

Minutes*

**Senate Committee on Educational Policy
Fall Retreat
September 18, 1989**

Present: John Clark (chair), Laura Bobick, John Clausen, Jean Congdon, Carol Grishen, Karen Karni, Marvin Mattson, Timothy Mazzoni, Gary Nelsestuen, Julie Peterson, Jennifer Wesson

Guests: Acting Provost Shirley Clark, Trudy Dunham (Council of Graduate Students), Darwin Hendel (Academic Affairs), Dean Robert Holt, Warren Ibele (Senate Consultative Committee), Provost Leonard Kuhi, Assistant Vice President Robert Kvavik, Ronald Matross (Student Support Services), Dean Harold Miller, Professor Frank Sorauf

1. Comments from Professor Warren Ibele

Professor Clark convened the retreat at 8:45 and welcomed everyone to the meeting. He began by asking Professor Warren Ibele, chair of the Senate Consultative Committee, to make a few remarks.

Professor Ibele briefly recalled the tumultuous events of the past 18 months. There had been costs, he observed--in faculty departures, in faculty morale, in faculty willingness to participate in governance. But the governance system had provided Shirley Clark to serve as Acting Provost, who has done extremely well under trying circumstances. The signs now, he thought, are virtually all positive.

Professor Ibele informed the members of SCEP about what some of the major SCC efforts were likely to be during 1989-90; he noted in particular the importance of the Task Force on Liberal Education, whose activities he characterized as vital to the educational process. SCEP, he said, would be asked to help identify the best statesmen to serve on the Task Force. He mentioned that we would probably all be satisfied if we could be guaranteed that every graduate of the University had attained the skills set forth by David Riesman as minimally necessary for a liberal education: The graduate should be able to write a paper, give a talk, write and speak in one foreign language, have two life-long sports, and understand the Bill of Rights and the Constitution.

With the integration of the Arts, Sciences, and Engineering (ASE), Professor Ibele noted, there were possibilities for improving liberal education. While the engineering faculty had not wished to be included in ASE, their presence suggests that students can reasonably be expected to learn something about how science operates and how technology affects our lives--they can know the broad issues and while perhaps not know how to solve all the problems, they could bring intellectual training to help ameliorate them.

Professor Ibele concluded by pointing out that Commitment to Focus, while calling for attention to liberal education programs, also seeks to emphasize those activities which the University alone can do--

* 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.

and those include graduate and professional education and research.

2. Comments from Professor Frank Sorauf

Professor Clark explained to Committee members that he had invited Professor Sorauf to talk with them about the educational climate and atmosphere at the University and how it affected the educational experience.

Professor Sorauf started by explaining that his comments were limited to Twin Cities campus undergraduate education; he noted that he did not have experience with the coordinate campuses so that he could not speak about them. Professor Sorauf then told the Committee that he had some things to say which might be unpopular but in the interests of being honest and not wasting time he would lay out his views for them.

There are, he suggested, two traditions or governing myths which operate at the University, both of which are wrong at least in part. The first is the "student as victim" myth--the student brings no problems when he or she comes to the University and that all the problems are the fault of the administration or the faculty. The second myth is that all the problems can be solved by changing the curriculum or improving advising. These myths, he suggested, are themselves part of the problems.

Professor Sorauf cautioned that he did not deny the failings of some faculty in undergraduate education--but maintained that students are also part of the problem. For example, he said, there are few or no universities where students spend as little time on the campus as at Minnesota. That is part of the problem. He acknowledged that some students have no choice. He noted that he was not laying blame; it is a situation which simply exists. Some students, he continued, are not as well trained or motivated as those of earlier generations. Some are profoundly ignorant, he proposed, and many reject conventional academic values; they are "suckers for new age and occult beliefs." Large numbers of students are untrained and many do not share the intellectual values of the University.

Worse than what students do not know, he argued, is what they cannot do. Many cannot read and cannot write a paragraph. They lack fundamental skills and values. Under those circumstances, Professor Sorauf observed, undergraduate education is a hard sell. Maybe, he reflected, there is a need for missionary zeal in the delivery of that education. We will not, he insisted, get anywhere in improving undergraduate education if we do not look at the nature of the students as well as the nature of the University.

