

Minutes*

Senate Committee on Educational Policy
Wednesday, June 4, 1997
1:00 - 3:00
Room 238 Morrill Hall

Present: Laura Koch (chair), Avram Bar-Cohen, Anita Cholewa, Elayne Donahue, Darwin Hendel, Gordon Hirsch, Robert Leik, Judith Martin, Kathleen Newell, W. Phillips Shively, William Van Essendelft

Regrets: Thomas Johnson, Gayle Graham Yates

Absent: Tina Rovick

Guests: none

Others: Martha Kvanbeck (University Senate)

[In these minutes: Military Science minor, University College, and SCEP; standardization of titles names for independent work; peer evaluation of teaching; issues for next year]

1. ROTC, University College, and SCEP

Professor Koch convened the meeting at 1:00 and recalled that about a year ago representatives from the Subcommittee on ROTC met with SCEP, representatives that SCEP had never seen before. Several weeks ago, Dr. Marshak brought to the Regents for approval a minor in University College (UC) in Military Science. This raises two concerns: why is the University supporting a unit whose policies clash with those of the University and about which the University Senate has expressed an objection, and how is UC offering degrees without a faculty?

The Faculty Consultative Committee raised this issue with Dr. Marshak, who said he did not know what consultation had taken place before proposing the minor; upon checking, he said there was the Senate Committee on ROTC. Professor Koch said she explored further, and learned that the SCEP subcommittee may have been involved. She said although she was supposed to receive minutes, she never has.

As a result, she has drafted a letter to the subcommittee instructing it to provide minutes to SCEP. Committee members observed that SCEP should be appointing the subcommittee and that it had overstepped its charge if it approved a Military Science minor. They also discussed the organizational structure of ROTC (it reports through one of the colleges at Duluth and through the Vice President for Student Development and Athletics on the Twin Cities campus), and voiced concern that a minor was being offered by a program not in any of the colleges.

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Provost Shively noted that UC offers degrees. Two are through the old UC (BAs through the Program for Individualized Learning and the Inter-College Program), and two are through the partnership programs (Bachelors in Construction Management and in Business Networking). He said UC should not expand its degree programs beyond those kinds, and the merger agreement says that UC will offer BAs only through the two existing programs.

It also offers a Master in Liberal Studies, pointed out one Committee member, which is a huge program. That is also a problem, in that it is outside the control of the colleges. The problem with a degree program outside the colleges means there are no faculty, and so little attention to graduate students, which is not good for them or the University.

The Committee discussed whether UC would or should offer additional degrees; Provost Shively noted that the merger agreement provided that only the two BA degrees would be offered. The Committee wondered if other bachelor's degree programs would be developed. Provost Shively suggested that any such degree program should be reviewed by SCEP. It was noted that the draft reorganization policy would require such review.

2. Standardization of Course Names

Professor Koch next reported that she had been contacted by the Graduate School to inquire if there are any definitions for "courses" such as directed study, directed research, readings, problems, and so on. It appears there are no standard definitions, and her own perusal of bulletins suggests usage is not consistent. She asked if the Committee wished to consider the matter.

Committee members agreed that the titles were somewhat vague, wondered if standardization was important, suggested surveying directors of graduate study and undergraduate study to find out how the titles are used, asked if there are guidelines for what must happen when a student enrolls in such courses (there are not), and if there should be policies that apply (the Senate rule requiring three hours of work per week per credit was seen as one policy that should apply; the rule about contact hours does not apply.). Without guidelines, it was said, in some cases students must work hard and long, while in others they may have to do very little.

The Committee deliberated various actions that might be taken (amending forms to make work more explicit, requiring a visible work product from such enrollments, the need for written understandings in order to defend why a grade was or was not given, departmental sign-off).

Dr. Hendel volunteered to find out if there are existing definitions, and said it is worth asking what occurs with each of these types of registrations. There could also be an analysis of records for a period of time to determine how widespread the use of these enrollments are. If the Committee learns there is inconsistency, it may be appropriate to develop guidelines or definitions, it was said.

One Committee member pointed out that these are the kinds of enrollments that programs use for students to do things that are different, so consistency may not be desirable. What is important is that there be a public record of the work required. Another inquired if the University WANTED a lot of students taking independent study or directed research or readings, and said there is no problem leaving

things nebulous. There will be inconsistencies across colleges, but that is the idea.

On a related matter, it was noted that the alphabetical suffixes for courses have been eliminated; does that mean a student cannot get extra credit in a course, or that there will be no independent study versions of regular courses? The elimination of the suffixes is an educational policy decision about which this Committee was never consulted. The decision also means that honors courses cannot be designated on a transcript; while all honors courses will supposedly have the word "honors" in their title, the elimination of the H suffix will make them less visible. One Committee member concluded that "all of these suffixes have vanished for the convenience of the machine."

3. Peer Evaluation of Teaching

Professor Koch now recalled that SCEP had discussed the status of peer evaluation of teaching about a year ago, and learned that compliance with the Senate policy requiring it was not widespread. The Committee informed the Provost of this fact, but nothing came of the discussion. This could be a sensitive issue, Professor Koch observed, and the Committee should take it up in the fall, with whomever is given responsibility for undergraduate education.

One Committee member said that one senses departments know what they have to do for promotion and tenure cases, and that they do NOT wish to do peer evaluation of teaching unless required for promotion and tenure. It is a time-consuming process that can be destructive if used for anything other than promotion and tenure.

Professor Koch said the Committee needed to review the policy early in the fall, to determine if it needed to be enforced as written or amended.

4. Meeting with Legislators

The Committee had discussed earlier the possibility of meeting with legislators to get a clearer sense of what they are concerned about and what is done that is of interest to them; one Committee member raised this issue again. Other Committee members expressed caution about such a meeting, and said the Committee should ask for SCC and administrative review before doing so. Such a meeting could invite micromanagement of the University, even though the legislature is already involved in management. Such a meeting might better be on an informal level, it was said; Professor Koch agreed to talk with Professor Gray about this matter.

5. Policies Needing Review and Action

The Committee turned to itemizing the policies that it must yet review. First on the list, although not exactly a policy requiring Committee action, is IMG. Professor Koch advised the Committee that since IMG appears to be here to stay, it would be best to ask how it can be used to enhance education, how it will work, and what incentives it will provide. The Committee should identify ways to use IMG, rather than simply harping about it. It was agreed the Committee should take up IMG at a fall retreat, with both Drs. Yudof and Bruininks, and the focus should be on how IMG can be used to accomplish the goals of U2000.

The other policies needing Committee action next year are these:

- The relationship of ROTC to the committee
- degree programs
- standards for distance education
- course suffixes
- independent study/directed study
- peer review of teaching
- grade inflation
- credits and degrees
- housing
- international education
- the role of the core

Other items are the staggering of courses between the Minneapolis and St. Paul campuses and the relationship of the new administration to the core, to undergraduate education, and to subcommittees on IMG and the curriculum.

Professor Koch thanked Anita Cholewa for four years of service on SCEP, and then adjourned the meeting at 2:40.

-- Gary Engstrand

University of Minnesota