

Minutes*

Senate Committee on Educational Policy
Thursday, April 22, 1993
1:15 - 3:00
Room 626 Campus Club

Present: James Tracy (chair), Victor Bloomfield, Thomas Clayton, James Cotter, Susan Donaldson, Megan Gunnar, Michael Handberg, Kenneth Heller, Darwin Hendel, Andy Kuehnel, Clark Starr, Susan Wick

Regrets: Robert Johnson

Absent: Lois Regnier, Andrea Mack, Tim Swierczek

Guests: Vice President Anne Hopkins

Others: None

[In these minutes: transfer curriculum; tuition policy]

1. Report of the Chair

Professor Tracy convened the meeting at 1:15 and reported briefly on a few items.

-- The Clerk of the Senate, Martha Kvanbeck, has written to him asking for SCEP's approval to hold a Senate meeting next year on May 19, which conflicts with the examination schedule at Crookston and Duluth. The problem is that to do it earlier makes it very difficult for committees to complete their business in time for the Senate docket deadline; to hold the meeting any later, of course, would mean that the two campuses had recessed for the summer.

The Committee voted without objection to approve the May 19, 1994, date for the University Senate meeting.

-- The foregoing item raised the question of calendars on each of the campuses; it was agreed that SCEP would consider calendars before the end of the year.

-- It was agreed that the recommendations for changes in procedures recommended by Professor Yates should be taken up by SCEP immediately in Fall Quarter.

*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 reflect the views of, nor are they binding on, the Senate or Assembly, the Administration, or the Board of Regents.

2. The Minnesota Transfer Curriculum

Professor Tracy then turned to Vice President Hopkins to explain to the Committee the development and status of the transfer curriculum. The curriculum was developed in response to legislative concerns about how the four higher education systems dealt with inter-system transfers, Dr. Hopkins explained. Improvements have been made in three areas: student services, the transfer curriculum, and articulation councils. The transfer curriculum is an attempt to ensure that general education requirements at the lower division level will readily transfer across systems; the corollary is that for students who have been certified as having completed undergraduate general education courses, individual courses on their transcript will not be examined.

At the University, Morris presents a problem because their general education requirements are high-credit; the transfer curriculum will not include all of them. On the Twin Cities campus, there will also be upper division general education requirements; this curriculum will only certify completion of the LOWER division requirements. The University representatives to the groups that developed the transfer curriculum were aware of the report of the Task Force on Liberal Education and the implementation of its report by the Council on Liberal Education, so tried hard--and with considerable success--to get many of those requirements incorporated into the transfer curriculum.

As far as anyone knows, no other public systems in the country are doing this, Dr. Hopkins said, so this is a different way of proceeding. The administration wants to be certain that everyone at the University is aware of the transfer curriculum; SCEP is one of the only bodies that can provide a system-wide perspective. Dr. Hopkins solicited the comments of the Committee, noting that this is essentially the last chance for major changes in the curriculum before it moves toward adoption by the four systems.

Committee members made a number of observations about the document.

- The goals for student competencies sound wonderful; they aren't accomplished now, so how is it expected they will be accomplished in the future? Dr. Hopkins said there is no common agreement on the point; each system will certify, in the best way it can, that the competencies have been met. Some of the systems use measurement and testing more than the University, and the Council on Liberal Education is not proposing outcome measures. One of the competencies--the speech requirement--is a problem.

This whole process requires something of a leap of faith; one must assume one's colleagues in the other systems will try to deliver lower division education at an appropriate level of competence. There will need to be periodic checks. Dr. Hopkins said there were is an intersystem faculty committee to monitor and identify problems as the new process takes effect. If, for example, GPAs of transfer students from particular institutions are low or decline, the University will know something is wrong. If one institution seems not to be meeting performance expectations, moreover, it could be taken out of the transfer curriculum agreement.

- The state should be very excited about the transfer curriculum and the work of the Council on Liberal Education, one Committee member observed. The message is not getting out, however, that the University and the state are doing pioneering work. The business

community is excited about the work of the CLE, for example, and Forbes and Fortune should be told about it. Dr. Hopkins agreed to explore the possibility.

