

Minutes*

Senate Committee on Educational Policy
Wednesday, April 7, 2004
1:00 – 3:00
238A Morrill Hall

Present: Emily Hoover (chair), Wilbert Ahern, Roxanne Beauclair, Victor Bloomfield, Vernon Cardwell, Shawn Curley, Gretchen Haas, Frank Kulacki, Scott LeBlanc, Marsha Odom, Martin Sampson, Karen Seashore, Mary Ellen Shaw, Mary Sue Simmons, Craig Swan, Douglas Wangenstein, Joel Weinsheimer

Absent: Dale Branton, Michael Edlavitch, Geoffrey Meisner

Guests: Laurel Hirt (Career and Community Learning); Professor Ken Heller (chair, ad hoc Subcommittee on Three Semesters); Tina Falkner (Office of the Registrar)

[In these minutes: (1) Community Engagement Scholars Program; (2) interim report from the three-semester subcommittee; (3) residency requirement; (4) 5xxx courses]

1. Community Engagement Scholars Program

Professor Hoover convened the meeting at 1:00 and welcomed Laurel Hirt to discuss the Community Engagement Scholars Program, a topic the Committee discussed earlier in the semester with Ms. Hirt.

Ms. Hirt reported that she had been asked by this Committee about the connection between the Program and the leadership minor and if there was duplication. She said she met with Ms. Nobbe, responsible for the leadership minor, and learned that there is not duplication but that this Program reinforces the minor. The Council of Undergraduate Deans had questions about the Program, which were answered, so the Council voted to support the Program and forwarded it to this Committee for action.

Committee members asked a number of questions; Ms. Hirt clarified a number of points.

-- Campus community service may be considered.

-- The advisory committee will have to deal with the issue of retroactivity (for current students, although probably not students who will graduate this spring). In the future, information about the program can be included in regular materials from the University. They will be developed once the program is approved, for distribution to the colleges and other offices.

-- The mechanism for appointing the advisory committee has not been established; the Council of Undergraduate Deans would be an appropriate appointing body.

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- Funding has been provided by reallocated dollars in her office; grant funds may also be available.
- The term community engagement is broader than the term service learning, which has a certain meaning that is recognized nationally; service learning encourages civic learning but may have other foci. Civic engagement, as the term is used on campus, has a broader meaning than service learning. These various terms are confusing; it would be helpful for faculty and advisors who want to talk to students about them if there were definitions of civic engagement, community engagement, service learning, and so on. There is a CIC definition of civic engagement that includes learning activities, research, and outreach, that could be provided. It would also help so that someone offering a service learning course knew what to include.
- There was talk at one point in CLE about establishing a requirement for study abroad or service learning; has that continued? They wanted this Program to be available to any student, but there are concerns among community organizations about their ability to manage a large number of students, and there is the danger that service learning would become a negative experience--if students do not want to be there, they could do more harm than good in the organizations.
- They have put together a list of courses that satisfy Program requirements; they have a set of criteria that a course must meet.

The Committee voted unanimously to endorse the Community Engagement Scholars Program. Professor Hoover thanked Ms. Hirt for her presentation and work.

2. Report from the ad hoc Subcommittee on Three Semesters

Professor Hoover welcomed next Professor Heller to provide an interim report from the ad hoc subcommittee exploring the possibility of offering three full semesters of instruction.

Professor Heller noted that he was asked to chair a small group to look at the possibility of a year-round academic calendar. There is a lot of impetus for such calendars around the country. The University of California and the California State University System are moving toward a year-round calendar; the subcommittee has looked at the studies the California systems prepared. The University of Washington is considering something akin to year-round calendars. The issue is "in the air." The studies done elsewhere seem to be a fairly complete itemization of the pros and cons; their subcommittee has tried to look at advantages and disadvantages for the University of Minnesota. (Note: although the subcommittee was charged to consider a change only for the Twin Cities campus, any major changes would also clearly have ramifications for the other campuses.)

In some ways the University is already down the road towards a year-round calendar. It has three terms of comparable length; the summer term can be 13 weeks, which is not far off the 14/15-week semesters of the regular academic year. The question is what a change would buy for the University. It is not in any crisis, unlike the California schools, which face a flood of students but which do not want to build new campuses). Minnesota is not under pressure.

