

Minutes*

Senate Committee on Educational Policy
Wednesday, October 4, 2006
1:30 – 3:30
238A Morrill Hall

Present: Richard McCormick (chair), Maureen Cisneros, (George Green for) Gail Dubrow, April Knutson, James Leger, Claudia Neuhauser, Peh Ng, Paul Siliciano, Donna Spannaus-Martin, Joel Weinsheimer

Absent: William Bart, Vernon Cardwell, Craig Swan, Cathrine Wambach, Douglas Wangenstein

Guests: Associate Vice President Victor Bloomfield; Tina Falkner (Office of the Registrar); Tom Dohm (Measurement Services Center)

Other: none

[In these minutes: (1) Office of Public Engagement; (2) delivery of exam forms to Measurement Services & change in Classroom Expectations Guidelines; (3) exams for 7-week courses; (4) strategic positioning task force recommendations]

1. Office of Public Engagement

Professor McCormick called the meeting to order at 1:35 and welcomed Associate Vice President Bloomfield to discuss the Office of Public Engagement.

Dr. Bloomfield said that he had two purposes in joining the Committee. First, to inform the Committee about the Office of Public Engagement and its work to further the University's priorities, and second, to urge the Committee, as the Committee on Educational Policy, to pay attention to public engagement aspects of and opportunities in the University's educational efforts. He distributed two handouts, one a brochure describing the office and the second a two-page summary report to the Committee about his office and what it is doing.

Dr. Bloomfield noted that the University's mission statement includes this language: "extend, apply, and exchange knowledge between the University and society by applying scholarly expertise to community problems, by helping organizations and individuals respond to their changing environments, and by making the knowledge and resources created and preserved at the University accessible to the citizens of the state, the nation, and the world." The Office of Public Engagement serves as an advocate for public engagement in order to support the mission and the goal of becoming one of the world's preeminent public research universities.

The Office for Public Engagement grew out of the Council on Public Engagement (created in 2002 and which still exists), which works with his office; the Council (COPE) grew out of a task force appointed by then-Provost Bruininks in 2000. Dr. Bloomfield reviewed the activities of his office

* These minutes reflect discussion and debate at a meeting of a committee of the University of Minnesota Senate; none of the comments, conclusions, or actions reported in these minutes represents the views of, nor are they binding on, the Senate, the Administration, or the Board of Regents.

(working with COPE and the student organization SCOPE to facilitate and coordinate public engagement activities, working with the senior officers to assure public engagement is recognized in college compacts, developing mechanisms to communicate with internal and external constituencies, developing contacts and partnerships with external organizations, facilitating intellectual discourse on public scholarship through conferences, forums, etc., promoting public engagement skills among University community members, encouraging public engagement activities in colleges, working with faculty governance committees to promote engaged initiatives, and so on). COPE has about 80 members from across the University and consists of both staff and faculty representing various groups. Dr. Bloomfield noted the 20+ offices and programs, both inside and outwith the University, that are affiliated with the Office of Public Engagement. He commented that the more he learns about the University and the more he talks with people, the more groups he learns about that should be added to the list.

The Office of Public Engagement relies on the UM/CIC/NASULGC¹ definition of public engagement: "the partnership of university knowledge and resources with those of the public and private sectors" to accomplish a number of things: "enrich scholarship, research, and creative activity; enhance curriculum, teaching and learning; prepared educated and engaged citizens, strengthen democratic values and civic responsibility; address critical societal issues; and contribute to the public good." This is not a one-way street, Dr. Bloomfield said; the concept of public engagement assumes that the publics who work with the University—companies, communities, and other external groups—have expertise to bring to the table as well. The ethos of public engagement is that in teaching and research the University takes advantage of that expertise as well as vice-versa.

Two of the items on that list (prepare educated and engaged citizens, and strengthen democratic values and civic responsibility) are ones that universities are sometimes reluctant to talk about, although they clearly seek to achieve them. They are specially important for this Committee because they are (or should be) a significant part of the liberal education requirements, whether implicitly or explicitly.

