

Minutes\*

**Senate Research Committee  
Monday, February 14, 2005  
1:15 - 3:00  
238A Morrill Hall**

- Present: Gary Balas (chair), Mark Ascerno, Dianne Bartels, (George Green for) Victor Bloomfield, Dan Dahlberg, Sharon Danes, Robin Dittman, Kathy Ensrud, Steven Gantt, Michael Hughey, Paul Johnson, James Luby, Timothy Mulcahy, James Orf, Mark Paller, Mira Reinberg, Thomas Schumacher, Maria Sera, Charles Spetland, George Trachte, Barbara VanDrasek, Michael Volna, Jean Witson
- Absent: Richard Bianco, James Cotter, Christopher Cramer, Genevieve Escure, Virginia Seybold
- Guests: Winifred Schumi, Ed Wink (Office of the Vice President for Research), Mark Bohnhorst, Greg Brown (Office of the General Counsel)
- Other: none

[In these minutes: discussion with Vice President Tim Mulcahy]

**Discussion with Vice President Mulcahy**

Professor Balas convened the meeting at 1:15 and welcomed Vice President Mulcahy. Before turning to that discussion, however, he noted that the research secrecy policy would soon be brought back to the Committee and that when it is scheduled, members of the Senate Committee on Social Concerns would be invited to participate in the meeting.

Professor Balas congratulated Dr. Mulcahy on his appointment as Vice President for Research, called for a round of introductions, and turned to Dr. Mulcahy for opening comments.

Dr. Mulcahy said he wished to preface all his comments by noting that he has been in office for two weeks so it would be foolhardy to make broad proclamations about what he will accomplish and what is needed. For some questions, he may need to refer to senior staff in the Office of the Vice President for Research for answers. He said he could, however, provide a broad perspective on the long-term agenda and ideas about what his office should be doing.

Research and scholarly activity by the faculty is of the utmost importance to a university, he said, and one reason he was attracted to Minnesota was because of the breadth of the activity here. His overarching principle is that the Office of the Vice President for Research must be an advocate for research at the institution. By that he means promote research to internal and external constituents and be sure that the systems optimize the ability of faculty to do research with a minimum encumbrance of policy and procedure. He said he wants to represent the University's research interests at the state and

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federal level and to highlight student and faculty research activities. His goal is to make the faculty's job easier and better.

One impression he has, after two weeks on the job, is that the focus on research and the scholarly activity of the faculty is very disjointed. It is not clear who does what and who is responsible for what. Some of this may come from splitting the Dean of the Graduate School and the Vice President for Research positions; he said he believes there is a need for greater definition of roles and responsibilities. His office also needs to be close to, and collaborate with, research offices across the colleges and campuses; it is not clear that they know where to come for assistance. The Office of the Vice President for Research should be a coordinating point—which does not mean taking over responsibility and authority from the colleges.

Because of the split in the two administrative positions, and because of the University's history, Dr. Mulcahy said it is also his impression that there has been a significant emphasis on research compliance issues. He has gotten the sense that the Office of the Vice President for Research is more identified with that side of research rather than promoting research. That responsibility is only part of the potential of the office, he said. The people in the office have done an outstanding job of establishing systems of compliance and trying to minimize their impact, but there is a lack of academic focus in the office. There is a need for more academic voice in the offices of the vice president—for example, there might be associate vice presidents for research for the natural sciences and for the humanities and social sciences, individuals who can serve as an interface with faculty committees and departments and who can provide advice to the office about issues and concerns that are discipline-specific. He said he would like to depend on people who understand the issues and know the campuses. The goal, he said, is to increase the academic representation in the vice president's office.

Dr. Mulcahy said he would also like to see collaboration and a direct relationship with this Committee, to use it to vet ideas and to hear from the Committee about its ideas. If that has been the practice in the past, he would like it to continue.

He is cautious about key initiatives, he told the Committee, but does want to identify ways to facilitate interdisciplinary research. They need to figure out how to make that happen. Using interdisciplinary research in evaluation is not something that resides in the Office of the Vice President for Research (they do not make tenure decisions), but they can make the case that it is something that should be looked at. His office can also encourage faculty to get together.