The advantages of a year-round calendar are several. It would ease the classroom crunch--but if the classes currently offered are simply spread over three terms, there would have to be changes in faculty and student behavior and students would need to go to school all year. A potential advantage for students is that they could better integrate work into their academic pursuits by taking 10 credits each for three semesters. Study abroad could be more flexible; students would not have to do it in the summer. If, alternatively, there were a full three semesters with the regular class density, there would be additional costs; the University would need about 30% more faculty (which would not necessarily be bad for research or outreach), but that is likely not a cost the state will bear.

The subcommittee has tentatively concluded that a year-round calendar at Minnesota may happen, or it may not, and that if it does it should be market-driven. If the students want it, courses should be available and the third semester should grow at a reasonable rate. The subcommittee decided that its job should be to identify barriers to that growth. Some units already offer fairly full summer programs (Education and Human Development, Carlson School of Management).

There are attitudinal barriers to the growth of summer programs. It is difficult to understand their financing, Professor Heller commented, but for the most part it is funded the same way as the regular program and administered by the college. But some colleges do not do it the same way; they limit faculty salaries to discourage teaching, for example. To eliminate that barrier, there should be no distinction in faculty salaries (this is apart from whether one has approval to teach something in the summer, which has more to do with coordination in the department and college). Summer courses have different duration, which they believe is good and should be replicated during fall and spring semesters. There is nothing in stone that says the best way to take a course is in a semester length. Some universities are offering divided courses. In the current computerized age, there is no reason every course must be a semester long; varying length already exists in the summer and it should not be discarded.

Professor Sampson asked if any institutions admit students with the understanding that they will attend in the spring and summer, for example? They do not, Professor Heller said, although California is providing incentives for attending in the summer.

Another barrier at the University is that summer tuition is higher than regular-year tuition. Why is that? In part it is banding; students cannot take in excess of 13 credits during the summer to get the extra credits for free. If the University wants to encourage students to attend in the summer, it needs to bring tuition into line or allow students to attend for three semesters with a lighter load--the latter would require changing the tuition band. This might encourage students to graduate in four years without a financial penalty for attending during the summer.

Professor Curley said that the School of Management has summer courses but the offering is much reduced. Most faculty have 9-month appointments, so summer teaching is overload, which many faculty are not interested in. Some programs could offer more courses because there is student interest, but the funds and faculty are not available.

They have no one proposal for change, Professor Heller related. In California, one can choose which 9 months one will be in residence (within the limits of the program). A number of units at the University offer that option. It is only tradition that drives the particular 9 months that most faculty

are here; it is nowhere written that the 9 months cannot be winter and summer. The standard schedule is woven into the University so they are not advocating anyone do anything RAPIDLY, and in fact they are not advocating anything except that the University remove barriers to the growth of summer instruction and see what happens. If there is pressure from students and a need for more classes, the University will either have to reallocate money (so there would be no cost to the classes) or there may be a need for more classes. If there is no student pressure, the University would not offer more classes. Customer pressure might vary, Professor Curley observed, and a unit might not be able to respond to it (e.g., there are not enough students to offer a course in a cost-effective way).

In terms of overload, Professor Heller said, some units do not want to encourage teaching in three semesters because this is a research university and they want faculty to obtain external research funds for those two additional months in order to help the research mission. Departments need to work this out.

Is the existing summer curriculum underused, Dr. Simmons asked? If the financial barrier were removed, she said, she believed there would be a considerable expression of student interest. Right now students cannot get financial aid for summer school. But if the classes that are offered are already full, there would be nothing for students to take. Professor Heller said he did not know. Summer courses tend to be smaller, he noted, so either they are too small or the University is exploiting students the other two semesters. And there is a different "right size" for different classes.

Dr. Swan said he thought summer session enrollments were trending down. Professor Heller said they are not, they are going up.

What has been learned from inloading, which was talked about in the past, Professor Ahern asked? Professor Heller said he did not know, although he remembered that it happened. There were severe limits on faculty salaries so inloading meant a financial burden for some departments. There has not been a big flood of inloading because of the disincentives to faculty and departments. The colleges can put caps on summer salaries or not, and that determines whether the college will get regular faculty to teach summer courses.

It is hard to say what will happen, Professor Heller said. If not for the financial disincentives, there might be slightly more faculty who want to teach in the summer, and willingness to do so could vary with research (summer teaching might give faculty more flexibility in when they do research). If there is no financial disincentive for students (they could receive Pell grants, tuition levels are equitable), one can imagine there would be more students who want to take more courses, although there probably would not be a flood of them. Professor Heller said he suspects that over time, the two-semester mentality of faculty and students would break down; nothing else in society makes that distinction.

