

Minutes*

Senate Committee on Educational Policy
Wednesday, September 29, 2004
1:00 – 3:00
238A Morrill Hall

Present: Emily Hoover (chair), Victor Bloomfield, Dale Branton, Vernon Cardwell, Shawn Curley, LeAnn Dean, Gretchen Haas, James Leger, Marsha Odom, Christopher Pappas, Karen Seashore, Mary Ellen Shaw, Craig Swan, Douglas Wangensteen, Joel Weinsheimer

Absent: Alexander Valen

Guests: Susan Van Voorhis (Office of Enrolled Student Services); Dr. John Ziegenhagen (Office of the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost)

Other: A Daily reporter

[In these minutes: (1) differentiating between an F for failure and an F for cheating; (2) new ex officio member from the Academic Health Center; (3) evaluation of instruction; (4) Twin Cities campus accreditation]

1. Differentiating Between an F for Failure and an F for Cheating

Professor Hoover convened the meeting at 1:00 and drew the attention of Committee members to a recommendation from the Student Academic Integrity Committee (SAIC) concerning differentiating on the transcript between an F for failure and an F for cheating (an Fx). SAIC recommends against an Fx for first-time offenders and comments that it might be appropriate to consider an Fx in conjunction with suspension. Does the Committee agree with these recommendations, she asked?

Professor Branton said he did not see the need for an Fx; an F is penalty enough and he is hesitant about branding a student.

Professor Leger said he found the rationale offered by SAIC to be compelling:

- a) There is a wide range of reasons for scholastic dishonesty, ranging from ignorance of policies and definitions, to intentional dishonesty without remorse for personal gain. Information from reviews of cases as well as a recent University Survey indicates that there is a high degree of variation among students as well as faculty as to what constitutes scholastic dishonesty. Placing a permanent brand on a student based on an unintentional act would be inappropriate in the opinion of SAIC, even though some faculty might believe this is a justifiable action.

* 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.

- b) The use of a permanent Fx would take a strictly punitive approach to all acts of dishonesty, whether intentional or unintentional. The committee prefers to take a development/educational approach whenever possible, with more permanent and irrevocable sanctions reserved for repeat and/or extremely egregious offenses.
- c) The policies for management of cases of academic integrity currently vary widely between programs and colleges. The use of a central office for management of cases of Scholastic dishonesty is a relatively recent development for the University and there are still gaps in knowledge among programs and faculty about the availability and obligations of this service. While University Policy states that all cases of scholastic dishonesty are to be reported to the Office for Academic Integrity, this does not yet occur despite significant improvements over the past 2 years. The SAIC does not believe that the system is currently sufficiently consistent or reliable to permanently disadvantage any individual on a one-time offense.
- d) Any “Fx” that prevents a student from retaking a required course would, in our understanding of the policy for undergraduate programs, prevent a student from completing a major. The “Fx” would also remain a part of the transcript for life, regardless of the severity of the offense. The committee does not consider this to be an appropriate outcome for many first time offenses.

There is a wide range of reasons that cheating might occur, Professor Leger said, including not understanding dishonesty. Sometimes the issue is not made clear in class.

Dr. Shaw said that to stem dishonesty, faculty must get on the same page and must report an incident every time it happens. That is not done now.

Professor Cardwell said he had mixed emotions. The Fx is as much an administrative as an academic issue. Should a student be allowed to remove an Fx? That is part of the issue. With respect to repeat offenses, and suspension or expulsion, that will already be on record, like a criminal record, so an Fx may be unnecessary.

Academic integrity committees are the place to deal with dishonesty, Professor Weinsheimer said; grades are not the place to decide it and transcripts are not the place to record it.

Professor Odom said that academic integrity is important. She said she understands that each campus is to report violations and that students can be failed with a grade. If faculty could do more to report incidents of cheating, that would help. She said she did not see the purpose of an Fx—it is to keep students out of graduate school, or to brand them? She said she would want more discussion before agreeing to put an Fx on a transcript. She added that she would like more information on patterns of cheating among University students; many outside the University would expect those within the University to pay attention to cheating and to deal with it.

Professor Seashore said she would like to ask SAIC to address the broader question of how to create more consensus and knowledge with respect to academic dishonesty. She said she is the only one in her department who knows how to use Turnitin.com. There are broader questions about how the University can be more coherent in its approach to academic dishonesty. This has stimulated her to think about this as more than just a cat-and-mouse game—and an Fx would just be a patch that does not address the broader questions.

