

Minutes*

Senate Committee on Educational Policy
Wednesday, April 20, 2005
1:00 – 3:00
238A Morrill Hall

Present: Emily Hoover (chair), Victor Bloomfield, Vernon Cardwell, LeAnn Dean, Adam Hirsch, James Leger, Richard McCormick, Christopher Pappas, Emily Ronning, Karen Seashore, Mary Ellen Shaw, (Linda Ellinger for) Craig Swan, Douglas Wangenstein, Joel Weinsheimer

Absent: Dale Branton, Shawn Curley, Gretchen Haas, Jenny Zhang

Guests: Associate Vice Provost Laura Koch; Professor Jo-Ida Hansen (ROTC Subcommittee); Professor Mickey Trent (chair, Senate Committee on Student Academic Integrity), Sharon Dzik (Director, Office of Student Academic Integrity); Steve Fitzgerald, Nancy Peterson (Office of Classroom Management)

[In these minutes: (1) transfer students; (2) ROTC subcommittee; (3) academic integrity survey; (4) classroom usage; (5) student-release questions]

1. Transfer Students

Professor Hoover convened the meeting at 1:00 and welcomed Associate Vice Provost Laura Koch to discuss transfer student issues.

Dr. Koch introduced Andy Howe (Coordinator for Transfer Student Orientation in the Office of Orientation and First-Year Programs) and Paula Brugge (Associate Director of Admissions, Twin Cities) and distributed a handout. She said that there has been a concern for a number of years about the transfer-student experience and the first-year student experience. The University has taken steps to improve the first-year experience but has not done a great deal for transfer students. She reported that the Office of the Provost surveyed all Fall, 2004 new transfer students on the Twin Cities campus via the Internet and received responses from 52%. The survey was administered after they had been on campus for awhile and had time to reflect on their experience of several months at the University. In addition to the data (below), there were a large number of written comments that they are trying to figure out how to make sense out of. She provided background characteristics of transfer students on the Twin Cities campus:

- two-thirds enrolled either in CLA or IT
- 53% were women
- 60% entered with fewer than 60 transfer credits (transferred in, not the number of credits the students had taken); 17% had fewer than 30 credits
- 13% were students of color

* These minutes reflect discussion and debate at a meeting of a committee of the University of Minnesota Senate or Twin Cities Campus Assembly; none of the comments, conclusions, or actions reported in these minutes represents the views of, nor are they binding on, the Senate or Assembly, the Administration, or the Board of Regents.

- 59% were under 22 years of age; 22% were 22-24, and 19% were 25+
- 53% came from Minnesota schools (36% community colleges, 9% from MNSCU, and 8% from private colleges).

Dr. Koch reported that the significant findings of the survey were:

- 90% said they were at least slightly satisfied with the University; only 10% said they were dissatisfied; 25% were extremely satisfied and 50% said they were moderately satisfied.
- Significantly higher levels of satisfaction were found for lower division transfer students versus upper division, those who had most of their credits transfer versus those who had less than half transfer, those who had higher GPA's in their first term at the University, and those who were retained into spring semester versus those who were not. Dr. Ellinger reported that they asked students what percentage of their credits transferred and applied to degree programs; in most cases, most of the time, most credits transfer. Satisfaction was not related to the number of previous colleges the student had been at (a number had been at more than one) or type of college, except that private college transfer students were more satisfied than community or technical college transfers.
- In terms of aspects of the transfer experience, the highest satisfaction was with the One-Stop on line and Admissions Office information. The lower satisfaction was with the availability of affordable, convenient housing. They know that housing is an issue for transfer students; the University does not offer housing for these students.
- 68% were satisfied with the extent to which their credits transferred. There was a problem with the timeliness of the evaluation of their previous coursework, Ms. Brugge reported, but they now complete the evaluation within a few days so satisfaction on this point should increase in the future.
- When asked what attracted students to the University, most cited the availability of a major program or quality and reputation of the University. They left their previous college because they had completed their program or because it lacked the program they wanted.
- When asked about whether they found various aspects of the University better, worse, or about the same as they expected, the majority of transfer students said it was about the same. There were some aspects where they found it better: finding their way around, online registration, friendliness of campus, availability of faculty, and availability of advisors. There were also aspects where they found the University worse than they had expected: meeting new friends, course availability (transfers students are the last ones to register), availability of housing, getting questions answered, and University bureaucracy. These results were largely expected, Dr. Koch said. 38% of transfer students also found classes harder than they expected (while 64% of new first-year students find classes harder than they expect, 38% was surprisingly high for students with previous college experience).
- Transfer students were also asked about behaviors that would socially integrate them into the campus; the majority of transfer students report that they did not "hang out" in Dinkytown, meet with their advisor, study in the library, or "hang out" in Coffman Union. 47% said they

