

Minutes*

Senate Committee on Educational Policy
Wednesday, December 13, 2000
1:00 – 3:00
238A Morrill Hall

Present: Wilbert Ahern (chair), Shawn Curley, Steve Fitzgerald, Charles Henderson, Gordon Hirsch, Emily Hoover, Frank Kulacki, Karen Seashore, Geri Malandra, Christine Maziar, Marsha Odom, Mary Ellen Shaw, Rita Snider, Thomas Soulen, Rachel Sullivan, Craig Swan

Regrets: Prince Amattoey, Khaled Dajani, Carol Miller, Kathleen Newell, Steven Sperber

Absent: none

Guests: Associate Dean George Green (Graduate School)

[In these minutes: certificate programs; report from subcommittees on IMG and on barriers to graduation, and from the Task Force on Distance Learning; make-up work for legitimate absences]

1. Certificate Programs

Professor Ahern convened the meeting at 1:05, welcomed Associate Dean George Green, and turned to Drs. Green and Malandra for a preliminary report on certificate programs. He reminded the Committee that there was considerable interest in certificate programs expressed at the Committee's fall retreat; Drs. Green and Malandra are today providing a status report in response to the issues that were raised at the retreat.

Dr. Green explained the context. The Graduate School has been exploring questions related to certificates and issued a policy document in 1998. This year it is working with the College of Continuing Education (CCE) on post-baccalaureate certificates; in setting up one program, it realized in the middle of the game that it was playing by ear [mixed metaphors at the meeting]. Dr. Maziar said guidelines were needed and talked about the issues at the Committee retreat; the Committee put the matter on its agenda. So there are two streams of effort taking place.

Dr. Green said he and Dr. Malandra are gathering information from both inside and outside the University and have a packet of handouts for Committee members.

Dr. Malandra said there is another stream as well: non-credit certificates, which are important in many departments. She said she had been amazed at the interest expressed at the Committee's retreat; it does not appear, she said, that this is something that is broken but may be an area of growth that may not be adequately served by existing policies and processes. The University provides a

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service to the community through these programs and if anything the University's offerings may be inadequate.

A certificate program, according to PETERSON'S GUIDE TO CERTIFICATE PROGRAMS AT AMERICAN COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES (1988), is "a sequence, pattern, or group of courses or contact hours that focus upon an area of specialized knowledge or information and that are developed, administered, and evaluated by the institution's faculty members or faculty-approved professionals." The term can also mean a formal credit program on a transcript, a formal credit or noncredit program, a program that may offer continuing education units; it may also encompass non-transcript, college-based, or personal records, a physical record of program completion, submitted to a certifying agency/association in regulated professions or a document issued to a student to confirm completion of a program (a paper certificate).

There are also technical definitions set by the U.S. Department of Education to ensure that if certificate program students are part-time they can qualify for federal financial aid. The University, she said, reports to the Department of Education about the programs that qualify.

In terms of comparisons of certificates to degrees, certificates are shorter, more focused, do not have the breadth of study in a degree, but are still a formal credential developed and administered by the faculty.

The key elements of formal certificate programs, according to 1997 University guidelines from the Executive Vice President's office, are these:

- They are developed by and administered, evaluated, and officially approved by the institution that offers it
- Each course in program is designed to meet occupational, professional, or personal enrichment needs of a defined audience
- Within each course (credit or noncredit) in the program, the student's understanding of the subject matter is evaluated against stated criteria
- A certificate signifying successful completion of the program is signed by the institution's chief academic officer or representative

Dr. Green told the Committee that the amount of education offered by employers dwarfs that of all other providers combined (including universities and colleges). In 1996, corporations spent \$60 billion providing formal education for 59 million employees. In 1999, the (average) industry training expenditures as percent of payroll was 2%. Other comments on this phenomenon were offered by Dr. Malandra:

- According to a Hudson Institute study of 5,500 national professional associations, 90 percent offer continuing education, spending \$8.5 billion on technology, business, and scientific topics.
- The biggest growth has been and is predicted to continue in distance-learning programs (medium of delivery) and information technology (content area).
- According to the Council on Graduate Schools, enrollments in higher education certificate programs are growing by 20 percent/year.

