

Minutes*

Senate Committee on Educational Policy
Thursday, April 8, 1993
1:15 - 3:00
Room 626 Campus Club

Present: James Tracy (chair), Victor Bloomfield, Thomas Clayton, James Cotter, Susan Donaldson, Michael Handberg, Kenneth Heller, Darwin Hendel, Robert Johnson, Andy Kuehnel, Clark Starr, Susan Wick

Regrets: Megan Gunnar, Lois Regnier

Absent: Andrea Mack, Tim Swierczek

Guests: Vice President Anne Hopkins, Professor Gayle Graham Yates (Chair, Morse-Alumni Awards Committee)

Others: None

[In these minutes: tuition policy; Morse-Alumni awards]

1. Tuition Policy

Professor Tracy convened the meeting at 1:15 and welcomed Vice President Hopkins to discuss tuition policy. Dr. Hopkins distributed copies of a docket item for the Board of Regents and explained that it is a paper that seeks to set the context for tuition policy. This is NOT a proposal, she emphasized, but is intended to raise issues about tuition; its contents are based on discussions both with the Board and with many others.

Dr. Hopkins reviewed briefly the contents of the paper with the committee; one of the major questions it raises is "who pays" and how much should the market drive tuition policy--to what extent should there be a public subsidy, and how much does the public benefit. A matter directly related is the "high tuition, high aid" policy (increasing tuition in order to reduce the public subsidy to those affluent enough to pay a greater share of instructional costs, while simultaneously increasing financial aid to assist students from modest financial backgrounds). Some states have tried a "high tuition, high aid" approach, Dr. Hopkins said, and have been unhappy with the results; it puts poor students at a disadvantage, because they never overcome the "sticker shock." The "high tuition, high aid" proposal made by the Governor is not being considered by the legislature, but it will return.

Of most interest, Dr. Hopkins told the Committee, is how to make this decision: If \$X are needed, who is to pay, and in what proportion? The percentage of instructional expenditures that is to come from tuition has been fixed by statute (at 1/3), although in recent years that ratio has not been maintained. In

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recent years the University has set tuition rates higher because the amount of state funds has been reduced. In order to blunt the impact of the cuts, tuition has now risen to the point where it pays for approximately 40% of instructional costs, rather than 33%. Every time there has been a cut in state funding, programs have been hurt; one question is how much of the cuts should be taken programmatically and how much should tuition be expected to cover?

At the level of the individual student, "who pays" depends on the financial aid and grant money available. Dr. Hopkins reported that Minnesota has perhaps three or four times the amount of grant money available in most states of similar size, and it is adding more. Some believe that if money is put into financial aid, there is no need for additional funding for the institutions; it must be clearly understood that increasing financial aid does NOT increase institutional funding. She also observed that grant funding has not increased as rapidly as tuition, nor are the grant funds distributed uniformly; the latter issue is being debated now.

There are several possible tuition policies that might be considered; Dr. Hopkins distributed an item from the April Regents docket with a table of comparative tuition rate models. One possibility is uniform undergraduate tuition (by campus), which is the direction in which the University has been moving the past several years (it is not there yet). Another option is to differentiate between upper and lower division, and to further differentiate among low, mid-, and high-cost upper division programs (again, by campus), and to eliminate banding (no increase in tuition from the 14th through the 18th credit enrolled for).

The argument for uniform undergraduate tuition is that students should not choose their studies on the basis of price.

The evidence for banding is interesting. It OUGHT to work; students pay the same whether they enroll for 14 or 18 credits. There is, however, no evidence that it has the desired effect on students on the Twin Cities campus. If so, banding should be dropped--and the tuition rates for those who enroll for fewer than 14 credits would then be somewhat reduced. There are a number of students who take between 14 and 18 credits, Dr. Hopkins said, but there is no evidence that behavior is DUE to banding. '

Lower division tuition on the Twin Cities campus is now all the same, and it is intended that lower division will remain uniform. Upper division rates are higher; is anyone deterred from attending? There is no evidence that they are, Dr. Hopkins said, but the University needs to be mindful of the differential rates among systems in the Twin Cities at the lower division. That is one drawback to the uniform undergraduate rate; to keep revenue neutral, lower division rates would have to be significantly higher than the rates of other institutions in the Twin Cities. The questions to be addressed are the number of different upper division rates and the GAP between the upper and lower division rates.

Unlike most other institutions, the University has had tuition based in part on cost of instruction for many years. In moving to uniform tuition, however, CLA students faced tuition increases significantly higher than in other colleges. Moreover, CLA (and other low-cost colleges) had high tuition increases during a period of large increases, while other college rates were increased at a much smaller rate.