did not talk to a faculty member outside of class but only 18% said they did not talk with students socially.

About 33 – 35% of new undergraduate students each year are transfer students, Ms. Brugge explained, and the Admissions Office has increased its activities to support them. There is an information guide and they provide a lot of information sessions with transfer-student counselors. In September they will have a Transfer and International Admissions Welcome Center that will provide a one-stop for students where they can get answers to their questions. They have also sped up processing credits for transfer students. There are, she concluded, a number of ways they are trying to enhance services provided to transfer students.

Professor Weinsheimer asked if transfer students are more or less likely to graduate than new high school students; Ms. Brugge said they are more likely to graduate.

Dr. Shaw asked if transfer students are provided information on the cost of attending the University; with the fees and everything else there can be sticker shock. Ms. Brugge said they provide all the information they have, including all the costs, financial aid resources, and suggestions about how to finance their education. The biggest concern is not the cost, Dr. Koch said, it's the late registration; transfer students feel insulted about having to register so late.

Professor Seashore asked if transfer students of color graduate at the same rate as other students. Dr. Koch said she did not know. They have looked at graduation rates for students of color irrespective of transfer status and found that when normed for ACT and high school rank, there is no difference between those students and others. If the University is to close General College, Professor Seashore said, one question to ask is whether students who go to a community college and then come to the University are put at a disadvantage; it is important to shed light on that issue because those students are roughly equivalent to those who come through General College. Mr. Howe said they are asking for the data.

With respect to weak integration into the campus community, Professor Seashore added, a larger issue for all non-traditional students is that there are fewer opportunities or ways in to the community.

Professor McCormick asked if transfer students would ever be included in Welcome Week. Dr. Koch said they have not been (because they have had all they can do to deal with 5000+ incoming new high school students) but eventually they would like to include them. Mr. Howe reported that the orientation office is making big changes in orientation and working with the colleges to give the more choices in meeting the needs of under-represented students.

Professor Hoover thanked Dr. Koch and her colleagues for joining the Committee and promised that transfer students will be on a future agenda.

2. ROTC Subcommittee

Professor Hoover next welcomed Professor Jo-Ida Hansen, chair of the ROTC Subcommittee, for the annual report from the subcommittee.

Professor Hansen reviewed the membership of the subcommittee and said they meet twice per year, with the second meeting coming up. The major charge to the subcommittee is to review nominations for new faculty in the military sciences departments. The military identifies individuals whom it nominates for teaching positions; the subcommittee reviews the dossier and makes a recommendation to Vice Provost Swan, who makes the decision. The nominees should either have a graduate degree or be admissible to a graduate degree program at the University. In her experience, the commanders typically have a Masters degree and are appointed as professors. Individuals nominated as assistant professors vary in the number of years they have spent in the military; some are very junior officers and perhaps 1/3 to 1/4 have only the Bachelors degree. In those cases, the commander identifies a potential graduate program that matches the qualifications and Dr. Swan will work with the admissions office to determine if the individual can be admitted. It would be unusual for a candidate not to have the qualifications for admission, although they have occasionally turned people down. The subcommittee has reviewed five candidates for positions this year.

Appointments to the ROTC program at the University are typically three years; given world affairs, however, the Army is seeing more frequent turnover. A number of the commanders who come to the program at Minnesota are nearing the end of their military careers and are interested in Minnesota as a relocation spot for retirement. Many who come here have chosen ROTC assignments and indicate Minnesota as one of the places they prefer to come, often because they have family members here or see the Twin Cities as a vibrant place to live. Those without a Masters degree appreciate the opportunity to obtain a degree while they are at the University.