Ms. Haas said that increasing awareness among graduate instructors is even more important because they are even less well equipped to deal with dishonesty.

Why is this a good idea, Professor Leger asked? To serve as a deterrent, like the death penalty? To work that way, students must know about it; he said he suspects that most students do now know they can receive an F for academic dishonesty.

Professor Hoover concluded that the Committee concurred with SAIC.

Professor Seashore suggested the Committee recommend that SAIC develop recommendations that deal with the faculty, not just students. Professor Cardwell agreed; he said faculty are not consistent in they handle incidents. It is discretionary with the faculty member on how to handle an incident and whether to report it. There is need for a clear articulation of policies and faculty should remind students on the first day of class about breeches of integrity. Instructors should not be able to reduce a grade because of academic dishonesty without reporting it.

Professor Curley commented that he is a member of SAIC and that part of the value of reporting academic dishonesty is to identify repeat offenders. How many faculty even have a clue there is an office they can report to, Professor Seashore asked? Just putting something in a policy document does not address the issues. So SCEP is calling for greater outreach by SAIC and the Office of Academic Integrity, Ms. Haas said. Professor Seashore agreed and said departments can decide how to deal with communication to faculty; SAIC is in the best position to recommend guidelines on what departments should discuss. Professor Curley reported that SAIC is looking into this suggestion but is not yet in a position to recommend an institutional policy.

Professor Weinsheimer commented that in 30 years of teaching, he could count the number of proven cases of cheating on two hands—it does not happen often. Students are being tarred with the brush of the former men's basketball coach and are still under suspicion because of those events. The standards for cheating vary across disciplines and instructors (e.g., group papers are required in some classes and considered cheating in others). This is a very troubling area, difficult to deal with, and he considers many instances of cheating his fault (because, for instance, he did not set up assignments to prevent it or because he did not explain fair use). The problem of cheating belongs to the problem of education and provides a teaching moment—he would not want to use it as a policing moment. Nor is he sure that all incidents should be reported. To the last point, Professor Seashore responded that SAIC records are not public and the point is to identify repeat offenders.

Professor Hoover said she would inform SAIC that SCEP agrees with them and that this Committee looks forward to more recommendations. The Committee agrees that at this point there is no call for adding the Fx to transcripts.

2. Ex Officio Member from the Academic Health Center

Professor Hoover noted that Senior Vice President Cerra had responded to the question about whether the Academic Health Center wished or should have an ex officio representative on the Committee; Dr. Cerra expressed strong support for such a representative.

Committee members discussed whether there should be an AHC representative or rather a representative from the professional schools. Right now the Committee has ex officio representatives with responsibility for undergraduate and for graduate education; the big piece that is missing is professional education, Dean Bloomfield observed. The Committee noted the existence of the

professional schools deans' council (composed of associate deans) and wondered if an ex officio member should be drawn from that group instead. What would be lacking, Dr. Shaw pointed out, is the overarching view that someone at the central level in the AHC could provide (at least for the health sciences).

Professor Curley suggested the matter be sent back to the Committee on Committees with the comments this Committee has made; the Committee on Committees can pursue the question and return to SCEP with its recommendations. The Committee concurred.

3. Evaluation of Instruction

Professor Hoover next took up the recommendations from the ad hoc subcommittee on the evaluation of instruction, the Durfee Subcommittee. She noted that there were six specific recommendations the Committee should take up. She reported that she and Professor Morris Kleiner, chair of the Senate Committee on Faculty Affairs (SCFA), had divided the recommendations into two groups, those to be taken up by SCFA and those to be taken up by SCEP. Each committee, in turn, will review the recommendations from the other before anything is taken to the Senate for action. The subcommittee did a good job; she said she would like this Committee to finish up its work by December.

The items for this Committee were as follows ("Comment" sections were in the original subcommittee report):

