

Minutes\*

**Senate Committee on Educational Policy  
April 26, 1990**

Present: John Clark (chair), John Clausen, Tom Clayton, Jean Congdon, Marvin Mattson, J. Kim Munholland, Gary Nelsestuen, Gary Parnes, Aron Pilhofer

Guests: Lesley Cafarelli, Gary Joselyn

**1. Report of the Chair**

The minutes of the March 29 meeting were approved as written.

Professor Clark urged Committee members to plan on attending the presentation of the Morse-Alumni Awards on May 16. He also noted that by policy of the Senate adopted in 1986 the names of those who have won the awards are to be accompanied by an asterisk in the bulletins and class schedules; there is a need to remind those responsible that this policy is in effect.

Professor Clark next reported, for the purposes of Committee memory, that the chair of the Committee is to receive released time, equivalent to one course, for serving in that role. Future chairs should be aware of the Senate policy which calls for this grant.

The Committee agreed that next year it would move its meetings to Tuesday afternoons from 1:15 to 3:00 in the Regents Room, thus avoiding a conflict with MSA as well as making the meetings more accessible to those in Morrill Hall who might wish to attend.

Professor Clark thanked the ROTC subcommittee for reviewing and passing on the proposed instructor appointments in the ROTC program.

**2. Discussion of Evaluation of the Evaluation of Teaching**

Professor Clark welcomed Professor Joselyn from the University Counseling Service to the meeting. Professor Clark explained that Professor Joselyn has been involved in the development of a questionnaire to be sent to departments about how teaching evaluation has been working; he came to SCEP to solicit advice on what changes, if any, should be made.

Professor Joselyn explained that he worked for the Office of Measurement Services, within the Counseling Service; the office performs two functions known to most: course exam scoring for faculty and provision of a service of student evaluation of instruction. They would like to improve the student evaluation of teaching service; they have been told that no one really knows what is going on at the University in course evaluation. As a consequence, they propose to send a questionnaire to department heads to find out, first, what is going on, and second, to obtain suggestions for improving the service. The suggestions of SCEP, as well perhaps as its endorsement, would be welcomed.

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Present policy, Professor Joselyn explained in response to a question, calls for faculty to evaluate at least one of their courses annually and that student evaluation should be included. The policy is normative rather than mandatory.

Dissatisfaction with the existing service, Professor Joselyn explained, has led to the preliminary conclusion that the University should adopt the system in place at most other Big Ten universities, which consists of a form with a few global questions and a catalogue with a variety of questions from which instructors and departments can make choices--and thus construct the survey they need.

Asked if there was any plan that the University might publish the results of the evaluations for students, Professor Joselyn said his unit takes no stand on that matter; they, he said, are technicians rather than policy-makers. He also said they do not provide norms for a unit (although the Carlson school has asked to receive them); they could do so but it is up to the departments to decide if they wish them and to request them.

Asked if a release would have to be signed by every faculty member for the results to be made available, Professor Joselyn responded that it is the policy of his department to send them only to the faculty member unless they ask something else be done. In the Carlson school, for example, 90% of the faculty have asked that the information also be sent to the school.

The cost of the service, Dr. Joselyn reported, is 8 cents per answer sheet; they are processed free of charge; central administration provides funds for processing to encourage use of the service.

The two purposes of evaluation of teaching, Dr. Joselyn told the Committee in response to a question, are for use in promotion, tenure, and merit pay and for the improvement of teaching. One reason for having a variety of questions is to achieve the different purposes. Asked if the purposes are being accomplished, Dr. Joselyn said he could not say. Most faculty, he guessed, conduct the evaluation because their department requires it for promotion and tenure rather than for the improvement of teaching. There are, he also pointed out, other ways of evaluating teaching than asking students; that happens to be the easiest way, but it is probably not appropriate to ask students if the content of the course was correct or if the textbook was the right one for the course. Those are judgments better made by peers.

Professor Joselyn was told that students in one college are not happy with the form that is currently used; it was also argued that students are well able to make judgments about the quality of a textbook (although not necessarily the contents).

Asked if there were space for essay responses on the forms and if his office had the ability to correlate surveys with grade reports, Professor Joselyn affirmed that there is room for essay responses but that correlation with grades has not been done at Minnesota. It was suggested that this would be useful information for faculty.

Dr. Cafarelli reported that the University would soon be submitting to the Bush Foundation a proposal to establish a program aimed at tenure-track faculty and directed toward improvement of student learning. One piece of the program would be a confidential individual teaching consultation; they typically rely heavily on student evaluations of teaching. Professor Joselyn commented that the research

suggests that teaching evaluations do not change faculty behavior except in the case of a new faculty member or one who is starting a new course; otherwise intervention is required to bring about change.

