

Minutes*

**Faculty Consultative Committee
Fall Retreat
September 16-17, 1998
University of Minnesota, Morris**

- Present: Sara Evans (chair), Kent Bales, Mary Dempsey, Stephen Gudeman, Roberta Humphreys, Michael Korth, Judith Martin, Fred Morrison, V. Rama Murthy
- Absent: Linda Brady, Gary Davis, David Hamilton, M. Janice Hogan, Leonard Kuhi, Marvin Marshak, Matthew Tirrell
- Guests: As noted
- Other: Martha Kvanbeck (University Senate)

[In these minutes: discussion with various groups at Morris that touched on the mission, delivery of education, faculty welfare, and financing; the intellectual future of the University]

1. Meeting with members of the Morris Campus Consultative Committee

Professor Evans welcomed several members of the Morris Campus Consultative Committee to meet with FCC and explained that FCC wished primarily to listen and learn about issues on the minds of colleagues at Morris. A number of points were raised in the ensuing exchanges.

- Morris has long emphasized undergraduate education, and is generally considered to do it very well. Now the Twin Cities campus is also emphasizing it. If the University seeks and obtains funds to improve undergraduate education (e.g., additional faculty lines, freshmen seminars), the Morris campus would like to receive some of that funding in order that it can do better what it already does well. Professor Martin reported that it was her understanding the biennial request being proposed would cover all campuses.
- Faculty vitality will be important for Morris, because faculty have agreed to support many educational programs, teach five 4-credit courses per year, and as a result are stretched quite thin. Leaves are a problem because departments cannot replace faculty, a problem that will be compounded with semesters. The Morris faculty were quite disappointed at the recent proposal for faculty leaves, because the only time they have for activities that contribute to faculty vitality are in the summers or on leaves.
- The mission of the Morris campus, the liberal arts education, is a great idea and a great value. It does not offer the student-faculty ratio of the private schools – it is, after all, public – but Morris was founded on an ideal. Then there comes pressure because Morris is said not to be efficient. It

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must be realized that Morris will NOT be cost-effective in comparison to some other units of the University.

- Morris faculty believe that communication on the campus and with the central administration is quite good. The only problems arise when central administrators are wearing two hats, serving as both campus and system officers; at times, the Twin Cities responsibilities seem to prevail.
- In terms of a new chancellor, the Morris faculty is excited and committed, and with the right leadership, could do more. There is also a large cohort of faculty who will be retiring, and a new group hired; leadership during this period will be needed.
- Recruitment of faculty is a major problem; retention is less so. There have been a lot of non-regular faculty who turn over because departments cannot obtain permanent lines, although a number of those positions are now being converted to regular faculty lines. Finding positions for spouses is extremely difficult. In terms of the recommendations from Professor Bales's committee on academic appointments, it was said, ALL non-regular (temporary, part-time, etc.) faculty appointments should be exemptions (rather than allowing a fixed percent across the University, which becomes either a license or an expectation).

Professor Evans thanked the members of the Morris Consultative Committee for joining FCC and invited its members to communicate with FCC whenever they wished.

2. The Intellectual Future of the University

Professor Evans now welcomed Executive Vice President Bruininks and Associate Vice President Kvavik to the meeting to discuss the intellectual future of the University. She explained that FCC had decided to structure its agenda for the year in such a way that it would have time to think about bigger things, but acknowledged at the same time that the Committee was uncertain about how to get its hands around "the intellectual future of the University." Quite a number of points were raised in the 90-minute discussion.

- The FCC white paper on the future of the research university should be revisited, as should the Sorauf report on intellectual emphases. The University's long-time planning criteria (centrality, demand, quality, and so on) should also be considered in intellectual future discussions.
- A central concern is that the dramatically-changing environment may drive the University in directions that the faculty do not wish to go, but which will afford the institution no choice. Those changes include sources of funding, means of delivery of education, the possibility of a declining number of research universities, changes in the nature of knowledge, and the essential need for interdisciplinary research. The contrast between the fluidity of knowledge and the rigidity of institutions cannot be ignored. How decisions will be made and the role that the faculty will play should be taken up. This is NOT a question of who will do what research.
- The University does not encourage or reward faculty to provide service to the community; such activities should be facilitated and seen as integral to what faculty do.

