

[In these minutes: Graduate School interdisciplinary activities and connections to the Strategic Planning Grand Challenges, Discussion of current activities for student-athletes at the McNamara Alumni Center for Student-Athletes, Approval of amendments to the Administrative Policy: Credit and Grade Point Requirements for an Undergraduate (Baccalaureate) Degree, Approval of the 2018-19 Twin Cities and Rochester Calendar]

## **EDUCATIONAL POLICY COMMITTEE (SCEP) MINUTES**

**NOVEMBER 5, 2014**

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

**PRESENT:** Sue Wick (chair), Nicola Alexander, Gifty Amarteifio, Michael Anderson, Elaine Darst, Gayle Golden, Noah Hall, Karla Hemesath, Ken Leopold, Keith Mayes, Thomas Michaels, Hamza Musse, Savio Poovathingal, Rachna Shah, Tisha Turk.

**REGRETS:** Erich Beckert, Tina Falkner, David Karjanen, Lauren Lindquist, Alon McCormick, Robert McMaster, Henning Schroeder.

**GUESTS:** Melissa Anderson, Suzanne Bardouche, Vicki Field, Leslie Schiff, Stacey Tidball.

### **1. DISCUSSION OF GRADUATE SCHOOL INTERDISCIPLINARY ACTIVITIES AND CONNECTIONS TO THE STRATEGIC PLANNING GRAND CHALLENGES**

Melissa Anderson, Associate Dean of Graduate Education, and Vicki Field, Associate to the Dean, joined the meeting to discuss Graduate School interdisciplinary goals for the year.

Melissa Anderson stated that these goals are meant to align with MnDRIVE and the Strategic Plan's Grand Challenges. They are looking to create new pathways to foster interdisciplinary scholars through the University's institutes and centers. Robust academic and professional interdisciplinary development will be done through three means – funding, groups, and activities.

Vicki Field then provided an explanation of these areas, starting with funding for the Interdisciplinary Doctoral Fellowship. This fellowship program is administered by the Graduate School with funding from the Provost. Funding currently provides 15 awards for students from departments/programs to study in an interdisciplinary institute or center. Last year there were 85 applications for the 15 slots. In 2015-16, the stipend will increase from \$22,500 to \$23,000. The IDF also provides full tuition benefits and graduate student health insurance.

This October, the Graduate School and the Office of the Vice President for Research co-sponsored the Discovery Across Disciplines research showcase, a new initiative to acquaint graduate students—especially potential IDF applicants—with some of the University's many research institutes and centers. There were 62 exhibits at this fall's poster session-style event and 82 percent of the exhibitors who completed a post-event survey expressed interest in participating again. If the event is repeated next year (which is anticipated), it will be in a larger venue, and special efforts will be made to increase graduate student involvement.

The next area is Interdisciplinary Graduate Groups (IDGGs). IDGGs offer a means to bring faculty and graduate students together around an emerging idea and provide seed grants to help launch preliminary activities. A new call for funding proposals for IDGGs will be issued in early December. The Graduate School will host a panel presentation and information session on November 25 for those interested in forming an IDGG and seeking funding under this year's

call.

The last area relates to academic and professional development opportunities, such as workshops and panel discussions, offered throughout the year for graduate students with interdisciplinary interests. These opportunities are offered as part of The Interdisciplinary Commons, a trial initiative the Graduate School is sponsoring this year that provides space every other Friday in two rooms in Nolte Center. The Interdisciplinary Commons also provides space for graduate students to network, practice giving presentations, and collaborate on projects. Under consideration is the possibility of an Interdisciplinary Summer Institute to offer non-credit learning opportunities at times when students are less busy.

Members made the following comments:

- This is an exciting time for the Graduate School to use the momentum of the Strategic Planning process
- The University should consider creating its own version of the Harvard Ig Nobel Prize, which is a venture to get people to laugh first and then think about the idea or concept
- As there is no course component tied to these ideas at the beginning of the process, there are also no budget concerns
- Some courses are created through this process
- The evolution of a successful group would be helpful to those trying to start one
- Interdisciplinary Doctoral Fellows should be showcased as well

Q: What is the ‘coffee and donuts funding’ to be used for?

A: These are small grants intended to encourage interdisciplinary conversations to see if an idea is worth advancing in this year’s IDGG competition.

Q: Will current interdisciplinary groups be able to take advantage of the ‘coffee and donuts’ funds?

A: No. These funds are intended to stimulate new collaborations that lead to the formation of new IDGGs.

Q: Have there been any issues for colleges in creating IDGGs?

A: To the Graduate School’s knowledge, there have not been issues. IDGGs exist outside the usual academic structures of departments and colleges and have not required department head or dean approval.

Q: How is ‘interdisciplinary’ defined?

A: This term may be defined somewhat differently depending on the context. In regard to IDGGs, it typically means collaboration across two or more colleges.

