

Minutes\*

**Senate Committee on Educational Policy**  
**Wednesday, November 19, 2003**  
**1:00 – 3:00**  
**238A Morrill Hall**

Present: Emily Hoover (chair), Wilbert Ahern, Roxanne Beauclair, (George Green for) Victor Bloomfield, Dale Branton, Vernon Cardwell, Shawn Curley, Michael Edlavitch, Gretchen Haas, Scott LeBlanc, Marsha Odom, Karen Seashore, Mary Ellen Shaw, Mary Sue Simmons, Craig Swan, Douglas Wangensteen, Joel Weinsheimer

Absent: Frank Kulacki, Geoffrey Meisner, Martin Sampson

Guests: Professor Lillian Bridwell-Bowles; Professor Ken Heller, Mr. Steve Fitzgerald, Ms. Nancy Peterson (Classroom Advisory Subcommittee); Professor John Ramsay (American Council on Education Fellow)

[In these minutes: (1) writing at the University (the ACT writing test); (2) writing at the University (writing instruction on the Twin Cities campus); (3) classroom scheduling policy]

**1. Writing at the University I: The ACT Writing Test**

Professor Hoover convened the meeting and welcomed Professor Bridwell-Bowles, Director of the Center for the Interdisciplinary Studies of Writing on the Twin Cities campus, who is leaving the University to take a position at Louisiana State University beginning next semester. She noted that the Committee had talked about writing and the ACT at its last meeting; that discussion served as a segue into a discussion with Professor Bridwell-Bowles about the ACT and about writing on the campus.

Professor Bridwell-Bowles began by noting that most of her experience is with the Twin Cities campus; she has also been president of the national organization of teachers of writing. Her overview will be specific to the Twin Cities campus.

She reviewed the draft minutes of the last meeting, when the Committee discussed the optional ACT writing test. There are many universities in the same position as this one with respect to the question about the test: Will it provide useful information if it is required of applicants? The word on the streets, nationally, is that it probably will not matter. But it is pretty cheap--\$8-10. The question she brings to the Committee, she said, is about what information the University would get for the requirement. Is it worth the bother? She said there will be an ACT writing evaluation team, and she distributed copies of the criteria and a sample essay. (The essay is appended to these minutes in Appendix 1 and was the subject of discussion by the Committee.)

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\* 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.

ACT will use several criteria to judge writing. They have been developed, according to ACT, after a lot of research on what high school English teachers are supposed to be doing and what college professors want. Most faculty on campus would like this list, although different disciplines might want to add strategies specific to their field; these, however, are good basic criteria.

What follows is the essay prompt students will be given. It provides for a binary response (for or against) but also allows students to offer another view.

"In some high schools, many teachers and parents have encouraged the school to adopt a dress code that sets guidelines for what students can wear in the school building. Some teachers and parents support a dress code because they think it will improve the learning environment in the school. Other teachers and parents do not support a dress code because they think it restricts the individual student's freedom of expression. In your opinion, should high schools adopt dress codes for students?"

"In your essay, take a position on this question. You may write about either one of the two points of view given, or you may present a different point of view on this question. Use specific reasons and examples to support your position."

Professor Bridwell-Bowles suggested that Committee members read the sample essay (at the end of these minutes). This essay, she told them, received the highest rating. If one were to rate the essay on a scale of 1-4, what would they give it, she asked Committee members? Low, average, or high, based on what one wants freshmen at the University to be able to do? Several Committee members rated it high and several made comments:

- It is good, but I would turn it back for rewriting. But not many of my students are able to write this well.
- It makes good arguments, is reflective, and has depth.
- It shows a mixture of logic and emotion (Columbine) and seems close to the top for high-school writing.
- The vocabulary is too simple.
- I would rank it high but it is deficient in argumentation in that it does not address the contrary position (although that is not what the ACT essay prompt asked, noted another Committee member).

The point to note, Professor Bridwell-Bowles said, is that this is a test of high school students in their environment. She said she would not give it a four if it were judged as a college paper because there is a problem with the cause/effect statements and the simple language it uses. College writing is expected to be more complex; in this essay, the logic and syntax break down. The author might not be able to make the transition to college. But according to ACT measuring nationwide, this is a top-rated essay. She said that she has seen a lot of freshman writing; about 10% of the students in freshman composition at the University would need to revise their essay to achieve this level; the other 90% write this well or better.

ACT gave information to the student to set up the argument, with an introduction, complete sentences, and so on--and nearly every English teacher teaches students to write a five-paragraph theme. The Committee talked about sending a message to the high schools; adopting the ACT writing test could do so. But, she cautioned, the University will not see honors students receiving the highest score; the average student can be coached to receive a high score as well. Perhaps more important than "the message" sent to high schools is support for public instruction at the secondary level, specifically smaller students loads so that teachers can critique writing.

