

Minutes*

**Senate Committee on Educational Policy
Fall Retreat
Friday, August 26, 2005
8:30 – 12:30
University Club, St. Paul**

Present: Richard McCormick (chair), Shawn Curley, Gail Dubrow, James Leger, Claudia Neuhauser, Mary Ellen Shaw, Donna Spannaus-Martin, Craig Swan, Douglas Wangenstein

Absent: William Bart, Vernon Cardwell, LeAnn Dean, Christopher Pappas, Emily Ronning, Paul Siliciano, Joel Weinsheimer

Guests: none

[In these minutes: (1) ROTC appointment; (2) discussion with Dean Dubrow; (3) role of the Committee in the strategic positioning process; (4) evaluation of teaching; (5) issues for the Committee for the year]

1. ROTC Appointment

Professor McCormick was delayed in getting to the retreat so Professor Curley convened the meeting and turned to Vice Provost Swan for an urgent item.

Dr. Swan explained that the ROTC subcommittee, which did not have a chair at the moment, is the body that reviews and approves appointments of individuals nominated by the armed services to serve on the faculty of the ROTC programs. One such nominee, if approved, is scheduled to begin his work at the University on September 1.

The Committee reviewed the credentials of the nominee, discussed the general nature of qualifications required for such appointments, and approved the appointment unanimously.

2. Discussion with Dean Gail Dubrow

Professor McCormick turned next to Dean Dubrow, who introduced herself to the Committee and then outlined her foci for the first part of her tenure as Dean of the Graduate School. She discussed reviews of academic programs, advancing interdisciplinary programs, the administrative structure of the Graduate School, budgets and funding, rethinking doctoral education. Other issues to be addressed include time to degree for doctoral students, what happens to Ph.D.s, and the quality and number of programs.

3. Role of the Committee in the Strategic Positioning Process

Professor McCormick suggested the Committee consider its role and function in the strategic positioning process. Vice Provost Swan handed out a diagram identifying the various task forces that will be appointed and explained how they would function. He urged the Committee to schedule early in fall

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semester discussions of student support and the proposal for an honors college and to transmit the results of its deliberations to the appropriate task forces. It may be that the Committee will identify a list of issues rather than resolutions of those issues. Dean Dubrow said the Committee should identify principles for the task forces (e.g., there should be intellectual mobility for undergraduate students). Dr. Shaw said the Committee might be able to affect the charges to the task forces; Dr. Swan said they would have the ability to take up issues identified by the Committee if the task force felt it should have been included.

Professor McCormick suggested one question should be about the number of colleges on the Twin Cities campus. Professor Spannaus-Martin urged the Committee not to forget the three undergraduate programs in the Academic Health Center; Dr. Swan said he assumed there should be communication with the task forces in the Academic Health Center.

In terms of the Committee's role, Professor McCormick said it should talk with the FCC representatives who will be serving on the steering committees for the task forces in various vice presidential areas. Dean Dubrow said that in addition to the procedural question, there is a larger question: what does the Committee want to see in graduate and undergraduate education? What transformations should take place? What do they want the planning process to accomplish, at a time when significant change is possible? The Committee should read the task force charges of interest to it and identify the stance it wishes to take about their work. Professor McCormick agreed with Dean Dubrow; the discussion should start now about the Committee's hopes and anxieties, about where there could be change and where change could threaten what the Committee believes is important.

One issue in undergraduate reform is graduation rate, Professor McCormick said, and that is related to the task force on student support. A related matter is centralization versus decentralization. Advising, for example, should be in a small community, but there also needs to be "an office for lost sheep." The Committee could talk about taking less time for an undergraduate degree, and perhaps combining it with a Masters degree in five years (by establishing higher benchmarks for students), Dean Dubrow suggested; doing so will depend on the quality of high school education, Professor Neuhauser said, which led Professor McCormick to observe that the work of the preK-12 education task force will also be of interest to this Committee. Professor Leger said he would like to see more outreach to K-12 schools; Professor Wangenstein wondered about the prevalence of PSEO students and whether the University is providing them the right kind of advising; Professor Neuhauser suggested thinking about transitional courses for students who have taken PSEO and AP courses so they do not have to repeat work at the University. Professor McCormick said there is a debate about how much credit the University should give for PSEO, IB, and AP credits. Dr. Swan said he wished to talk to the Committee early in the year about what the University's expectations in math should be.

Dr. Swan also reported on CLEP tests. He looked at practices at 45 other institutions. Nine private institutions do not accept them; about 11 do (mostly public universities in the Midwest); about 11 were said by CLEP to accept them but the institutional websites said they did not, and in other cases there was no mention. The scale for the tests is 20-80; Minnesota accepts results from the high 40s while Wisconsin (Madison) only accepts scores of 70 or above. This issue needs to be revisited, Professor McCormick said.

4. Evaluation of Teaching

Professor McCormick noted that the draft policy on the evaluation of instruction will come to the Senate this fall. There will be a debate at the first meeting about who will have access to students' written comments on evaluation forms. There is nothing more for the Committee to do at the moment; the issues

that were aired in this Committee and the Committee on Faculty Affairs will be played out again on the Senate floor.

The "student release" questions will be piloted this fall. The Committee was given the authority, by the Senate, to take final action on the questions. It has the authority to approve the questions, not delay them, Professor McCormick pointed out. The questions can come to the Committee before the pilot study is conducted, he added.

5. Issues for the Year

Committee members reviewed the list of "issues pending" and identified those it wished to focus on. By the end of the discussion, the Committee had concluded that it wished to take up many of the issues on the list; they were:

- revisit the issue of CLEP tests and the number of credits the University gives for PSEO/AP/IB credits.
- the University's expectations of incoming students in math
- undergraduate education at research universities
- another report on 5XXX classes (percentages of undergraduates in them)
- review the proposal for external use of classrooms
- schedule the bookstores/libraries discussion again
- scheduling and use of classrooms and a possible policy concerning classes at non-standard times
- schedule a discussion with Vice Provost Billie Wahlstrom about on-line student evaluations
- courses with a high percentage of A's
- role of the faculty in setting admissions standards (spring, 2006)
- an honors college
- financing graduate education (task force report 9/04)
- re-examine current CLE requirements
- data on mid-term grade alerts: How is the impact measured?
- once the grad planner is operational, collect information on the adoption of the 13-credit rule, find out if it is possible to graduate in four years in all programs, track the number of students who are on the path to a degree, consider data on # of credits students have at graduation by college/major, % required courses in majors (are there "slower" majors?), data on credits at graduation for peer institutions
- transfer credit quality (is there a systematic problem: some students, from some institutions, cannot do college work?)
- report from the Academy of Distinguished Teachers
- assessment issues, North Central Association

Professor McCormick adjourned the retreat at 12:15.

-- Gary Engstrand