The units seem to be operating well and are filling their scholarship quotas and graduating students in a reasonable manner. There is not a lot of attrition from the programs. They also compete in regional and national events and win awards. The commanders appear to be committed to the educational process and developing leadership.

One worry, more Navy and Air Force, is that the military is reconfiguring so that it needs fewer officers and work is assigned to enlisted personnel. The result is that the ROTC programs train officers who have nowhere to go and they end up being assigned to the reserves—which is a disappointment for the graduates because they want active duty. Some of the ROTC programs will close, but since Minnesota is seen as one of the stronger programs, it is probably not vulnerable.

What comes up on the agenda of the subcommittee every year, Professor Hansen reported, is the overall condition of the Armory. It probably violates many safety codes. There is a problem with access; the roof leaks and damages computers. The Navy commander is trying to bring the situation to increased visibility in the University and hopes to move the Armory into the budget process for renovation (but it has no dean to advocate for it, so it is always at a disadvantage). This is the biggest concern of the commanders of the three programs.

Professor Cardwell asked if there are data comparing the performance of ROTC students with the rest of the University in terms of graduation and GPA's. Professor Hansen said the global summary is that GPA's are about 1/2 point above the average of the general student population and the graduation rate is higher; if a student stays until the third year, the graduation rate is nearly 100%. Professor Cardwell said it is his sense that there are scheduling difficulties for some of the ROTC students because of required courses; how general is that problem? The new commander raised this issue with Dr. Swan, Professor Hansen reported; it is difficult to accommodate the ROTC demands

because there are a lot of groups on campus with demands and it would be impossible to respond to all of them. There are special problems for engineering students, she added.

Professor Hoover thanked Professor Hansen for her report. Professor Hansen said that anyone who had any suggestions for solutions to the problem of the Armory should let her know.

3. Academic Integrity Survey

Professor Hoover next welcomed Professor Trent, chair of the Senate Committee on Student Academic Integrity, to the meeting to discuss a survey the Committee had commissioned about attitudes toward (and behavior with respect to) academic integrity among faculty and students.

Professor Trent said she would provide a summary of the report findings. The survey was distributed to a random sample of undergraduate, graduate, and professional students last fall, with intended over-representation in some cases to ensure adequate numbers among certain groups. The University had no baseline data so that it can tell if the situation vis-à-vis academic integrity has improved. They used a survey developed by Dr. Donald McCabe at Duke University that has been used nationally; Professor McCabe ran the survey through his server and the University has no access to any individual responses. (That prevents additional analysis of the data.) Of 1,830 students sent the survey, 17.8% responded; of the 500 faculty, 23.8% responded. This rate is low for University of Minnesota on-line surveys but high compared to the response rate Professor McCabe usually gets.

Professor Trent reviewed the seven categories of data and said that in general, Minnesota students and faculty are more informed than their counterparts nationally, the students are less likely to cheat or observe cheating, and consider cheating more serious than do their counterparts nationally.

Professor Leger said that his college has a policy that mandates discussion of academic integrity during orientation. Dr. Ellinger and Dr. Koch said it is also the practice to do so during the University's orientation program. That might explain the higher rates of knowledge about institutional policies, Professor Leger said; perhaps the discussions are having some effect. It is also emphasized in other ways, Dr. Koch said, such as in freshman seminars, the freshman convocation, and a lot of first-year courses. Professor Trent agreed that there has been a concerted effort to get the word out and it may be paying off.

Professor Seashore cautioned against too much patting oneself on the back; she noted data on one of the tables that suggested Minnesota undergraduates are not much different from undergraduates nationally (in terms of the likelihood that students would report an observed violation). Only about 16% of undergraduates say they would report a violation (about 19% nationally), which means there is no strong norm about a sense of peer responsibility. Professor Trent agreed that this was an interesting datum but said it was nonetheless true that the University's educational efforts appear to be having an effect. She agreed that it would be worthwhile to focus on why students do not report cheating. Professor Seashore said that Minnesota students are like others: there is a difference between what they are aware of as expectations and their behavior. Minnesota students have a higher level of knowledge but they do not behave differently. Dr. Ellinger pointed out that the University has never articulated an expectation that students should report cheating; the University has no honor code. The expectation is that students will not cheat. Professor Seashore said that the notion that information or knowledge will change behavior is inconsistent with 75% of psychological research.

