

Minutes*

**Senate Committee on Finance and Planning
Tuesday, October 3, 2000**

2:15 – 4:15

Room 6-101 Basic Sciences and Biomedical Engineering

Present: Charles Speaks (chair), Jean Bauer, Leanne Baylor, Stanley Bonnema, Charles Campbell, David Chapman, Daniel Feeney, Wendell Johnson, Rose Samuel, Cory Stingl, Susan Carlson Weinberg

Regrets: Stephen Gudeman, Michael Korth, Terry Roe

Absent: Eric Kruse, Richard Pfutzenreuter, Michael Volna, J. Peter Zetterberg

Guests: Vice President Sandra Gardebring; Jan Morlock (Institutional Relations), Jason Reed (Student Senate Consultative Committee)

[In these minutes: communication within the University (BRIEF, KIOSK, DDD list, etc.); the committee and the consultative process; access to library materials via DSL; Techmart prices; light-rail and other transit plans affecting the University]

1. Communications

Professor Speaks convened the meeting at 2:15 and welcomed Vice President Gardebring to discuss University communications.

Dr. Gardebring recalled that she had received a memo last spring about a meeting with the Committee on internal communication at the University [as a result of a recommendation from the Subcommittee on Twin Cities Facilities and Support Services]. Since receiving it she has spoken with a number of people about the subject.

From the perspective of the central administration there are four mechanisms available for communication at the University: (1) the BRIEF newsletter, (2) KIOSK, (3) the DDD list (deans, directors, and department heads), and (4) the minutes of Senate committees.

(1) BRIEF has been published for what seems like forever, Dr. Gardebring said; her office is conducting a survey to learn if the electronic version is preferable. About 1000 people have asked to receive BRIEF electronically. BRIEF tries to cover important FCC and Senate committee items and they look to committee minutes for information.

Professor Speaks inquired what the savings would be if BRIEF were published electronically only. Dr. Gardebring said she did not know but would find out; she said the decision should not be made

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based only on the cost, which is probably not significant; the question is whether BRIEF provides information people want. She said it is one of the few University-wide mechanisms available.

Professors Speaks, Campbell, and Chapman complimented Dr. Gardebring on BRIEF and said they liked the format. Professor Chapman said it is one of the few newsletters he reads and he likes the focus and the brevity. He also said he prefers the paper version, which he can read while in transit or between meetings. Professor Speaks observed that even if BRIEF is distributed electronically, anyone can print it out and read it wherever they wish. Professor Campbell said it is useful to be able to put BRIEF in a file and search the contents later; it serves as a useful reference. He also related that he spent a semester at a university only two years old which had declared itself paperless and where all communication was electronic; it worked fine, he said.

Professor Johnson said the outstate campuses prefer the electronic version. Dr. Gardebring said that in her view all of the communications vehicles should provide options in terms of the way they are received.

(2) There will also be a readership survey for KIOSK, Dr. Gardebring told the Committee. They receive generally good feedback about KIOSK, which has more feature stories, highlights, and recognitions. She said she was not sure why an additional format beyond BRIEF was adopted but the two publications do not serve the same purpose; the audience is the same but the content is different.

Professor Campbell said KIOSK was "terrific" and noted that it had been created at the behest of FCC. Dr. Gardebring remembered being informed about the history of KIOSK as a mechanism to look at issues in more than one or two sentences.

(3) Dr. Gardebring then noted that she had been asked specifically about the DDD list as a result of the report from the Subcommittee. She said that "DDD" had a loose definition; it was intended for distribution to senior people and there are about 400 people on the list. The electronic use of the DDD list is limited to the President and vice presidents but anyone can purchase, for \$18, the mailing labels for the list. It is used for all kinds of things, such as announcements. The electronic version is not used very often.

There are about 130 non-confidential listservs at the University, ranging from the bowling league to the CIC. There are 527 confidential listservs, such as that used for BRIEF. Only the President, the vice presidents, and the Senate have access to the all-faculty, all-P&A, and all-civil-service lists. There is also a system-wide email list that is used only rarely; it was used, for example, to communicate information about a case of spinal meningitis at the University.

