

Minutes*

Senate Committee on Educational Policy
Wednesday, December 8, 1993
2:30 - 4:30
Room 626 Campus Club

Present: Kenneth Heller (chair), Anita Cholewa, Thomas Clayton, James Cotter, Megan Gunnar, Robert Johnson, Manuel Kaplan, Darren Walhof, Gayle Graham Yates

Regrets: Craig Bursch, Sue Donaldson, Michael Pawlicki, Carla Phillips

Absent: Daniel Boler, Darwin Hendel, William Van Essendelft

Guests: Vice President Anne Petersen

Others: None

[In these minutes: Advanced placement testing (briefly); Research Strategic Planning Committee report]

1. Advanced Placement Testing

Professor Heller convened the meeting at 2:35 and reviewed briefly the discussion that had taken place at the previous meeting concerning the proposed policy on advanced placement testing and credits.

After a few comments by Committee members, it was unanimously voted to approve the recommended policy to the Senate Consultative Committee for placement on the docket of the University Senate.

2. Report of the Strategic Planning Committee for Research and Post-baccalaureate Education [RSPC]

Professor Heller then invited Committee members to make comments about the executive summary (distributed to Committee members) of the RSPC draft report pending the arrival of Vice President Petersen.

One Committee member took sharp exception to the language calling for "positive decisions on hiring, promotion, and tenure require accomplishments that raise the mean level of the quality of the current faculty." First, it says the way to develop faculty is to get better faculty than the University has now, which is "ludicrous." Second, hiring to raise the mean level of quality means "stupid people are going to hire smart people?" It's more like reaching into a black bag and hoping you get quality, it was said.

*These minutes reflect discussion and debate at a meeting of a committee of the University of Minnesota Senate or Twin Cities Campus Assembly; none of the comments, conclusions, or actions reported in these minutes reflect the views of, nor are they binding on, the Senate or Assembly, the Administration, or the Board of Regents.

At this point Vice President Petersen joined the meeting; inasmuch as it was her first visit with SCEP, Professor Heller called for introductions. He then invited Dr. Petersen to comment on the RSPC draft report.

Dr. Petersen expressed appreciation to SCEP for agreeing to schedule an extra meeting so she could bring the draft report to it. This report is the product of a planning effort that has been going on for a year and the committee writing it talked often about its role vis-a-vis the University-wide planning process. Its members felt strongly that it should continue to work; it included faculty and graduate students from across the University and it wanted to be sure that the issues it raised would be integrated in the larger institutional planning efforts. She said she believed its activities would have an effect. She has tried to ensure the committee's work is linked with the U2000 planning process, although some of what it is doing will be separate.

The report itself is much larger, Dr. Petersen said, and she will be glad to share it with the Committee if it wishes. (Later in the meeting, it was agreed that she would distribute it to SCEP members.) There are a lot of data in it about Minnesota and national trends; there are also data and indicators about the units.

While the committee had many interesting discussions, she commented, developing recommendations was a challenge. The recommendations are from subcommittees chaired by Professors Sara Evans (history), Irwin Rubenstein (plant biology), and Matthew Tirrell (chemical engineering).

The timing of the report is an issue, in two ways. First, she hoped it would have an impact on the institution-wide planning process. There remain a lot of "loose ends" to be dealt with and this is the first consultative group that has seen the report. Second, she makes an annual report to the Board of Regents; this report will serve as the basis for her report this year, at the February Board meeting.

It is clear from the data on national trends contained in the report, she informed the Committee, that university research practices for the last 20 or 30 years are about to change--and no one knows what the future will be. Research universities grew dramatically in the 1960s but the 1980s were actually a period when research funding grew the most. During that time, increased funding was used increase the number of research universities. This diffused research funding, and Minnesota--like others in the top tier of research universities--lost part of its share of those funds. [The "tiers" come from the Feller and Geiger report and refer to quality groups based on NAS ratings.] Those universities that did well--largely from the second quality tier--were those that targeted their funds on particular areas and made good choices in faculty. A third quality tier of institutions received more money--perhaps by "pork"--but did not enhance their status. As a result, there are now more research universities at a time when there is likely to be a dramatic decline in funding. We have new competitors, she told the Committee, and we need to work hard to maintain our status--and even harder to enhance it.