1. Recommendation: A new, single, comprehensive Senate policy should be written to replace the current three policies. (Comment: A single, comprehensive policy that details the purpose, procedure, and use for the student rating system will reduce confusion and minimize the need to interpret, both of which are excessive with the current policy.)
2. Recommendation: Every course with a University course number should be evaluated through a student rating process every time it is offered. (Comment: (1) Current Senate policy dictates courses be rated by students once each year. Student ratings are sufficiently important that they should occur every time a course is offered. (2) The every course every time policy should apply to courses taught by faculty, by teaching assistants, by lecturers. If the course is offered, it is evaluated. (3) There may be special courses with a University course number where student rating is not appropriate, for example graduate thesis credit courses. The Senate should be reasonable in applying the every course every time policy, yet at the same time should not permit arbitrary exceptions. For example, an instructor who doesn't believe student ratings are valid should not be allowed to opt out of the every course every time policy. (4) The every course every time policy may need examination for courses with fewer than five students as this raises particular concerns about student anonymity and validity of data. (5) There should be further discussion on evaluation requirements for courses with multiple instructors. For example, if an instructor gives three lectures, should he or she be evaluated? How about instructors who give just one lecture? (6) Instructors should be encouraged to adopt a mid-semester course evaluation process so that the course can be improved as it is delivered. OMS has a mid-semester form used by many instructors. The Committee does not recommend that mid-semester evaluations be required.

3. Recommendation: Questions 1, 2, 3 and 4 be retained in the set of core questions required for every course. (Comment: (1) The wording of Question 4 is not ideal for courses taught by multiple instructors. For these courses, Questions 1-3 would generally be administered for every instructor as well as for the course coordinator, Question 4 could then be interpreted as either what was learned from one instructor or what was learned for the whole course. The Committee suggests that the wording of Question 4 not change across course types but that instructors, through the instructions to students, can interpret the question in a manner that makes most sense for that particular course. The Committee also suggests that OMS works with a group of faculty members to create a new SET form that is appropriate for multi instructor courses. (2) The verbal anchor points for Question 4 should be changed. Perhaps Question 4 could be reworded so that it has the same anchors as the other required questions. Or, perhaps retain same wording with anchors similar to "not very much," "a reasonable amount." and "a lot." (3) Keeping the wording of Questions 1 through 4 the same means that data can continue to be compared back to 1993.
4. Recommendation: Question 5 should be dropped from the set of core questions. (Comment: (1) Questions about facilities could be included in a bank of optional questions that individual instructors could choose to include on their SET form. (2) If Question 5 is retained either as a required or optional question, the phrase "ability to see, hear, concentrate" should be dropped as it may be interpreted by students to be asking about their abilities or disabilities. (3) If Question 5 is retained either as a required or optional question, the data should be linked to specific building and room numbers and the summary data by room number should be provided to the Office of Classroom Management (OCM) to help guide decisions on facilities resource allocation. OCM has used the aggregate data in the past to argue for additional classroom resources. Because the physical environment is an important part of learning, Question 5 provides valuable data that is part of being accountable to students to make sure tuition dollars are spent wisely. (4) If Question 5 is retained, variants should be developed for classes that use multiple rooms, for field study class, for on-line classes, and for other classes that differ from the lecture-in-one-room format.
5. Recommendation: All questions on SET forms should have verbal anchors on each numeric data point. (Good psychometric survey practice requires that each point on a numeric scale have verbal anchors. The current SET form has anchors on the end points and the middle. Comment: (1) The specific verbal anchors to use should be developed in consultation with a survey expert. (2) Strictly speaking, additional verbal anchors will mean that survey data from the time period after implementation should be compared to pre-implementation survey with caution.
6. Recommendation: A question bank method should be implemented for the SET process. The questions would be supplemental to the core questions, would be selected by the instructor, and would be used primarily for improving teaching. Because the supplemental questions from the question bank are to be used for improving teaching, summary results should go to the instructor only. (Comment: (1) A working group, including staff from CTLIS, should develop the question bank. Design and implementation of the question bank procedure should be handled by OMS in collaboration with the working group. (2) The question bank process should be designed to minimize the effort required by faculty to create custom SET forms, otherwise few faculty will use it. (3) Use of supplemental questions from the question bank is

optional. (4) As with the current SET forms, provision should be made for instructors, should they choose, to add a reasonable number of custom questions that are not included in the bank. (5) Departments or schools should be free to require questions from the bank or from other sources to be required on all forms used in their area. These “Department Core” or “School Core” questions could be used either for evaluation of instructors or for improving teaching, courses or programs. If for the former, than summary results should go to the department. If for the latter, summary results should go to the instructor only if the results are to be used by the instructor, or to curriculum committees if the results are to be used for program improvements.

As for number one, Professor Hoover said, there appeared to be unanimous consent in favor of it. She said she would appoint a subcommittee to draft a single policy; later in the meeting, when she sought volunteers, it was agreed that Professors Hoover and Weinsheimer would serve, as would Mr. Pappas.