There are colleges with honor codes, Dr. Koch observed; those are weak tools, Professor Seashore responded, but it would be useful to obtain information about them. Some institutions have full honor codes, Professor Trent reported, but one can't draw firm conclusions about them from the data.

Professor Weinsheimer asked what the future plans are. Professor Trent said the Academic Integrity Committee is in the process of identifying what it wants to do next; it has identified elements of the survey results that it wants to pursue.

Are there any best practices to minimize the opportunities for inappropriate behavior, Professor Cardwell asked? They have not looked at them, Professor Trent said, but there are a number of papers on the topic and it may be necessary to get information out to the faculty. The information is available but it has not been put together for faculty. Dr. Ellinger noted that one of her responsibilities is administration of Turnitin.com; she said a message could be sent to the faculty every year about it and indicating that the best strategy is prevention, with a link to a website about prevention.

Dean Bloomfield asked if they had found cheating in graduate and professional courses (they had). The University, he noted, is one of the few—if not the only—institutions that has required instruction in the responsible conduct of research, but that does not cover cheating in courses. Professor Trent said that some of the questions on the survey were not clearly worded and it is not clear what graduate and professional students answered, but since they wanted to have results that were comparable to national data, they decided to stick with the questions.

Professor Danes noted that one reporter had asked why Minnesota undergraduates on copying part of all of another paper without citation; it could be that many students do not know what cheating is because so many faculty emphasize collaborative work and study groups. Professor Trent pointed out that there is a clear relationship between frequency of misbehavior and perception of seriousness: the most frequent misbehavior are in areas the students see as the least serious offenses. She agreed that the University has one of the best uses of collaborative learning and it may be that instructors are not clear about what working together means.

Professor Wangensteen said he was concerned about the 18% response rate—that could be students all in one unit. Professor Trent said that they were provided the distribution of the students; the numbers in any one college were too small to break out. Did they ask if the numbers are representative of enrollments, Professor Wangensteen asked? They did not, Professor Trent said, but in terms of national comparisons, it is likely that the same population at Minnesota would have responded to the survey as the population that responded at other institutions. This is only a starting point, she said. Professor Seashore agreed that these data were a good starting place—and pointed out that on-line surveys are frequently very boring. The data are useful to stimulate discussion and there is no reason to assume they are biased; no doubt many people looked at the survey and concluded "it's boring; I'm busy." Dr. Ellinger concurred, saying that there is the "over-surveying" problem—the administration knows the number of surveys it distributes but does not know about those conducted by majors or colleges.

Professor Hoover thanked Professor Trent for her presentation.

4. Classroom Usage

Professor Hoover turned now to Professor Weinsheimer, chair of the Classroom Advisory Subcommittee, and welcomed Mr. Fitzgerald and Ms. Peterson to make a report on classroom usage and unplaced courses.

Professor Weinsheimer said that his comments will be the report of the Classroom Advisory Subcommittee for the year. There is important information this Committee should be apprised of. He said that all owe a debt of gratitude to Mr. Fitzgerald and Ms. Peterson from the Office of Classroom Management (OCM); the work they have done has led to real improvements in the venues in which the faculty teach.

About two-thirds of centrally-scheduled classrooms have been technologically upgraded, Professor Weinsheimer reported, which are especially appreciated by faculty who use the web in their instruction. He said they hear fewer complaints than in the past (which may in part be because there is a telephone in the classroom to call someone to get something done, sometimes during the class period during which the call was made).

About one-third of classrooms have not been upgraded. Moreover, the technology that has been installed has a fixed usable life, the new technology installed in the two-thirds of classrooms that have received it is reaching the end of its expected usable life and needs to be replaced. Funding for upgrades and lifetime classroom maintenance, however, has not been forthcoming. One of the most serious needs the Office of Classroom Management faces is recurring funds for recurring problems in order that Mr. Fitzgerald does not have to go around with tin cup in hand. There should be recurring funding for this most basic of common goods.

