

Minutes\*

**Senate Committee on Educational Policy  
Wednesday, September 27, 1995  
1:15 - 3:00  
Room 626 Campus Club**

Present: Laura Koch (chair), Anita Cholewa, Paul Cleary, Elayne Donahue, Gayle Graham Yates, Megan Gunnar, Robert Johnson, Thomas Johnson, Judith Martin, Glenn Merkel, Mark Schuller, William Van Essendelft

Regrets: Avram Bar-Cohen, Jeffrey Larsen, Ryan Nilsen

Absent: Helen Phin

Guests: Professor John Adams, Cheryl Jones (Alumni Association), Ms. Karen Linquist (Academic Affairs), Provost W. Phillips Shively, Professor Richard Skaggs, Dr. Peter Zetterberg

Others: none

[In these minutes: Semester conversion issues; changes in the Morse-Alumni award materials]

Professor Koch convened the meeting at 1:15, welcomed everyone to the first regular meeting of the Committee, and called for introductions.

**1. The Change to Semesters**

Professor Koch then noted that SCEP would have a major role to play in the conversion to semesters and reported that the Faculty Consultative Committee had specifically asked SCEP to deal seriously with the issues. She turned to Dr. Zetterberg to begin the discussion.

Dr. Zetterberg recalled that the President made the decision to change to semesters last spring, after the legislature acted to require the other public institutions to make the change. The University has discussed this issue for over 20 years, and there remains a division of opinion about which system is better for each academic discipline; that discussion may continue forever.

The administration believed the Regents should act on the decision, and the Board did so in September when they adopted a resolution endorsing the change. The resolution contained no specifics, however. Dr. Zetterberg reported that in August and September he met with representatives from the coordinate campuses and the provosts and deans on the Twin Cities campus; in addition, he has had a number of discussions with Senior Vice President Infante and Associate Vice President Kvavik about how to organize and coordinate the biggest undertaking the University has ever attempted. This change, he observed, will touch almost everyone.

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The materials distributed to the Committee were prepared for the President's Retreat on September 18; they are only discussion pieces, he said, not decision packages. One major issue that had to be resolved was whether to make the change over the next three or the next four years; the clear sentiment at the retreat was to take four years, so the change will be effective Fall Quarter, 1999. The chancellors, provosts, and deans believe this will be an opportunity not only to change the calendar but also to rethink academic programs.

Other than the decision about the date of the switch, no decisions have been made, Dr. Zetterberg assured the Committee. Senior Vice President Infante is consulting FCC Chair Professor Adams about membership on a semester oversight committee; student leadership groups have also been contacted. This committee will be appointed very soon.

SCEP will have a huge role, Dr. Zetterberg said, because the core issues in the change are academic. He told the Finance and Planning committee the day before that Drs. (Carl) Adams, Infante, Koch, and Morrison must talk with the President about how the oversight committee relates to SCEP and the Finance and Planning Committee. This is a once-in-a-lifetime change for an institution, and while they wish to rely on existing administrative and governance groups, it must be recognized that an oversight committee is needed. That committee, however, must be in tune with SCEP in terms of who will do what and the flow of decisions.

Dr. Zetterberg then described how he expected the work of the oversight committee to develop. At first--this quarter, primarily--they would have to make fundamental decisions to guide the four-year process, a schedule with deadlines, and make recommendations on such things as the specifics of the calendar, revision of single-quarter leave policies, and so on. Virtually all policies will have to be revised, but in some cases the changes will be editorial; the oversight committee will address the major questions. After Fall Quarter, it will oversee the process and perhaps serve as an appeals group if the principles of the conversion are challenged by an academic unit.

One tool that will be enormously useful will be the Authorized Course Data Base, Dr. Zetterberg commented; he will summarize it for the Committee. The inventory permits analysis of the courses and credits offered and the variations by college and campus. Of the 30,000 courses listed, less than half have been offered in the last three years. Maybe one should go back four or five years, but a lot of the courses may be of historic interest only. The data from the inventory will be available to the Committee as it discusses such things as a standard course module and the impact of the change on faculty and student workloads.

Asked if there are places where courses of less than a semester in length are offered, Dr. Zetterberg said this question comes up in virtually every discussion, and is of major concern to CEE. He said he does not know the answer to the question, but he also said he knows of no reason why shorter courses could not be offered. All of this is open to discussion. The College of Education serves professionals who have different time constraints; it will be necessary to keep the system flexible. The options for summer need also to be thought through; if the calendar were one such that the spring semester were done by the first of May, there could be a full summer semester, half semesters, courses after the public schools are out, and so on.

