

Minutes*

Senate Committee on Educational Policy
Wednesday, January 24, 1996
1:00 - 3:00
Dale Shephard Room, Campus Club

Present: Laura Koch (chair), Avram Bar-Cohen, Anita Cholewa, Paul Cleary, Elayne Donahue, Gayle Graham Yates, Megan Gunnar, Robert Johnson, Thomas Johnson, Jeffrey Larsen, Judith Martin, Glenn Merkel, Mark Schuller, W. Phillips Shively, William Van Essendelft

Regrets: none

Absent: Darwin Hendel, Ryan Nilsen, Helen Phin,

Guests: none

Others: none

[In these minutes: Proposal for a Twin Cities Curriculum Committee; semester conversion standards; grading policy]

1. Twin Cities Curriculum Committee

Professor Koch convened the meeting at 1:00 and distributed copies of a draft proposal to create a Twin Cities Campus Undergraduate Course/Curriculum committee. The committee would consist of 8 faculty appointed by the Assembly Committee on Educational Policy (the Twin Cities subset of SCEP), 6 deans, and 3 undergraduate students; it would be charged to "establish guidelines and procedures . . . to review all course proposals that have been approved by the appropriate college curriculum committee. The committee shall establish timelines for submission of course proposals, make suggestions for revisions that are related to the established guidelines; report back to the college curriculum committees those courses that are approved, need revision, and not approved, including the rationale for non-approval, and settle disputes between and among colleges involving a course or courses. The committee will review all courses proposed for the change to semesters, as well as all courses proposed after the change has taken place." The committee would also review courses for compliance with Senate and Assembly policies, deal with overlapping courses among colleges and departments, consider the overall Twin Cities curriculum, and consider the time it takes a student to complete a degree. Professor Koch noted that the other campuses of the University have such a committee, and the concept and some of the ideas for the proposal come from the Change to Semesters Committee being chaired by Provost Shively.

Several comments were made.

-- The committee would review ALL courses. It would be best to leave it to the committee to decide

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how to review them; it might look mostly at compliance with the 1:1 ratio between credits and contact hours and with the 3:1 ratio between weekly workload and credits, for example.

- It would have a lot of work in the next few years.
- The committee would make decisions, but enforcement would be up to the provosts. The provosts would almost always accept the recommendation of the committee, in the case of a dispute, because otherwise they would have to get into the course review business themselves.
- The Graduate School has six Policy and Review Councils to handle graduate courses; how can one committee handle all undergraduate courses? The committee could establish guidelines and procedures, and then ask the provosts to establish committees within each provostal area, especially during the semester transition period.
- This is a management committee; one is concerned about the amount of time taken from faculty for management. But it should be jointly appointed, because curriculum is a high priority item for the faculty. Moreover, all are concerned about faculty time, but there is also concern about increasing the number of administrators. One is loath to have decisions about curriculum made by non-faculty; these need faculty control, so the partnership approach is needed. Perhaps each provost could appoint one faculty member; the faculty, in any event, should have a key role.
- How would this committee be related to college committees? Are they empowered to deal with curricular matters within colleges, while this one deals with cross-college matters? Or does this one deal with all courses? It would be more a question of cross-college matters. In the case of duplication within colleges, the mechanisms of Responsibility Center Management will require that issue be addressed. The "responsibility centers" will likely be the colleges, so this committee could deal with cross-college duplication, something for which there is now no mechanism to address. It would also have the role of enforcing Senate and Assembly policies.
- Could it not be made up of representatives of college curriculum committees, so there is some coordination? That could mean all colleges would have one vote; there might be representatives from SCEP, who would not be from such committees; there is a danger of logrolling if college committee representatives serve AND ARE SEEN as college representatives.
- The courses to be reviewed would include all of those which enroll undergraduates. This might mean both the committee and the Graduate School would review the same course, but that is acceptable because their purposes in reviewing them would be quite different.

It was agreed without objection that the proposal should be refined and brought back to the Committee for further consideration. Professor Koch also said she would present the proposal to the administration for consideration.

2. Semesters

The Committee then took up the Semester Conversion Standards; Professor Koch reviewed a few minor changes proposed as a result of the last Senate discussion. She reported that all five standards were

supported by overwhelming margins in the straw votes that were taken.

The only change of significance was that in considering how a course meets the required 1:1 ratio between contact hours and credits for the course, it was agreed that the contact hours need not be spread out evenly over the semester. The rule is simply that the contact hours must equal the number of credits times the number of weeks of the term (14 if the 14-week semesters are approved); in theory, a 1-credit course could meet for 14 hours over two days and meet the contact hour requirement.

Professor Koch said the proposal has been revised so that in addition to voting on each standard, the Senate will be asked to vote, in each case, whether the standard should be campus-wide or system-wide.

She then reported on related items.

