Minutes[*]

Senate Committee on Educational Policy
Wednesday, February 23, 2000
1:00 – 3:30
238 Morrill Hall

Present: Judith Martin (chair), Wilbert Ahern, Leanne Baylor, Steve Fitzgerald, Darwin Hendel, Gordon Hirsch, Emily Hoover, (George Green for) Christine Maziar, Marsha Odom, Riv-Ellen Prell, Tina Rovick, Richard Skaggs, Rita Snider, Thomas Soulen, Craig Swan

Regrets: Suzanne Bates, Karen Seashore Louis, Steven Sperber, Rachel Sullivan

Absent: Kathleen Newell

Guests: Ann Burkhart (Graduate and Professional Award Committee); Chancellor Donald Sargeant (University of Minnesota, Crookston), Associate Vice President Robert Kvavik, Dr. Bernard Gifford (President, Distributive Learning Workshop), Dr. David Murphy (President, Midwest Higher Education Consortium)

[In these minutes: awards for contributions to education; classroom advisory committee; bookstore advisory committee; educational materials conflict of interest policy; repeating courses; sanctions for late grades; Distributive Learning Workshop]

1.   Awards

        Professor Martin convened the meeting at 1:00 and welcomed Professor Ann Burkhart, who chaired the nominating committee for winners of the award for outstanding contributions to graduate and professional education. She turned first to Professor Ahern, who chaired the nominating committee for winners of the Morse-Alumni award for outstanding contributions to undergraduate education.

        Professor Ahern began by commending the support that the nominating committee had received from Karen Linquist in the Office of Human Resources and then reported the names of the eight individuals (out of 25 names submitted) the committee was nominating to receive the award. The Committee unanimously approved the nominees.

        Professor Ahern also suggested that the committee recommends that award winners each receive about one minute to speak at the ceremony (and other time be reduced). The nominating committee will also prepare a recommendation for clearer guidelines on the use of student evaluation of teaching data.

        Professor Burkhart then reported the names of eight nominees (out of 26 candidates) for the graduate and professional award; the Committee unanimously approved the nominees. She said that she had felt a great deal of pride in the University because of the incredible work the faculty had done and the impact they had on their students, who in turn were making an impact in their communities. She noted

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that all of the nominees were from the Twin Cities campus, even though the Duluth campus was entitled to nominate up to five individuals; they did not do so.

Professor Martin extended thanks to Professors Ahern and Burkhart for the work of their nominating committees.

2.   Classroom Advisory Committee

Professor Martin next drew the attention of the Committee to a proposal, forwarded from the Committee on Finance and Planning, to create a joint subcommittee to advise on classroom management. The original proposal came from Mr. Fitzgerald, Director of Classroom Management, and from Vice Provost Swan; the Finance and Planning Committee had made minor alterations in the draft proposal and asked the Assembly Committee on Educational Policy (since this is a Twin Cities matter only) to approve it.

The Committee did so with the addition of an ex officio representative from the Center for Teaching and Learning Services. One Committee member urged that in the identification of people to serve on the subcommittee, the faculty be drawn from different teaching environments. It was also suggested that a representative from the Academy of Distinguished Teachers also be appointed.

The subcommittee members will be nominated by the chairs of the two committees, Professors Gudeman and Martin, with the advice of the Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost, and approved by the two committees.

3.   Bookstore Advisory Committee

The Committee was next informed that the Director of the Bookstores (Twin Cities) had provided to the Committee on Finance and Planning a proposal for a bookstores advisory committee. The proposed committee would have been comprised primarily of students and would have two faculty members. The Finance and Planning Committee considered the proposal and concluded that it would prefer to have an additional joint subcommittee with SCEP, a group that falls under the aegis of the governance system rather than existing as a free-standing body.

The Committee agreed, and asked for a draft proposal at its next meeting. It was suggested that ex officio representation come from the libraries, the Office of Information Technology, and the Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost.

4.   Educational Materials Conflict of Interest Policy

The Committee turned next to a draft conflict of interest policy for educational materials. The draft language required that no instructor could personally profit from the assignment of materials in a course; the Committee amended the proposal to provide that instructors could not assign materials from which they would receive payment without appropriate administrative approval. One Committee member pointed out that except in the case of large lecture classes, the amount of money involved would be very small. It was also pointed out that the venue of sales needed also to be addressed; the recent email to a number of faculty about varsitybooks.com provided a "kickback" if students ordered books from that organization at the behest of a faculty member.

It was agreed that the proposal would be revised at brought back to the Committee at a future meeting.

