

Minutes*

Senate Committee on Educational Policy
Wednesday, September 15, 1999
1:00 – 3:00
Room 125 Nolte Center

Present: Judith Martin (chair), Wilbert Ahern, Steve Fitzgerald, Darwin Hendel, Gordon Hirsch, Emily Hoover, Christine Maziar, Kathleen Newell, Marsha Odom, Riv-Ellen Prell, Tina Rovick, Richard Skaggs, Suzanne Bates Smith, Thomas Soulen, Steven Sperber, Craig Swan, Susan VanVoorhis

Regrets: Karen Seashore Louis, Tina Rovick

Absent: none

Guests: Karen Linquist (Office of Human Resources)

[In these minutes: (lengthy list of) issues pending; registration fall 1999; distance education; teaching award guidelines]

1. Welcome and Introductions

Professor Martin convened the meeting at 1:05, welcomed everyone, and called for a round of introductions. Following introductions, she observed that the Committee may not be quite as busy as it has been in the past few years; with semester conversion accomplished, the Committee needs only deal now with the fallout. There will also be continued work on policy revision, which has involved reviewing all educational policies adopted by the Senate and consolidating and updating them; this is a process that is nearing an end.

The Committee also deals with things that "come up" during the year; one such matter that will appear on the agenda will be the report from the Special Senate Committee on Student Academic Integrity, chaired by Regents' Professor Tom Clayton (and of which Professor Martin is a member). Those recommendations may require policy revisions.

2. Issues Pending

Professor Martin next reviewed a list of issues pending before the Committee.

-- Academic integrity: will be taken up when the Clayton committee issues its report.

-- Metropolitan education: the legislature asked MnSCU to provide a report on metropolitan education, and to consult with the University in preparing it; there were meetings between MnSCU and University representatives. The report is due at the legislature soon. Dr. Bruininks sees this as an opportunity to develop

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a University position on metropolitan education separate from that of MnSCU, and a paper on the subject went to the Board of Regents at their September meeting.

-- Exceptions to non-resident tuition rates: these will be handled in compact discussions, and will be treated differently in different parts of the University.

-- Distance education and the virtual university: see the discussion later in these minutes.

-- Activities of University College: the Committee tries to stay in touch with what is going on in University College, including the partnership degrees, and Dean Gail Skinner-West will be invited to provide an update.

-- Grading: John Kellogg, in Institutional Research and Reporting, will bring a draft report on grades that SCEP can review and then submit to the Senate, as required by the report of the grading subcommittee that was approved by the Senate.

-- Peer review of instruction: a SCEP subcommittee last year recommended that there be no change in the policy. Professor Martin said she would write to Dr. Bruininks to so inform him and to inquire about implementation of the policy.

-- Publication of student evaluation of teaching data: Dr. Hendel is working with Measurement Services to implement the Senate action. The change to semesters complicates the matter, because information about past classes will not be pertinent. The data from the questions are made available to students on a voluntary basis.

-- International education policy: needs to go back to the Senate for action.

-- Application of policies to transfer students: an ACEP subcommittee last year said that all of the uniform undergraduate policies (Twin Cities) should apply to transfer students as well. This should receive one last scrutiny before implementation.

-- Credits and degrees: Professor Martin said that a subcommittee appointed some while ago has yet to make a report, so she will reconstitute it. This policy would deal with questions concerning the number of credits required for a degree, the number of credits in residence, and so on. It was suggested that SCC and the Senate should think about where policies are located and how to find them; degree requirements could appear in several places.

-- Teaching evaluation form: it was suggested that there be an additional question on the form about WHY a student does not like a facility, in order that the information can be passed to Facilities Management or to Mr. Fitzgerald, the new classroom manager. It was noted that the question will not be useful UNLESS the information is provided to those who can use it. Professor Martin said she would speak with Dr. Hendel and Mr. Fitzgerald to identify how the information can be made available.

-- First year seminars: the question is whether a similar experience should be provided to transfer students. There will not be as many of the seminars as the University had hoped, because the funding from the legislature was less than requested, but there will be more of them next year. To some extent, the

problem of lack of comparable opportunities for transfer students may diminish, because as more and more lower division students continue into upper division, there may be less space for transfer students. CLA did offer junior seminars for transfer students last year; the Committee should find out what happened with them. It was also suggested that there be an evaluation of the first year seminars: did they have any impact on the students?

-- Changes in K-12 graduation standards: one issue is the impact of the Profile of Learning on applications/admission to the University. At this point it is unclear what will happen to the Profile, since the legislature and Governor are split on what action, if any, should be taken. It seems likely the Profile will continue in some form, and there is need for a faculty committee to work with the Admissions Office with respect to the Profile and University admissions.