In terms of the relationship of research to graduate education, research funds were provided--largely after WWII--in the belief that graduate education should be part of the picture--universities should develop knowledge and develop researchers at the same time. In other parts of the world those two functions are separated--federal money goes to research institutes and higher education is usually supported separately, often from different sources.

She recently heard an address arguing that much of the impetus for federal support of research--and for universities--was driven by the cold war. Now that it is over, Congress and national leaders do not know what to do about federally-funded research; without the old cold war framework, there is now a "crisis of rationale." While that proposition may not be entirely correct, she commented, it does fit the situation. It is NOT the case that everything is wrong with research universities, although the litany of ills may not stop. It is to be hoped that research universities will not have to continually do more with less but they must learn how to seek additional funds for instruction and research in the climate that now exists.

One hears that the number of research universities in the country may shrink to as few as 16 in the future, one Committee member said. The number will shrink, Dr. Petersen agreed, although certainly not to so small a number--there are now about 300. The University of Minnesota is not in immediate danger of losing its status as a research university; what is at stake is whether or not it can maintain its status as a LEADING research university.

It appears that "leaner and meaner" will be the way to go, one Committee member observed. Where are the "teeth" to the recommendations? Dr. Petersen replied that she is still learning about the University of Minnesota and how to develop strong recommendations that will be implemented. She hopes that the consultation process will help shape the recommendations so that faculty, students, and administrators will be supportive of, and committed to, their implementation. For example, the original recommendations from the committee said that she should take the lead on a number of issues. While she would be happy to lead the way in some areas, she told the Committee, in some cases she did not have the authority to do so and in others it would not have been the right way to proceed. She, for example, has very few funds available, compared to that which the colleges have, so the colleges must support the recommendations. The recommendations now reflect those who need to bear responsibility for action.

Dr. Petersen said she hoped that the recommendations could be refined through the consultative process so that a commitment will emerge. At the end everyone will know where the "teeth" will be and who will watch to see that things happen. It was one committee member in particular, she related, who was insistent on answering the "who" and "when" questions--which are, she agreed, good questions.

One Committee member expressed concern about WHAT would be done? Where in the University is research done well or poorly? What type of research that succeeds here? The first step will be to identify what can be done better, what the University CAN do, and what must be cut out.

That was the original charge to the committee, Dr. Petersen said, but it was much more difficult than she thought it would be. Her concern, she said, is the University Achilles heel: we pretend everyone is above average and then act as if it were true. That hurts the University in two ways. First, good units are not protected when funds are tight (e.g., so there are across-the-board cuts); in the case of a good department, if several strong faculty leave and are not replaced quickly, the unit will go downhill. The second way it hurts is that weaknesses are not recognized and thus not fixed. Program reviews work in some places and not others, depending in part on who is involved, but it is easy to do nothing in response to them. The cycle of program reviews is supposed to be every five to seven years but the University has just completed its second full cycle in 20 years.

The University collects a lot of data, Dr. Petersen noted, but frequently does not make use of it.

She has been urging that there be evaluation indicators; the process, she said, should be like research: First the questions are asked and then the data are collected. She agreed that one could find they had asked the wrong questions; that is why a pilot project would be helpful. It is clear that no single indicator can be used and the committee has worked hard to develop indicators and to provide information on quality to the units.

U2000 includes quality as one of the five criteria for judgment of programs, Dr. Petersen recalled, and the other four are also important. Much will be driven by those criteria, she said, and she has consistently argued for a SET of indicators. A planning consultant to the Board of Regents said there should be ONE quality indicator; she disagreed and said she hoped the report would inform the process. People seem to be afraid that the data might say something negative about their programs. There is, however, a middle ground between being ranked in the top 10 and being of low quality--it may be a department just didn't make the top ranking or was not included ranked sample.

