

Minutes\*

**Senate Committee on Educational Policy  
January 11, 1990**

- Present: John Clark (chair), Jean Congdon, Robert Jones, Karen Karni, Marvin Mattson, J. Kim Munholland, Gary Parnes, Julie Peterson, Gary Nelsestuen
- Guests: Elayne Donahue (Athletic Academic Counseling), Michaeleen Fox (Space Programming and Management), Darwin Hendel (Academic Affairs), Harvey Jaeger (Physical Planning), Assistant Vice President Robert Kvavik, Sam Lewis (Registrar)

**1. Report of the Chair**

Professor Clark reported on several items.

- Vice President Kuhi has asked the deans to start implementation of the 1:1 ratio; one result has been a letter from the Registrar indicating there may be a shortage of classroom space on the West Bank, depending on how units adapt to the ratio (change to three credits for three class hours, move to two two-hour blocks for four-credit courses, etc.). A meeting with Ms. Grundner, Associate Registrar, and Mr. Lewis, Registrar, will be held soon. Professor Clark said he had informally checked classrooms on the West Bank and noticed that after 2:00 they tend to be empty; one possible solution to any problem might be a move to somewhat more afternoon classes.
- There is a need for the ROTC subcommittee to act on a request for approval of a faculty appointment. The subcommittee, chaired by Professor John Clausen, needs to be formally appointed.
- The Morse-Alumni award committee, chaired by Professor Jean Congdon, will be appointed, in consultation with Assistant Vice President Carol Carrier. There have been discussions about criteria and numbers of nominees but there are no significant problems expected. The timeline for nominations and selection probably needs to be reworked, however, because it was too rushed this year, especially in CLA. Award recipients will be recognized on May 16, in the HHH Center; there will probably be a presentation followed by lunch. The President and Vice President for Academic Affairs, Deans, appropriate department chairs, and others will probably attend.
- President Hasselmo will make a presentation to the Board of Regents on January 12 on the importance of undergraduate education; Committee members are encouraged to attend.
- As chair of SCEP Professor Clark had been asked to sit in on interviews of the candidates for Vice Provost for the Arts, Sciences, and Engineering. This individual, in the future, may become a principal contact between SCEP and the central administration.

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\*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 represent the views of, nor are they binding on, the Senate or Assembly, the Administration, or the Board of Regents.

- Professor Clark was asked to intervene when the hockey team was expected to play on the last day of finals week; some team members had finals. This scheduling was unfortunate but the situation was worked out, to some extent; Professor Clark, however, wrote to Jack Merwin, chair of the Assembly Committee on Intercollegiate Athletics, to indicate his concern and asking that ACIA provide information to SCEP about scheduling policies. It was noted that scheduling such events is contrary to University policy but that ACIA had granted an exception. One Committee member inquired why athletics could obtain exceptions when academic units could not; Professor Clark responded that ACIA is the body which approves team schedules and in that role chose to permit an exception. It was suggested that SCEP ought to be explicit in its opposition to such incidents in that they detract from the undergraduate education of the athletes. Professor Clark also reported that both he and Professor Merwin have been asked to join the next meeting of the Faculty Consultative Committee because it wishes to talk about intercollegiate athletics.

## **2. Report on "Time to Completion" to the Higher Education Coordinating Board**

Professor Clark welcomed Assistant Vice President Kvavik to the meeting to discuss a report from the University to the Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) on "institutional constraints that potentially lengthen student time to program completion."

Before he addressed the report, however, he informed the Committee briefly about the contents of the initiative on undergraduate education which would be announced by the President at the Board of Regents the next day. The initiative draws on many things which have been said over the past few years; the intent is to do something. (Dr. Kvavik itemized the elements of the initiative but they are not recorded here because there will be sufficient coverage of and distribution of the initiative in the University community.) Dr. Kvavik emphasized that the initiative is a draft, intended to engender a dialogue within the University, so that at the end of the process the initiative will be in place after internal discussion.

Dr. Kvavik then directed the attention of the Committee to the report to HECB. It is, he commented, a cut-and-paste document right now, but it may not be much more formally organized because it is only one of a number of reports on which HECB will draw to write its own report. The issues it deals with, however, seemed to be of sufficient importance that several individuals have given it considerable energy; the report, Dr. Kvavik said, contains several policy implications to which SCEP should pay some attention as it has the chance.