When he came to the University, Dr. Mulcahy related, the President described the charge to the Office of the Vice President for Research in clear terms. One remit is to increase research funding—that is a standard by which he will be measured. (He noted wryly that given prospective cuts in federal research budgets, this may not have been the greatest time to have accepted the position at the University.) He said there is a need to find ways to get faculty aligned, through their natural interests; research does not work from the top down but rather when faculty see what works and seek help. He said he wants the office to help faculty exploit funding opportunities, and it must be recognized that the federal government favors bigger, more interdisciplinary, and more translational research—and he would like to help faculty in those areas.

A second charge from the President is to do a better job in commercializing intellectual property. He said he understands the Committee has questions about the Office of Business Development and

University Enterprise Laboratories. He said he needs to focus attention on them but would not change what is going on in laboratories; the point is to how to process what is going on. He does NOT want people to get the impression he wants to turn the University into an intellectual-property-generating machine. He wants to identify opportunities when faculty activities can generate intellectual property and make it easy to do so.

A third charge from the President is to improve relations with corporate partners. He has received information that many of the University's traditional supporters (local corporations) are dissatisfied with the ease of interacting with the University and its faculty. He said he will try to bridge the gulf so the University can be more transparent and connect with those partners more efficiently. He said he wished to reiterate, however, that he will not try to get faculty to do things that are of interest to corporations; he will try to match up faculty and corporations when they are interested. The process should be easier; now it is opaque and outsiders can be confused.

What is primary for him, Dr. Mulcahy told the Committee, is to establish the office as the recognized focal point for what faculty do, as a problem-solver for what faculty do. He said he knows there will be times when things are a pain in the neck but they will still have to be done. His philosophy is to identify what needs to be done and then find the easiest and most convenient way to do it (and it may still be a pain in the neck). He said he knows the staff have been working to make things easy. He said he wants the office to be viewed as one that has the best interests of the faculty at heart. He related that he got into administration because, after twenty years as a faculty member, he felt there had to be better ways of doing things. At Wisconsin he was seen as a problem-solver, he said, who dealt with people in a respectful way and without burdening faculty and staff. He said he wants his legacy here to be that he made research better. He said he is open to suggestions and will be genuine in responding to them when he can.

Professor Balas asked for questions.

Professor Orf asked how Dr. Mulcahy would get the message out to the faculty in general about what he wants to do. Dr. Mulcahy said he does not yet have a comprehensive communications plan rolled out but is working with the staff to do so and will use an array of mechanisms. He said he expected that he would be able to go to the Office of the Vice President for Research webpage and learn all about research at the University; what he found was where to go for regulatory activities, not how to get help with research funding or interdisciplinary research. Part of his plan is to convert the webpage into that kind of function. There will be additional information on the site; it will also highlight individuals who head up activities and make it easy to contact them (without having to click 15 times, for example). It will also provide easy contact with him. The site will also highlight the research of faculty, with different faculty featured every week; he has asked those who will prepare the reports to feature the full breadth of research at the University, including the humanities and social sciences. He said he hopes people will check in on the site.

The web will not be the exclusive tool for communication, however. He said he would like to see the Council of Research Associate Deans be an effective tool for communicating with faculty and colleges. He also intends to get out and around the campus and wants regularly to have events like open houses.

Professor Danes noted there was recently an article in the newspaper about the apparent misalignment between the University's vision (being one of the top three public universities in the world) and the populist culture in the state and a resistance to increasing admissions standards. How will he address that issue philosophically as he works outside the University on research objectives? She said she recognized Dr. Mulcahy might not have an answer for this question today, but said the issue needs to be on the table.

Dr. Mulcahy said that he did not see the article but said he recognized the potential for the problem in the strategic planning document. He agreed the issue should be on the table and said that the administration is sensitive to it. He did not know what the solution would be. There are many facets to being in the top three—in what capacity, by what metrics, on what timeline? Metrics will probably change with time; just saying that the University wants to get there in ten years is important. He said he did not see the problem as significant in research as it might be in other elements of the University's activities—and the University's research provides great opportunities for students. The University is trying to improve access for those with financial limitations but it clearly wants the best students. The state deserves a first-class university that provides high quality instruction. The research office does not have a direct role in the matter but he can carry the message and pay attention to it. Professor Danes said that she travels across the state as part of her work; the perception is that the University is an elite institution—a perception that can affect its political support. The President and Provost are under pressure to provide more accountability, Dr. Mulcahy said, and the University is asked if it is doing enough, if it is training the best students. One measure of the quality of an institution is the quality of its students. Rankings like U.S. News & World Report look at high school GPA's and test scores; if an institution accepts lower scores and GPA's, as state institutions often do, that works against the institution saying it will do what it can to get the best students but will not close the door to average students. The emphasis must be that the University will do what it can to recruit and retain the best students, but this is a conundrum for public universities.

