

Minutes*

Senate Committee on Educational Policy

Wednesday, November 8, 2000

1:00 – 3:00

The Morrill Room

Morrill Hall

- Present: Wilbert Ahern (chair), Shawn Curley, Khaled Dajani, Steve Fitzgerald, Nena Fox, Gordon Hirsch, Emily Hoover, Frank Kulacki, Geri Malandra, (Naomi Scheman for) Christine Maziar, Kathleen Newell, Marsha Odom, Mary Ellen Shaw, Rita Snider, Thomas Soulen, Steven Sperber, Rachel Sullivan, Craig Swan
- Regrets: Karen Seashore, Carol Miller, Richard Skaggs
- Absent: Prince Amattoey, Charles Henderson
- Guests: J. Peter Zetterberg (Institutional Research and Reporting); Professor Kent Bales (Joint Committee on Academic Appointments), Professor Fred Morrison (Faculty Consultative Committee); Tina Rovick for Susan VanVoorhis

[In these minutes: semester issues; subcommittee charges; academic appointments]

1. Semester Conversion Issues

Professor Ahern convened the meeting at 1:05 and welcomed the new student member of the Committee, Nena Fox. He then turned to Dr. Zetterberg to discuss issues related to the conversion to semesters.

Dr. Zetterberg said he did not have many prepared remarks. It has been his feeling that it will take about three years on the new calendar for everything to shake out. One concern is about who is responsible for addressing semester-related problems and how they get reported. This Committee, he said, should play a major role, and he recommended that it formally ask the chancellors at Crookston, Duluth, and Morris and the deans of the Twin Cities colleges to inform it of any problems.

He said he was not aware of any major problems except perhaps in CLA, where there is a workload issue and a shift in course-taking behavior by students; on the latter, he said he did not know if it was a result of the change to semesters, a result of IMG, or a one-year phenomenon that will disappear.

Another question is enrollment in General College. Typically around 1800 students in fall quarter, there were more than 3000 fall semester because many who would have transferred out have not done so. He said he has talked with Dean David Taylor about this situation; many students, Dean Taylor reported, are acting as though they have transferred, even though on paper they have not. But

* 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 represent the views of, nor are they binding on, the Senate or Assembly, the Administration, or the Board of Regents.

this a concern; General College had done well in transferring students out quickly, usually after two quarters. One semester in General College, however, may not be enough time for many students who enter it.

Other than those items, however, he said he was not aware of any major curricular problems or problems affecting instruction. He has long maintained that the University should not lengthen the time it takes for students to get a degree. In 1995 he had a study done which demonstrated that students took an average of 210 quarter credits—when a degree required 180. A similar study will be completed in the near future. This is an issue that needs to be watched carefully, he told the Committee, and one of the subcommittees it is commissioning (on degrees and credits and barriers to graduation) should take it up and be sure that there is no significant increase in degree requirements as a result of the change from quarters to semesters. This will require attention for the next four or five years.

Has the legislature raised questions about how much work the University requires of students in order to obtain a degree, Professor Kulacki asked? It has not, Dr. Zetterberg answered, but there is curious statutory language that tries to limit the number of credits the state will subsidize for a student. The limit is quite liberal—up to 150 semester credits—after which a student would be assessed non-resident tuition. The language has never been enforced, in part because it would hurt those who complete a technical college degree and who then decide to complete a baccalaureate degree; it would also hurt those who make a mistake in their choices and who must take more credits in order to get the degree they finally decide on. The issue may be moot in any event, he said, because the legislature is also talking about eliminating non-resident tuition altogether.

There are also limits on financial aid for students, Dr. Swan pointed out; the implication is that students should be able to complete a degree in a reasonable time.

Professor Kulacki said he wanted this issue on the record because he has heard from colleagues at a number of institutions where it is mandated that no more than 120 semester credits will be subsidized by the state.

This has never been a major issue with the legislature, Dr. Zetterberg said. There will be a proposal from the Higher Education Services Office (responsible for administering financial aid programs but with no authority to conduct studies or adopt policy) that there be no limit on state subsidy of tuition for resident students; the limit now is 120 credits, which is too strict, but the proposal to eliminate the cap is probably bad public policy. The question is where to draw the line in the state subsidy. Dr. Zetterberg thought it unlikely that the legislature would approve the proposal but thought it might allow a little more flexibility than 120 credits.