One of the issues raised by the report is "timely completion" itself. The assumption--certainly on the part of the legislature--appears to be that it is best to get speedily through one's college education; there are, however, reasons why students take the time that they do and the issue is a complex one. One motivation of the request which led to the report is to perhaps change the structure of financial aid so that a penalty is imposed on students who slow down. The legislature is of the view that the cost of higher education is increased when the student headcount is high; that cost can be reduced when students stay "on track" and get through the system faster. Their report, Dr. Kvavik said, comes to no conclusions but rather informs HECB about how complex the problem is and to point out that there is no "quick fix." If it is to be dealt with, it must be done so in a sensitive way, with different student groups in mind; there are things the University can do--is doing--to help those students who can and should do so to move more

quickly through.

Dr. Kvavik drew the attention of the Committee to the table which shows that there is a long-term downward trend in the number of credits students carry, on average, in every college of the University. This is, he reported, a national trend; Minnesota is not unique (although the phenomenon is probably more pronounced in public than in private institutions).

The report also contains information about credits earned; there has been a presumption about the prevalence of the 180-credit major but the data illustrate the fallacy of that presumption because there are few fields which require only 180 credits--and even fewer students who take only 180 credits. Students take, in some cases, significantly more credits than they need. It was suggested by one Committee member that this may in part be because students, when they first come to the University, do not realize what courses they need and end up not taking those subjects which are required; Dr. Kvavik agreed and added that others may not understand the mechanics of graduation (e.g., they don't realize they need a course or two more before they can be granted a degree or they do not find out when there are deadlines).

The data (from Spring 1988 bachelor's degree candidates) also show that students who attend part-time take longer, those with higher GPAs finish faster, those who change majors take longer, women finish more quickly than men but minority students tend to take longer, and students whose home is not in the Twin Cities finish more quickly than those whose is. Regression analysis of the data does not lead to any single factor playing the significant role in determining length of time to degree. This, Dr. Kvavik said, should suggest to HECB that simply tinkering around with financial aid will not resolve the problem.

Another element of the time-to-degree matter is the unavailability of courses; the report contains survey results from 1988 degree candidates, information on what the University is doing about class closures, and the "bottleneck" courses in each college. Yet another is lack of student preparation and the need for remedial coursework.

The report also examines the financial variables affecting time-to-degree and the implications of establishment of a new standard (such as 15 credits instead of 12) to be considered a full-time student). Besides being administratively confusing (because the federal government uses 12 credits), the change would have an adverse impact on the University because it is already more expensive than other institutions; unless financial aid is also adjusted, students will end up paying more for their education.

Other more speculative factors which might affect time-to-degree include: the lack of the concept of "graduating class" (except perhaps in smaller and more rigid academic units); ease of employment and desire for higher standard of living; taking fewer courses, maintain better grades, and thus be able to compete for scholarships and post-baccalaureate opportunities; taking courses for recreation and delaying graduation to take advantage of scholarships and financial aid; and double majors. These are not, the report points out, necessarily bad decisions by students--but they are slowed down as a result. One Committee member inquired if there is a difference in graduation rates between institutions located in large metropolitan areas and those which are not; Dr. Hendel said data for the Big Ten suggest this could be a factor (more diversions mean taking longer to graduate). Another inquired if there is any trend toward parents not making contributions to their children's college education--because perhaps either the student prizes independence or the parents want their own BMW--thus requiring students to work or

borrow more; Dr. Kvavik responded that the report speculates that it might be. Dr. Hendel commented that there are some national data which suggest parents are contributing less.

Asked about the impact of transfer students, Dr. Kvavik agreed that students could lose credits depending on where they came from and the program into which they are going; that can also happen between and among units within the University. Dr. Hendel pointed out that transfer students often also make major changes in their educational plans; different groups of transfer students would need to be examined separately.

A potential source of problems in the future, Dr. Kvavik mentioned, is the desire of the vocational/technical institutes (AVTIs) to look more like community colleges. Students taking general education courses at the AVTIs will expect that those credits will transfer to the University, which could be a problem. There is agreement with the community colleges that their courses will transfer but there is no such agreement with the AVTIs; Dr. Kvavik also pointed out that the AVTIs are not even accredited by the North Central Association.

One policy issue from all of this arises from the President's initiative; one of the questions he will raise is who is it that ought to come to the University and how ought they be prepared. It is his personal view, Dr. Kvavik commented, that the worst thing the University can do is admit a cluster of students who have no chance of being successful. Conducting an essay test in a freshman course, for example, creates havoc for students who cannot write a coherent sentence much less an essay.

Dr. Kvavik concluded by reiterating his view that there are policy implications to which SCEP should attend. One is the question of where the University should direct its resources in order to permit students who can do so to graduate sooner. One Committee member observed that there are a number of factors identified in the report over which the University has no control; Dr. Kvavik agreed and said the University should fix the things which it can fix.