Dr. VanDrasek suggested that Dr. Mulcahy be connected with the budget model discussions because the new model will have implications for research. Dr. Mulcahy commented that he has a lot to read. He agreed that the budget model will be key and will have an impact beyond the colleges because it can affect the funding for research infrastructure, for new activities, and for the recruitment and retention of faculty. The budget model will have an impact on his office; he said he believed he would have an opportunity to affect the discussions.

In Minnesota in the recent past budget action has been decentralized to the colleges, Professor Johnson noted. Deans want more money and there is no motivation to support interdisciplinary research. Deans do not have to care about the research infrastructure. These could be significant problems for him. Dr. Mulcahy said that the traditional organization of a university in general is a problem in that respect: it cannot be as agile as it needs to be in order to be competitive. He said he did not believe it should be organized like a corporation and would not advocate dismantling the University's structure. He would like to try to leverage the resources available to encourage deans to see the benefit of interdisciplinary research—and expects to have an open and frank dialogue with them as well as visit with them regularly. The bigger challenge is how to set priorities for initiatives (not first-come, first-served, and not "those who have, get"). Initiatives must be dealt with strategically. He said he congratulates the administration, in the strategic planning document, on taking a stand for aligning money with priorities. There will be winners and losers but it is critical the University do this. The questions are where to put the money and

who decides what the priorities are. That is more worrisome than getting the deans to support interdisciplinary research.

Mr. Spetland asked about Dr. Mulcahy's view of the role of the libraries. There are two things that launched him into administration, Dr. Mulcahy explained. One was a review of the medical school dean's office; the other was his service on library committees. The committee service broadened his horizons and perspective with respect to libraries. He said he had been naïve—the libraries had what he had needed, but heard from colleagues in other colleges that the libraries were their laboratories and they needed help. A great library is essential to a great university. If one wanted to boil it down to a metric people use to evaluate libraries, it is the quality of the holdings. The University must do better on this measure; it is fundamental to continue to support the libraries. In the case of medical and biological fields, there is a lot the faculty should be doing. There are a lot of new journals that the faculty say they must have. But faculty generate intellectual property (in the form of journal articles) and give it away to publishers, who then sell it back to the universities for a lot of money. The issue is more than just money; the University should take a vocal position on what drives subscription rates. This issue came up with the Board of Regents; the administration said it is an area of major concern. The Regents are adamant that it must be addressed. Dr. Mulcahy said he did not know what action would be taken but the administration has laid the issue on the table. His office is there to help all who do research at the University, which means supporting more than just laboratories. His office will advocate for the libraries.

Professor Balas expressed concern about the three goals that the President articulated for Dr. Mulcahy—increasing research funds, increasing intellectual property, and better corporate connections. Those are not the only responsibilities of the Vice President for Research. Dr. Mulcahy agreed; he said that the President believed those are three areas where the situation can be improved. Any research university will expect to obtain more research funding; he said he would be stunned if that were not on the table.

In terms of commercialization, all public universities face the issue: with a decline in state funding, they must look to all other sources of support. This University has great potential; Dr. Mulcahy said he has heard that the appropriate structures are not in place for those faculty who do want to commercialize intellectual property. The President said the University must be competitive, not just make more money. He is intrigued by the charges that universities only want to make more money; the question is what universities DO with the money. Wisconsin has WARF, which provides \$20 million per year, and no one objects because the money comes from the commercialization of intellectual property. The President is not interested in commercialization as a money-making scheme; the point is to let faculty who want to do it do so, and help to impress the state that the University is the economic driver of the state. It needs to commercialize intellectual property in order to help achieve that effect. The President wants to address criticisms of the University and wants to help faculty who want to commercialize intellectual property.

With respect to corporate relations, the President simply does not want to go to meetings and hear how terrible the University is. Corporations have provided a lot of money to the University but do not feel like they are a part of the University. The President wants the University viewed as a willing collaborative partner with corporations and the state, not closed off from them.

Those are three areas that need attention, Dr. Mulcahy said, not the whole of his office. The points are well-reasoned and would put the University in a better place than it is now. Professor Balas said that clarified the points well.

