

Minutes*

Senate Committee on Educational Policy
Wednesday, April 24, 2002
1:00 – 3:00
238A Morrill Hall

Present: Wilbert Ahern (chair), Vernon Cardwell, Shawn Curley, Scott Ferguson, Steve Fitzgerald, Christina Frazier, Gretchen Haas, Frank Kulacki, John LaBau, Geri Malandra, (George Green for) Christine Maziar, Carol Miller, Kathleen Newell, Marsha Odom, Martin Sampson, Karen Seashore, Mary Ellen Shaw, Mary Sue Simmons, Craig Swan

Absent: Patricia Cavanaugh, Douglas Wangenstein

Guests: Douglas Knowlton (Crookston), John Schwaller (Morris); Associate Vice President and Chief Information Officer Steve Cawley, Deputy Chief Information Office Shih-Pau Yen; Dr. C. Eugene Allen, Ms. Kathleen Sellew (Office of International Programs)

[In these minutes:

Professor Ahern convened the meeting at 1:05 and announced happily that this was his penultimate meeting as chair of the Committee. He noted that there will be a number of issues that carry over to the next year.

1. First-Year Experience, Graduation and Retention, and Ws at Crookston and Morris

Professor Ahern then welcomed Vice Chancellors Knowlton and Schwaller to discuss various issues of interest to the Committee as they play out on the Crookston and Morris campuses. He recalled that Professor Koch reported at the last meeting on the experiences of first-year students on the Twin Cities campus; today the other two campuses will provide perspectives.

Dr. Knowlton began by noting he had been in his position for five years but that this was the first opportunity he has had to speak with the Committee. The first-year experience at UMC is different from that on the Twin Cities campus. UMC offers a shared experience, an introductory class on information technology; they are also focusing on retention, as are all campuses. It is also important to understand that many of the students at UMC are first-generation college students so they have no college experience. As a result they look at a broad-based program that includes the academic, residential, family support, and intense advising. The advising is all done by faculty, who also have a very high teaching load (the highest of all University campuses). They want to follow best practices in offering their first year experiences and have sent their director to national conferences on the subject.

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Dr. Knowlton described the experience of each new student on the campus. They have also been involving parents to create a relationship with families. With the change to a four-year degree and the polytechnic program, UMC is no longer open enrollment. They are clear with students that they will be "in your face" about how and what they are doing and they will talk about grades. They admitted 50 students on probation last year; by the end of the year, 41 of them were off probation.

For the future, they will continue their living/learning program. Another major issue is a revamped introduction to the technology curriculum; they also have a summer start program for three-four days, which includes a one-credit course on introduction to technology. They are considering a freshman seminar and how to work it into a polytechnic curriculum--which has far fewer electives than a liberal arts degree program.

Mid-term grades are required, Dr. Knowlton affirmed. Professor Ahern noted that the Senate has adopted a policy requiring mid-term notification for all students at the University who are not performing well in 1-XXX courses. What is the UMC experience? Because they are a small campus, they can make individual contact through the advisors, Dr. Knowlton said. It is a very useful system.

Dr. Schwaller next reported to the Committee about Morris. He noted that he is a newcomer to the University who had only been here since July, 2001. Understanding what Morris does for first-year students requires putting its activities in the context of a public liberal-arts college that is between selective and highly-selective. In 2000-01 they had an 85% retention rate from the first to the second year. Most campuses would see that rate as extremely successful; Morris is chagrined: it is among the top among its public peers but only in the middle compared to the private liberal arts colleges. They are looking to see if there are structural issues that impede students; the task force will report next year. They work on retention from the first time they send a letter or email to a student because studies suggest that a close relationship from the point of first contact increases the likelihood that a college will retain a student.

They try to sell Morris to prospective students but also try to be sure they would fit at Morris (e.g., not focused on a Nursing career, which Morris does not offer). They inform students about the liberal arts curriculum, get them to envision themselves in it, and tell them they should be ready to meet personal goals. Students overwhelmingly succeed at Morris; over 90% obtain an undergraduate degree. The issue for Morris is how better to serve students.