Professor Ahern recalled that the Senate adopted change-to-semester guidelines requiring that the change be neutral with respect to the amount of work demanded of students. Dr. Swan observed that the University did hold the line on the number of credits required for degrees; most are 120 and a few of the engineering programs require 128. The question is whether programs expanded requirements within those limits, such as requiring more credits in the major or provide only one way to complete the program or even setting up conflicting requirements that mean a student must take more than 120 credits. Another possibility, Professor Ahern commented, is that students are being

given the message that they will not have a good program if they ONLY complete the minimum 120 credits and that they really need to take an additional X number of credits.

Ms. Shaw asked about limits on financial aid from the state; Dr. Zetterberg explained the limits that exist. He said that if the state wished to enforce the limit on subsidizing credits, it would require the University not to include any student with more than 150 credits when it reports the number of full-year-equivalent students. The University is not required to CHARGE non-resident tuition to students who have completed more than 150 credits. There is also statutory language providing that the state will pay for 2/3 of the cost of education for students at the University, a provision the legislature also ignores.

Dr. Zetterberg, noting that "I am out of the semester business," expressed concern about problems that involve more than one college. Since there is no Twin Cities curriculum committee, he said, SCEP is the best forum to hear about problems. Dr. Zetterberg agreed to draft a memo that Professor Ahern could send out. He also suggested that this topic could be on the agenda of one of the two new subcommittees that SCEP is appointing.

Dr. Zetterberg also noted two pieces of data. First, student credit loads are higher this year than last, which is good news. The University made it a priority when the change to semesters was made but there was concern that the loads might slide; they went in the opposite direction. Second, in the last year on the quarter system the University granted a record number of degrees, which was expected because students tried to get done before the change to semesters. But there was a very high number of degrees granted last year as well, the first year on semesters. Committee members speculated on why this might have been so; among the reasons suggested were the strength of the economy and the desire to get a job as well as a wish to avoid increasing their student loan debt.

Professor Ahern then recalled that at the last meeting Committee members received copies of a memo that implied CLA was making an effort to move to 4-credit courses. Professor Skaggs, interim associate dean, responded and said that that was not what was happening. The effort is to fine-tune the work expectations of courses as the change to semesters occurred--the point is to evaluate whether the work demanded of students corresponds appropriately to the number of credits for a course. There is no basic policy change.

Professor Ahern thanked Dr. Zetterberg and expressed relief that there were no big problems. Dr. Zetterberg responded that there were no major problems THAT HE KNOWS OF.

2. Subcommittee Charges

Professor Ahern next reviewed the charges to and membership of two ad hoc subcommittees being appointed, one on IMG and one on degrees, credits, and barriers to graduation. He asked Committee members to review the charges and make suggestions about them. The IMG subcommittee will be chaired by Professor Hoover during fall semester; the chair for spring semester has not yet been determined. The credits and degrees subcommittee will be chaired by Professor Hirsch.

Dr. Swan inquired if the Senate Committee on Finance and Planning were doing anything with respect to IMG because the administration would probably rather deal with the issues

comprehensively rather than piecemeal. Professor Ahern said he did not believe Finance and Planning had IMG on its agenda and said that SCEP will focus on educational policy implications.

3. Academic Appointments

Professor Ahern turned the discussion once again to academic appointments and welcomed Professor Bales to the meeting. He reported that the guidelines (now labeled administrative policy) were changing continuously and that the points raised in the draft resolution he had forwarded earlier had been responded to in the more recent revisions. There were 3 issues of concern: use of FTEs rather than headcount, the use of titles, and the definition of the "unit" in the policy. In a meeting of committee chairs and of FCC, there was general consensus that the document had been strengthened considerably.

More pressing is a statement of principles, Professor Ahern said; the Committee had raised a concern about the lack of any overarching principles. Professor Morrison drafted one, which had been emailed to the Committee prior to the meeting. Professor Morrison joined the meeting at this point.

In general, Professor Ahern said, it was the view of Dr. Bruininks that to try to go any farther in the policy to create uniformity would create difficulties given the cultural differences among units.

His reading of the FCC members' comments was that it is important to get a statement of principles to the Senate for action and that the policy move forward. They may not be the best that can be written but they adhere to the major principles set out by the Bales committee and as revised they will not make the situation worse but will in fact improve it.

