

Minutes\*

**Senate Committee on Educational Policy**  
**Wednesday, September 13, 2000**  
**1:00 – 3:00**  
**433 Johnston Hall**

Present: Wilbert Ahern (chair), Steve Fitzgerald, Charles Henderson, Gordon Hirsch, Emily Hoover, Frank Kulacki, Karen Seashore Louis, Geri Malandra, (George Green representing) Christine Maziar, Kathleen Newell, Marsha Odom, Mary Ellen Shaw, Rita Snider, Thomas Soulen, Steven Sperber, Rachel Sullivan, Craig Swan

Regrets: Richard Skaggs

Absent: Carol Miller

Guests: none

[In these minutes: issues coming from FCC (including the distance education task force, IMG, and academic appointments); certificate programs and guidelines for them; make-ups for legitimate absences; ROTC subcommittee; commercial web site service email to faculty; student academic integrity committee; repeating a course]

**1. Report on Issues From the FCC Retreat**

Professor Ahern convened the meeting at 1:05, called for a round of introductions, and then reviewed the issues that came out of the FCC retreat at the Morris campus.

-- The distance learning task force has not been fully constituted but Professor Billie Wahlstrom will serve as chair. She will join the Committee later in the semester to hear comments and suggestions from Committee members; the Committee will also have a chance to review the charge to the task force. After that, the Committee will await the report; it will, however, have a representative (yet to be identified) on the task force.

-- This Committee will likely be the principal one giving attention to Incentives for Managed Growth (IMG), although it is not clear how. The SCEP retreat discussion seemed to have a couple of messages, Professor Ahern said: that it was not a big deal that the change to IMG was made but that SCEP members want to deal with it (there is the same sentiment on FCC, he reported), and that there needs to be performance measures about the way IMG is affecting educational delivery at the University. There was an oversight committee, chaired by Professor Catherine French, that made recommendations and a report from a committee chaired by CLA Dean Steven Rosenstone that responded to the French report; once he sees both those reports, he will advise the Committee on how to structure its approach to IMG.

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Professor Louis said that this was an interesting enough policy issue that she would see if it could be built into a practicum course in her department.

-- There was concern about academic appointments a few years ago so this Committee joined in appointing a committee chaired by Professor Kent Bales; the committee made a report to the Senate with guidelines on the appointment of non-tenure-track faculty (dealing largely with the amount of instruction such appointees deliver and the conditions of their employment). An administration/faculty group chaired by Dean John Brandl then worked on the recommendations of the Bales committee. The recommendations from those two groups were synthesized into a set of guidelines by a group consisting of Professor Fred Morrison, Vice President Carol Carrier, and Vice Provost Robert Jones; those guidelines received a mixed reaction from the Faculty Consultative Committee.

SCEP will take up the recommendations at one of its next two meetings. One of the objections to the guidelines was that there was no statement of principle that most instruction should be delivered by regular faculty. Professor Morrison is working on a preamble to the guidelines, which may be the only item that is taken to the Senate for action.

Also a concern is the timeline for providing fringe benefits to non-tenure-track faculty as well as tracking the number and kind of such appointments. Professor Ahern said he would ask Professor Bales and Vice President Carrier to talk with the Committee about the guidelines.

-- One issue that jumped out of the discussion at the retreat was certificate programs, Professor Ahern recalled. The goal of the Committee at this point is to receive a report from Dr. Malandra at the end of the semester on the nature of the issue and the guidelines that exist. It was agreed that she would provide documents (or abstracts) and sample proposals and that individuals from colleges that have established certificate programs would be invited to meet with the Committee. It was also agreed that the Committee would consider both undergraduate and post-baccalaureate certificate programs, both credit and non-credit. Associate Dean Green has been asked to develop a task force on post-baccalaureate programs; this Committee should hear about the entire range of programs before deciding in what directions it wished to move. Dr. Green agreed to provide copies of national reports that have been issued on this subject as well.

