

Minutes*

**Senate Committee on Educational Policy
March 8, 1990**

Present: John Clark (chair), John Clausen, Jean Congdon, Roland Guyotte, Robert Jones, Karen Karni, Marvin Mattson, J. Kim Munholland, Gary Nelsestuen, Gary Parnes, Aron Pilhofer, Jennifer Wesson

Guests: David Grant (Pharmaceutics, College of Pharmacy), Laurie Hayes (Agriculture), Russell Hobbie (IT), Dale Lange (Education), Elaine May (CLA), Hal Miller (Continuing Education and Extension), and others

1. Open Discussion of Several Issues

Professor Clark opened the meeting with a number of announcements.

- The special meeting to act on the nominations for the Morse-Alumni awards has been moved from 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on April 4.
- A replacement for Tim Mazzoni for the remainder of the year will be named soon.

* * *

Tuition Study Group Recommendations Action on the recommendations of the Tuition Study Group by the Board of Regents has been postponed until the April meeting; both SCEP and the CLA Assembly asked that the process be slowed down. Given that postponement, what does SCEP wish to do?

One Committee member commented that many of his questions had been answered by the letter in the Daily from Dean P. T. Magee; another suggested that a piece in the following day's issue responded to the points made by Dean Magee. Professor Clark informed the Committee that David Berg, Director of Management Planning and Information Systems, would speak with the Committee if invited but is not volunteering to do so. Noting that the Consultative Committee would also be taking up the matter at its March 29 meeting, one Committee member inquired if its discussions would duplicate those of SCEP--or make SCEP discussions unnecessary.

Committee members discussed the need for additional data and information; several wondered if they were even available. Presentations and arguments about the recommendations thus far had included very little hard information.

Two of the Committee members reported that they had been doing considerable research both before and since the special meeting of the Committee on March 2, including a query to the student

* 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.

members of the Tuition Study Group about the data used to reach their conclusions. The answer appeared to be that very little data were used, although they allegedly existed. One Committee member observed that data, in an instance such as this one, will be similar to that which surround the quarter/semester question--they do not lead to self-evident conclusions and they will not be hard data. Whether or not the anecdotal information, and the assumptions used by the Study Group, however, it was pointed out, are accurate is open to question.

It was agreed also to ask Dean Magee to speak to issues raised when he joined the Committee at its meeting on March 29.

Proposed By-law Amendment Professor Clark explained that the chair of SCEP serves as ex-officio member of the Senate Committee on Finance and Planning (SCFP); most of the agenda items, however, do not pertain very directly to educational policy. In keeping with the centrality of SCEP to faculty governance and the issues on the agenda of the University, Professor Clark said, it makes more sense to have the chair of SCEP sit ex-officio on the Senate Consultative Committee rather than on SCFP--just as the chair of SCFP now does serve as an ex-officio member of SCC. Professor Ibele, he reported, concurred that the proposal made sense.

The proposed by-law amendment would effect this change; it would also remove the SCEP chair from ex-officio membership on SCFP (in part simply because the SCEP chair cannot reasonably be expected to attend, monthly, two SCFP meetings, two SCEP meetings, two FCC meetings, and one SCC meeting.

It was moved, seconded, and voted unanimously to approve the by-law amendment and forward it to the Senate Consultative Committee for action.

* * *

- Professor Clark reported that at the Regents' meeting day the President and Assistant Vice President Kvavik would be making a presentation on international education as part of the President's Initiative.
- Associate Dean Ken Zimmerman of the Graduate School will be meeting with the staff to SCEP next week to discuss the 5-XXX course proposal and also the matter of undergraduate program reviews. On the latter, it is the view of the Graduate School that undergraduate program reviews are built into to current reviews. Professor Clark observed they may be built in too informally and the practice may be spotty.
- Minutes of the meetings of February 22 and March 2 were approved as written. Professor Clark asked the Committee if it found the minutes too elaborate, adding that he was not suggesting they be done differently and that he liked them the way they are done for the purposes of the Committee record. They are, however, distributed widely, and because they are taken from a tape are often detailed--so Committee members might wish more summary minutes. The consensus of the Committee was that the minutes should continue to be written in the same fashion.

