

Minutes*

Senate Committee on Educational Policy
Friday, March 4, 1994
2:15 - 4:00
Dale Shephard Room, Campus Club

Present: Kenneth Heller (chair), Craig Bursch, Anita Cholewa, Thomas Clayton, Darwin Hendel, Manuel Kaplan, Darren Walhof, Gayle Graham Yates

Regrets: James Cotter, Sue Donaldson, Megan Gunnar, Robert Johnson, William Van Essendelft

Absent: Michael Pawlicki, Carla Phillips

Guests: none

Others: none

[In these minutes: Regents' ROTC policy; U2000 indicators]

1. Regents' ROTC Policy

Professor Heller convened the meeting at 2:15 and suggested the Committee first take up the Regents' ROTC policy. He reminded the Committee it had been asked by the Board of Regents' office to review the policy, as part of the regular three-year review of all Regents' policies. He reviewed the questions raised in the letter of transmittal asking for SCEP review.

The content of the existing policy concerns the academic structure of ROTC and its relationship with the University and seemed, in the view of the Committee, to be appropriate. The only changes that appeared to be necessary are editorial, reflecting the Senate reorganization that placed consulting responsibility for ROTC in SCEP once the Committee on University-ROTC Relationships was abolished.

SCEP members also considered recent Senate actions with respect to ROTC and the call for the Regents to deal with the discrepancy between the University's equal opportunity policy and the military policy with respect to homosexuals. The Senate in 1991 requested that the discrepancy be dealt with by June 30, 1993, or the Regents begin the process of disestablishing ROTC on campus; the Regents declined to concur with the Senate request. The existing Regents' policy contains no reference to this issue.

Committee members made a number of points in the discussion.

-- It appears that ROTC policy does not discriminate in any other way contrary to University policy (e.g., with respect to women). It is not known how the ROTC program operates under the new

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policy toward homosexuals of "don't ask, don't tell." It is probable that anyone openly homosexual would not be eligible for a commission in the services.

- Is the existing Regents' policy separable from the discrimination question? The policy serves to affirm the University-ROTC relationship when ROTC policy conflicts with University policy. The Regents' policy is acceptable, as far as it goes. But it does not go far enough.
- Should the policy include a statement that ROTC should abide by the University's non-discrimination policy? Does the University require this adherence by all groups affiliated with it? What about the Minnesota Supercomputer Center? What about partnership agreements with the private sector, of which there will certainly be more? The Regents' policy recognizes that the University cannot make social policy decisions in these areas by itself.
- To a certain extent the Senate action is now outdated, given the new military policy. The Senate has not acted since the adoption of the new policy.
- Even the new military policy and the University's policy are inconsistent, and if the policy language is to be based on principle, that conflict needs to be addressed head-on.
- If a homosexual individual will not receive a commission, they will also not receive a scholarship; does the University permit other restricted scholarships? It does. If the University is going to demand that ROTC not deny aid based on sexual preference or in a way that violates University policy, then should it not also insist the same of other individuals or groups that provide money for student aid? The University provides scholarships for minority students, for example. Things are done/not done because of prevailing attitudes; some race-restricted scholarships are acceptable while ROTC policy is not, and there are inconsistencies.
- This is a social concern more than a matter of educational policy, and should be referred to the Social Concerns Committee.

It was agreed that the existing Regents' policy, amended to reflect SCEP's role, appeared to be satisfactory. It does not require any significant action by SCEP in the oversight of ROTC programs, but does appear to grant it license to comment if SCEP believes it appropriate to do so. Issues can be brought to SCEP when it is useful to do so.

There are agreements with other institutions that permit students attending college elsewhere to participate in ROTC at the University of Minnesota. Those agreements should be brought to SCEP for review, it was suggested.

In terms of the discrimination policy, it was agreed that the conflict should be referred to the Consultative Committee with a recommendation that the Social Concerns Committee consider the new military policy vis-a-vis the University's policy. The Committee should not, however, pretend that the discrepancy does not exist.

The Committee voted unanimously to recommend approval of the policy, as edited, and to ask the Consultative Committee to refer the discrimination matter to the Senate Committee on Social Concerns.

2. Men's Basketball Team Event

Professor Heller reported that the Department of Men's Intercollegiate Athletics has requested permission for the men's basketball team, if appropriate, to participate in the NIT tournament, which would take place during Finals Week. The Committee unanimously approved the request following brief discussion.

3. Indicators to Measure U2000 Success

Professor Heller then turned to Dr. Hendel for discussion of "Principles to Guide the Development of Indicators for Use in Evaluating Success in Achieving Strategy Direction Goals Outlined in University 2000." These principles, to develop institutional indicators by which to measure success in achieving U2000, were stimulated by the Board of Regents' resolution approving U2000, which included calling for critical measures and benchmarks to judge unit performance. Dr. Hendel noted that several lists of proposed indicators have been developed at the University, but there have been no principles by which one would evaluate the indicators.

The process outlined in the document distributed to the Committee consists of two parts: (1) discussion of principles that guide the identification of indicators, and (2) consideration of indicators to see if they are consistent with the principles. The principles come first; the indicators will follow. SCEP will be consulted about both. This process is not dissimilar from what other institutions are doing, Dr. Hendel noted; he then solicited Committee views. Questions and answers led to the following points being made.