That gets to the purpose of requiring the test, Vice Provost Swan said. If it is for admissions, will it serve to identify those who need remedial help? It will, Professor Bridwell-Bowles said, but can the University do that already? This is more work. The University will receive a scanned version of the essay that it can examine. The University does already have writing information that it can get if it needs it, Dr. Swan agreed. And if there is a question about a student's writing ability, Professor Bridwell-Bowles added, the University can ask for a sample on the spot.

This is a 20-minute essay that will be scored by bachelor's degree holders who have not been writing instructors, Professor Bridwell-Bowles pointed out. She said she was not sure it would provide much useful information. What about the other benefit, that it is harder to cheat on this, Dr. Swan asked? That is true, Professor Bridwell-Bowles replied, but one can set up an environment on the first day of classes to test writing in which the chances of cheating are minimal.

Dean Green tried to clarify Professor Bridwell-Bowles' point: If one takes current freshmen, 90% would be at the high end of the scale on the ACT test? No, 10% would be at the bottom, she replied; the remainder would receive a 3 or 4 on the writing. But that is looking at the "winners," Dean Green pointed out--the students who have been admitted. The admissions office is looking at a larger pool of applicants. Those who are admitted have demonstrated writing skills, but that does not mean the test would not be of value for admissions as part of a set of criteria to evaluate applications.

Professor Bridwell-Bowles said there is a high correlation between writing ability and SAT and ACT scores, which is why there has not been a writing test before now. There are a lot of individual exceptions, of course; there are students with high SAT scores who still require a lot of instruction in writing. This test would detect those students, although the number will be small. At the lower end of the scale, she agreed, the University probably would obtain useful information.

Ms. Beauclair asked why the University would not use the SAT test if it will identify who is a good or bad writer. Professor Bridwell-Bowles said the two tests are comparable. ACT says its test is based more on research, although she said she doubted that ACT would have done more research than ETS, the company that offers the SAT. She said she did not believe there is a significant difference between the two.

Mr. LeBlanc said that for an essay written in 20 minutes, the sample seemed well done. What do the faculty on the Committee say about how it compares to impromptu essay tests that they offer, he asked? Professor Cardwell pointed out that he had given it a 4, but that the ACT scale goes up to 6. Professor Bridwell-Bowles said she would give it a B-/C+ in high school but would not accept it in a freshman English class. In academic writing, students are required to read academic materials beforehand and then write. She agreed with Professor Cardwell that this is a good job, given that it is

a brief impromptu essay. But in a freshman composition class, students would read a sophisticated essay and then be asked to write about it, and the product would be a quantum leap over the sample essay.

It is the Committee's decision whether to recommend the ACT writing test, she said, and she wished them the best in reaching a decision.

## **2. Writing at the University II: Writing Instruction on the Twin Cities Campus**

Professor Bridwell-Bowles turned next to writing on the Twin Cities campus and began by reviewing the history of writing instruction. First there was Freshman composition, consisting of either one or two courses that were taught by individuals with or without significant training or experience (it was variable) in a program with or without clear objectives (which was also variable). Some directors of composition tried to set clear objectives, but there was so much turnover in the position that there was no consistency. Sometimes the instructors had extensive training and sometimes they had a four-day training session, and some came directly from obtaining their undergraduate degree.

Next there was Upper division composition; e.g., "writing in engineering," "writing in the arts," and generic "advanced expository writing." These classes were taught by graduate students (including MA students), most of whom did not have academic credentials in the disciplinary area. In the best case, they knew the field, but most did not. The advantages of this approach were the coverage, though limited to one course, and ease of delivery. The disadvantages were the qualifications of the instructors and the lack of a link to disciplines. There was widespread criticism by students about being graded by people who did not know the field and by faculty about instructors who did not know what they wanted.

Now the campus has the Writing-Intensive requirement, which consists of freshman composition plus four writing-intensive courses. There is no training required of faculty who offer such courses, although there are voluntary workshops conducted by the Center for the Interdisciplinary Studies of Writing (now the Center for Writing). The only scrutiny is when the Council on Liberal Education looks at the paragraph in the course application--and it is not their fault they do not do more because they have too much to do. There is no assurance that writing will be taught with any consistency. The requirement of four courses, however, is more than most universities require, so coverage is a huge advantage, as is the proximity to the discipline or genre. The disadvantages of the requirement are that there is inconsistent delivery, no specified goals for the course, and faculty workload issues.

She has held many workshops, Professor Bridwell-Bowles related, at which faculty ask what the writing-intensive course is supposed to accomplish. CLE does not say (and cannot). One can use writing to increase learning in the course OR one can require a correct, edited, polished piece of writing to communicate to specified audiences. In its workshops, The Center for Interdisciplinary Studies of Writing always presented the two options and let faculty decide. Many believe writing-intensive courses are intended to improve public communication and polished writing, but many faculty are more comfortable using writing to increase learning rather than to improve writing skills per se.

