

Minutes*

Faculty Consultative Committee
Thursday, December 3, 1998
12:45 – 2:15
Room 238 Morrill Hall

Present: Sara Evans (chair), Kent Bales, Linda Brady, Gary Davis, Mary Dempsey, Marilyn Grave, David Hamilton, M. Janice Hogan, Roberta Humphreys, Michael Korth, Leonard Kuhi, Marvin Marshak, Judith Martin, V. Rama Murthy, Matthew Tirrell

Absent: Stephen Gudeman, Fred Morrison

Guests: Assistant Vice President Stephen Cawley; Executive Vice President and Provost Robert Bruininks

Other: Maureen Smith (University Relations)

[In these minutes: communication with the regents and changes in policies the Senate has approved; the Y2K problem; discussion of various matters with Dr. Bruininks]

1. Communication with Regents/Administration

Professor Evans convened the meeting at 12:45 and began by recounting the gist of conversations she had had with Executive Vice President Bruininks and Interim Regents' Secretary Greg Brown. She, Professor Morrison, and President Yudof have been exchanging views about the process of adopting policies, and concluded there is need for a small group of people who can review a document that has been approved by the Senate and then edited or changed by another office (e.g., the General Counsel, the Regents' Office). There needs to be a trigger mechanism that would decide whether the changes warrant sending the policy back through the Senate process (because the changes are substantive) or that could decide the changes were only editorial or technical (e.g., corrected numbering, changed the name of the administrator to whom a report would be made, etc.) and did not alter in substance what the Senate had adopted.

There is also a need to make the process itself work better so there are fewer glitches. There is need for more communication during the process of policy development, so that a continued back-and-forth between administration and Senate (and Regents, where appropriate) is necessary. Both Dr. Bruininks and Mr. Brown agreed.

One recent example of this kind of problem, Professor Kuhi pointed out, was the Intellectual Property policy, which went through the committees of the Senate and then came back from the General Counsel's office significantly different. This process MUST be brought under control, he maintained. Professor Hamilton added that the policy was re-written in the General Counsel's office without consultation by an attorney who was not familiar with the history and culture surrounding the issue.

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Professor Evans agreed with Professor Kuhl; the process must be managed so that things need not be done over and over. She reported that Mr. Brown believes it inappropriate for his office to tell the Senate what to say, but that it should tell the Senate the format to use in saying it. One possibility might be template they provide, suggested Professor Hamilton; Professor Bales added that the template itself should be an item to be negotiated, because he continues to believe it unwise to adopt policies which contain no language indicating the purpose of the policy. Professor Evans said the Committee could raise the point (again), but that ultimately that is a decision the Board must make.

2. Dealing With the Y2K Problem

Professor Evans welcomed Assistant Vice President Stephen Cawley to the meeting to discuss how the University is responding to potential Year 2000 (Y2K) problems. Mr. Cawley introduced Ken Hanna, project director responsible for implementation of the University's Y2K plans.

Mr. Cawley explained that as acting Chief Information Officer, his responsibilities include University Y2K readiness, and said he wished to speak explicitly about the issue with respect to research and grants. He has raised these same issues with the Senate Research Committee and with the Senate Committee on Information Technologies.

Research is one of the biggest concerns with respect to Y2K. There is not very much information available about the University's Y2K readiness in research. The colleges have little data about databases and systems, so they have reached out directly to faculty to get help, to bring them up to speed, and to provide them whatever tools and help they may need to deal with problems.

There is another player involved as well: federal agencies such as NIH and NSF are requiring certification of Y2K readiness, and could hold up research funding if such certification is not provided. All certifications are to go through the General Counsel's office to be sure that they are done correctly, because there are potential legal and liability issues involved. The University negotiates what is required with each agency, and the certification procedures are to be kept on file with the General Counsel.

A recent mailing from Vice President Maziar reminds faculty of their responsibilities, Mr. Cawley noted, and they intend to survey faculty to learn if there is any reason the faculty member could not certify Y2K readiness – and offer to provide help if a faculty member requests it.

Mr. Cawley said he did not believe there is a huge problem. It will, however, only take one or two instances where data are corrupted or research is delayed to cause problems in funding and to draw adverse attention. Looking for potential Y2K problems in research is like looking for a needle in a haystack, Mr. Cawley said, but at the same time his office does not want to unduly burden or bother faculty needlessly. He asked for the advice of the Committee.

Professor Murthy inquired what is needed in order to certify Y2K readiness; Mr. Cawley said that ideally a test or simulation. If that is not possible, reliance on the manufacturer's test would be an alternative. It is the responsibility of the principal investigator to ensure Y2K readiness, but the PIs cannot do it alone – they need support from the administration. Mr. Cawley noted that there is a team in the Academic Health Center working with faculty and with vendors on potential Y2K problems. Mr. Cawley also pointed out that some research may not be date-sensitive, so in some cases there may not be a problem.

