

Minutes*

Senate Committee on Educational Policy
Wednesday, September 25, 2002
1:00 – 3:00
238A Morrill Hall

Present: Martin Sampson (chair), Wilbert Ahern, Victor Bloomfield, Dale Branton, Shawn Curley, Scott Ferguson, Steve Fitzgerald, Gretchen Haas, Frank Kulacki, Carol Miller, Marsha Odom, Mary Ellen Shaw, Mary Sue Simmons, Craig Swan

Absent: Vernon Cardwell, Karen Seashore, Douglas Wangenstein

Guests: Susan VanVoorhis, Tina Rovic (Enrolled Student Services); Regents' Professor John Sullivan (Presidential Search-Advisory Committee)

[In these minutes: (1) presidential search forums, responses to committee minutes; (2) Twin Cities campus calendar; (3) report on classroom technology upgrades; (4) the 13-credit rule and registration data for fall semester; (5) the presidential search; (6) the policy on withdrawals; (7) subcommittees]

1. Committee Business

Professor Sampson convened the meeting at 1:00 and called on Professor Ahern. Professor Ahern said there was one statement in the minutes of the last meeting that he should have caught before the minutes were distributed. It is not the FACULTY members of the presidential search-advisory committee who decided not to have open forums; it was the search-advisory committee as a whole that decided against forums.

Professor Sampson reported that when the minutes of the Committee are distributed he receives comments both positive and negative about issues raised. As a faculty governance committee, it makes sense for the Committee to receive these comments; he will in the future ask the authors of messages for permission to forward them to the Committee. They should be taken seriously, he said; the Committee exists to serve the faculty and students.

2. Twin Cities Campus Calendar

Professor Sampson turned to Dr. Rovic to introduce a discussion of the Twin Cities campus calendar. Dr. Rovic distributed a handout enumerating the options:

1. Keep the calendars as proposed, with fall semesters 2004 and 2005 ending on December 23. This is what occurred in fall, 1999, and no one complained. Michigan and Wisconsin are also scheduled to end December 23.

* 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.

2. Make fall semester a standard 70 days regardless of when Labor Day falls and leave spring semester at 74 days. fall 2004 would end December 22 (if no days between the end of classes and beginning of finals); fall 2005 would end December 21 (same proviso).
3. Make both fall and spring semester 70 days. Finals fall 2004 would end December 22 (as above); spring 2005 could (a) begin after the MLK holiday and end May 10 (the middle of the week, and leaving more time between the end of term and beginning of the May session) or (b) begin the Monday after the MLK holiday and end May 14 (time between the end of term and beginning of May session would remain as at present; break between fall and spring semester would be lengthened by a week).
4. Make fall semester 67 days and spring semester 70 days (Michigan does this). fall 2004 exams would end December 18; fall 2005 exams would end December 17.

67-day semesters would provide:

40 class days for MWF classes
27 class days for T-Th classes

70-day semesters would provide:

42 class days for MWF classes
28 class days for T-Th classes

74-day semesters would provide:

44 class days for MWF classes
30 class days for T-Th classes

He has received feedback on calendar options from a variety of courses, Professor Sampson told the Committee. (1) There is overall recognition that exams on December 22 and 23 ARE a problem, even if the administration has not heard about it. (2) One solution might be to re-juggle exams so that large class finals are first so only the low-enrollment classes have exams on December 22 and 23. (3) One technology instructor said he would gladly give up exam week in order to have more time for projects. Since the University sets a final exam period, finals are important, but it must be recognized that a shortened semester would be a disadvantage to some instructional offerings.

Mr. Fitzgerald reported that the large-class final exams ARE scheduled early in exam week. If that is so, Dr. Bloomfield said, then the problem of asking TAs to stick around over a break to grade exams in big courses is eliminated and it becomes easier to live with exams ending December 22 or 23.

Professor Kulacki said that while he likes the idea of symmetry between fall and spring semesters, given the weather in Minnesota the second option is acceptable. That allows for campus closings due to weather and the general prevalence of colds and the flu. A more flexible spring semester is better operationally even if not in principle. Dr. Rovic pointed out that there are precedents; Michigan and Wisconsin have semesters of different lengths.

