

SENATE RESEARCH COMMITTEE*
Minutes of the Meeting
April 7, 1995

PRESENT: Allen Goldman (chair), Kathy Jones, John Baegen, Susan Hupp, N.L. Gault, Tony Potami, Jeylan Mortimer, Eric Klinger, Paul Sackett, Jean Kinsey, Mark Brenner, Henry Buchwald, Signe Betsinger

REGRETS: Bob Super

ABSENT: Dongli-Su

OTHERS: WinAnn Schumi

GUESTS: Jane Whiteside and Darwin Hendel (Academic Affairs)

The minutes of the last meeting were approved as written.

Discussion of U2000

Professor Goldman convened the meeting at 1:30 and deferred to item 6 on the agenda, U2000 Research Benchmarks, since the presenters of the other items were not present. His rationale for doing this was because he thought that it an appropriate forum for discussion of how to evaluate research university-wide. The spirit of the U2000 benchmarks is to assign a number, like a dollar amount, for research funding, graduation rate or an average graduation number of years, he said. If you focus on the questions of research and scholarship you can't do it in a simple way.

Referring to page 22 of the U2000 discussion materials, Professor Goldman directed members' attention to the section on scholarship, research and artistic accomplishments. One size does not fit all, he said, and thinks that alternatives should be considered.

One member questioned whether this was necessary since there are already a number of ways of evaluating scholarship. Even in major fields there are different standards for different subfields, someone noted....again, one size does not fit all. Peer evaluations work very well. For example, a number of universities and research organizations have an organized and systematic process by which major programs are evaluated regularly. It was one member's observation that part of the problem here is that it is usually eight or nine years since the previous review. Many things change during this time and it has to be decided, again, what will be presented in the self survey. There is no regular, ordinary data collection to prepare for the review process.

Regular review processes have routines, they know what to do and because it is done regularly it is less of an administrative burden. If we are interested in quality, the process should be taken seriously, it was said. Members agreed that a formative process was helpful. One member said that she would rather see money spent to energize people to help with the program development rather than into a portfolio that ends up

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counting numbers. An external committee of experts is much more knowledgeable in knowing what counts and what doesn't count rather than a cross-the-board assessment.

Why can't department heads be charged with the responsibility of providing information to the faculty, it was asked? Some members disagreed with this notion.

How much money does the Graduate School spend on a program review in one year, it was asked? Professor Brenner responded that it spent between \$60 - \$80,000 and the cycle is approximately seven years. Frequent reviews would change the operating practices of departments. It would force them to keep things current, he said.

Professor Goldman described the process used by a review committee that he serves on. They conduct a review every 18 months, problems are identified and recommendations are made. The same committee comes back 18 months later and says..."you didn't fix this problem." This is very important if the process is to mean more than simply keeping books and impressing people on the outside.

As accountability increases at the University of Minnesota, the process, if it is going to work, must feed back into the peoples' needs who are being evaluated, one member commented. For example, a developmental approach to how we construct our programs. This approach would result in a positive outcome.

Somehow we need to implement a way in which we can communicate the value of research to the outside community, another member added.

One problem with the process, one member observed, is that a university administrator, who is not an expert in a particular area, cannot make a critical assessment based on a sheet of information turned in by a department head. A department head could do it, but then it is not an objective review.

Every two years may be too much, it was said, not that much would change over such a short period to make the investment worthwhile - maybe the review should be done every 5-6 years.

One member suggested a uniform computerized spreadsheet for the University on which people put their vitae. This system would automatically evaluate journal and publishing quality. Collecting the information is the first step, what you do with it is the second phase. One member interjected that she would much rather know what use somebody is going to make of an evaluation process first and then tailor the data collection so the units are meaningfully interpreted. Collecting data without a plan for evaluation is not a good way to assess research quality, added another.

Graduate Student Benefits/Tuition

Professor Brenner asked Kathy James to provide an update on the committee's work regarding graduate student benefits and tuition. She said that the committee is doing all tuition waivers. The committee is reviewing and commenting on the Zetterberg report. They will also review the preliminary report on graduate student benefits. It should be completed in about a month. Professor Brenner said that Zetterberg has obtained enough information to lead to caution sign about thinking it is appropriate to switch to a direct charge system to cover tuition remission. By way of survey, it was found that other institutions recover costs: as a fringe benefit charge a percentage of the salary; and some who charge it as a direct amount. The

most compelling point is the overall cost to support a graduate student at other institutions compared to what we are paying - we are not out of alignment, he said. A second element to this he said, is the analysis - is the current system equitable for the institution? In the current system it appears that I.T. is disadvantaged because they have a percentage on the fringe benefit. The reason is due to time of appointment for the year and the salary base. The basic principle being the higher the salary from the mean, if it is a percentage, then you contribute more to the average cost of the student. If your average salary during the year is lower, as covering tuition, then you will be advantaged. There will be no action or change for fiscal year 1996, Professor Brenner said.

Regarding issues of FICA, Professor Brenner reported that they are working on refining. A draft letter is expected to be formalized within the coming week. He explained that last year to be considered a student you would have to take 3 credits (summer) that term and work less than 20 hours a week. This status would carry through the break period. The recommendation (for this summer) is that as long as you register before the pay period starts, you can register for 6 credits any time during the summer.