- Has there been discussion if this would affect where freshmen enroll? Dr. Hopkins recalled again that many believed the University was discouraging freshman enrollment as part of Commitment to Focus, which was not the case. There may be a marginal impact on how long students stay at one institution, but overall the impact is not expected to be large.
- The language of the document is devoid of substance, noted one individual; it speaks entirely to process and skills. Other Committee members concurred. While it is difficult to specify the irreducible content of a discipline for a general education course, there should be something said about content. It is there by implication, observed one Committee member: to know how scientific theories are developed, presumably one knows some of the theories. Another Committee member said he was comfortable with the process emphasis, saying that it is more important that science students know HOW science is done; reducing a science to three principles or major facts would trivialize it. Another Committee member rejoined, however, that he could imagine a history course on how to do history that would be entirely without historical content; it would be better if these principles called for students to take a course in the field, rather than seem to prefer "contentless" courses. The "overall emphasis is on the gaseous, and it needs ballast," concluded one Committee member--content must be included, perhaps making reference to fundamental bodies of knowledge. Dr. Hopkins agreed to develop appropriate language in consultation with members of the Committee.
- If a student transfers before completing the entire general education at his or her first institution, the process of review reverts to the course-by-course evaluation, as is the present practice. There is discussion about a half-package, intended for technical college students who take their general education requirements at community colleges. The transfer credits would be from the community college, NOT the technical colleges (the University does not accept transfer credits from technical colleges). This is a complicated question that needs to be resolved soon.
- The course-by-course review will remain important, because students will likely continue to transfer in significant numbers prior to completing the requirements.
- The articulation councils have been established by disciplinary areas, to consider work in the various subject fields; they will be permanent. University faculty members have played significant roles in the discussions.
- At present the University does not distinguish between lower and upper division liberal education requirements; transfer students who arrive on the Twin Cities campus believing they have completed the requirements could be surprised. Dr. Hopkins agreed that this needs to be addressed; Professor Skaggs, chair of the Council on Liberal Education, believes it can be. It may be necessary to specify what liberal education requirements will be upper division; it may be that once the Twin Cities has determined what ITS transfer curriculum will be, the answer will sort itself out more clearly.

- Asked how students will ever know all this, Dr. Hopkins responded that each institution will label the courses that meet the transfer curriculum requirement. At the smaller institutions, the number of such courses will be small; at the University, the number will be larger. Because of the close correspondence between the requirements of the Council on Liberal Education and the transfer curriculum, courses the Council identifies as the appropriate courses on the Twin Cities campus will likely make up the University's transfer package.
- The transfer curriculum will not affect the CLA second language requirement, which is a graduation requirement, not a general education requirement. Allowing this one exception--language could be seen as a general education rather than graduation requirement--could lead to others being sought, but Dr. Hopkins said she would dissent from any additions that are not discipline-related.
- In the instance of departments that want their majors to take specific courses to meet general education requirements, there should not be a lot of other prerequisites that are not general education--or students will be here seven years. This is more a problem for IT and CBS than for other units.
- Students who obtain Associate of Arts degrees from community colleges should have completed the lower division transfer curriculum. The University will not recognize all credits in the AA degree, however, because they can include credits from technical colleges.
- The breadth and nature of the human diversity requirement was not clear.

It is expected that the transfer curriculum will be effective in the Fall of 1994; campus reviews and final adjustments are to be completed in the fall of 1993. The impact of the transfer curriculum varies with the systems and institutions; the community colleges are taking it very seriously because it will have a significant effect on their course offerings.

In terms of data collection on transfer students, HECB is supposed to collect it. At present the University has very good data; the State University System will have good data when their new system is installed. The technical and community colleges could be a problem, however, and all of the systems have disappointed with the help received from HECB to date.

3. Tuition Policy

Discussion then returned to tuition policy. Dr. Hopkins reported that the Board of Regents discussion had not focused on the same issues as had SCEP, which had attended primarily to who pays, rather than larger issues. The Regents discussion was focused on the larger issues; in May and June there will be review and action on tuition principles, and in June and July on a tuition plan (as part of the budget plan) There will be no change in the policy that tuition on each campus will be independently determined.

Dr. Hopkins also noted that the Faculty Consultative Committee is very interested in this subject, and she will be discussing it with them next week.