Mr. Ferguson said that as far as students are concerned, ending finals on December 22 or 23 is unacceptable and they all oppose it. Many students fly internationally; others have to drive home, and driving 10 hours on December 23 is unattractive.

Professor Ahern said that instruction is changing dramatically and that it would be interesting to know the percentage of courses with some part of the instruction occurring via the web. His guess is that students actually receive more instructional time than they did 10 years ago so it is unlikely that a change in semester length would lead to reduced student-faculty or student-student interaction.

The Committee took a straw vote on the options; the results were as follows:

Option 1	-0-
Option 2	6
Option 3	4
Option 4	1

Professor Odom said she would stay out of the discussion about the Twin Cities campus calendar; Professor Ahern responded that the decision will affect all of the campuses (for example, if the Twin Cities opts for a 70-day semester). Professor Odom agreed that it would be difficult for the other campuses to retain a longer semester if the Twin Cities did not. She reported, however, that all of the faculty discussions in which she has participated indicate faculty want more instructional time, not less.

Would the change in the calendar be one-time, Ms. Haas asked? Professor Sampson said it would be permanent policy change.

What is the difference in semester length now, Dr. Shaw asked? Spring semester is always 74 days, Dr. Rovic said; fall is usually 72 days (when Labor Day falls early in September) but can be 70 or 71 if Labor Day comes late.

The problem with Option 2 is that there is a great disparity between 70 and 74 class days, Professor Miller said. If one is teaching the same course both semesters, they would be quite different if one can add four class days to one of them. There would only be one or two more classes unless the class meets every day, Ms. Haas observed. Dr. Bloomfield said that leaving spring semester unchanged would probably be more popular with faculty because they have taught courses with the 74 class days. But if the class were changed from spring to fall, then there is a problem, Professor Sampson said.

Professor Curley concurred with Professor Kulacki's point about more flexibility in spring semester. If faculty want consistency in their courses, he said, they can gear them to 70 days of instruction and not use the extra days in the spring.

Professor Odom said that if one talks about student learning rather than what the faculty are teaching, courses should have the same expectations irrespective of whether they are taught in the spring or fall. Faculty can adjust their teaching either way but there would be more responsibility for learning placed on the student. Each semester classes are different, with different students. What is not being addressed is whether seat time is a valid measure. The Senate has a policy on contact hours but the Committee has not looked at what seat time means. Professor Sampson said that was a good point. One suggestion at the last meeting was to drop a week from the semester but increase class length to 55 minutes, which would mean there would be MORE seat time in a shortened semester.

The discussion has moved from whether late finals are a good idea to more difficult questions about how semesters are working, Professor Miller said. The latter questions cannot be solved today but there is a need for a stopgap decision about the calendar. The Committee should, however, return to these questions. The length of the class period is important; she said she would love to have 55 minutes, and a longer class period could have positive learning outcomes.

Professor Ahern noted that the current Senate policy does not link credits to seat time but rather to student work. He said he would prefer Option 3 but Option 2 might be the more responsible decision at this point; it simplifies the situation and semester lengths do not bounce around from one year to the next. He also said the arguments for more flexibility in spring semester made sense. He also said the faculty would object to a dramatic change in semester length without more consultation. In addition, Professor Curley pointed out, Option 2 stays within the current policy, which calls for semesters of 70-75 days.

It is interesting, however, that neither Option 2 or 3 addresses the problem of late exams, Professor Sampson observed. Professor Kulacki said that when finals run late, either faculty give exams early or they give take-home exams. When the exam period ends very close to the Christmas holiday, it must tacitly understood that these practices will go on. Labor Day will be September 7 in 2009, Dr. Rovic commented; Professor Kulacki responded that there will be few final exams given that year.

The Committee voted 10-0 with one abstention to adopt Option 2. Professor Sampson said the Committee would review the specific calendars (which Dr. Rovic had prepared for each option) at the end of the meeting. At that time, the Committee voted unanimously to approve the Twin Cities calendars for 2004-05 and 2005-06 that have 70-day fall semesters and 74-day spring semesters. The calendars will be on the October 31 Senate docket.