One Committee member told Dr. Petersen that SCEP has been dealing with the mission and vision statement, specifically with respect to teaching and research, and has come to the view that it is not teaching "and" research. Education here REVOLVES around research; they go together. Right now at the University it is research "and" education--they are separate jobs for faculty that may not be connected with each other: one has a research contract (and works with graduate students on it, perhaps)--and then one teaches class. It is as though the faculty have two full-time jobs and each one suffers because of the time that must be put into the other--so neither of them is done well. The pessimistic view is that the University cannot compete with research institutes or with teaching institutions.

The other view is that research and education go together. The issue of time spent on tasks, on how faculty perform their functions, must be addressed in order to ensure that they can do a good job. Dr. Petersen agreed; the University must articulate the relationship between research and education or it will be out of business. And if it cannot do both jobs well, they should be separated--a proposition that some argue for. The University's rationale for existence must be that it is the place that integrates teaching and research and that the generation of knowledge is inextricably intertwined with teaching. That relationship is clear at the level of graduate education; it must also be true in undergraduate education. It is not easy to see the relationship on a day-to-day basis, and the committee tried twice to develop a statement on the balance between the two activities--both times it fell short, but she agreed that it had to be included in the report.

Part of it is a time problem, said one Committee member. Researchers can teach, and teachers do research, but there is just not enough time. As funds have been cut, the easiest place to save money has been in civil service lines--so now faculty members are doing their own typing, putting stamps on envelopes, their own Federal Express mailing, and so on--things which could be done by others. Is the University paying the right people to do the jobs? Could not faculty time be restructured so that there would be time for research and teaching rather than for these other tasks?

One needs to ask about the definition of a research university, said one Committee member. Does it imply that there are researchers who are teaching? Or are there researchers who do research and teachers who teach? The latter definition isn't compatible with his definition, it was said. If the definition is the former--researchers who teach--then the faculty must be provided the support they need to do both. Dr. Petersen confirmed that the model of a research university is faculty who both teach and do research,

with some variations in individual cases. All researchers have graduate students and virtually all of them have undergraduate students.

At this point it was maintained that there are budgetary walls that separate the use of RAs and TAs which hampers the combination of research with teaching. Dr. Petersen said it was worse than that and that this is an unusual model. It would be better to have funds specifically for GAs, with additional funds for excessive workload needs, to be used for TAs or instructors.

At some institutions, Dr. Petersen pointed out, funds for graduate student support are allocated to the departments, which then decide how to use them. There are also cases where there are instructional funds that follow need rather than being permanently assigned, and thus can meet institutional needs. It is unlikely, however, that the funds currently in departments for graduate student support could be captured for this kind of use because the departments are so pressed financially. Graduate students on the committee, she reported, felt very strongly about this issue because they feel especially vulnerable--their funding can simply disappear.

Dr. Petersen said she will also ask that a study be done in the near future about graduate student employment patterns and the impact of the increase in the fringe benefit expenses. In the report to the Regents by Associate Vice President Pfutzenreuter on where funding cuts were taken, it was reported that a total of 125 TAs had been cut by the units--but that was incomplete information because other units may have cut out TAs but not listed them separately.

The uncertainty of the process of graduate student funding is also threatening, commented one Committee member. A graduate student may have guaranteed funding for a year or two; after that, support is on a quarter-by-quarter basis, and a student may not know until the quarter has begun whether or not support will be provided. Dr. Petersen said she has heard the horror stories and agrees that the University must do something about those problems. As Dean of the Graduate School she said she would try to help colleges ensure graduate student support so that at least there can be certainty, even if not additional funds.

One Committee member expressed concern about TA support; that is something most face all the time. The distinction between issues like TA support and the large-scale concerns of this document is so large that it cannot be bridged--which makes one skeptical about the U2000 documents. Another concern is the relationship of teaching and research. We inherited the idea of the research university, which is that faculty must both teach and do research. But at Minnesota, one MUST teach--and research is done in one's spare time. Different models of the research university have not been honestly faced nor have needs of a research university been articulated so that priorities could be set long enough that they could be met. As a result, band aids are used. IF TAs are a priority, there should be some attention to the problem. Instead the University tinkers.