What about summer jobs, Dr. Swan asked? A lot of students have year-round jobs, Professor Heller said; there are also winter jobs and other seasonal jobs that are not all in the summer.

Dr. Simmons said that she works with adult learners, people who are full-time employees, who like summer session because they have a permanent exception from the 13-credit rule and they want to make progress in the summer. There is a 3-term year, she agreed, but students cannot get what they want in the summer because there is not the rich array of courses offered the other two semesters.

The same is true for part-time MBA students, Professor Curley added. Because of the salary disincentive for faculty, a lot of summer instructors are not regular faculty and they tend to teach introductory courses, Professor Heller said. The more sophisticated courses need regular faculty, so it would help to eliminate the financial disincentive.

Year-round 3-4-week modules perked up his interest, Mr. LeBlanc commented. He said he would like to see Committee discussion of this topic and whether it could encourage such modules. He said he was cautious about summer session. It would be very difficult to manage a policy that required taking 26 credits over a year, rather than 13 per semester; students would naturally put off taking some credits and could end the year with less than the 26. And what would the student community be like if only 2/3 of the students were on campus at any one time? How would that affect the campus? If one decided to take 10 credits per semester and keep a job, would one still be considered a full-time student, Ms. Beauclair asked? Would financial aid cover the entire academic year? Or must one pick two semesters? It would not cover the entire year, Dr. Swan said. That is a barrier the U.S. Senate is taking up, Professor Heller said. If the Committee wants to go in this direction, it should ask the University's officers to support changes in state and federal student aid rules. There are a lot of details, however, which is why the subcommittee is not advocating doing anything rapidly.

Is there any indication of a rising demand for action, Professor Kulacki inquired? Is there a compelling economic case? Are there any data? The good thing is that there is NO rising demand in Minnesota, Professor Heller responded, as there is in California and elsewhere. The demographics of the state do not appear to suggest that the University will be flooded with students. Bad economic times means more students want to attend college, and the flagship campus will always have pressure to admit more students than it can handle. If the change is to happen, it should be driven by demand. Professor Curley commented that it is difficult to tell if demand is actually low or if it is low because of the barriers that exist.

Professor Sampson said he was impressed by the thoughtfulness of the subcommittee's work. If the University moves incrementally in the way Professor Heller has suggested, there will be a period of discomfort. Things will have to be done in pairs or triples, such as eliminating both the salary disincentive and the tuition disincentive. Professor Heller agreed and said the University should remove barriers where it can (it cannot control financial aid rules but it can deal with tuition and faculty salaries).

What are the implications for the Graduate School, Professor Cardwell asked? As a Tier 1 institution, the University must look at what these kinds of changes will do to graduate education and research. A related question, Dean Bloomfield added, is about the importance of freeing faculty time to do research. The University of California is also a Research I institution; he wondered how they are dealing with this issue. With respect to financial aid, he said he imagined that students would pick two semesters to go to school rather than three with a lighter load. Professor Heller said that was not necessarily true; the administration could put pressure on the U.S. Senate to change the rules.

Most graduate programs are year-round, Professor Heller said, and graduate students are on campus anyway. But there are collateral implications. For example, for TAs, three semesters would provide more flexibility with graduate student support, and a department could have TAs in the summer and allow them to do research full time in the winter. Students take courses in the summer to

get through, Professor Kulacki said, but the cost per Student Credit Hour is higher for 8xxx courses. They are, Professor Heller agreed, but they do not all cost the same. Professor Kulacki suggested developing a model; the economics would be compelling.

Would there be enough dorm space, with summer camps and the like, Mr. LeBlanc asked? Increased summer classes would affect those programs, Professor Heller said, but one must ask what the University's mission is: to have camps or to allow students to graduate? Some dorms are closed; there is an accounting question involved: would it cost anything to use them? If the University has a big capital investment, the most efficient use of it is to use it; leaving dorms vacant is very uneconomical.

Those are their preliminary thoughts, Professor Heller concluded; they have not written their report and would welcome feedback. He urged Committee members to read the California and Washington reports--and in particular Washington, which is very like Minnesota. The links for the reports are

<http://www.washington.edu/reports/summer>
<http://www.ucop.edu/planning/yearroundreport2000.pdf>,
http://www.csulb.edu/~senate/yr-rndintrm3_rev-3.html

Professor Hoover thanked Professor Heller for his report.