One Committee member inquired if any thought had been given to the model more prevalent in Europe, where the semester may be 14 or 15 weeks long but classes only meet for 12 or 13 and the last two weeks are devoted to research or study. Dr. Zetterberg said that was a new idea, but that it could be considered. It was pointed out that anyone could do that with a course now.

The standard definition of an academic quarter, Dr. Zetterberg pointed out, is 10 weeks with 50 class periods for a five-credit course. The standard semester is 15 weeks with 75 class sessions. Both are then followed by an exam period. Michigan has had a 13-week semester since 1965; asked if accrediting agencies have questioned it, the answer has been that only by other registrars. There are other variations; Michigan is the most extreme variation. The typical semesters have 72-75 days; a number of those with fewer than 75 days have nonetheless retained the 50-minute class period. That, however, could also be increased at Minnesota.

There are a number of people who are unhappy with the expectation that the semester will start after Labor Day, observed one Committee member; some creativity is called for. Dr. Zetterberg said he has heard a lot about the starting date, and the possibilities of changing the State Fair. Some have suggested that the St. Paul campus could be in session during the State Fair; others say adamantly that it could not. Others argue there would be a commotion, but only for a week, and that people could make do. The Director of Parking Services has pointed out that the University is much less reliant on Fairgrounds parking than in the past, and it could become completely independent of those lots if it wished.

His concern, Dr. Zetterberg related, is not parking as much as it is State Fair control over the transitway and the ability of people to get between the Minneapolis and St. Paul campus. There are also security concerns. Even starting immediately after Labor Day will have problems; the Fair has control of part of the St. Paul parking lots; when would students move into the dorms?

The State Fair rights to the use of the transitway were granted by contract with the University when the transitway was built. The last piece of property required to make it work was owned by the State Fair; in return for it, the University agreed to Fair use of the transitway and St. Paul parking. That agreement was for 10 years.

If the fall semester were to start after Labor Day, two years out of seven it would have 70 instructional days--unless Saturday exams were permitted, which would provide some flexibility. The first worst-case year will be 2009, when Labor Day falls on September 7.

One Committee member recalled that the public schools are not allowed to start until after Labor Day; does the same logic apply to public higher education institutions? Is there any legislative opinion on this issue? Dr. Zetterberg said he knew of none, and noted that the Minnesota State College and University System (MNSCU) will have to make a decision about what it will do, since it is mandated to be on semesters by fall of 1998. The legislature may not have considered that the semesters might begin before Labor Day; this could be an issue. The concern is about the tourism industry.

There is a concern, said one Committee member, that courses not simply be retained and the number of credits changed. But there is not a lot of money available to pay for what may really be needed, and none for faculty and staff. Whose back will the effort be on? Dr. Zetterberg said he had

talked about this issue with the Finance and Planning Committee; it is clear that there will not be money available to colleges and departments--but it is also clear that they will probably need to rely on one or two key faculty each, and give them reduced loads; the departments would have to pick up the reduction. The President and central administration ALL recognize that the true and tremendous cost of the change will be in faculty time.

One college has predicted that for the period of the change, its research funding will be flat, because no one will have time to apply for additional funding. Was it made clear to the legislature that this change will likely cost the state a lot of money in lost funding? The legislature would probably say, suggested one Committee member, that it gave the University \$60 million in one-time funds--while it gave none to MNSCU--to help with such transitions. That money will go to re-engineering and perhaps a one-time compensation plan next year; perhaps some of the compensation funds could be used to help support the semester transition.

The faculty and staff are right to gripe that they are being asked to support the change gratis when the legislature provided money, said one Committee member. No, said another, they are right to make the point that the transition will come out of their hides, but the University could use some one-time money, and perhaps savings achieved by systems improvements, to help departments. That discussion has not been held.

Dr. Zetterberg cautioned that SCEP will have to consider carefully workload questions, particularly its own; this will not be a routine period for it. It should focus on core academic issues, he suggested, and let the oversight committee manage the process. He urged that SCEP and the oversight committee chair talk frequently. Professor Koch promised that would happen.