His office is system-wide and was created in 2005 and reports to Senior Vice President for System Administration Robert Jones. He has a 60%-time appointment and is assisted by one full-time staff member and a quarter-time student communications intern. Several offices report to him as a result of a reorganization by Senior Vice President Jones; they include: Business and Community Economic Development; Center for Transportation Studies; Center for Urban and Regional Affairs; Children, Youth, and Family Consortium; and Metropolitan Studies Consortium. Many of them are well-established, Dr. Bloomfield said; his role is to try to connect them better. His office also works closely with Associate Vice President Maruyama and the P-16 Partnership and urban initiatives as well as Regional Sustainable Development Partnerships. The Office for Public Engagement, for example, has an "urban agenda" jointly with Dr. Maruyama.

External relationships are both state and national, and include Campus Compact, Higher Education Consortium for Urban Affairs, Science Museum of Minnesota, Citizens League, Wingspread Conference, and CIC and NASULGC public engagement committees.

The Council on Public Engagement also has a number of committees that include representatives from all significant groups at the University that interact with the public. Dr. Bloomfield reviewed the work of the various committees and some of the current activities of his office. The three decision-

¹ National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges

making committees are program evaluation (propose/evaluate forums, speakers, and other events), seed grant (projects to be sponsored with funding), and outstanding community service awards (select the award winners, for the award established by President Bruininks several years ago).

Among the current activities of his office are Public Engagement Day (April 11, 2007), which will bring together a number of activities that have in the past been fragmented. They are also working on developing a database with GIS capability, so that in addition to knowing WHAT the University is doing in public engagement, it will also know WHERE it is doing those things—the latter of which should help the President inform constituents about work done in their districts, and help keep units and individuals from stumbling over one another (e.g., three different faculty members or departments want to do work with one particular elementary school) as well as encourage collaboration when there are several activities in the same geographic area. There will be regular communications about public engagement through University Relations outlets (such as BRIEF) and portals to various audiences, and so on. Dr. Bloomfield said he also has a public engagement blog, which can be found at <http://blog.lib.umn.edu/victor/publicengagement/>.

In terms of connections with this Committee, Dr. Bloomfield made several points. Engaged teaching, such as service learning and multi/interdisciplinary teaching focused on societal issues, can enrich teaching and allow students to see the real world: practice vivifies teaching. The lower limit estimate of service learning activities is that there are 75 courses in 13 colleges involving about 60 faculty and 2000 students. There is a high concordance between service-learning outcomes and life-long learning and citizenship goals (established by the Committee on Enhanced Student Learning) as well as student outcomes (established by the Office of Student Affairs). There are connections between public engagement and liberal education themes (multiculturalism, citizenship and public ethics, and international perspectives).

Two questions in particular that this Committee might look at are, first, whether there should be University certification of service learning and a transcript notation, and second, whether public engagement should be a part of the research-ethics training for graduate students. Dr. Bloomfield said that he and Dean Dubrow of the Graduate School have talked about the second and it is a work in progress; the idea is to inform students how to do publicly-engaged research and not get in trouble.

Professor Neuhauser said that all these activities seemed like a lot for a small office. Dr. Bloomfield agreed but said that much of it is carried out by volunteer labor (especially through COPE). His function is to network and make connections, be a cheerleader, raise consciousness, and obtain recognition for people who work in public engagement. Professor Neuhauser also noted that NSF has a broad-impact requirement for large grants; does his office help with meeting that requirement? Often those activities are not funded, however; could the seed grant program help? Dr. Bloomfield said that they could, although no one has asked for a seed grant for that purpose. Professor Leger followed up on Professor Neuhauser's first question: does his office do anything University-wide so faculty are aware of things like the NSF requirements for outreach and public engagement? Dr. Bloomfield said that public engagement will appear in department 7.12 statements as well as Section 7.11 (establishing University-wide criteria for promotion from assistant to associate professor with tenure). In addition, Vice Provost Carney has agreed to chair the faculty/staff awards committee.

Dr. Bloomfield said, in response to a query from Professor McCormick, that there are people working on the state sesquicentennial.