Committee members made a number of suggestions for minor changes in language in the two documents in order to clarify them, most of which Professor Morrison accepted as friendly.

Professor Ahern said that SCEP does not NEED to take a position on the documents, but since the statement of principles will go to the Senate this month, it should focus its attention at this point on that document. Professor Newell said the Committee should take a position inasmuch as it was one of the bodies that appointed the Bales committee. Professor Odom asked of Professor Bales his views on the documents.

Professor Bales said they were much improved. He noted the change in requiring a supplemental plan for departments that exceed the 25% FTE threshold for non-tenured/tenure track (NTT) faculty (the denominator in the fraction has been changed to the tenured/tenure-track faculty) and asked how the latter would be counted; he recalled that 48 FTE faculty in a department can quickly become 28 FTE teachers because faculty may have various kinds of administrative released time or research time or whatever. The new denominator, based only on the TT faculty rather than the entire faculty complement, Professor Ahern pointed out, sets a lower threshold for triggering a supplemental plan for a department. The measure should be of TEACHING FTEs, Professor Bales said; that can be very flexible and very contextual, Professor Ahern responded.

And much is very arbitrary, Professor Kulacki said. It will be necessary to keep the administration's feet to the fire on this issue. With credit hours declining and a stingy legislature, the tendency to hire NTT faculty will be tremendous. The top 20 or 30 departments should not made to

follow that pattern because their quality will suffer. Dr. Bruininks will have to go to bat for the faculty on this, he said, and said he understood that this is a slippery slope that central administrators could find themselves on.

Professor Morrison said the requirement of a supplemental plan for departments that exceed the 25% threshold is a warning that calls for a conscious decision and it tries to address the slippery slope problem. If the faculty, the department head, the dean, and the administration are convinced that hiring more NTT faculty is the way to go, a conscious decision must be made. It may be right or wrong but there must be a decision. The original proposal required a conscious decision by every department on hiring any NTT faculty; the deans resisted that requirement because many departments have no such positions or maybe only one, and they did not see why the policy should extend to them. The deans also wanted plans based on college numbers; on that point the faculty held firm so that wherever there is a substantial number of NTT faculty in any department there must be a conscious decision by that department, reviewed by the dean and central administration and ex post facto by the Tenure Subcommittee and the Senate Committee on Faculty Affairs.

Once that point was achieved, the threshold had to be defined. Various numbers were tried; using FTEs made the most sense, Professor Morrison said. To a certain extent the 25% is arbitrary. They are trying to protect the teaching effort and to measure the number of students who are taught by regular faculty. Any department that has a substantial number of NTT faculty will require conscious planning on the part of the dean.

Another piece of this puzzle is PeopleSoft, Professor Morrison said, which should help in counting. Counting was very hard to do under the old system, and it was the discovery of the number of NTT faculty that led to the inquiry. The plan is that the PeopleSoft system will annually generate a list by department of the number of TT and NTT faculty; this will provide a way to monitor the situation so that if any number goes above 25% the Tenure Subcommittee and the Executive Vice President will start asking questions about the plan that should be in place.

Professor Hirsch said there would be a virtue in setting an expiration date, perhaps five years, on the plans. He said he was concerned that a plan, once approved, could become a permanent situation in a department. The point is that periodic re-examination should take place.

Professor Kulacki, noting Professor Morrison's comment that the 25% threshold is arbitrary, said it was too loose and that he would argue for 15%. The 25% will allow for "cooking the books" and said he was very concerned that hiring NTT faculty will hurt the arts and sciences departments the most. There is an excess number of people who can be brought in to teach courses that are not up to par and he worries that that could happen at the University.

Professor Morrison said his preferred language, initially, was that any department with more than four NTT faculty would have to have a plan, and that any department with fewer than four would not have to make any report. The 25% threshold is a compromise in order to get REPORTING, department by department. This will represent a substantial increase in workload for the Tenure Subcommittee, he said, because it must review the reports and the numbers. Professor Kulacki responded that his concern is that everything in these documents is connected to money and said he wants an expression of sentiment about how serious this issue is and that the faculty wants to enter a partnership with the administration on controlling it.