There are a number of arguments that need to be considered, said one Committee member. There are, for example, a lot of biology majors in CLA, because the students want to take advantage of the

lower rate in CLA. Second, it is not true that a student enrolled in a college only takes courses in that college; the logical conclusion is that tuition should be course-based, although that is probably administratively impossible. Third, there is a pernicious educational effect when there are different tuition rates: students enroll in CLA, intending to obtain their degree in CBS, but delay the transfer, depriving themselves of adequate advising, peer contact, and a sense of community and intellectual content. Apropos the course-based tuition, Dr. Hopkins noted that students drop/add courses all the time, and that since financial aid is tuition-based, it would have to be recalculated at each change. This makes course-by-course tuition an administrative quagmire.

There are other questions that must also be addressed, Dr. Hopkins responded: Should tuition be market driven? There are three levels of upper division tuition illustrated, but the health sciences programs are VERY expensive. Third, should banding be dropped? Another possibility would be to charge the same rate for students who enroll for 1 - 6 credits (which would lower tuition rates for everyone else). Few students, however, actually take fewer than six credits, and that proposal may be more complicated to implement than the savings would warrant (less than \$1 per credit for everyone else).

Should the cost of a program affect tuition? If one believes in equity, how does one establish a tuition structure that does not penalize other students? There is a case to be made, said one Committee member, for high-cost/low-enrollment courses, such as in the health sciences. The people who come out of many of those courses (e.g., nursing, medical technology) do not make a lot of money, and the benefit is societal rather than individual. It may be justifiable to subsidize these programs--rather than subsidizing the education of lawyers, for instance.

One idea for addressing some of the problems, Dr. Hopkins said, might be to move the BA degrees in science out of CLA and into IT and CBS and then enforce reasonable collegiate residency requirements.

There is a national proposal to link student loan repayment to the career a student chooses, but that becomes a problem. Even in law, for example, salaries are dropping at major firms. It is hard to know what the market will demand. What will come out of Washington is unclear, it was said, and the Clinton administration appears to be backing away from community service as a substitute for loan repayment.

There has been no mention of the land-grant mission, pointed out one Committee member, and serving societal needs is part of that mission. The United States is where it is today, it was said, in part because of huge health care costs. Part of the land-grant mission is access. Dr. Hopkins said that if one wants to affect access, the University should be mindful of the competitive position of its lower division rates. The University used to have 16 upper division rates (it does not yet have only one); the question of the number of upper division rates is one question, as is the gross upper/lower division differentiation.

Asked about the program to encourage students to take their lower division work outside the University, Dr. Hopkins replied that the University does not encourage students to take lower division work elsewhere. Significant numbers of transfer students are accepted, she noted, but that part of the message of Commitment to Focus was not heard correctly; the University did NOT say it would not want freshmen, just that it would have more transfer students (which was all in the context of lowering overall University enrollment).

How would the three proposed rates affect students from lower SES backgrounds; would they be less likely to obtain financial aid? Dr. Hopkins pointed out that there are more than three rates now. She said she would not like to see the rates in the health science programs increase dramatically. There is a problem with financial aid; it benefits students, but there is evidence that sticker shock may deter poorer students. The federal government has not tried to fix the problem, so institutions just raise tuition, which only makes the situation worse. The University is trying to make more scholarship money available in order to attract high-quality lower-income students.

This proposal suggests that the Governor's recommendation for tuition is antithetical to high-quality public higher education. Financial aid must be disentangled from appropriations to the University, she emphasized; an increase in financial aid does NOT benefit public higher education, and when it takes institutional support funds away in order to increase financial aid funds, it actually HURTS public higher education.

One Committee member pointed out that the state constitution calls for tuition to be free; that should be the goal. The regents should restate that goal because few are aware of it. This is a question of reality: If one wants a university based on that principle, its funding must come from tax dollars. If not, but if there are no tax funds, there is no university. The Regents should restate the proposition that the University is a public good. As tuition increases too much, students are encouraged to work, which has a detrimental impact on their education. Working correlates with grades it was said, although Dr. Hopkins pointed out that 20 hours per week seems to be a "breaking point" in the impact work has on studies. It is also not clear, she said, that students are working more now than in the recent past.

Arguments need to be made, one Committee member said, about the amount of state grant money going to students in the private colleges. Dr. Hopkins told the Committee private colleges enroll about 25% of the undergraduates in the state, but those students use about 60% of the state grant money. Asked if the students who apply to the University are likely to need the money more, Dr. Hopkins said that is not clear. (This issue is about where and how one caps maximum cost reimbursements.)