Morris has obtained four new faculty positions in the last couple of years; those positions have been used to enhance the first-year initiative. They have a major program for students at risk: a 3-week program before classes begin and intervention programs during the year. They also have a 2-credit first-year seminar common to all students organized around human diversity. Each section has its own topic, depending on faculty interest, but they draw from across the campus. The seminars also introduce students to the library, the computer system, and campus services: they create a common experience, provide information, AND make it an academic program. Dr. Schwaller described briefly the other programs for students (mentorships, academic assistance, mid-term grades, full-year planning).

Even though Morris is quite selective, like UMC it has a large number of first-generation college students. The students are predominantly from rural backgrounds and 85% are Minnesotans.

They have an initiative for 2003-04 to abolish non-resident tuition (few pay it now) that the Board of Regents has approved.

In terms of graduation rates, they have been increasing. The five-year rate is 50%, which is good for public institutions, although it does not compare favorably with the rate for private institutions. Professor Seashore recalled that in the past the primary reason undergraduates left the Morris campus was because they transferred to the Twin Cities. Should that be factored into graduation rates? Are there data available? Dr. Schwaller said there are data on both those who start and end at Morris and those who start at Morris and end elsewhere at the University. They use the second datum in identifying their graduation rate (there is about a 4% difference between the two).

Professor Odom asked about the number of first-year seminars offered at Morris. Dr. Schwaller said they offer 34 sections with 15 students in each, all taught by volunteers from the faculty. There are 15-17 faculty who each offer two of the seminars, which are equivalent to one course. The seminars are inloaded so they also meet general education requirements. They received four new faculty positions which were given to divisions that agreed to offer 3-5 first-year seminars in return. These positions came out of the undergraduate initiative.

Along the same line, Dr. Swan recalled, there was a concern that a lot of Morris students transferred to the Twin Cities in order to go into engineering. As a result, one chair negotiated with the Twin Cities so that Morris students would automatically be admitted to graduate programs in IT if they successfully graduated from Morris. Dr. Schwaller said an agreement has been signed with IT so that if students complete their first three years at Morris and two years on the Twin Cities campus, they will receive a bachelor's degree from Morris and a master's degree from IT at the same time.

Professor Ahern asked Drs. Knowlton and Schwaller if the current practice and use of the W is an area of concern. Not until the issue was brought up on this campus, Dr. Knowlton commented. Dr. Schwaller said the faculty at Morris have not indicated there is a problem. Students do not receive a lot of W's and they are caught quickly by faculty advisors; Morris would be comfortable with restrictions on use of the W because it is not a significant problem on the campus. Morris does not allow graduation with more than three D grades; if a student receives a fourth D, the credits do not count. A restriction on the use of the W is consonant with that policy (with the usual caveat that there are always special circumstances beyond the student's control). Dr. Knowlton said it was his sense that the use of the W is also not an issue with the Crookston faculty.

Professor Ahern thanked Drs. Knowlton and Schwaller for joining the meeting. They, in turn, thanked the Committee for the opportunity to meet with it.

2. Course Management Software

Professor Ahern now welcomed Messrs. Cawley and Yen to the meeting and noted that they had been invited because of concerns about the escalating cost of course management software. The Committee heard earlier from Professor Wahlstrom that there are a lot of faculty who use WebCT; now it learns that the price of WebCT is going up.

Mr. Cawley introduced Dr. Yen to the Committee and noted that he has responsibility for academic and distributed computing services, including WebCT, and it is Dr. Yen who negotiates for

the University for WebCT. He said that the faculty selected WebCt a few years ago as the course management software that the University should invest in, along with the other CIC [Big Ten plus the University of Chicago] schools. There were not many products available and the majority of the CIC schools selected WebCT. It was almost given away in early years (compared, for example, to PeopleSoft and others).

WebCT has advanced tremendously recently and has a new product currently being tested. The cost would rise from the initial \$35,000 per year to \$140,000 per year. While the increase is significant, it is still not a lot of money. The other big classroom management program, Blackboard, is in the same range. WebCT's defense is that it has priced the product at market rates and universities should be happy with it. Dr. Yen, however, is not. The CIC is trying to negotiate with WebCT and leverage its joint buying power; it would like a standard product so it can also leverage faculty training across campuses, provide ease of use, and provide a common experience for students. The CIC schools will probably stick with WebCT at least for the short-run; for the long-term, it will look at other products and opportunities.

