

Minutes*

Senate Committee on Educational Policy October 10, 1991

Present: Stanford Lehmberg (chair), Victor Bloomfield, Thomas Clayton, James Cotter, Joanne DeMoss, Karen Karni

Guest: Geoff Gorvin (Footnote)

1. Report of the Chair

Professor Lehmberg called the meeting to order at 1:15 and began by reviewing briefly the discussions that he and the Committee have been involved in with respect to the budget plan. He noted that budgets do have a relationship with educational policy, albeit indirect, and that SCEP's interest runs primarily to the programmatic changes. Inasmuch as those changes occur primarily within the colleges, SCEP is not the appropriate group to monitor the cuts except in a general way.

Committee members considered the relationship between enrollment and tuition income. Concern was expressed about the decision to allow--insist--that the three post-graduate units on the Twin Cities to increase revenues by raising tuition and enrollment; the institution should be getting smaller, to increase quality, rather than diluting quality by increasing enrollment. It was pointed out that the overall enrollment of the University will not increase and that these specific increases can be harmonized with the institution-wide policy.

One Committee member inquired how hard and fast the decisions on program cuts (e.g., Occupational Therapy) are. That will be up to the Vice President for the Health Sciences and central administration, it was suggested; SCEP does not have the knowledge or wisdom to start second-guessing the decisions. There are probably several dozen more such decisions in the wings; it was unfortunate that the OT recommendation was leaked, but if the process breaks down at this point, the University will be unable to hold the line anywhere. The Vet Medicine/Dentistry examples will doubtless not be repeated, but the University is absolutely committed to program cuts; it may be that in a few instances the wrong programs may be cut, but the cuts must be made. The role of SCEP, however, is to look at the overall policy implications of the budget.

Committee members generally agreed that the proposed budget plans were very positive, that they recognized and respected the importance of academic planning, that the major cuts were in support and administrative areas, and that the long-range implication was increased funding for academic programs. It was noted that the document reflects the fact that central administration appears to have "thought things through," taken a comprehensive view, and left the decisions to the colleges rather than attempting to micro-manage. There was also agreement that students needed to be better informed about the budget, especially about the relationship between the budget and tuition increases.

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The Committee voted unanimously in favor of a resolution--the final language of which is to be composed by Professor Lehmborg--which expressed appreciation to the administration for its consultation on the budget principles prior to the preparation of the final document, noted that it does everything possible to protect the integrity of academic programs, and withheld judgment on the implementation because of the early stage of the process and the nebulous nature of the program cuts to be made.

2. The 1994-95 Calendar

Professor Lehmborg next drew the attention of Committee members to the proposed 1994-95 calendar for the Twin Cities campus. He noted that even if the question of a change to semesters were to be taken up this year, it is doubtful that such a change would be implemented by 1994-95.

Committee members voiced reservations about the lack of a Winter Quarter Study Day; Professor Lehmborg agreed to contact Ms. Grundner, who drafted the proposed calendar, to learn if there were any alternatives which might be considered. The calendar will be brought back to the Committee at its next meeting.

3. Report from Professor Clayton

Professor Clayton next reported on his participation in a group appointed to evaluate Student Support Services. He related that there had been no written report to deal with but that he had met with a very good external review group which had raised several excellent questions about the unit. The final report is to be prepared at some point in the near future.

4. Policies on Missed Class Days, Events During Finals Week

Professor Lehmborg reported on a meeting he had been involved in last summer with the President and representatives from the athletic programs. One outcome is that the Committee will be presented at its next meeting with an appeal from the Men's Athletic Department for an exemption from the policy prohibiting events during Study Day and Finals Week. A nationally-televised basketball game was accidentally scheduled during Winter Quarter Study Day; the department will ask the Committee to grant an exemption in order that the game may be played.

Other issues raised at the meeting were these:

(1) There are a number of faculty members who will not allow any students to make up work no matter the reason a class may have been missed; this works to the disadvantage of student-athletes, who are sometimes legitimately off-campus for regularly-scheduled and approved athletic events. The Committee agreed that a policy on missed class days should be considered because there are legitimate reasons why a student may have to miss class. The Committee considered a policy in place in CLA and agreed to draft a parallel policy for the entire institution.

(2) Some faculty give their final exams the last day of class or at times other than that printed in the class schedule. The Committee agreed that this practice was inappropriate and that a policy should be drafted for submission to the Senate.

5. Academic Advising and Letters of Recommendation

Professor Lehmborg reported that Professor Amos Deinard, a member of the Faculty Consultative Committee, had raised with him the problem of students who need letters of recommendation but who do not know any faculty member well enough to obtain them. This is an issue related to the larger questions of academic advising; the Committee discussed briefly ways in which the problem might be remedied. It was pointed out that there is a reciprocal obligation, on the part of the student, to take time during the undergraduate career to seek out and become acquainted with faculty members.

It was agreed that Professor Deinard should be asked to join the Committee at one of its future meetings to discuss the matter.

The Committee adjourned at 2:45.

-- Gary Engstrand

University of Minnesota