- The information technology industry is a special case; there are approximately 1.6 million individuals worldwide who earned approximately 2.4 million information technology certifications by early 2000 (the most since 1997). This is a global phenomenon.
 - According to Adelman, over 3 million certification examinations were administered in 140 countries in 1999 by private info tech training companies.
 - One in eight job advertisements in IT now mention certifications as a “plus” for applicants; one in five indicate that degrees are required
 - This is a kind of “silent system” -- most providers are not part of the U.S. Department of Education IPEDS “universe”
 - For the University it is important to note that some higher education institutions have been active participants in offering these certification programs: they meet market needs, can be lucrative source of revenue, offer courses and examinations, and may even incorporate multiple certifications into bachelor’s degrees, awarding their own certifications based on curricular packages purchased from for-profit developers

What are the perceived benefits of these programs? From the employer perspective, they focus on skill development; they validate specific skills; they are attractive to working adults not interested in a full graduate degree program; they raise tuition revenue; and they help students attain career advancement and higher salaries. Collaborations between universities and employers are growing: some corporations outsource all of their employee education to private training organizations (e.g., Dupont spent between \$300 and \$500 million/year).

In terms of information collection, there is no statewide collection of data on certificates, and except for periodic reports to U.S. Department of Education, the University does not have a comprehensive list of available credit certificate programs, let alone noncredit certificate programs.

There was work in the mid-1990s by the Higher Education Coordinating Board to develop guidelines, but HECB was dissolved and the work was never finished. The Executive Vice President's office developed a set of guidelines in 1997 that is used informally. The EVP office was going to survey colleges and campuses in mid-1990s but the survey wasn't conducted. The College of Continuing Education conducted an informal study in 1995 of national trends in noncredit certificates, and surveyed the Twin Cities campus in 1998. The College of Education and Human Development has guidelines in place; CEHD consulted with the Graduate School and the Executive Vice President's office in developing them. The Graduate School has also developed guidelines. The College of Continuing Education Academic Council has reviewed draft guidelines that are currently being revised, pending the outcome of the discussion at this Committee.

Dr. Green said that in terms of the policy issues they were not looking for the discussion today to provide answers; they will provide information and the “homework” will be due in March when the Committee revisits this subject. He said they would welcome comments and questions over the next several weeks.

Dr. Maziar suggested that as Committee members think about the policy issues, they should keep in mind two different kinds of certificates: the issues around the credit/transcript certificates are quite different from those around non-credit programs.

Dr. Malandra highlighted the possible policy issues.

Review, approval, and oversight

- What is the relationship of certificate programs to the University's and the academic units' mission and goals?
- What should be the criteria and procedures for review and approval of certificate programs?
- What additional guidelines and/or procedures should be in place for quality assurance of certificate programs?
- Should there be a "fast-track" review and approval process? If so, what should the parameters be?

Curriculum Design

- What should be the general requirements for numbers of credits?
- Should there be time limits for students to complete certificate programs? If so, what should the parameters be?
- What special considerations are there for distance-delivered or enhanced certificate programs?
- What are the appropriate overlaps or connections between certificate and degree programs?
- What program requirements, beyond coursework, are appropriate for certificate programs?
- How should interdisciplinary certificate programs be housed and administered?
- Should there be any linkage between credit programs and noncredit certificates?

Instruction

- Under what circumstances are adjunct faculty appropriate in certificate programs?
- What should be the role of adjunct faculty in development, instruction, evaluation, selection of instructors?
- What significant instructional issues might arise in distance-delivered certificate programs?

Students

- What are appropriate admission requirements? Completion requirements?
- What should be the relationship between admission to certificate and to degree programs?
- When should "graduates" of certificate programs be included in commencement ceremonies?
- What student support issues relate to certificate programs?

Financial Resources

- How are/should certificates be priced? How does this relate to tuition for degree programs?
- What should be the fiscal basis for certificate programs? How might this differ between credit and noncredit programs?
- What particular issues relate to students' use of financial aid programs to enroll in certificate programs?
- Who should pay tuition for graduate certificates?
- What means should be considered to assure responsiveness, flexibility, and program stability as market needs change?

Committee members raised additional questions and issues.

-- Who issues the certificates? There can be 18-month programs administered by the University and quick ones run by the colleges or departments.

-- There can be “two and a half” kinds: credit-bearing, Regents-approved programs that appear on a transcript, credit-bearing programs that do not appear on the transcript, and (the “one half”) non-credit programs.

-- Within the Graduate School there is the capacity for a non-credit collection of classes primarily for advising.