Dr. Yen explained how the decision was made to purchase WebCT a few years ago and pointed out that it is very expensive for an institution to develop its own course management system. The University saw that option as a black hole so opted for WebCT. He reviewed the evolution of the system and the increasing cost. How should the increasing costs be dealt with, he asked? "I'm cheap," he said, and strong universities should show that they have power to deal with the problem, which is why the CIC got involved. The CIC is currently drafting an agreement with WebCT; the CIC chief executives will look at it and then tell WebCT what the CIC wants.

The CIC can also look at other course management systems; there are three other ones besides WebCT that could be considered, one of which is open-source. So the CIC will negotiate with WebCT and see what else there is. Dr. Yen said that Blackboard is developing a new system so there will be two large commercial products available. For the current year, Blackboard costs more money--it is a less adequate system but it is easier to use. Next year prices will go up for both, but Blackboard will have a totally new system. He expressed doubt that the University would switch to Blackboard next year because a new system would require a lot of infrastructure, training, licenses, and so on.

To change programs would cost a lot of money, Mr. Cawley agreed. They need to look at ease of use as well as the ability of the system to be integrated with PeopleSoft. The new WebCT is supposed to be easy to use, Dr. Yen added, but the University will also keep an eye on the open-source software, developed at MIT and Stanford with University of Minnesota participation. The open-source software can blend with WebCT.

What is the difference in the number of people using WebCT now and four years ago, Professor Ahern asked? Mr. Cawley said that 24,000 students used it last year, compared to zero four years ago; about 1500 courses used it, covering about 51% of enrolled students.

When one thinks about the cost, Professor Seashore said, and the amount of time to train faculty, graduate assistants, and students, one must ask whether the new system will be enough easier that the University will recoup training costs. Mr. Cawley said that is a reasonable question; if the new system is easier to use it will save labor and increase student efficiency and the gains will probably far outweigh any increase in the cost of the license fee. Professor Seashore recalled that the

first time she used WebCT she spent a large amount of time telling her classes how to use it; now she does not have to do so. A new system would mean a loss of instructional time again.

With respect to the open-source software, Mr. Cawley said he will encourage the University to start with WebCT. As they are able to integrate the open-source software with WebCT to that there is a common face and the student does not know the difference, they will do so. But the University does NOT want two different course management experiences for students, he said.

What is the nature of the WebCT license, Dr. Swan asked? If the University says it will not pay more, does it have the right to use what it already has? Or must it pay each year? The CIC proposal is that the source code be escrowed so the universities can still use it if WebCT goes bankrupt, Dr. Yen said. Mr. Cawley said the University has the right to use and extend WebCT if the company goes away.

In terms of the CIC agreement, scale makes a difference. The rate varies by school with the amount of use. Dr. Yen said that the University is WebCT's biggest customer.

Professor Ahern thanked Messrs. Cawley and Yen for joining the meeting; it was agreed that the Committee should hear from them again next fall.

3. International Education

Professor Ahern now welcomed Dr. Allen and Ms. Sellew to the meeting to discuss the Office of International Programs (OIP).

Dr. Allen noted that his office (Office of International Programs) is expected to provide an annual report to the Committee, something he is glad to do. He spoke first about the internal environment at the University for international education. If there were ever a year to emphasize the need for greater emphasis on international education, this is it. OIP has some very exciting initiatives underway and has had great support from central administration and the colleges. The administration has committed to increasing the funding for Study Abroad scholarships from \$100,000 to \$560,000 by 2005; at the same time, colleges are increasing their support for Study Abroad as well. Two colleges are taking the additional step of integrating Study Abroad into the curriculum by making their collegiate scholarships available for supporting study abroad programs.

The Global Campus-Study Abroad office through the support of two grants (about \$1.2 million) is leading a major initiative to integrate selected study abroad programs in 204 majors across all undergraduate colleges on the four campuses. This effort involves many faculty and advisors in educational retreats on study abroad programs and details, site reviews around the world, and working with selected faculty to internationalize their courses. These efforts have been well received and will continue for two more years. The project will provide faculty, advisors and students with advising sheets on study abroad options that satisfy specific major degree requirements.