ROTC appointments Professor Clausen reported that the ROTC subcommittee had been delayed in acting on a faculty appointment because it had lacked members. One of the ROTC departments wanted to appoint an assistant professor recently, and they require considerable lead time to do so. He told the Committee that in the 1970s the ROTC committee had adopted a rule that no ROTC faculty be appointed who were not admissible to the Graduate School because some of those who had been appointed were not of high academic quality. The officer in ROTC did not know of the policy; Professor Clausen said that he had then inquired of Academic Affairs if it had the policy but they were unable to locate it. In the current instance the individual nominated has indicated he will take the GRE; he has a bachelor's degree. (The long-standing agreement has been that ROTC faculty come with a Master's degree or be admissible to the Graduate School.) Professor Clausen said that because the delay had been due to SCEP rather than ROTC, he told them they could go ahead with the appointment. He commented that "to put the military bureaucracy on top of [that of] the University is just too much for almost anyone to bear."

It was clarified that there would, in the future, be a procedure in place. The term of these appointments is four years, the Committee was informed, and reviews of the faculty take place within the department to which they are appointed. The military was initially reluctant to send these appointees to Graduate School but were ultimately persuaded to do so--which, Professor Clausen said, has raised the standards of the ROTC programs noticeably.

It was also noted that the SCEP subcommittee action is a recommendation to Academic Affairs, which must actually make the appointment. It is incumbent upon them, it was said, to ensure that the policy is adhered to.

* * *

- A response from Dean Magee to the 6-XXX/7-XXX course proposal was distributed to Committee members, as was a report from Sam Lewis about students receiving Ds in prerequisite courses. More information will be provided to the Committee; in the near future a discussion will be held in order to attempt to come to some closure on these issues.

2. Further Discussion of the Course Numbering Issue

Professor Clark welcomed to the meeting representatives of a number of the colleges to present views on a proposal to number courses at the 6-XXX and 7-XXX level.

Associate Dean Lange began by commenting on the proposal, which he said appears to include in its intent the separation of research from undergraduate education. This separation would cause problems for a major research institution, which says that undergraduate education is enriched by a research perspective.

Professor Grant said that he and his colleagues were concerned with the premises upon which the proposal rested, and particularly the call for separation of the 6-XXX courses from the 5-XXX courses. They rely heavily on the basic sciences in their graduate education; they also view the mixing of graduate with undergraduate students as a positive influence rather than negative. They also believe the proposal would put an undue burden on faculty members because they would be required to offer the same course at both the 5-XXX and 6-XXX level. The concern about resources, it was added, is a by-product of the

reservations; if it were desirable to separate the two levels of students then presumably the money could be found.

Another contended that the claim on resources which would arise, in a time of declining resources, would have an effect on the ability of a unit to offer its curriculum.

Associate Dean Hobbie reported that the proposal had been discussed and could provide an official IT response. He commented first, however, that he found the third "whereas" clause of the rough draft "one of the most offensive pieces of rhetoric that I have ever read at the University."¹ He argued that the implication is either that the graduate students water down the course for undergraduates or vice-versa--but probably with the implication that it is the undergraduates who cause the watering-down. That, he said, is "absolutely untrue." IT graduates go the best graduate schools in the country and are superior to most of the other graduate students whom they encounter.

Professor Clark injected at this point the observation that the clause to which Dr. Hobbie was referring was included because it was part of a presentation by graduate students to SCEP. If so, Dr. Hobbie responded, it may be that there are problems in some departments which need to be addressed.

