

SENATE RESEARCH COMMITTEE*
September 23, 1994
Minutes of the Meeting

PRESENT: Allen Goldman (chair), Mark Snyder, Eric Klinger, John Basgen, Susan Hupp, Jeylan Mortimer, Mark Brenner, Tony Potami, Signe Betsinger

REGRETS: Paul Sackett

ABSENT: Henry Buchwald, Liz Eull, N.L. Gault, Dongli-Su

GUESTS: Darwin Hendel and Jane Whiteside, Academic Affairs

OTHERS: WinAnn Schumi

Professor Goldman convened the first meeting of the Research Committee at 1:30 p.m. He welcomed new and returning members and asked them to introduce themselves.

The approval of the minutes from the joint meeting of the Faculty Affairs Committee and Research Committees was deferred.

Professor Goldman explained that the main purpose of the meeting is to discuss the benchmark materials for matters that relate to research and particular sponsored funding. The Regents are expected to act on the measures in October. He then turned the meeting over to Darwin Hendel and Jane Whiteside.

Dr. Hendel thanked the Committee for giving them the opportunity to discuss the materials with them. He explained that he, Jane Whiteside and George Copa (from the College of Education), have been working on the development of institutional level critical measures. He began by saying that the process began with the January, 1994, resolution by the Board of Regents that asked the central administration to develop a set of institutional level critical measures that would be used in evaluating the implementation and progress of U2000. Dr. Several of the Senate Committees saw the measures last year, Dr. Hendel reminded Committee members, and that they will continue to be included in the process. The materials were presented to the Board of Regents at the September meeting for review and discussion and will take action at the October meeting.

Moving on to describe the process, Dr. Hendel said that they started by defining a manageable set of general critical measures to be used by the University. A number of things were done, including going through collegiate and campus planning documents, reviewing a number of reports, taking into account the work that was done in the previous year by the committee appointed by the Graduate School, and looking at changing requirements relative to increased reporting by the University to outside constituencies, they came up with eighteen measurement areas. The next three months were spent on focusing on the five measures that they felt they could get a good handle on, he said. The five characteristics are: 1) characteristics of entering students; 2) graduation rate; 3) underrepresented groups and diversity; 4) sponsored funding; and, 5) direct

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instructional expenditures per students. He said, that while the three of them have spent most of their time working on these measures, it has been a process that has included a lot of involvement from elsewhere in the University.

Dr. Hendel suggested that the Committee turn their attention to the proposed critical measure about sponsored funding and then raise additional issues about the other critical measures. Before the discussion began, Dr. Hendel pointed out that what they had tried to do with each of the critical measure was to come up with a relatively small number of general measure or indicators that might be used in looking at how the University was doing in the particular area that was being highlighted in the critical measure. With that, he asked for comments and/or observations members might have about sponsored funding.

A number of points were made:

-- The criterion as a central critical measure makes sense, commented one member, but there is an incentive that this influences that can affect the direction of scientific endeavor in the various areas. If total sponsored funding is the measure, it provides a good incentive for "big science" and a disincentive to "little science." There has been a long standing debate within the scientific community about the extent in which "big science" erodes "little science" and the relative weight in contribution to scientific progress. This criterion weighs in on the side of "big science" and will likely play a role in the fates of the different units. Adding, that this is said not to suggest that we eliminate "big science" or that this is not a valid measure, but rather as a cautionary note.

This also favors applied science versus fundamental science, interjected another member. If you took this as a measure of success, presumably in making investments in faculty who do research, it might be said that we really don't have to have anything except a medical school because the National Institute of Health is the biggest source of money and we know that the average grant size coming from the NIH is likely to be larger than the National Science Foundation or somewhere else. If this is to measure the impact of investments in researchers, it is an inadequate criterion.

Dr. Hendel commented that is important in looking at both of these issues, that this is one of what eventually will be 18 critical measures. Referring to the first point, Dr. Hendel said that it will be addressed more clearly when they look more closely at one of the measures which looks at research and scholarly accomplishments in a broader sense, and doesn't look specifically at the funding aspect of it. The measures should be used as a set rather than putting sole focus on any one, he said. Applied versus fundamental is also a very important consideration and by putting this forward as a measure, we have to be careful that bad things don't happen as a result of using this solely to the exclusion of the other measures, he concluded.

