

Minutes\*

**Senate Committee on Educational Policy**  
**February 11, 1993**

Present: James Tracy (chair), Thomas Clayton, Susan Donaldson, Megan Gunnar, Michael Handberg, Darwin Hendel, Lois Regnier, Tim Swierczek, Susan Wick

Guest:Rich Broderick (Footnote), Richard Cushing (MSA), Vice President Anne Hopkins

[In these minutes: final review, implementation procedures for the Senate policy on evaluation of teaching contributions; future agenda items]

**1. Evaluation of Teaching Contributions**

Professor Tracy convened the meeting at 1:15; the Committee turned to the redrafted protocols for student evaluation and peer review of teaching. Most of the meeting was spent in deciding on the language to be used, but a number of substantive points were dealt with.

-- A continued concern was the possibility that anonymity of students would be jeopardized by the use of identifying information, especially demographic information, especially in small classes. The Committee deliberated for some while on this issue. Points of view ranged from making provision of this information optional--with a warning that students in small classes might endanger the anonymity of the response if they provide the demographic information--to simply making it optional and leaving it at that, on the grounds that these are university students and no one can MAKE anyone fill out ANY of the surveys. In terms of possible subgroup analysis, validity will be dependent on the number of students who fill out the forms and who identify themselves by race/gender/sex. (The real issue, as one Committee member observed, is race/ethnicity, because in many small classes there may not be more than one or two minority students.)

The Committee concluded, however, that these data should be requested, because the information obtained can be useful to instructors in demonstrating how different groups respond to his/her teaching--and possibly affect the teaching. The information should be sought because it can make a difference: problems with different race/gender/age groups can be identified and addressed.

The Committee also agreed that other personal information--class year, GPA, major, and whether the class was elective or required--should be requested and NOT identified as optional, because these factors have been shown in prior research to have an effect on student evaluations.

---

\*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.

Student members of the Committee all expressed satisfaction that the privacy interests of students would be served by these proposals.

- Nothing in these procedures would preclude faculty members from conducting other student evaluations, at different times during a quarter, for their own purposes.
- Information on the size and type of course will be provided by the department or by the Office of Measurement Services.
- It appears, on the basis of comments from an attorney in the General Counsel's office, that any summative data (that is, it does not identify any single individual) will be public information. It is possible that the norms developed from the data would be made public, and the University has already received a "freedom of information" request for the teaching evaluation data that currently exist. It was also pointed out that the new policy does not change anything in that respect; any summative data that currently exist are public information. One difference may be that calculation of summative data, called for by the Senate policy, is not presently done; requests for the information would be facilitated by the calculation of the norms. While this possibility should be made clear to the Senate, the Committee concluded that the University should not thereby be deterred from implementing the policy.
- It was agreed that collection of student evaluations, according to the proposed procedures, should begin in 1993-94, with the understanding that problems in data collection and evaluation would be ironed out. Development of peer evaluation systems in the departments should also occur during 1993-94. The full implementation of the policy should be expected for 1994-95.

Following agreement on the document, the Committee approved a suggestion from Professor Tracy that the draft procedures should be circulated to deans and department heads and that there should be 2 - 3 open meetings on campus to discuss them. Following receipt of comments and suggestions, the Committee will then prepare a final draft for submission to the Senate Consultative Committee for placement on the docket of the Senate at the April 1 meeting.

## **2. Future meetings**

It was agreed that the February 25 meeting would be devoted to a discussion of plus/minus grading, an initial conversation about the degree changes at the Crookston campus, and discussion of that portion of the recommendations from the Select Committee on Gays, Lesbians, and Bisexuals that relate to a program of study (this matter has been referred to SCEP by the Committee on Social Concerns). The March 11 meeting will be devoted to a meeting with the Chancellor of the Crookston campus and discussion of the teaching initiative proposed in the "planning for planning" document prepared by Academic Affairs.

With respect to the proposal for a program in gay/lesbian/bisexual studies, while SCEP will take up the proposal as requested, it was noted that the approval of a particular curriculum properly rests with

collegiate curriculum committees. One possibility suggested was to invite the Dean of CLA to join the discussion.

It was agreed that Lois Regnier would serve as the student representative from SCEP on the Morse-Alumni Awards committee.

The Committee adjourned at 3:00.

-- Gary Engstrand

University of Minnesota