

Minutes*

Faculty Consultative Committee
Thursday, June 4, 1998
1:00 – 4:00
Room 238 Morrill Hall

Present: Victor Bloomfield (chair), Kent Bales, Carole Bland, Gary Davis, Mary Dempsey, Gary Gardner, Virginia Gray, David Hamilton, Russell Hobbie, M. Janice Hogan, Laura Coffin Koch, Leonard Kuhl, Fred Morrison, V. Rama Murthy, Harvey Peterson

Absent: Michael Korth, Marvin Marshak, Matthew Tirrell

Other: Martha Kvanbeck (University Senate)

[In these minutes: relationships with regents; discussions with legislators at fund-raisers; important issues pending]

1. Various Matters

Professor Bloomfield convened the meeting at 1:00 and declared that the first order of business was to have a piece of cake, to recognize the last formal meeting of the Committee for the year.

The second item of business was recognition of departing Committee members (Carole Bland, Gary Gardner, Virginia Gray, Russell Hobbie, Laura Koch, and Victor Bloomfield), who were each given a gift as a token of thanks for their service on FCC. Professor Bloomfield commented that it had been a privilege to work with a remarkable and hard-working group of people and that he had been pleased to be a part of it. Professor Gray presented Professor Bloomfield with a gift, and said that as a political analyst, she reflected on what did NOT happen during the year, things that could have gone wrong, but didn't: the faculty got off on the right foot with the new president and administration and the faculty did not continue to fragment, after the tenure debate. She also recounted what she described as Professor Bloomfield's graceful language at the presidential inauguration as an example of how well he had represented faculty during his service as chair.

Professor Bloomfield then reported on meetings in which he had been involved. In the quarterly meeting with the regents' chair and vice chair, and the President and Executive Vice President, he had once again raised the question of faculty representation on regents' committees; he was officially told that the regents' are not ready for it. They do, however, like the less formal meetings of their educational policy committee, with faculty participation, and may expand the practice to their faculty and staff affairs committee. The chair and vice chair of the Board have also agreed to have quarterly meetings with FCC.

President Yudof has suggested that the regents take up faculty welfare issues more actively (e.g., sabbaticals). They would work with Professor Bales's committee, and could lead to more public recognition that the regents value the faculty and will try to help them. Involvement could also lead to

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more communication across the table, and a greater understanding of why faculty benefits are important. It will be, he concluded, an evolving relationship, but the implication of the recommendation is that they would be more actively involved, rather than passive recipients of recommendations.

Professor Bloomfield then commented briefly on the fund-raisers for the DFL and IR legislative leaders, which had been arranged by Professors Marshak, Murthy, and Stuthman. He thought they went well. One DFL leader acknowledged that the University would need continuous attention, and that the legislative appropriation this session was not a one-time fix. IR leaders said it was very important that the University demonstrate accountability, that it have clear and sensible goals that it is achieving. On the question of the balance between the University and MNSCU, the message was that the University will have to do an extra good job in order to be competitive with MNSCU, but that IF it does a good job, it WILL be competitive.

Other Committee members reported that the legislators emphasized the effectiveness of the unified approach the University brought to the legislature this time, and they commended the University for being far ahead of other systems in setting, accomplishing, and reporting on objectives. Faculty contact with legislators was very important and must be kept up. Professor Bloomfield recalled that legislators had been asked if they cared if the University were top-ranked; basically, they did not, but invited the faculty to inform the legislature why it mattered – what are the benefits to Minnesota from having a top-ranked university.

The Committee next held a discussion about a possible visit to the Duluth campus in the fall. It appears there is some uncertainty about the usefulness of such a visit on the part of the faculty and administration at Duluth, but it was agreed that if structured properly, a visit would be helpful in maintaining communication with colleagues.

2. Important Issues Pending

The Committee then reviewed and discussed briefly what it believed to be the major issues facing it next year. They are:

A. Faculty Handbook

There is a need to have a useful printed version (small) and a useful web version. The printed version might very well include an index to the web. Committee members made several observations on this matter.

- It is difficult to get at complicated material, and thought needs be given on how to make it accessible. It may be that a working group should attend to this.
- That one cannot obtain parts of policies is frustrating. The U of California has a big index, readily usable, and one can easily abstract parts of policies that one needs.
- Adobe Acrobat makes it difficult for faculty and others to obtain regents' policies, and is an unnecessary barrier to access for those who simply need a text-only version; why cannot there be a text-only version available on the web?

- A major issue with the government review group (with respect to grants management) was that one cannot find policies and cannot get them.

It was agreed that this was an issue that should be brought up with President Yudof and Executive Vice President Bruininks at the meeting on June 23. It is in the best interest of the University to do this well.

An issue directly related to the matter of access to policies is faculty indemnification; Professor Bloomfield said he has received no response from the letter he sent to President Yudof. Professor Morrison suggested that the FCC chair make a report to the Senate, and that the President can at that time explain his views.

B. Health Care

This will be the BIG issue for next year, Professor Morrison speculated; a difficult decision must be made, one that it seems Human Resources would rather avoid, and that is whether to separate from the state and set up a University health care plan. This issue also has the potential to be a source of major conflict between the faculty and the administration, because the latter may not want to separate. A decision will be required by November 1.

Professor Gray suggested that the incoming FCC chair and vice chair remind the President of faculty concern that a decision not be put off, and that the issue needs high-level attention.

C. Academic Misconduct Policy

Professor Bloomfield noted a letter from Professor Gayle Graham Yates, chair of the Science and Scholarly Advisory Board (SSAB). The SSAB has been unable to reach agreement with the office of the Vice President for Research on changes that should be made to the academic misconduct policy, so is requesting FCC and the Executive Vice President to appoint a task force to review the policy during Fall Quarter, 1998. It was suggested that it might be wise to wait on the new leadership in the Research vice presidency. There was also concern that the requirement that allegations be heard by a panel of faculty peers is frequently being bypassed by administrative officers; there have been judgments made centrally and the findings sent to SSAB for rubber stamp approval.

A related item is a "compliance committee" appointed by the Vice President for Research. It is chaired by Professor Amos Deinard and staffed by non-faculty. Professor Hamilton said the charge to the committee is unclear – it is responsible for compliance with all state and federal regulations related to research – and could have a strong impact. Professor Morrison commented that this is only one of a number of policies, and it seems the approach of the University is "if we can't get you on one, we'll get you on another."

There is a need for accountability, Professor Gardner pointed out; all agreed. Professor Hamilton said his concern was that this was potentially a policing and regulatory body, staffed by those with little knowledge of academic work, which could be dangerous. It is important that FCC know what the committee is to do.

C. Provostal Faculty Consultative Committees

Ms. Kvanbeck noted that the constitution and bylaws still provide for the provostal faculty consultative committees (and elections thereto) and asked for advice on what to do about them. It was agreed that the AHC committee should be continued, and that appropriate arrangements for elections should be made for the fall. The other two committees should be left in limbo for the present, until the issue of representation for subgroups on the Twin Cities campus is resolved.

It was agreed that representatives from the AHC finance and faculty affairs committees should sit on the parent committees of the Senate. Professor Dempsey urged that the other recommendations of the consultation task force be reviewed and implemented next year as well.

Professor Bloomfield then adjourned the meeting at 2:30.

-- Gary Engstrand

University of Minnesota