3. Residency Requirement

The Committee turned next to a proposed Interpretation of the residency requirements; at present there are two different Senate policies that do not quite align with each other. The two policies are:

(Adopted 1999):

In order to complete a degree at the University, a student must take a minimum of 30 semester credits offered through the University, including 24 credits taken after admission to the major or program and taken from the college offering the major or program.

(Adopted 2001):

(1) To be eligible for a University of Minnesota undergraduate degree, a student must present at least 30 semester credits awarded by the University of Minnesota.

(2) These 30 credits must include at least 24 credits taken after declaration of or admission to the student's major or program, and these 24 credits must be taken from the college (in the case of the Twin Cities Campus) or campus (in the case of Morris and Crookston) offering the major or program. It is up to the college or campus to decide if "declaration of" or "admission to" is the appropriate description of how a student's major is determined.

(3) Of the last 30 credits earned prior to the award of a University degree, at least 15 credits must be awarded by the University of Minnesota.

A student's college or campus may waive the requirements in sections 2 and 3 above, but not section 1.

Dr. Swan framed the three issues. First, independent of the Twin Cities campus, how many credits should a student take to receive a University degree? 90? 5? The policy addresses that question; it requires 30. Second, If a minimum number is required for a University degree (the University's policy is pretty standard), must they be obtained at a particular point in the student's studies? May they be obtained after the major course requirements have been satisfied elsewhere? Third, what about students who transfer at the last minute (e.g., CLA students transferring to CBS but who have taken all their biology while a CLA student)? This is less of a problem with uniform undergraduate tuition.

If a student takes the last 30 credits at the University but has taken the major courses elsewhere, the department still has to approve the credits transferred, Professor Ahern pointed out. Would they permit a UMM history graduate who never took a history course at Morris, Dr. Swan asked? Professor Ahern said they would not, and the policy addresses that issue. It does not require courses in the major, Dr. Swan observed, only in the college. Professor Sampson said that a biology degree should require University course credits and it should not matter when one declares a major.

Professor Hoover said she agreed with the 30-credit requirement. The question is where must the next 24 credits be taken. Professor Cardwell said he thought the policy required 24 credits in the major after transfer, but the policy only says they must be within the college. There are a lot of intrinsic things in each college that affect a student; he questioned whether a program should recognize someone as a graduate who has not taken courses in it. Does a graduate need simply to satisfy the 30-credit requirement or must the student take 24 courses within the major at the University?

Dean Bloomfield said that when there were differential undergraduate tuition rates by college there was concern about taking CBS courses while registered in CLA. With IMG, it does not cost the student but CLA collects 25% of the tuition for students taking CBS courses. And colleges are also judged by the number of majors they have. This sounds like holding students hostage to arbitrary University rules, Dr. Swan said. They are in a tight fiscal environment, Dean Bloomfield said, and colleges giving up 25% of the tuition revenue could use that money to hire faculty. The money helps support student services, Dr. Swan said, and the degree is from the University, not a college.

Dr. Shaw suggested the policy could require 24 credits after declaration of the major and that some must be in the major, and allow for exceptions. Mr. LeBlanc said there should be a requirement that the last 20-odd credits should be in the college the student graduates from. Without that there will be difficulty in advising, but there could be an allowance for petitions. Right now departments can decide, Professor Ahern said; if the policy required 24 credits in the major, departments would have no discretion. Colleges can waive provisions (2) and (3) in the 2001 policy, Dr. Swan observed. Professor Ahern said the policy should be clear about whether the 24 credits are expected in the major. Professor Curley said it does not make sense from a student point of view to require 24 credits after declaration of the major. Is the policy not specific enough in terms of requiring courses in the major? Dr. Swan said he has not worked out his own views. Should there be a presumption that some portion of the major work should be taken at the University? That is less of a problem when there is no differential tuition rates.

Professor Weinsheimer said he was trying to remember what residency meant a number of years ago. It meant having student life before graduation, and he said he believed the University should stick with that principle; he is nervous seeing the definition of residency stretched more and more. Departments have a lot of control over who is a major student, with a number of transfer courses allowed. He said there are more and more hoops being imposed on students as the definition of residency becomes more narrow.

What rationale was there for students to change from CLA to CBS at the last minute and still obtain a biology degree, Professor Cardwell asked? As faculty, they have a responsibility to ask "is that student one of ours?" The University gives the degree but he or she "is our student." He said he would retain the 30-credit requirement and would require 24 credits in the college, not the major. Some programs go across colleges; there needs to be flexibility.

