Minutes*

Senate Committee on Educational Policy
Thursday, May 5, 1994
3:15 - 5:00
Room 608 Campus Club

Present: Kenneth Heller (chair), Craig Bursch, Anita Cholewa, Thomas Clayton, James Cotter, Darwin Hendel, Robert Johnson, Manuel Kaplan, Michael Pawlicki, William Van Essendelft, Darren Walhof, Gayle Graham Yates

Regrets: Sue Donaldson, Megan Gunnar, Carla Phillips

Absent: none

Guests: Jane Whiteside (Academic Affairs)

Others: none

[In these minutes: Class scheduling and class cancellation; benchmarks and critical measures; task force on user friendliness]

1. Possible Committee Issues

Professor Heller convened the meeting at 3:15 and began by inquiring if the Committee wished to pursue further the question of class scheduling. Mr. Van Essendelft, who with Professor Gunnar had met with Vice President Hopkins about the issue (at the direction of the Committee at its previous meeting), reported that Dr. Hopkins believes this is a difficult issue and would like the Committee to take it up. Although the complexity of the institution presents problems, it would be user-unfriendly to students to not manage the problems. She believes, he said, that it will take a year to deal with, and would be willing to provide a list of people with whom the Committee might speak about it in order to collect different points of view. There appears to be no policy on class scheduling.

The Committee will need to gather more information, it was said, before it can decide whether or not it should pursue policy. It may learn that there are good reasons for current practices, some of which may be in conflict with each other, and conclude that there is nothing SCEP can do without HURTING the educational process.

Professor Heller said the Committee could take the matter up next year.

The other issue that has been raised is that there appears to be no policy on canceling classes. There may be perfectly good reasons for a faculty member to have to cancel a class, but there is no policy on whether or not make-ups are required. The issue was raised when a student questioned the

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cancellation of three classes in a ten-week 3-credit course, or 10% of the classes, and did not schedule make-ups or provide substitute instructors. There appears not to be any Senate policy on this issue. (The policy in CEE, it was reported, is that a class must either be made up or a substitute must be found.)

The number of Senate policies should minimal, but this seems to be a fundamental issue. One possibility might be to direct the colleges or departments to develop policies, which would permit them the needed flexibility. The assumption is that this is now left up to the faculty member, noted one Committee member, but perhaps there ought to be an institutional expectation. It would probably be wise for the Senate to speak on the issue.

This, too, can be taken up next year, Professor Heller concluded.

2. Benchmarks and Critical Measures

Professor Heller then turned to Dr. Hendel to lead the discussion of benchmarks and critical measures.

Dr. Hendel explained that he and Dr. Whiteside are part of a 3-person team (that also includes Acting Associate Vice President George Copa) charged to devise a list of institutional critical measures to be used in U2000 planning. He recalled the meeting with the Committee a few weeks earlier at which the principles to guide the development of critical measures were discussed, which were also intended to be helpful to units as they developed their own measures. The Board of Regents will take up the proposal for institutional measures for information in June and for action in July--although it is not clear that that schedule will be adhered to, because the more the measures are explored, the more complicated they become.

In addition to working on defining the critical measures, the group is spending time first on internal consultation and, later in May, external consultation with a number of the same groups that were involved in discussions of U2000.

Dr. Hendel then drew the attention of Committee members to the handouts. [A modified version of the list of the proposed critical measures is appended to these minutes.] He explained why it is important to measure: guiding institutional self-improvement, linking planning, evaluation, and resource allocation, a public confirmation of the University's success in reaching its goals and objectives, and to have a way to compare the University to a selected group of institutions.

They have tried, in developing the critical measures, to link them to the five strategic directions of U2000. Even though a measure may be identified as linked to one objective, they recognize that a measure will have implications for other objectives as well. In terms of the 21 measures themselves, some are more specifically defined than others--some are more conceptual than actual measures.

At this point the help of the Committee is sought to determine if the best set of critical measures has been identified and how a particular measure might be developed more specifically. The list of 21 measures is a reflection of earlier discussions, including with this Committee. In addition, he emphasized again that these are INSTITUTIONAL critical measures which were assembled after reviewing the collegiate planning documents, and other reports (such as the Research Strategic Planning Committee report). An original list of over 200 possible measures were winnowed down to this proposed set of 21 to use as the basis for further discussion. Dr. Whiteside also noted that they will be trying to sort out which of the measures are meaningful ONLY at the institutional level and which will be meaningful at both the institutional and collegiate or support unit level; another part of the process will be the development of collegiate measures. She invited Committee members to comment on how useful the measures would be at the institutional or collegiate level.