5.   Repeating Courses

Professor Martin next welcomed Associate Dean Peter Hudleston, representing the Council of Undergraduate Deans (CUD), to discuss yet another possible change to the grading policy provisions concerning a student repeating a course. (The Committee had already approved and placed on the docket of the February 24 Senate meeting one change, which provides (1) that for a student who takes a course and receives a C- or better, the first grade counts if the student repeats a course, and (2) that a student who takes a course and receives a D+ or worse, the later grade counts. Students who receive a C- or better are not barred from repeating a course if for some reason they wish to demonstrate they have better learned the material.)

The issue now at hand has to do with this clause in the Uniform Grading Policy: "In those instances when a college or campus permits a student to repeat a course. . . ." Dean Hudleston said the phrase was bothersome and that although CUD had not specifically discussed, he surmised that CUD would prefer uniformity and that the clause be deleted.

It was suggested that units be surveyed to find out if any of them do not permit a student to repeat a course. If some do not, it was said, they should be given the courtesy of explaining why they have such a policy before this Committee proposes legislation that would abolish the ability of a unit to bar repeats. Dr. Ellinger agreed to obtain the information for the Committee. (Committee members were unable to identify any unit that they knew for sure did not permit repeats.)

Professor Martin thanked Dean Hudleston for joining the meeting.

6.   Sanctions for Late Grades

Professor Martin now reported that when some members of the Faculty Consultative Committee learned that the deadline for grades in Fall, 2000, would be December 28, they indicated their displeasure and asked that the matter be taken up by the Faculty Consultative Committee. It was also suggested, however, that FCC would be receptive to suggestions from SCEP for sanctions that might be imposed on faculty members who turn in grades late, were the due date to be moved forward to sometime in January.

Committee members made a number of observations.

--   Just as Boynton Health Service would not want to be responsible for calling parents of students who are found to abuse alcohol, the Registrar would not want to be in the position of calling faculty members who are to be sanctioned because they have not turned in their grades.

--   This is an important issue for students. There are faculty who are arbitrary about when they will turn in grades but the lives of students are affected, sometimes severely, when grades are late. There is need for discussion about how to target that group of faculty.

--   The names of faculty who do not turn in grades on time should be reported to the department and to the college.

--   There should be mandatory reporting in the personnel files of individuals who fail to turn in grades on time, with notification to the individual so that he or she can explain extenuating circumstances. The point is to get at those who cavalierly disregard the due date, not those who may have a death in the family or another serious family emergency.

--   It would be relatively easy to develop a tracking flag for faculty who fail to turn in grades on time and to provide that information in the course guide or similar materials; such information might affect whether students enroll in a course.

--   Someone other than the Registrar should send a note to recalcitrant faculty informing them of the consequences for students when grades are late. Some may "blow off" the due date because they do not realize the harm late grades can cause students. Such a note should be in addition to any sanctions, not in lieu of them.

--   In one unit, faculty are provided not only the grade report forms but also a brightly-colored cover sheet which explains the impact of students of reporting grades late.

--   Perhaps a personal letter from the President to those faculty who turn in late grades would have an effect.

--   One could think about incentives rather than sanctions. (But when it is only 15% of the faculty? And what about the other 85% who do what they are supposed to--why would they not also receive an incentive?)

--   It is surprising how ineffective the Committee seems to believe the department is in the delivery of policy. Chairs do not serve for 20 years--which is good--but leadership continuity is vulnerable at the University. As a consequence, the deans who convene meetings of chairs have a responsibility to inform them of policy and they should hold the chairs responsible for adhering to it. Deans need to take responsibility as well; SCEP could perhaps play a role in working with the deans to develop responses to the problem.

        The contrary view is that department chairs do not always know who turns in grades on time or does not, and chairs can talk to faculty "until they are blue in the face" and cannot make anything happen. Nor is it always the case that chairs set salary increases or have much discretion over merit decisions.

--   If the pattern of late grades is random, then one wonders if there is really malfeasance.

--   One underlying assumption on the part of faculty may be that the date is not serious.

        Professor Martin said she would report these points to the Faculty Consultative Committee the following day. There was a general consensus that some form of notation in personnel files, and attention to merit at the level of chairs and deans, would be the best sanction.

7.   Distributive Learning Workshop (of the Midwest Higher Education Consortium)

Professor Martin now welcomed Chancellor Donald Sargeant from the Crookston campus, Associate Vice President Robert Kvavik, Dr. Bernard Gifford (President of the Distributive Learning Workshop, hereinafter DLW) and Dr. David Murphy (President of the Midwest Higher Education Consortium, hereinafter MHEC).

