

Minutes*

Senate Committee on Educational Policy
Wednesday, October 1, 1997
1:00 - 3:00
Room 238 Morrill Hall

Present: Laura Koch (chair), Avram Bar-Cohen, Elayne Donahue, Gordon Hirsch, Thomas Johnson, Robert Leik, Judith Martin, Kathleen Newell, Kevin Nicholson, Jessie Jo Roos, Tina Rovick, William Van Essendelft, Gayle Graham Yates

Regrets: none

Absent: Darwin Hendel, Palmer Rogers

Guests: none

[In these minutes: Issues for the year; student evaluations of teaching; Morse-Alumni guidelines]

1. Prefatory Comments and Introductions

Committee members raised several points in conversation that SCEP will subsequently attend to:

- The Graduate School has problems with distance education with respect to maintaining standards
- In the change to semesters, where departments have been laggard in preparing their new curriculum, is it ethical to permit students to register for courses where there is no text describing it? This information will be needed for advisors, for APAS, for curriculum articulation, and there are a number of colleges where the work has not been done. (It was suggested that if curricula are not ready, students should not be permitted to enroll; under IMG, those units which have not completed their semester curricula would see significant enrollment and revenue declines. Students already in the programs, however, would be at a disadvantage with respect to their academic planning.)
- Movement, merger, or elimination of programs in which faculty have invested years is having an impact on faculty morale and damages their commitment to the University.

At 1:10 Professor Koch convened the meeting, welcomed everyone to the first regular meeting of the Committee, and called for introductions.

2. Issues for the Year (and comments thereon)

Professor Koch distributed copies of a draft list of issues for the year. Committee members talked

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about each of them for some while; the list eventually came to appear as follows:

I. ISSUES SCEP WILL TAKE UP

- * distance education (SCEP's primary concern is educational standards)
- * the role of the Council on Liberal Education (CLE), especially with respect to the [Twin Cities] Course and Curriculum Subcommittee and to quality control of the curriculum (CLE has not reported, either to SCEP or to the Twin Cities Assembly, on big changes; several faculty have expressed concern about the power of CLE over the curriculum. CLE may need to be folded into the Course and Curriculum Subcommittee.)
- * student evaluation of teaching (promises were made both to the Senate and to the Minnesota legislature that action would be taken with respect to making student evaluations of faculty available to students; action must be taken this year pursuant to those promises)
- * peer evaluation of teaching (implementation of existing Senate policy needs to be reviewed)
- * grade inflation (Professor Martin, chair of the subcommittee, reported that she was awaiting data from the Office of the Registrar, and will obtain information from others who have done studies as well.)
- * granting of calendar exemptions (the Senate assigned SCEP a role in approving exemptions from the standard semester calendar; guidelines are needed)
- * use of U2000 critical measures (there remains continuing concern about the juxtaposition of the critical measures and IMG; it was agreed that in the first instance, the IMG subcommittee should take up these potential problems)
- * educational policy issues in the first-year experience
- * ROTC (the subcommittee is supposed to report to SCEP)
- * semesters (advising will be a major issue, so students can be helped in making decisions; there will be a single undergraduate catalogue for the Twin Cities campus in Spring, 1998, and departments must have text ready for it so students can plan)

II. POLICY REVISIONS SCEP WILL COMPLETE (Professor Koch emphasized that this will be a big issue, because she would like to see SCEP complete this year its review of existing Senate educational policies)

- * honors
- * reorganization (collegiate/departmental/administrative)
- * housing (the role of, educationally)
- * international education
- * final examinations
- * transfers
- * standards with respect to credits and degrees
- * a number of other policy questions arising from the Student 2000 project (the new computing/web student system); an administrative group has been reviewing college and University policies, but SCEP must take final action on any proposals, and may not agree with the administrative position.

III. REPORTS SCEP WILL RECEIVE AND ADVISE ON

- * task force on the under-prepared student
- * report on the first-year experience

Mr. Nicholson reported that MSA is doing a survey of students on what kinds of questions they wish to see asked and that Ms. Roos was handling the issue for MSA; SCEP members gave her several suggestions about how to improve the survey. (It was noted, for example, that the proposed questions do not get at teaching style, which has been one of the major questions the students said they wanted information about.) The results of the survey are "more numbers for Darwin Hendel."

Mr. Nicholson also said that while the agreement is that asking the questions (and providing the summarized response data) will be optional with each faculty member, they would like to see COLLECTING the data made mandatory, so that all faculty could see the results and, presumably, be comfortable with them. For example, faculty might be reassured to learn that they could be "tough" on grading but still receive high marks on the evaluations.

Professor Koch then suggested a number of subcommittee assignments, many with responsibility for issues outlined above. Committee members accepted the assignments.

3. Morse-Alumni Guidelines

Professor Koch distributed copies of the Morse-Alumni award guidelines and said that few changes were needed. One question raised, however, was whether diversity (in educational activities/efforts) should be one of the criteria by which candidates are evaluated. Of the five Committee members who expressed a view on this, all were strongly opposed to adding diversity as a criterion for the award, for various reasons: some are in programs where there is no opportunity to further diversity aims, it is already talked about by the nominating committee and seen as a positive factor in a dossier, some people make diversity their sole mission while others either cannot or make it part of their activities--and the resulting award selections are a mixture of those individuals. Without further ado, the Committee concluded it would not add diversity to the criteria.

Another question raised was about the eligibility of P&A appointees who have significant responsibilities in undergraduate education in areas important to receiving the award; at present, they are not eligible. Committee members were of diverse views on the issue, and a special concern was the relationship of this issue with the larger question of the use of non-faculty (or term faculty) for undergraduate education and the appropriate mix of appointments. It was agreed that P&A eligibility should be considered.

Professor Graham Yates agreed to serve as chair of the committee to nominate candidates for the graduate/professional teaching award.

Having no more business, Professor Koch adjourned the meeting at 2:45.

-- Gary Engstrand