Professor Bridwell-Bowles turned next to "other possibilities and immediate recommendations." They included the following:

- Strengthen freshman composition
- Reduce the number of unspecified, "open" writing-intensive courses to 2 and require a freshman seminar and a senior seminar that would be writing-intensive, thus adding up to 4 courses
- Return to a "generic" advanced composition course for departments who want this to count as an "open" writing-intensive course in their program of studies (the disadvantage is that these courses would not be discipline-based, but departments that did not believe they could offer writing-intensive courses could use them)
- Require use of the writing labs for those whose records indicate they need support (this has been random and only a recommendation; Michigan, in contrast, has required students to use writing labs if they fall below certain scores)
- Recommend gathering an early writing sample in all writing-intensive "open" courses and encourage faculty members to refer students to the writing labs
- Expand writing labs to serve many more students in writing-intensive courses and promote their use, possibly placing them in disciplinary clusters where faculty can communicate with tutors about expectations and assignments.

In terms of major, long-term recommendations, Professor Bridwell-Bowles said that in 22 years she has seen a lot of task forces take up the problem of writing. Many of them have good and useful ideas but they come and go and there is no continuity or evaluation of whether anything makes a difference. One possible cure for this problem might be the creation of a "Faculty Writing Board" (made up of people outside the traditional "composition" disciplines, but working with these people) to oversee activities in freshman composition, writing centers, writing-intensive courses, and writing assessment. It could review writing requirements. Such a board is necessary because the Council on Liberal Education has too many responsibilities; recommendations from this Writing Board could be made directly to the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education or to the Council. The University of Missouri has an outstanding example of a writing board, and the University would do well if it adopted that model.

A second recommendation is to appoint faculty-level leadership in the teaching of freshman composition and to require continuity in this leadership, a commitment to writing studies, and faculty-led training programs for TAs involved in instruction that are ongoing, not just pre-fall meetings. As she noted, the leadership has changed often so that good ideas are temporary. There needs to be long-term faculty leadership. This will require collaboration across programs.

A third recommendation is that the University hire people qualified to direct writing programs with faculty-level, tenure-track positions (especially to work with CLA, CBS, and IT students; Rhetoric on the St. Paul campus and General College have sufficient numbers). These should be people with scholarly credentials and reputations who are also good at administration. Such individuals can be found, Professor Bridwell-Bowles averred.

Finally, there has to be assessment, Professor Bridwell-Bowles said. There must be year-in, year-out tracking of student progress and of the requirements (are they working?) The University must gather data on faculty and student opinions and satisfaction, along with case studies or selective sampling of student writing development, from the 1<sup>st</sup> year to the senior year (not for individual

"certification" but for overall assessment of instructional effectiveness). The University has put a lot of money into writing-intensive courses but it has no data on whether or not they are working. Some limited anecdotal evidence from faculty and students suggests that the courses are random, haphazard, and not very good. The University needs more than that. A Writing Board could advise on this issue and systematically review it.

Despite her criticisms, Professor Bridwell-Bowles said she was proud of the work the University has tried to do. She said she NEVER thought it would be possible to implement a 4-course writing-intensive requirement and provide enough seats. Her feeling (without data) is that in general it is going well, even though the consistency and quality of courses could be improved with clarified objectives and assessment.

Professor Weinsheimer said that as far as he can tell, with Professor Bridwell-Bowles's departure, there will be no one in CLA, CBS, or IT with a long-term commitment to writing. How significant is that, he asked? It is unthinkable, Professor Bridwell-Bowles responded. She said she is leaving the University in part because of the randomness of the commitment to writing (in addition to a wonderful offer from Louisiana State), but she would have started looking for another position even without the offer if there were no increase in support for writing. It is a problem. It is VERY important that students be able to write well; information technology is changing so radically that the University must pay attention to communication. Her assignment at LSU covers those areas--and they have ten people working on writing.

Dean Green asked about the faculty positions she recommended. Should they be people with specific training and expertise in the teaching of writing in addition to having, for example, an engineering degree? People who could run a college-based array of upper division writing courses? In the sciences, they might have a Ph.D. in technical communication, Professor Bridwell-Bowles said, and a background in the field; if she were writing the job description, she would require an undergraduate degree in a pertinent disciplinary field. Where would they be given tenure, Dean Green asked? They would not be doing scientific research. Some give tenure in the department, Professor Bridwell-Bowles said; others could have joint appointments in appropriate communications-related departments where their research would be understood. One of her students has been given tenure in Surgery.

Dr. Simmons said she works with adult students, some of whom are good writers and some of whom are not. Are people teachable at 40 or 50 years of age? Their style can be entrenched by that age, and then they come back to academe. Should one do something different for adults? That has been studied and yes, they do require different treatment, Professor Bridwell-Bowles replied. Reading is a huge part of the instruction; when someone has been out of school for many years, they must read materials that contain the kind of writing that is expected.