Professor Hoover suggested appointment of a small subcommittee to work on the language; Professors Cardwell and Sampson and Dr. Swan agreed to serve. Professor Hoover asked for a report back in the fall. Professor Ahern pointed out that there is no moment at which one must declare a major at Morris--it can be the junior or senior year--so language will have to cover that practice. Dr. Swan agreed to take the lead on organizing the subcommittee.

For the meanwhile, the Committee voted unanimously to forward to the Senate an interpretation of the two existing policies providing that the 2001 language controlled and that the 1999 language would be deleted from the Senate website.

4. 5xxx Courses

The Committee returned to the issue of undergraduate students in 5xxx courses. Professor Hoover reported that several people had expressed concern about the draft motion that had been circulated. In particular, there was concern that the Provost would reclassify courses from 5xxx to 4xxx if they had more than 25% undergraduates enrolled. Instead, she suggested that the Committee ask the Provost to request that deans, curriculum committees, and departments look at the appropriate use of 5xxx courses. There is a lot of anecdotal information about why undergraduates are in 5xxx courses, but the Committee should not identify a specific percentage that would lead to automatic reclassification of courses.

Dr. Swan said the Provost intends to share data and will suggest 25% as a guideline. Professor Curley said he did not want to see the Committee weaken the position it took at the last meeting. Dr. Swan said the Committee might end up in the stronger position but he will have more information in the fall for the Committee to review. The revised proposal postpones action but does not preclude it. Professor Sampson said the Committee should also acknowledge that its proposal does not address the dilution-of-graduate-education issue and that it should call for use of course numbers as they are intended.

Dean Bloomfield inquired why the Committee would delete from its draft motion the statement that "5xxx courses are to be predominantly graduate courses, so any 5xxx course which has more than 25% undergraduates is not composed 'predominantly' of graduate students." Professor Cardwell agreed with Dean Bloomfield; 5xxx courses are intended to be graduate and too many undergraduates in them affects the quality of education.

Professor Sampson pointed out that with the change to semesters there was also recognition that 4xxx courses can carry graduate credit if taught by a member of the graduate faculty. And if the program approves, Dean Bloomfield added. But the Committee's proposal still does not address the dilution issue, Professor Sampson repeated.

Professor Weinsheimer said he supported a division between clienteles and a numbering change would not accomplish that. He said he would like to see central administrative and Graduate School action that would move to separate the two groups. He said he wants undergraduates out of graduate courses and vice-versa so that students can be addressed at the level they are at. Doing this would take more effort and thought; he said the Committee will need to think about what would happen if 5xxx courses are taken out of the undergraduate level, unless it recommends simply renumbering them. This needs more study, not just a change in numbers.

As an outsider, Professor Ahern commented, he recalled the role of graduate assistants and said that Dr. Swan has the right idea. It makes sense to shift some courses to the 4xxx level. He said he took some 4xxx-equivalent courses as a graduate student, but he KNEW they were undergraduate courses, which is different from taking a course one EXPECTS to be a graduate course.

Professor Cardwell concurred with Professor Weinsheimer's comments. Before semesters, courses were dual-listed and an instructor had to document for the Graduate School the difference in requirements for undergraduates and graduates in the course. Initially he thought the 4xxx courses would fill that function but there have been two problems. First, the Graduate School does not accept 4xxx courses not listed in the bulletin so they have no visibility (Dean Bloomfield disagreed) and it is not clear whether a course is graduate or undergraduate. If there were dual listing, with courses listed in the Graduate School bulletin, with a clear requirement of more work for graduate students, that would help. With only one listing, it is difficult to distinguish.

Dean Bloomfield said he agreed with Dr. Swan that the Committee should receive information from the deans and departments. He said it would be premature to prohibit all undergraduates in 5xxx courses without the consent of the instructor, but it would not be to require the consent of the instructor for freshmen and sophomores. He reported that 5xxx courses are treated as undergraduate by the new computer system, but he would argue that ultimately they should be listed as graduate courses. It is an opportune time to make a system change that would not allow freshmen and sophomores to register in 5xxx courses without the consent of the instructor. Why allow it at all, Professor Sampson asked? Dr. Swan said that he suspected a few egregious examples would eliminate most of the problem.

Professor Hoover said she would write to the Provost expressing the view of the Committee. She also said she would redraft the statement, and then adjourned the meeting at 3:05.

-- Gary Engstrand