- The next steps will determine who identifies the indicators and how they will be defined and calculated.
- There are two purposes to the effort: first, to communicate to external constituents how the University is progressing toward its U2000 goals, and second, to the University community to help in determining if the University is achieving the outcomes it wants.
- The indicators would be related in a general sense to the criteria for making judgments about programs (i.e., centrality, demand, comparative advantage, efficiency, quality); the relationship would be clearer in some cases than others.
- Meetings with external groups to obtain ideas about U2000 were seen as very helpful; it might be useful to hold similar meetings to inquire how the University would know it is improving.
- Some indicators would apply across the University; others would be used by specific colleges and departments. Retention rate, for example, might be a University-wide indicator that would not be appropriate for a department. Units are proposing measures at the budget hearings; that is one source for unit-specific indicators.
- What about indicators of educational quality, the matter of interest to this Committee? The GRE could be one, although it would have to be controlled for entering SAT score, with which it is

- highly correlated. Others could include the extent to which students have contact with faculty, the percentage of undergraduates who have a research experience (inasmuch as this is a research university). A small set of measures is needed, and one not so complicated that everyone spends time figuring out how their doing rather than doing what they're supposed to.
- One can have misgivings about every quantifying measure for a public relations function. Much in the University is not quantifiable, but that does NOT make it merely anecdotal. The University is doomed if it only uses measures such as graduation rate without taking into account the community in which it exists and its role in that community. The intellectual quality of the faculty should be considered, as one example (they should be BETTER at a research university). Thoughtful surveys of students, with written results, are another example. These are difficult to do, but if one is serious about quality indicators, they need to be undertaken. Another indicator might be what happens to graduates.
 - State and federal governments are requiring more information about graduates and their employment; the University must provide data. Higher education is at risk of being overtaken by education for employment, a focus that is appropriate for certain programs with an occupational focus. For many programs, however, alternative measures are needed.
 - Survey measures could include how people are faring in their lives, their citizenship and civic participation, community leadership roles, family and domestic patterns, and so on. One could also locate University graduates in prison for serious offenses, argued another Committee member, and find out the role their education played in their lives; the comment is only half-joking, it was said.
 - The process of developing indicators is a painful process. It includes developing standards and how to achieve them, how to improve on where a unit is now, what the problems are. (One can also do trivial indicators that are unimportant to mission.) What can happen, after the pain, is identification of REAL problems that were not known about before and the need for remedies.
 - Measures of quantity are usable within their limits; in the humanities, however, such measures are more difficult to use. But "anecdote" is the invidious way to describe information that is not quantified.
 - One answer to the problem of improving teaching is to demand more of students; if more were demanded, teaching would get better. If little is demanded, not much will be gotten. Most units do not identify what their students should be expected to know; most probably could distill the essence of the discipline. Nor is there any talk across fields about major ideas. Could most disciplines insist students know the following?
 - Demonstrate knowledge of the basic principles of (the field).
 - Be able to communicate the use of that knowledge in a logical and consistent manner.
 - Be able to apply the knowledge and tools of the discipline to new situations.
 - Demonstrate the ability to lead a group effort to solve a problem in the field.
 - Show an appreciation for the value of the approach of the field to the world.

One addition might describe the basic skills and competencies which are fundamental to all other

study.

- There are two issues related to students at graduation: first, the where and when they should be assessed, and second, if they are to be assessed, what should the assessment show? Students are assessed to a varying extent in different programs; there is no uniformity.

Part of a uniform process could include asking faculty what they want students to remember from a course two years after it was taken--most faculty are so tied into the details of the course they haven't time to think about the big picture. Faculty are not now asked to do that. There could be steps along the way to assess what students get out of courses.

This is a discussion of ideals; one quickly gets back to indicators and institutional operation--and there is a large gap between ideals and practice. People mostly want indicators for external purposes such as the legislature; they're not interested in what the Committee is talking about.

- There is national interest in standardized tests to look at the impact of college, but there are great difficulties with such tests. An external group could decide they should be administered, but they may not match what faculty believe important in an education.
- There has been no talk about relationships, which is what education is all about, even in a 200-student class. Some are best at teaching in a 1:1 relationship or in small groups, where students can catch on to an issue. The University's poorest link is its failure to report on the yield of faculty-student relationships. That interactive element of education must be captured. The literature indicates that is a powerful predictor of retention; one hears there are not opportunities for it at the University. Faculty members hold office hours and no one comes. Students must be invited to participate and to be involved in the dynamic of education; the best faculty have strategies to do so. Do faculty have the time to encourage such relationships together with their other duties and pressures? The system frustrates. There needs to be a normative expectation of faculty-faculty and faculty-student interaction, not just one of faculty members giving lectures and tests and holding office hours.
- This is not an issue of user-friendliness; that is more along lines of making life easier in terms of parking and buying books and registration. This is a question of enriching the educational experience.

Wearing "U Ask Me" buttons and stickers, under President Keller, did more to generate good will at this University than anything before or since.

The user-friendliness part of U2000 is not limited to students; it is intended to affect faculty and staff, including what is it that affects how faculty can do their jobs. If there were a way to obtain systematic faculty feedback, some operations at the University would not look good.

- For complex issues such as the quality of education, why not draw samples of appropriate people and use focus groups? Rather than try to measure everyone?

Dr. Hendel promised that the Committee would see something again in the near future. He

commented that the University must not measure that which is not relevant to its central institutional values--and that which it does measure must be connected to quality and what distinguishes the University from other institutions in Minnesota.

Professor Heller thanked Dr. Hendel and adjourned the meeting at 4:00.

-- Gary Engstrand

University of Minnesota