Another broader issue is the development by the University of a sense of the kind of education it wants to provide. Accommodations can be made in some areas but in others the University will not want to compromise; other systems of higher education can perhaps better deal with some of the problems. Taking such a position might mean offering less remedial work, for instance. It was suggested that another look at the General College might be in order but Dr. Kvavik responded that the University has determined that there is a genuine and important role for GC--but it cannot become a cure-all for the failings of the high schools.

### **3. Discussion of Grade Changes**

Professor Clark welcomed Sam Lewis, University Registrar, and Elayne Donahue, Director of academic counseling for intercollegiate athletics. The matter in front of the Committee, he explained, is an exploration of whether or not there are any policy issues pertaining to changes in grades once grades have been issued.

Mr. Lewis said there may not be an issue and reported that he had received a number of calls recently inquiring whether or not the University had a policy governing grade changes. His office searched for a policy and also asked the Senate office to do so; none were discovered. Of the colleges,

only one had a policy.

His office, he told the Committee, has the responsibility for actually making the change; they have taken the stance that whenever changes are submitted by faculty, on the official grade change form, and the form is appropriately filled out and signed or stamped, they will make the change without questioning the grade (unless the faculty member is trying to give a grade that isn't possible). There are, he said, many thousands that come in every quarter. The largest number are changes from an "Incomplete" to a letter grade but there are also changes of letter grades, up and down (but mostly up). The "ripples" from a grade change include a change in GPA and credits completed (if from an "I"); it can change student status vis-a-vis probation or athletic eligibility or financial aid.

One Committee member recalled that at one time an explanation had to accompany any change of a letter grade; it appears that may have been a departmental or collegiate requirement because there is no such central requirement.

Dr. Donahue commented that while she may see a skewed sample--of athletes who wish to retain their eligibility--conversations with faculty and college officers have led her to conclude it is probably not limited to athletes. It also seems that grade changes occur a lot. The attorney who led the investigations of alleged rules violations in athletics did a study of grade changes for athletes; he concluded that the changes made kept many athletes eligible.

Dr. Donahue told the Committee that she had developed categories of how grade changes occur so that if SCEP determined there was a problem, and wished to correct it, it could take into account different situations. There appear to be three legitimate ways grade changes can occur: To change a true Incomplete, to correct a calculation or reporting error, or to reflect a re-evaluation of coursework (such as essay work). Other ways are: to improve grades through extra work not available to other students; to grant an "I" and permit the student sit through the course again--without registering--and then awarding a grade based on attendance in the class twice; to plea and cry or stamp your feet; in some cases there may be intimidation; to base a grade on work promised in the future rather than that actually completed in the course; and (in only one case she knows of) petition to have a course and grade (of F) completely dropped from a transcript (probably done with the consent of the instructor).

Professor Clark noted that CLA has a requirement that no opportunity to change a grade can be offered--if based on additional work--that is not available to the entire class; how often the rule is honored is an open question. One possibility for SCEP might be to suggest that the CLA rule become University policy--although what other college policies exist would have to be investigated (although Mr. Lewis reported that he had been unable to unearth any other college policies).

Professor Clark asked if there were other actions the Committee might consider. Mr. Lewis suggested that preparing guidelines on when it is reasonable to consider grade changes might be useful. Dr. Donahue proposed requiring an explanation, as had apparently been required in some units at some time (she recalled hearing of one incident where a letter had been sent to an athlete promising a grade change but the faculty member had backed down when informed that the reason would have to be shared with departmental colleagues).

It was agreed that Professor Clark should write to the deans to ask if they have any policy

governing grade changes before SCEP developed a final recommendation. Asked about her own feelings, Dr. Donahue said she believed the University was too lax in permitting grade changes; she worries not only about possible trouble with the NCAA but also the image of the institution.

It was pointed out that grade changes require a sign-off from the department chair--which is usually a rubber stamp. If the chairs were held accountable for that signature they might get more excited about the changes.

Dr. Donahue cautioned that this discussion should not leave a bad impression among Committee members--with the impression that student-athletes have no integrity. She emphasized that only a very small percentage of athletes actually have grades changed.

Professor Clark thanked Mr. Lewis and Dr. Donahue for their presentation and promised that any draft policy SCEP might develop will be provided to them for comment. It was suggested, at the end of the discussion, that perhaps each college should be asked to develop a policy, however one Committee member argued that this would be too confusing for students.

#### **4. Discussion about Study Space**

Professor Clark next welcomed Michaelleen Fox from Space Programming and Management and Harvey Jaeger from Physical Planning to the meeting. He told them that the interest of the Committee was ill-defined except that it did wish to be informed about where the University stands on study space, where it is going, problems that exist, and anything that SCEP might address through policy.