Dr. Hendel then asked the Committee to review with him the 21 critical measures. The first one, characteristics of entering students, is primarily an "input" measure: who are the students being served by the University? One can consider their readiness to benefit from a university education as well as diversity issues. Why would this not also be a part of outreach and access, asked one Committee member? There could be, Dr. Hendel agreed, although that may depend on the University College discussions; the notion has to do with students who enter and progress through a program, with a beginning, middle, and end, unlike outreach.

How is "readiness" being determined, asked another Committee member? Will students take tests? There are two ways it is being thought about, Dr. Hendel replied; U2000 has a clear statement of readiness in terms of high school rank, and the completion of preparation requirements. A third possibility would be use of a standardized assessment instrument. He added that the use of such an instrument, especially at the end, is fraught with so many difficulties that they have declined to suggest it.

One of the elements of readiness in entering students could be "intent," said one Committee member; some come intending to be full time, some full time, etc.; can information be obtained? That information is important for the institution to know, Dr. Hendel said, but it may not be the focus of a critical measure, which are oriented more to outcomes. He agreed that student intentions, however, will have an effect on outcomes. Another Committee member pointed out that there are several groups of students who "enter" the University but who do not intend to obtain a degree (e.g., adult specials, part-time students, international students here for one year). There should be way to judge their intentions as well as to measure what they do with what they receive while here. Dr. Hendel concurred.

In terms of the student experience, the focus is on undergraduates as well as graduate and professional students, and this is also linked to user friendliness. One measure might be a student satisfaction survey from a random sample of students to learn their experiences in a number of arenas (classroom, advising, etc.). Another measure, perhaps more objective, is the percent of faculty teaching undergraduate courses (or some other similar measure).

The third measure is an attempt to identify what is distinctive about the University's undergraduate program (such as the percentage of students who participate in research, internships, international activities), including the opportunity for students to be taught by faculty who are doing leading research in their disciplines. The attempt is to distinguish the University from other public institutions. This entire effort, Dr. Hendel told the Committee, is similar to ones being undertaken by other institutions; he said he believed it important that the University have some measures parallel to those being used elsewhere but also some unique to the University.

Graduation rate is another measure, considered in light of the number of full-time and part-time students as well as a function of the characteristics of students who enter the institution. This would include both diversity characteristics and whether they start as freshmen or as transfer students. About 50% of the University's baccalaureate graduates have transferred from another institution, so transfer students must be considered.

The fifth measure is credits to degree--and could be the number of credits required by programs or the number of credits students actually complete in order to graduate. The meaning of such a measure, however, is not clear. If a typical baccalaureate degree requires 180 credits, one could say that students taking more than 180 credits is a signal of institutional inefficiency. At the same time, a student who completes more than the minimum number of credits may have had a better educational experience.

Dr. Hendel said, in response to a question, that comparing required credits to actual credits taken could be a measure of efficiency for undergraduates. Why not then for graduate and professional students as well? Because there is more variation across programs, Dr. Hendel replied; aggregating it into an institutional measure would be difficult. Even if credits taken surpass the number required, that doesn't tell one very much, said another Committee member, unless the reasons are identified. This is another instance of where the University must know why it has the results it does with a measure. Asked if other institutions use the measure, he reported that Wisconsin has proposed it and the community college system in Minnesota will do so. He agreed that comparisons with other institutions would make the measure more useful.

What is the measure trying to get at, asked one Committee member? What is it that is being fixed? What is the problem? Do a lot of students take a lot more credits than they need? Is that wrong? If one looks at the total number of credits completed by students who start at the University and graduate from it, the results are considerably higher than the number of credits required (varying with program), Dr. Hendel reported. What might need fixing may be course access and advising. There is some data to suggest, for example, that when students cannot obtain a needed course, they will take courses they do not need and that do not count toward their degree--but their financial aid package may require they take a certain number of credits. The learning experience may be valuable, but it does not help meet degree requirements. It may be that course access and advising should be focused on directly, rather than this measure of credits taken as an outcome measure.

Is not the measure intended to help ascertain whether or not there is a problem, asked one Committee member? The numbers already suggest students take more credits than needed, so one might say there is a problem. Once an effort is made, having the numbers will indicate whether any headway is being made.

The sixth measure, post-graduation experience, is intended for both graduate and professional and undergraduate levels; it would look at whether graduates continue their education (within some period after graduation) and would also consider employment experiences. The latter measure is increasingly being required by external constituencies as well as the federal government. This kind of measure will focus first on programs that have a specific occupational emphasis.

