

Minutes*

**Assembly Committee on Educational Policy
Wednesday, October 24, 2001
1:00 – 3:00
385 Mondale Hall**

Present: Kathleen Newell (chair), Patricia Cavanaugh, Shawn Curley, Scott Ferguson, Steve Fitzgerald, Christina Frazier, Gretchen Haas, Gordon Hirsch, Frank Kulacki, Christine Maziar, Carol Miller, Mary Sue Simmons, Craig Swan

Absent: Geri Malandra, Martin Sampson, Karen Seashore, Mary Ellen Shaw

Guests: Professor David Frank (Council on Liberal Education); Carol Gruber, Academic Counseling for Intercollegiate Athletics

[In these minutes: (1) classroom supply, demand, use, and funding issues; (2) issues from the Council on Liberal Education; (3) athletic matters]

1. Classroom Supply, Demand, Use, and Funding Issues

Professor Newell convened the meeting at 1:30 and noted that a number of Twin Cities campus educational policy issues had arisen so that a meeting of the Assembly Committee on Educational Policy had been scheduled. She turned first to Mr. Fitzgerald to lead a discussion of Twin Cities classroom supply, demand, and utilization issues.

Mr. Fitzgerald began by introducing Nancy Peterson from his office, who, he said, makes a tremendous effort in scheduling classrooms to make life for chairs and deans easier; she is the University expert on classrooms. He then turned to a series of PowerPoint slides for his presentation.

His purpose, he said, is to provide “an informational update” and to “foster a dialogue on important issues regarding this critical teaching and learning” resource. The report was produced by the Office of Classroom Management.

There are two kinds of classrooms: general purpose classrooms, “designed to meet the teaching and learning needs of a broad range of academic programs and to support the entire University community” and which are centrally managed and funded; and departmental classrooms, “designed to meet the specific and more specialized needs of a given department or program,” such as studios and labs. The latter are departmentally-managed and -funded.

The Twin Cities general purpose classroom inventory is as follows:

East Bank 193 rooms 14,339 seats in 39 buildings

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West Bank	73 rooms	6,045 seats in 8 buildings
St. Paul	32 rooms	2,582 seats in 15 buildings
Total	298 rooms	22,966 seats in 62 buildings

There are 224 departmental classrooms and 341 labs.

There is a classic supply and demand curve for classrooms; demand is up because of semester conversion, program growth, and IMG. There were about 10,000 class sections under the quarter system; there were 13,967 sections with semesters in Fall, 2000, and the number appears to have stabilized around 14,000. Of those 13,967 sections, 12,646 were on-campus and 1321 were off-campus. Of the 12,646 on campus, 58% (7,357) were in classrooms and the remainder were not. Finally, of those 7,357 in classrooms, 55% or 4,025 were in general purpose classrooms and the remainder (3,332) were in departmental classrooms.

This means that there 3,332 sections in about 560 rooms (the departmental classrooms) and 4,025 sections in about 300 rooms (general purpose classrooms). Mr. Fitzgerald affirmed that duplicates (classes scheduled in the same time and space, such as joint graduate-undergraduate courses) are eliminated from these numbers.

At the same time demand is up, supply is down because of construction and renovation. There is also a downward trend in the number of classrooms available after construction: in Ford and Murphy, there are 3 fewer; in CALA there is one fewer; in JOML there are six fewer. These three alone account for a loss of nearly 1300 seats. There are 9 new rooms, with 597 seats, in temporary leased space at 1901 University Avenue. Another reason that demand exceeds supply is because of inefficient utilization. The net result is that there is a large number of "unplaced courses" (scheduled courses with students enrolled but with no classroom) before the beginning of each semester.