The second myth arises because the faculty and the administration have turned over far too much responsibility to the "student industry"--the array of student counselors, advisors, advocates, and administrators who are often non-academics. Those people are, Professor Sorauf said, often helpful in undergraduate education, but they bring a limited perspective. The ultimate responsibility for this phenomenon goes to the vice presidents, the deans, and the faculty. He recalled from his own days as Dean of CLA that in meetings with the vice presidents the deans were riveted to the meeting and fixed to pounce during conversations about the capital request--but that when undergraduate education was the subject, eyes glazed over and the discussion died sagged. To take another example, faculty in some research-oriented departments tend to delegate responsibility for undergraduate education to a few, teaching-oriented colleagues.

So, Professor Sorauf inquired, what is to be done? The first thing to do is to identify the problem; we have not applied our intelligence to University problems, he suggested. The problem is probably not in the curriculum; it isn't a question of economics versus political science or two rather than three engineering courses--that, he concluded, is merely moving deck chairs around on the Titanic. There must be a more fundamental analysis of the skills and values to be obtained. The final goal of the University, he asserted, is a young man or woman who can take over the process of education once they leave the University--a young man or woman who is intellectually independent. Moving around the curriculum or improving advising does not reach to the more fundamental matters requiring attention.

Professor Sorauf entreated the Committee to also listen to the best students. He described his reactions to honors students in Political Science: They are mature and perceptive about undergraduate education and the University should listen to them. They have amazing insight, he concluded.

A third area which the Committee could take up, he said, is the exploration of new modes of teaching and instruction for undergraduates. Professor Sorauf pointed to the report of the Committee on Undergraduate Education on the improvement of large classes; there were in that report, he commented, some imaginative proposals. We always say that things will be so expensive, because of the numbers involved, that we are stopped in our tracks; it is time to talk about sub-populations, Professor Sorauf suggested, when considering fundamental changes which might be adopted. For example, it is a sad commentary on how badly honors programs are doing; he opined that there should perhaps be a change from a meritocracy of accomplishment to a meritocracy of ambition: More should be done for the "B" students, many of whom go on to become community leaders. In any event, we should begin to talk about smaller groups.

Another way in which undergraduate education might be improved, Professor Sorauf reflected, would be to shift the incentives and rewards away from the individual and to the departments. The University should get away from the student industry and push the responsibility on the departments so that they take undergraduate education seriously. The departments should be reviewed and held accountable. He recalled having conducted some undergraduate reviews in conjunction with Graduate School reviews but said they didn't work very well. The undergraduate reviews are, in many ways, both bigger and harder than graduate reviews and need to be done on a different cycle and in a systematic way.

Further, Professor Sorauf suggested, the University must put money into undergraduate education. We should have put some of the funds that went into the endowed chairs into undergraduate education; \$1 million would have helped, for example, in remodeling woefully outdated classrooms--\$10,000 in 100 classrooms would change a lot more than one endowed chair. Undergraduate education must be made a budgeting priority, he concluded, or we would simply return to tinkering--devising new awards and changing classes around a little.

One Committee member applauded Professor Sorauf's remarks and suggested that some of the difficulties arise because the faculty do not do a sufficient amount of advising; the responsibility is delegated to student personnel workers and classes are taught by TAs. Professor Sorauf agreed, noting that much of what is called advising is actually program counseling. Major and graduation requirements can be dealt with by well-trained graduate students or even clerical staff; planning academic careers and thinking about life should be done by the faculty. The evidence, however, is mixed, Professor Sorauf

said, on whether students want that kind of advising. Other Committee members agreed that it was often difficult to get students to come in to see faculty.

At the request of a Committee member, Professor Sorauf expanded on his proposition that responsibility for undergraduate education should be placed on the departments. The entire reward system centers on discipline-based departments, he said; if there are to be changes, they must come through that system. It is in the departments where priorities and values are set. There should not be a multiplication of special offices at the dean's level nor should there be more individual awards (such as the Morse-Alumni). Those things might be laudable, but what they accomplish is only within narrow limits and will have no significant effect on undergraduate education. Professor Sorauf added that he was not implying that turning over the problem to the departments would make it go away; there would need to be accountability.