This discussion has implications for the other campuses, Professor Ahern said. He asked about the extent to which requiring the ACT writing test could discourage applications from lower socio-economic groups. It will probably have that effect, Professor Bridwell-Bowles said. Changes in writing instruction really need to be made long before the University makes an admissions decision about a student. Students from lower socio-economic groups need better elementary and secondary education and the University needs to take that into account in its admissions process.

Professor Odom said she could find nothing on the ACT web site that indicates whether the writing tests will be normed or if there will be percentiles. Neither could she, Professor Bridwell-Bowles responded. Professor Odom said she still likes the idea of a standard piece of information about all freshmen. She said she would also like to see the correlation between the writing test score and the reading subtests. There will be a high correlation, Professor Bridwell-Bowles said.

Dean Green said he would like to offer thanks for Professor Bridwell-Bowles's years of leadership at the University. The Committee gave her a round of applause. Professor Hoover thanked her for joining the Committee and wished her well at Louisiana State.

### **3. Classroom Scheduling**

Professor Hoover next welcomed Professor Ken Heller and Mr. Steve Fitzgerald from the Classroom Advisory Subcommittee. The Subcommittee had been asked earlier in the year to advise this Committee on what steps should be taken to minimize the number of classes offered at non-standard times, thus reducing the efficiency of the uses of classrooms. Committee members were provided a copy of the report from the Subcommittee (which is appended to these minutes as Appendix 2).

Professor Heller began by saying that they have looked at the problem of classrooms for many years. One problem is that there are not enough classrooms in the right places to handle the population of students. There is a severe shortage (by his rough estimate, at least 50), and scheduling people do a heroic job of getting classes scheduled--even if they have to put them in a broom closet with no blackboard. Until there is more money for classrooms, these problems will have to be dealt with.

Can the campus be more efficient in the use of classrooms? It can, Professor Heller said, but that will mean less flexibility. Efficiency can get in the way of pedagogy. Optimization of the use of classrooms is the key.

There will soon be in place new electronic course-scheduling software that they hope will be a big step forward, Professor Heller told the Committee. There are also rules adopted by the Assembly that they believe to be adequate; the question is enforcing them. He said the Subcommittee understands that there may be some reasons a department cannot follow the rules, so they recommend flexibility, with checks. Because the University is in a tight economic situation, the flexibility must be paid for in scheduling priority, since there is no money. He drew the attention of Committee members to the five bullets in the Subcommittee report. Their recommendations are as follows:

"The Classroom Advisory Subcommittee supports the OCM [Office of Classroom Management] intention to utilize the new scheduling features to provide rapid feedback to departments, and to make that information part of an effort to reward compliance with existing policy by prioritizing the schedule submissions of those who are in compliance. The corollary is that those who are not in compliance will receive lower (or 'space available') priority in central classrooms.

"The Classroom Advisory Subcommittee also supports the implementation by OCM of a procedure that will return submissions that are non-standard or in excess of 60% in peak

time. (OCM will identify the number of hours in excess of 60%. The department will determine what specific courses to associate with the excess hours). These course submissions may be changed to conform and resubmitted (by the deadline) by the department, in which case they will be processed for placement in central classrooms along with other correctly submitted courses. Alternatively, the department may justify the non-standard or excess peak time need to the appropriate associate dean and, if so approved, schedule the course in a departmental classroom. As a second alternative, after associate dean approval, the course may be resubmitted to Scheduling for placement in a central classroom on a 'low priority/space available' basis.

"Given the high demand for central classrooms, this low priority for non-standard or excess peak-time courses means that those courses that remain outside the currently approved policy will likely not be assigned to a central classroom, especially at peak hours. Conversely, courses that meet policy will have an enhanced placement opportunity and a reduced likelihood of being changed or moved at the last minute. OCM will attempt to place non-standard time or excess peak time course submissions in central classrooms on a 'space available'/ not-guaranteed basis."

There are concerns about whether departments will be able to change schedules, Professor Heller said, because the Assembly rules have for so long not been enforced. Many departments could be set in their ways and have no resources to alter their schedule. It could be difficult if departments face a massive rescheduling of courses because they violate the 60% rule (the Provost's rule that only 60% of courses may be offered during peak time, 9:00 to 2:00) or if they start at times different from the standard class schedule. This is also not trivial because changing where a course is scheduled will affect students in other courses.

Professor Heller said they hoped that the feedback and the scheduling software help to address the "what if" questions.

What about a department that offers primarily doctoral courses in the late afternoon and evening, Professor Seashore asked? This recommendation applies to daytime undergraduate courses, Professor Heller said. Mr. Fitzgerald clarified that electronic scheduling applies to all courses in the same way that currently existing policy applies to all courses. Professor Seashore's example would be covered by the "grad/professional course exemption" and/or the fact that the example was after 5 o'clock--both are provisions of current policy.

