

SENATE RESEARCH COMMITTEE*
Friday, November 17, 1995
Minutes of the Meeting

PRESENT: Allen Goldman (chair), Elizabeth Jansen, Henry Buchwald, Jeylan Mortimer, Christopher Wiley, Dorothy Hatsukami, Tony Potami, Susan Hupp

REGRETS: Marilyn DeLong, Joel Eisinger, Kathy James, Mark Snyder

ABSENT: Kathryn Rettig, N. L. Gault, Rob Super

GUESTS: Peter Zetterberg, Ronald Gentry, Jane Whiteside

The minutes of the last meeting were approved.

THIRD PHASE CRITICAL MEASURES

Jane Whiteside, Office of Planning and Analysis, came before the committee to continue discussion regarding Third Phase Critical Measures. Dr. Whiteside briefly reviewed her discussion with the committee from the October meeting. She said that the discussion regarding the category called interdisciplinary/applied was very useful.

[?] work and make it something that can be measured in a direct way, she said. Currently, there are three categories that are put together for discussion: 1) Outreach and public service; 2) Responsiveness to compelling state needs; and, 3) Responsiveness to market demand. Applied research is part of the other set of measures which look at what the University does and how it connects with the outside world and contributes to what happens in the state and communities within the state. She said that after the discussion, she came to the conclusion

that the applied measure be focused on interdisciplinary work. She asked for additional comments, keeping in mind the interdisciplinary focus.

Dr. Whiteside asked the committee, what kinds of interdisciplinary work would be particularly important to measure and highlight in this critical measure? Secondly, she reminded the group that the Research Committee, as lead committee, has been assigned the responsibility for the interdisciplinary/applied category. Other Senate Committees have been assigned supporting committees. She also noted that the document has not been revised but the framework has.

Professor Goldman called for reactions as to how one measures interdisciplinary research. Dr. Goldman began by saying that he was uncomfortable having it as a separate measure in a sense that various kinds of research areas are dynamic and evolve driven by curiosity and strategic interest. There are two levels he continued, one where interdisciplinary research is multidisciplinary research, driven by some fundamental problem which requires input from other communities; the other kind of interdisciplinary research he believes actually marks the beginning of a new discipline which comes at the interface

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between two existing disciplines. If you have strong research efforts, there is a continuous evolution in the nature of the disciplines, he added.

Another expressed reservation about making it a separate goal and measuring performance by formal ties.

Given the nature of interdisciplinary work as described, Dr. Whiteside asked if it was important for the University to be able to tell people what it is and why it is such an important part of what happens here? It can be measured, one said, but in an effort to measure interdisciplinary activity and attach a certain value to it degrades the value of disciplinary activity. This led to a discussion about center based research and how it is easier to measure their success in terms of research and competitiveness.

Members discussed whether interdisciplinary work should be treated qualitatively versus quantitatively. Sometimes the best interdisciplinary work has come out of some of the strongest primary disciplines who have learned how to share, commented one member. The problem with sharing is who can get credit on a BA 23? How can indirect cost be split up, etc. How is it counted? It is unfortunate when a college has to give away part of their own home strength in the name of interdisciplinary, it was said.

Rather than attempt to classify the results in a qualitative fashion, why not do it in a quantitative fashion, and say "we have this many centers," another commented. It was suggested that distinctions not be made on the intellectual qualitative level. Interdisciplinary work should not be made a virtue in and of itself, another member interjected, it is a necessity. Disciplines are continuously in flux.

Two areas should be separated, it was said, the sciences and the arts that are taking place and the administrative substructure that allows it to take place. The administrative substructure is more difficult. In many

[?] the text of the report of the critical measures, highlight especially successful interdisciplinary/multidisciplinary activities within the University - perhaps naming them, one member suggested.

It was asked of WinAnn Schumi how difficult it would be to get a sponsored funding number broken down by individual disciplines, individual researcher versus something that would represent center activity. Ms. Schumi responded that it would be somewhat difficult to do - in some areas it is very difficult to collect the data for all the people who are involved in certain activities. Members then spent some time discussing various aspects of tracking. Dr. Whiteside told the committee that it is their hope to start working on the discussion drafts in December and into January. She urged the committee to make contact with the supporting committees and get input before January.