Professor Balas next commented that he heard there is discussion in the administration about the need for security badges across the campus; the Academic Health Center already has them. Is he aware of this? What role should the Office of the Vice President for Research play in the discussion? Dr. Mulcahy said he was not aware of any broad plan. At Wisconsin, he was responsible for select agents and bio-security and faced the same conundrum. Everyone had an ID; they were only used in the hospital. Wisconsin is going in the direction of using security badges, however, and starting with high-risk areas. He said he was not enamored with the idea of credentialing to get in and out of buildings but he is very concerned about access to certain facilities (e.g., animal research facilities). He does not like security badges but he supports their use—in some facilities, it is essential to know who is in them. Should they be required to get into general classroom areas? Dr. Mulcahy said he did not believe so, but faculty and students do not go to just one area of a campus. Some areas should be high priority and he wants to be involved in the discussions

This university has the opportunity to engage students in research, Professor Balas said, but it is a large university with a lot of faculty in the Academic Health Center who work with a small number of students. It may be that students attending smaller colleges have more opportunities to participate in research than students at the University. How would he change that and provide more undergraduates with a research experience?

Dr. Mulcahy said he looked for this subject on the webpage because he assumed the Vice President for Research would play a central role in coordinating the activity. It is, however, in the Graduate School. He said it was not clear to him why undergraduate research education is a better fit for the Graduate School than the Vice President for Research. He said he did not know if the location of the activity should be moved but the issue should be considered. If he were an undergraduate interested in research, probably among the LAST places he would look is on the Graduate School website (with all due respect to the Graduate School). There are a lot of issues associated with undergraduates and research—it can involve the use of human subjects, for example, so there needs to be ways to fulfill regulatory obligations. There also needs to be ways to match faculty interested in having undergraduates do research; not all do because they see it as a big time commitment that is less productive than other things they could be doing. They do need to find ways to encourage faculty and undergraduates. Colleges are very diverse, Dr. Van Drasek observed, and she said she hoped he would speak with the deans. Most undergraduates have no idea about the central administration; they relate to their college and department.

Dr. Van Drasek also observed that many faculty do research without external funding and do not pay indirect costs, which makes it difficult to obtain dean and department head support. That is an issue to be attended to, Dr. Mulcahy said, and it relates to the primary mission of the university. The University needs to collect full cost in areas where it can and where it is customary; where not, it must work with those who are involved to preserve opportunities to do research.

Professor Ascerno inquired about the cost of graduate education, noting that there is the stipend, tuition, and fringe benefits. At a meeting with peers in his field, he learned that the vast majority of institutions cover the tuition from central funds. The University does not do that, so tuition must be covered with grants and contracts, which makes it less competitive. Dr. Mulcahy said he needs to be

educated on this subject. He related that Wisconsin sometimes cites Minnesota because it covers costs in the first year, which makes it more competitive than Wisconsin. He needs to have a more accurate picture of what is going on. Dr. Mulcahy said that this cannot be a first-class university unless it has first-class students and its peers seem to keep on coming up with options that give them an advantage.

How does he visualize his relationship with the IRB, Professor Bartels asked? There must be a close working relationship, Dr. Mulcahy said, and he believes there is. He said he knows there is a sense of dissatisfaction on the part of the faculty and there are some performance parameters that may need to be looked at, but he said he also knows that the IRB is doing the best job it can in representing faculty interests. The IRB office has said it needs additional resources and that faculty sometimes do not want to serve on IRB panels. He said he will make the case for the IRB in his compact. More money and personnel will only go so far, however, and there is a need to look at what is going on and whether or not some things can be streamlined. He said that one of the reasons he was pleased to come to the University of Minnesota is because of the quality and caliber of the Human Subjects Protection program. It is an EXTREMELY well-functioning operation.

There are certain hot-button issues in compliance, Dr. Mulcahy remarked, and he will look at areas of high risk, such as animal research and human subjects research. The federal government is increasing the number of these hot-button issues faster than universities can keep up with them.

It is a fact of life that indirect cost money now goes to the dean but departments have been given many more burdens that used to be handled centrally, Professor Dahlberg commented. That is especially true with start-ups. Departments must now come up with one-third of the cost; in some departments, a start-up costs \$1 million. Because departments have a difficult time finding that much money, they may not be able to recruit the people they need in certain fields. "Faculty lines most often are made available for teaching needs; these lines are used to strengthen the scholarly pursuits in a department. Strengthening the most important or strategic areas should not be compromised by the burden of finding startup funds within a department."