The Committee agreed that it would continue to wrestle with the questions raised in the discussion.

3. Report on Classroom Upgrades

Professor Sampson turned next to Mr. Fitzgerald, who distributed a handout and reviewed it with the Committee. He identified the elements of the classroom technology upgrade plan, the goals (which include, for the first time, funding life cycle and replacement costs for classroom technology), what constitutes a projection-capable classroom, and the items in an upgrade package.

Mr. Fitzgerald then reported on the progress in implementing the plan. The goal was completion of 300 centrally-scheduled classrooms by the end of 2003-04; at present, they are running about 50 classrooms per year (or about one year) behind schedule. At the current rate, they will complete the upgrades of the 300 rooms by the end of 2004-05.

They completed about 40 classrooms in 1999-2000, only about 20 in 2000-01, but nearly 50 in 2001-02 as the result of a partnership with the colleges created by then-Provost Bruininks. Partnerships are of two kinds: (1) departments/colleges convert department classrooms to central classrooms in return for technology upgrade installation by the Office of Classroom Management (OCM), or (2) departments/colleges partner with OCM to fund immediate upgrades in a central classroom that was not scheduled for near-term installation. In both cases, the department contributing funding is assigned

"priority scheduling" in the upgraded classroom. This partnership program has been a great success, leading to a significant increase in the number of classrooms upgraded in the last year, Mr. Fitzgerald said, and he said he hoped it would continue.

Mr. Fitzgerald also reported that technology upgrades include making the classrooms wireless-ready. Asked if this increased the cost of the upgrade, Mr. Fitzgerald said it added very little. The design was included from the beginning. He said that people can expect to have problems and a steep learning curve, however, and OCM invites feedback (www.classrooms.umn.edu).

There is real progress, Mr. Fitzgerald concluded, but at a slower pace than had been planned. Progress to date is based on one-time funding; recurring funding to support life cycle maintenance and equipment replacement is lagging. There could begin to be backlog on these items. Asked why funds are coming more slowly, Mr. Fitzgerald explained that because of pressure from faculty and students, they have been driven to get as many rooms as possible upgraded; they forged ahead, but now need to have recurring funds to keep them up.

The initial estimates on costs were quite close; they have received about \$1.6 million. What that figure does not include is the non-technological recurring costs in classrooms. For example, OCM recently completed a detailed study of the replacement cost of classroom furniture; the total is \$14.9 million. Mr. Fitzgerald said he is discussing with the administration the need for recurring funds for this purpose as well.

Professor Ahern recalled that the Committee has endorsed a statement calling for funding for classroom upgrades for all campuses. The Committee needs to hear how the other campuses are doing. There are economies of scale on the Twin Cities campus, so it can have Mr. Fitzgerald's office, and there has been significant progress, but he cannot be responsible for the coordinate campuses. On the other hand, they can learn from Mr. Fitzgerald. Mr. Fitzgerald pointed out that UMC is ahead of the other campuses in classroom upgrades and that he has learned much from them; the learning goes both ways, he said. Professor Ahern said there was a report to the Regents a couple of years ago suggesting that Crookston was ahead while Duluth and Morris were lagging in classroom upgrades; in the meantime, Morris has a new science building and is slated for a new social science building (if the buildings vetoed last spring are funded), so it could have a high percentage of its classrooms upgraded. The lack of recurring funds remains a challenge, however.

Dr. Swan said the initial technological specifications were shared with all campuses, has have funds as they are available. Having said that, the vagaries of construction may have meant different impacts on different campuses.

Classroom upgrades has been an enormous problem for a number of years, Professor Sampson said, but it is at the core of one of the main University missions. It is hard to imagine a more active advocate for classrooms than Mr. Fitzgerald, and all governance committees of which he is aware have supported increased funding for classrooms, but the University remains behind. He said he wanted the minutes, however, to reflect the Committee's appreciation for Mr. Fitzgerald's work and the role of then-Provost Bruininks and others in finding money during the summer for the recent progress in upgrading classrooms.