Vice Provost Swan said that he wanted to underscore the language in Professor Heller's memo asking the Assembly Committee on Educational Policy to endorse the recommendations the Subcommittee has made. That will be important, he said. He said that Mr. Fitzgerald has talked with the undergraduate deans about these problems; the recommendations will contain no surprises for them. There are several things happening on this issue.

-- The campus has been losing classrooms because of new projects and remodeling (e.g., Architecture, Ford, Murphy).



-- Enrollment and average credit loads are up, which has meant an increased demand for seats. Increasing a class from 37 to 41 students in a classroom designed for 45 is not a problem, but the conflicts are not all that easy.

-- The change to IMG, which was both good and bad, makes life difficult for Mr. Fitzgerald. The good is that colleges are responsive to student demand. The bad is that colleges assume they could have a lot of students so they have over-scheduled classes, both for size and for the number of sections they need. They correct the problem after the fact, but in the meantime Mr. Fitzgerald's office must schedule more classes than there is room for.

-- Information systems have not been as timely as they will be with the new course-scheduling software. With it, the University can hold people more accountable up front. This will not solve the problem, but it will help. There are institutional standards; departments need to understand that it is OK to teach a class at 8:00 or at 3:00, and that they have to teach on Fridays.

Professor Heller is right about the tradeoff between efficiency and flexibility, Dr. Swan said. These recommendations are pushing on the efficiency side, but they are the only short-term solution available.

Do the recommendations give any teeth to refusing faculty who have personal reasons for wanting to teach a 4-credit course on Monday and Wednesday, which blocks out time for students, Professor Cardwell asked? There has never been any leverage to change behavior. The recommendations put the responsibility at the level where the decisions are made, Professor Heller said. A department will be told it is out of compliance with the policies and that it will not receive the same priority in scheduling classes--a problem that it can fix before it submits class schedules. There is a rule-buster rule, he said; with consent from somewhere in the college, a non-standard course can be scheduled in rooms not controlled by central scheduling. If someone can convince the college the course must be taught on Monday and Wednesday, it can be offered, but it will probably not be taught in a centrally-scheduled classroom.

Mr. Fitzgerald said he wanted to recognize the Subcommittee's helpfulness; it is a broad-based group that assists his office with meeting the needs of pedagogy and learning and in wrestling with tough issues. His position is Director of Classroom Management and he serves as the central point of contact and accountability for classrooms.

The electronic course-scheduling software was to on the agenda of this Committee, but the question raised by Professor Hoover, whether non-standard classes should be prohibited, led the Subcommittee to respond and include information about the software. It is better to find this middle ground, he said, rather than take a draconian step. The provost's support for the new software is timely because it will allow his office to address the problem. Last week they had to temporarily close registration for 49 large classes because the problem (the lack of classrooms) was out of control.

Mr. Fitzgerald distributed copies of a report from his office and pointed to two slides. One revealed that the number of sections (classes) had increased from about 10,000 in the last terms the University was on quarters to about 14,000 for Spring, 2004. There have been approximately 14,000 sections every semester. The demand has increased significantly.

The second slide graphed the number of "unplaced courses" for the spring terms 2000 to 2004; this coming spring the number is 717 (for the four previous spring semesters, the numbers were 781, 401, 310, and 531). Mr. Fitzgerald recalled that he had spoken with this Committee perhaps half a dozen times about the problem, as well as to the Committee on Finance and Planning and the deans. He has said for many semesters that this is a dangerous situation. They have solved it by taking Klaeber Court offices, faculty offices, and conference rooms--putting classes in rooms totally inappropriate for the quality of education the University expects to deliver. Last week the situation got too close to the edge; Ms. Peterson has lived with the situation for 10 semesters and concluded she could not schedule classes with the numbers involved. He agreed, Mr. Fitzgerald said, and they stopped registration in large courses, which allowed them to change times and locations and to work with departments. He said he apologized for the impact on students but said he could justify the decision because it reduced a much larger impact later.

What is the environment in which Ms. Peterson runs scheduling? A 40% increase in sections since the change to semesters and a smaller number of classrooms. They lost four classroom and 600 seats in the Ford/Murphy/Architecture remodeling--and the size of the new classrooms is down. The same will happen with the remodeling of Nicholson/Jones. Compare that to the trend to larger classes, Mr. Fitzgerald said.

The inefficiencies are serious. The situation is dire but they can be more efficient in how they schedule classes, and the new software will help. Departments will be provided the guideline (60% of classes may be in the 9:00 - 2:00 period) and told that their submissions exceed the guideline by X hours. The shortage of classrooms, Mr. Fitzgerald said, is during the peak times. About 20% of classes are at non-standard times. There is also inefficient scheduling by departments, which tend to see classrooms as an inexhaustible resource. There were inaccurate and excess course projections in Spring, 2003: enrollments were 60% of projections. There is also an 18-22% cancellation rate per semester. If there can more accurate enrollment projections, fewer cancellations, students will have an improved experience and it will be possible to schedule more in advance with certainty and with fewer perturbations in the system and fewer unplaced courses, Mr. Fitzgerald concluded.

