

Minutes*

Senate Committee on Educational Policy
Wednesday, May 10, 2000
1:00 – 3:00
238 Morrill Hall

Present: Judith Martin (chair), Leanne Baylor, Steve Fitzgerald, Charles Henderson, Gordon Hirsch, Emily Hoover, Karen Seashore Louis, Kathleen Newell, Marsha Odom, Riv-
Ellen Prell, Tina Rovick, Richard Skaggs, Suzanne Bates, Rita Snider, Thomas Soulen,
Steven Sperber, Craig Swan, Rachel Sullivan

Regrets: Wilbert Ahern

Absent: Darwin Hendel, Christine Maziar

Guests: Dr. C. Eugene Allen, Kathleen Sellew (Office of International Programs); Associate
Dean Gerald Rinehart (Council of Undergraduate Deans), Ole Gram (College of Liberal
Arts Dean's office)

[In these minutes: report on activities of the Office of International Programs; writing across the curriculum; distance education policy; discontinued registration; final exams and assignments; excused absences; resolution of appreciation]

Before the meeting was convened, there was active conversation about IMG, with several of those present expressing vigorously the view that it is creating significant problems for the curriculum and that faculty are refusing to teach outside their own colleges and refusing to collaborate in establishing programs.

1. Annual Report from the Office of International Programs (OIP)

Professor Martin convened the meeting at 1:00 and welcomed Dr. C. Eugene Allen and Kathleen Sellew from the Office of International Programs (OIP). Dr. Allen distributed a packet of materials that included a fact sheet, the compact with the Provost's office, a roster of exchange programs, and data on student participation in international programs; he led the Committee through the contents.

Dr. Allen said the compact process was better than any strategic planning process because it gets at unit tasks and individual responsibility, things that do not appear in normal strategic planning documents--which is why they end up on shelves. The compact is a two-year contract with the Executive Vice President's office and units make an honest effort to meet the goals that they agree to in the compact.

The International Exchange Roster lists the 247 exchange programs operated at the University, of which about 200 are active. Dr. Allen said he would be surprised if the roster actually includes all of the programs at the University because registering an exchange is not a requirement. The list is useful

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because for anyone who is thinking about work in another country, the roster provides information about what the University is already doing in a given location. The exchange registry is on the web, organized by region of the world, Ms. Sellew reported. That fact is not well known, commented one Committee member; OIP might wish to notify the DDD list and/or put a note in BRIEF to that effect. The note could also ask units to inform OIP of programs that are not included in the roster.

Dr. Allen told the Committee that he firmly believed the University does NOT need any more all-University exchange agreements, in part because they do not work with IMG. What is needed, he said, are strong and meaningful exchange programs with colleges and departments; such programs tend to have a greater commitment than programs run from the central administration. Some all-University exchange agreements are being cancelled because they are not balanced (i.e., people going from AND coming to the University) and the University cannot afford them.

Do these exchanges include students, faculty, or both? Both, Ms. Sellew said. Dr. Allen said that when a program bridges graduate and undergraduate students it becomes more complex, partly because of IMG. It becomes even more complex when it includes both students and faculty. The cleanest kind of program is one where a department operates an exchange program, for example, that includes only undergraduates; it is possible to determine clearly if the program is successful.

Dr. Allen moved on to discussion of the International Student Census prepared by International Student and Scholar Services. One Committee member suggested that the count of students may not include those who come to the University only to do thesis work, of whom there are quite a number. While they will show up in visa counts, they should be included in the totals if they are to reflect the scale and scope of international activities. Dr. Allen agreed that there are a number of scholars that OIP does not know about.

Of the exchange students on campus, about one-fourth are undergraduates. The University does nothing as an institution to recruit international students; recruitment takes place with individual faculty and graduate programs. Purdue, by comparison, recruits heavily. Europe is getting very aggressive in recruiting students and the U.S. total as a percentage of the world total is declining. That decline is related to tuition; Prime Minister Tony Blair, for instance, has been aggressive about international students to Great Britain. Dr. Allen clarified, in response to a question, that the U.S. percentage of international students has declined but the actual NUMBER in the U.S. is up. The U.S. has about half a million international students; the UK and Australia, however, are marketing aggressively for them as well. Another factor may be that the academic mobility programs instituted within the European Union encourages students to stay in Europe.

Dr. Allen then reviewed where students come from. The largest number is from China. What is notable is (1) how few students there are from Mexico and Central and South America. East Asia sends over 1700 students, Western Europe sends over 700; there are 70 from Central American and about 200 from South America. Also notable is (2) how few students there are from southern Africa. There is a group of 14 countries in that area that have picked the Twin Cities as an area to work with in business, but University foreign student representation from the area is "miserable," especially for Black Africans. The area has increased the number of democracies significantly and has some of the fastest-growing economies in Africa. His goal, Dr. Allen said, is to increase the number of Black African students at the University.

It would interesting to have data for the past ten years, said one Committee member, and to do a retrospective on how well the University is doing vis-à-vis other institutions.