Professor Weinsheimer recalled that about ten years ago or so there was talk about making service learning or study abroad a liberal education requirement. Has he thought about that or is that a dead issue? The number of students who would be involved make it a daunting proposal, Dr. Bloomfield said; it is not clear that organizations around the Twin Cities could absorb thousands of students who want to engage in service learning. There are ways to put public engagement into courses consistent with liberal education requirements, and in ways that benefit the community, but that do not require full service-learning coursework. The honors task force made a number of recommendations on these issues, Professor McCormick said, and while it is not clear they will be requirements for an honors degree, there are universities that do make them requirements. As an educational issue, service learning and public engagement enhance learning and enthusiasm and provides a positive experience—for both students and faculty. To the extent the role of this Committee is to improve the educational experience, this is one way to do it.

Dr. Knutson said she was delighted to see a University commitment to public engagement. It was part of Women's Studies when it began; a number of courses studied the legislative process and lobbied for laws beneficial to women. She suggested that Dr. Bloomfield might want to tap into that history of engagement with the community and with legislators. Dr. Bloomfield said he has talked with those who were involved and to a considerable extent that activity continues.

Professor Ng asked if the database would extend to the point that people can report on what they have done and with what results. Dr. Bloomfield said that was a good idea and reported that Portland State has the best public engagement website that he has been able to find. They have a database that uses Google maps: one can run a mouse over a map of Portland and see bubbles where some public engagement activity is taking place, and if one clicks on the bubble, text appears and informs the reader what Portland State is doing in that location. These databases are difficult to set up, he said, although a lot of departments want it. He said he is trying to coordinate the effort to establish it; a major issue will be maintaining it. The more useful it is, the better known it will be, he observed. Part of the idea of the database, Professor McCormick said, is to permit the University to take credit for what it is doing, and results are a logical part of reporting what is going on.

Professor McCormick thanked Dr. Bloomfield for making his report and said that this is an important activity, one that helps position the University as a unique resource in the state.

2. Classroom Expectations Guidelines Change (Exam Answer Sheets)

Professor McCormick now welcomed Dr. Dohm from the Office of Measurement Services to the meeting to introduce a small change in the Classroom Expectations Guidelines, to wit:

Instructors are responsible for submitting examination [answer sheets] for scoring by the Office of Measurement Services (OMS) in a secure manner. Specifically, instructors or their designate (departmental office employee or teaching assistant) must submit exams personally or via campus courier to the OMS office, 103 U Stores Building, or to a drop location in 301 Eddy Hall or 130 Coffey Hall. [Do not use campus mail.] (The language in brackets was suggested by the Committee during discussion with Dr. Dohm, suggestions which he accepted.)

Dr. Dohm explained that OMS is responsible for a number of activities related to people or program evaluation. They have a high-speed scanner to score all course exams on campus (if they use bubble sheets)—a total of about one-half million exams per year.

One concern, and the reason for the recommendation for change in the Classroom Expectations Guidelines, is that periodically course exams are sent to them through campus mail. That is a bad idea, he said, because it does not protect the integrity of the exams and because it is so slow they cannot provide 24-hour turnaround (which they usually do). But his primary concern is the integrity of the exams, Dr. Dohm said.

Professor Siliciano asked if the process identified in the language is secure enough. Are TAs or employees sufficient to protect exam integrity or would additional stipulations help? Dr. Dohm said that they have a number of mechanisms to protect exam integrity once they are delivered to OMS, and they trust TAs, instructors, or department employees to bring them the exams—they do not question the integrity of the individuals on the assumption that staff or TAs would not be asked to deliver the exams if they were not trusted. They have no indication that there is any problem in this regard.

Dr. Dohm asked how his office should handle instructors who consistently refuse to follow the practice to ensure exam security and who puts the exam forms in campus mail. They have written and called the individual, to no avail. They have debated whether they should refuse to accept exam forms if delivered by campus mail; his ultimate concern is that if a student complains about exam results, they do not want the University to be liable.