A project that will run in parallel with the semester conversion is the revision of the 12 student systems (admissions, registration, financial aid, and so on), Dr. Zetterberg told the Committee. They are invisible to most, except that students who register or anyone who obtains a transcript understands there is some system there. But they are critical to carrying out the instructional mission, and all date from the 1970s. Once state of the art, they are no longer so and need to be redone rather than patched up for semesters. They are VERY complicated systems; the University is now checking to see if there are any off-the-shelf programs that could be purchased. It is unlikely there are, because there are so many unique elements (e.g., seven Twin Cities grading systems, 500 possible holds on a record). SCEP consideration of a changed grading policy would help, he said, because they want to redesign the systems to be only as complicated as necessary. It will be necessary, however, to handle the records from a quarter system for a long time, he agreed. The very rough estimate of the cost of these system changes is \$10 - 15 million, including kiosks where one can conduct business as well as links with CUFS and Human Resource systems. This is the only budgeted item for the next four years, except for the cost of reprinting EVERYTHING.

Asked if he had ideas about how to address the question of supply and number of courses, Dr. Zetterberg acknowledged it to be an interesting one. If one takes the position that the University should continue to offer the same number of courses, with the same frequency, and there will be two rather than three academic terms, the number of courses per term must increase by 50%. Who, he inquired, will teach all these courses? Everyone understands this problem.

What is best for students? One argument is that students should be encouraged to take five 3-credit courses; how that would be accomplished is not clear. Dr. Zetterberg said he would be surprised if either this Committee or the oversight committee comes down in favor of a standard course module that will apply across the University; courses in the Medical School are very different from those in Architecture. Perhaps some kind of standard might be developed for undergraduate education.

It may be that the course module is not the right subject to address. Should the change to semesters be neutral with respect to student and faculty workload?

However addressed, Dr. Zetterberg said, this is the HEART of the matter. The places in trouble because faculty workload went up or down or student load declined unexpectedly did not confront this issue and make a disciplined decision. There is time to think carefully about it.

Not all can be locally decided, said one Committee member; the consequences will be surprising if the details are left to the departments. There must be central guidelines. Dr. Zetterberg agreed, although what they should be is not now clear. The pitfalls to be avoided are known; how best to avoid them is not. This is a key issue, said another Committee member, because if it is not solved, there will be a tremendous effort in all departments, requiring a lot of time, much of which will be duplicative and wasted. Departments should NOT do anything until they receive guidelines; it is to be hoped that the oversight committee will deal with this issue. This sentiment was echoed by other Committee members as well. Dr. Zetterberg said this is one of the most important questions for the oversight committee.

In response to a comment that there must be models that could be considered, Dr. Zetterberg said he has suggested that departments obtain course bulletins from peer institutions on semesters and evaluate how they configure their courses. That puts the burden back on the departments to all do the same work, objected another Committee member. They will not find things they can adopt wholesale, Dr. Zetterberg responded, but they may get a sense for the common course credit module, for example, in their discipline.

Dr. Zetterberg said he has information about the change when it was made at Michigan State, Tennessee, and Penn State. Two people on the campus have experience with converting: former Senior Vice President Kuhl and acting dean Mike Martin. It might be worth the time of the Committee to speak with the two of them.

Is there a better model, in terms of credit modules, from a student learning perspective, asked one Committee member? Institutions vary a great deal, Dr. Zetterberg said; it might be helpful to get the catalogues from a number of different institutions. That may also vary with the course of study. It is certain that taking five courses is NOT the same as taking four courses even if the credits are the same. Nor is it the same to teach three courses per term rather than two, even if the credits are the same. One of the biggest impacts, if courses are largely four credits, is that double majors are nearly impossible.

Professor Koch asked Professor Adams if he had any comments. He did. He distributed an outline of his thoughts, "Notes on Getting to Semesters the Wrong Way."

Professor Adams began by concurring that SCEP should focus on the major educational policy issues. He then suggested that attention needs to be paid first to institutional issues--what this University

is about at this time and place and what it should be about for the next twenty years. One should be able to see the shape of where the University wants to be; rereading the educational mission is required. For example, no one in this discussion has mentioned the critical measures, which have been adopted by the Board of Regents; they have a great deal to do with undergraduate education. The question that must be asked and must be kept in mind is how semesters will serve the goals and missions of the University.

Professor Adams took exception to the first paragraph of the materials provided to the Committee, in which it was suggested that the "extensive research and outreach activities, which operate year-round, will not be significantly affected by a change from a quarter to a semester calendar." The change will mean the reorganization of the entire work year, he maintained; it will NOT be an isolated event, but will affect every activity. The quarter system allows a degree of flexibility in how outreach and research are conducted, something that CLA, for example, has not paid enough attention to because it thinks it's an undergraduate college. It must be remembered this is a research university.