4. The 13-Credit Rule

Professor Sampson turned next to Dr. Swan, who provided data on enrollment for the Twin Cities campus. At the end of the second week of classes the data were as follows (all data are for the TWIN CITIES CAMPUS):

All undergraduates, fall semester

Year	Avg Credits
------	-------------

99	12.9
00	13.0
01	13.3
02	13.9

All undergraduates, fall semester

Year	%<13
------	------

99	33.5
00	33.1
01	30.0
02	20.7

%<13 = percentage of students enrolled for fewer than 13 credits

NHS (new high school) students

Year	Avg Credits
------	-------------

99	14.7
00	14.6
01	14.9
02	15.3

NAS (new advanced standing) students

Year	Avg Credits
------	-------------

99	13.1
00	12.9
01	13.0
02	14.1

Continuing students

Year	Avg Credits
------	-------------

99	12.4
00	12.6
01	12.9
02	13.5

NHS Year	%<13
99	10.8
00	12.4
01	8.9
02	1.1

NAS Year	%<13
99	32.5
00	36.9
01	34.8
02	14.3

Continuing Year	%<13
99	39.6
00	37.9
01	35.1
02	26.0

Dr. Swan said it is his interpretation that these are very encouraging numbers. They will be monitoring withdrawals, about which the Committee has talked but reached no conclusion. He said he shared the concern about whether the current policy is the right one but said he understands that there is not agreement on what the alternative should be.

There was discussion of the 13-credit rule with advising offices and with the Council of Undergraduate Deans; it is fair to say, Dr. Swan reported, that while some colleges might have done some things differently, the entire effort turned out to be much easier than anticipated. Course access is another important issues; his sense is that access was better this year than in a number of years. He said that does NOT mean one cannot find some students who could not get the course they wanted, but as long as students can be flexible (e.g., not all freshmen can take freshman composition in the fall--the campus does not have the teaching capacity--and full-year registration should ensure that what students cannot get in the fall they will be able to get in the spring), the campus is in good shape. The Institute of Technology guarantees students that if they start a sequence they will be able to finish it and if they cannot get it in the fall, they guarantee they will get it in the spring. It is also important that there be enough flexibility in programs, especially when there are prerequisites outside the control of a department, so that if students take a course in the spring rather than the fall they will not be slowed down. Programs cannot be so lock-step that students are slowed if they cannot get one course one term; it would be best if perhaps programs did not prescribe all 120 credits, he observed.

Sometimes a department will adopt a new prerequisite, a course in another department, without telling the other department. The result is that the numbers in the course can increase significantly, to the surprise of the department offering it. Dr. Swan said he has asked that the Executive Vice President's

office be on the mailing list for the minutes of all curriculum committees so it can serve as a traffic cop. The decentralized operations of the colleges is a good thing but there does need to be communication between units.

5. The Presidential Search

Professor Sampson welcomed Regents' Professor John Sullivan to the meeting to join Professor Ahern in leading a discussion of the presidential search (both Professors Ahern and Sullivan serve on the presidential search-advisory committee). He noted that faculty are especially concerned about the search because a majority of the search-advisory committee members are not faculty.

Professor Ahern said that they would like to hear about issues it will be important for the next president to confront as well as the characteristics the individual should possess. Candidates can be nominated via the web. The goal is to have the individual selected by the end of the calendar year. Professor Sullivan pointed out that all three of the faculty on the search-advisory committee are from liberal arts departments, so they are consulting widely, especially with non-liberal-arts departments, in order to learn things that will help them interpret the criteria the Board has established as well as help them in questioning prospective candidates. They want to be able to speak with authority for the faculty on the basis of what they have heard FROM the faculty. he said.

Mr. Fitzgerald recalled the Budget Management Task Force that had been chaired by CLA Dean Steven Rosenstone. One of the issues the Task Force report identified was the difficulty the University seems to have in funding common goods, such as the teaching and learning infrastructure. This is a key issue, he said.

