

Minutes*

Senate Committee on Educational Policy
Wednesday, May 4, 2005
1:00 – 3:00
Basis Sciences and Biomedical Engineering

- Present: Emily Hoover (chair), Dale Branton, Vernon Cardwell, Shawn Curley, Gretchen Haas, Richard McCormick, Christopher Pappas, Mary Ellen Shaw, Craig Swan, Douglas Wangenstein, Joel Weinsheimer
- Absent: Victor Bloomfield, Adam Hirsch, James Leger, Emily Ronning, Karen Seashore, Jenny Zhang [LeAnn Dean was not present but not counted as absent because of technological difficulties connecting her to the meeting]
- Guests: Susan Van Voorhis, Tina Falkner (Office of the Registrar)

[In these minutes: (1) Twin Cities accreditation and student learning; (2) use of classrooms; (3) Morse-Alumni award recommendations; (4) student evaluation questions; (5) probation and suspension rules]

1. Twin Cities Accreditation and Student Learning

Mr. Ziegenhagen, 2005 Self-Study Coordinator, distributed a summary of the process as of this date, noting that more updates will be available on the web site listed. A final version of the self-study will be ready by the end of the month in preparation for the site visit October 13-November 2.

He noted that the commission finds it hard to recruit faculty and administrators from Research I universities, so the site-visit team has not yet been finalized. To help this process in the future, he is trying to recruit people from the University to do site visits at other institutions.

As for the self-study, he has reviewed previous self-study reports, which are very thorough, but were done under the old criteria. The University's current self-study is being done under the new criteria and will focus on the overall strategic direction of the campus and highlight examples of some of its efforts. It will be concise and provide links to other campus information to help the reviewers.

The site-visit team will draft preliminary findings before it leaves campus. Primary focus will be placed on the third criterion, Student Learning and Effective Teaching.

Q: Do the five criteria relate to the University's strategic positioning?

A: Criterion 2, Preparing for the Future, relates most directly, but areas of the strategic planning process match well across all the criteria.

Q: Should SCEP be involved with criterion 3?

* 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.

A: The self-study steering committee would appreciate any comments or examples from the committee.

Q: Will the Academy of Distinguished Teachers be asked to participate in the draft?

A: Yes, as well as other groups that can help strengthen the report.

Q: What is considered to be evidence of student learning?

A: Under the old process, an NCA matrix was provided that institutions and site-visit teams often used as a checklist, which was not its intended purpose. Now the model is continuous improvement toward measurable goals and objectives related to teaching and learning, evaluations, curriculum redesign, and learning objectives. Examples of campus components, such as CTLS and CESL, show on-going work towards the future. There is more focus on outputs and results rather than inputs.

Q: What implication does this study have for future faculty improvements?

A: It will ask units to be more explicit about learning outcomes, which some colleges are already doing. The University will also be more accountable to and explicit with the public. The accreditation will highlight what is being done and point out areas for improvement, but will not mandate specific changes.

2. Use of Classrooms

Associate Vice President Scheich said that Vice President O'Brien asked her to head the review of the policy on campus facility usage by non-University groups. She distributed a revised copy of the policy, noting that it includes recommendations and prioritization for all campus classroom facilities.

Ms. Weinberg, from the Real Estate Office, said that the policy discusses permissible users for facilities leases, which have on-going campus usage such as ATMS machines, and use agreements, which are meant for short-term events.

Q: If the policy is intended to promote the campus for summer conventions, how will these decisions be weighed against summer class needs?

A: A one-stop system will be set-up to schedule all the facilities for all events, including classrooms.

Ms. Van Voorhis said that many classes are not scheduled in advance, yet most conferences book at least one year in advance. How will these two conflicting efforts be handled?

Mr. Fitzgerald said that there is some classroom excess for summer, and his department would designate a small group in advance to be used for non-course events. Once this reserved group has been booked, no others will be scheduled. The question is whether the University will choose to rent its rooms during fall and spring semester as well.

Vice Provost Swan expressed concern about conference use bleeding into the other semesters. Serious consideration needs to be done on this issue.

Q: What will be the room rental rates, market-comparable to just to cover the University's cost? Who receives the revenue?

A: Rates would be comparable to the private sector. Revenue could go back to central classrooms or to central administration depending on who is renting and how revenue is designated in unit's compacts.

Mr. Fitzgerald noted that this policy also has another implication in terms of Facilities Management work. At this time, they do not schedule classroom work out two years, but they will need to for this process.

Q: How will this effort be coordinated?

A: It is proposed that a new office be created to manage event planning. The office would not have authority over rooms, but would help outside entities coordinate conference events on campus.

Q: Does the policy apply to the Twin Cities or the entire University?

A: The policy (Use of Facilities by Non-University Groups) is a Real Estate Office administrative policy and it will apply to the entire University, so buildings on all campuses will need to be included in the final language.

Q: If a department rents its room, does it collect the revenue?

A: This arrangement needs to be worked out with the Budget Office.

Professor Weinsheimer said that if the University just breaks even on the revenue generated, then it should have better reasons for renting its classrooms. He already teaches classes in less-desirable locations in the summer, when better classes should be available. Classes should not be relegated to obsolete rooms just to make money renting better rooms.

