

Minutes*

Senate Committee on Educational Policy
Tuesday, May 2, 1995
1:45 - 3:30
Room 626 Campus Club

Present: Kenneth Heller (chair), Anita Cholewa, Megan Gunnar, Darwin Hendel, Robert Johnson, Manuel Kaplan, Laura Coffin Koch, Judith Martin, William Van Essendelft, Darren Walhof

Regrets: James Cotter, Elayne Donahue, Gayle Graham Yates (on leave)

Absent: Ryan Nilsen

Guest: Linda Ellinger (Arts, Sciences, and Engineering)

[In these minutes: Policies on classes and scheduling; Report of the Committee on Teaching and Learning]

1. Policies on Classes and Scheduling

Professor Heller convened the meeting at 1:45 and turned to Dr. Cholewa to lead the discussion of revisions in Senate policies concerning class scheduling, the final examination period, and the scheduling of final examinations. Dr. Cholewa distributed a handout with the policy revisions that had been agreed upon at earlier meetings. These revisions are part of SCEP's program to review current Senate educational policies and reconcile them with actual University practices. Committee members discussed a number of issues.

- The policy on a standard class schedule (calling for Minneapolis and St. Paul campus classes to be on the same schedule, with the same starting time, for 50-minute classes, and for the start time of T-Th classes longer than 50 minutes to coincide with the standard schedule) also includes a proviso that students will not be permitted to enroll for classes that overlap. Can the registration system be set up to not allow such registration?

The prohibition on registering for overlapping classes, it was agreed, should be a separate policy, since it is not specifically a question of the scheduling of classes.

- There is no common finals schedule; they are set by each college. A student could have classes at different times of the day or different days of the week, in different colleges, and yet end up with overlapping finals. This suggests there should be a parallel policy of not permitting students to register for courses with overlapping final examinations. The registration system, ideally, should print out the final examination schedule for a student's

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courses at the time of registration, so they know their exam schedule, and it should also not permit registration for courses with overlapping finals.

The Committee may wish to consider recommending a policy requiring a common finals schedule for the Twin Cities campus. It would be better to have a class schedule that would not have overlapping finals than to have a policy of not allowing students to register for courses with overlapping finals; is the former possible?

- Until there is a single registration system for Day and CEE courses, the system would not be able to identify overlapping classes or finals when a student registers for both Day and CEE courses.
- Present policy on scheduling of final exams provides that there will be no exceptions from the final examination schedule except with the concurrence of the department chair, the dean, and the scheduling office. The Committee concluded that this should be changed, so that a final examination may be moved on recommendation of the faculty member and with the concurrence of the department head and the unanimous secret written ballot of the students in the course. The scheduling office is to be notified of the change; if a room to hold the examination cannot be found, either the time of the exam could not be moved or a room not under the control of the scheduling office would have to be found.

The Committee recognized that there could be difficulties obtaining unanimous consent, but moving an examination from its scheduled time should NOT be an easy process.

Laboratory practicums would be permitted during the final week of classes.

No lectures would be permitted after the last day of classes, unless there is no course final of any kind.

Take-home examinations, and other final exams requiring out-of-class work, may be distributed during the last week of classes, but may not be due before the regularly scheduled time of the final exam.

It was agreed that the final revisions to these policies would be reviewed and approved at the next meeting, and included in the presentation of educational policies to the Senate next fall.

2. Report of the Committee on Teaching and Learning

Professor Heller turned next to Dr. Ellinger to review the development of the Report of the Committee on Teaching and Learning. She reported that the Committee, co-chaired by Professor Heller and former Vice President Hopkins, met about 30 times over 15 months and went through repeated drafts of its report; the Committee gradually came to the conclusion that it should focus its recommendations to help the functioning of departments. The meetings with chairs and deans, Professor Heller added, made clear the necessity to change or reinforce departmental culture with respect to teaching and learning. The report emphasizes those practices that are simple to implement and have, for the most part, low cost. Most of the recommendations are already practiced by some units at the University. There are many

aspects of teaching and especially learning that report does NOT address.

The report was submitted to Senior Vice President Infante and SCC Chair Professor John Adams; Professor Adams has forwarded it to SCEP for review and recommendation to the Senate Consultative Committee.

The Committee supported the emphasis of the report on changing the department culture and the interaction of departments with the University administration as the necessary first step to improving teaching and learning at the University. Several points were made in the discussion.

1. In terms of KEY recommendations, the Committee believed that #17, calling for departmental rewards for teaching, is most important; unless the reward structure is changed, nothing will happen. One way not to pit research against teaching is to permit overload pay for teaching to go into research funds. An effective teacher can become highly valuable to a department. Many faculty would prefer to teach another course rather than apply for another grant they will not get.

There must also be opportunities for faculty to learn to teach more effectively; if those are not made available, but the reward structure is changed, only half the solution is implemented.

2. There were discussions of how the recommendations might be reorganized, given the 29 strategies to implement the five principal recommendations. The final conclusion was to leave that structure intact.
3. The recommendations in the report presume that existing programs for improvement of teaching and learning would continue.
4. The proposal for differential faculty workloads as a departmental responsibility is a correct one. It has been discussed forever that faculty have different emphases at different stages in their careers, and that they change; the decisions about allocation of effort need to be made by DEPARTMENTS, not individuals.
5. The recommendation that teaching be considered in the hiring process, and that it be a part of the promotion and tenure process, does not represent significant change in existing college and University regulations. More specificity is needed is at the department level. It does not matter what is written down on paper; what is important is how colleagues value teaching. There are some departments that value it highly and others that clearly do not value it at all.

If the focus is on newly hired faculty, but there is no departmental support for excellence in teaching, the individual will become a sacrificial lamb and will also not obtain tenure. They will become isolated and hostile if in a department that does not value teaching.

6. These recommendations could be turned into critical measures of the quality of the student experience; if they were, how would one know that the University was doing what it intended? The CTL put its recommendations in operational form. It proposes actions, such as recommending that teaching be a factor in the hiring decision, and those actions can be identified as part of the decision. The recommendations are actions needed to establish or change a culture, and that

change must start with the people who do the work. If embraced, there will be changes. Apart from this cultural change, there needs to be measurements of their effect on student learning. This is no such recommendation in this report.

7. There is only ONE sentence that considers the research on how students learn. This is crucial and should be more strongly emphasized in this and any follow-up recommendations.
8. The core set of recommendations should be fitted in some way into the strategic planning process. This report should be connected to other things that are occurring at the University.
9. In terms of technology, the CTL rejected the proposition that there should be decentralized assistance from a centralized source; they call for a "person down the hall" as the best model for using technology in instruction.

What would put teeth in this report, asked one Committee member? If the Committee supports all or part of the report, it can be taken to the Senate as a policy recommendation. It was agreed that Professor Heller would report to the Senate Consultative Committee that SCEP strongly supports the report and believes that the five recommendations should go to the Senate for action as policy, with 29 action items for implementation as part of the policy. It will be brought to the Senate in the fall of 1995.

3. A Policy Matter

In closing conversation, it was noted that in the opinion of the University it is NOT legally permissible to post grades for a course using alphabetical order, student ID numbers, or Social Security numbers. An individual identification code must be agreed on between each student and the instructor if grades are to be posted.

Professor Heller adjourned the meeting at 3:30.

-- Gary Engstrand

University of Minnesota