

CLASSROOM ADVISORY SUBCOMMITTEE
MINUTES OF MEETING
FEBRUARY 18, 2002

[In these minutes: Welcome and Introductions, Discussion with Senior Administrators on What Can be Done to Make the Classroom Technology Upgrade Plan a Budget Priority, Future Meeting Topics/Strategies].

[These minutes reflect discussion and debate at a meeting of a committee of the University of Minnesota Senate or Twin Cities Assembly; none of the comments, conclusions or actions reported in these minutes represent the views of, nor are they binding on, the Senate or Assembly, the Administration or the Board of Regents.]

PRESENT: Denise Guerin, Chair, Bobbi Cordano, Steve Fitzgerald, Bernard Gulacheck, Steve Spehn, Kenneth Heller, James Perry, Jane Phillips, Nelson Rhodus, Martin Sampson, Steven Sperber, Micah Johnson, Jonathan Suk

REGRETS: Ryan Osero

ABSENT: Janice Smith, William Hanson

OTHER: Nancy McGlynn

GUEST(S): Associate Vice President Robert Kvavik and Vice Provost Craig Swan

I). Professor Guerin called the meeting to order, welcomed all present and asked members to introduce themselves.

II). Committee members briefly reviewed and discussed a handout that outlined the Subcommittee's history and ultimate goal. The purpose of the handout was to guide the Subcommittee and its guests, Associate Vice President Robert Kvavik and Vice Provost Swan, to answer the following questions:

1. How can classroom funding be raised to a higher priority?
2. What is the current mechanism for funding classrooms and can that be changed?

The University community has duly noted on several occasions that there needs to be a recurring and reliable funding stream that goes into the institutions teaching and learning resources and classrooms. Various strategies have been discussed to accomplish this objective, however, the University's current financial allocation framework, IMG (incentives for managed growth), fails to adequately fund 'common good' areas such as central classrooms, libraries, etc.

The suggestion has been made to earmark a specified percentage of tuition and apply the funds to accomplish the following:

- Upgrade classrooms
- Establish recurring life cycle replacement costs for classroom technology upgrade purposes

In the meantime, until a recurring funding source is established, creative strategies are being undertaken to secure the necessary funds for the Classroom Technology Upgrade Plan. For example, partnerships are being cultivated with departments as part of the compact planning process in order to obtain funds to upgrade classrooms.

Unfortunately, there is no systemic approach in place to fund central classrooms; the current approach is ad hoc at best. Hence, administration needs to decide if the Classroom Technology Upgrade Plan is truly a priority.

Next, Associate Vice President Robert Kvavik provided the Committee with some history and facts related to the current discussion surrounding IMG and funding for classrooms; acknowledging there has been a “legacy of neglect” towards classrooms over the years.

Referring to the major classroom study that was commissioned in 1995 to look to at the neglected classroom environment, Associate Vice President Kvavik commented that the University regularly petitions the legislature for funds to upgrade classrooms. In the past a strategic error of imbedding its requests for classroom funds under broader initiatives resulted in central classrooms being short-changed. In an attempt to correct this problem, there is now an agreement with the administration that in every biennium request \$4 million will be earmarked for classroom renovation. While this does not address the technology issue it does address the lighting, painting, ventilation and other physical classroom issues.

With both Associate Vice President Kvavik and Vice Provost Swan in attendance, Professor Guerin solicited their ideas on what the Classroom Advisory Subcommittee can do to convince the administration that the Classroom Technology Upgrade Plan needs to become a budgetary priority.

Some funding for classroom upgrades is coming from the following sources:

- Unspent ‘undergraduate initiative’ monies are being channeled to upgrade classrooms. Unfortunately, the limited funds from this source have not allowed the Technology Upgrade Plan to keep to schedule.
- Building partnerships with colleges.
- One-time soft funds as they are available

Acknowledging that recurring funding does not adequately support the Classroom Technology Upgrade plan, Vice Provost Swan stated that there is a commitment on behalf of the administration over the next few years to build a recurring budget base to fund central classrooms and their technology.

Alternative ideas mentioned as possible funding sources for the Classroom Technology Upgrade Plan included:

- Request the University Foundation to raise money specifically for this project i.e. endowing classrooms. According to Vice President Kvavik, the Foundation has indicated that raising funds for facilities initiatives is an extremely difficult thing to do. Along these lines, it was mentioned that the Law School and the Carlson School have classrooms with corporate names.
- Mobilize students to go to the legislature and lobby for upgrading classrooms.
- Lend support during the biennium budget process when it starts this summer by lobbying deans and the administration. In addition, it was suggested that the Committee invite Donna Peterson, Associate Vice President of University Relations, to discuss how the Classroom Advisory Subcommittee could most effectively muster its resources.
- Put a tax on tuition income that would support classrooms. A lot of internal dynamics become problematic with this approach because of the enormous amount of cross-subsidization that would occur.
- Use the existing IRS.

Vice President Kvavik summarized by outlining what he sees as the Committee's priorities:

1. There is a significant amount of money on the table in the current capital request plan that needs to be secured for this initiative.
2. Calculate the recurring cost to operate the Office of Classroom Management and then transmit this figure to the President, the Executive Vice President and Provost, and the Associate Vice President for Budget and Finance.
3. Continue to pursue the capital campaign and leverage with colleges.

Steve Fitzgerald, Director of the Office of Classroom Management, indicated that a lot of faith was put into the last biennium budget request and, unfortunately, legislative funds did not materialize. In order to avoid a similar scenario Mr. Fitzgerald believes that funds be secured from multiple sources. Vice President Kvavik responded by indicating that while the legislature did in fact give the University money in the form of a block grant, the problem for classrooms came in the allocation process. Because the money seems to get allocated to other items in the 'block', nothing is left for classrooms and, therefore, classrooms are not a priority.

To conclude, in Vice President Kvavik's opinion, a hard, ample, recurring funding stream needs to be secured for this project as opposed to the prevailing ad hoc transfer of soft dollars!

III). Next, Committee members strategized on discussion items and tactics for future meetings. The following ideas were mentioned:

- Steve Fitzgerald will reiterate figures on the recurring cost to operate the Office Of Classroom Management.
- Pursue the notion of securing 1%-2% of tuition to finance the Classroom Technology Upgrade Plan. This would give the Committee a very tangible demand.
- Concentrate on revamping the management funding system. If deans and colleges truly support the idea of upgrading classrooms then they will have to pay for them one way or another.
- Focus on having President Yudof make the Classroom Technology Upgrade Plan a priority.
- Consider inviting deans of major undergraduate colleges to attend a future Classroom Advisory Subcommittee meeting.
- Invite representatives from the Alumni Association and the University Foundation to solicit ideas on how money can be raised for this initiative.
- Invite Donna Peterson, Associate Vice President of University Relations, to an April CAS meeting to discuss strategies for mobilizing resources in order to gain support for upgrading classrooms.

In what he described as a tongue-in-cheek recommendation, Professor Perry commented that all classrooms could be give to the local ownership of deans, who would own the classrooms and pay for their management and upkeep. They could then rent out the space, which would be paid for my tuition.

Bobbi Cordano recommended that the funding mechanism be recognized as an investment in our classroom resources rather than a “tax” due to the negative connotation of the word, and the fact that classrooms are essential to the University’s basic mission.

Renee Dempsey, Senate staff, was assigned to contact the Alumni Association to find out more about volunteer opportunities for supporters of the Classroom Technology Upgrade Plan in an attempt to promote lobbying efforts for this and other University legislative requests.

IV). With no further business, Professor Guerin adjourned the meeting.

Renee Dempsey
University Senate