The purpose of the survey being proposed, Dr. Joselyn told the Committee, is both to inform those who wish to know about the extent of student evaluation of teaching as well as to provide information on what better services can be delivered. Committee members had no substantive comments on the survey form; Professor Clark urged that they call Professor Joselyn if they have suggestions. The results of the survey will be summarized and made public; it is hoped that the report can be completed by the end of Spring Quarter.

### **3. Discussion of Items for the May Senate meeting**

Professor Clark called to the attention of Committee members a packet of draft resolutions which might be submitted to the Senate.

Scheduling of Events During Finals Week and Study Day The Committee affirmed its support for the policy with the addition of one sentence about the intended distribution of the information.

Achievement of a "D" grade in prerequisite courses Changes in the language pursuant to the discussion at the last meeting were pointed out to the Committee. It was agreed that the question of the propriety of existing prerequisites should perhaps be examined but that that need not be combined with this resolution. With some changes in the comment the Committee approved the revised resolution and accompanying rationale.

Review of Undergraduate Programs This was a new resolution, drafted to reflect the conversation the Committee had had with representatives of the deans about undergraduate program reviews. Professor Clark recalled for the Committee the unanimous views of the deans that undergraduate reviews not be conducted separately but rather that they be included, with greater emphasis, in the Graduate School reviews. This resolution affirms that the undergraduate programs should be emphasized to the same extent as graduate education and research.

It was reported to the Committee that in recent reviews the undergraduate programs appear to be receiving equal emphasis with the graduate education and research elements of the departments. A problem which apparently does exist, however, is that some units continue to resist being reviewed; this resolution would require, by Senate policy, that all units be reviewed at least once every ten years. There is, it was noted, no sanction attached to departments which are not reviewed.

Concern was expressed about the possible requirement of duplication of reviews when there are accreditation reviews by external agencies; would departments be required to conduct two (or more) reviews? It was agreed that language should be added which would make it clear that duplicate reviews are not required by the policy.

The Committee agreed to forward the policy to the Senate Consultative Committee with the request that it be presented to the Senate; it was also agreed that it would be sent to the deans for their comments.

Unification of Honors Programs The proposed resolution and commentary had been amended in

accord with the discussion at the previous meeting. The Committee, after brief discussion, approved the revised version of the resolution for forwarding to the Senate Consultative Committee.

Resolution on Course Numbering One new paragraph had been added to the proposal. Committee members continued to express reservations about the proposal in its entirety, for a variety of reasons. Some Committee members accepted the rationale for the 7-XXX course numbers, for the professional schools, although others disliked the implication that barriers would be constructed, the professional schools would be more isolated, and that students would be discouraged from taking the 7-XXX courses. There was less support for the addition of the 6-XXX courses as graduate-level courses.

After considerable discussion there was agreement that the proposal should, before it is sent to the Senate, be circulated to the college curriculum committees and the Graduate School Policy and Review Committees. The Committee was of the view that if these changes are determined to be desirable it will be necessary to have widespread support before they can be implemented.

Professor Clark agreed to send the proposal to the colleges for comments.

Policy on Grade Changes Some minor revisions were made to the policy, following the discussion at the previous meeting; the policy continued to receive the approval of the Committee.

#### **4. CASE Professor of the Year**

Professor Clark informed the Committee that the Council for the Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) gives an award which includes \$2000; there is one per year. In Minnesota, however, there is an additional award, carrying a \$1000 stipend. Assistant Vice President Kvavik suggested that SCEP make the nomination, perhaps from the Morse-Alumni award winners.

The information about the award was passed to Professor Congdon in order that the Morse-Alumni award committee could consider the nomination.

#### **5. Discussion of Morse-Alumni Criteria**

Letters which had been sent to Professor Clark protesting the outcome of the Morse-Alumni Award selection process were circulated to Committee members; there is irritation in some quarters that no faculty member in CLA received one of the awards.

Given the little time remaining in the meeting, Professor Clark suggested that the issue be deferred until the May 10 meeting. Copies of the Morse-Alumni Award criteria were distributed to Committee members for their review prior to the next meeting. Professor Clark also distributed a sheet containing a count of the distribution of the awards by college for the past 10 years.

It was agreed that the criteria probably deserve thought; the intermarriage between teaching and research should also perhaps be made clearer. It was recognized that the relative weights of the criteria have probably changed over the years. No one, it was observed, received the award who did not deserve it but there were people who deserved it who did not receive it.

The Committee talked for a short while about the possible problems with the nomination system, the criteria for selecting the award winners, and whether or not there was cause for worry about the small number of nominees (for example, only 3 from CLA, out of only 13 nominated in total from the college).

The Committee adjourned at 5:00.

-- Gary Engstrand

University of Minnesota