-- There was a mechanism to get non-credit courses on the transcript by writing to the Registrar; does the University want that mechanism to exist?

Professor Seashore said that when the College of Education and Human Development (CEHD) developed its policy on certificate programs it captured many of the policy issues. One thing became clear: there is no single answer to what a certificate program might be; the programs must be justified. The Committee should think less about having A POLICY than having a mechanism for review, approval, and oversight. In the case of CEHD, the administration discovered a number of certificate programs it did not know about; the programs are now required to meet peer review standards and go through the college administration before they are offered.

The biggest administrative hurdle CEHD faced, Professor Seashore related, is that some people want to take a certificate program for credit and some want it non-credit. In pricing the programs they were constrained by the limited array of options available in meeting short-term needs (some of the programs have a limited life). Pricing will be a major issue if the University is to be a player in the community in offering certificate programs for mid-career professionals.

-- Should there be a provision to sunset certificate programs?

-- Should certificate programs explicitly be required to be self-sufficient? Should some of them? (That depends on whether they serve a public purpose and could or would carry a state subsidy and how closely related it is to the University's mission.)

-- Tuition is also a problem when it comes to cooperating with other institutions.

-- In some cases, the program will not have any students if it does not carry Graduate School credit.

Professor Malandra inquired if it would be useful to have a systematic survey of colleges/campuses on the number and range of certificates currently offered at the University. She invited the Committee to let her know if that would help in its deliberations. For example, the deans and chairs could be asked about the extent to which they anticipate creating new certificates. She also asked the Committee to think about what conceptual framework, policies, guidelines, academic support, etc., are needed for pre-baccalaureate, post-baccalaureate, post-Masters, and noncredit programs. Finally, she asked for the Committee's views on the connections between certificate programs and distributed learning initiatives, guidelines, and support; this is a topic in which Professor Wahlstrom, chair of the Distance Learning task force, has considerable interest.

Dr. Swan said a survey was a good idea; it would provide information on how old some of the programs are and the number of certificates awarded in recent years would help distinguish between those programs that are growing and those that are not.

There are faculty issues that also need to be considered, Professor Curley observed, such as inloading, that affect pricing. Are these programs overload work? Another is the need for better oversight, Professor Seashore said, and, for example, whether a certificate program responds to a short-term need or if it will go on forever. Whether they need Board of Regents' approval is another question. On the last point, Dr. Malandra said the intent is not to set up a new regulatory process; they want to see a streamlined process. But quality is important, Professor Seashore maintained.

The Committee might think about using non-credit programs as a way to meet the demand for upgrading skills. There are many such programs in the community and the University could perhaps provide such training without relying on degrees and credits. That would provide more flexibility. How would non-credit effort be measured? Would it be overload, Professor Ahern inquired? Professor Curley suggested that could vary by college and he urged that the Committee not try to write regulations for all these issues.

What would it be helpful for the Committee to have when she returns in March with more information, Dr. Malandra asked? Dr. Maziar said it would be useful to know about the extent to which regular faculty are participating in the delivery of these programs and the extent to which non-faculty or outsiders are delivering them. That would help the Committee understand how much "Minnesota" there is in these programs that carry the University of Minnesota label.

It may be that there will not be a need for new guidelines, Dr. Malandra said; Dr. Green added that instead what may be needed are a set of considerations to be used in oversight and review of certificate programs. Professor Ahern commented that to the extent quality control is an issue, however, and if they return and recommend that no guidelines are needed, the Committee would want to know why it should be confident about quality. He thanked Drs. Green and Malandra for their presentation.

2. Subcommittee Progress Reports

Professor Hirsch reported for the subcommittee working on degrees, credits, and barriers to graduation. The subcommittee is gathering data for Twin Cities units to measure the total number of degree credits before and after the conversion to semesters to see if the percent of credits required for a degree or required be taken within a college have risen. Professor Ahern asked them to look also at Crookston and Morris but the subcommittee has no representatives from those campuses; he asked for the names of people to be contacted to obtain data. Professor Ahern suggested that the registrars on each campus could supply the data.

What is the general charge to the subcommittee, Professor Odom asked? The speed at which students can progress to graduation, Professor Hirsch said, the possible obstacles to graduation, and whether the freedom they have to take electives is more circumscribed than it should be. The subcommittee is gathering data on the number of credits students have when they graduate; the number varies with programs. Dr. Maziar observed that most students graduating now did the majority of their work on the quarter system so the study design should be set up now and data

collected over the next 3-4 years; students graduating now are part of an anomalous group. Professor Kulacki suggested studying different cohort groups in various disciplines. There are units, Professor Hirsch said, where students accumulate half again as many credits as they need to graduate; Dr. Maziar responded that that is not likely a semester effect but simply a continuation of what occurred before the change to semesters.