A major problem that has not been resolved is "unplaced courses": courses without a classroom as the start of a semester approaches. The problem parallels that of Interstate 394: built to reduce congestion, a large number of condos were built near it so that the problem remained the same. There has been an increased efficient use of classrooms on the campus—but the number of sections has also increased significantly. So there are still hundreds of unplaced courses when the class schedule is published. This is an issue the University needs to work on.

The Office of Classroom Management has introduced Resource 25, a software program that interacts with PeopleSoft and that allows OCM to manage and to know about non-centrally-scheduled classrooms. Those classrooms are very important, Professor Weinsheimer said; they must be used because there are not enough centrally-scheduled classrooms to accommodate the number of classes. When they are short of rooms, OCM calls departments to ask if they can use departmental classrooms—and they also know if the rooms are open at the time that is needed. This is not, however, the best way for the University to conduct its business. Only 10% of departments (representing about 30% of the departmental/non-centrally-scheduled classrooms) have signed up to participate in Resource 25. There should be a much higher participation rate.

Last year the Subcommittee worked on the issue of classes meeting at non-standard times, the rule about the maximum percentage of a department's classes that can be scheduled during peak hours (which not all departments follow), and the fact that projected enrollment should be within a few percentage points of actual enrollment, Professor Weinsheimer reported. Last year they suggested to

this Committee that it should ask the colleges to monitor exceptions to the rules. Sometimes there are good pedagogical reasons for exceptions and OCM is not in a position to make judgments about them; the colleges should do so. It appears, however, that colleges are not monitoring exceptions so the number of requests for them has not declined—as might be desired if one wanted to maximize the use of classrooms. The Subcommittee should in the future consider other mechanisms for granting exceptions.

Mr. Fitzgerald distributed copies of graphs and data and expressed thanks to the Subcommittee for its support. He said his office tries to stay close to the Subcommittee and the Academy of Distinguished Teachers in order to steer a steady course in meeting faculty and student needs. This is the latest in a long line of discussions he has had with this Committee and others about the problem of unplaced courses in the last five and one-half years. Some progress has been made, but with the strategic planning process, there is a need to be more efficient in meeting teaching and learning needs. One can ask whether the incremental approach is appropriate or if a bold new step should be taken.

One of Mr. Fitzgerald's graphs depicted the number of unplaced courses in fall and spring semesters since fall, 1999. The number is affected by buildings coming on or going off line, Mr. Fitzgerald said, but the numbers are not a healthy indicator. In fall, 2004 there were 857 unplaced courses at the start of the semester; in spring, 2005 there were 438. Numbers in prior years fluctuated up or down somewhat (although the fall 2004 number was the highest on the graph). They often are able to solve the problem of an unplaced course only in the nick of time. The risks are large; two semesters ago the campus had to freeze registration in large courses because of a lack of space. That is not a good way to do business, Mr. Fitzgerald observed.

Another graph illustrated a significant growth in the number of course sections. There was a large jump in the number with the change to semesters (i.e., from about 10,000 course sections in spring 1999 to about 12,200 in fall 1999 to about 14,500 in spring 2000. The numbers have trended upwards since then; the number of course sections in spring 2005 was about 16,000. This increase has created greater pressure on the supply of classrooms.

There are a number of reasons for inefficiencies in the use of classrooms, Mr. Fitzgerald explained, mostly related to deviation from the Senate policy on class scheduling. They include over-projecting enrollment and the number of sections, excess use of peak times, excess use of non-standard courses, and excess late changes/cancellations. His office is developing reports by course and college on these items; when they see a department register high on three or all four of these measures, they will be concerned. There are legitimate reasons for variances but colleges must manage them. Is this information provided to departments, Professor Hoover asked? It is, Mr. Fitzgerald said. For many departments this is not an important issue; they can cajole and persuade but they cannot push. (They get concerned, for example, when they see that over a number of fall semesters a course has about 60% of the projected enrollment—and the department wants to INCREASE the projected enrollment.)