The number of unplaced courses over recent terms is as follows:

Fall 99	835
Spring 00	781
Fall 00	759
Spring 01	401
Fall 01	465

This is not a healthy sign, Mr. Fitzgerald said, and the quality of education is affected when hundreds of courses have no classroom. The problem has been addressed by putting these unplaced courses in substandard spaces such as deans' conference rooms, University Village, and so on; Ms. Peterson works with departments to find places. They also "arm-twist" departments to use other locations when enrollment in a course is small.

Classroom supply is not expected to increase. With the completion of the Architecture remodeling and Molecular and Cellular Biology, most classrooms will be on line. The next round of construction, however, will take another students seats off line each year for the foreseeable future.

The implications of these supply and demand problems are that the Office of Classroom Management is “approaching the limits of central classroom’s ability to support the growth of sections and courses. If we continue to use substandard classrooms, our educational quality and reputation will suffer.” If enrollment limits or other restrictive measures are to be avoided, there must be an improvement in scheduling and utilization of both departmental and central classrooms, Mr. Fitzgerald told the Committee.

Professor Kulacki inquired if there are any plans for a fixed total size for the Twin Cities campus, both undergraduate and graduate, to help alleviate this problem. Dr. Swan said the Twin Cities campus has been admitting about 5,000 new students per year and that number could perhaps rise to 5,500 in the next ten years. There are about 28,000 undergraduates on the Twin Cities campus but that number can also be affected by retention and transfers. There could be SMALL growth in the next few years. He pointed out that high school graduations are expected to plateau for the next 6-7 years but a sustained decline is predicted to begin about 2009.

They are also hearing, however, that departments and colleges, driven by IMG, want to expand programs, Mr. Fitzgerald said.

In addition to a supply problem, there is “too much slack in scheduling and inefficient use” of classrooms. In the past there was sufficient extra classroom capacity to allow less efficient use; that is no longer true, Mr. Fitzgerald emphasized. The long-term options are few: fewer classes, more classrooms, or better use of existing classrooms. Fewer classes do not support college needs; more classrooms are desirable but are not in the capital plan; there can, however, be an improvement in patterns of use.

There are several ways to improve utilization: continue to improve central classroom technology, improve overall utilization rates for both central and departmental classrooms, and a greater focus on adhering to current scheduling policy in terms of standard class hours. Standard class periods allow students to take interdisciplinary courses, improves use of expensive space, increases tuition revenue, and facilitates academic and program goals. Without standard class periods, colleges, students, faculty, and classrooms would exist in independent “silos.”

There are trade-offs for using standard class periods. Non-standard hours optimizes planning at the department/college level, optimizes individual faculty scheduling, requires more classrooms with lower overall usage, and is optimal for graduate/professional programs. Standard hours optimizes planning at the campus level, optimizes student scheduling, requires fewer classrooms with a higher usage rate, and is optimal for undergraduate programs. Where should the fulcrum be, Mr. Fitzgerald asked?

In Fall, 2000, 58% of day courses in general purpose classrooms had some kind of non-standard scheduling issue (1945 of 3367 sections had non-standard time, credit hour, or time distribution). 806 courses had non-standard times, 945 had credits not equal to contact hours, and 361 exceeded the general rule that no more than 60% of a department’s offerings should fall in the prime time of 9:00 – 2:00 (and some courses had issues with more than one of these categories). Mr. Fitzgerald said that his office does not try to adjudicate a difference between contact hours and credits but the data are referred to departments. They are trying to work with departments to move some of the classes out of the prime time period.

In terms of utilization and occupancy, for Fall, 2000, general purpose classrooms were used 60% of the time between 8:00 and 5:00; 66% of the seats were occupied. The 60% figure is below what it should be, Mr. Fitzgerald said; the goal is 67-70% use. Asked if there are benchmark data from other Big Ten schools, Mr. Fitzgerald said that the data that do exist are not very good. Dr. Swan suggested that this question could be raised with the other schools in an attempt to reach common understandings about classroom utilization. Mr. Fitzgerald agreed and noted that there is also no national standard; use rates are computed differently at different schools. If there is to be a policy response to this issue, Dr. Maziar commented, it would be helpful to see what other university utilization rates are so that policies do not become too rigid.