One Committee member urged adding a measure of student satisfaction separate from employment or post-graduate education. An important part of what the University does is to educate people without necessarily relating that education to a job. This Committee, recalled another, has previously discussed the point that the University does not educate solely for work but also civic responsibility and family life and social participation--that cluster of mature human values needs to be included in measures. There ought to be some measure for preparing students for life. Dr. Hendel agreed that some numbers could be developed, such as percentage who vote, volunteer work, the number who go into the Peace Corps. How, inquired another Committee member, does one link those to the educational process? One would have to know a lot about the students' prior life experiences before that could be assessed.

The seventh measure, program reputation, is included with full recognition of the difficulties with the reputational measures. It is, nonetheless, seen as important.

Professor Heller asked if the Committee had any reactions to the group of seven indicators addressed to teaching and learning--are there things omitted? Do they provide the essence of what it is that needs to be known? After a long silence, one Committee member suggested that if one goal of the University is to teach, there ought to be some measure of what is learned. Just because a student obtains a job does not mean anything was learned, and graduation rate is not necessarily a function of learning. If there is an assessment at point of entry, should there not be one as a student is leaving?

Dr. Hendel said such measures might have considerable prominence at the level of the department or college; it was less clear, he said, how one has an INSTITUTIONAL measure of learning. Some institutions have begun to use standardized outcome measures, but they are not well conceived or well developed, in his view, and present the potential for more harm than good. There has been thought of using the GREs; one Committee member cautioned that GRE scores correlate almost perfectly with SAT scores and may not be related at all to what happens during college. Such standardized tests may all measure the same thing.

Dr. Hendel was asked if there been any discussion of including the reputation of undergraduate programs. He said they were not because the results of those analyses are very closely related to the graduate and professional program reputation. For the analyses that include schools without graduate and professional programs--the mostly widely used one is U.S. News and World Report--they use measures that are already included in these 21. In addition, there is almost a perfect correlation between the reputation of an undergraduate school and the quality--i.e., the test scores--of the entering students.

As asked earlier, said another Committee member, should there not be a critical measure about what students learn--even if it is not easy to measure? In some sense that's what the University is all about. Another Committee member said another measure ought to be of what faculty teach and how teaching is apportioned and rewarded. Mention has been made of student exposure to research faculty as one of unique elements of education at the University; that may be less important than how it is they are taught, irrespective of WHO is teaching them. The characteristics of teaching in the University ought to be measured as part of teaching and learning assessment: the way teaching is assigned, the manner in which curricula are established, and with a focus on who teaches how, and how well, and who learns, and how well. There must be measures both of what is done as well as the reward structure for it.

What should also be important is advising, said one Committee member. Students deserve and should have high-quality faculty advising, whether a research faculty member or a TA who knows the structure of the academic discipline. Advising should be both for programmatic purposes and the personal interests of the students. These measures do not address how the teaching and learning experiences are organized through advising.

Faculty satisfaction with teaching might also be considered, especially since many perceive they are not well-rewarded for teaching. The University should think about what it expects of those who teach and should measure how well teaching expectations are fulfilled. Dr. Hendel said that faculty satisfaction is an element of one of the measures. One the specific issue of teaching, one possibility might be to include an institutional summary from the student evaluation of teaching. It has not been suggested as a critical measure, Dr. Hendel said, and he would be interested in knowing the Committee's view about doing so. One Committee member responded that doing so would NOT speak to the internal evaluation of the instructor and decision-making about him or her or the availability of courses or the effectiveness of learning.

In a related vein, while departments cannot easily compared in teaching quality, it would useful to keep data such as the number of classes offered by the department (undergraduate, graduate, seminar), what is the average teaching load of the faculty, the number of new courses offered each year, and so on. Those data would also provide useful measures of inter-institutional comparisons and should not be difficult to compile.

Dr. Hendel reviewed the remainder of the 21 proposed critical measures and then inquired of Committee members if there appears to be any major category of activity that has not been included. Committee members had no observations to offer. He then asked them each to evaluate the importance of each measure on a scale of 1 - 5 and also to identify which seven measures were MOST important at the institutional level.

There are two conceivable ways in which these measures might be used, observed one Committee member. One is to compare data from one year to the next; the other is to compare data about this university with those of other institutions. Dr. Hendel assented and pointed out that they would also be used to guide institutional improvement, perhaps by the establishment of performance goals (both annual as well as comparative). And, added another, simply in terms of the institution's own expectations, which may be most important.