The intent of the report, Dr. Petersen said, is to affect the day-to-day life of the University; if there are disconnections between real life and the report, she would like help in addressing them. The Executive Summary recommendations are few, but the committee wanted ones that would make a difference in the way the University works.

One Committee member commented that there must be differential criteria for research in the

sciences and humanities. The humanities, for example, do not get the same research support as the sciences. If there is a single model for research, one can just write the humanities out. If not, such realities should be recognized in the document and accommodated in practice.

Dr. Petersen agreed; people were added to the committee over that issue. She talked with liberal arts department heads and several made that point, so the committee asked for help. It was a hard-working group that played a significant role in development of the indicators. It is easy to get off the track, Dr. Petersen observed, and one should be careful to use the President's phrase: "research, scholarship, and creative activity."

In the talk about the University contributions to the state, Dr. Petersen observed, the measure usually used is dollars; the committee assembled information as well on cultural contributions and wants to be sure they are noted in the report.

The point about the history of funding is correct, Dr. Petersen said, and applies to graduate education and research. The University of Minnesota was one of the first institutions in graduate education. If one looks at the changes that have occurred, and the influx of research funds, it has been to the detriment of the humanities and has skewed the nature of the university. That issue must be looked at carefully; in times of tight resources, it is often too easy to be driven by the need to obtain more money. An institution must be aware of what it is giving up when it does that. If funding is permitted to drive the institution--which seems to be the case--it is the University's responsibility to think about the nature of the education that the University provides and to be sure that it is providing a good one. The University must say "these are the things an educated citizen must have"--that defines the University relative to other institutions. If all institutions are trying to satisfy the same demand, the University becomes like all other institutions.

Dr. Petersen said she was shocked at the doctoral data for the State of Minnesota. The University has always been the only public institution in Minnesota to grant the doctorate, and it has always been in the top 10 nationally in the numbers granted (650 last year). But in Minnesota Walden University gave over 100 doctorates, and now there is the Graduate School of America as well.

One reads the planning documents and hears from administrators, said one Committee member; the question is "will we really do it?" One hears a lot about planning done by committees--but what is being done? It isn't because there are no funds; there are more and more administrators and not enough faculty. Is the administration serious? Dr. Petersen said she would turn the question around; she believes that the administration should not make decisions alone about educational matters. Will it let the faculty make them? she was then asked. The question is if these are the right recommendations, she replied. That must be decided collectively, and then she will be sure they are implemented.

There are two kinds of recommendation, she said--ones on which she can take the lead and ones that she can check on. Both are important and she said she hoped they could be implemented with the help of the faculty. If the recommendations are the wrong ones, Dr. Petersen told the Committee, she wants to know that.

Faced with the "who?" and "when?" questions, she explained, she said she would see to it that there is movement where she can--but there are areas where she cannot do so. She will be meeting with the

deans to learn if they say this report sets out the right directions, she wants to be able to say that her office will work in collaboration with the deans. The role of this Committee is to keep track of what they are doing. She can continue to ask questions, she said, but if the Committee tracks an issue or report, it remains important--and helps preclude it from being put on a shelf.

Dr. Petersen said she has repeatedly heard the refrain "we have done this five times and have a shelf full of recommendations--do these!" She said she was serious about the recommendations in the report and had no interest in wasting people's time. It is also not appropriate, she pointed out, for HER to say what will be done; much of the effort must be collaborative. If the Committee has thoughts about the report, she would appreciate hearing them, including on who's role it is to take the lead with recommendations.

One Committee member repeated the concern expressed before Dr. Petersen arrived at the meeting about "hiring good people and hoping the bozos retire." That is not faculty development, it was said, and is an incredible statement. It is not logical to expect that "the bozos here now will hire somebody good." The statement assumes too little of the faculty who are here and it is too passive for the University.

Dr. Petersen accepted responsibility for the statement and said the intention was that the University must hire good people but must be sure it supports all those who are here. This can be said more positively, one Committee member said. Dr. Petersen agreed and said she would try to fix the wording.

My sense of faculty development, declared one Committee member, is that it should make better the faculty who are already here. How can the University help units do better with the people they have? The University may cut programs and the number of graduate students and perhaps reorganize--but this will not address what the people still here will need to make them feel positive about the changes. Dr. Petersen said this is exactly what she believes.