Professor Weinsheimer noted the need for the bracketed language about exam answer sheets and also commented that as campus mail is becoming outdated, replaced by email, so also will the bubble sheets become outmoded. Dr. Dohm said they have talked about that possibility for years but they do not see any decline in the use of bubble sheets. Some faculty have used online exams and have returned to paper. The procedure they want to see required helps avoid cheating by protecting the integrity of the exam forms; the concern is that anyone could open a campus mail envelop and change answers on an exam, something OMS has no mechanism to prevent.

Dr. Dohm said there are online courses that use online evaluations, but the primary problem with online testing is that it must be monitored, something that is not feasible with large classes. They are exploring ways to do so, by using large computer labs on campus so the exams can be monitored. This is solvable within the next five year, Professor Weinsheimer speculated; Dr. Dohm agreed and said OMS is looking at the technology and the long-term issues for the University.

The Committee unanimously approved the recommended change in the Classroom Expectations.

Dr. Dohm then said he would like the opinion of the Committee on what he should do when faculty do not abide by the procedure (and use campus mail, for example). He has written to dean, in the one case that has arisen. In the case at hand, the TA was instructed by the faculty member to put the exam score sheets in campus mail. (In other cases that have come up, they get an "oops" response from the instructor and they don't do it again; this happens perhaps 2-3 times per semester.) The faculty member, department head, dean, and Vice Provost Swan should be notified, Professor McCormick said.

Although the Committee did not vote on the matter, there appeared to be complete agreement that after OMS has provided notice to the individual as well department head and so on, and there is consistent refusal to follow the procedure, they should refuse to score the exams and return them to the instructor. That will disadvantage the students, Dean Green observed, and the instructor will have to answer to them when their grades are not posted. Professor McCormick said such an instructor would get the point when the exams were returned and the instructor required to score them, which also would likely cause that instructor to miss the grading deadline.

Dr. Dohm thanked the Committee for its advice and help.

3. Exams for Seven-Week Courses

Dr. Falkner next brought to the Committee a proposal to change the language for final exams for seven-week courses. The current policy provides: "For courses that do not run for a full semester, the final examination shall be administered (or due, in the case of take-home or other out-of-class examinations) on the last day of the course." In the case of courses offered during the second half of spring semester, the current language PROHIBITS use of final exam week for exams. The Registrar's office proposes new language, to be added to the existing policy: "For courses offered the second seven-week session during spring semester, the final exam can be administered during final exam week, allowing the course seven full weeks of instruction. In instances where the final exam will take place the last day of the term, the instructor must notify classroom scheduling by the second week of the seven-week session."

Professor Neuhauser objected that the change would allow students in the second 7-week spring term additional time to study; it would also add an additional day of instruction because the last day of the course would not have to be used for the exam. She suggested that the exam be the 8th week following every 7-week course. That will not work during the fall, Dr. Falkner said, because the second 7-week session begins immediately after the first one ends, so students taking 7-week courses both periods would have new courses beginning as well as exams from the previous 7-week. Professor Neuhauser said she would prefer consistency rather than allowing some exams after the 7th week and some the last day of the 7th week.

This exception would actually occur for the second and fourth 7-week sessions, Professor McCormick pointed out, because 7-week courses ending before final exams in fall semester would have the same option. So it is the first and third 7-week sessions that would still have to have exams on the last day of class. Dean Green said that the change provides flexibility for instructors; if they feel strongly about it, an instructor could lobby to have his or her course the second or fourth session. It would be nice to be consistent but that is not possible.

There are a lot of these courses, Dr. Falkner reported in response to a question from Professor Siliciano. Most students either take two such courses or they take a full-semester course plus a seven-week course.

This may be a Twin Cities issue, Professor Ng said. At Morris, the half-semester courses must be seven and one-half weeks each, with the last day of class used for the exam.

The Committee concluded it needed more information about finals during the first and third sessions as well as the number of instructional days in the courses each session. Dr. Falkner said she would provide the information to the Committee.

4. Strategic Positioning Task Force Recommendations

Professor McCormick asked Committee members to identify the task force recommendations they were most concerned about (from the three task forces that dealt with undergraduate education and the two that dealt with graduate education).