One of the Committee members pointed out that the clause in question combines two separate statements. One, which several of those present have addressed, came from Dean Holt: a capstone experience for an undergraduate may deal with a range of issues in a field in a way that a beginning course for a graduate student would not; the graduate student might be introduced more to methodology. That is very different from the second statement, about watering down, which arose from complaints by graduate students.

Dr. Hobbie recalled his experiences serving on an Association of American Colleges panel to develop a document defining the value of a major. What he has learned from that experience, he related, may bear on this issue. Some disciplines, such as chemistry, physics, mathematics, economics, biology, uniformly have a very structured curriculum. As courses progress there is increasing sophistication which require the prerequisite work if a student is to survive. Those in such disciplines feel strongly there is a continuum of increasing sophistication; a student at a major research university may get farther along on that continuum than a student from a smaller college. It is thus very appropriate that some baccalaureate students from small colleges take courses as graduate students which seniors at the University might also take.

There are other disciplines where taking any collection of eight or nine courses will constitute a major. In those cases, it may well be that a graduate level course will require a certain maturity and sophistication--and a situation where one might not wish to have undergraduates included.

¹That clause read: "Whereas, the Committee [i.e., SCEP] is of the view that routine and unrestricted mixing of graduate and undergraduate students in the same courses does not constitute sound educational policy, primarily because the aims and practices of undergraduate and graduate education are, for the most part, significantly different, and because such mixing of graduates and undergraduates can lead to a watering down of course content to the meet the lowest common denominator."

Whatever this University does, Dr. Hobbie concluded, must accommodate this wide range of disciplines. The resolution as written is very specific in prohibiting any graduate program from requiring a 5-XXX level course and prohibiting any undergraduate program from requiring 6-XXX level courses. There are in mathematics three 3-quarter sequences required of seniors which are also required for a minor in mathematics at the graduate level. Similarly in Physics.

Another problem with the resolution is its impact on inter-disciplinary programs. Students may come in with strong backgrounds in one area but require work in another; in those situations, Dr. Hobbie said, it makes sense for those incoming graduate students to take advanced undergraduate work in the complementary area. This proposal would not accommodate those programs.

Professor Clark inquired if there were any permissive wording which would respond to these problems. One response was that there is nothing wrong with the present 5-XXX system of numbering; most universities, it was said, have a set of overlapping courses. One Committee member pointed out, however, that undergraduate and graduate students bring different expectations to 5-XXX courses.

One Committee member inquired if an argument for decentralization is not being made--that the disciplines know what is best. The draft proposal is an attempt to centralize and apply a uniform standard that may lead to more problems than it solves.

One of the undergraduate student members of the Committee expressed interest in being in the atmosphere of the more advanced courses; if one is considering advanced study they are worth taking. But the graduate students were acknowledged to have a point, that 5-XXX courses as they now exist are not uniform. It was also observed that there are 3-XXX and even 1-XXX courses which are "far more difficult, far more challenging, and far more theoretical or methodological" than many 5-XXX courses. A solution including permitting the undergraduates to experience the advanced courses but responding to the concern of the graduate students should be sought.

The faculty in each discipline should re-examine every course, one visitor commented. "Cars rust and things fall apart; you have to come back and take a look at them."

Dean Hayes reported that she had been involved in teaching courses within the past year at all four levels and agreed there is some ambiguity about them. As far as the College of Agriculture is concerned, it has no official view of the proposal. Some departments share the concern about the need for prerequisites and the watering-down which can occur. They would prefer to have requirements clear so they knew what the backgrounds of the students were who came into the classes. The resource question is a problem, however, as is the integration of undergraduate and graduate programs. She also pointed to the inter-disciplinary graduate programs; some in Agriculture require 5-XXX courses in other departments because it wants students to have a broader education. In others, which accept undergraduate majors from any field, it is inappropriate to immediately put a new graduate student into 8-XXX courses.

