

Minutes*

Senate Committee on Educational Policy
Wednesday, September 30, 1998
1:00 – 3:00
Room 238 Morrill Hall

Present: Judith Martin (chair), Darwin Hendel, Gordon Hirsch, Laura Coffin Koch, Christine Maziar, Kathleen Newell, Palmer Rogers, Richard Skaggs, Thomas Soulen

Regrets: Robert Johnson, Jeff Ratliff-Crain,

Absent: Craig Swan

Guests: none

[In these minutes: appointment of the Twin Cities Curriculum Subcommittee; advising for semesters (and problems therewith); teaching awards; athletic rule exemption for UMC; making teaching evaluation data available to students; program reviews]

1. Twin Cities Curriculum Subcommittee

Professor Martin convened the meeting at 1:05 and drew the attention of committee members to the charge to the Twin Cities Curriculum Subcommittee. She noted that the Subcommittee needed to be appointed, and recited a list of nominees that she and Professor Koch had prepared (8 faculty, 2 P/A staff nominated by the college curriculum committees). The Committee approved the names; Professor Martin said she would contact all of them about serving on the Subcommittee.

2. Advising for Semesters

Professor Koch now reported on advising students for the change to semesters. She recalled that the Senate had adopted a policy requiring that students not be put at a disadvantage because of the change to semesters. She noted that she had served on a joint administration/governance committee on changing to semesters, and in that role had been asked to take on responsibility for advising. A task force on advising was appointed and began work last year (1997), with the goal of making the transition to semesters as smooth as possible for students. The task force did considerable work.

- It provided training for advisers and faculty.
- It prepared an adviser's handbook, a student's handbook, and a number of other publications with information about the change to semesters, thousands of copies of which have been distributed to students in various venues. Brochures were printed and distributed for various groups of students (undergraduates, graduate students, and others).

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- They set up a website with much information for students.
- Students were sent email messages about the change,
- Kick-off events were held on the Twin Cities campus, with information, food, and gifts.
- There have been workshops for students on the transition; they have not been well-attended, which may reflect the fact that students will wait until the last minute or that the colleges have been doing a good job and that students know what's coming.
- Information on the change was provided at the freshman convocation.

In other words, Professor Martin concluded, no students can say that they did not know about what was coming. Professor Koch concurred.

There is a concern about the workload for advisers during calendar year 1999. Students will not think about the change in advance, and will then rush to advisers at the last minute because they will want to graduate early. The academic year ends June 15, followed by a 10-week summer session, and then less than a month before the new academic year begins, running right up to the 23rd of December. There will be constant pressure on advisers, possibly more than on faculty or students. Some units have hired more advisers or increased the appointments of their staff, in recognition of the need.

Another concern is that while advisers may feel comfortable with the change, that may not be true of faculty (in their role as advisers to students). They play a different role, Professor Koch said, and the task force is trying to get information to faculty in a way that will be useful for them.

A big problem the task force has faced is obtaining accurate information (such as about semester courses) for publication. Course numbers and credits have changed repeatedly and in various ways, especially after units evaluated how students could complete their programs after the change to semesters (i.e., in some cases, the planned curriculum made little sense for students trying to finish up a degree).

They have also sought information from other institutions that have made the change to semesters (i.e., Michigan State, Utah, MnSCU). The biggest concern of MnSCU is the drop in enrollment, which has been significant. The University is expecting a drop; the credit hours per student last year and this fall are up by almost one credit per student – which is probably a reflection of the fact that current students are working to get done before the change.

One proposal being considered is banding of tuition; the charges for 13, 14, and 15 credits would be the same. One member of the Finance and Planning Committee has urged that the band be extended to 16 credits, a notion that several members of SCEP agreed would be wise. The Committee concluded it wished to hear from Dr. Zetterberg about the proposal, and that it may wish to offer advice to the Senate Consultative Committee and the Senate about the proposal.

Professor Koch reported that there is also a working group on the intersession, the 3-week session the precedes Summer Session but follows the end of Spring Semester. Summer Session will last for 10 weeks, and will include one set 8-week term. The intersession, for financial aid purposes, will be counted as part of Spring Semester; for academic purposes, colleges and departments can use it as they wish. It

can be used to offer intense coursework or other kinds of instruction or it can be combined with any part of the 10-week Summer Session (including the creation of a 13-week summer semester). It was SCEP's intent that departments have great flexibility in how they use the intersession.

The impact of the intersession on faculty workload will vary; for 9-month faculty, the intersession will be overload. Colleges or departments must also decide if coursework offered during the intersession will be substitutable for courses offered during the Fall and Spring semesters, and if so, how that will affect the distribution of course offerings during the entire year.

Another concern of faculty and academic advisors is student workload after the change to semesters. There is a Senate policy on conversion of courses, but in some places two quarter courses are simply being combined into one semester course, and in other cases a quarter course is being turned into a semester course. Professor Koch observed that with respect to student workload in some cases, the University might either "work them to death or bore them to death." There is need to retain a balance in coursework obligations.

Next year, orientation for students will be in June. Faculty will be asked – urged – to get their book lists in early, because many students buy their books as they go through orientation.