Mr. Fitzgerald then presented data on the distribution of classes over the week in general purpose classrooms:

Monday	19%
Tuesday	22
Wednesday	21
Thursday	23
Friday	15

He also provided data on the distribution of class start times:

8:00	9%
9:00	15.9
10:00	11.4
11:00	14.7
12:00	11.9
1:00	12.7
2:00	12.6
3:00	5.7
4:00	6.2

Mr. Fitzgerald said he was worried about the trend in unplaced courses; if the Architecture remodeling is not completed on time, they may face a problem they cannot fix. He noted that the Fall, 2002 schedule will be set in November, so prompt action is needed to reduce the number of unplaced courses.

Ms. Frazier said that most of her classes start after 4:00, when there are a lot more classrooms available; could the faculty be asked to teach more courses then? Mr. Fitzgerald said they can. He recalled that when he was in college, Saturday morning classes were the norm; there is at least a need for more evening and Friday afternoon classes. One faculty member has pointed out to him that lightly-loaded Friday afternoons means that student weekend partying starts earlier than it might otherwise.

For the short term, the Office of Classroom Management will work with colleges to address specific deviations from scheduling policy and will increase efforts to adhere to policy. Data will be provided to the deans identifying all non-standard courses and his office will ask departments about all

courses that are not scheduled at standard times. For Fall, 2002, the goals are to reduce peak-time congestion, emphasize compliance with existing policy for start and end times, achieve increased accuracy in projecting enrollment and number of sections, better define course technology requirements, and reduce or eliminate unplaced courses.

There seems to have developed a culture of not adhering to approved scheduling policy, Mr. Fitzgerald commented; at UMC, in contrast, the vice chancellor must approve any deviation from standard class times and UMM simply does not allow such deviation. Ms. Peterson, however, tries to provide expert customer service and to allow non-standard times. Crookston and Morris are less flexible, which may be good, Dr. Maziar said; do other universities follow that kind of policy, making the Twin Cities an outlier in that respect? They do, Mr. Fitzgerald said. That is not your fault, Dr. Maziar told him; academic units will need to exercise more discipline, she said. His office is part of the problem, Mr. Fitzgerald responded, because it has not held the line on adhering to policy.

What is current policy, Professor Newell asked? It is spread across four documents, Mr. Fitzgerald replied, and is probably in need of revision. They have allowed exemptions for graduate and professional courses and have tried to deal with clinical teaching schedules in the Academic Health Center—those are key issues, he said.

Do classes at non-standard times bump regularly-scheduled classes, Professor Newell asked? They used to, Mr. Fitzgerald said. Now, any late changes in a schedule means a class is put on the unplaced course list.

With respect to more accurate projection of enrollment, Mr. Fitzgerald said, in a number of cases course enrollment projections are completely wrong. In some cases, that may be conscious, because instructors want to get into high-technology classrooms. His office will give departments a list of classes that are plus or minus 10% of projection; he said he believed departments should manage enrollment better. Professor Hirsch suggested the range should be plus or minus 20% because enrollment projection is not always easy. Dr. Maziar noted that there are different consequences for under-projecting and over-projecting. Over-projecting enrollment claims a scarce resource (classrooms) and is a serious problem. Mr. Fitzgerald said his office can work with colleges and departments to flag the numbers; the units can decide if something is out of whack.

Mr. Fitzgerald assured the Committee his office would not take a draconian approach. They would use common sense based on existing policy, recognize the existing special provisions for graduate and professional courses, and work collaboratively with departments and colleges. Dr. Maziar inquired if graduate and professional courses rely more on departmental classrooms; Mr. Fitzgerald said they do, but many are also in general purpose classrooms.