Another question assigned to the subcommittee, Professor Hirsch reported, is whether the Graduation Proficiency Test (passing a proficiency examination in a language) is impeding the ability of students to graduate in a timely way. The subcommittee is looking into the question.

Professor Hoover reported for the IMG subcommittee, which had not yet met. Professor Ahern recalled the letter on funding for common goods that had been sent to the President from the chairs of Finance and Planning, the Subcommittee on Twin Cities Facilities and Support Services, and Educational Policy; a copy has been provided to Executive Vice President Bruininks, who will provide comments and information about the points it raised.

Professor Kulacki said the Distance Education Task Force has been gathering a great deal of information and that he will keep the Committee posted on developments. He reported that the Task Force thus far had discussed the relation between technology enhanced learning (TEL) and distance learning (DL). TEL is seen mainly as an on-campus type of activity; DL is seen as an off-campus endeavor for which infrastructure looms large as an enabler or impediment

Issues for Distance Learning include: faculty involvement must be obtained, programs should be faculty-centered, and the level of effort to produce quality DL products must necessarily lead to a new business model. The current University strategy appears to be to serve niche audiences and markets, e.g., Nursing.

Long-term concerns include:

- Marketing: How and to whom?
- University of Minnesota comparative advantage: Broad markets versus niche markets.
- R&D: What do we do to research teaching methods?
- Effectiveness: We don't know what really works. Research appears needed?
- Financial: How does the University make money on this? It was remarked that of the 10,000 courses offered annually on the Twin Cities campus, 25 generate 10% of the student credit hours.
- How can a faculty member recover costs of developing courses? Faculty incentives and rewards are an issue.
- How can the University become entrepreneurial to the degree needed for a success DL program?

Professor Seashore asked Professor Kulacki to elaborate on the new business model that might be developed. Professor Kulacki explained that the Task Force will do a risk model. Some feel intensely about the amount of time needed for DL courses. Dr. Maziar said she had been informed that in some areas the development costs for DL were \$10,000 per hour of instruction. Professor Kulacki said that the amount could be higher in scientific and artistic courses. There is no design point the whole campus can use, no single model for what departments can do.

One concern at the undergraduate level is that another institution could enter the environment and make available to University students, at less than University tuition, courses that generate a lot of tuition income. All know that some courses subsidize others. Professor Kulacki responded that that is not a faculty concern. Professor Ahern wondered if it really would be cheaper for another to offer the courses; the cost per student may be greater than in a regular class. That varies with the scale, Dr. Maziar responded; for courses of 500-1000 students, the costs can be lower. The concern is about students taking courses from Harvard and Stanford from their dorm rooms here. Professor Kulacki said that in terms of on-line versus transfer it is difficult to get one's hands on the issue (e.g., transferring to the University a Northwestern course in English and a University of Illinois course in Chemistry).

There was continued discussion about course offerings from various institutions and the quality of such courses. Professor Ahern concluded that Professor Kulacki would "capture our attention" each time he reported from the Distance Learning Task Force.

3. Make-Up Work for Legitimate Absences

The Committee next returned to the question of framing language for the policy providing that faculty members must, in certain circumstances, provide make-up opportunities for students who are legitimately absent from class. Among the points of concern were when and how faculty should require verification from students for an absence and what constituted a University-sponsored activity (participation in which entitles a student to make up missed exams or work). Advisors also need to be informed so they can tell students what to do when they are aware they will be absent.

Professor Hirsch said that there are other reasons a student may be absent from class and they need to know it is incumbent on them to make contact with the faculty member as soon as possible. The policy provides for the "thou shalt not be penalized" instances, which is a strong statement; students need to know that if there are other instances when they may be absent, they should negotiate with the faculty member about how to treat the absence.

Committee members discussed the wording of the proposed revision and then agreed that a redraft would be circulated for discussion at the next meeting.

4. Issues Pending

Professor Ahern distributed copies of the list of issues before the Committee and asked Committee members to review it and to note any that they are especially interested in.

Professor Ahern adjourned the meeting at 3:00.

-- Gary Engstrand