Professor Hamilton explained to the Committee the process he had gone through in his lab to ensure Y2K compliance. He had done so by setting priorities: first the computers, then the software, then databases, then research equipment. Priorities for other researchers might vary, he noted.

The Committee suggested that Mr. Cawley distribute to every department software and instructions on how to ensure Y2K compliance. Mr. Cawley reported that he had met with all of the deans, who have each appointed a Y2K coordinator, and observed that there are local technical people in many departments. Faculty should work first with those people in their own departments.

Mr. Cawley explained the University oversight structure for Y2K compliance, which includes a steering committee on which Professor Hamilton sits. They are tracking about 400 projects, most of which are administrative computing applications; they estimate the cost to fix the problems will be about \$4.5 million. They very likely do not cover all research efforts, so are proceeding somewhat blindly, but trying to provide maximum communication and whatever tools are needed, and hope all goes well.

The \$4.5 million is an estimate of out-of-pocket costs of colleges plus the expensive changes centrally. Much of the cost is in people's time, which is not being identified. Mr. Cawley said that costs are being absorbed in department budgets; if they face a hardship, it is expected they will go to their college, and if the college faces a hardship, it will come to his office; central funds have been set aside for the purpose. Thus far, there have been no hardship appeals.

Mr. Cawley agreed that it was a challenge to get the message to all faculty, some of whom may not believe they have a problem. There is little his office can do except knock on the door; if no one lets them in, they cannot help. He suggested that some might prefer to rely on local staff, people whom they trust, rather than someone from Morrill Hall.

The Committee was emphatically adverse to the proposition that there could be a "Y2K newsletter – because one more newsletter won't hurt." It was suggested, however, that an article in KIOSK, comment in BRIEF, and a note in FACULTY GOVERNANCE UPDATE would all help. Another idea that had been rejected administratively – although the Committee did not express a view – was a countdown clock on the Northrop Mall.

Asked how many days there were to the year 2000, Mr. Hanna said that he did not know, but that the aim is to be as fully Y2K compliant as possible by June, 1999. It would be unwise to wait until November, when there may be heavy demands on systems.

Professor Evans thanked Messrs. Cawley and Hanna for their report and wished them well in their efforts.

3. Discussion with Executive Vice President Bruininks

Professor Evans welcomed Dr. Bruininks to the meeting, and explained that she had informed the Committee about the conversations relating to the process of developing policy. She told him that she had also spoken with Mr. Brown, who agreed completely on the need to smooth out the process and increase the communication.

Dr. Bruininks asked for an off-the-record discussion of the Campus Club, which took about 45 minutes, and then commented briefly on several other items.

-- In response to recommendations from the IMG Oversight Subcommittee, his office is preparing a draft of core principles concerning IMG, which will be brought to the Committee in January. He commented that he expected "spirited conversation" about the draft.

-- The final report of the task force on the libraries has been issued, and the amount of money in the biennial request for the libraries has been increased. There needs to be a discussion of the future of the libraries woven into the discussions about the intellectual future of the University, and he asked that the Committee include this as an item at its next discussion devoted to that subject.

-- There is also need to spend time thinking about how the University, as a major research and land-grant institution, nurtures and supports interdisciplinary work. He expressed doubt that IMG will make such work more difficult. Dr. Bruininks noted the "Request for Proposals" approach being used in the new cellular and molecular biology initiative, and said what is needed is identification of ways to fund, support, govern, and sunset these initiatives. The existing institutional structure may not be able to do so effectively, and he would like advice on how to proceed, and how to get beyond the "projectitis" approach.

Dr. Bruininks agreed that the RFP is very broad, and the process is one from which the University should learn. It is also unique; they have created a "stellar" scientific group of faculty to review the proposals, drawn from both inside and outside the University (the external faculty are from among those who were involved in the original site visit on the reorganization of the biological sciences). The scientific group will probably have more to say about what proposals are funded than will the administration. This is, he said, an experiment that should be examined for the lessons it might provide.

Professor Murthy inquired if there were any initiatives being considered for interdisciplinary teaching; right now, he said, the bureaucracy is "horrendous." Dr. Bruininks agreed that the present system is similar to a "tin cup" model, whereby one goes around begging for money to support it; he agreed that a different approach was needed, and cited a recent effort in Architecture that has worked very well. There is also a need to better combine teaching and research across campus, he added.

-- He has tried to emphasize the need to build better recognition programs for faculty and staff, and noted new awards that have been created. These will not work, however, unless the faculty get behind them and gather materials to nominate colleagues. The new awards include the graduate/professional teaching award, the Academy for Distinguished Teachers, and the community service award.

-- The Committee should hear a progress report on the five academic initiatives that composed the legislative request last year.

Professor Evans thanked Dr. Bruininks for joining the meeting, and adjourned it at 2:10.

-- Gary Engstrand