The purpose of the measure to identify some quantifiable set of numbers that can be understood broadly, commented a member. This number can be understood broadly and is something that we could strive for. Quantitative measures of scholarship and creativity are much harder to come by. One can view some aspects of sponsored funding as directly connected to scholarly work and others are not, they represent service. The discussion has been restricted to federal funding. If this kind of measure is applied in a macro sense, there is a danger that it will distort the mission of the University and under-represent areas of research and scholarship that are very important.

Perhaps sub-measures should be developed that look at different aspects of funding, one of which might be all funding that in some way could be considered basic and another subset that could be applied, responded Dr. Hendel.

It is more complicated than that. For instance, if you look at the list of universities there are universities that are more highly ranked than the University of Minnesota in terms of their scholarly impact which are further down on the list of institutions which have funding. Their level of funding is not comparable to ours and some have outstanding medical school and in one instance they don't have a medical school. This measure is not the whole answer by itself. In looking at funding sources, some of them are highly competitive and only the best people get money from those sources. Other sources are not competitive and have a lot of money.

No one indicator will be perfect - multiple indicators are needed. Be sure that the total number of dollars has to be an indicator. What others are contemplated - is it dollar per capita, is it the total number of investigators?

Mark Brenner responded to this comment. Data are available comparable by the department as to where we stand in comparison to our peer groups. He said he did not think that we have data about funding generated per investigator.

Do we have information about total units of external funding? How many funded are there at the University? Dr. Potami responded to this question. We can do this but you would have to get everyone else across the country willing to do it. You also need the staff to do this. We also need a way to determine what applied is.

Members spent some time discussing the totality of dollars of a department, the number of investigators, and the strength of the department.

Goals are only as good as the strategies that people set up. What are the plans for the strategies?

Dr. Hendel referred to page six of the document and noted that they are not very specific. Goals will be translated into action at the campus level, provost level, collegiate or department level. Focus on the initiatives is clearly the next step in the process.

Answers to many of these questions will come from the bottom up, interjected Dr. Whiteside. There are several levels of planning - institution and campus, but in many ways the meaningful content is in the colleges and departments within colleges. This process began last winter and will continue.

This is fine, said one member, but if you look at what is going to happen in the next several years in terms of the budgeting process, this is impossible. Recruiting, nurturing, retaining and rewarding world class researcher is eroding. It does have to come from the bottom up. The whole notion of U2000 is to siphon off money to essentially put out other fires. The University and the State need to make investments at lower levels to enable departments to develop programs and maintain quality.

This section of the document is very vague, commented yet another member. If our salaries keep eroding how do we keep good researchers? Without strategic initiatives we cannot assume we will

also be in the top 15.

The faculty determine where we rank, commented Dr. Potami. The faculty get the grants. Further discussion ensued about preserving excellent faculty, what is the definition of a professor, and what a research university is.

The Committee is not comfortable with how the section on sponsored funding is written, Professor Goldman said. Does it have to be done by October? Dr. Whiteside explained that the Regents are being asked to approve the general way that the five measures have been laid out, they are not being asked to approve the goals. Part of the rationale is that all of the areas are very complex. There are a lot of sections that have not been started. The Regents are being asked to approve, in general, the way the areas are being approached, not to approve the details. This allows room to continue to work on how they are defined and what they really mean.

Dr. Whiteside pointed out that one of the categories in the second group is faculty and staff. This includes everything from recruitment and hiring to retention as well as environment. One issue is to determine how we measure whether we have top quality faculty and keeping them. This has not yet been worked on.

One member asked if there was a Senate Committee that could be identified with the development, monitoring and evolution with the benchmark indicators. Concern was expressed that if this becomes a single disparate process of arriving at a group of benchmark then there is a danger that they will either be set in stone or disregarded. If there is an ongoing group whose responsibility it is to formulate and serve as a monitoring agency, then it would be clear that it is an ongoing process.

Dr. Whiteside responded that under the reorganization of central administration there is to be a Planning Office. One function of that office is to continue to work on these measures and to follow through on the long-term parts. In addition, the colleges will be asked to start on the second round of planning. A committee has been established to look at the Senate structure and determine how it can better connect in with the administration and other areas of the University. It has been the practice to include involvement from Senate Committees.

Professor Goldman thanked Drs. Whiteside and Hendel for their presentation.

New Reporting System by ORTTA

Tony Potami reported on the new effort reporting system administered by the Office of Research and Technology Transfer Administration (ORTTA). The system will begin in fiscal 1995. The system is designed to be more efficient, easier to use, and will reduce the University's exposure to federal compliance risk. ORTTA will offer staff training for the new certification method.