Professor Speaks said he was surprised the University did not take better advantage of the all-student email list to communicate with students. A few students who serve on committees know what is going on at the University; most do not. Why not tell them about issues rather than reserving the use for emergencies?

The student members of the Committee agreed. Ms. Samuel said it would be nice to be updated and that often the University "gets a bad rap" about things because students don't know what's going on. They could be notified, for example, if there is a backlog in Student Financial Aid so students wouldn't make a pointless trip to the office. Professor Speaks added that such communications could include

things like reminders about the half-price tuition and the opportunity cost of not finishing college in four years, if they were brief and infrequent.

Mr. Stingl commented that such messages would also be a good way to get feedback from students about the problems they face. They may not know where to go; this would provide an opportunity. Professor Speaks observed that the issue of light rail transit was on the agenda for this meeting because a student asked that it be put on, but that was only a chance occurrence.

Dr. Gardebring thought this was an excellent idea and said she would carry the message back to the appropriate people. She also said that the University does a lot of surveying of its faculty, students, and staff but that it needs to be done more systematically. There should perhaps be a decision at the beginning of the year about what issues will be looked at; with students, they could be asked for their views monthly. People do participate when the University asks for views, she related; the group is self-selected, to be sure, but they do respond.

Dr. Gardebring said she was not quite sure what the concern is about the DDD list. Is it used to often? Not enough? She said the administration expects that when items are sent to the DDD list, the recipients will in turn forward them as appropriate. It is, she said, a blunt tool but is a default instrument.

The problem is the definition of "director," Professor Campbell said. There is confusion about who is and who is not a director. Dr. Gardebring agreed and said that the list is updated intermittently; her office will make a change if notified or if they notice a press release about a change, but the process is haphazard.

(4) Although they are a communication vehicle for the faculty, not the administration, many people, including those in central administration, look at the Senate committee minutes. Dr. Gardebring recalled that someone had complained to her, when she first took her position, that the committee minutes were a major communication vehicle. She said she is heavily reliant on them for story ideas as well as information.

Of those four tools, she said, is there too much, not enough, or other alternatives that her office should consider?

Professor Feeney pointed out that many at the University must contend with information overload, with 40+ email messages a day from various listservs and other sources. Whatever is sent must be focused and brief. He agreed with his colleagues that KIOSK and BRIEF should not be limited to electronic publication.

Professor Campbell offered two recommendations. First, when a publication is archived on the web, it is extremely useful to have it be searchable. Second, web links in electronic news publications are very valuable; one can obtain more detailed information if they wish.

Ms. Samuel suggested that it would help to promote community if there were a faculty-student listserv so that students would know the faculty are reading the same things they are. Professor Speaks noted, however, that it is frustrating to try to establish electronic communication with students. He has repeatedly tried to do so in classes; a few will use it to raise questions about intellectual content but most email at the last minute to ask when an exam will be. Ms. Samuel said that in her college, however, most

everything is Internet-based and that it is a lot easier to reach faculty; Classnet also provides access to syllabi, assignments, course materials, and so on.

Something they also do, Dr. Gardebring said, is rely on the DAILY, through purchasing space to deliver information. Is that useful? Committee members were of the view that this was not an effective way to reach most faculty and staff.

With respect to the DDD list, it was suggested to Dr. Gardebring that unless there were items intended for restricted circulation, the easiest thing to do might be to let anyone be on the DDD list who wants to be. If the intent is to get information to people who need it, let all those who think they need it be on the list. Mr. Bonnema agreed, saying that he often needed information distributed on the DDD list but did not see it when he needed it. Dr. Gardebring agreed that this was a useful suggestion.

Dr. Gardebring thanked the Committee for its suggestions and said she would return if she had any additional ideas. Professor Speaks thanked her for joining the meeting.

2. Committee Discussion

Professor Speaks reminded the Committee that it had expressed a wish to have time at each meeting to use for reviewing presentations, talking about consultation, or discussing the issues it wished to take up. This was that time.