Dr. Simmons said she wants to see a president wise and articulate about the liberal arts AND about the breadth of students at the University, someone who understands the University does not focus solely on 17-23-year-olds. There are many adult and returning students and many companies send their employees to the University. This is part of a broad set of concerns related to the diversity of the University, Professor Sullivan said, and will need to be explored with candidates.

Professor Miller agreed, saying this was important with respect to the University's land-grant status and its responsibilities to the people of the state. She is from another state, she said, and has been struck by how much love people in Minnesota have for the University, a feeling that is threatened by the University's self-perception as an elite research university (which it is and must be) and by the funding situation. It is important that the next president "sell" the University and keep that support in the state. Ms. Haas agreed, saying that she would want to hear about new ways to communicate with the legislature and public about the decline in financial support for education and the apparent lack of public understanding of its value. Professor Branton also concurred, saying the next president must be facile at communication; people love the University but it has not done the best job of articulating its needs to the state.

Professor Sullivan said that most people with whom they have spoken viewed communication as a real strength of the Yudof administration; if members of this Committee disagree, they need to know it and to know what questions should be asked of candidates.

Mr. Ferguson said he did not know the number of universities that have a General College and would want to know about a candidate's views of it, and also would want to know a candidate's views about the issues facing the University in athletics. Professor Sullivan commented that athletics has come up surprisingly often in conversations with faculty: They are concerned about the budget priority it seems to receive.

Professor Sullivan told the Committee that they have asked each group about priorities: if the new president must set priorities (and he or she will probably have two or three of his or her own), what should be? Faculty salaries? Support for building infrastructure? More faculty lines? The human capital infrastructure? In his view, President Yudof took the position that he would deal with the infrastructure first and then salaries; he succeeded with the infrastructure but then state budget problems struck.

Professor Sampson said he has been impressed with the number of faculty at the University who have a deep commitment to public education; such a commitment is a desirable quality in a President. Second, he said, the faculty want academic achievement, but not in a unidimensional sense; the candidates need to understand how the pieces--undergraduate education, graduate and professional education, and research--fit together. This is connected to the individual's ability to articulate to the state the needs of the University. He said he was pessimistic one would find these abilities in someone who had earned a Ph.D. but then gone on to a career that was entirely administrative.

Professor Sullivan said that they want to know the faculty's priorities. Professor Miller pointed out that the Committee is not composed entirely of faculty; the president must understand the interactive relationship between faculty and student well-being, especially economic well-being. The University must continue to be affordable or it will not matter what the president does about salaries and benefits. President Yudof's vision of a hybrid university is interesting; she said she would like to see the concept revisited on the financial side with an eye to keeping the institution affordable.

Dr. Swan had a different take on the issue of communication. He said he has often felt people believe that if the University had great communications, the state would pour riches on it. He said he does not believe the world works that way. The University should explore the hybrid idea that President Yudof advanced and where it stands on that idea. President Yudof made it clear that the University could not exist without students and that a commitment to students must be at the center of a lot of things. Student support was important for him, and those are things that also make life easier for faculty, so they should be explored with the faculty.

Dr. Simmons, noting the photographs of the University's 14 (white male) presidents hanging on the wall, suggested that it is perhaps time for a change in the pictures.

Professor Kulacki asked whatever became of liberal arts education. One proposal recently was that it should be combined with pre-professional education. In his view, the University should offer the best liberal arts education it can, including the arts AND the sciences. What is the candidate's concept of a liberal education--pre-professional or educating the whole student? Professor Sullivan said that they had heard from the professional schools about the need for a commitment to the core liberal arts and sciences. In both Management and the Medical School, for example, this question is on people's minds. Exposure to quantitative skills and the sciences is absolutely essential for students today, Professor Kulacki added.

Professor Curley said he did not foresee a large influx of new state dollars. As a result, it may be that the president will have to have the courage to decide that the University will not do any more things that it has been doing. These decisions will have to be made; they will not be easy but they may be necessary.

Dr. Bloomfield said he wanted to put civic engagement on the table: None of the University's problems will be solved unless the new president can reconnect the public purposes of the University with the people of the state. The University will be unable to keep tuition in line without more state aid; that will only happen if people are convinced the University is a public good, not just a private good for those who receive an education. The president must speak to the value of scholarship and teaching.