Chancellor Sargeant began by noting that the Crookston campus uses technology heavily in its instructional program, that all students have notebook computers, and that there is more and more technology being used in the teaching process. Students like it. The question is what faculty expect from well-crafted materials. MHEC covers a 10-state area, is housed at the University of Minnesota, and has made technology one of its priorities. He explained briefly what MHEC is doing with respect to technology and education; one such effort is the Distributive Learning Workshop. Dr. Sargeant distributed a handout on the DLW, the contents of which are appended to these minutes.

Professor Martin at this point explained that one member of the Faculty Consultative Committee had received materials related to the DLW and had been extremely annoyed by them. FCC asked SCEP to talk with the people who are involved in the process and learn what is going on. There is a perception that over the long-term, the DLW will undermine the faculty role and faculty credibility; there was also a question about whether or not any faculty members were actually involved in the DLW. Dr. Sargeant said that the objectives are very clear, and added that times change and so must the institutions. This effort, however, is totally faculty-driven.

Dr. Gifford thanked the Committee for its time, noted his own background as a faculty member at a number of institutions as well as a dean at Berkeley, and then explained what the DLW was all about. The suggestion that it would undermine faculty, he said, is foreign to himself as a faculty member; it is driven by the desire to create a counterbalance to private-sector efforts to define teaching and learning for the next 20 years. The higher education community, he said, has not led the discussion about how technology will be used in teaching, what will drive it, and how it will be evaluated.

Last year the U. S. Senate called for a commission on web-based teaching and learning, sponsored by Senator Bob Kerry (incoming president of the New School for Social Research); the preamble to the act described higher education as ossified and incapable of appreciating the opportunities that technology provides so the federal government is forced to turn to the private sector. One-half of the commission members are from for-profit software companies. Higher education has not formulated a systematic approach about how intelligently to use technology-mediated instruction.

The DLW has several tasks. One, produce materials for technology-mediated instruction that present the materials from multiple perspectives. Two, support more faculty collaborations to create "communities of practice" (new teaching practices that help faculty make the transition from the conventional classroom to instructional settings afforded by computer-mediated instruction). Three, make enabling technologies available to all of higher education. Four, provide faculty the opportunity to create materials and use the DLW as a way to distribute them.
The DLW is committed to extensive openness and non-proprietary technologies; all source codes would be made available to all of higher education. Higher education institutions in the Midwest (the area of the consortium) could have it for free; other higher education institutions would have to pay a modest fee; private sector organizations would be charged whatever the market would bear.

It is important to the future of higher education that these be open organizations, Dr. Gifford said; the private organizations are closed and faculty have no idea what is going on. The agreements required mean faculty sign away their intellectual rights.

An important policy issue that must be dealt with, Dr. Kvavik said, is that traditional faculty interest in course materials has been in text; with the shift to technology, now the interest is in ownership of the COURSE. Private companies are peddling something the university traditionally owned--and making money.

One concern expressed by the Faculty Consultative Committee, said one Committee member, is that once these courses are available, there is no reason for faculty to be in the classroom. That is a big leap, Dr. Kvavik replied. Dr. Gifford said this is an important point in the debate in higher education on how technology will be used. Some believe it will objectify, commodify, and trivialize instruction; the DLW does not. Higher education must develop a vision contrary to that of those who would do so, and the DLW is lobbying for federal money to develop enabling technologies for a new generation of high-quality computer-mediated instruction. Beyond developing materials, the goal is to "own the space" about the discussion--which higher education does not now own.

Higher education is at a watershed, Dr. Gifford said; if it does not get involved, the private-sector vision will win the day. DLW is one vehicle that is sufficiently broad in scope and vision that it will allow faculty to stand up to those with a quite different vision of higher education. DLW will not offer material of its own, so will not be a Western Governors' University or a University of Phoenix; it will offer enabling materials to institutions which in turn can make them available to students.

There are two ways to produce modules that might be used in a discipline, Dr. Gifford related. DLW could prepare them--identify the content of lessons, obtain materials, and let the home institution market them and obtain the revenue. Alternatively, faculty could get together, seek support and develop materials that DLW would distribute. The money would go to the faculty, the campus, and DLW. The money would come from students who purchase the materials in lieu of texts; the model is that the module would eliminate the text, and they would be aimed primarily at introductory classes. Students would enroll on the campus, use this material, and perhaps go to lectures.

What if teachers want to use the materials but differently? They will be highly "modularized" so that faculty can use parts of them or recombine them. They would probably cost $20 per module, with half of the income going to the home department where they were used.

The discussion that followed touched on a number of points.

--   One concern has been that this kind of instruction would make the faculty less relevant and change the relationship between faculty and student. Dr. Kvavik said his sense is that the new distance learning material could make the relationship more intense as well as provide a more interesting information environment.