This also raises the question about whom these measures are intended for. That question is yet to be addressed, Dr. Hendel agreed. The measures ARE a good idea, said one Committee member. After there is discussion and consensus about the measures, an important part of the process will be establishing goals, Dr. Hendel commented, and ensuring that there is support for those goals. There are many steps remaining, one of which is what the goals should be.

Professor Heller thanked Drs. Hendel and Whiteside for their presentation.

3. Task Force on User Friendliness

Next on the agenda, Professor Heller announced, is a report from Ms. Anne Sales on the work of the Task Force on User Friendliness (appointed by the Senate Consultative Committee), and welcomed Ms. Sales to the meeting.

She started by saying that one of the reasons she wanted to meet with the Committee was to obtain its suggestions about the work of the task force. She recalled that "user friendliness" is one of the five strategic directions of U2000 and Professor Garrard's concern that it embrace ALL of the people involved with the University--faculty and P&A and civil service staff as well as students. The task force thus consists of members from all of those groups, including the bargaining unit employees, and the administration, and will make its final report to the Senate Consultative Committee on June 2.

The task force identified three major areas upon which it wished to focus, and organized itself into three corresponding subgroups: academic progress, human resources and information systems, and physical plant (including transit and transportation, an important issue in the eyes of many).

The academic progress subgroup has considered a range of large issues, such as advising and course scheduling. It has been focusing on what it calls "tip of the iceberg" kinds of projects, in an attempt to propose things that can be done quickly and with a reasonable chance for success in order to stimulate further action.

The human resources and information systems subgroup has been looking at issues in a more abstract way, such as how people perceive their work environment and how that affects the delivery of services to people.

The physical plant subgroup has taken a mix of the two approaches. One specific area it considers a problem on campus is signage and direction for people who may not be familiar with the campus. It has also discussed how space can be used to be more inviting, friendly, and welcoming to people who come to the campus.

Ms. Sales invited the comments of Committee members about issues that the task force should also consider emphasizing. One has to do with scheduling classes within the buildings housing the relevant academic departments (rather than scattering classes from a single department all over campus), said one Committee member. The point is that students would benefit from more of a "community of scholars" if their classes were in their department.

A related problem, said another Committee member, has to do with equipment for classrooms. Some is owned by departments, some by the University. IF one is teaching in a building outside one's own, access to equipment may be restricted and fees may be administered for equipment. The mix of ownership of equipment is a problem. This, pointed out another, runs against the idea of Responsibility Centered Management.

One of the issues, Ms. Sales commented, is just the lack of consistency around the University; things have happened more by accretion than anything else, and tend to be agglomerated without anyone ever having inquired if they make sense. A lot of the problems might be alleviated simply by someone asking "does this make sense?" That "somebody" must be someone with an overview, said one Committee member; this is NOT an "iceberg" issue.

In the area of human resources, adding timeliness would increase user friendliness. It often seems that areas that must provide support to units are those units that are retrenched so badly that they can no longer be responsive in a timely fashion. One example is the ability of the Personnel Department to define job duties for civil service jobs--it is almost impossible to obtain timely information because they are so overloaded. Trying to get computer help is another example, said one Committee member: "I've never gotten through on the micro computer help line." Another example is the creation of rules and processes for isolated instances of abuse. It would be preferable to identify places where problems exist and deal with the problems, rather than create a rule. A related human resource issue is the lack of flexibility in how people's time can be used; teaching assistants cannot be used as research assistants, nor vice-versa, and neither can be used for other activities.

The subgroup on physical facilities is not looking at issues of user friendliness for students with disabilities--because those issues are being looked at very systematically elsewhere, Ms. Sales said, and the task force did not wish to duplicate activities. Is it considering visitor treatment, and short-term parking in particular, given the land-grant responsibilities of the institution require many people to use the University's services? It is, Ms. Sales replied; one problem is to identify who the visitors are and which units need contact with them--and how to protect parking spaces for short-term use, which probably requires a validation system of some kind.

A related parking issue is night parking, especially for women faculty and graduate students. There are many parking spaces closer to the center of the campus that are not used late at night that could be used--but at present if anyone parks in them, they will assuredly get a ticket. Ms. Sales told the Committee that the Graduate and Professional Student Assembly is working with Assistant Vice President Tschida on the issue and arrangements should be in place by Fall Quarter.