Noting that he had been at the University a long time, Professor Adams said that it often forgets what the enterprise is built on. If it can recall the past and consider the future, it can pick and choose what it will retain and what it will disregard. Since the 1950s, the University--higher education--has changed from an elite to a mass enterprise, very unlike Europe, and that has changed the job that faculty do as well as the way they do it.

The statistics are startling. In the past, there were 17-18 week semesters with six courses per quarter, 50-minute class periods, three class meetings a week, for a total of 15,300 minutes per semester in class for 18 semester credits--at a time when people were skilled at learning by reading outside of class. One current proposal, in contrast, calls for a 14-week semester, four courses per semester, four credits per course, three class meetings per week, or a total of 8,400 minutes per class for 16 semester credits. Also in the past, 144 semester credits were needed for a degree; the present proposal is for 120.

The dramatic reduction in class time, moreover, comes when more and more students learn primarily by ORAL INSTRUCTION and activities and projects. It is now typically hard for students to learn outside of class--they do well in class, but not out. Something has changed how people learn, and that must be foremost in mind as people think about the calendar.

There have been three eras at the University, Professor Adams said. First was the pre-1970s, when students had 15+ class hours per week (one credit per lecture hour per week, one credit per 2-3 hours of labs), 15 weeks of class, and 15 credits, all of which conformed to Regents' policy that one credit is to equal three hours of work per week. CLA/SLA conformed.

The second era was the post-1970s, when in many upper-division CLA programs there were fewer than nine hours per week spent in class for 12 credits for 15 weeks--which DEPARTS from Regents' policy. The amount of time in class and studying abruptly declined while credits stayed the same, teaching loads dropped, and by tacit agreement between the faculty and the students, they each went on their way--but the outcome has not been satisfactory.

The next era, by one proposal summarized recently in the newspaper, would be a 14-week semester, the four-credit module as the standard, and again for many programs fewer than nine hours per week in the classroom for 12 credits. If this is adopted, the University will have a political problem; the

goals of undergraduate liberal education must be articulated. The Council on Liberal Education has done a good job, and then along come semesters; the work of the Council should not be thrown away.

This issue of credits and instruction must be attended to in 1995, Professor Adams insisted. It is not trivial. The facts of what some parts of the University have been doing would not easily be defensible were they challenged, he maintained. Why does a student receive four credits for less than three hours in class? It could be a fine arrangement, he said--but expressed deep doubt that it is in many undergraduate courses.

In the 1950s and before, 144 semester credits at three credits per course meant a student took 48 courses. A requirement of 120 semester credits to graduate, with a standard four-credit module, means a student would take 30 courses, Professor Adams pointed out in dismay. The issue of the module is critical for liberal education requirements; 30 courses does not offer enough flexibility. Even a three-credit module, with 120 required credits, would permit 40 courses, which would be better. There must be enough blocks to work with. If there are too many narrow courses oriented to pre-professional or disciplinary requirements, the opportunities for cross-disciplinary and liberal education studies will be eroded.

The high schools have changed to accommodate the University but they did so in a way that eroded math programs. Professor Adams said he has been told that high school graduates are entering community colleges with diminished math perception because high schools have expanded foreign language instruction at the expense of upper-division high school math. That is "a hell of a note!" Everything is connected; if the University can clarify the objectives of undergraduate education and work it out into classroom policy, then the situation with the secondary schools can be worked out.

On the issue of faculty workloads, if the provosts will lay out a framework within which the colleges must function, and the colleges are clear on what the departments must do, it could be clear what departments should do about workload. Insisting that faculty teach X number of courses is an appalling standard at this university--one cannot use a cookie-cutter approach. Senior faculty with well-established research programs are not the same as a new assistant professor; a good teacher is not the same as a good researcher. Decisions about workload have to be made at the unit level.

Moreover, care must be exercised to avoid having several different departments and colleges duplicating courses and programs, otherwise competition will develop to chase high volume, low cost courses, leading to diminished internal subsidies at the unit level, which will work against a balanced curriculum with expensive courses offset by cheap ones (assuming that the University continues to aim for FLAT-RATE PRICING of courses--the same price for cheap and expensive courses; avoids CONGESTION PRICING--with the tuition premium shared with departments teaching late in the day, evenings, and weekends; and TUITION DISCOUNTS for courses taken at inconvenient times but that allow fuller use of the physical plant).