In terms of the role of the Committee, it was then said, one senses that the issue is its jurisdiction. One can worry that if this Committee does not mind the store as a whole, no one is doing so. That does not mean a conflict with the administration, but there is nothing in the planning process that affirms the good that the faculty who are here are doing or that helps them improve things. There appears to be a gap between what is actually being done and some vision of an ideal university. The administration should realize that faculty must feel engaged with education and research and told they are doing a decent job, although perhaps some things should be changed--instead, the faculty are being told they are not doing their jobs.

That is where the data can help, Dr. Petersen responded. If one does not know where one stands, one doesn't know what must be done to improve. All of this information should be welcome as a guide to improvement. Among some faculty, she was told, there is the negative sense that the administration hopes faculty can be replaced with someone who will do better. Instead they should be reassured that where there are some weak places in the University they will be given the tools to make them better.

Given faculty tenure, Dr. Petersen pointed out, that is the only path to take. Why traumatize everyone with the idea that people will be cut out? That process will not improve the institution and will probably not save much money.

In studying for planning this summer, a group visited four campuses and learned several lessons. The first was UCLA, which faced massive cuts and the elimination of whole units. It sounded like they had a rational process but the place was in an uproar. Michigan and Washington were also visited; in the early 1980s both saw large budget cuts, made traumatic program cuts, and said they have not recovered--and didn't save much money. Michigan now uses ongoing quality improvement approaches; the group of deans they met with included one from a unit that was cut deeply. They are exhilarated by the process, they collaborate with others a great deal, and find ways to link low budget areas to areas that have more money. They do not have any MORE money than Minnesota but they approach its use differently; it's not "the axe is going to fall" but rather that people must get out and do things. One does not see that comparative spirit here.

This does mean reaching into the community, Dr. Petersen affirmed in response to a question. Outreach is a main strategy for obtaining funds for the University. This does NOT mean just asking for dollars; it means identifying areas of interest where the University can be of service. Good service will frequently be rewarded with gifts. Further good work with donors provides the opportunity for information exchange--feedback to the University and educational opportunity for the University with donors.

Approval of this report, Dr. Petersen said, should have a good effect on the faculty. She knows many feel "beat up" and don't feel positive about their jobs or the institution--that is what is wrong about waiting for the next cut. If that is the desired goal, it was said, then the language of several sections of the report should be changed, it was said. She welcomed suggestions.

The language about program effectiveness, said one Committee member, is bureaucratic, not educational. It is intended to help programs think about the effectiveness of their educational process, Dr. Petersen replied, and how they might better get faculty and students involved in it. Right now only program "inputs" are considered; the "outputs" must also be addressed. Again, Dr. Petersen welcomed suggestions.

Dr. Petersen was asked about the "Shively report" referred to in the RSPC report. She told the Committee she had asked Professor Phil Shively to work on regional collaboration, a subject in which both he and the President are very interested, and has supported him to do so. He has talked with other universities, including Wisconsin, Iowa, and Iowa State, and there are a few possibilities in the Dakotas and in Manitoba. This is an effort to look systematically at how the institutions could collaborate; the report contains a lot of recommendations. Some are already occurring; for example, the catalogue of holdings of the libraries of Minnesota and Wisconsin are being merged. (Books are couriered between the two institutions.) The libraries of the entire CIC (Big Ten plus the University of Chicago) may be merged within a year. The next step will be to have complementary acquisitions, which would save a lot of money.

Another big change coming, the effect of which on the scholarly enterprise is not yet clear, will be electronic publishing. Right now promotion and tenure norms drive publishing in journals--and if there are not enough outlets, new journals are published. One possibility, it was said, is to encourage faculty not to publish too much. Promotion and tenure drives the way research and teaching is done. Publications are also driven by the existence of big projects, said another, prompting the observation that the humanities don't have a chance. Dr. Petersen said that the reason that university presses exist is to

publish books in the humanities, which is the rationale for University support. What effect will electronic publishing have if one must show colleagues one's work in book form rather than in a computer file?

