

Minutes\*

**Senate Committee on Educational Policy**  
**Wednesday, January 21, 1998**  
**1:00 - 3:00**  
**Room 238 Morrill Hall**

Present: Laura Koch (chair), Avram Bar-Cohen, Darwin Hendel, Gordon Hirsch, Robert Leik, Judith Martin, Adam Miller, Kathleen Newell, Palmer Rogers, Tina Rovick, Craig Swan, Gayle Graham Yates

Regrets: Elayne Donahue, Thomas Johnson

Absent: Kevin Nicholson, Jessie Jo Roos, William Van Essendelft

Guests: Susan Van Voorhis

[In these minutes: academy of distinguished teachers; grading policy issues; review of policies]

**1. Academy of Distinguished Teachers**

Professor Koch convened the meeting at 1:00, noted that the major item of business was beginning a review of the administrative recommendations to make educational policies consistent across the Twin Cities campus, but that there were several items first requiring attention.

Professor Swan provided information about proposals for funding the graduate and professional award and the academy of distinguished teachers; at least one idea includes a substantial increase in the financial reward to the winners. The idea of the academy, he noted, was to make it an honor, not a burden, and its work could evolve (and might include such things as a public recognition ceremony, self-established advisory committees, working with colleges and the administration on a variety of issues, mentors for new faculty, participation in new faculty orientation, and creation of a web page to honor the members, with statements from each). He said he would welcome any additional suggestions. The intent is to strengthen the Morse award and the grad/professional award.

One Committee member suggested that if it is to be expected that award winners will participate in events, the criteria for the award should be amended to reflect this expectation.

It was noted that Morse-Alumni winners, and those who win the graduate/professional award, would automatically be members of the academy, and the first year of the academy should be next year. It is also likely the case that former winners of the Morse-Alumni award could be re-nominated.

Professor Swan also suggested that no final decision on the name of the graduate/professional award be made, but assured the Committee that there would be no arbitrary (or any other) administrative

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decision on the matter.

## **2. Grading Policy Issues**

I. Professor Koch then noted the request from Veterinary Medicine to have O (Outstanding)-S-N grading, rather than simply S-N. The Committee discussed the request, and the reasons proffered. One Committee member said that the point of a uniform policy is that it is uniform, and the Committee should not consider changes to it for several years. Other Committee members agreed, and suggested that the college could design an evaluation system for short courses that would provide discrimination in judging performance.

The Committee, after brief discussion, voted unanimously not to approve the requested change.

II. The Committee then also considered the issue of whether the C- grade should count for graduate credit. The concern is that the grading policy provides that C- is not satisfactory; at present, however, any C grade counts for graduate credit; if there is a change, that would be unfair to students or contribute to grade inflation. Alternatively, there is a concern about the quality of graduate student work when a C- is accepted for credit. The Committee deliberated several ideas, but reached no conclusion (at this point in the meeting, but it did so later).

III. Ms. Van Voorhis reported that her office has a problem in determining what to do when a faculty member gives a student a D-. There is no D- grade in the grading policy, but there were about 200 D- grades fall quarter. She commented that they do not have the capacity to contact each faculty member to determine whether the grade should be a D or an F, nor do they have the authority to turn them into Fs. In the case of those faculty who gave A+ grades, her office simply converts them to an A. The Council of Undergraduate Deans recommended that the D- grades be converted to a D.

The Committee agreed, and suggested that the faculty be reminded that there are no D- (or A+) grades. It is the job of the administration to implement the policy, it was said; Professors Koch and Swan agreed to consult on a communication that should be sent to the faculty.

The Committee also asked if it would be possible to obtain grade distributions now that the new grading system has been implemented, including both the grades and the number of faculty who used +/- grades. Ms. Van Voorhis reported, again, that she does not have the staff to produce ad hoc reports; Professor Swan said he would consult with Dr. Hendel on how information would be provided to the Committee.

## **3. Policy Review**

The Committee then turned to the task of reviewing the administrative recommendations for making educational policies consistent across the campus. SCEP will review and approve or change the recommendations it has received, and then bring a complete package of recommendations to the Assembly in the spring.

Following quick disposition of the first four policies, Committee members had a lengthy discussion about the standard for accepting transfer credit (both within and from outside the University). The central

issue was whether the University should accept courses from other institutions when the student earned a D in the course; the major discussion points concerned portability (the content should be; low grades should not), disadvantaging students who had a stray D on a transcript, the hardship on students if they are required to take additional courses to obtain a degree, and how, if D meets internal transfer requirements, the University would say that a D earned elsewhere did not (and whether or not there was any need for consistency on this point). Also at issue was whether the C- should be considered acceptable. The straw vote on the matter was that 6 individuals favored allowing transfer credit only for courses with a C or better; 3 favored allowing credit for courses carrying a D.

The Committee then held a long discussion of whether the S should be set equal to the C-, rather than the C (as is called for in the current policy). This item affected several of the policies being reviewed. Before deciding on whether that change should be made, the Committee recapitulated its discussion of the policy on students taking a course more than once, and voted 5-1 to accept the recommendation that students be permitted to repeat a course only twice, and only to repeat it if the grade earned was (C) or (C-).

The Committee then voted 8-1 to recommend to the Senate that the grading policy be amended to set the S equal to the C-, and that all other policies be amended accordingly.

Professor Koch agreed to bring the amendment to the Senate, and then adjourned the meeting at 3:00.

-- Gary Engstrand

University of Minnesota