Ms. Fox began by explaining that one difficulty they have is that "study space" is not defined in the HEGIS classification of space nor does it appear in the Minnesota Facilities Model as a specific category (except for libraries). It does address "general use common space" on a building-by-building basis and a formula to determine the amount of such space required; she distributed the pages from the Model which speak to common space. This common space, she said, includes not only student areas but also staff and faculty areas; the formula is one square foot for each instructional station in the building plus one square foot for each headcount employee in the building. This, she said, is a minimum standard, and need not be a room with walls; it could be a lounge space with vending machines, for example.

Ms. Fox also distributed copies of the report from the Student Study Space Committee appointed by Interim President Sauer and issued in August, 1988. The Committee was appointed in response to the brouhaha over the shortening of the late-night hours in Wilson Library earlier in 1988; it was charged to evaluate the quantity, quality, distribution, and accessibility of study space. They had to make up a definition of study space, which the Committee used; it turned out that the campus has 197,000 square feet of student study space.

The Committee concluded that there is adequate quantity of space on the Twin Cities campus; the distribution and the quality need to be addressed and recommended the allocation of funds to increase and upgrade the amount of study space. A total of \$450,000 has been assembled, from a variety of sources (including students), which is now being spent.

The only new space will be the creation of 1200 square feet in the Wilson Library corridor; six

other rooms are being improved (anything from new furniture to a total rehabilitation of space). The improved rooms are in the Science Classroom Building, Lind Hall, Folwell Hall, Anderson Hall, and Nolte Center. Most will have furniture more conducive to study than simply tables and chairs (such as carrels). Asked about distribution, Ms. Fox said the report found an inadequate amount of space on the northern sector of the campus, which is being addressed by Folwell and Nolte (the "living room" in the latter is now poorly used and poorly furnished and will be upgraded for study).

With these improvements the University will have improved the situation considerably; the problem is that there is no standard for determining how much study space there ought to be. By comparison with the University of Illinois standards, which are fairly sophisticated (and include restricted areas, such as available only to graduate students), the Twin Cities has more than enough such space. She noted, however, that the Illinois standard includes space, for example, for commuter students to go between classes, and that the standards were altered slightly to account for the fact that Illinois is more residential than Minnesota.

Ms. Fox commented that her intuitive feeling, apart from standards or square feet, is that when one sees students sitting on the floor in Folwell there is a need for someplace for them to go. Apart from that, she is not persuaded there are other needs for study space.

One of the student members of the Committee observed that there is very likely a lot of study space available on campus of which she is simply unaware; Ms. Fox reported that the students on the study space committee said the same thing. There has been discussion about including that information in bulletins or class schedules and even putting a sign outside buildings--similar to the handicapped-accessible signs--indicating there is study space inside. Another suggestion was that a map of study space, similar to the parking map, be included in the Student-Staff directory. Ms. Fox added that in some cases a student would have to look hard to find study space in a building; in others it is very obvious.

One Committee member inquired if space might not be used for multiple purposes (such as classroom during the day and study space in the evening). Ms. Fox responded that there had been discussion of late afternoon, evening, and all-night study space; no formal decision was made. 24-hour study space is more expensive if it has to be monitored. Given the \$450,000, it was determined to be more important to upgrade as much space as possible rather than divert funds for monitoring all-night space.

There was consensus from the beginning, Ms. Fox told the Committee, that the libraries are not responsible for providing all of the study space on campus. They are responsible for providing quality study space for those using the facilities, and they understand that others will also study there because it provides the best ambience. The goal in remodeling other spaces has been to create library-quality space.

Professor Clark asked if they thought there was anything SCEP should consider recommending concerning study space; Ms. Fox suggested that either a new standard for common use space be established for the Minnesota Facilities Model or that a separate standard be established for study space in buildings where appropriate (not, for instance, in the new support services building); neither change would be made without action from the Committee. She pointed out that the Model is now being re-examined and the time is right if a change is to be made. Professor Clark agreed the Committee should consider it; any policy could address both new construction as well as major renovation.

Mr. Jaeger then explained to the Committee that his office is more involved in implementation; it works with building advisory committees typically composed of building users. When describing what a new building should contain, he said, they do bring up the question of study space; usually the advisory committees are very supportive of including it. They do run into a problem in trying to know how much to put in, so guidelines would be helpful; right now they try to make the best judgment they can. He reviewed for the Committee the planned amounts of study space in several planned new and remodeled buildings and noted that the amount seems to evolve with each separate project. They also do not have any standards on how it should be furnished; that, too, seems to evolve with each project.

Professor Clark promised that any statement developed by SCEP would be provided to them for review.

The Committee adjourned at 5:08.

-- Gary Engstrand

University of Minnesota