As for number two, Dr. Shaw said the Committee should endorse it only with the caveats noted. Professor Hoover suggested that the ad hoc subcommittee charged to draft a uniform policy should take into account the caveats. Professor Seashore said there are only two caveats, the last two comments; otherwise, some courses are permanently exempted and courses with fewer than five students are exempted. Professor Odom responded that it is not the student's problem if there are only a few others in a course—it still needs evaluation and a way to do it needs to be identified. Students will want to provide feedback for small courses and instructors will want it. Nothing prevents an instructor from seeking feedback in any course, Professor Curley said; this technique, which is based on anonymity, cannot guarantee anonymity in small courses so some different mechanism must be used.

With respect to comment #5 in item two, Professor Hoover said that SCFA is focusing on what evaluations should be formative and which should be summative as well as who should see what results.

The multi-instructor courses are not an exception, Professor Seashore observed, and while they may require a different instrument for evaluation, they would not be except from the policy.

The Committee voted unanimously in favor of item 2.

The Committee moved next to number three, but engaged in a discussion of verbal anchor points. Professor Hoover suggested it could be difficult to attach a verbal anchor to each number; Professor Cardwell said that while he understood why the subcommittee wanted them, if students are given end points and the midpoint, they will understand the scale. The rationale comes from survey methodology but it does not apply here. One problem is that one does not know if the differences between the numbers are logarithmic, Professor Leger commented. Professor Branton agreed with Professor Cardwell: while Committee members are not experts on construction of survey instruments, it would seem that verbal anchors at the endpoints and the midpoint would be sufficient. Mr. Pappas agreed. Ms. Haas said that she has not done a lot of survey work but believed the literature would call for verbal anchors on every point. Professor Weinsheimer said he has read some about survey instruments and agreed on the anchors for the endpoints and midpoint; he said that people must be wary about giving false precision to measures, or about believing the instrument can meaningfully discriminate between 5.1 and 5.2. He said he was more worried about what will be done with the

results than he was about the names on the numbers. Even if there are verbal anchors, Ms. Dean commented, the ambiguity of words means the results will not be consistent.

When one looks at the numbers, the purpose is to compare them with others in the department or others who have taught the same course, Professor Seashore said. There is no way to look at the numbers to compare a turf course with an early childhood education course.

With respect to survey design, there are people at the University who know a lot about the subject, Professor Seashore said. The Committee should give the survey to people with expertise so the questions meet some technical standard. It must also be clear, she said, that if the anchors are changed or added, the results cannot be compared with earlier data.

The Committee voted unanimously in favor of recommendation number three with the understanding that addition of anchor points would be the subject of further discussion.

Recommendation number four, to drop the question about facilities, was not endorsed. Professor Branton maintained that it is important to receive feedback about the facilities; Professor Weinsheimer agreed but suggested it be moved from the evaluation part of the survey to the demographic section. It is important to get the student point of view on every classroom, and it is most important that the information go to the office that can do something about the results: the Office of Classroom Management. Right now Mr. Fitzgerald, the Director of Classroom Management, can chart student satisfaction with a classroom but he cannot identify the classroom. That must be remedied.

There is a link on the evaluations between how satisfied students are and their comfort or lack of it in the classroom, Professor Cardwell said. He recalled one example when there was a large air duct in the middle of a classroom he was using, which resulted in negative responses about the course. In principle, Dr. Swan said, one could compare evaluations of one instructor in different rooms and the instructors who taught in the same room. What is the correlation between the answers to the facilities question and the other four questions, Professor Seashore asked?

The Committee voted unanimously that the facilities question should remain on the survey but should be moved to the demographic section and that the information from the facilities question should be provided to the Office of Classroom Management and the instructor.

Professor Seashore moved to commend the Durfee Subcommittee for its work, which was really needed and which will help both faculty and students a great deal. The Committee concurred.

4. Twin Cities Campus Accreditation

Professor Hoover turned next to Vice Provost Swan, who introduced Mr. Ziegenhagen and explained that he (Mr. Ziegenhagen) would lead the effort with respect to the re-accreditation of the Twin Cities campus by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association.

Mr. Ziegenhagen distributed copies of a memo to Committee members that provided background information on the accreditation process. The criteria for reports that the University must submit have been revamped, driven in part by external pressure arising from the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act and Congressional calls for increased accountability. Universities are feeling the pressure, as are the accreditation agencies, which provide the "good housekeeping" seal of approval and allow institutions to receive federal research and student aid funds. There have been

questions raised about only doing accreditation reviews every ten years, so there has been discussion about using criteria similar to those used for K-12 education. Accreditation agencies feel pressure to justify their existence and have developed a new set of criteria for 2005. The University of Minnesota will be among the first institutions reviewed using the new standards.