-- Guidelines on classroom expectations: the draft developed last year will be distributed to deans and department heads for comment; the Council of Undergraduate Deans will also be asked to look at it.

-- Calendars: SCEP must approve and bring to the Senate calendars for future academic years. The coordinate campuses have provided calendars through 2004; Twin Cities calendars have also been prepared, but they need additional work. It was agreed that Professors Martin, Hirsch, Swan, and Ms. VanVoorhis would meet to review them. It was also suggested that academic calendars sometimes do not mesh with administrative calendars (e.g., faculty appointments for 9-month faculty). There needs to be a tighter link between the two, especially so that faculty advice will not be needed when many 9-month faculty are away for the summer.

-- Policy on repeating courses: there may be practices in some units that vary from the Senate grading policy provisions. There is also some confusion about whether college discretion is permitted. If so, if a student in College A takes a course in College B, which rules apply? It was agreed that Dr. Swan would meet with Professor Martin and Ms. VanVoorhis to consider the matter.

-- Cap on the tuition discount: SCEP last year asked the administration and Board of Regents to put a cap (20 credits) on the 50% undergraduate tuition rate for the 13th and additional credits. That recommendation was not followed. SCEP then asked that it be provided a report on the number of enrollments in excess of 20 credits per term. John Kellogg will provide the Committee with a report.

-- Class sizes with the change to semesters: John Kellogg will provide a report. Mr. Fitzgerald reported that all classes have a location, although not all are in locations that meet standards. For Spring Semester, there are at present about 300 courses that do not have a location; one problem is loss of the Architecture building. He told the Committee that attempts are being made to make better use of classrooms (one problem, for example, is classes that STILL do not meet at the regular times set out in the class schedule). On this last point, Professor Martin said she wished the Committee to be provided a report on the number of classes that do not respect the class schedule; faculty are seeing students come late to class because another class runs at different times. Another problem is that there is no passing time between some Tuesday-Thursday classes, when a 50-minute class starts or ends at the same time a 90-minute class starts or ends.

At Crookston, there has been a severe shortage of space for classes with the change to semesters. At Morris, the major challenge has been re-introducing the freshman seminars.

-- Applied doctoral education in Minnesota: at this point SCEP feels that nothing more needs to be done about this. Vice President Maziar concurred.

-- Rochester: was discussed at the Board of Regents last week. Professor Martin will invite Mary Heltsley, who has been appointed Provost of the Rochester campus, to talk with SCEP about academic plans for the Rochester campus.

-- Writing across the curriculum: this is a Twin Cities issue, and a report from associate deans for undergraduate education will be sought.

-- Relationship of the Council on Liberal Education (CLE) to this committee: Professor Martin said that she and Dr. Swan would discuss this. There is a sense that CLE not operating in the way originally envisioned, that it is acting alone, and that it is unconnected to the Committee or the Twin Cities Assembly (but should be).

-- Graduate School issues: are on the back burner, for the time being.

-- Student 2000 project: the Committee will receive a report. Dr. Swan reported that he and Ms. VanVoorhis had contacted a number of deans and associate deans in different colleges to help identify the problems and issues that arose with registration this fall so that they could develop a list of items to address. He urged that if Committee members have issues, they should contact him or Ms. VanVoorhis. He also agreed that he would solicit the views of Directors of Graduate Studies. He reported that he and the Director of Financial Aid are also having meetings with students to identify issues that need to be addressed.

-- Advisory committee on classrooms: Mr. Fitzgerald has expressed a desire to have an advisory committee, which would be a joint subcommittee of this Committee and the Committee on Finance and Planning. Professor Martin said she would contact Professor Gudeman, chair of Finance and Planning, about appointing such a group.

Professor Martin commented on how impressed she was with the technological capabilities in UMC classrooms, and how much more advanced they are than the Twin Cities in this respect.

-- Rule on retention of papers and exams: the General Counsel's office will be asked, again, if there is any applicable statute or any other legal reasons for any particular rule.

3. Registration and Financial Aid, Fall 1999

Professor Martin inquired if Dr. Swan or Ms. VanVoorhis had any report on the registration process for semesters, with PeopleSoft.

Ms. VanVoorhis said she wanted first to thank all the colleges for their work, and the students, who she said were understanding and who worked with them to get through the process. She said she hoped the registration for Spring Semester would be smoother, although they are finding a lot of bad data as a result of the translation from the old system to the new, and that will need to be cleaned up. There could be one more "rocky" registration period, she cautioned, but after that they should go well.

