

Minutes*

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

Present: Laura Koch (chair), Elayne Donahue, Gordon Hirsch, Judith Martin, Kathleen Newell, Kevin Nicholson, Palmer Rogers, Jessie Jo Roos, Tina Rovick, Craig Swan, William Van Essendelft, Gayle Graham Yates

Regrets: Thomas Johnson, Robert Leik

Absent: Avram Bar-Cohen, Darwin Hendel

Guests: Chuck Dahl (Office of the Registrar)

[In these minutes: grading policy matters; 2000-2001 academic calendar; Twin Cities undergraduate curriculum committee; academy of distinguished teachers]

1. Grading Policy Matters

Professor Koch convened the meeting at 1:00 and noted that there were several issues that had been raised with respect to the Incomplete (I).

One question is whether a student should be notified when an I is changed to a grade. One Committee member said this should not be required; if there is a contract, the student knows what must be done, and faculty do not have to talk to all members of a class about their grades. Other Committee members believed that if notification could be accomplished easily and cheaply, it would be user-friendly to do so, because timely notification would permit a student to raise questions if it was believed there was an error. Mr. Dahl said that perhaps automatic notification by email could be built into the system later, but it would assume the University had an email address for the student. At present it would be very costly to do so, because each change would have to be looked up by hand. Committee members were also divided about whether this responsibility should be placed on the faculty member, or if needed to be. It was pointed out that the new grade book program being set up, allowing much greater ease of grading for faculty, might permit such notification to students.

Several Committee members pointed out that while a student might be peeved to learn later that an I had been converted to an F, it would only matter at the time of declaring a major or at graduation; other than that, no one would care. And in the case of graduate and professional students, no change would ever be made unless the student requested it, because faculty haven't the time or inclination to go searching out student transcripts for an Incomplete.

*These minutes reflect discussion and debate at a meeting of a committee of the University of Minnesota Senate or Twin Cities Campus Assembly; none of the comments, conclusions, or actions reported in these minutes reflect the views of, nor are they binding on, the Senate or Assembly, the Administration, or the Board of Regents.

It was agreed by consensus that no change in the grading policy would be made, and that notification to students would be sought as the new grading and student systems are brought on line.

The question of the status of an I was also brought up with respect to adult special students and students who may be taking an isolated course but who are not enrolled in a program. It was agreed that for students taking a course for graduate or professional credit, the I would not revert to an F after one quarter.

2. Morse-Alumni Nomination Committee

Professor Koch distributed a list of the proposed members of the Morse-Alumni Award nominating committee; the membership was approved unanimously.

3. The 2000-2001 Academic Calendar

Professor Koch next distributed copies of a proposed 2000-2001 calendar. She noted that it did not address the question of when B-based faculty should return to work, but that is not a question that SCEP must deal with. The calendar is one that follows the rules set out in the semester conversion rules approved by the Senate, and that she would bring it back to the Committee for action after further work with the Office of the Registrar.

4. Twin Cities Undergraduate Course and Curriculum Committee

Professor Koch asked the Committee to consider whether the proposed Twin Cities course and curriculum body should remain a subcommittee of SCEP or if another attempt should be made to have the Assembly approve it as a standing committee of the Assembly. Several points were made in the discussion.

- The group would be stronger if the Assembly were to approve it as a standing committee (that is, if sufficient number of people were present at an Assembly meeting to approve it; the lack of sufficient people present and voting at an Assembly meeting has been the reason the bylaw change has not heretofore been enacted).
- The committee, whether a subcommittee of SCEP or a standing committee, could diminish the role of the college curriculum committees. College committees should be obligated to keep each other informed of their work (such as by distribution of minutes and agendas). The dispute resolution function of a Twin Cities committee, however, would be important. (All Committee members appeared to agree on the need for better communication between college curriculum bodies.)
- The question of course duplication is a tricky issue, especially under IMG. The committee would have a role in examining duplication, but there would be legitimate differences in courses that on the surface might appear to be duplicative.
- Would this committee usurp some of the responsibilities of SCEP? (It was thought not.)
- The intent is not that the committee review undergraduate program proposals or majors, but that it

look at the curriculum of the Twin Cities campus as a whole (such as is now occurring with the biological sciences, for example).

- SCEP has long talked of the need for a curriculum oversight committee, and has heard much about the lack of coordination and connection between colleges developing courses to meet liberal education requirements; a Twin Cities committee might not be ideal, but there is a clear need for a clearinghouse and faculty forum to review the curriculum.
- If the body is to set policy, it should be an Assembly committee; if it is to implement policy and make recommendations to the provost, it could be a subcommittee.
- The relationship of the curriculum committee to the Council on Liberal Education is not clear.
- The original proposal had the curriculum committee reviewing all courses; the present one--either for a subcommittee or standing committee--calls for it to serve as a disinterested party looking at questions that arise across colleges and serving as an appellate and review body.
- On the one hand, the associate deans of the colleges could perform this curriculum review function; on the other, one can question whether the faculty should turn over this responsibility to the administration.
- SCEP should establish the subcommittee, simply to get the body functioning, and consider later whether to take a bylaw change to the Assembly to create a standing committee.

It was agreed that Professors Koch, Martin, and Swan would rewrite the proposal to incorporate the suggestions made.

5. Academy of Distinguished Teachers

Professor Koch handed out materials related to a proposed academy of distinguished teachers.

There was agreement that those who win the Morse-Alumni award and who win the graduate/professional distinguished teaching award should automatically be members of the academy. One question with which the Committee grappled at some length was the number of faculty who should be included, and how those who have won the Morse-Alumni winners in the past should be incorporated in the academy. It was agreed that the Committee need to know the number of Morse-Alumni winners still active at the University.

One Committee member asked why this was being considered at all. Professor Koch explained that most believe the selection process for the two awards is very good, and that any new process would make the two awards seem second-class. The academy would also provide a mechanism for making use of the award-winners in a way helpful to the University; it would not be greatly different from the Morse-Alumni advisory committee that is to be established.

The Committee reached no conclusion on the number of faculty who should be included in the academy, nor how to select from those who have already won the Morse-Alumni award, and agreed to

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revisit the issue at an upcoming meeting.

Professor Koch adjourned the meeting at 3:00.

-- Gary Engstrand

University of Minnesota