One Committee member inquired if there is any provision for beginning to offer semester courses during the summer of 1999, as a way to pilot courses in advance of the real thing; it seems not. There may be a turn-over point on the computers that would not permit such offerings; Professor Koch said she would inquire of the Registrar's office. Departments could, however, use the discretionary course numbers to offer semester versions of regular courses. Some units are offering special summer courses to help students who have taken two courses out of a three-quarter sequence.

It remains difficult to identify honors courses, since the "H" was dropped from the course indicators. Departments have responded in different ways, and there is a need for a standard way for honors courses to be identified. All honors courses are SUPPOSED to have the word "honors" in the title, but not all departments followed that protocol; as a result, it is not possible to do a search on course titles to identify the honors courses.

Professor Martin thanked Professor Koch for her report.

3. Awards Matters

The Committee reviewed and approved the Morse-Alumni award guidelines, with the proviso that editorial changes were made for the date and mailing address. One concern was that the colleges were not nominating sufficient numbers of faculty for the award. It was suggested that Human Resources be asked to do more in the way of promoting the award and the provision of information to departments on how to make nominations.

Professor Martin reviewed a list of names of people who might be asked to serve on the Morse-Alumni selection committee; the names were accepted and Professor Martin was to contact the individuals about serving. It was agreed that the Committee would take up appointment of the nominating committee for the new graduate/professional award at its meeting on October 15.

The award for outstanding contributions to graduate/professional education has been approved and funding has been made available; Dr. Bruininks' office has a letter ready inviting nominations. Guidelines for the nominations need to be prepared; it was agreed that Professors Martin and Newell would draft them for consideration at a meeting of the Committee in the very near future.

There was agreement that there needed to be separate selection committees for the graduate/professional and the Morse-Alumni award. It may be that the graduate/professional committee should be slightly larger (e.g., 8 faculty/PA rather than 6) because of the greater breadth of graduate and professional programs at the University. It was agreed that Committee members should send an email to Professor Martin with the names of individuals who might serve on the selection committee.

4. Rule Exemption for Crookston

Committee members were provided materials requesting an exemption for the Crookston men's basketball team from the Senate policy prohibiting University-sponsored extra-curricular events during the period from the beginning of study day to the end of finals week. UMC has finals scheduled Thursday-Friday and Monday-Tuesday, and requested permission to schedule a home basketball game on Friday evening.

Committee members could identify no rationale for granting such an exemption and voted unanimously to deny it.

5. Representative from SCEP to the IMG Subcommittee

Professor Thomas Soulen agreed to serve as the representative from SCEP to the IMG subcommittee.

6. Making Available Teaching Evaluation Data

Professor Martin next asked Dr. Hendel to provide an update on the implementation of the Senate policy concerning teaching evaluation data.

Dr. Hendel said there were two matters to be considered. One, the Committee had raised the question of the disposition of the data from the surveys concerning the physical environment in which they took their courses: for those courses which received negative evaluations, is there any way to learn what caused the evaluation (and perhaps, deal with the problem)? Dr. Hendel said there is no processing of the open-ended responses on the questionnaires, and no one knows what the frequency of comment might be on the facilities. He suggested that on the next round of surveys, those from courses that were in the lowest decile in physical facility ratings be examined to determine if there were any comments on the classroom.

It was suggested that the results be stratified by size of class, location, and by time of day, if possible. These data could be very useful for the University if provided to Facilities Management and whomever is in charge of classroom maintenance and renovation. Dr. Hendel agreed to explore the possibilities that exist for developing and manipulating the data in ways that could be helpful.

The second matter was implementation of the new student evaluation forms approved by the Senate last year. There are several standard forms used for teaching evaluation; not all include the ten new questions approved. Some faculty did use the forms and give permission for the results to be released to students.

The implementation committee met Spring Quarter and will meet again this fall to discuss how to make the results available to students. The proposal is that they be on a website that is restricted to students (and perhaps a few others, such as the faculty member whose results are on the website). Access, however, will be a major issue. Dr. Hendel said he would report at a future Committee meeting about progress and about the matter of access.

Results will generally be available a year later; results for Fall Semester 1999 will be available for students registering for Fall Semester, 2000. One question to be answered is the number of evaluations for a particular course – if the same course is taught by the same faculty member, there is usually not great variation in the course from term to term, and it may not be useful to have more than three sets of evaluations available for any single course.

7. Welcome

Professor Martin extended a welcome and introduction to Vice President and Dean Christine Maziar, who joined the last part of the meeting.

Dr. Maziar said she was pleased to join the Committee, and would herself be serving as the representative from the Graduate School.

She reported that she needed to fill two Associate Dean/Associate Vice President positions in her office: one individual would work with grants management; the other with student services, admissions, the Policy and Review Councils, and redesigning the program review process. With respect to the latter, she said, she has suspended program reviews until after the transition to semesters, because it seemed not sensible to bring in outsiders during this period. It will also give the University an opportunity to re-think program reviews and to align them with the compact process.

Asked if the reviews would be simultaneous with undergraduate program reviews, Dr. Maziar said they would whenever possible. She said she would prefer to make multiple use of faculty time whenever possible, and the more that the same pieces of paper can be used multiple times, the better.

With that, Professor Martin adjourned the meeting at 3:00.

-- Gary Engstrand