The Committee agreed that only an abbreviated record of this portion of the discussion would be prepared. The points touched upon during the conversation included the following:

-- An excerpt from the minutes of this Committee for the last decade was prepared; the excerpts were those times when the Committee discussed consultation and its role in the process. The irritation over the process is constant. Professor Speaks said he has begun asking that guests provide materials in advance of meetings so Committee members may review them.

-- There is a need for the Faculty Consultative Committee to discuss with the President his insistence that nothing be provided to the Committee unless the President has approved it as something he supports. If the role of the Committee is simply "the first to know," then it is wasting its time. There must be something in between (1) no consultation at all and (2) discussion of the full range of options; perhaps bringing initial discussions, tentative proposals, and alternatives that have been discarded to the Committee, before any final decisions have been made, would be appropriate. The administration could then get the Committee's reaction.

-- There should be more extensive training of Senate committee chairs on what the "rules" are. They should be provided the summary of the elements of effective consultation (prepared for new members of the Board of Regents a few years ago). How would consultation be "enforced"? There is much a committee can do publicly. This is not a democracy; the administration can ignore the Senate. But it is the forum the faculty and students have; if used effectively it can increase consultation. When administrators do not use it, it is important that they be called on the carpet, asked why, and told that it is expected they will use the process in the future.

The worst example in the recent past was the declaration by the Senior Vice President for Finance that there would not be consultation on parking rates--and that this Committee had previously AGREED that there would be no consultation. There was never any such agreement.

-- At one time, at least, there was a sense that FCC did not appreciate communication between the senior officers and Senate committees without its (FCC's) involvement.

-- The situation in the Academic Health Center is now completely different; Senior Vice President Cerra meets with committees, brings issues, and talks openly about plans and alternatives and asks for views before making decisions.

-- One measure of the administration's view of consultation is signalled by the consistent absence of all of the ex officio members of this Committee.

3. Electronic Matters

Professor Campbell noted two issues:

-- At the last meeting, it was said that certain library materials were not accessible on DSL. He was subsequently informed that they were; he tried to use the complicated method of gaining access that he was advised about but could still not gain access. At the least, he said, accessibility of these materials is in dispute.

-- The Committee should look at Techmart. There is the belief that it is the place to get the best deals but that is not always true.

4. Light Rail and Other Transit

Professor Speaks now welcomed Jan Morlock from Institutional Relations and thanked her for joining the Committee on short notice to discuss light rail transit. Ms. Morlock said she had urged that the topic be on the Committee's agenda and appreciated the opportunity to join the meeting.

She serves as the University's representative on the Central Corridor Coordinating Committee, which is the group planning for the light rail link between Minneapolis and St. Paul; the link will go through the University.

With respect to the Hiawatha corridor, Mark Cox from Transportation serves for the University on the steering committee. The closest stops to the University on this line will be at the Metrodome, where University transit buses will connect, at Cedar-Riverside, and at Franklin Avenue near Hiawatha. There is discussion occurring about the location of the Cedar-Riverside station as well as other issues; if people have an interest in them they should contact her, Ms. Morlock said.

Why is there no stop closer to the University? It is a matter of cost. The Hiawatha corridor is seen as the first step toward a multi-pronged light rail transit system. It was never envisioned that the Hiawatha corridor would cross the river. The second major light rail transit system will, however, and will connect with the Hiawatha corridor.

Ms. Morlock reported that in the Central Corridor there are three alternative transportation modes on four different routes being studied. They include two busways (along I94 or along University Avenue), three light rail (LRT) systems (two on University Avenue, one with stops every 1/4 to 1/2 mile, the other with stops approximately every one mile, one on I94 with mile intervals between stops), and commuter rail on existing rail lines. The current study is intended to reduce these seven options to two; the two will be identified as the preferred alternatives (by this winter). The Committee reviewed the maps Ms. Morlock provided identifying the various route options.

Ms. Morlock briefly outlined the planning process that is taking place and who is involved in it. She also pointed out the proposed timeline, which calls for construction on the central corridor to begin in 2004--which she described as a "very ambitious and optimistic" plan. She also provided materials describing each of the three modes of transportation being considered and noted that LRT now being built is at surface (sidewalks and streets cross it) and so quiet that bells have been added to some to warn pedestrians that a train is coming. It is not at all like walking over railroad tracks.