Dean Hayes was asked about the Project Sunrise curriculum in Agriculture, which is predicated on a non-discipline-based undergraduate education; how does this education fit with graduate education, which tends to be based on disciplines, and do they meet at the 5-XXX level? Dean Holt had drawn a line between graduate and undergraduate education and had suggested that they are being improperly mixed. Dean Hayes said it was hard to respond because the inter-disciplinary undergraduates are now

only in their second quarter; how that education would intersect with a department-based graduate program is hard to predict.

In Food Science and Nutrition, which has had the blend for a long time, it is often their experience that the undergraduates are the stronger students in 5-XXX level courses, depending on the course. It is not unusual for students from their own program to have a stronger background than graduate students from other institutions. This, Dean Hobbie pointed out, argues directly against the statement from the graduate students; in many disciplines it is simply not true that the presence of undergraduates leads to a watering down of the courses.

One visitor also commented that it was no longer expected that graduate and undergraduate students have different assignments in 5-XXX courses. When it was required, however, it was found that the two different grading curves either overlapped or one year the graduates did better than the undergraduates and the next year the reverse was true. Professor Clark inquired if anyone knew the status of that requirement; no one did.

Dean May reported that CLA concurred with the comments made previously and that it was opposed to the proposal. Professor Clark expressed surprise, recalling that CLA had been interested in separating graduates and undergraduates and had made presentations last Spring to SCEP supporting such a move. Dean May responded that most of their concern had been over the concurrent teaching of 3-XXX and 5-XXX level courses, although she admitted that the CLA Curriculum Committee was concerned about comparable standards across 5-XXX courses as they were proposed by departments.

Professor Clark inquired if there were any places in CLA where there would be a difference of opinion about the proposal. Dean May responded that this particular proposal had not been placed before the Assembly but there are differences about the concurrent 3-XXX/5-XXX courses. There was much debate but it came down to a local autonomy issue: Within departments there was a history and level of clarity about 5-XXX courses and those understandings should not be disturbed. She expressed doubt that there would be much support for a system which included 6-XXX and 7-XXX courses or any combinations of them.

Dean Hobbie said that while he did not favor this proposal, the Committee might consider introduction of 4-XXX courses. They could be taken either by graduates or undergraduates and they could be required in undergraduate programs but not in graduate programs. 5-XXX courses could be required in either and 6-XXX courses could not be required in undergraduate programs. While adding another layer, it would have the advantage, in those departments where it does not make sense to distinguish between the two groups of students--the hierarchical ones alluded to earlier--the 5-XXX courses could be retained. In departments where a distinction does make sense, courses could gradually be moved to either the 4-XXX or 6-XXX level, whichever was appropriate. This would also eliminate the need for double-numbering; the 5-XXX course would be retained in those instances.

Another visitor to the Committee observed that individuals who become graduate students essentially take on a different status, a commitment to pursue their field in large part on their own. The complaint about the mixing of undergraduates and graduates, and graduate students not getting what they expected, does not reflect that obligation to be pursuing their own work.

It was clarified that 8-XXX courses are very difficult for undergraduates to enroll in. Several expressed the view that the Graduate School should not make it as difficult as they do for undergraduates to enroll in these courses. This, it was pointed out, might even further aggravate the concerns of the graduate students. There was also the suggestion that the Council of Graduate Schools may have regulations concerning students in these courses; Professor Clark recalled that Dean Holt had made passing reference to these and that across the country the trend is toward separating the two levels of students.

One Committee member observed that some departments require 5-XXX courses of undergraduates while others do not; the University may be imperceptibly moving away from a 1-XXX/3-XXX undergraduate course structure to a 1-XXX/3-XXX/5-XXX system--which may be causing some of the strain. Dean Hobbie acknowledged that IT has moved in this direction.