Directing the attention of the Committee to the overheads, Dr. Potami preceded with a detailed presentation. He began by saying that while the audits conducted have not been severe, they are starting to show a pattern of some problems that the systems, policies, and staffing are slipping in the area of system management. One reason for this effort is to ensure that the government can rely on the University of Minnesota in accepting funds. One great way to slip is to not get awards because you don't have systems to support it, he said. Such things as the review of the policies on Academic Misconduct and the Conflict of Interest have

been done in the past couple of years. A major review of indirect cost has been done with a result of a rate from 40 to 45.

He then walked the group through the steps taken to meet accountability requirements. One such step includes a diagnostic review, which has begun. The Grants Management Project will be going for two months at which time a report will be issued and then a plan to make corrections will be developed. He will keep the Committee apprised.

The effort reporting system is required by the government....if you take the government's money, you need to have this system to certify the charges to grants. There is no other alternative, he said. If you don't have a system, the government will ask for the money back. The effort reporting system has been in existence since the early 60's. The University has been using the same system since 1976. In the past several years it has been dying. It is inflexible, very burdensome and costly. In 1993, a committee was established to review the system. Arthur Anderson was hired to look at the system and are working with the University. One change is that we will go from a monthly reporting system to a quarterly system. He said that monthly reports will be issued showing who has been charged and the percentages. Then, he said, there will be a quarterly report which will show the quarterly accumulation, a quarterly sponsored project employee summary report. This will show the faculty member the charges to the grant, by name and by grant. The P.I. will have to certify who worked on the grant. Training will be provided throughout the campus. It is crucial that individuals attend the training, said Dr. Potami.

He moved on to discuss the responsibility of the P.I. The P.I. identifies who he/she wants working on the grant. The department head should not influence this. The P.I. determines what is needed. To be in compliance, the effort reporting cards must be certified. Failure to comply could result in the withholding of research support funds, deny spending grants, etc.

One of the problems that has been identified through this review is that rather than charging the grants, we contribute. We have excessive cost sharing. It complicates effort reporting. For example, he said, we cost share research assistants, secretaries, some post-doctorates, and faculty salaries. Currently there are no real requirements for cost sharing any more. We need to think of ways of how to minimize cost sharing. One of the big impacts it has is that it reduces the overhead rate substantially. This generated a lively and lengthy discussion about grants and cost sharing. At a minimum, Dr. Brenner said, we need to raise people's awareness of the implications of cost sharing.

Proposed Resolution on Research Climate

Professor Goldman asked the Committee to turn its attention to the proposed Resolution on Research Climate. He explained that the Resolution was approved by the Research Committee and the Faculty Affairs Committee on May 26, with the provision that the authors of the resolution improve the language grammatically. In June, the revised Resolution was distributed to both committees. One member of the Faculty Affairs Committee then raised a question about the Resolution, saying that full professors were being left out. Professor Klinger, co-author of the Resolution, said that the Resolution states....that workload structure in all such units must enable its FULL-TIME TENURED AND TENURE-TRACK FACULTY...he said, full professors may be left out in the creation of the standard for the time allotted for research. The people benefiting from the standard include full professors. He suggested that including full and associate professors, be added.

One member said that the issue may come from the last part of the sentence regarding tenure and promotion. He said that he thought merit increases may need to be added to that wording. Professor Klinger responded that the criteria for merit increases are not spelled out anywhere in the University, whereas, criteria for promotion and tenure are.

Another member expressed concern about the wording of the Resolution and asked whether it could be delayed from be forwarded to the Consultative Committee. Professor Klinger stated that he would like to move it forward and moved to include the clause....full and associate professors, to devote, on average, as a standard applicable to the larger group above....

Other members suggested that this be taken up at another meeting. It was further suggested that the Committee talk about expectations and how one meets those expectations and are we creating a work atmosphere that makes it possible to meet those expectations.

Professor Klinger pointed out that the Resolution was passed at the joint meeting with the provision of some stylist changes. Pulling the Resolution back would nullify a vote taken by two committees last spring. Members spent some time discussing this further, and with agreed to forward it on to the Consultative Committee.

Agenda Items

The following agenda items were presented to the Committee for future consideration by Dr. Brenner:

- Role and Function of VP for Research Office
- Conflict of Commitment Policy
- ICR Committee items
- Guidelines/Policy on Distribution of ICR money
- Issue of Cost Sharing - should there be a policy
- Policy on Full Recovery of ICR
- Tuition Remission and impact on grants

The meeting adjourned at 4:00 p.m.

- Vickie Courtney

University of Minnesota