

## **FACULTY CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE**

February 19, 2015

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: Intellectual Futures Conversation: Shared Governance]

**Present:** Rebecca Ropers-Huilman (chair), Chris Uggen (vice chair), William Durfee, Eva von Dassow, Linda Bearinger, Gary Cohen, Joseph Konstan, Kathleen Krichbaum, Colin Campbell, James Cloyd, Jigna Desai, Allan Erbsen, Janet Ericksen, Karen Mesce

**Regrets:** Gary Gardner, Maria Gini, Susan Wick, Jean Wyman

**Others attending:** Vickie Courtney, director, Senate Office; Jason Langworthy, board associate, Policy & Committees, Office of the Board of Regents; Amy Phenix, chief of staff, Office of the President; and Jon Steadland, associate to the deputy chief of staff, Office of the President

**Guests:** Provost Karen Hanson and President Eric Kaler

1. **Call to order:** Professor Ropers-Huilman convened the meeting and welcomed those present. She noted that while Renee Dempsey, Senate staff, would be taking minutes during the intellectual futures portion of the meeting, the minutes would be written in a topical, nonspecific style without attribution to committee members and guests.

2. **Regent selection update:** Professor Ropers-Huilman called on Professor Bearinger to provide a brief update on the regent selection process. Professor Bearinger reported that on March 4, 2015 the House and Senate will meet jointly to vote on the five open Board of Regent seats. Four of the newly elected Regents will have six-year terms and the fifth Regent will fill out the remaining term of Regent Larson who passed away unexpectedly last fall. She encouraged members to contact their senators and representatives to voice their informed opinions about the candidates. Professor Bearinger

said she would be happy to stay after the meeting to talk with anyone about her perception of the candidates.

**3. Intellectual futures conversation:** Professor Ropers-Huilman said that the intellectual futures conversation would be about shared governance and how it relates to the future of the University of Minnesota as well as research universities across the country. Before beginning the conversation, Professor Ropers-Huilman turned members' attention to a document that had been sent out along with the agenda containing some thought provoking questions and a few quotations as a launching point for the discussion.

Major themes coming out of the discussion included:

- The vigor of shared governance at the University level is not necessarily replicated at the collegiate level.
- Responsibility-centered management (RCM) budget model is problematic and a lot of the issues facing the University stem from limited financial resources.
- There is a lack of incentives for faculty to think broadly about the institution versus themselves.
- How colleges operate varies tremendously from one college to another.
- Governance and consultation are not synonymous.
- The governance process should be structured so the individuals who need the faculty perspective get/solicit it before decisions are made.
- There is a perception that the administration is not interested in the faculty perspective.
- More should be done to promote University citizenship. Currently, there exists a culture of apathy.

Salient comments:

- The University of Minnesota, in general, has strong shared governance. While the vast majority of issues are consulted on, the reality is that this is a hierarchical institution where the governance practices that exist at the University level are not necessarily replicated in the colleges and units. There are colleges that do not have effective processes for engaging their faculty in key decisions. It was discussed that each dean runs his/her college as he/she sees fit, which translates into there being a lot of variability. Others mentioned that they have noticed the variability of governance

- involvement from college to college, and wondered whether there should be some standardized expectations on matters where faculty input needs to be solicited.
- Budget considerations play a significant role in determining what initiatives/programs will and will not happen. Consultation on programs should be disentangled from budget conversations. The only way to make shared governance related to curricular and programmatic decisions work is by reducing the defensiveness of deans around the budget.
  - A well-written and well-implemented collegiate constitution would allow for effective shared governance, but who assures the processes and practices used in the college are consistent with its constitution. It was again noted that much of this would likely depend on the dean's style. A dean will either embrace the notion of shared governance and give it life, and, if not, the faculty may have to push for that to happen. In either case, a good constitution will have checks and balances written into it to ensure consultation occurs.
  - Frequently, governance and consultation are used as if they are synonyms but they are not. Meanwhile, where faculty have no real role in making decisions, their relationship with administration can become adversarial. To close that divide, it is proposed that all persons with an administrative position who also hold a faculty appointment be required to return to the faculty after three years working in administration. Term limits would ensure that administrators maintain an acquaintance with the working conditions they help to create. It is important that faculty administrators do not lose touch with teaching and developing students. Related to this idea, another member suggested faculty administrators be required to do some teaching albeit on a very limited scale given their busy schedules. Often administrators are out of touch with what goes on at the department level, not to mention the classroom. The group discussed how little time senior administrators have and that to have an administrator return to the faculty shortly after they have learned the intricacies of their administrative position would not be feasible. It would be extraordinarily difficult to do a decent job wearing both hats.
  - Along these same lines, another member suggested having the deans reapply for their positions after six years, same as the term for a Regent. Deans would govern differently if they knew they would

have to reapply for their position after six years. Under the current system, deans, some perceive, are automatically reappointed. Others pointed out a thorough review of each dean precedes their reappointment. Also, if deans were required to reapply for their positions, it would likely make recruiting an attractive pool of dean candidates difficult.