- The Law School, because of the nature of the exams it gives, requires more than 72 hours to grade finals; they currently are exempted from the rule (and they are already on semesters).
- Data from the Big Ten show that two hours is the prevailing pattern for the length of final exams. Illinois has three-hour exams; Penn State has one hour and fifty-minute exams; the rest have two hours. The exams will be two CLOCK hours, not two 55-minute "hours," it was agreed.
- Discussion about the May term versus the January term continues. IT opposes the May term; others oppose the January term, in part because of the impact on graduate student employment and on graduate and professional education. The Committee discussed graduate student employment issues but reached no conclusion about how it might be affected by a January term. Questions about the May term have also been asked, and whether it would be part of the summer sessions or the regular term; this must be considered. There are both financial as well as pedagogical questions.
- Should the 72 hours for turning in grades be extended? The Committee deliberated proposals to change it, and concluded that there should be no change, except that the understanding should be that it would be 72 WORKING HOURS (that is, three regular business days), except for Fall Semester, when grades would not be expected to be turned in over the holidays.
- Is it necessary to have final exams before the holidays? The general sense of the Committee was that students would revolt if faced with examinations after the holidays.
- The Committee discussed reverting to earlier language suggesting that EITHER three-credit or four-credit course modules are to be preferred; the proposal now strongly recommends three-credit courses. This essentially puts one college, IT, in the position of being wholly at variance with the standard, since its curriculum would be based on four-credit courses. The Committee concluded it would not change the language, noting that the standard clearly gives units the authority to offer courses of varying modules, depending on what they believe appropriate.
- The Change to Semesters Committee has suggested that the liberal education requirements should total 39 credits, rather than 40, simply so the number is divisible by three. The Committee

concurring.

- There are some degrees that are not expected to meet the liberal education requirements (although they may try to do so in spirit); one example is the applied degrees being offered jointly with the area community and technical colleges. Those programs would find it difficult to meet the requirement of 120 credits for a degree and also require 39 liberal education credits. It may be that the requirement in the standards should apply to bachelor of art and bachelor of science degrees.

The Change to Semesters Coordinating Group document from Provost Shively suggests, on the issue of which standards will apply to each campus and which will be system-wide, that the President and senior officers will make the decision. The Semester Conversion Standards document says the Senate and administration must agree. Can this be cleared up?

This has also been the subject of discussion at the Senate Consultative Committee, Professor Koch reported. It is the view of SCC that the Senate has the authority and responsibility to DECIDE; the President may then accept or reject the decision, but may not ignore it. He may ask the Senate to reconsider its decision. But these standards will definitely come to the Senate for a vote, and it will be up to SCEP to recommend whether they should be controlled by the campus or be system-wide. The point of all these deliberations, however, she affirmed, is that the Senate would act on the policy recommendations in order to establish University "law." But the administration must accept the Senate policies, she confirmed, and added that she has encountered no opposition from the administration on the standards that SCEP has formulated.

- The standards should be brought for a VOTE at the February meetings, because many units will not take action until they know what will be adopted. The Committee disagreed, saying that the consistent statement has been that the standards will be voted on in April, and it would be unfair to preclude further debate. What should be the focus of attention at the February Senate meeting is the points of contention: whether three or three-and-four credits will be preferred, whether a January or a May term, the financial implications of an interim.

The Finance and Planning Committee should be asked to look into the financial implications of the interim term.

- The interim term would NOT be considered part of the regular academic year; it is assumed that a full-time student could graduate in four years by enrolling only in Spring and Fall semesters.

3. Schedule of Meetings

It was agreed that the Committee would not schedule additional meetings, but that time limits should be placed on discussions and that additional discussions can be held via email in order to accomplish the tasks facing the Committee.

4. Other Semester Issues

Professor Koch noted that the Committee had to take up other semester issues, such as those for graduate students and those for students who are at the University during the transition. It was agreed that

the Committee should seek advice from all it deemed appropriate, and that it should set general guidelines that departments and colleges would be responsible for carrying out.

5. Morse-Alumni Committee

Professor Koch proposed members for the Morse-Alumni nominating committee. The Committee approved it unanimously.

Consideration should also be given, it was said, to a parallel award for graduate and professional instruction.

6. Grading Policy

Professor Koch then drew the attention of Committee members to the memorandum from CLA Associate Dean Peter Reed, who raised a number of questions, especially about the grading policy provisions with respect to the W and to repeating a course. It was noted that the policy only incorporated existing language with respect to the W, so it must be that the colleges are not complying with existing policy.

Professor Graham Yates agreed to discuss the issues with one of the individuals in CLA Student Support Services and report on the nature of the objections.

Questions were also raised again about including additional information on the transcript (such as class rank or about the grades awarded in the course). Professor Koch recalled that Mr. Lewis (the University Registrar) and Associate Vice President Kvavik were quite strong in their views that SCEP should not propose such a change to the transcript, given the cost (probably in excess of \$500,000). The Committee had also worried that such transcript entries might put Minnesota students at a disadvantage in apply to graduate and professional schools, and it had also concluded that changing the STUDENT transcript in order to deal with what is essentially a FACULTY problem was not appropriate. Since faculty do not routinely look at transcripts, it was also thought not likely to be a particularly effective way to combat "grade inflation."

The Committee agreed that President Hasselmo should be asked to bring up this issue at the CIC, in order that a more systematic approach to the problem might be considered.

Professor Koch then adjourned the meeting at 3:00.

-- Gary Engstrand