Is it likely there will be any serious environmental concerns or litigation, Professor Feeney asked? Ms. Morlock said the Environmental Impact Statement must take into account many factors, including historical sites, wetlands, endangered species, etc. The communities through which the Central Corridor will pass are well-organized and informed. Some are very enthusiastic and some only want the route through their neighborhood if there is a station. Opposition could depend on the details.

Professor Speaks asked when, before construction allegedly begins in 2004, a decision on which mode of transportation will be selected; that will be this winter, Ms. Morlock said. Mr. Stingl asked if the costs take into account both construction and maintenance; Ms. Morlock said they did. She added that there will be two options because one may be a longer-distance commuter rail (e.g., along the St. Cloud corridor) and one a local LRT or busway.

Professor Speaks asked about connections with the St. Paul Campus. Either LRT or a busway would use I94 or University Avenue, Ms. Morlock pointed out, so would bypass the St. Paul campus. There will, however, be discussions about how to connect the St. Paul campus once the Central Corridor is chosen.

The last time transit was studied in this way, in 1993, the University took the position that it was acceptable to use Washington Avenue if the transit system were in a tunnel from Oak Street to the Washington Avenue bridge. There is now a plan to lower Washington Avenue from Coffman Union to Church Street, although it is not yet funded. Ms. Morlock said that with the newer and quieter LRT technologies the University may take a different position. Stadium Village business owners may want the transit at grade, not in a tunnel.

Ms. Morlock asked what the best way would be for her to stay in touch with the Committee. Professor Speaks said she should meet with the Committee as appropriate; it would make recommendations to the Senate Consultative Committee, the Senate, or the administration. What role should the Committee play? Ms. Morlock said it was important to know what it thinks about LRT on Washington Avenue, and whether at or below grade.

Professor Campbell noted that an at-grade transit system would have an effect on the buses, which late afternoon line Washington Avenue. While a transit system might reduce the need for some

buses, many would still be there because they serve other parts of the Twin Cities that would not be served by light rail. Ms. Morlock agreed that a transit system should provide a net improvement in service, not come at the expense of the bus service. Professor Campbell surmised that eventually there would be more LRT built than is currently being planned so that the Route 52 buses will not be needed, but there will be a short-term impact. Professor Feeney also expressed concern on this point, noting that it can take 10 minutes to make a turn off Washington Avenue at rush hour; a transit system could increase the congestion.

Mr. Stingl asked if any consideration had been given to an elevated system. Ms. Morlock said that it had never even reached an engineering analysis because it is too expensive; digging a tunnel is cheaper. Committee members expressed surprise.

Asked how a decision would be made, Ms. Morlock said that eventually the President and Board of Regents would have to address it. She said she hoped that when they do so they will be well-informed about how University constituents feel about the options. Professor Feeney suggested that the decisions may be made more for technical and financial reasons rather than because of views expressed by this Committee or the University. Ms. Morlock observed that the University could see pressure to fund more expensive stations or options.

Ms. Morlock said she had no idea at this point how the President and Board of Regents were leaning on the issue; it hasn't been discussed for seven years. Professor Speaks said that if the first important decision will be made this winter, it is an opportunity for the Committee to provide Ms. Morlock and the President with an opinion--if the Committee wishes to do so. His view, he said, is that this is an important issue financially as well as an important planning issue. Other Committee members concurred; it was agreed that Ms. Morlock would return to the Committee later in the semester.

Professor Campbell expressed concern that the administration may not have developed a position on the transit options, and that the University would thus not be a major participant in the decision-making. Ms. Morlock explained that there would be a significant meeting in mid-October with all of the major players; that would be the first opportunity for a "nitty-gritty" discussion. Professor Campbell then asked if students were involved; Ms. Morlock said she hoped to recruit students to the discussions. Even if this Committee is not informed about the details of the alternatives, Professor Speaks observed, it can be informed about what the administration should be doing.

Professor Speaks thanked Ms. Morlock for presenting the information to the Committee and adjourned the meeting at 4:10.

-- Gary Engstrand

University of Minnesota