Professor Tracy alluded to the voluminous minutes of SCEP discussions of three years ago, when the proposal was made to move toward uniform undergraduate tuition; the upshot of the discussion was that the University would adopt it. Now it is proposed to change direction. There are, Dr. Hopkins explained, good reasons to differentiate between lower and upper division--and there are various ways to do so. There can also be differentiation at the upper division level (one possibility suggested is three different rates). Nothing, however, is fixed. At present there is also a considerable gap between upper and lower division rates; one must consider the implications if that gap were less. None of this, she pointed out, is a science.

The earlier SCEP minutes, commented one Committee member, suggest that the arguments for a single upper division rate were stronger than those in favor of getting rid of the distinction between upper and lower division rates. The earlier committee also appeared to favor retaining a difference between lower and upper division tuition. One of the defenses of the uniform undergraduate tuition was that it would encourage students to attend community colleges; if it is not the wish of the University to encourage students to community colleges, then one of the arguments for uniform tuition is no longer valid. Dr. Hopkins agreed. The size of the gap between upper and lower division needs to be dealt with; it should be sufficient, but not so large that people are discouraged from completing their degrees or that they go elsewhere to do so.

There appeared to be no sentiment among Committee members to erase the distinction between lower and upper division tuition rates. (Morris is moving toward, and will have, a uniform rate for all students. This policy that seems fully justified inasmuch as students there take general education courses across all four years.) Of the tuition advisory groups on each campus, Dr. Hopkins reported, none favor eliminating the gap between lower and upper division rates.

Dr. Hopkins was asked if anyone had said anything on behalf of simplicity. What is the financial benefit, to the University or students, from making upper division rates higher? Simplicity must be measured from where one is, Dr. Hopkins replied; the system has not been simple. Pricing is not inconsequential; good students who should be at the University should NOT be priced into the community colleges.

Introduction of different rates, it was said, basically introduces the concept of a user fee, which is destructive. Some tuition is cost-driven, in different sectors of the University. In most areas there will be no change, in that respect. In some cases, moreover, the University may WANT price to be part of the calculation, although not too much so.

There has been some preliminary discussion about moving all of the (Bachelor of Arts) science degrees to IT and CBS. There is a collection of faculty, known as the Arts and Sciences, that used to set requirements for the BA in science degrees; that group has been succeeded by the Council on Liberal Education. If the degree programs are transferred, and there are residency requirements established, the problem of CBS students staying in CLA in order to pay lower tuition should be resolved. Committee members were not so certain, noting that students can change majors, or need not declare them.

There was discussion about how requirements for a BA in the sciences would be set. There would be little motivation for IT and CBS faculty to sit on a curriculum committee to set the requirements if none of their students were in CLA. Dr. Hopkins responded that although CBS, for example, might offer the BA in biology, it could not alone decide what the curriculum or degree requirements would be; the full range of faculty from the colleges would be required. It would also not be a good idea, another Committee member pointed out, if IT or CBS could set the science BA requirement such that it no longer required a second language. There must be a body, Dr. Hopkins concluded, that keeps the science BA an honest liberal arts degree.

An important question is how much and in what ways tuition pricing affects student behavior. There is evidence, said a Committee member, that price does not affect students in their choice of major but it does affect how long they take to obtain their degrees. Tuition affects behavior in an educational policy sense, and this Committee should discuss that issue directly, not just on occasion. It may be true that the University's tuition is not higher than rates elsewhere, but it is clear that it is affecting students at THIS university.

If lower division tuition were decreased, Dr. Hopkins said, students might need to work less, and the University would lose fewer students during those years. Once a student reaches the junior year, the probability of graduation increases substantially. If price affects behavior, that is a strategy the University might consider.

Banding also needs to be considered, Dr. Hopkins said. The evidence says that it has not affected student behavior on the Twin Cities campus, although one would think that it should have. A Committee member argued that eliminating banding would increase tuition for those taking more credits (15 - 18)--while at the same time the University wants to encourage students to go faster. The Morris campus has recommended that banding start at 15 credits, not 14. On a related issue, Dr. Hopkins reported, that with the change in the definition of full time from 12 to 15 credits in the state grant program, there has been a significant increase in the number of hours taken per quarter.

One Committee member rejected the idea that students who work take fewer credits; Dr. Hopkins declined to do so. Her concern, she said, is that people are not making a wise economic calculation about the best way to go through school. Students choose to take six years, and work, rather than go through in four years and borrow the money. And students appear not to receive sufficient help in making these calculations. Another Committee member argued that other issues affect how much a student works, such as credit burdens and the purchase of cars and stereos. Tuition policy relates to the cost of education, said another Committee member; this discussion is about ability to pay. Dr. Hopkins pointed out that students should make informed decisions.