Dr. Allen then talked about the study abroad students (i.e., going from the University). While the University has accurate counts for students going on its own or co-sponsored programs, it has incomplete information on graduate students, students who enroll directly at a foreign university or a program at another university, and students who participate in shorter study or travel experiences. The incomplete statistics make it difficult to set goals. In addition, there may be students who go abroad without the proper medical insurance.

Dr. Allen noted that President Yudof took the lead in increasing the number of students studying abroad and said he was pleased that Vice Provost Swan provided an additional \$100,000 for undergraduate study-abroad programs. His suggestion is that each college raise money for study abroad scholarships in order to increase the participation rate. The number of graduate/professional students who study abroad is too small and there are few funds to support them. That lack could be addressed in the capital campaign, he said.

In an undergraduate population of about 30,000, the University has a study abroad participation rate of 3.6%. (The Institute of International Education, the agency that keeps national statistics on study abroad, is now measuring study abroad participation by the percentage of the graduating class in any given year; in this case, in a graduating class of 6000 the University would have a 16% participation rate.) Many private liberal arts colleges as well as public universities have higher numbers. At the same time, one must be careful about the statistics because there is no agreement on definitions. For example, 90% of Michigan State students who study abroad do so on short-term programs; 4% of Minnesota students participate in short-term programs.

There is a change going on. Because of the switch to the semester system and the availability of January and May for study abroad programs, the University is offering short-term group experiences. Ideally, all students would do something abroad, but until this year the University's number of undergraduates who do so has been at the rate of 800-900 per year. The short-term programs offer a variety of options for less cost and less time away from other commitments.

One Committee member inquired if OIP had studied the comparative costs to study abroad for University of Minnesota students versus students at other institutions. He said he had the impression that it costs Minnesota students significantly more. Dr. Allen said he would be surprised if that were true but said he would look into the possibility.

Dr. Allen said that there will be seven Global Seminars (short-term, faculty led programs) for Twin Cities students, which will increase the number of students studying abroad. All are faculty-led, each will have 15-25 students. Morris has four such seminars. The colleges should be challenged to offer these opportunities, suggested one Committee member.

Other study abroad initiatives are tied to encouraging students from "non-traditional" disciplines to study abroad. Programs are being linked to the curriculum, Dr. Allen said in response to a query, so that there is no curricular opportunity tax for students who participate. For example, there are 19 students going to the University of Melbourne next year and they represent many colleges and majors, not only the

traditional liberal arts students. (Melbourne has been determined to be the university outside the United States that is most like Minnesota). These students will not "miss a beat" in their education.

The University has recently submitted grant proposals to the Bush Foundation and the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education to expand the curriculum integration project. The University needs to increase the number of lower-division students, minority students, and males participating in study abroad programs, Dr. Allen said. He pointed out numbers of students who participate, by college, and said all colleges have a long way to go.

During 1999-2000 International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS) participated in a business process redesign project. OIP used a consultant who had worked with eleven other University units; ISSS was the first one that the consultant described as under-staffed, by 5.5 FTEs. Dr. Allen said he has been at the University for 33 years and was not aware of the range of services offered by ISSS before he came to OIP; it is one of the best-kept secrets at the University. But it has had developed some staffing issues because of increased numbers of international students, scholars and staff and the increasing complexity of immigration regulations. The only way to address the problem was to assess administrative fees for international students and scholars beginning next year. OIP needed an additional \$475,000 and had nowhere else to obtain it. The Committee also discussed with Dr. Allen fees for permanent resident visas for faculty and the problems that can arise when departments negotiate to hire a non-U.S. faculty member.

Professor Martin thanked Dr. Allen for his presentation and encouraged Committee members to share information if they know of programs not on the OIP roster. Dr. Allen said he would return next year but would be willing to report any time the Committee wished.

2. Writing Across the Curriculum

Professor Martin turned now to Associate Dean Gerald Rinehart to report on writing across the curriculum. She reported that she had asked Dr. Rinehart, as chair of the Council of Undergraduate Deans, to speak with his colleagues about how the writing across the curriculum was going and to provide SCEP with impressionistic data.

Dr. Rinehart said that administratively the program is a success. Students are not being forced to queue up to obtain the courses they need. CLE is approving courses as needed. He said he did NOT know if writing was actually being improved. There has been a suggestion that the Center for the Interdisciplinary Study of Writing could be asked to do an assessment.

Mr. Gram reported that there are plenty of seats available in writing-intensive courses; perhaps there are too many courses, he said. Students run into writing-intensive courses no matter what they do; anecdotal evidence is that they are "exhausted." Students could end up with six or seven writing intensive courses, more than are required; they are working with CLE to achieve a balance. Within one or two years there should be equilibrium, Mr. Gram said. He also told the Committee that the pedagogical evidence suggests that faculty and TAs in "gateway courses" are developing great writing materials and that they are having an effect on student writing. At the upper division level the situation is more confusing; it is not clear how much writing instruction should be remedial or whether these courses are to be an introduction to disciplinary writing.