Professor Ahern noted that this topic overlaps to some extent with distance learning; it also overlaps with IMG, Professor Newell observed.

-- Professor Ahern reviewed upcoming issues: on September 27 the Committee will hear about the Bush Foundation faculty development proposal from Professor W. Andrew Collins and Jan Smith (the thrust of which is instructional technology), will approve the membership of the teaching award committees, and perhaps hear about the Ibele Committee report on the basketball allegations. Later in the semester there will be a report on the implications of PeopleSoft for advising students and perhaps policy recommendations from the Academy of Distinguished Teachers to strengthen undergraduate instruction.

## **2. Policy on Make-up Examinations for Legitimate Absences**

Professor Ahern drew the attention of Committee members to the existing policy on make-up examinations. The policy provides that students are not to be penalized for absence due to unavoidable or legitimate circumstances, which include everything from family emergencies to jury duty to military service to participation in athletics or other group activities sponsored by the University, and it specifically provides that make-ups for major examinations must be provided in the event of a legitimate absence. In the case of other work, special arrangements are at the instructor's discretion. Questions arose last year about (1) should a student be given the opportunity to make up a quiz (as opposed to a major exam) and (2) what constitutes a "University-sponsored" event.

The Committee discussed whether the instructor discretion permitted for work other than major exams could mean a student is put at a disadvantage. The Committee generally was of the view that the opening statement of the policy ("Students should not be penalized for absence due to unavoidable or legitimate circumstances") controlled the remainder of the policy, even though some were unclear about that in the earlier discussions.

Dr. Swan said that "unavoidable or legitimate" is ambiguous. Professor Ahern said that in cases of disagreement about what is unavoidable or legitimate there are grievance procedures; he expressed the hope that most faculty would be reasonable and that grievances would only arise in rare cases. Ms. Shaw said that she doubted most students were aware of this language, and that if they were there might be more grievances. Many times students are penalized for legitimate absences.

Ms. Shaw also pointed out that the policy did not address how much classroom instruction a student could miss and still have a meaningful educational experience and pass the course. Some instructors have classroom activities that are part of instruction; how much can be excused?

What does it mean to say an activity is sponsored by the University, Dr. Swan inquired? There is no definition of University-sponsored events, he told Professor Ahern. Some activities are important but they should probably not get a student excused from class. (For example, the freshman convocation.) This is open to abuse, Professor Ahern agreed, but the faculty must be fair-minded in dealing with students. Professor Kulacki suggested weaving that phrase into the policy. Professor Newell added that students must also be expected to take responsibility for their activities.

Following additional discussion, it was agreed that Professor Ahern would develop language that would either amend the policy (for Senate action) or that would constitute an interpretation (for Senate information). It was also agreed that the policy should be more widely publicized; it should be distributed to advisors and included in the class schedule.

What about participation in a national presentation on undergraduate research, Professor Hirsch asked? Or an honors presentation? The Committee did not agree on whether such activities should warrant make-up work for a student. Professor Louis said the Committee would not want the requirements of one faculty member clashing with the requirements of another; she pointed out that there will be cases in dispute because "there are unreasonable students and unreasonable faculty." Professor Kulacki argued for striking a middle ground; with 3500 regular faculty and a lot more adjuncts, there are probably several hundred incidents of student absences each year. The idea is that faculty and students will do what is right; it is impossible to write conclusive language in a policy.

### **3. ROTC Subcommittee**

Professor Ahern next asked the Committee to consider the draft language on the charge to and membership of the ROTC subcommittee. The first question is whether this is a SCEP issue or an ACEP (ASSEMBLY Committee on Educational Policy) issue, because while there is an ROTC program at the Duluth campus, it has indicated it operates effectively without Senate involvement and wishes to continue to do so. Committee members surmised that neither the Morris nor the Crookston campus are likely to establish ROTC programs. The only ROTC program subject to oversight by the Subcommittee is thus the one on the Twin Cities campus.