- Any discussion of the intellectual future must include the history, culture, and traditions of the institution. Research universities share attributes, but there are also distinct differences among them; some have statewide agricultural interests, some are land-grant, some are public, and academic programs (graduate/professional especially) vary.
- The Committee reviewed a set of handouts addressing the various ranking systems used in higher education (National Research Council, U.S. News and World Report, etc.). Minnesota has always been in the top tier, but there are many more institutions aiming for that rank, so there is more competition for essentially stable federal funds. Funding for areas of the University that were weak in the last NRC rankings will be important. The University, however, should not chase rankings. It should look at them, and understand them, but decide itself what makes sense for the University of Minnesota to do. It should not focus on the end product or ranking number but the activity of research and teaching, and how to encourage them.
- The University has tended to emphasize applied (professional) rather than basic knowledge, and it must invest in the basics, and the core, for the intellectual future, if the University is to remain strong.
- The demands on faculty must be considered (especially on assistant professors). They are being turned into bureaucrats, which is not healthy. They do not feel they can take chances; the University must reward intellectual efforts which fail if this is to be a healthy place for research and scholarship.
- With the increased specialization of knowledge, there are no longer core disciplines. Another element of a healthy institution is intellectual dynamism. The faculty feel a sense of loss over the fracturing of knowledge.
- The rhetoric the University uses emphasizes items and efforts attractive to the legislature; it tends to be silent, at least publicly, about research and the intellectual enterprise, and consequently seems to downplay it. That rhetoric reinforces a downward shift in expectations of what the University is about. Change in response to that shift must be accomplished through personnel: hiring new faculty and encouraging faculty activities. The improvement of faculty vitality, and of recruitment and retention, are big issues.

In addition, faculty are socialized into their disciplines, not into being a professor. The conversations about vitality should help to bring them out of their isolation. This is especially needed at a time when interdisciplinary research is so important; it must be made more easy for faculty with similar interests to work together.

- One thing the University does not do well is promote its faculty and their careers; it is too modest about them; there needs to be more mentoring of young scholars, rather than leaving them to sink or swim, and more celebration. The University also does not pay enough attention to mid-career faculty.

On this point, the University is structured so that it does not encourage faculty to publish, except as a threat, because it provides no support for doing so. One of the questions raised in the

compact process should be the amount of support available per faculty member, and there should be analyses to determine if colleges should reallocate funds for faculty support.

- There is little follow-through on graduate program reviews. Dr. Kvavik said the reviews need to be made more relevant to the University's strategy and must be incorporated into the compact planning process.

In closing comments, Professor Evans said the University must do more to emphasize how the quality of life in the state is improved because of the University. She then thanked Drs. Bruininks and Kvavik for coming to Morris for the discussion with the FCC.

3. Statement by the Association of Governing Boards

Professor Evans drew the attention of Committee members to the draft policy statement on internal institutional governance issued by the Association of Governing Boards (AGB, the professional association of boards of regents/trustees). The AGB asked for comments on the draft; Professor Evans distributed two alternative draft statements that the Committee might consider.

The Committee worked for an hour and then agreed on the outline of a draft, with further polishing and editing to be done by Professor Evans and Dr. Engstrand.

(The FCC statement was subsequently sent to the AGB, and also distributed to all faculty.)

4. Discussion with Morris Division Heads and Administrators

Professor Evans welcomed Vice Chancellors Gary McGrath (student affairs) and Cathleen Brannen (finance) to the meeting.

Vice Chancellor McGrath said the Morris campus was unique in American higher education, but would not be able to carry out its mission were it not part of the University. He reviewed the history of the campus and noted the passion of its founders – and pointed to the recurring pressures on Morris to change its mission. Morris is proud to be part of the University, and is helped by being a part of it.

Students at Morris are predominantly from rural areas, although 30% come from the Twin Cities metropolitan area. Morris has a strong commitment to diversity, and with students of color comprising 15% of the population, has done better than all other institutions in the state. Dr. McGrath said the campus was a great place to work with students, most of whom are full-time and come from modest socio-economic backgrounds. There are 85 student organizations for 1900 students.

Changes on the Twin Cities campus have cost the Morris campus students – with the admission of freshmen in the Carlson School and the College of Biological Sciences, some students who would have come to Morris did not do so. Morris is a young campus (a part of the University since 1960), so also does not have a lot of wealthy alumni, so needs the cooperation of the Foundation. Morris has asked only that it receive its fair share of scholarship funds, because it needs aid dollars to attract good students.