One Committee member said the Center for the Interdisciplinary Study of Writing is best equipped to evaluate the program and that one cannot expect major changes in one year. Enrollment in the courses was far above expectation and above what is needed for students to meet requirements; one question is whether this is a burden or if more writing makes a course better and enhances its pedagogical value. It may be both.

There are research questions to be addressed, said one Committee member, that both the Center for the Interdisciplinary Study of Writing and this Committee should be interested in. They include the contribution of these courses to undergraduate education and whether the standards for qualifying as writing intensive were set too low in order to serve the number of students expected and if fewer courses with more attention to writing are needed. The answers to these questions could be valuable. Also whether the work in the courses is generalizable to other courses or to post-college life.

Professor Martin thanked Dr. Rinehart and Mr. Gram for joining the meeting.

3. Distance Education Policy

Professor Martin next noted that Committee members had been provided copies of a policy on distance education that had been formulated at San Diego State University; she asked the Committee if it would be worth the effort to pursue a similar policy for the University of Minnesota. She recalled that the Committee has taken interim steps on distance education; Regents' Professor Clayton reported to it on University-wide discussions that took place a year ago, but distance education is still a moving target at the University. She also noted that there is a University task force on distance education being appointed.

Committee members offered a number of observations on the subject.

-- Given the attention that distance education is receiving nationally, it is critical that any policy be institution-wide.

-- The first half of the SDSU policy would be unnecessary at the University because there are in place procedures for approving programs, although no specific ones for distance education. The SDSU policy, said another, gives one the sense that distance education is not perceived as part of what the institution is doing. It is also a negative and discouraging policy, it was said.

-- There are, however, bigger policy issues, such as conflict of commitment, upon which Harvard has taken the position that one may not teach in conflict with the University without approval. There is no such policy at the University, it was noted.

-- Unless an existing course is also offered by distance education, there is no regulation of distance education courses at the University. It is a cause for worry that such courses need not go through regular channels for review.

-- How these courses are counted in faculty workload is an issue that must be addressed. The North Central Association expects some guidelines. Those would be best set at the college level, it was said; another responded that there could be University guidelines. It may be, concluded Professor Martin, that campus policies are needed.

4. Discontinued Registration

Professor Martin drew the attention of Committee members to the email from the Registrar's Office explaining what happens when a student needs to withdraw completely during a term. There are no entries on the transcript for the term.

The only question for the Committee, it was said, is whether the rules governing how and when a student may withdraw complete should vary by college. The consensus of Committee members was that the differences in the college curricula make the college the most logical place to set the rules for withdrawal.

5. Final Exams and Assignments

Professor Martin then reported that a question had been raised about whether an instructor may require that an assignment be due the same day as the final exam for the course. One Committee member responded that she had never heard of a faculty member who objected to an assignment being turned in early.

The Committee concluded that the situations were so variable and complex that it did not wish to try to write any policy that would cover it. It is difficult, said one Committee member, to protect students from egregious examples.

6. Excused Absences 1

One Committee member inquired how to treat students who miss unannounced quizzes (which the syllabus informs the students will be given) because of legitimate absences (e.g., participating in a University-sponsored event). A prime example is student-athletes. The question is not about major exams, which are covered by Senate policy; these quizzes may account for only a small percentage of the course grade.

Committee members offered a number of views.

- Students who know they will be gone should work this out with the instructor. Athletes know well in advance when they will be gone.
- The quiz can be dropped from the grade calculation (especially if there is only one).
- One hopes that this might be discussed as part of the department discussion of grading. There should be a department consensus on the use of pop quizzes.
- If a student is not in class because of a University event, and his/her grade suffers, there should be provision made for them.
- The syllabus should indicate that there will be such quizzes and that if students know they will be absent they should communicate with the instructor.

-- It may be that existing policy should be rewritten so that faculty are responsible for offering make-ups. This, however, would be very burdensome in the case of unannounced quizzes.

-- The Senate cannot legislate about everything; there is a responsibility on the part of students to follow the rules that are announced in the syllabus.

-- The decision about students who are legitimately absent should not be left at the discretion of the instructor if the University allows an excused absence.

-- Participation in events cannot always be cost-free.

The Committee reached no conclusion about what to do.

7. Excused Absences 2

A question was raised from a department by a student who participated in an event called SpringJam 2000; the student claimed--after the fact--that it was a University-sponsored event and the participation required that a final be rescheduled for him.

One Committee member recalled having been involved as an advisor to SpringJam and said this claim was "ridiculous" because the schedule is known long in advance and that the student should have talked with the instructor beforehand. The event is also not University-sponsored; it is co-curricular, one Committee member contended. There are 400 student groups that have activities; where does one draw the line on what is "University-sponsored"?

There is a need to clarify what a "University-sponsored event" is, it was agreed.

8 Resolution

Professor Hirsch raised a point of personal privilege at this time and read a resolution expressing appreciation to Professor Martin for her two years' service as chair and her six years of service on the Committee. Committee members gave her a round of applause.

On that note, Professor Martin adjourned the Committee for the year sine die.

-- Gary Engstrand