Assistant Vice President Kvavik mentioned that \$200,000 would be spent on the improvement of large introductory classes and that the money for these improvements would be funneled through departments on the basis of proposals submitted. After reviewing those which are funded, some would be given hard (permanent) money so they can be continued. He also informed the Committee that last quarter there were 21,000 "holds" issued, for several hundred different reasons; he deplored this fact and contended that the circumstances under which these holds are issued and removed are ones which contribute to the unattractiveness of the undergraduate environment at the University. That there had been 21,000 holds in one quarter provoked several Committee members to comment that something must be drastically wrong with the system.

It was alleged that there is only 35% class attendance at the University and that students in the United States; Professor Sorauf suggested that some of the 65% who do not attend may have other responsibilities and pointed out that even with the problems, levels of student satisfaction with the University remain high. He also opined that many students may not come to class because undergraduate classes are too easy and can be finessed--which, he observed, is a faculty problem.

Professor Clark thanked Professor Sorauf for taking the time to meet with the Committee to express his views and participate in the discussion.

3. Comments from Provosts Shirley Clark and Leonard Kuhi

Provosts Clark and Kuhi joined the meeting; Provost Kuhi explained that he was too new to the campus to make any grand policy statements. He did, however, express interest in undergraduate education and pointed out that the concept of a liberal education cannot be lost. He told the Committee that much of what he had heard was familiar from debates at Berkeley.

Provost Clark reviewed for the Committee the status of several issues of interest to it:

- The membership of the Task Force on Liberal Education is being developed, in consultation with the Consultative Committee; the Task Force will be appointed this fall. It is appropriate to have both a new Provost as well as the Vice Provost for the Arts, Sciences, and Engineering to work with the Task Force in thinking about undergraduate and liberal education.

- Improvement of study space has been occurring; Dr. Kvavik reported that \$450,000 had been spent to improve seven study areas (the work will be completed by January)-- although it was only a drop in the bucket, since there are 197 rooms designated for study space, some of which are in such bad condition that they are never used.
- The \$200,000 for the improvement of large classes; Dr. Kvavik told the Committee that Academic Affairs would be going to the deans and asking them to target problem areas and asking also them to have a few departments submit proposals. There will be brief Academic Affairs review; if there is a payoff in the results, the funds will be hardened. No decision has been made on how many projects will be supported, but the start-up will be kept simple. There will be an attempt to capture outcome information and distribute it around the campus.
- The development of a more robust award program for teaching; Academic Affairs is now pursuing with the Foundation the enhancement of the Morse-Alumni awards. It may be necessary to continue the awards as they have been for one more year, while the necessary income and endowment is being sought; if those funds cannot be obtained, Provost Clark added, thought will have to be given to the question of the importance of the awards and the possibility of reallocating hard dollars to them. Academic Affairs will not, however, support enhanced awards without hard dollars, although there is strong support for the increase in the funds associated with the awards.
- On grade changes, Academic Affairs will look to see what can be done administratively. If questions are raised because of a failure of enforcement of existing policy, SCEP need not act; if, on the other hand, there is a gap in policy governing grade changes, then SCEP will have to recommend action to the Senate.

One Committee member entreated Provost Kuhi to tackle the monumental job of improving undergraduate education, a subject to which the University, he said, has long only paid lip service. Provost Kuhi replied that ultimately it is a matter of priorities; one can find the time and the money.

4. Comments from Dean Holt

Professor Clark welcomed Graduate School Dean Robert Holt to the meeting and asked him to address the major issues in graduate education.

Dean Holt said there are two major topics at hand. The first is demographics: The undergraduate cohort, between now and 1997, will get smaller and smaller. The reaction to declining graduate enrollment is different than to shrinking undergraduate enrollment; one doesn't close institutions because of it. But the demand for graduate assistants will increase dramatically. Universities need graduate students as part of the research infrastructure; if they are to have decent continuing education and teaching, they must have graduate assistants. To get graduate assistants one must have good financial support. Dean Holt pointed out that many of the individuals who turned down offers from Minnesota were discovered to have received \$300 - 500 in travel money to visit the school which they ultimately chose. The implication, he said, is that to effectively compete for graduate students will mean spending

money that had not previously been spent.