It appears that the basic level of tuition is not something the University controls. The overall level, largely set by the legislature, can then distort internal decisions made by the University. Internally, moreover, there are conflicts between different kinds of equity. One can have sympathy with the argument that it is fair for students to get what they pay for, and not fair for them to pay for what they do not get (e.g., CLA students facing increased costs in the move to uniform tuition without any corresponding change in their education). Another question of equity is why cost for a student should be greater in one major than another. Yet another question is whether or not students in the same course should be paying different rates of tuition. It is not easy to sort these out.

This is, it was said again, a conflict between principle and practicality; the Board of Regents should state the principle (low or no tuition) and then acknowledge the University exists in the real world and yield to practicality in setting tuition rates. The University, it was also said, must worry about graduation rates, which are a continuing embarrassment that may be related to tuition rates. The University is in trouble in terms of the cost of education for students, and the legislature should realize that. Moreover, while lower division education is cheaper, it should not be; presumably it is because of smaller classes and the use of TAs. This plan will increase the schism between upper and lower division, it was argued.

There was further discussion about the costs of programs; Dr. Hopkins pointed out that some programs are by their nature more expensive.

One Committee member expressed concern at the harm that may have been done by the move to uniform undergraduate tuition. Tuition in CLA has increased by 38%, economics times have been bad, opportunities have been less--and yet there have been these steep tuition increases. If one then considers the quality of undergraduate education in CLA, the situation is troubling. Dr. Hopkins agreed that the tuition increases were a problem, but she demurred at any suggestion that CLA undergraduate courses were not more than comparable to other course offerings in the Twin Cities.

Asked what the role of SCEP will be in any change from the current movement toward uniform undergraduate tuition, Dr. Hopkins said she is discussing it with tuition advisory committees on each campus. The Committee could vote, and forward a resolution to the Senate, but the Board of Regents sets tuition policy. The situation before was messy, with multiple tuition rates. Then in 1988 the Board adopted the uniform undergraduate tuition policy. The discussion paper opens up the question again. Dr. Hopkins said that the discussion must make clear the choices and the implications so that everyone involved will understand the alternatives.

Professor Tracy thanked Dr. Hopkins for joining the meeting.

2. Morse-Alumni Awards Committee Report

Professor Tracy next welcomed Professor Gayle Graham Yates to the meeting to present the nominees for the Morse-Alumni awards. Professor Yates reviewed the work of the committee and provided the names and brief backgrounds of the nominees.

The committee also had several suggestions to make to SCEP about the functioning of the Morse-Alumni committee in the future.

- SCEP should try to be certain that the committee members will be available to participate in the entire process. If prospective members of the nominating committee are doubtful about their ability to participate fully, they should be replaced.
- Departments and colleges should be asked to compile dossiers specifically for this award.
- Nominators should provide proper editorial comment and pagination.
- Departments should be discouraged from renominating those who did not win; this is a prize, not a fellowship.

There was also discussion about the wisdom of REQUIRING five letters from present or former undergraduates, but the nominating committee (several of whom were also SCEP members, and present at this meeting) did not agree that was desirable, inasmuch as some contributions to undergraduate education could be at a level that would not involve the nominee directly with undergraduates.

The Committee also discussed the distribution of the winners in terms of home departments and

whether or not "mainline" departments were nominating candidates. Nominating committee members said they were absolutely satisfied with the quality of the nominees and the selection of the winners; the only way to ensure some kind of distribution of winners would be to prejudge the units that could nominate, observed one committee member.

The Committee voted unanimously to approve the nominations of the Morse-Alumni Awards Committee.

Discussion then turned to action by the House of Representatives asking each higher education system to nominate three or four individuals for an excellence in education award. Those involved in the discussions concluded that the Morse-Alumni Awards Committee would be the appropriate group to make such nominations. Professor Yates then reported the names of the four individuals who had been selected, from the pool of Morse-Alumni award winners, to be nominated for the state award.

The Committee voted unanimously to approve the four nominees.

The Committee also thanked Professor Yates and voted its appreciation for the work of the Morse-Alumni Award Committee for its outstanding work.

3. Teaching Evaluation Policy

Professor Tracy then noted that the Senate, with the exception of the representatives from Crookston, had voted to approve the teaching evaluation protocols that SCEP had recommended. It appeared, however, that those negative votes were cast because of a misunderstanding about the presence of one of the five required questions on the survey. The question of concern requires that students be asked about the physical conditions in which their class is being taught; the purpose for the question is to mitigate possible negative evaluations of faculty because of the facilities. The question is NOT intended to hold faculty accountable for the conditions of the physical facility.

Committee members also expressed some concern about the possibility that the results from the other four survey questions might be added all together to obtain a composite score. A Committee has been appointed to prepare materials for those who will be using the survey results; it is to be hoped that the committee will advise against relying on the "mean of means" that would result from combining the results.

The meeting adjourned at 3:15.

-- Gary Engstrand

University of Minnesota