Mr. Ziegenhagen reviewed briefly the five criteria and said that number three was likely of most interest to the Committee: "Student Learning and Effective Teaching: The organization provides evidence of student learning and teaching effectiveness that demonstrates it is fulfilling its educational mission." Provost Sullivan has appointed a steering committee for the accreditation process, which consists of the administrative and faculty co-chairs of the working groups that will coordinate preparation of the report for each of the criteria:

Mission and Integrity:

Marvin Marshak, Carol Carrier

Preparing for the Future:

John Adams, Al Sullivan

Student Learning and Effective Teaching:

Carol Chomsky, Craig Swan

Acquisition, Discovery, and Application of Knowledge:

David Bernlohr, Vic Bloomfield

Engagement and Service:

John Finnegan, Billie Wahlstrom

The work groups are beginning to gather information. There will be a website for the accreditation process that will allow for broad consultation across the campus in addition to discussions with standing groups such as this Committee. Mr. Ziegenhagen recalled former Senior Vice President Maziar's observation that this is a pass/fail process and there is no reward for an A+. Any penalty in the process is that the University does not provide enough information so must be reviewed again in four or five years. They are trying, he said, to streamline the process.

What are they looking for? Mr. Ziegenhagen said he has been involved in a number of accreditation processes. It used to be that the University could provide a stack of information about its activities to the Higher Learning Commission. That is no longer true, and there is no specified standard an institution must pass. The Commission will use the five criteria but are interested in how the University assesses performance across the campus and how it uses the information to make decisions to improve. The University will thus not provide evidence for every unit/college on the campus but will instead take a more global approach to institutional efforts and highlight examples of what it does.

If there are ways to use the process to advantage for things that the Committee or others are interested in, it can be a two-fer or three-fer because it will have been of value to the institution. The process is time-consuming, but if it can be used to obtain what the University needs, there will be value added.

Many colleges and departments go through external reviews, Professor Seashore pointed out. Do the new criteria map more closely to other external reviews? Is there a way to use those other

reviews, rather than ask units to do things differently? It could reduce the amount of work that must be done if what is already available can be used. Mr. Ziegenhagen said the existing reviews can be used and they want to do so as much as possible.

Vice Provost Swan commented on Criterion 3. There will be increasing external demands for University accountability in the areas of student learning and effective teaching. The more the University can be proactive on them, the better off it will be. There is a fair amount of course and curriculum assessment that goes on now, especially in the professional schools (and it may be more difficult in some departments). This will be a journey for the entire campus and the Council on Enhancing Student Learning is committed to it. There is much assessment of student learning that occurs, but the campus has not been as self-conscious in talking about it as it might be.

Professor Seashore said that the North Central Association is used to accrediting small and medium-sized colleges; with the new criteria, will the University be appropriately evaluated? Dr. Swan said that the review panel will be from institutions similar to the Twin Cities campus—it will not be expected to be like a 1500-student campus. All the team members in the 1995-96 review were from large research universities, Mr. Ziegenhagen said, and they will try to make sure that happens again for this review.

Professor Cardwell inquired about the extent to which the Provost would provide colleges and departments with boilerplate language that would help them address each of the five criteria. It would help if there were a list of questions, for example, for curriculum committees as they look at the criterion related to teaching and learning. Mr. Ziegenhagen said his office will provide a working outline and questions for departments. Part of that work will also be done by the Council on Enhancing Student Learning, Dr. Swan added; the campus has between 150 and 230 undergraduate majors, depending on how one counts (e.g., BA versus BS degrees in the same field) and there will not be 230 statements for the accreditation process. But is the campus on a journey where such statements can be expected at some point? It is, he said. And in many cases, graduate programs have already prepared such statements.

What is the role of this Committee in pulling together the final report on Criterion 3, Professor Cardwell asked? To review and comment on it, Dr. Swan said. Such review would be extremely helpful, Mr. Ziegenhagen said. To what extent are graduate and professional students part of the process, Mr. Pappas asked? Is anything expected of them, or only through participation on this Committee? It will be helpful to have comments from standing student groups, Mr. Ziegenhagen said, but he did not know if there would be specific presentations of a document to them. The accreditation team may also want to visit with people on the campus, Dr. Swan said.

Professor Hoover thanked Mr. Ziegenhagen for joining the Committee and adjourned the meeting at 2:55.

-- Gary Engstrand

University of Minnesota