DISCUSSION - TUITION WAIVER AND TUITION REMISSION PROGRAMS

Professor Goldman introduced the next item on the agenda - graduate assistant fringe benefits. He asked to hear first from Peter Zetterberg regarding the current situation and the rationale for not implementing the recommendations of the Gentry Committee. Dr. Zetterberg responded that he did not know why the recommendations were not implemented. He speculated that they were not accepted and it was felt there was a need for some additional study and that study should be done in a larger context. He reported that the Committee on Tuition Waiver and Tuition Remission Programs was appointed by Senior VP Infante

in September, 1994, shortly after the Gentry Committee submitted its report. The final report was sent to Senior VP Infante in August. Dr. Zetterberg said he did not know the status of the report.

Professor Gentry apologized for having to leave early. He distributed copies of his committee's report. He did say that he believes that it is right that the University change the mechanism that it recovers tuition remission for graduate students. Referring to the report of the Graduate Assistant Fringe Benefit Committee, dated July, 1994, is dated now, he said. Many of the issue raised in that report have been amplified greatly in the Zetterberg report. He noted that the Zetterberg report lists three options regarding this issue, he said. One of the options, also identified by his committee, suggests that the University go to a mechanism bywhere it charges directly the research grant or other budget item of paying the salary of the graduate assistant for the tuition liability of that individual student as a pay by you go basis. This mechanism is understood much better by the funding agencies, he added. Professor Gentry advocates going to the direct charge mechanism.

Dr. Zetterberg agreed with Professor Gentry, adding that he could disagree also. What bothers him about the current situation, he said, is not the mechanism used for the tuition remission benefit but the other related policies that affect the issue. For example: we allow tuition in some of the graduate and professional programs to up at a rate that makes it far higher than it is for other graduate programs. Part of the issue is what is fair, he went on. It is not fair that the Chemistry Department is subsidizing the tuition remission benefit to the tune of about \$400,000 annually. It is also not fair that tuition for chemistry students, who work in labs with very expensive instruments, is the same as it is for Ph.D. students in Rhetoric. If we go to the direct charge system we should take a careful look at exactly what we are going to do with graduate tuition, he said. The most striking results of the surveys done of other institutions is how permissive we are with respect to the

[?] to two rulings on how much you can charge on against a grant for graduate assistants. 1) Restricts the amount to no more than what you would charge for a post doc. Verbally, they have been told by NIH that they are to interpret this to mean that we should not charge more for a 50% RA than we charge for a 100% post doc - this is not what the NIH ruling says but we have been told to interpret it this way. 2) Talk of capping how much tuition you can charge. Given what is going on in Congress, he said, tuition benefits are going to remain exempt. If they are going to be taxable, he would recommend that we go immediately to a system where we do not remit tuition but we pay higher salaries and we make students pay tuition. This is far simpler, fairer, and easy to understand. We may not want to move to that system now is because tuition benefits have been non taxable. He explained that the exemption has not yet been passed and we are collecting taxes retroactive to January 1, 1995 on tuition benefits this year. While it is expected that Congress will pass it, there are no guarantees on this issue. Under the present arrangements, Ph.D. students do not pay tuition the full time they are enrolled in a Ph.D. program. The present arrangement with this kind of benefit rate creates a situation where there is an extra tax on research programs which results in a flow of money into another part of the University, one said. When this happens it is wrong.

Dr. Zetterberg did not disagree, he did however say that he would object to anyone who wanted to look only very narrowly at this issue and ask whether it is fair. He thinks that we have to look broadly at the issue in terms of the entire tuition structure and policy for graduate students.

The Zetterberg Committee found that the floor of the subsidies is not between TA's and RA's, it is from graduate students in colleges such as IT to the professional schools. One option would be to pull the

professional students out of this system. A separate program would have to be developed for professional students.

Members agreed to invite Senior Vice President Infante to an upcoming meeting to discuss this issue further.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:00 p.m.

- Vickie Courtney

University of Minnesota