The other major topic is that research foci are becoming multi-departmental in nature. Multi-disciplinary research is not the problem, he added; it is an administrative issue, having to administer it through the departments. Dean Holt eschewed the idea of changing departments around--but maintained that new program areas must be accommodated. (He gave as an example neuroscience, which draws on 14 departments from 5 colleges.) The intellectual environment for graduate students in these programs is not the same as in traditional disciplines; they come from diverse backgrounds and it becomes hard to build a community. There are, he said, a large number of these programs which are not departmentally-based. The problem with them is how to run them and how to finance them. One such program can be done informally among the deans; 50 programs cannot possibly be done that way.

Two additional issues bear mention, Dean Holt continued. One is the direction of undergraduate education: For example, neuroscience is an exciting graduate program, with over 50 faculty involved--but one cannot take an undergraduate course in the field. This led him to recommend that there must be changes in the Arts and Sciences so that they extend outside the traditional limits of CLA/IT/CBS.

The other point is that a university cannot have a strong undergraduate program without an excellent graduate program. In the best undergraduate programs the faculty are involved in research; that is the distinctive feature of undergraduate education at institutions such as Minnesota. Small private liberal arts colleges may have faculty who do more hand-holding, but they do not have the great research scholars. Budgets, however, are keeping those faculty out of the classrooms.

Dean Holt echoed the theme enunciated by Professor Sorauf: We cannot attract great faculty to an urban research university to do undergraduate education. There are a few who do a great job in undergraduate education, but eventually Minnesota loses them to Carleton or Wesleyan because they don't do the research necessary here. Minnesota needs great research faculty, and must then provide them incentives to get into the classroom. The incentives, however, should not be to good teachers; they should, Dean Holt emphasized, be through the departments--that would make a difference, he argued.

Dean Holt also expounded the view that the impact of the University on the state and region is directly related to its quality as a research institution; the impact of lesser-quality institutions is not as great.

Dean Holt took notice of the recommendation in the M-SPAN report calling for more practitioner-oriented master's degrees. The University, he pointed out, does not lack for such degrees; there are 60-70-80 programs. The problem is that the University is "so incredibly understaffed" and under-financed. For example, the University's Psychology Department has 900 undergraduate majors and 250 graduate students, which make it one of the largest departments in the country. Yet it has a faculty one-half the size of Illinois and one-third the size of Michigan. That phenomena is not just true of Psychology, he noted; it is repeated across the University. He warned that if SCEP and the Administration do not face up to that problem, they can forget about improving the Arts, Sciences, and Engineering. Most departments in the core are grossly understaffed and in many cases the size of the faculty would need to be doubled to reach an average size for a research university. Doing so, he added, would in many cases almost automatically pick up the practitioner-oriented degrees called for in the M-SPAN report.

The "student industry" identified by Professor Sorauf, Dean Holt observed, is mostly a cheap way to avoid hiring faculty.

Committee members exchanged views with Dean Holt on a number of issues; Professor Clark then thanked him for meeting with the Committee.

5. Comments from Dean Miller

Professor Clark welcomed Continuing Education and Extension Dean Harold Miller to the meeting.

Dean Miller began his remarks by saying that the biggest issue for CEE, with 120,000 clients, is counting them all--getting CEE into the records system. This is a problem which SCEP visited last year; he reviewed briefly for the Committee the history of the issue. CEE was left out of the original automation of the records system but told it would be integrated later; it never has been and attempts in the intervening period have never gotten off the ground. One element of the problem is size: CEE records would swamp an overloaded system that is already outdated.

In the last couple of years CEE has begun to develop its own system which, through networking, could be connected to the central system. Critical parts could be downloaded to it without swamping it and the objective of having a single transcript could be met. They would forget trying to put past records on the system, except as students came back and registered anew.

This proposal has been resisted some, Dean Miller informed the Committee, because it is hard to consider alternatives to a single mainframe system. The central administration, however, allowed CEE \$450,000 to begin planning (with \$450,000 of CEE money) a decentralized system; they have a team at work and will put together a system which can be integrated with day school records--to produce a single transcript so that advisors know everything a student has taken. Dean Miller thanked the Committee for its help in the past but warned that if CEE did not obtain the decentralized system, there would be no hope for integration in the foreseeable future.