They have been providing information to departments but it has not been in real time--it comes two semesters later, which is not particularly helpful. The new system will enable them to provide feedback to departments and colleges about non-standard classes and peak time limits have been exceeded eight months before the term.

When the Committee comes across a problem that appears to be general, it often turns out to be a problem in a few departments. This is widespread, Mr. Fitzgerald said. Some are not more likely than others to be a problem, and thus have a mindset more difficult to change? That is not the issue, Mr. Fitzgerald said. This will empower departments with the information they need. There is a coercion factor involved, Professor Heller said, but it is peer coercion. The recommendations make it clear that classrooms are not an inexhaustible resource and the problem goes right to the department. If a department has more than 60% of its offerings in peak time, unless it identifies those that it will move, NONE of its classes will receive priority for centrally-scheduled classrooms. The DEPARTMENT must make the decision, not some office on high. The changes will need to be negotiated locally, based on local priorities.

Does this apply only to classes in centrally-scheduled classrooms, Professor Hoover asked? A lot of classes are held in department classrooms. One consequence of a lot of non-standard classes is that students never get out of their silos and take courses in other areas. The new software will put the information out there and allow people to make decisions, Mr. Fitzgerald said. Departments have options--they can use department classrooms and teach at non-standard times. The Assembly policy contains a lot of exemptions, he pointed out: the "grad/professional exemption" states that all 6XXX to 8XXX courses can be non-standard if they are not at peak times or if they are not in centrally-scheduled classrooms, for example. The 60% rule, however, applies to ALL of a department's offerings. Ms. Peterson said they will provide information to departments on both: the total offerings and the offerings in centrally-scheduled classrooms. The provost's rule applies to classes in centrally-scheduled classrooms, Vice Provost Swan clarified.

Mr. Fitzgerald reviewed the rules at other Big Ten universities. Minnesota is by far the most liberal and most flexible, he said. (Michigan State, by comparison, will not schedule classes at non-standard times. UW Madison is much more structured in its approach to standard and peak time usage of general classrooms. So are other Big Ten schools.) He said he believed the Subcommittee recommendations were appropriate and a good approach.

Professor Heller said that first, it is crucial the rules be publicized and well-known (they currently are not, in his judgment, nor is it clear what the hard rules are and what the recommendations are). Second, they do not expect these recommendations to solve the problem. They are a first step, however, and the process will be iterative.

Mr. LeBlanc said he saw this as an extraordinary benefit. He has been doing his class schedule for four years and has seen the same classes offered at exactly the same time EVERY year. That restricts how students can schedule classes. He said he could imagine that the recommendations might lead departments to rotate course offerings in and out of peak times.

Professor Weinsheimer said he supported the recommendations for several reasons. First, if one is convinced that there is a crisis in classroom availability, this is the time to do something. The question is how far one should go. The advantage of this proposal is that it does not require new policy or propose a change in established norms. Second, it is not absolutist. Departments can decide if they wish not to abide by University rules. Third, new information that will be available will make a lot of difference because it will be instantaneous. The system will increase the efficiency of classrooms and increase flexibility in the use of departmental space. He said he was amazed to learn the number of classrooms owned by departments--it is 40% of the classrooms on the Twin Cities campus. The recommendations ask departments to make the most effective use of that space. This is a minimalist approach, and it may not be enough over the long-term but it is the right way to go as a start.

Dr. Shaw said she hoped that with the implementation of the graduation planner, departments will think about how their students' lives are constructed and that there are competing factors that affect their lives. With the number of students who now live on campus, the 9:00 - 2:00 period is not so important--students would take required courses later to avoid having their classes all bunched up. She also endorsed the recommendations and urged that the Committee continue to monitor the situation.

When departments submit their schedules, have they first used their own classrooms? Or do they use them as a fallback, Ms. Haas asked? There is no requirement either way, Dr. Swan said. Some do and some don't, Mr. Fitzgerald reported. Department classrooms are under-used and represent one way to solve the problem of non-standard classes. Are department classrooms smaller, Dr. Shaw inquired? Many are middle-sized or smaller, Mr. Fitzgerald said, but they can often accommodate discussion sections of larger classes. Ms. Haas said it is important to note that they are trying to put 90% of classes into 60% of the space.

Mr. Fitzgerald said it would be helpful if the Committee would take action today to approve the recommendations in order to give him and the Subcommittee the tools they need. Dean Green moved they be approved. Professor Hoover said she would like to think about the proposal until the next meeting and to better understand the rules and the recommendations. Mr. Fitzgerald said that they are now dealing with 600 unplaced courses for spring semester and that he feels a pressing sense of urgency. If the Committee supports the recommendations, Dr. Swan said, the Provost will write a letter to the colleges conveying them.