--   There could also be a different division of labor in the learning process, Dr. Kvavik speculated. In the case of the curriculum, for example, faculty could design it, Disney could teach it, and Tests R Us could do the evaluation. The multiple-institution forum is attractive (perhaps through something like the

National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges); it may be that each institution doing things is not efficient. The alternative is that the private sector enters the field and forces an environment on higher education that it does not like.

--   The goal is to create a self-sustaining DLW with a critical mass of the most competent people. Nowhere else would even be close, except perhaps Disney.

--   Higher education accounts for $24 billion in revenue; the private sector would like to obtain about 10% of it, probably, and would take the money in areas that would make it impossible for a residential institution to continue. Last year legislation was adopted that allows students to use federal financial aid for non-credit courses. Dupont Circle (the higher education associations) said nothing; the private sector was thrilled.

--   Dr. Gifford said that some are so enamored of technology that they are willing to call a website a course. No committee would allow attaching a university's name to dreck. The higher education community needs to come to agreement on what a course is, to establish a standard that will be difficult for others to define downward.

--   DLW would issue a set of materials for a course, based on faculty recommendations, that would allow a faculty member to select any module he or she wanted and allow them to incorporate their own text-based materials in the course. Why not allow faculty to incorporate what DLW produces into what they are doing, asked one Committee member? That would be possible, Dr. Gifford said, and would depending on funding arrangements.

--   To get a critical mass of talent from 10 states there must be an enabling mechanism to allow faculty participation; this cannot be something faculty are expected to do in addition to what they are already doing. How would the University allow faculty to contribute? Dr. Gifford said some allow a direct relationship with DLW, some use summer employment or consultation. DLW is asking all founding campuses to make faculty available in all disciplines, but this is not supposed to be a burden, so are asking that they receive released time or additional compensation. Different institutions are approaching this differently.

        Dr. Kvavik said he sees DLW as an opportunity the University should be engaged in, not a threat, and that what the University learns will help it. It need not necessarily participate in the preparation of course materials; that would be a faculty member's decision. The University could benefit from discussions of policy issues (copyright, privacy) as they affect distance education. He said he believed the University should be a part of DLW. One Committee member inquired if faculty should be warned off DLW as something terrible or encouraged to participate if they wish? There is no reason to discourage faculty participation if they believe it worthwhile, said another.

        Professor Martin said she would make a report to the Faculty Consultative Committee, and adjourned the meeting at 3:15.

<div align="center">-- Gary Engstrand</div>

University of Minnesota

Talking Points regarding Distributive Learning Workshop meeting (02/23/00) for the SCEP meeting

Distributive Learning Workshop

The DLW will provide settings where faculty, educational technologists and academic leaders can work collaboratively to identify, implement and continuously improve the best strategies and practices for employing high quality discipline based computer mediated instructional (CMI) and Internet technologies in college teaching and learning. The activities of the DLW compliment the initiatives of the Digital Media Center (DMC). It is expected that the DMC will work closely with our faculty and DLW to develop instructional; materials of benefit to our faculty.

The objectives of the DLW are:
Enhance the pedagogical effectiveness of faculty
Increase the learning productivity of students
Improve interactivity and responsiveness of college instructional settings
Support efforts to adopt more flexible approaches to the organization and conduct of teaching and learning

Distributive Learning Workshop Provides An Opportunity for U of M Faculty to:

DLW brings together faculty from a ten state area to encourage higher education to be the developers of instructional designed courses rather than corporate entities. It invests in academic institutions.

The organizational structure for DLW puts faculty at the center of development on the discipline based academic advisory committees.

DLW gives faculty an opportunity for professional development with cutting edge curriculum and instructional design and software applications and in the evaluation of learning outcomes on a continuing improvement process.

DLW initiative will develop instructional materials that faculty can choose to use or choose NOT to use. This initiative is dependent on faculty recommending the purchase of DLW created modules just as faculties recommend students purchase textbooks.

DLW is an investment in faculty professional development and in enhancing the teaching and learning environment under the guidance of faculty.

The Distributive Learning Workshop Does Not:

Eliminate faculty - DLW works with faculty to develop and use higher-level pedagogical process and lets technology to do the lower level activities.

Diminish faculty choice in course content – DLW provides wider selection of course materials and learning processes other than lecturing and use of textbook.

Create Loss of Personal Touch – Can increase personal touch through interactivity discussion groups and other technology related pedagogical vehicles.

Develop computer mediated materials that work for one faculty member or one level of student – data shows well crafted CMM can be designed for broad faculty and student use. DLW will create materials in a setting that allows for evaluation of effectiveness, continuous improvement, ease of use, and transferability within the academic environment.

Create materials with Distance Education as the target market - the DLW goal is to develop well-crafted computer mediated materials for faculty in the traditional and nontraditional campus courses.