- Any viable governance structure should include the faculty voice in training administrators who have never been faculty so that they have an understanding of what actually happens in the classroom, lab, field, etc. Faculty should have a role in training and educating these individuals to give them an understanding of the impact the policies that they have been hired to make and enforce are having at the department level, for example.
- How can the faculty governance process be structured in a way that people who need the perspectives of the faculty get them before decisions are made? For any kind of significant central policy there should be a checklist of who needs to be consulted on the policy. It was pointed out that not all consultation with faculty needs to take place within the governance system; meaningful consultation happens outside of governance as well.
- A question arose about whether the multi-campus shared governance system is working and working well. On repeated occasions there has been no opportunity for faculty input from the system campuses. There was broad agreement that perhaps the multi-campus shared governance structure is not as functional as it could ideally be. However, cases such as the University regularizing its admissions process across all the campuses, demonstrate that steps are being taken to do more to include the system campuses in efforts that are being undertaken on the Twin Cities campus.
- There is a disconnect between the people who are preparing and managing the University's larger budget from those managing departmental budgets. Individuals managing the larger University budget do not have a sense of what departments deal with on a daily basis. What is being done to get the perspective of those at the local level and/or other campus perspectives? Others pointed out that throughout the budget process choices have to be made, and the decisions are then made by those who have the knowledge and authority to do so. The fact of the matter is the financial environment is constrained and there is simply not enough money to go around.

- At the FCC meeting with the collegiate deans it was apparent the deans were not clear about how the strategic financial decisions would be aligned with the Strategic Plan. It was also interesting to learn that the deans do not have as much decision-making authority as a number of FCC members thought. It was pointed out that deans do have the authority to make decisions for their respective school, but because the University implemented responsibility-centered management (RCM) during a difficult time when the budget was declining, people's perceptions about how decisions are made, e.g., suspicion that money is being held elsewhere, were negatively influenced. Another member added that a number of the deans mentioned that the compact process does not allow for multi-year, long-term planning. It was noted that this is a challenge that the deans and senior administration wrestle with on an ongoing basis.
- There is the perception, whether true or false, that the administration is not interested in the faculty perspective. Is senior administration receiving enough input from faculty? The FCC provides senior administrators with a lot of valuable input, which has influence on decisions that are made.
- What is the institution doing to ensure that faculty have input on the issues and that they are being heard? Some faculty perceive that term faculty or those on the tenure track may be reluctant to voice their concerns in the presence of administrators because they feel vulnerable if they disagree with those in positions of authority to whom they are accountable. There is apathy among some faculty when it comes to serving on governance committees because they feel they do not have influence. True shared governance requires transparency on both sides (faculty and administrators). A number of faculty believe they do not have enough information to make an informed decision and some of this information needs to come from upper administration. For example, faculty need to have an understanding of the budget model to know why resources are being allocated in a certain way, and that understanding is only possible if faculty take the time to understand how the University works. This knowledge is not uniformly distributed across the faculty.
- All issues/problems discussed today stem from a lack of financial resources. Faculty need to better understand the monetary constraints that exist. It appears that some deans do not know how strategic financial planning is occurring, and, as a result, department heads do

not understand their allotment from their deans, e.g., why they can't get bridge funding. In some of the materials provided prior to the meeting about faculty governance, it was pointed out that faculty involved in the governance process need to start thinking about the good of the institution rather than the good of their own program. It is naïve to believe that the University's current funding model will sustain the institution the way it has been operating for much longer. Therefore, the University has to get to a point as an institution and decide areas it will de-emphasize and put these resources in areas where the institution knows it can excel. Using a shared governance approach to accomplish this would be a first step.

- The widespread perspective is that faculty do not know where decisions come from and there are many incentives for faculty to think only about what is good for them. How can this be changed? Serious thought needs to be given to developing an optimally participatory and inclusive governance system. In response, another member said it is the responsibility of the faculty who are involved in governance to inform their colleagues about the issues governance committees are talking about.
- It would not be good to have a faculty all of whom understand the details of the University's budget model because their time could be better spent doing teaching and research. There is an opportunity for the FCC, in collaboration with President Kaler and Provost Hanson, to distill two or three big questions the University is thinking about in terms of the direction it wants to go and/or problems it is struggling with and send it out in the form of a survey to see if faculty respond with their thoughts. One thing the University does not do well, while squeezing out slack through budget cutting from the top down is creating slack/space in which creative ideas or new possibilities can emerge.
- Faculty are not mentored to be leaders at the University and citizens of the community, but should be. What does it mean to be a citizen of the University community? Consider holding another forum similar to the one on civility and have a conversation about what is the fate of higher education, etc., which could be used to instill a sense of citizenship. The current culture of apathy needs to be changed.
- Over time, productivity expectations have been on the increase. As a result, to ask junior faculty to participate as academic citizens raises the question of what are the implications of doing so. For the

academy it is important and necessary, but for the individual person the reward structure is such that it does not incentivize citizenship. University conversations cannot/should not be isolated from broader societal conversations.

Before adjourning, two action items were proposed by a member:

1. The senior leadership needs to clearly communicate to administrators the importance of consulting with the appropriate Senate committees to gather input as they formulate policies and procedures.
2. The FCC needs to galvanize governance leaders to connect with their faculties about the issues that are being discussed.

3. **Adjournment:** Professor Ropers-Huilman thanked President Kaler, Provost Hanson and members of the committee for a good conversation. Hearing no further business, Professor Ropers-Huilman adjourned the meeting.

University Senate  
Renee Dempsey