Mr. Fitzgerald said improvements will require cooperation and effort by both his office and department schedulers; he is not talking about the Office of Classroom Management “running amuck.” Schedulers, in turn, will need backing from administrators and deans. There is need for a broad base of support for the problem to be solved.

There are essential elements for solving the problem: departments and colleges must exercise discipline in setting the Fall, 2002, schedule, by using standard start and end times, minimizing peak-time requirements, using Mondays and Fridays more, more accurately projecting enrollment and

course technology needs, and by managing course submissions. His office, in turn, will work with schedulers to improve efficiency in classroom use.

Other actions that are being considered include further reductions in peak-time congestion, additional emphasis on compliance with policy on standard start and end times, spreading out simultaneous sections for the same course, instituting a justification and approval system for non-standard course times, tracking department classroom utilization, and revision of the scheduling policy.

This issue will be brought to the Deans' Council, Mr. Fitzgerald said, as well as to departments and associate deans. Key committees, such as this one, will also be informed. There will also be a meeting for all schedulers in early November to review the Fall, 2002, schedule in detail.

For the longer term, his office is working with the Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost: to start a review of scheduling policy; to begin data collection and analysis of departmental classroom utilization; on how best to identify and act on future classroom needs of colleges; and how best to keep deans and the Provost informed about results of efforts to improve classroom use. Critical next actions include support from deans in adherence to policy, working closely with departments to improve classroom utilization, and develop an improved schedule for Fall, 2002, and beyond.

When will there be a report from the deans, Professor Newell asked? They are not seeking one, Mr. Fitzgerald said; the deans are being provided information and asked to use it in order to achieve better compliance with existing policy. Is it sufficient to wait to see if the process works or should the Committee take a position, she inquired? Mr. Fitzgerald urged that the Committee take a position; he said he would welcome the support.

Professor Curley said it sounded as though existing policy is adequate and the statement should call for adherence to it. Dr. Swan said that is not what he had heard; better adherence will help, but there could also be changes in policy. Such change could not be made in time for the Fall, 2002, schedule, however. Mr. Fitzgerald agreed and said there needs to be better compliance as well as a review of existing policy. His office must also hold the line on adhering to policy and will tell the departments that Classroom Management is doing so.

The Committee subsequently approved (by email following the meeting) the following statement:

The Assembly Committee on Educational Policy is extremely concerned about the continuing occurrence of "unplaced courses" at the beginning of each semester (that is, courses with students enrolled but with no classroom or other appropriate instructional space).

Large numbers of course sections are being taught at non-standard times that do not accord with scheduling policy approved by the Twin Cities Campus Assembly and the University Senate. This practice results in reduced efficiency in classroom use, which, in combination with supply and demand, degrades the quality of education.

The Committee supports efforts to increase compliance with Senate- and Assembly-approved scheduling policy. The Committee specifically supports action by the Office of

Classroom Management to improve classroom utilization and to work with colleges and departments in improving adherence to standard scheduling policy.

The Committee also recommends that colleges and departments actively back efforts to improve utilization of critically-important central classroom resources.

Discussion then moved to the issue of technology upgrades in classrooms. Mr. Fitzgerald reported that 65 classrooms have been updated, which is not sufficient to meet demand. He explained that his office has fallen significantly behind the projected schedule for upgrades and in funding for life-cycle costs and provision of staff support (both of which were built into the original upgrade plan). They have made progress but have nothing budgeted for life-cycle funding (that is, because classroom technology has a finite life, about three years, there needs to be recurring funding to replace that equipment); all funds have been one-time allocations. The upgrade plan called for about \$7 million; \$1.6 million has been provided thus far.

There is also distance education and wireless communication on the horizon, Professor Kulacki observed; is the administration taking a thoughtful position on these issues or letting things fall where they may because of the demand for dollars, he asked? With respect to wireless communication, Dr. Swan commented, the plan called for it to be phased in, initially for instructor use and eventually student connectivity. That second phase would take into account the evolution of the technology, but the University is falling behind its schedule.