Professor Branton agreed that great communication would not solve all the problems of the University but, he said, the University has been hurt because it has NOT had great communication in the past and people lost understanding of what it does for them. And what talk there has been has usually been only about the economic benefits and not what else the University does, Professor Sullivan added.

The demographics of Minnesota suggest that growth will be in non-white immigrants, Professor Kulacki commented; the candidates must have an idea about how the University will deal with those families and how it will recruit faculty.

Professor Ahern said that there is a congruence between what they are hearing from Committee members and what they have heard from other groups: a leadership that respects the missions of the University, the people who set the agendas to meet must be faculty and staff, and a resistance to the idea that the market should set the University's agendas. Professor Sullivan said he has been surprised at the high priority given to investment in the infrastructure; even with all the new buildings, many faculty feel the infrastructure is awful--they have bad or no offices, old computers, no air conditioning, and need support staff.

Department heads opt for faculty lines, not support staff who would make faculty more productive, Professor Kulacki said. He said he would like to see a smaller, better-supported faculty.

Professor Sampson thanked Regents' Professor Sullivan for joining the meeting.

6. Withdrawals

Professor Sampson said the Committee needs to refresh itself with respect to its views about possible changes in the W and decide how it wished to proceed. He said he agreed with Dr. Swan that this issue is related to the 13-credit rule and it will be useful to see how fall semester works out with respect to W's.

Mr. Ferguson said that a lot of W's during registration are caused by the fact that students do not know who is teaching a course or the cost of books or the workload. Students are concerned about more restrictions on the use of the W. The first part of the concerns should be an element of good advising and information provided to students, Dr. Bloomfield commented; if it is in place, the number of W's should drop--and providing that information is a good goal for the University. These concerns can also be addressed in the first two weeks of class, Dr. Swan pointed out; there has been no proposal to change the opportunity to withdraw without penalty or transcript entry during the first two weeks of classes.

One factor that affects W's is knowing how well one is doing in class or how well one is prepared for it, Dr. Shaw said. Some W's come because students discover they are not as well prepared for a class as they need to be. Mid-semester alerts are a step in the right direction but they will come too late if there is a more restrictive policy. She said the Committee should not fix the problem without knowing why students cancel; she agreed that part of the problem could be advising.

Dr. Bloomfield thought he recalled a policy from this Committee a long time ago requiring that a syllabus be available in department offices for students to look at and gauge their readiness for a course. Professor Sampson said the policy requires it be available the first day of class. Dr. Swan noted that there is the course guide, but if one faculty member taught the course before and another one is teaching it now, it could be a quite different course. If syllabi could be incorporated (electronically) in the course guides, however, that would be a help to students. There are limits to the information that can be available, Professor Curley said; in some cases fall schedules are not known until August. He said that is a good part of the option which provides for the unrestricted two weeks to withdraw and add courses.

Professor Odom said that since UMC is not under the 13-credit rule but many proposals are tied to it, she said she was not sure why things would need to be changed at UMC. This is, however, a University-wide policy. Dr. Swan said the Committee should ask if the current withdrawal policy is the right one irrespective of the 13-credit rule; the requirements might be different for undergraduates and graduates. The Committee must keep its eye on the larger context, that of graduation rates, Professor Sampson said, and needs to learn if the 13-credit rule spawns an increase in W's.

It was agreed that the Committee should wait until spring semester to take any action on the W, at which time they will have data from fall semester. Dr. Shaw also suggested learning what other universities do; she said she thought the University has one of the more liberal policies among its peer institutions. She said she would like to see other policies AND how the institutions handle exceptions and the criteria for granting them. Dr. Swan said he would contact the other CIC members to obtain information.

7. Subcommittees

Professor Sampson distributed draft copies of a charge to a subcommittee on undergraduate education at a research university and asked Committee members to send him any suggestions. He said he would have a final version at the next meeting as well as a draft for a TEL subcommittee. He adjourned the meeting at 3:00.

-- Gary Engstrand