As a result of September 11, the federal mandates and system needs for tracking international students will be much more onerous and visa applications may take longer. Even though the federal government requires all universities to track international students, the details of these requirements and our university system needs to do it are still evolving. The current implementation date for the

new tracking requirements is January 2003. This is not all negative because it has gotten the attention of people at the University and will likely lead to better integration of record systems and forms. Neither the State Department nor the INS is willing to charge a fee to pay for the tracking systems, however, and they will force universities to collect the fee for them. That is sad as well as disgusting, Dr. Allen said; it mixes education and regulation, and universities will be viewed by some as regulators in addition to our role as educational institutions. Universities were previously supposed to keep the information but the regulations were never enforced nor the information collected, Ms. Sellew commented. In some cases the INS asked universities to not forward the information! Many people are dubious about what will happen to the information once the information is provided to the INS, Dr. Allen observed, because the agency has traditionally been seriously underfunded. He noted that universities are being required to establish a tracking system for less than 2% of the 33 million people who come to the United States each year. That is because, Dean Green commented wryly, it is only students who would cause trouble.

Dr. Allen and Ms. Sellew reported on the consortium of Big Ten universities (MUCIA), on International Education Week, on new grants and fund-raising (they have raised about \$700,000 in gifts for Study Abroad scholarships), and on the activities of the China Center. The China Center has an exciting new customized leadership workshop program of a few weeks to a few months that is targeted at mid-career Chinese professionals in city, provincial, federal and university positions. The majority of the teaching is done by U of M faculty and covers a broad range of topics that help those enrolled deal with WTO and changes taking place in the government and economy of China. The first group of 17 is from the city of Beijing and they will be on campus from April through July. In another initiative, the International Service and Travel Center (ISTC) is working with colleges who have a need for placing students in international internships. In the last two years, OIP and the Graduate School have awarded 55 fellowships of about \$1700 each to masters and professional degree students for study or internships in more than 30 countries. For such students there is a high interest and demand for internships.

Ms. Sellew reviewed the roster of exchange programs. There are 280 registered programs, some of which are quite small and some very large. OIP encourages colleges and departments to take responsibility for these programs, rather than having the University do so, because university-wide programs do not work very well due to the lack of collegiate ownership and the transfer of tuition funds across colleges in the IMG financial model. The list only includes programs that OIP has been informed about because there is no central collection of information about exchange programs, nor is it mandatory that their office be informed.

Do they have any sense that there is an increased number of academic units that want exchange programs, Dr. Malandra asked? There is a lot of activity but not more exchange agreements, Ms. Sellew said; Dr. Allen said that requests for assistance in setting them up have tapered off in the last two years. Dr. Allen explained why all-University exchange programs are problematic (they take a lot of support staff, given the number of students involved, and would not be an effective way for the University to reach the goal of having half its undergraduates involved in study abroad). It is great if colleges or departments want to set up an exchange agreement; the benefit comes from faculty and students mixing together, but they are not a way to involve a large number of undergraduate students in study abroad programs because they have many options to choose from. Interest in exchange agreements increasingly involves faculty and graduate or professional degree students rather than the previous focus on undergraduates. This would seem to be very appropriate

Where does one send information on the experience with exchange programs, Professor Sampson asked? To her, Ms. Sellew said; their office would very much appreciate knowing about experiences with the programs. Do they track faculty who are involved, Professor Seashore asked? They would like to do so, Dr. Allen said, but there is no good way to do this and therefore OIP is dependent upon individual feedback and hearsay.

Dr. Allen reported one statistic of interest: University undergraduates studying abroad in 2000-01 (1,065) made up 4.2% of undergraduates at the University and 22.2% of the degrees granted. The goal is that 50% (or about 3000 students per year) of students obtaining degrees will have studied abroad. Asked how that compares with other Big Ten schools, Dr. Allen said Michigan State has the highest percentage but that Minnesota compares favorably with the rest. If the goal of increasing the number of students who participate is met, however, Minnesota could be number one or number two. There is a lot of national attention on the University because it has an aggressive goal of 50% by 2005 and the two grants have allowed us to have the most extensive effort underway with regard to integrating study abroad into major degree requirements. The participation rate will go down if the graduation rate goes up! Professor Sampson observed.

