which he said he would be happy to share if members were interested.
- An outcome of the rejecting complacency goal might be people putting up a front that they are doing more than they actually are or putting a better face on what they are doing to avoid scrutiny. Professor Uggen agreed this could be an unintentional consequence, and proposed the need for greater leadership/chair accountability in dealing with employees. Professor Uggen believes there is room for initiatives that will improve employee skill sets.
- To manage an institution the size of the University there needs to be policies and processes in place. The University is subject to rules, regulations, terms and conditions of its funders such as the National Science Foundation (NSF) and the National Institute on Health (NIH). Faculty and staff need to understand the consequences of not following policies and administrators should not be pressured to make things happen. There needs to be more collaboration between faculty and staff. Professor Uggen agreed that a lot of the rules at the University are externally imposed, and staff should not be put in positions where they are pressured to do things that could violate policies/rules.
- Rather than being so risk adverse, the University should focus on managing its risk. There needs to be more risk management. Professor Uggen agreed and used the example of the one-year annually renewable appointments and the transaction costs associated with renewing these appointments every year. The University could look at three-year appointments, recognizing they are taking on a little more risk, because this would serve to reduce transaction costs as well as boost employee morale.
- Department administrators need to be represented on the implementation teams because they know how things run, what is efficient, what is not efficient, etc. Administrators are knowledgeable about how the University operates at so many levels. Professor Uggen said this is a good suggestion.

- In terms of grade inflation, has anyone looked at the relationship between median grades in a class versus the evaluation of the instructor? Yes, said Professor Uggen, and there is a modest correlation.
- It was somewhat surprising to see metrics included in the plan around rejecting complacency. Professor Uggen said when goals are set there needs to be a qualitative and quantitative measure to indicate that progress is being made.

3. Mr. O'Neill welcomed Jeremy Todd, director, Office of Classroom Management (OCM), who was invited to provide an overview of OCM. Mr. Todd distributed a handout to supplement his presentation. He began by reporting that the Classroom Advisory Subcommittee (CAS) of the Senate Educational Policy Committee (SCEP) recently recommended the development of a Learning Space Master Plan (LSMP) as part of the current University strategic planning process. The purpose of a LSMP is to provide a vision to guide the creation, management, and operational excellence of learning spaces at the University of Minnesota. The last review of classroom space took place in 1995, and the 2009 Campus Master Plan provides only limited guidance on learning spaces. In the past, there had only been a focus on formal learning spaces, and not a broader look at where learning actually occurs.

In addition to the development of a LSMP, also in 2014, the Center for Educational Innovation (CEI) was created by Provost Hanson to strengthen instructional and academic technology collaboration and support across the institution. OCM will be partnering with CEI, and expects to work toward a better understanding of classroom needs for emerging curricular innovations. Brad Cohen will lead the CEI, and he will report to the Provost as the senior academic technology officer. He will also continue to serve as associate chief information officer in the Office of Information Technology. Initial initiatives will focus on pedagogical advances and looking at discipline-specific needs. OCM is good at improving utilization and looking at standardizing best practices, and this strength makes OCM a good partner for CEI. How effectively the University understands and manages the rapidly emerging needs for new kinds of learning spaces will be a critical strategic differentiator for place-based institutions.

After concluding his prepared comments, Mr. Todd welcomed members' comments and questions, which included:

- Is more attention being given to learning spaces during the budgeting process? Mr. Todd said OCM saw a downturn in funding for a few years. Last year, however, Vice Provost McMaster pushed hard to reinstate some of the funding that OCM had lost. In addition, OCM acquired a loan a couple years ago to renovate older spaces and make general improvements in other physical spaces. OCM will be paying back on this loan over the next 10 years. Looking at the budget model, in Mr. Todd's opinion, the institution could do a better job of long-term capital planning instead of the short-term approach and looking at budgets on an annual basis. There is a tension between planning for multi-year capital projects, and departmental budget funding that does not permit departments to have a carry forward.
- Are colleges/departments that will have a major renovation occur consulted on informal study space? The academic needs need to be taken into account. OCM tries to insert itself into these discussion, replied Mr. Todd. Previously, this did not happen. There is a Minnesota facilities model that looks at the total number of classroom seats and total number of lab seats in a building, which is then used to calculate the square footage assigned to informal learning/student study space. The faculty and student voice is important in planning for this kind of space. OCM

and CEI know there needs to be an academic view into programming in order to appropriately design a space.

- Looking at the future of learning spaces and classrooms aligns perfectly with the Strategic Plan around the Grand Challenges Curriculum. Mr. Todd agreed and said he also sees it as an opportunity for OCM to grow. The University needs to be more creative when it comes to responding to the needs of changing environments if it is going to meet the needs of courses, faculty and students.
- Some science courses require hybrid spaces for demonstrations and the University has not done a good job of creating these types of spaces. Mr. Todd agreed and acknowledged need for more service spaces.
- Given the strategic planning process is underway, now would be a good time to think about innovative ways to open up private departmental space and use the space more collaboratively. Space needs to be used more creatively to provide opportunities for students versus having a siloed mentality. Mr. Todd said collaborative space is a key component to aligning services so there can be baseline standards for all students and faculty instead of having great spaces that are hidden away.
- Renovation of learning space plays an important role in recruitment and retention of students as well as faculty morale. Student Rating of Teaching (SRT) responses indicate a lot of dissatisfaction with classrooms. Mr. Todd said OCM uses the SRT as a predictor for before and after remodel satisfaction.
- There is a shortage of classroom space that seats 50 - 100 students. This presents a problem for departments that are trying to grow their curriculum because of the limited number of classrooms of this size that are available. Mr. Todd said this is an accurate observation and a valid concern. It also presents an even greater challenge as the University moves to new time periods with 75-minute periods on Mondays and Wednesdays. Another challenge, noted Mr. Todd, is that classrooms that accommodate over 50 students require two exits. OCM is looking at how it can combine rooms to make larger classrooms.

Hearing no further questions/comments, Mr. O'Neill thanked Mr. Todd and members for a good discussion, and adjourned the meeting.

Renee Dempsey  
University Senate