Q: Is there a chance for successful groups to be showcased?

A: Yes. For example, the November 25 panel presentation and information session will feature several IDGGs and highlight the benefits and value of their activities and accomplishments.

Q: How will summer topics and participants be identified for an Interdisciplinary Summer Institute?

A: One means to college information on students’ programming preferences might be to include questions on this topic in the Council of Graduate Students’ (COGS) annual survey, for example.

Q: How will the success of the Nolte Center Interdisciplinary Commons programming be measured?

A: Attendance counts are taken for each session and a follow-up survey is sent after each. Occasionally, lunch will be provided as an incentive for students to participate in sessions that are offered over the noon hour. There will be an open house this Friday to explain the Interdisciplinary Commons concept, and the Graduate School newsletter, *Synthesist*, will highlight these opportunities. Programming is currently scheduled for the next three Fridays: a panel presentation and discussion with research librarians this Friday, a workshop on effective mentoring on November 21, and a workshop on leading with emotional intelligence on December 5.

Q: Will presenters be able to make a reservation for the Friday space?

A: Yes.

## **2. DISCUSSION OF CURRENT ACTIVITIES FOR STUDENT-ATHLETES AT THE MCNAMARA ACADEMIC CENTER FOR STUDENT-ATHLETES**

Lynn Holleran, Director of the McNamara Academic Center for Student-Athletes (MAC), joined the meeting to discuss her office and the students that they serve. She has been director for over four years, and worked in the President's Office for the previous seven years, which provided a valuable academic background.

In 1999 there was an incident involving the basketball team and the academic service office for athletics. Changes were made in many areas of athletics following the investigation. First is that academic services, such as her office, no longer report to the Athletic Director but instead to the Provost's Office through Vice Provost McMaster. Second is that compliance also moved from reporting to the Athletic Director to the Office of the General Counsel. Third is that the one Senate committee for athletics was divided into two committees, with one focusing on overseeing academics. MAC reports to this committee on a variety of academic issues (e.g. grades, enrollment numbers in majors, and clustering concerns).

Her office includes three areas – Academic Advising, Learning Services and Academic Support, and collaboration with Student Development. The MAC provides student-athletes a secondary advisor in addition to the primary advisor that they have through their college or major. The MAC advisor looks at a student-athlete's schedule with a different lens. In addition to graduating student-athletes in four years, their focus for the schedule is on practice times, travel schedules, and NCAA eligibility for degree progression. They also receive the 6-week and 11-week mid-term reviews and can talk with faculty regarding schedule changes.

The Learning Services and Academic Support area provides computer labs and study areas in Bierman. It also coordinates two types of tutors. The first is subject area tutors for classes. The second type is a mentor tutor, or academic coach, usually during a student-athlete's first year. The mentor tutor focuses on making sure the student is organized and completing work in all his or her classes. In addition they work on organizational skills, note taking, time management, etc. to ensure that the student-athlete can be successful.

The last area is Student Development, which is a partnership with Athletics. The focus is on life beyond college, so activities are career fairs, outreach, resume writing, mock interviews, volunteering, and internships.

Lynn Holleran then said that student-athletes are successful academically. The federal

graduation for student-athletes is 75 percent (highest ever), which is in-line with the general student population. Overall the University of Minnesota ranked fourth among all Football Bowl Series (FBS) institutions with the highest percentage of teams earning APR awards. The University of Minnesota ranked behind only Northwestern, Notre Dame and Duke and was the highest ranking public institution in the country. APR (Academic Progress Rate) is an NCAA standard to measure retention and eligibility. Every sport has to hit a mark to be eligible for post-season play. The University was fourth in the country last year in improvement, which is a credit to all the coaches for really pushing academic success.

Q: How does MAC help ensure the student-athletes are doing original work (papers)?

A: Student-athletes are encouraged to go to the Writing Center for help with papers. The Writing Center has a satellite center in the MAC's learning center. Also, extensive training is provided for graduate students who serve as tutors. Sometimes papers are also put through Turnitin.com to educate student-athletes on how to cite and reference.

Q: Instructors do not always know who in a class is a student-athlete and who is outside checking on them. Is there a protocol that faculty be informed if someone from MAC or athletics will be outside classrooms?

A: This is a tough area since some student-athletes do not want to identify themselves in that way to all instructors and they are encouraged to just be a regular student. If they are in season, they are asked to talk with the instructor regarding their travel schedule and classes that they will miss. MAC does not class-check student-athletes for attendance, but some programs do this. The people doing the checks are told not to enter the class or be disruptive, but she sees how it could raise questions for the instructor.

Q: Outside of classes and their work, what is the typical level of commitment by student-athletes?

A: NCAA rules prohibit more than 20 hours of practice per week, yet student-athletes typically spend more than 20 hours preparing for practice or competition. NCAA rules also stipulate one day off per week. Then there are the actual competitions and travel times to and from sites. There are many teams that compete mid-week and institutions are at the mercy of commercial airlines for departure and arrival.