What is the cost of the new system, Mr. Edlavitch asked? Mr. Fitzgerald said he did not know. But it will go forward; the question is whether they can use it to enforce the policy in the flexible manner the Subcommittee has recommended. What are the "cons" to the proposal, Mr. Edlavitch then asked? The faculty will not be as free to ignore department demands, he suggested. The system will provide information "with a kick," Professor Seashore commented.

Professor Heller said there are potential disaster scenarios and there is a cost. He said he did not expect the process to go smoothly the first time. In some cases, a department cannot move a class on its own without unintentional consequences for students. But the classroom problem must be addressed. Dr. Swan said that they knew when the policy was first adopted that it would not be possible to enforce it; now it will be. Professor Heller agreed and said that the Committee can revise the policy as information becomes available.

The Committee voted unanimously to approve the recommendations of the Subcommittee. Professor Hoover then adjourned the meeting at 3:05.

-- Gary Engstrand

University of Minnesota

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### **Appendix 1**

From the ACT web site, the sample essay discussed at the meeting.

Many high schools have adopted dress codes that set guidelines for what students can wear in the school building. Many people disagree with these policies. Though arguments can be made for either side, my opinion is that a dress code can have a very positive outcome for several reasons.

First of all, a dress code promotes student equality and acceptance. High school students are at a vulnerable age when they want to be accepted. If a teenager feels as though they don't belong, it can lead to serious emotional problems. Some students get so upset that they withdraw from family, their grades fall, and they may become hostile. The shootings at Columbine High School were the response of two boys who felt unaccepted. Students following a dress code would look more alike. This helps all students feel like part of a group as well as eliminates problems of not wearing the "right" clothes for students affected by poverty who can't afford to.

Second, a dress code eliminates distractions in the classroom. Students who wear tight clothing could be uncomfortable and not able to concentrate. Some students may feel peer pressure to wear revealing clothes they believe are immodest just because it's in style. This would make them uncomfortable in a different way but also keep them from concentrating. Tight and revealing clothes can also affect the rest of the students, especially the opposite sex, by catching the eye and causing people to think about things other than what they should be learning. A dress code keeps tight and revealing clothes out of the school so that the focus in the classroom stays on education.

Lastly, a dress code can contribute to students' education by teaching students how to dress for the working world. Since most students will have to work sometime after they graduate, it's important that they know what to wear for a job. A dress code can teach students to distinguish between what is appropriate to wear and what is not.

While many people are afraid dress codes restrict personal freedom, it is important to remember that a dress code is only for school and that students can express their individual style on their own time. Since a dress code in school can make students feel more accepted, decrease distractions in the classroom and help students prepare themselves for a job, it's not surprising that many schools have adopted dress codes.

## **Appendix 2**

November 11, 2003

TO: Emily Hoover, Chair, Assembly Committee on Educational Policy  
FROM: Ken Heller, Chair, Classroom Advisory Subcommittee  
RE: Non Standard Scheduling/Unplaced Course Problem

This letter replies to your request of September 5, 2003, in which you asked that the Classroom Advisory Subcommittee (CAS) consider whether ACEP should send forward a policy recommendation to the Senate and administration that would prohibit classes from being offered at non standard times.

The context of your question is the continuing central classroom supply-demand/ unplaced course problem that is largely caused by classroom utilization inefficiencies that are broadly called "non

standard times”: courses that do not conform to the Senate approved policy on class scheduling or to the Provost’s guidelines that limit peak time scheduling to 60% of sections taught. The Classroom Advisory Subcommittee and Assembly Committee on Educational Policy have been on record for some time as being greatly concerned about this problem and the resulting adverse impacts on the quality of teaching and learning on the Twin Cities campus.

CAS strongly agrees that we have a significant problem, and notes with concern the warnings from Classroom Management that the Scheduling office will not be able to successfully place future semester course loads without a substantial improvement in central classroom utilization.

We believe that existing policy and guidelines are adequate. This is not a question of needing new policy. It is more a question of how to increase conformance with existing policy. CAS considered the “prohibition” option, but decided in favor of a more incentive-based and less draconian approach. We believe that the new scheduling system improvements that will be implemented in December 2003 offer the basis of this necessary improvement in central classroom utilization.

The Classroom Advisory Subcommittee recommends:

- That ACEP endorse and strongly support OCM’s Electronic Course Scheduling project initiatives (described below).
- That ACEP endorse and strongly support OCM’s incentive-based approach to having departments comply with existing Senate approved policy and Provost Guidelines for class scheduling. This approach provides incentives to conform to existing policy & guidelines. It also provides for an alternative (and a vetting process) to permit departments to use non standard times if they determine that they cannot conform.
- That ACEP take note that this approach allows departments, with associate dean approval, to place non-standard time courses in departmental classrooms. This helps improve central classroom utilization (and helps solve the problem), but still presents course access issues for students. ACEP should caution that this should be an infrequently used exception for reasons of pedagogy.
- That the Provost send a letter to Deans discussing the necessity of compliance with policy and the importance of this effort.
- That OCM provide feedback to the Classroom Advisory Subcommittee and to ACEP on the results after the Fall 2004 schedule is complete. This feedback should include an assessment of whether this incentive-based approach adequately controls the problem and whether more stringent action is required.