OCM has taken a number of actions, in consultation with the Subcommittee, the Academy, and the Council of Undergraduate Deans: they have improved information technology systems (they have led the horse to water, Mr. Fitzgerald commented, apropos the information provided by the new systems to colleges and departments), they have made reports available faster and on demand, provide

rapid notification to department schedulers of deviations from the rules, provide training for schedulers, and provide extensive communication to everyone involved. One system improvement is the Departmental R25 system, allowing department classroom scheduling; this allows OCM (Ms. Peterson) to see if a room is vacant and to request it for a class and to schedule such rooms across departments. Ms. Peterson is trying to persuade departments of the virtue of using the system; one question is whether departments should be required to use it. They have also made a number of process improvements. The result, Mr. Fitzgerald said, is that improvements have been made, but the large number of unplaced courses indicates "that we continue to address only the margins of the problem. The bottom-up, incentive-based, incremental approach is not solving the problem."

Mr. Fitzgerald said he wanted to recognize Ms. Peterson as "a true treasure" in terms of classroom management and scheduling. Ms. Peterson said that course schedule reports are in UM Reports, including non-standard class times, percentages in peak/off hours, projected versus actual enrollment, and so on. These data will identify the departments that are causing problems. Unfortunately, it is doubtful that people are actually looking at the reports and using them to make changes, she said. One problem that has seen no improvement is the actual versus projected enrollment; it would be best if colleges assessed courses themselves, before sending a classroom request to OCM, because the inaccurate projections skews the ability of OCM to provide appropriate classrooms.

Professor Hoover asked if the problems are as significant in St. Paul; Mr. Fitzgerald said they are not; they are East Bank, West Bank, and St. Paul, in that order. If people stopped deviating from the regular class schedule, would there be enough classroom space, Dr. Shaw asked? There would, Mr. Fitzgerald said. Then why not bar such deviations, Professor Hoover inquired? Dr. Ellinger agreed that there should be consequences for deviation from the class schedule; she also suggested that departments should use an algorithm for projecting enrollment, rather than just last year's numbers. At present the default is last year's projected number, Mr. Fitzgerald said, even if there is a consistent gap between actual and projected. Dr. Ellinger said the University needs to be more sophisticated about approaching the numbers.

Professor Seashore said she appreciated what OCM has been doing and said it needs more teeth in terms of negative incentives or requirements. Things will be even more complicated as faculty deliver a class that is both on-line and in a classroom; it is difficult to schedule a course to meet in a classroom only three times. Some classrooms will be empty sometimes because a class is being conducted on line. But a course should not take a classroom for a whole semester if it will only meet physically three times. Mr. Fitzgerald said the policy in this respect is quite flexible; a department could schedule classes in the same room when it knows that each will only meet a few times during the semester.

With respect to over-projecting enrollment, Professor Seashore commented, it may happen not because people are lazy or misguided but because the classroom they would get if they projected accurately is unsuitable for the course—whereas if they project higher, they will get a different classroom that accommodates their needs. For example, if a course needs seats for break-out sessions, the faculty member may project a larger enrollment in order to accommodate that style of instruction. As the freedom to project enrollment is restricted, it would help if some other alternatives are offered. But, she concluded, OCM should have more enforcement authority.

Professor Hoover thanked Professor Weinsheimer and Mr. Fitzgerald for their report.

5. "Student-Release" Questions

Professor Hoover reported that the Student Senate would act on the "student-release" questions for the evaluation of instruction forms on April 28. She said that she and Mr. Wanderman had hammered out wording; the Student Senate would act on the questions irrespective of any delay in Senate action on the final policy because the students want to see this finished this year. Any changes to them will have to be submitted as amendments on the Senate floor.

One question is whether the Morris campus is required to use the student-release questions; her interpretation of the Senate policy is that they are.

Committee members made various observations on the wording of the questions. [N.B. The Senate on May 5 considered a large number of amendments to the questions during the floor debate and finally decided to delegate to this Committee final authority for the wording of the questions, provided that it consulted with survey experts on campus.]

Professor Hoover adjourned the meeting at 3:10.

-- Gary Engstrand

University of Minnesota