Is his concern that deferred maintenance is accruing for which the University is not accounting, Dr. Maziar asked? It is, Mr. Fitzgerald affirmed. They are already behind--on maintenance of the rooms that were initially upgraded in 1999. So if the upgrade plan were followed, the University would be even further behind on deferred maintenance of classrooms, Dr. Maziar exclaimed!

In addition, Mr. Fitzgerald said, student expectations are that coming to a research university the faculty will have the technology they need to teach a course. Professor Kulacki noted that he represents the Senate Committee on Educational Policy on a council for technology enhancement; bringing distance education into focus assumes all of the necessary technology is in place.

Professor Newell thanked Mr. Fitzgerald for his presentation.

2. Issues from the Council on Liberal Education

Professor Newell next welcomed Professor David Frank, chair of the Council on Liberal Education (CLE). Professor Frank took up the issues that had been listed in the agenda for the meeting.

-- The idea of math-intensive courses came up last year in CLE. Since he is in Math himself, Professor Frank said, he took little role in the discussions and saw his role as chair as responsible for slowing down the discussion inasmuch as there was only one representative from CLA on CLE last year. The discussion has resumed this year, with more CLA representation. CLE plans to develop a proposal but will move slowly, and will circulate it to the colleges before taking any action.

The idea is that a certain number of courses will be designated math-intensive, in parallel with the writing-intensive courses. The number of courses and requirements are still being discussed; the proposed requirement fluctuates between two and four courses, with the understanding that many courses students take already are math-intensive (e.g., mathematics, physics, etc.).

There seems to be general inclination to favor the requirement, with the details to be ironed out. CLE does not want to do anything to increase time to graduation; a new requirement might have little effect on the majority of students but could have an undue effect on some.

Dr. Maziar suggested it would be helpful to identify classes that are math intensive and examine programs of students who have recently graduated in order to get some idea of the impact of a requirement. If there were a list of such courses it would be easy to answer the question, Dr. Swan agreed.

Why impose a requirement if most students would meet it anyway, Professor Hirsch inquired? He said he favored people studying math--and the languages, and so on--but there are a lot of good things that are not put into undergraduate requirements. If this one is adopted, then other requirements should be reduced. He said he, too, was worried about graduation rates, but also about recruitment: if students are interested in other areas they will be discouraged from coming to Minnesota if it has an expansive set of requirements.

In terms of the analogy with writing-intensive courses, Professor Miller said that in that case a number of courses were transformed; faculty were provided support for the change with the dispersal of the composition program funding. How would that work here? Would courses be transformed? Where would the support for faculty come from? Professor Frank agreed that if many courses were to be transformed, calling for additional faculty work, support would be critical. He said he suspected that most courses, however, would qualify without additional support.

It is not clear what problem is being solved, Professor Curley said. Is there a sense that graduates have inadequate math skills? That should not be true if they are already taking the courses that would be math-intensive. Should students be taking courses with more math than they do now? This needs to be clarified. The motivation is a perceived deficiency among students in handling quantitative issues, Professor Frank responded, something that in some quarters is called "numeracy."

Undergraduate students have lots of deficiencies, Professor Hirsch pointed out; that is the nature of undergraduate students. To the laughter that erupted, Professor Hirsch assured the Committee he meant that comment in the nicest way. One can make the case they have language deficiencies as well, he said; the University cannot solve all those deficiencies, real or imagined.

Has the curriculum grown so that students can take fluff and avoid the difficult parts, Professor Kulacki asked? There are so many courses at the University that have no math at all; he said it seemed to him that there were a number of courses one could strike from the catalogue without undue harm to the reputation of the University. Probably including, he added, a course or two that he has taught.