Dr. Swan said that while official numbers are not available yet, it appears that undergraduate enrollment is up across the system (perhaps down on some campuses, up on others). On the Twin Cities campus, from last year to this year, it also appears that average credit load may have INCREASED--so the University's actions may have had some effect on behavior. That, Vice President Maziar interjected, is worth a round of applause--which the Committee promptly gave it. That is impressive, she said, and a testament to the seriousness of the University's students.

4. Distance Education and the Virtual University

Professor Martin turned next to the subject of distance education, a topic that has vexed the Committee for some time in terms of what, if anything, the Committee should be doing. What pieces of distance education (DE) does the Committee need to pay attention to, she asked? Discussions with Dr. Swan, and with Regents' Professor Tom Clayton (who represented SCEP on administrative discussions of distance education last year) have persuaded her that the "technology-enhanced learning" part of the "DE/TEL" combination does not need particular attention; technology will be used in the classroom and for courses as it is appropriate. DE, however, remains an issue. What should SCEP do, if the issue is to be considered?

This is not only a question of the Minnesota Virtual University (MnVU), Dr. Swan commented. He described the other activities underway, such as a web-based way to explore educational opportunities linked to career choices and places to obtain catalogue information. One problem is that there are different visions of what MnVU should be, and when the legislature funded it, even LEGISLATORS had different visions of what it would be. It is possible that MnVU may become more involved in transfer issues. The idea that it would serve as a credit bank, where one accumulated credits and graduated when the number was high enough, is not something in which the University is interested.

It is possible, of course, for a student to obtain credits from several different institutions, and then transfer them into the University. The University will only accept credits from accredited institutions (although some question whether the same accreditation standards are used with virtual universities as with traditional institutions).

Dr. Swan observed that DE is very expensive, and that perhaps there are places where the University should concentrate its efforts and other places where it should not. That latter matter has not been addressed, and it is one that SCEP could push on. The University has long had distance education, through Independent Study and the U.S. mail; now it can be conducted on ITV and over the web. With the advent of digital TV and increased bandwidth, the suggestion has been made that the University could become a partner with KTCA. These kinds of alternatives, he said, need to be based on decisions the University makes about DE.

It was suggested that SCEP should talk with the Senate Committee on Information Technology, to be sure that the two groups were not both pursuing the same ends, or working at cross-purposes with one another. It was also agreed that Professor Martin would write to the Executive Vice President to ask him to outline a plan to identify the numerous issues that surround DE.

It might be helpful to find out what has happened in other states or at other universities that have gone into DE in a big way. The University has been involved in distance education for a long time, and the

Internet provides new tools. The faculty are doing interesting things with those tools, but one can inquire if those activities add up to an institutional strategy for DE. One can also ask if the institution SHOULD have a strategy, or should it be built up from the bottom? One datum about DE and Internet technology is that most students who use it are already on the campus.

One Committee member recalled the discussion piece that had been distributed and said that the AAUP questions about distance education were important: what are we doing? The issue of cost slides to the side, added another. It will be important to see the data from other institutions.

5. Teaching Awards

Professor Martin now welcomed Karen Linquist to the meeting, to discuss the schedule and process for giving the Morse-Alumni and Graduate/Professional awards for outstanding contributions to education. The Committee agreed:

-- The recognition event should be April 24.

-- That the period of time one has been at the University to qualify for either award should be increased from three to five years, including the current year. This point arose because one Committee member inquired if, empirically, tenure-track faculty received the award. Although it is very unlikely they would, because they would not have had the time to accumulate the record that the winners have typically compiled, there have been tenure-track faculty who won in the past (and who were subsequently denied tenure, which created an awkward situation for the University). It was agreed that the guidelines should include a statement along the lines of "in the past XX years, out of YY award winners, ZZ have been tenure-track appointments"; YY as a percentage of ZZ will be quite small. This would alert departments and colleges that nominating a tenure-track faculty member would be a long shot. It would be best to be honest about these odds, the Committee agreed. (Those who had served on the nominating committees in the past did not recall that tenure-track faculty had won, but also pointed out that tenure status had not been a part of the nominating committee's deliberations; it was not a factor.)

-- The deadline for submission of files would be January 29.

-- Proposed nominating committees were approved; Professor Martin is to contact the proposed members.

6. Faculty Director, Program for Individualized Learning

The Committee was provided with the position description for the Faculty Director of the Program for Individualized Learning. The position is vacant; the individual is to come from the ranks of the faculty, and the position requires about a 10-20% time commitment.

Professor Martin adjourned the meeting at 3:00.

-- Gary Engstrand