Professor Ng asked about the honors recommendation and a possible honors college. Professor McCormick said that since the original task force report, the idea of naming the campus-wide honors entity an “honors college” seems to have been dropped. There is, however, an implementation group working on a University honors program. The college programs will be integrated—there will no longer be a separate CLA Honors or IT Honors (although the lower-division intensive math-science program in IT apparently will be maintained as a special option within the University Honors Program)—and the staff will be in the University honors program.

Dr. Knutson raised the issue of class enrollments (one of the recommendations from the task force on undergraduate writing): will the limit be applied to foreign language courses where students write many compositions that are to be evaluated thoughtfully and systematically?

Dean Green asked if it is too late to say the Committee likes a particular recommendation. The faculty governance role is to indicate its preference for priorities, Professor McCormick said. The Provost provided a list of all the recommendations and is trying to be accountable; the governance system needs to identify those it believes important (or if the administration is going in a direction it does not believe appropriate). Professor Neuhauser said the Provost might not like any of the recommendations on the list. Professor McCormick pointed out that there is an implementation team and that none of the recommendations has been rejected thus far.

Dean Green inquired about the role the Committee should play; if recommendations are being implemented, should the Committee throw bricks or roses? Professor McCormick reported that the Faculty Consultative Committee (FCC) believes it important for committees to advise on the recommendations and will receive reports from the committees as they are doing their work. The administration will take the recommendations seriously if it takes governance seriously, which it always has. The administration has consulted all along as this process has unfolded. Then the Committee should talk with the implementation groups, where they exist, and should inquire with whom it should speak where they do not exist. Professor McCormick said that FCC asks that committees identify what they believe should be high priorities, what is being implemented, where funds are going, and how much reality there is to all the recommendations that the task forces made.

The Committee carried on for some time a discussion about what its role should be and what the timing of consultation (if any is useful) might be. Some expressed the view that consultation was rather pointless if implementation is already under way; others disagreed and said the Committee can affect implementation as well as receive reports on how money is being spent. It was also argued that there is no point to discussing recommendations if there is no group appointed to implement them—and that the Committee might express concern if it believes recommendations should be implemented but are not

(apparently). Professor McCormick said that the Committee is slated to receive reports on the progress of the implementation of the honors and writing recommendations. If the student support recommendations are to make any difference, there will have to be an investment made to improve advising across the campus; the quality of (and resources for) the advising that students receive should not vary significantly from one college to another.

Dean Green said that rather talk among themselves, the Committee should have a discussion with the people who are working on the recommendations in order to inform itself about the issues. The discussions should start with the recommendations being worked on; if the Committee identifies recommendations that are not being addressed, that is the time for questions to the Provost about what is happening. Professor McCormick said another way the Committee can be informed is by looking at what the task forces said and identify what it believes should be implemented. Professor Neuhauser said she agreed with Dean Green rather than identifying recommendations the Committee believes important. Professor McCormick reminded the Committee again that it has been asked by the FCC chair to identify the recommendations of highest priority, items that FCC should consider. Professor Chomsky asked that SCEP pay attention to these five task force recommendations because FCC will not do so separately from SCEP. He also said he did not agree that the members of the Committee lacked the expertise to make a judgment about the task force recommendations, but in any case the Committee will also be hearing from representatives of the groups working on implementation of the task force recommendations over the course of this semester.

The entire process of creating the task forces and their deliberations were outside of and parallel to the governance system, Professor Weinsheimer said, and a number of decisions are being made by the administration. It seemed to him that if FCC had not instructed committees to deliberate about the recommendations, the committees might never have been consulted. His view, he said, is that it would be most profitable to have an interim report on implementation, not when everything is done. That is when the Committee will have an opportunity to contribute to the decisions. The administration created the task forces, Professor McCormick agreed, but the faculty volunteered to serve on them; the task forces made recommendations to the administration and the administration must now decide which to implement, based on a limited pool of funds.

The Committee agreed it would like to hear from those working on implementation of the undergraduate task force recommendations and to also discuss the graduate/professional education recommendations even though there is apparently no working group charged to implement them; the Committee would like to find out about plans for implementing these recommendations.

Professor McCormick adjourned the meeting at 3:30.

-- Gary Engstrand

University of Minnesota