Vice Chancellor Brannen told the Committee that Morris was blessed with a clear mission, “who we are and what we are about” and that it must constantly struggle to reaffirm that mission and to

respond to pressures to broaden its mission. One source of such pressure is the region, which would probably prefer a regional college rather than an elite liberal arts college; another source is the University, which exerts such pressure under the guise of asking the campus to be more cost-effective. Morris IS cost-effective, given what its role is, she maintained.

There is long-standing pressure to increase enrollment to 2200 students, which has worrisome implications given the size of the faculty, the size of the physical plant, and the size of the surrounding community. At present half the students live on campus, and they believe they must be at that number to retain the atmosphere of a residential liberal arts college. They believe the goal should be 2000, and it should be a steady-state situation at that point. (The population of Morris is about 5600, which includes the campus; it would upset a delicate balance between town and gown were the campus to become more than half of the town population.)

A major challenge for Morris is faculty recruitment, primarily because of the location. There is also no solution in sight for the lack of appropriate spousal employment opportunities.

Interim Chancellor Sam Schuman joined the meeting, and in response to a query from Professor Humphreys, said that Morris employs perhaps 6-10 faculty couples, if one includes all varieties of appointments. There are about 4 couples where both members have regular faculty appointments (out of a total of about 120 faculty).

Vice Chancellor Brannen reported that Morris is working on articulation agreements with Twin Cities colleges, so that Morris students who receive the baccalaureate and meet certain GPA and course requirements will automatically be admitted to the Twin Cities programs (in, for example, IT, Nursing, and Management). This has helped reduce the number of Morris students who transfer early to the Twin Cities or elsewhere.

The Committee and Morris administrators discussed the Master of Liberal Studies program. The reaction has been generally positive; it is a University program at Morris and University outreach, not a U of M Morris program, but people like being able to continue their liberal education in the area, it is afield from Morris's mission but at the same time takes pressure OFF Morris to change its mission.

Dr. Schuman echoed comments of his colleagues in reiterating that the most important characteristic of Morris is its focussed nature. They have known for 40 years what they want to be, a public liberal arts college, and they have been single-minded in pursuing that objective. That has been the greatest strength of the campus, and he has no sense that it is weakening. That focussed mission permits Morris to recruit high-ability students and high-quality faculty.

In terms of faculty salaries, Morris is about in the middle of its 14-school comparison group (comprised of 1/2 public liberal arts colleges around the country and 1/2 private liberal arts colleges in Minnesota). It is "doing OK" on that score. Other discussion touched on the possibility of teaching exchanges with the Twin Cities (occasionally they occur now, but are mostly ad hoc, but it might be useful to regularize them).

Dr. Schuman agreed that the campus should not grow. Absorbing another 500 students would not kill the program, but it would also not lead increased cost-effectiveness. The physical plant is about at capacity; to add that many students would require building additional classrooms, a dormitory, and offices

– costs that could not be made up with additional tuition dollars. Where is the line, he inquired, where Morris is no longer a jewel? It isn't clear, but 500 more students would likely cross it. Ms. Brannen observed that if student numbers go very much over 2000, it would not be same kind of campus community, where faculty, students, and staff all know each other. His test, Dr. Schuman said, is whether or not the faculty have to introduce themselves. They do not at Morris, and simply adding 5 faculty would not mean one did not know 5; groups divide, and people would suddenly not know many of their colleagues. Professor Evans related hearing of the number of freshman classes of 50-70 students; there may be too many, and the University should do nothing to make that worse, rather than better.

One issue that arose in this discussion, and that was also raised by members of the Morris Consultative Committee, was tuition waivers for American Indian students. For historical reasons, such waivers are granted; the number of students who have taken advantage of them has recently increased significantly. When the University uses an IMG system, this means considerable loss of tuition income for the Morris campus. Members of FCC promised to raise this issue with the central administration.

The Committee was joined by the four division heads. They discussed the nature of the structure of the division and of the faculty (who are organized at the disciplinary level, but also as a whole and by division). All faculty within in a division can participate in the tenure decisions for the division. Students also participate, in different ways across the divisions. The result of the system as a whole is a VERY positive one for the campus.

Professor Evans thanked Dr. Schuman and his colleagues for joining the Committee, and recessed the meeting. At its resumption, the Committee considered the issues before each of the committees represented on FCC (Educational Policy, Finance and Planning, Faculty Affairs) and reached conclusions about the business at hand and about the business to come.

-- Gary Engstrand

University of Minnesota