

Minutes*

**Senate Committee on Educational Policy
Tuesday, August 21, 2001
University of Minnesota, Morris
Prairie Center Lounge**

Present: Wilbert Ahern (chair), Shawn Curley, Steve Fitzgerald, Christina Frazier, Gordon Hirsch, Frank Kulacki, Karen Seashore, (George Green for) Christine Maziar, Carol Miller, Kathleen Newell, Marsha Odom, Martin Sampson, Mary Ellen Shaw, Craig Swan

Regrets: Geri Malandra, Mary Sue Simmons, Steven Sperber

Absent: none

Guests: Professor Paula O'Loughlin (Morris)

[In these minutes: issues in undergraduate and graduate education; civic engagement; distributed education; various other issues]

The Committee took a tour of several facilities on the Morris campus; Professor Ahern then convened the retreat in the Prairie Center Lounge.

1. Issues in Undergraduate Education

Vice Provost Swan reviewed the major issues in undergraduate education that might come before the Committee during the year.

- Retention and graduation rates.
- Assessment (the next North Central Association review will be 2005-06 and the University must be prepared for an evaluation of how it assesses student learning and progress).
- Accountability reports due to the legislature and the "excellence" commission (which is charged with, inter alia, identifying five undergraduate programs of high priority and five centers of excellence).
- A Bush Foundation grant to integrate study abroad into the curriculum.
- The Twin Cities campus has subscribed to "turnitin.com," a web system that permits instructors to check student work for plagiarism and that is available to all instructors. Dr. Swan commented that how faculty talk about this will be important (not that they do not trust students but rather that they want to protect the many from the few who may cheat) and they can use it as an opportunity to talk about academic standards.

* 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.

- A legislative rider concerning metropolitan higher education; the University is expected to work with MNSCU on K-12 education and the transition to higher education.
- The future of the applied bachelor's degree programs.

2. Issues in Graduate Education

Associate Dean Green reviewed issues in graduate education.

- The status of post docs (this is likely an issue for the Senate Research Committee, not this Committee, but that can be discussed).
- Two new job titles have been established, Graduate Instructor (to recognize TAs who have responsibility for teaching) and Graduate Research Project Assistant (like a research assistant, but with a difference: the RA role is related to education the new category is purely a funding relationship; the distinction bears on an IRS rule concerning tuition as taxable income). The question is whether the Graduate Instructor position is a matter that SCEP wishes to discuss.

3. Civic Engagement

Professor Paula O'Loughlin from the Morris faculty joined the meeting to discuss the report of the Task Force on Civic Engagement. Several points emerged from the discussion.

- One of the major roles of the University is to strengthen a democratic society, and it can do so by being civically engaged.
- The recommendations from the Task Force and Working Group reports suggest a number of items that should come before this Committee.
- It would be helpful if the Faculty Consultative Committee would adopt a resolution about the report, to the effect that its recommendations are important for the University and that they should be incorporated in what the University does. The continuing activity, however, should probably remain in this Committee.

Committee members debated at some length whether to appoint an ad hoc subcommittee on civic engagement. Professor Ahern suggested the Committee return to the topic at its first meeting, at which point he would provide a draft charge to a subcommittee.

4. Distributed Education

Professor Kulacki reported on the work of the Distributed Education Task Force and said the task force would continue its work. A number of issues for Senate committees were raised in the recommendations which need to be distributed as appropriate. Financial issues in particular bear watching: whether funds will be controlled centrally or by the colleges, the impact on funding for common goods, the cost of updating delivery systems (more than changing delivery of more traditional instruction), and the fact that using technology in instruction is not one-time but requires a recurring investment. There are also questions about the focus of distributed education ("core" degree programs

versus offerings through the College of Continuing Education), student demand, degree programs versus "patchwork" curricula, and impact on faculty workload.

Professor Kulacki urged that the Committee stay on top of the issues and that it send to Dr. Bruininks a statement of its sentiments about what the University should do with respect to the task force recommendations.

It was agreed that the task force recommendations would be on the agenda of the Committee early in Fall Semester.

5. Other Issues

The Committee considered a number of other items which may appear on its agenda later in the year.

-- Peer evaluation of instruction: the Committee needs to learn what is being done, its possible relationship to post-tenure review, the extent to which the existing Senate policy is being implemented systematically, and to examine the possibility of a teaching merit salary pool.

-- The Committee should receive a report on the first-year experience, after analysis of the second year information is ready.

-- The Committee should look at the use of the release form for the results of student evaluations of instruction.

-- There is a malaise affecting interdisciplinary undergraduate programs: there are institutional bars to establishing such programs and some of this may be related to IMG. The Committee should learn more about the conditions affecting programs that both cross colleges and those within colleges.

-- The Committee should look at major and degree requirements since the change to semesters and in particular the percentage of credits that a student is required to take. Relatedly, the Committee might inquire about the difference between 3- and 4-credit courses and whether there have been any unintended consequences as a result of the change to semesters. For instance, are new faculty teaching more?

-- One proposal with respect to retention is a recommendation that there be mid-term grade reports. The Committee should consider this as well as what the University is doing to improve graduation rates with respect to financial aid, course access, and student knowledge about course and degree requirements.

Professor Ahern announced that Professor Newell has agreed to serve as chair of the ASSEMBLY Committee on Educational Policy, dealing with matters exclusive to the Twin Cities. He thanked Professor Hirsch for serving in that capacity last year. He then thanked everyone for coming to the Morris campus and adjourned the meeting at 4:30.

-- Gary Engstrand