Q: Is there a policy to limit extra training or charity-like activities?

A: Not from the NCAA, but instead at each institution. The University is sensitive to these requests.

Q: Why is the student-athlete GPA higher than the average student population?

A: The overall student-athlete cumulative GPA is slightly higher than the general student body, and some of this is due to the increased academic opportunities that are provided to this group.

Q: What issues are you concerned with for student-athletes?

A: The first is always academic integrity, which keeps everyone up. Notre Dame and North Carolina are just the two latest programs to have national media coverage. The NCAA is sensitive to this issue, but they cannot control it since it is handled at the institution level. Each institution has checks and balances to prevent it, but everyone wonders if it is enough. Other national issues are online courses, clustering in classes and majors, and independent study courses. The policy here for independent study courses is that the contract stipulates the course

content to be covered and then the proposal is approved by one of the two faculty athletic representatives, who are both full-time faculty members.

### **3. APPROVAL OF AMENDMENTS TO THE ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY: CREDIT AND GRADE POINT REQUIREMENTS FOR AN UNDERGRADUATE (BACCALAUREATE) DEGREE**

Suzanne Bardouche presented an amendment to the Administrative Policy: Credit and Grade Point Requirements for an Undergraduate (Baccalaureate) Degree. The change is intended to have the policy cover certificate courses at the Twin Cities and Rochester. With no questions, the amendment was approved.

### **4. APPROVAL OF THE 2018-19 TWIN CITIES AND ROCHESTER CALENDAR**

Sue Wick reminded members that SCEP is charged with recommending the academic calendar for the Twin Cities and Rochester. Last spring the committee reviewed the 2018-19 calendar and began discussing the length of spring semester (74 days) in relation to fall semester (70 days) as well as a possible pre-MLK start in this year due to the lateness of MLK. A subcommittee met over the summer to review possible options and sent out a general survey.

At the last meeting SCEP agreed that information was needed from faculty, students, and student service staff on more specific questions, so a second survey was conducted. With almost 600 responses, the results (available at: [https://docs.google.com/document/d/11J-HdGQ5call3rUHDXu\\_U4bx7wPfc\\_O0gH1JDs-AUjA/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/11J-HdGQ5call3rUHDXu_U4bx7wPfc_O0gH1JDs-AUjA/edit?usp=sharing)) showed that there is strong support for shortening spring semester and not starting classes before MLK.

On the question of shortening the semester to 72 or 70 days, the short answers provided gave good reasons for both. A few reasons to support 72 days were not ending classes on a Monday, providing “spare” days in case of cancelled classes, and impressions of student learning decreasing in the last few days of the semester. For 70 days, most cited the benefits of consistency between semesters and providing two weekday study days to students.

Q: Why is it a problem to shorten spring semester?

A: Not everyone will want to remove four instruction days from spring semester. By keeping 74 days in spring semester, the average number of instruction days is 72. It would be better if there could be 72 instruction days in each semester, but that is not possible every year in fall semester.

Q: How does 70 instruction days relate to other institutions?

A: It is within the spread of other institutions. Within the Big Ten, the University of Michigan has the lowest number of instructional days (68) while most others have either 70, 72, or 74.

Members made the following comments:

- As the majority of respondents preferred a 70-day spring semester, SCEP would need to provide a clear rationale if it recommends a different option
- If a course can be taught in 70 days one semester, then why does it require extra days in the other semester?
- Students are not taking the same course each semester, so the average across both semesters is not accurate
- For the many courses taught both semesters, syllabi could be identical if semesters were the same length
- Instructors make the same class work in each semester; they do not redesign the syllabus
- Weather should not be a consideration

- The reduction does not mean four lost class days per course; since most courses only meet once or twice a week, it is really only a reduction of 1-2 days
- Monday-only courses would not miss a class day under this proposal
- Instructors fit in what is important in the time that they have
- Many responders did not realize that the semesters are unequal now
- Study days are important for students prior to the start of exams
- Are parity and consistency enough of a reason to switch the length of spring semester?

A motion was then made and seconded to propose a 70-day spring semester with a post-MLK start and an extra study day. A member suggested that this calendar not have any Saturday exams to preserve the weekend for studying. Another member countered that non-traditional students might want Saturday exams so that they can continue to work during the week. It was decided that Saturday exams would be allowed in this proposal. The motion as presented was approved.

A motion was then made and seconded to propose a 70-day calendar for 2018-19. This motion was approved.

Members asked that the number of classes and exams on Saturdays be brought to a future meeting for review prior to approval of future calendars.

## **5. OTHER BUSINESS**

With no further business, Professor Wick thanked all members for attending and adjourned the meeting.

Becky Hippert  
University Senate