Professor Brenner reported that they have received legal opinion that they can create a special category for master degree students who are essentially thesis only.

Indirect Cost Policy

Professor Brenner distributed materials regarding the policy on charging indirect costs. He directed the committee's attention to the September 7, 1994 memo and the January 1995 addendum, regarding new guidelines for charging direct costs. He pointed out that the documents were drafts.

The documents outline the procedures necessary to deal with the numerous rules and regulations promulgated by federal agencies. He said that the Indirect Cost Committee has not met for awhile but has begun to work on developing a policy on how we should charging indirect for sponsored activity. The policy, he said, is trying to move the institution towards the concept of consistency, of how we collect indirect cost. The current practice has been to charge federal programs with the full indirect cost rate, unless specific agency legislation or regulation limits indirect cost recovery. With respect to non-federal sponsors who have written policies regarding indirect costs, the University generally accepts their stated policy.

It is particularly difficult to know what to do about industry, Professor Brenner said. Should all industry be treated the same? Currently, we are not consistent.

Professor Brenner opened the floor for comments or questions.

Professor Brenner pointed out that there is a further revision of A-21 that says that if you have a negotiated rate and your rates change, the negotiated rate is that which is in place before the term of the grant. There is question as to what this means he said. Hopefully, it means we can go to the new rate.

The intent is to hold down costs, Mr. Potami commented. The push for the indirect cost rate to go up is occurring in an environment in which the actual number of dollars in a given grant in a given grant is going down steadily, it was said. There is a tremendous financial squeeze for almost any program. The only way to accommodate the differences to get more grants, much like the "red queen game," where you are running faster and faster, to stay in the same place. The drive to raise the indirect cost rate is making things non

competitive unless somehow the increases of indirect cost show up in terms augmentation of infrastructure, or something like that.

Professor Brenner responded that they forecasted about a \$2.8 million dollar increase in the total net revenue on ICR for the coming fiscal year. One point five million is being distributed directly to the collegiate units or provosts based on a formula basis directly reflecting the ICR earned on fiscal 94, he said. We are putting more money back as a direct reflection of grant activity, he added. The remaining amount of money is being held for the presumably one-time expenses of implementing the grant management project. The other major change in the ICR budget, for 1996, is that they did some major swap outs in dollars. What has been referred to as block grants in the past, which were major allocations, have been hardened up with O&M money and using the ICR dollars for what should be used for ICR activities. They are moving in the direction of having a higher correlation of ICR expenditures associated to where they are being generated with the objective of getting at least 40% return to the units that are generating. Although indirect cost rates vary from institution to institution, the nationwide average among universities is approximately 50% of total direct costs. The University of Minnesota's rate of 45% places it in the middle of public universities, but at the lower end of private universities.

Policy on Professional Commitment

Professor Brenner provided an overview of the draft and pointed out that is a reflection of comments and critiques from SCFA and the Academic Integrity Committee. Others have had input as well. Academic professionals are included in this draft - previously they were not properly recognized. The policy will go before the Senate for information at the May 18 and action in June.

One member expressed curiosity about the issue of the learned journal - for example, the editor of the learned journal is paid a consulting fee that represents one day's worth of consulting activity a week. The activity is actually major. He said he would be uncomfortable with it being considered part of one's regular load in terms of conflict of commitment. Professor Brenner said this should be worked out with the department head in terms of workload. The idea of the policy in general is not to promote servitude, but to promote collegiality, professionalism and an even playing field among the faculty. The objective is consistency and fairness.

Why is the word "business" eliminated in some places and not in others, one member queried. Professor Brenner said that there are two kinds of businesses and this relates to extra professional but there is also unrelated business. The language under section 4.1 says that you may engage in business activities unrelated to their professional expertise insofar as they do not interfere with the primacy of their University obligations.

Members spent some time discussing time limitation for extra professional activities.

A question was raised about item 6.6 International Projects Administered by the University, second paragraph. . . . Academic employees on nine-month appointments may use these overload funds to fund a summer appointment, assuming they intend to work during this appointment . . . isn't that like working twice for the same compensation?

Professor Brenner responded that this is assuming a nine-month appointment and that would be used to

summer salary. The intent is that if you are working on an international project during your nine-month period and you earn an overload amount, you can do one of two things: 1) the extra money could be used to support yourself during the summer, or 2) it could be used for extra compensation which is equivalent to consultant time.

One member said that it needs to be made explicit that you can actually get paid outside of your department. Professor Brenner made a note of this.

Is it considered competition if you do a service or research for the University and you do it free of charge and ordinarily it would be a charged service, it was asked? Why would you do it for free, one member quipped!

The way we define extra professional activities seems to require that the training and expertise that qualifies the employee for the a particular University - what if a person is employed in an area that does not draw on that particular expertise, it was asked? This is considered under business, Professor Brenner responded, you can do it as long as it does not affect the primacy of your job.

Hearing no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned.

- Vickie Courtney

University of Minnesota