Professor Morrison said that is what has been achieved. The faculty yielded from stronger positions in order to get something in place that they can monitor and that the administration can monitor and that can help monitor academic quality. If one tried to look at every department nothing would get done; the focus must be on the 10 or 15 departments where there is a problem and it must be made clear that the goal is having full-time regular faculty. At the same time, it is understood that there may be times when other kinds of appointments are warranted but they must be justified.

Professor Newell, following on Professor Hirsch's suggestion, urged that the entire policy be reviewed in five years to try to determine if it is addressing the problem. Professor Morrison agreed that this would be a good idea.

Dr. Swan, describing himself as a "complete outsider" to the discussions about academic appointments, said it was his understanding that there have been lengthy negotiations and that the 25% threshold has been in the documents from the beginning. To propose changing that now could be "a significant monkey wrench," but he agreed that the five-year review would be appropriate. Professor Bales affirmed that the 25% figure had come from AAUP documents.

Ms. Shaw said that contract appointments seem to be more narrowly defined in the documents and that they are special kinds of faculty as in the health sciences. There is no change, Professor Morrison said. The tenure code limits the conditions under which non-regular faculty appointments can be made. There has always been the problem that if a tenure-track appointment becomes a non-regular appointment it loses much; there is no notice provision and the appointment letter used to be called the "welcome aboard you're fired" letter because they made it clear the appointment ran no longer than the one year. These documents are trying to make possible longer-term appointments, which has not been possible on the faculty side while it has been on the P&A side.

Ms. Shaw also said that there has been much discussion about moving away from part-time appointments but that there is only one place where the document addresses this issue; will the language have any effect? Professor Bales said he believed the language should be stronger, especially at a time when fringe benefits rates are increasing, thus creating more motivation to use part-time appointments. Professor Morrison agreed the language should be stronger and that there should be monitoring. The documents provide an instrument for looking both at the policies and the hard numbers. Professor Ahern suggested that there is need for a threshold with respect to part-time faculty as well.

Dr. Scheman suggested other numbers that might be used to address concerns expressed by Professors Hoover and Bales. One could count the number of courses being taught by TT faculty and NTT faculty as well as the number of Student Credit Hours and require that no more than 25% of them be taught by NTT faculty. This would avoid the problem of trying to track faculty time.

Dr. Swan said he did not know how this suggestion would affect the negotiations that have occurred but there are other reasons why it would be a good idea. Departments often do not indicate who is teaching a course or who the instructor of record is. This would force departments to provide that information. (A number of Committee members were surprised that this information was not known to the administration.)

Professor Hoover said that Dr. Scheman's suggestion would work for small classes but that for classes of 400 students the Student Credit Hour measure would be skewed. Dr. Scheman responded that that would not necessarily be bad, if the question is the number of students who are provided instruction by NTT faculty.

The real problem goes far beyond what has been discussed at this meeting, Professor Morrison said. There are departments where the number of NTT faculty exceeds the number of regular faculty. He said he was not so worried about fine-tuning the denominator or the measure as he was about getting at the biggest problems right away. The five-year review will also be key.

Professor Odom wondered if five years was too long for a review of the policy; much could go wrong in that long a period, she said. Professor Ahern said that the Tenure Subcommittee will look annually at the information and speak to units that are violating the principles; he said the governance system would not ignore NTT appointments for the next five years. He agreed with Professor Odom that if after three years it appears something is going wrong SCEP would not be barred from calling for a review at that point.

The Committee approved without dissent a resolution approving the revised policy with the changes suggested at this meeting. The Committee also approved without dissent a resolution approving the statement of principles with the changes that had been recommended at this meeting.

Professor Ahern expressed appreciation to Professor Morrison for the work that he did; Professor Morrison demurred and said the credit belonged to Professor Bales, who in turn demurred and said the credit belonged to the Joint Committee.

Dr. Scheman reported for information on a related discussion that had been held in the Graduate School. There are perceived to be fiscal reasons why it is advantageous to hire adjunct or part-time faculty rather than graduate students (because of the fringe benefit rate), and while the Graduate School does not want to see graduate programs expanded to cover instructional programs, it is nonetheless clear that the cost advantage to part-time and adjunct faculty is not what it seems both because the graduate assistant tuition benefit returns to the college and because adjuncts typically have greater incremental needs for offices, computers, phones, etc.

Professor Ahern thanked everyone for coming and adjourned the meeting at 3:00.

-- Gary Engstrand