-- CLE is aware of the different implications for liberal education between the BA and the BS degree. It is also aware of the tensions between different college needs and that the current liberal

education requirements are an uneasy compromise among them (e.g., engineering versus CLA). CLE is asking all of the deans to speak to it about this issue. Associate Dean Skaggs in CLA is concerned that the all-campus liberal education requirements do not do justice to what should be in a BA degree; he is examining the requirements with an eye to making them slightly more demanding than originally designed. The tensions will continue, Professor Frank said; colleges that want more strenuous requirements could increase them for the college.

The University is trying to make it easier to graduate, not harder, Dr. Swan said, and uniform undergraduate rules are one way to do so. It would not be acceptable to say that a student had met liberal education requirements in one college, transfer, and then be told he or she had NOT met them in the second college. Dr. Swan cautioned that colleges need to be very careful about this; he said he would not want to see requirements surreptitiously increased.

-- In terms of writing across the curriculum, CLE is reviewing it for the first time this year. With the change to semesters, CLE was first worried about the number of courses available to students to meet liberal education requirements; now it can begin to turn to assessment. In terms of writing-intensive courses, Professor Frank said it was his sense that people are generally satisfied and that the University has avoided the disasters that befell other institutions. Assessment is complicated and expensive and CLE is not sure what it should do.

Dr. Swan said that he and Dr. Malandra are talking about broader assessment issues related to the North Central Association and the University's accreditation. This is a subject that needs to be on this Committee's agenda next spring. With respect to writing across the curriculum, that is something that is talked about at different times and with different purposes. Some talk about when students come to the University, as with a portfolio; others talk about students accumulating a portfolio over their undergraduate years and then assessing it in the senior year. Dr. Swan said he did not support the latter proposal because it gets mired in practical issues (one does not know if the student wrote the papers; the idea that someone would review all these papers and decide that the student could not graduate even though he or she had passed all the necessary courses is just silly). His office is trying to develop a protocol to assess writing-intensive courses.

Professor Frank said that CLE has not discussed this a great deal. Some believe that the disappearance of upper-division composition courses, and a general weakening of writing-intensive courses over time, will lead to students having little instruction in writing. He said he did not believe that had happened at the University--yet.

-- The relationship between CLE and this Committee is informal, surely not hostile, Professor Frank said. He is happy to work with the Committee.

Is there another body that approves CLE actions, Professor Newell asked? And who appoints CLE? Professor Frank said that CLE is appointed by Dr. Swan and understands it has the authority to create liberal education requirements without further review or approval. CLE reports to the Twin Cities Campus Assembly, but Assembly approval for CLE decisions is not required.

There have been many conversations about civic engagement and civic learning, Dr. Simmons observed; have any of them reached CLE, she asked? Professor Frank noted that students can reduce their liberal education requirements if they are in service learning programs and said that CLE has

talked about civic engagement and how to integrate it into the curriculum. Any time it does so, there is pressure to drop some other requirement. Should CLE think about civic engagement, he asked? SCEP has appointed a subcommittee to look at the issue, Dr. Simmons said.

-- The Undergraduate Curriculum Subcommittee has not met, to anyone's knowledge; its only responsibility is to hear complaints from colleges about encroachments on its curriculum by another college.

Professor Newell thanked Professor Frank for joining the meeting.

3. Report on Athletic Teams

Professor Newell next turned to Dr. Carol Gruber, the new Director of Academic Counseling for Intercollegiate Athletics.

Dr. Gruber noted that the Committee had received the report from Women's Athletics, about the arrangements that had been made for student-athletes on one team who missed a final exam because of competition. That was the only time that happened last year, she said. There were also no such arrangements necessary for Fall Semester, 2001.

Dr. Gruber said she would be glad to answer any questions the Committee might have, noting that she had only been in the job for four months. She said she will be appearing before the Faculty Assembly Steering Committee (the Twin Cities members of the Faculty Consultative Committee) later in November to make a report.

Professor Newell thanked Dr. Gruber for joining the meeting, and adjourned it at 3:20.

-- Gary Engstrand

University of Minnesota