The Committee asked for a progress report in a few years to see how the policy is working.

3. Morse-Alumni Award Recommendations

Professor Hoover noted that she did not bring copies of the proposed changes and that due to room change, there was no phone available so Professor Ahern could not be present for the discussion. In light of these conditions, she suggested that the discussion be held until the fall retreat or the first fall meeting.

Professor Cardwell noted that there appears to be a lack of uniformity across the nomination process in terms of the kinds of letters being submitted. Any change should be to make the process better for the nominees and easier for the committee.

Professor Curley noted that any proposal changes should also be looked at for the graduate and professional award.

Vice Provost Swan agreed that with the number of nominees declining, any work to reduce the dossiers should be considered. It would also be easier to address changes in the two awards at the same time.

4. Student Evaluation Questions

Professor Hoover said that Mr. Wanderman placed the student release questions on the April 28 University Senate agenda for approval. After many comments received on the floor of the Senate and an attempt to table the item to next fall, the Senate agreed to pass the item back to SCEP for final approval.

The main arguments at the Senate were that no one who does survey research was asked to evaluate the proposed questions. Professor Hoover said that sitting next to her at the meeting was Professor Marti Gonzales, who offered her services as well as a colleague, Professor Jo Ann Miller. She then distributed the version as approved by the survey researchers.

The main changes involve reducing multiple characteristics in several questions to just one, and wording changes in questions 5 and 7.

The researchers did raise a question about the targets used in the 7-point scale, noting that it is hard to distinguish between fair and adequate. It is used here because it is also used in the other questions.

Vice Provost Swan agreed that students should have a say in what the questions are, but he thinks that review by survey researchers was helpful. He would also like testing of the questions to be done before they are put into full use. He has asked Professor Michael Rodriguez, who also teaches survey methods classes, to test them with his classes this summer. If other classes will also use them this summer, then the revised questions can be in place for fall semester. If there is not enough testing this summer, he would propose more testing fall semester, with full implementation withheld until spring semester 2006.

The Committee then discussed other options for 7-point scale targets. Professor Hoover said that she would speak with Professor Hendel about SCEP's concerns. If any changes take place for these questions, the same will happen in the faculty questions.

Q: Are any of the student release questions open-ended?

A: No since there is no way for Measurement Services to post this information on the web.

The Committee then voted unanimously to approve the questions as presented, subject to testing this summer or fall semester, with full implementation no later than spring semester 2006.

5. Probation and Suspension Rules

Ms. Van Voorhis said that when she was asked to speak on mid-term alerts, she contacted Mark Taylor, head of the College Student Affairs Administrators (CSAA), to speak on the revisions to the policy on probation and suspension.

Dr. Taylor distributed the most recent revision to the policy, noting that it was presented to the Council of Undergraduate Deans (CUD) last week. The intent of the revision was to make the policy clear and coherent for advisors and students. This led to removal of repetitive and confusing language, and some rearranging, without changing the meaning of the policy. The first paragraph applies to all colleges, while the second paragraph includes more details that only pertain to some colleges.

Dr. Shaw said that the old language lead to conflicting interpretations in two areas: if two terms needed to be consecutive and GPA provisions and student contracts.

Vice Provost Swan asked about a first-year student who is put on probation after the first semester and then does not improve spring semester. According to this policy the student would be suspended. Could the language be reworded to allow the student to recuperate during summer session?

Dr. Shaw noted that summer session is not included in the policy, as just the full terms, fall and spring, are referred to when discussing terms. However, there would not be this opportunity for a student suspended at the end of fall semester. Also, if the suspension is not effective until the start of the next term, then there are financial aid implications.

Vice Provost Swan said that the student would already be on probation at the end of spring semester, and therefore could choose whether to use summer to raise their GPA.

Dr. Taylor said that the policy language does not encourage taking summer classes, and it should not be an option for someone who would not be mathematically able to raise their GPA through summer classes. It might be best not to codify summer classes in the policy.

Vice Provost Swan stated that if it is not in the policy, people will interpret it differently.

Professor Cardwell noted that current language encourages a student to take summer courses if they are deficient in an area so that they may graduate in four years.

Dr. Shaw then read some suggested changes that she had received from Gary Engstrand.

The Committee then discussed the following changes to the policy:

- Introductory language added, stating that a student can be suspended or placed on probation for language under paragraphs one or two of the policy
- Add language to paragraph 1, stating that a student can also be suspended if he or she fails to maintain the terms of his or her contract
- The first sentence of paragraph 2 should be moved to the third sentence of paragraph 1
- Language should be clear that not all students will have a contract
- Add language that a student is suspended at the end of the next regular term; this language should be in a separate sentence

Vice Provost Swan noted that the revisions should go back to CSAA and CUD for approval and then the policy can be brought to SCEP and the Senate in the fall.

With no further discussion Professor Hoover thanked everyone for attending. Members then expressed their appreciation and thanks for Professor Hoover's leadership as SCEP chair. She was given a round of applause as the meeting was adjourned.

-- Becky Hippert