Professor Clark turned next to Dean Miller, who began by saying that he did not disagree with much that had been said. He inquired of the Committee what proportion of the 5-XXX level courses it assumed would move to the 6-XXX level. The matter of resources would affect CEE as it would others. Even though one cannot obtain a Master's degree in most fields through CEE, a student can make progress toward it by enrolling in 5-XXX courses. If they have to duplicate courses at the 5-XXX and 6-XXX levels, with enrollment from the existing course divided among the two, there will be significant financial problems. CEE has about 800 courses at the 5-XXX level and the question of how many will go to the 6-XXX level is a very real one for them to contend with. Dean Miller clarified that no one can obtain a degree through CEE, and that graduate programs are obtained through the departments and approved by the Graduate School.

The graduate students, it was pointed out by one Committee member, are arguing that the numbering system as it exists is vague. Even though people within the departments may know the courses, incoming graduate students do not. Another aspect of this problem, from the graduate student perspective, is that they are told to enroll in 5-XXX courses to prepare them for the 8-XXX seminars--and then discover that the 5-XXX courses do not provide that preparation. How broadly valid that criticism might be is, of course, unknown. The comment was made that faculty members who gave that advice didn't know their programs very well. If, however, the faculty member teaching the course is teaching it with an undergraduate philosophy in mind, then the confusion arises partly from the definitions of the courses.

It was confirmed that the proposal for 7-XXX courses was for the post-graduate professional schools, such as Law and Medicine, and not the Department Masters' programs. One visitor commented that if graduate students are puzzled by 1/3/5/8-XXX course levels, the problem will only be exaggerated by adding 4, 6, and 7-XXX courses. Another suggested that the sorting of professional from graduate courses could cause as much confusion as separating graduates and undergraduates--and the move of programs in the College of Education to the post-baccalaureate level emphasizes the point. If College of Education courses were to be at the 7-XXX level, it would signal a separation between the background necessary to teach and the "preparation" for teaching.

Dean May observed that the principle problem with the proposal may rest in the third "whereas" clause, which she said viewed as "completely wrong" because of what it says about the differences between graduate and undergraduate education. She endorsed the statement from Dean Magee which had

been distributed to the Committee; she said it was a good statement of the collective view of the undergraduate deans.

Professor Clark thanked the visitors to the Committee for their time and comments.

One of the Committee members said that although he was against this new set of numbers, he knew, from recent service as a Director of Graduate Studies, that graduate students are always unhappy when undergraduates show up in their courses and said that any Committee resolution should not run roughshod over their concerns. They are often frustrated with class size more than with the presence of undergraduates; if they see the class size is large, they blame the undergraduates. But the attitude is held very strongly and it appears that the only one among the powers that be who supports their view is Dean Holt--he does reflect their sentiments. They feel they are being cheated--even if the undergraduates are doing better.

That attitude may, said one Committee member, reflect the faculty attitude, which is that the quality of graduate education is not as good if you include many 5-XXX courses in it. Seeing the undergraduates in 5-XXX courses is not in keeping with the faculty view that graduate education ought to be "on the cutting edge" and working one-on-one.

One of the undergraduate student members concurred with the opposition to the new numbers but also accepted the point of view of the graduate students. Is it because of the presence of undergraduates in the courses that there is a watering-down; "if we expunge the undergraduates from these courses" will there be an improvement? Is there a watering-down of courses? If so, how can SCEP deal with it? It does need to be dealt with. One of the graduate student members of the Committee pointed out that any watering-down should be blamed on the undergraduate; it has to come back to the faculty member. Some suggested it was simply their presence; another commented that it was a matter of the University clarifying what would be expected of students in the course and changing the numbers would not solve the problem.

It was agreed that the Committee wished to hear from additional graduate students from a variety of disciplines, even though a statement had been made by Ms. Trudy Dunham, President of the Council of Graduate Students. The proposal for changing course numbers will be kept on the table until the specific concerns of the graduate students can be heard.

Professor Clark agreed to try to gather a group of graduate students.

* * *

The Committee agreed also to hold two special meetings to discuss the Tuition Study Group recommendations and asked Professor Clark to invite individuals who might be able to present data which bear upon their likely impact.

The Committee adjourned at 5:00.

-- Gary Engstrand