If tuition affects who comes to the University, it was said, that broad policy question should be examined. Dr. Hopkins concurred, and said that OVERALL tuition should be evaluated, not whether CLA should be higher or lower than IT. The central question is about the proportion of total educational expenses that should be paid by tuition. While the legislature decides that question, the Regents feel that there should be a clear statement of what THEY expect that policy to be--and that statement should be the basis of any legislative strategy.

This should not be talked about strictly in economic terms, argued one Committee member; there

are educational implications from tuition policy that are not addressed by the legislature. One implication, noted earlier, is that long hours of work hurt educational progress a great deal. Dr. Hopkins said that to a certain extent the University has misled students by not making the price of their education clear and providing sufficient counseling on the relative costs of alternative financing and attendance strategies.

Students should not have to pay any tuition, asserted one Committee member. But that proposition is hard to get interested in, he continued--the University needs the money and students must pay some part of the cost of their education. After that proposition is accepted, there is no way to end to the debate. Dr. Hopkins replied that there is a series of trade-offs between economics and education. In recent history, with the complexity and diversity of tuition rates in effect, major simplification should improve the situation. The variations that are possible must be considered, as best as one can, and a decision made. If the University were NOW at a uniform undergraduate tuition, she added, she would NOT be advocating that it be changed.

Asked why the uniform rate should not be implemented, one Committee member pointed out once again the disproportional impact on units such as CLA when tuition increases generally have been so high. That is, equalization means raising CLA tuition, and recent increases in the overall tuition levels have meant raising the cost even more for CLA students. Another Committee member countered that fixing tuition at differential rates gives students in low-tuition colleges an advantage like that enjoyed by people who live in rent-controlled apartments.

One way to view this is that students are paying for a university-level education. Another is to view them as enrolling in courses. If the latter, CLA is subsidizing other students. If one rejects that view, and says that everyone is buying a university education, then there is no reason to pay different rates. In the abstract, Dr. Hopkins agreed, one wants uniform tuition. But the University is not starting at ground zero. Some reasonable degree of cost-related tuition pricing differential seems appropriate.

Another Committee member agreed that there is only one "natural" tuition rate: -0-. If the policy is given up (as the state legislature did a long time ago), the University should oppose that step and resort to the constitution. Tuition violates the principle of getting an education. The University must say it is opposed to tuition rates as they are and that it does what it must to survive.

At Morris, it was reported, there will be a single rate plus banding. The administration has directed Morris to charge what the market will bear.

In Australia, it was mentioned, tuition is free--but only 5% of graduates can attend higher education. There is also no tuition in Europe, added another, but one cannot pick out pieces of one social system and try to transfer it to the United States. In Europe universities are run by the ministry of education, a plan that would not likely be popular here. And it is UTTERLY UNREAL to talk about zero tuition. While some state systems had no or minimal tuition in the past, those days are gone as the pressures on state funds have increased. To argue from principles that applied 30 years ago, or that apply in other countries, is utopian. It is not unreasonable that students should pay part of the cost of their education--and the principle that was set out a few years ago is that they should pay one-third. The problem is that the tuition fraction is now at 40% and rising. This is not the same as charging what the market will bear--it is a fairness principle, that students should bear some of the cost.

There has been no talk about zero tuition, Dr. Hopkins pointed out; when the state wants to increase access to disadvantaged students, it provides additional financial aid, not aid to the institutions.

What is to be the role of SCEP in these discussions, one Committee member inquired. The schedule may require a special meeting, and since the Faculty Consultative Committee also wishes to take the subject up, a joint meeting may be appropriate. Inasmuch as SCEP took this issue very seriously three years ago, discussed it over several meetings, and adopted a resolution, it should do so again now. Dr. Hopkins cautioned that tuition policy is set by the Board of Regents; was rejoined that if the Committee felt, however, that uniform undergraduate tuition should remain the goal, it should say so, and presumably that would have some influence on the administration and the Board of Regents.

Professor Tracy said he would speak with Professor Bognanno and try to arrange another appropriate time for SCEP to take up the issue.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:00.

-- Gary Engstrand

University of Minnesota