A big issue in at least one collegiate unit is study space within the libraries and library hours. "It's not an issue here," responded another Committee member. "since the library's not open." Although a facetious comment, library hours are a problem; they seem to think students do not study Friday evening or on weekends; this is a particular problem for graduate students. Retrenchments have led to reduced hours, it was said, probably in order to keep the money in acquisitions. The task force will talk to the libraries, Ms. Sales said, although she did not hold out hope that hours would change.

Computer access is another issue in some units. How is this handled systematically? It isn't, Ms. Sales said. Why not the Crookston solution, asked another Committee member, requiring all students to have a computer with "network spigots" provided by the University. That has not been proposed for this campus, Ms. Sales noted, and anyone who did would likely face a firestorm of opposition; students would be resistant on the basis of the expense, if nothing else. The resistance could be overcome, but it would be troublesome. The students at Crookston were divided about the decision; one of the hardest problems may have been getting the FACULTY all at the same level of knowledge.

"Some of us are not as swift at picking up things" on computers, observed one Committee member, and if there is to be an increasing emphasis on the use of computers--which there should be--then there have to be better training opportunities available for staff who are here. Having an instructor in an IBM class show up with a Macintosh was not helpful. It may be, said one Committee member, that the youngest of those who know--the students--should be the ones who teach those who need to know. That would generate student employment and would certainly be cheaper than hiring a consultant, said another Committee member.

The task force is working primarily on low- or no-cost changes, rather than changes which are very expensive. They are looking more at things that require a re-ordering of people's thinking and attitudes. How can one motivate people to change their attitudes and the way that they approach what they do here? The attitude change is necessary, both on the side of the person providing the service and the person who receives that service. Expectations must be reasonable. If expectations are that services have no time costs, that is not reasonable. It will take an attitude shift on the part of both people involved in the transaction; it is that message that the task force is working on. In addition, the task force is looking at things and evaluating the degree to which they make sense, given the objectives of that particular activity.

Professor Heller thanked Ms. Sales for her comments and adjourned the meeting at 5:00.

-- Gary Engstrand

University of Minnesota

PRELIMINARY WORKING DRAFT - 4/28/94

POTENTIAL CRITICAL MEASURES AND RELATIONS TO STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS IN UNIVERSITY 2000

Number indicates a direct relation of the measure to the strategic direction (coded as follows); ? indicates uncertainty if the relationship should be focused on. [bracketed terms indicate area of potential critical measures]

1=Undergraduate

2=Graduate & Professional

3=Research & Scholarship

4=Outreach and Access

5=User Friendly Community

[teaching/learning]

1. Characteristics of entering students (readiness, diversity)	1,2
2. Student experience - student satisfaction - faculty involvement in undergraduate teaching	1,2,5
3. Uniqueness of baccalaureate experience	1
4. Graduation rate (full time, part time,	1,2?

diversity/underrepresented minorities)	
5. Credits to degree (required, actual)	1
6. Post-graduation experience (further education, employment)	1,2
7. Reputation of graduate and professional programs	2
[research/discovery]	
8. Sponsored funding (research, scholarship, artistic activity, development, training)	3
9. Scholarly, research, and artistic accomplishments (honors, awards, offices, patents, books, articles, performances, exhibits)	3
[outreach/public service]	
10. Outreach contacts (visits, phone calls, meetings)	4
11. Response to compelling state needs	4
12. Continuing education	4,5
[overarching areas]	
13. Interdisciplinary/applied programs and activities	1,2,3,4,5
14. Responsiveness to "market" (instruction, research, services) - demand - user satisfaction	1,2,3,4,5
15. Overall satisfaction of Minnesota citizens with the University	1,2,3,4,5
[diversity]	
16. Underrepresented minority groups, women (students, faculty, staff)	1,2,3,4,5

- K-12 graduation
- retention through University graduation
- graduate/professional students

[management effectiveness]

17. Faculty and staff	1,2,3,4,5
- development	
- satisfaction	
- retention	
18. Facilities	1,2,3,4,5
- deferred maintenance	
- physical accessibility	
- safety	
19. Resource development	1,2,3,4,5
- fundraising	
- investment performance	
20. Cost/student	1,2
21. Bureaucracy	1,2,3,4,5

Direct comments and questions to one of the following, or you may send comments to any of these individuals at:

Academic Affairs
232 Morrill Hall
100 Church Street SE
Minneapolis, MN 55455

George Copa, 624-2889, or copax001@maroon.tc.umn.edu
Darwin Hendel, 625-0129 or hendel@mailbox.mail.umn.edu
Jane Whiteside, 625-6039 or whitesid@mailbox.mail.umn.edu