The Committee voted unanimously that the subcommittee should fall under the purview of ACEP. It also voted unanimously to approve the appointment of a new member of the subcommittee to replace Professor Laura Koch.

### **4. Commercial Web Site Service**

Professor Ahern next noted the exchange of emails that had been duplicated for the Committee concerning the offer to a number of faculty from a commercial web site preparation company; the service would be free to faculty but would include a nominal charge (\$7) to each student in a class. One faculty member had received the email offer from the company and forwarded it to him asking if SCEP had looked at the matter. It is not clear, he said, that this is something that should be the subject of policy.

Dr. Swan noted in one of the emails that there was no violation of University policy; the emails were not sent from a University email address (unlike an earlier incident). He told the Committee that because things change so quickly in technology, it was not clear to him how to write policy. Several Committee members recalled having received this or similar emails; this is a variety of junk email.

Professor Ahern said that one part of the offer for web site service, grade posting, was probably illegal under Minnesota law. Dr. Swan agreed and observed that the situation would be different if the University had some sort of contractual arrangement for the service. Nor is there any issue, Professor Green said, if he purchased software to help him with his grades. It may be that the vendor did not think through this part of the offer, and in any event the Committee is not in the position to offer legal advice to faculty.

Some Committee members said they thought it unacceptable to impose additional charges on students in this way.

Professor Ahern concluded that there were no policy implications for the Committee to consider. He added that with respect to support available to faculty, he was struck by the challenge of keeping faculty aware of what the University offers. That is the nature of the situation; there is much going on. He reported that there had been a presentation to the Board of Regents on instructional technology and how the University is trying to bring tools to both students and faculty. Another issue is teaching faculty how to use the tools available, which is part of the proposal to the Bush Foundation.

## **5. Student Academic Integrity Committee**

The Committee next reviewed the draft bylaw proposal creating a Senate Committee on Student Academic Integrity, implementing the call of the Clayton Committee for appointment of an advisory committee for the to-be-created Office of Student Academic Integrity.

After reviewing and deliberating the draft language, the Committee decided it would recommend to the Senate Consultative Committee that the new committee include faculty from both Morris and Crookston and that students from all three campuses be appointed. In addition, it agreed that review of individual cases should be performed by campus committees, not this one. [Note: the Senate Consultative Committee subsequently also added a student from the Duluth campus.]

Professor Odom said it was her understanding that the new Office of Student Academic Integrity would be charged, *inter alia*, to assist the coordinate campuses. Dr. Swan said it would be. On a day-to-day basis, its activities would mostly be focused on the Twin Cities campus but that it should advise the coordinate campuses and coordinate its activities with them. As the coordinate campuses develop their own case-review groups and their own academic integrity officer, discussions can go back and forth between the campus and University-wide committees, Dr. Green suggested.

In response to a question from Professor Odom, Dr. Swan said that the Office of the Executive Vice President hopes to have a director of the Office of Student Academic Integrity appointed very soon. He added that there has been no formal written reaction to the action of the Senate in approving the report of the Clayton Committee in principle but there have instead been a series of discussions and agreements along the way.

One cultural issue that must be addressed, Professor Ahern said, is this: faculty have to understand that cheating is not a private matter between the faculty and the student. Allegations of cheating need to be reported to the Student Academic Integrity Office.

## **6. Course Repeats**

Ms. Shaw raised the issue of course repeats. The new policy approved by the Senate permits a student to repeat a course once, with the grade earned the second time the one that counts in the GPA. The earlier policy allowed a student to repeat a course as often as he or she wished. What about the student who has taken a course more than once, under the earlier policy; does that student have one more chance under the new policy?

The Committee agreed that with the change in policy, a student would have one more opportunity to take a course. It was agreed that an interpretation of the policy should be prepared and, once approved by the Committee, presented to the Senate for information.

Professor Ahern adjourned the meeting at 3:00.

-- Gary Engstrand