## **BACKGROUND**

The Office of Classroom Management (OCM) advises that the completion of the Electronic Course Scheduling (ECS) project in December 2003 will bring major changes and improvements to the scheduling process. These improvements may offer the best solution to this ongoing and vexing problem. The improvements occur at a critical time, as the number of unplaced courses is again on the increase, and classroom supply is declining due to renovation projects. **OCM is on record as saying that they will not be able to place all courses in central classrooms in the Fall 2004 semester unless the U makes a substantial improvement in utilization.**

Currently, the scheduling process requires that departments submit, and that OCM's scheduling office iteratively process, multiple paper forms for each of UMTC's 14,000+ course sections. In addition to being slow and cumbersome, this paper intensive system has not allowed Scheduling to provide timely feedback on course submissions that deviate from the established Senate scheduling policies or the Provost's scheduling guidelines.

Scheduling has done extensive reporting and provided volumes of data on the causes of inefficient utilization of central classrooms (non-standard times, excess use of peak time, over projecting enrollment, projecting excess sections, etc). This information to departments has identified non standard issues at the individual and specific course section level, and excess peak time issues to the exact hour level of detail. The information has been somewhat useful for those departments that apply it to the management of future scheduling needs. However, the information has always been provided too late to be a helpful tool department administrators and schedulers to use in fine-tuning the course submission for a given semester while it is in progress.

This will dramatically change in December 2003 when the ECS comes on line and when the scheduling production starts for Fall semester 2004. Under the new system, departments will submit scheduling inputs in an on line, web-based system. For the first time, the new system will allow instant feedback to departments that will specifically flag course submissions that deviate from the Senate policy and from the Provost guidelines. For the first time, the U will have an opportunity to solve scheduling/unplaced course problems before the scheduling algorithm runs – not afterwards when department and central schedulers have been forced to play catch up.

### **NEW APPROACH**

The Classroom Advisory Subcommittee supports the OCM intention to utilize the new scheduling features to provide rapid feedback to departments, and to make that information part of an effort to reward compliance with existing policy by prioritizing the schedule submissions of those who are in compliance. The corollary is that those who are not in compliance will receive lower (or "space available") priority in central classrooms.

The Classroom Advisory Subcommittee also supports the implementation by OCM of a procedure that will return submissions that are non-standard or in excess of 60% in peak time. (OCM will identify the number of hours in excess of 60%. The department will determine what specific courses to associate with the excess hours). These course submissions may be changed to conform and resubmitted (by the deadline) by the department, in which case they will be processed for placement in central classrooms along with other correctly submitted courses. Alternatively, the department may justify the non-standard or excess peak time need to the appropriate associate dean and, if so approved, schedule the course in a departmental classroom. As a second alternative, after associate dean approval, the course may be resubmitted to Scheduling for placement in a central classroom on a "low priority/space available" basis.

Given the high demand for central classrooms, this low priority for non-standard or excess peak-time courses means that those courses that remain outside the currently approved policy will likely not be assigned to a central classroom, especially at peak hours. Conversely, courses that meet policy will

have an enhanced placement opportunity and a reduced likelihood of being changed or moved at the last minute. OCM will attempt to place non-standard time or excess peak time course submissions in central classrooms on a "space available"/ not-guaranteed basis.

### **CONCLUSION**

The Classroom Advisory Subcommittee supports this incentive-based, "carrot" approach by OCM as opposed to a more stringent "enforcement" based approach, or an outright prohibition of non-standard courses. The Subcommittee notes that existing policy provides ample exceptions to the standard time requirement. CAS also notes that this brings UMTC more in line with how other Big Ten counterparts handle non-standard or excess peak time requirements for general purpose classrooms.

OCM advises that the risk of this incentive-based approach is that it will not sufficiently control the problem and we will continue to have central classroom shortages and unplaced courses. If this is the case, future, more stringent action, such as prohibition, will be necessary.

We believe that communications will be an important part of implementing the new Electronic Course Scheduling project enhancements in December 2003 in conjunction with the start of production for the Fall 2004 semester schedule. The ECS project has been ongoing for nine months and has been widely publicized in scheduling, classroom, registrar and student services channels. ACEP and senior administration officials can play an important part in broadening the understanding and importance of this effort that will hopefully allow UMTC to get the unplaced course problem under control.

cc: Charles Campbell, Chair, Senate Committee on Finance and Planning  
Craig Swan, Vice Provost