Is there a difference in participation rates between men and women, Professor Curley asked? Two-thirds to three-quarters of the students are women, Dr. Allen said, and it has traditionally been that way for study abroad programs in a wide variety of institutions. The Committee also discussed the participation of students of color. Dr. Allen said there are multiple efforts underway to increase the enrollment of such students. In addition, he indicated his surprise that more students do not apply for study abroad scholarships that requires an essay in the application. The number of applications is up significantly, however, Ms. Sellew reported. OIP is hoping to receive a large grant from a foundation to fund study abroad opportunities based on financial need.

One very serious issue for anyone traveling abroad is to have adequate health insurance, including evacuation and repatriation coverage Dr. Allen commented. Dean Green has done tremendous work in getting coverage for graduate assistants. His own coverage is through HealthPartners but he would not think of leaving the United States without obtaining extra coverage. Students can obtain coverage, Dean Green said; if they get sick while abroad, and must go to a hospital, they will be in trouble if they only have the University's plan. Undergraduates on a family plan are typically not covered; about 1/3 of undergraduates and about 1/2 of graduate assistants are covered for travel abroad. No University staff are covered. If the University were to buy coverage in bulk for faculty and staff, he said, adequate international insurance coverage could be obtained at very reasonable cost. A related problem is horrible press coverage a university can get if one of its students or staff die abroad and the institution took no precautionary steps to provide evacuation coverage for them, Dean Green commented.

This is an issue that needs to be addressed, and questions should be addressed to Employee Benefits if there is no coverage by next fall, Dr. Allen said. NOTE: Shortly after this report was given, the Employee Benefits Committee appointed a task force that is preparing a RFP for such faculty and staff coverage.

Professor Ahern thanked Dr. Allen and Ms. Sellew for joining the meeting.

4. Withdrawals

Professor Ahern noted that there was insufficient time at this meeting to consider the various proposals for W's. He recommended that Committee members read the various questions and comments that had been provided and then indicate, within a few days, a preference for one of the three options that had been developed (or indicate a preference for the status quo).

Another issue, independent of those options, is the extent to which campuses and colleges have discretion within the policy. What scope is allowed for variations from any Senate policy that might be enacted?

These issues will be brought back at the next meeting.

5. Calendars

Professor Ahern noted that the calendars will be on the Senate docket on April 25. The Crookston and Morris calendars for 2004-05 and 2005-06 will be up for approval; the Twin Cities campus calendars will not be. The latter calendar will be the subject of discussion at the meeting of the Assembly Committee on Educational Policy--which was convened promptly, as Professor Ahern now adjourned the Senate Committee on Educational Policy meeting at 3:05.

**Assembly Committee on Educational Policy
Wednesday, April 24, 2002
3:00 – 4:00
238A Morrill Hall**

Present: Kathleen Newell (chair), Vernon Cardwell, Shawn Curley, Scott Ferguson, Steve Fitzgerald, Christina Frazier, Gretchen Haas, Geri Malandra, Carol Miller, Marsha Odom, Martin Sampson, Karen Seashore, Mary Ellen Shaw, Mary Sue Simmons, Craig Swan

Absent: Patricia Cavanaugh, Frank Kulacki, John LaBau, Christine Maziar, Douglas Wangenstein

Guests:

[In these minutes:

1. Classroom Supply and Demand

Professor Newell convened the meeting at 3:10 and turned to Mr. Fitzgerald for a report on classroom supply and demand.

2. Accreditation, Council on Liberal Education, and Curriculum

Professor Newell asked Drs. Malandra and Swan to discuss several issues.

Dr. Malandra said that they are beginning to plan assessment of student learning on the Twin Cities campus, which will be part of the accreditation requirements. She noted that the North Central Association accredits each campus separately, each on 10-year cycle. The last accreditation review for the Twin Cities campus was in 1995-96 so the next one will be 2005-06. The work for the review needs to start about two years in advance.