What does she want from the Committee? Dr. Petersen was asked. Are these recommendations on the right track? she said. Have areas been missed? Are they wrong-headed? Dr. Petersen agreed to send the full report to the members of the Committee. There are also implementation issues, she observed, and Committee members may know more than she does about how to get things done. If there are things that MUST be done, how to do so must be identified; she will do her part, she promised, but the effort will succeed only if the faculty and other administrators are on board.

The University is trying to redefine itself as research university and this is a preliminary guide to the steps that could be taken, observed one Committee member. One can ask about definitions, however. Does everyone accept the definition of a research university? What is centrality? What must be done to keep artistic and similar endeavors vital? What are the next steps? At what level does Dr. Petersen expect the Committee to function? What does the University have now and how will it get to what it wants?

The criteria come from U2000, Dr. Petersen said, and there are some definitions in the planning documents. But what is central, in this University, to the welfare of the state? If planning is for the future, does anyone know the future of Minnesota and how the University fits in? Planning is focusing on that, Dr. Petersen said, and it is to be hoped the importance of the University to the state can be documented.

Dr. Petersen confirmed, in response to a query of puzzlement from a Committee member, that SCEP's appropriate role in evaluating this report is to consider the pieces that deal with graduate education. And, it was added, the undergraduate connection to research. She said she came to SCEP because the suggestion from Professors Rubenstein and Scott to do so made sense--but it is up to the Committee to decide what parts of the report it wishes to take up. She said she also wanted the Committee to be aware of the process and to have the opportunity to consult about the report. Because the RSPC began work before U2000, she said, we need to make sure the two are fully integrated.

One Committee member said some of the language implied threatening bureaucratic mechanisms; Dr. Petersen responded by pointing out that it had been faculty members who had insisted on language of implementation and "enforcement." She invited alternative perspectives.

From the point of view of educational policy, said one Committee member, the report has a lot of glowing generalities but does not come to grips with what the University must be moving towards or the pressures that could rip it apart. There does not appear to be a lot of thinking about how to integrate research and education at the graduate or undergraduate level. There is no statement of what's broken. There are impediments to achieving that integration, and the University is not user-friendly to research in many areas. (For example, how does one fund graduate student travel to conferences? It's important, but who's looking out for it? Another example is how research groups are not encouraged to hire undergraduates be reducing or eliminating indirect costs.

Dr. Petersen pointed out that the University does not control the matter. And that is the point, it was said; the University throws up its hands because of bureaucratic rules--they need to be looked at. At

the end of the day, is there really ANYTHING that is not within the University's control? Even federal rules can be changed.

Another Committee member said it is embarrassing that the word "undergraduate" does not appear in the document when the pinnacle of undergraduate education--the education offered by the University--is to include involvement in research. To add undergraduates as a central focus will defeat the rationale for having these issues dealt with apart from the whole planning process. She is not involved in undergraduate education, she pointed out, so it would be presumptuous of her to appoint a group to look into it.

That is part of the problem, said one Committee member kindly. If the topic is research, which is central to the University's mission, the organizational structure impedes the accomplishment of the mission because Dr. Petersen feels constrained in talking about undergraduates.

Undergraduate education also includes graduates as teaching assistants, it was pointed out--is that a positive or negative experience? Are TAs cannon fodder, doing undergraduate education, or is being a TA part of professional development of future leaders in their field? One cannot separate the research and undergraduate programs--there are contacts in all parts. Dr. Petersen may not worry about registering undergraduates, but it is an issue for TAs and RAs. The report, said another Committee member, talks about faculty development and facilities but not about the development of graduate students--what is the University doing for them?

One Committee member said the gap between research and teaching is fostered in graduate education at the department level. Being a TA means grading and there is no link to research.

Dr. Petersen agreed that parts of the document could be reframed and she said she had heard mention of several points that had been left out. She expressed appreciation for the Committee's interest in the report. It was agreed that she would meet again with it in January after there has been time for the Committee to digest the summary and to review the full report.

Professor Heller thanked Dr. Petersen for joining the meeting and then adjourned it at 4:30.

-- Gary Engstrand