Dean Miller turned the attention of the Committee once again to the M-SPAN report. Like Dean Holt, he pointed out that the degrees are there but the funds are not. M-SPAN recommended a new institution, encouraged private higher education to meet some needs, understated the availability of programs, especially from the University, overstated the need for additional undergraduate programs, and overlooked the need of the University for funds with which to provide access. One result would likely be to spread resources too thinly. The recommendations from M-SPAN were also frustrating because they overlook what is offered through CEE--which can offer programs more cheaply but well--rather than funneling money into a whole new institution.

[See also the letter attached to these minutes, which Dean Miller provided after the retreat, clarifying certain steps which have been taken in moving toward a unified transcript.]

Dean Miller then reviewed briefly for the Committee the activities at the Rochester Center and the efforts of CEE in assisting the recruiting of high school students, particularly those of high ability.

Dean Miller concluded his remarks by noting that with the disestablishment of the Committee on Outreach and Extension (which he did not recommend re-creating), there was no representation of outreach and extension either in the Senate or in the President's Cabinet or the Provost's Council. He advised the Committee not to rush into setting up any new structure but did say that he would be pleased to meet with SCEP from time to time to discuss CEE and broad issues of extension.

Professor Clark thanked Dean Miller for his remarks.

6. Comments from Trudi Dunham, Council of Graduate Students

Ms. Dunham distributed to the Committee a statement of the Council of Graduate Students about the principal issues of concern to graduate students (a copy of the statement is attached). Committee discussion revolved around the points made in the statement.

7. Comments from Darwin Hendel and Ronald Matross

Drs. Hendel and Matross brought to the Committee information about various projects underway which are collecting data about students, particularly undergraduates; they distributed copies of survey instruments and other materials. They also provided some preliminary data collected from the survey of graduating seniors about their perceptions of the University; the results seemed to affirm Professor Sorauf's view that students generally leave the University with a positive opinion about the place. (Although Dr. Matross pointed out that their colleagues from other institutions do not find the results for Minnesota to be very positive, compared with their own schools.)

The degree candidates survey results will be distributed to colleges and, where the numbers are large enough, to individual departments. Dr. Hendel told the Committee that they wished to produce results which would be of use to departments and colleges as well as SCEP; they had no interest in producing large quantities of data which would go on the shelf. He urged that SCEP bring questions to them, if it wished.

The Committee was also informed that the University would begin to participate in the UCLA/Alexander Astin annual survey of freshmen; the University would receive in return a report for the Twin Cities campus, for the colleges, and a data tape which would be available to those who wished to do further research.

8. General Discussion with Assistant Vice President Kvavik

Committee members covered a number of points with Dr. Kvavik:

- It is unlikely that the Provost will regularly attend the meetings of SCEP, in large part because he must also attend FCC, SCC, and the Finance and Planning Committee meetings. It appears that the Vice Provost for the Arts, Sciences, and Engineering will be the Academic Affairs representative to SCEP.
- The report of the Task Force on Liberal Education will inform the direction of many other activities.

- Provost Kuhi is not interested in reviving the question of converting to semesters; furthermore, President Hasselmo pretty much put the issue to rest last Spring.
- The state of honors programs will need to be sorted out when the new Vice Provost for ASE is appointed.

9. Agenda and Organization, 1989-90

SCEP members took up the list of issues which had been prepared by Professor Clark and added a number of their own: The effectiveness of EDP, the effectiveness of TA training and the policy framework in which it is taking place, use of the "D" grade in meeting prerequisites (which varies by college), policies to encourage departments to emphasize undergraduate education, initiation of a cycle of reviews of undergraduate programs, cross-disciplinary studies, and child care.

The Committee discussed what subcommittees it might wish to establish, and directed Professor Clark to prepare a proposal which would be distributed in advance of the next meeting. Committee members would be asked to express their interest in various issues as well as in subcommittees.

The September 28 meeting of the Committee was cancelled; the next meeting will be October 12.

The retreat adjourned at 3:15.

--Gary Engstrand

University of Minnesota