This question begins to encroach on the budget model discussion, Dr. Mulcahy observed, and his office will want to weigh in on it. What he has heard, and what the strategic planning document says, is that the University will realign resources with priorities, which says that there may be things the University cannot support any more. Those changes may produce more funds. His perspective is that his office must find ways with its resources to work with colleges and campuses to stay competitive. They do so in Wisconsin. But this is a huge problem for everyone. And it is not always the cutting edge that needs to be the priority; if the University does not fund a strong undergraduate program, in some areas it can lose key faculty. This is one of the biggest challenges confronting public universities and he wants to find ways to leverage funds to help. If the money flows to the deans, it is a matter of how they set priorities. At Wisconsin, for example, the biggest problems were in Chemistry, Physics, and Molecular Biology. The worst thing that can happen to a university is to lose prominence in an area where it has been strong; the cost of recovery makes recovery almost impossible. The University must look at what is essential to its mission.

Professor Ascerno noted that the Bush administration budget proposed to cut certain research funds by half next year and terminate them altogether in fiscal year 2007. That will have a big impact on departments; is this something they are discussing? They have started, Dr. Mulcahy said, and are trying to model the impact. They will identify the programs and activities that benefit the state and nation that

will be lost and will work with federal relations to advocate for the funding. One role of the vice president, he said, is to put issues in front of legislative bodies. He promised the University would not sit still for the proposed changes.

Professor Orf recalled that Dr. Mulcahy said the University must take maximum advantage of its intellectual property. But the faculty do not hear about that nor do they know of anyone in the vice president's office they can contact to find out if their intellectual property might be commercialized. What does he plan to do in this regard? A number of things, Dr. Mulcahy replied. The mission of the Office of Business Development includes helping inform faculty and it needs to take a more active role in providing information to faculty about the resources available. He is also talking with the Patents and Technology Marketing group; it would pay dividends to have liaisons where translation of intellectual property is a higher-frequency event. The Academic Health Center has someone who works in this area and he would like to experiment with the model. Some colleges have had liaisons but they are focused on the college; he would like to see more connection with the Patent and Technology Marketing activities and would like the deans to see that this is an advantage that would pay off. He said he knows of few faculty who set out to do research with the idea that it will be commercialized—and in the large majority of cases, they never think about it. There needs to be people who can help guide them through the process, and it is not in the best interests of the faculty that they are responsible for doing everything in this regard.

Professor Danes said that she knows priorities must be set and that there will be an emphasis on income-generating efforts where possible. She said she hoped he would think about areas that have not been income-generating in the past but that might be in the future. Some faculty would like to help generate resources but do not know how. Some want to be entrepreneurs.

Dr. Mulcahy said he would clarify what he meant. When it comes to encouraging the deans, that means supporting the salary of someone who will assist the faculty. That is easier to do if the activity is already taking place. There are a lot of places where commercialization is not occurring—but where there are opportunities. His plan is to provide coverage for those areas. That does not necessarily mean one-to-one coverage, a person per college; perhaps one person would work with two or three colleges. The goal is to cover the campus. That question, he added, speaks to what the President wants taken care of: an easy answer for the faculty. The idea is not to turn the University into a manufacturing plant.

There is a contradiction in the public mind about this, Professor Johnson said. On the one hand, this is a public university that provides a public good, the education of the kids. Now it is saying that it will create intellectual property and not give it back. At the end of the day, the public may say that it will not give so much money—if the University wants to try to make more money, that is fine, but then the public will not give as much. There is a perception problem, Dr. Mulcahy agreed, but not a contradiction. The University needs to explain to the public what it does beyond teaching the kids. At one point, he did not believe a university should be involved in commercialization. Now he knows a university cannot be competitive if it is not; it must communicate that commercializing intellectual property is not a contradiction, especially for a land-grant university. The original concept of the land-grant institution was that it would provide information and help a community prosper by applying ideas to problems. That role remains the same today. The creative work may be different but the University is still obligated, where possible to use its knowledge to improve the quality of life. The University needs to explain that if it did not receive the revenues from Glaxo it would have to shut down programs.

Professor Balas inquired about the search for the head of Sponsored Projects Administration. Dr. Mulcahy said two or three candidates have been interviewed. There are good candidates, he assured the Committee.

Professor Balas thanked Dr. Mulcahy for joining the meeting and adjourned it at 2:50.

-- Gary Engstrand

University of Minnesota