The duplication of courses across programs is a serious issue; there are now programs starting to grow on the St. Paul campus that duplicate those in Minneapolis. Who is watching this, he asked?

The bottom line is that the University was bludgeoned into adopting the semester system, instead of standing its ground and arguing that the quarter system, with four quarters and year-round course

offerings and student enrollments is best for this university in this metro area. School is a start-stop operation in the life of students here.

Dr. Zetterberg has said that all the options are open, Professor Adams recalled. That should include job-sharing, less than full-time appointments with tenure and fringe benefits, leaves, and so on. Attention must be paid to what the faculty need, are able, and want to do--and to what students need, want, and should have. If these are attended to, the University can be a stronger, healthier place.

The University, Professor Adams concluded, should be a full time, year-round school, which would give the faculty more flexibility, flexibility that the rest of the world is acquiring.

Professor Adams agreed that the credit inflation was a national problem; he recalled that some private institutions had an interim period and shortened the semesters to accommodate it; the interim disappeared, the semesters stayed shorter, but the tuition remained the same--so students pay more and get less. The image in all of this, he mused, is lemmings jumping into the sea.

The way to think about this, urged one Committee member, is as Professor Adams contended--this is a university in a metropolitan area. There are not many of them; the University has all the opportunities and conflicts its location implies, and it must be more creative and inventive than other places. Students will not stop working 20-30 hours per week and they cannot take 5 courses per semester; the University must be careful how it crafts the semester.

How much of the effort will be focused on getting students out of the University quickly, asked one Committee member? At a minimum, Dr. Zetterberg responded, a situation that is already troubling should be made no worse. Students already take longer to graduate than at other institutions, and there is no reason to believe they are any different here than elsewhere; it is the culture of the institution. A lot of Minnesota students go to Madison, and they behave differently there. He related that he has heard speeches to new freshmen by senior officers; the students then charge out ready to go--and after seeing an advisor, going the registration process, and so forth and so on, they register for less than a full load. Professor Adams is right, he said; everything is connected. The University does not want to have an outcome that could be avoided.

Professor Koch thanked Dr. Zetterberg and Professors Adams and Skaggs for joining the meeting, and promised that the Committee would wish to hear from them in the future.

## **2. Recognition of Morse-Alumni Award Winners**

Professor Koch then drew the attention of Committee members to the proposal from Provost Shively that all faculty who have been awarded either the Morse-Amoco or Morse-Alumni award be entitled throughout their careers at the University to designate themselves as "Morse-Alumni Distinguished Teaching Professor of [field]." This proposal had been discussed at the SCEP retreat earlier; at this point it was moved, seconded, and unanimously voted to forward the proposal to the Senate Consultative Committee with a request that it be placed on the docket of the Senate for approval.



### **3. A Possible Undergraduate Initiative II**

Provost Shively reported that he had met with the President to discuss the list of items concerning improvements to undergraduate education (the list had been discussed at the SCEP retreat earlier). The President was enthusiastic about the list, he said, and encouraged him to develop something like an Undergraduate Initiative II for inclusion in the biennial request.

### **4. Changes in the Morse-Alumni Procedures**

Professor Koch next welcomed Karen Linqvist from Academic Affairs and Cheryl Jones from Alumni Relations to discuss the materials to be mailed out concerning nominations for the Morse-Alumni award. The Committee reviewed the proposed changes in the materials, made as a consequence of decisions by SCEP last spring. Several topics were covered:

- The permanent augmentation of \$1500 is divided over the number of the faculty member's pay periods; it is not added to the base salary so is not increased when the salary increase is calculated.
- The dossier release form will be included, with a notice that winners will be asked to sign it so their dossiers can be placed in the libraries for review by other units, to make more public the instructional activities that have been recognized and to allow them to serve as models.
- The nominating committee should be sharper about rejecting any materials which exceed the page limits set forth in the instructions. It was suggested that those who prepare dossiers be told that the file will be returned if it exceeds the page limits.

It was moved, seconded, and unanimously voted to approve the proposed changes, as amended.

The Committee then heard a report on the reception, to be held in the Ted Mann concert hall; all previous winners will be invited, although the focus will be on this year's winners.

Professor Koch then noted that two faculty members from SCEP were needed to serve on the Morse-Alumni nominating committee; seeing no volunteers, she promised that she would be making calls in the near future. She then adjourned the meeting at 3:15.

-- Gary Engstrand

University of Minnesota