

CLASSROOM ADVISORY SUBCOMMITTEE
MINUTES OF MEETING
NOVEMBER 11, 2003

[In these minutes: Standard Class Times Policy Discussion, Response to March 24, 2003 from EVPP Maziar, Future Meeting Topics]

[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: Ken Heller, chair, Steve Fitzgerald, Bernard Gulachek, Steve Spehn, Donald Brazeal, Denise Guerin, Jennifer Peters, Jane Phillips, Joel Weinsheimer, Katie Herbert, Rachel Long, Marco Perzichilli

REGRETS: Roberta Juarez, Joyce Weinsheimer, William Hanson, James Perry, Gina Meyers

OTHER(S): Nancy McGlynn, Nancy Peterson

I). Professor Heller called the meeting to order and asked members to introduce themselves.

II). Professor Heller reported that since the Committee¹'s last meeting in October, members Joel Weinsheimer, Jane Phillips, Donald Brazeal and Steve Fitzgerald drafted language to be presented to SCEP regarding the continuing central classroom supply-demand/unplaced course problem.

Steve Fitzgerald provided new members with background information concerning this on-going issue. He noted that there has been a long-standing problem of unplaced courses, which is the symptom of a larger problem, an excess number of courses requested for scheduling at non-standard times and too many courses requested during the peak teaching hours of 9:00 2:00.

Copies of the proposal were distributed to members for their review. SCEP had requested CAS look into the question of whether non-standard class times should be prohibited. The existing Senate and Provost policy stipulates that standard times and day patterns are to be used and that no more than 60% of a department¹'s courses are to be taught during the peak time of the day. (The existing policy also provides for various exceptions. The problem relates to non-standard times and courses in excess of 60% that are outside of the existing Senate/Provost policy and guidelines).

According to Mr. Fitzgerald, the new web-based schedule submission system, ECS, which is anticipated to be on-line by December 2003, will flag all non-standard class time requests and send them back to the department to:

1. Comply with standard class times and resubmit their request, or
2. As outlined in the draft language presented today, get approval from the associate dean of their respective college for an exception to have the class scheduled as non-standard in a departmental classroom, or
3. Alternatively, after associate dean approval, the course may be resubmitted as an exception for scheduling as non-standard in a central classroom on a lower priority/space available basis.

The thrust of this new language is to prioritize standard class time requests for central classrooms and de-emphasize non-standard class time requests. This high-priority/low-priority approach is an attempt to put an incentive-based system in place that will encourage departments to better manage their course loads in order to comply with the existing Senate and Provost policy.

Professor Heller asked for a definition of what is meant by "non-standard¹ class times. Steve Fitzgerald referred to several previously provided summary handouts and said that essentially it meant classes at times other than specified in the Senate policy; classes meeting on day patterns different from the Senate policy; and courses in central classrooms in excess of 60% of a department's initial course offering. Mr. Fitzgerald agreed to provide Senate policy itself to the Committee at the next meeting.

One member expressed concern regarding how departments will be expected to deal with central classroom requests that exceed the 60% peak time maximum. According to Mr. Fitzgerald, ECS will notify each department in

excess of the 60% peak time maximum and provide them with information concerning how many class hours exceed the maximum. It will then be the department¹'s responsibility to pick which of its courses are associated with the excess hours. The department will have the flexibility to correct the excess hours as they see fit. Departments will be given a second deadline that they need to reply by, and, if they are in compliance, their course offerings will be put into the initial queue for scheduling. The ECS system is designed to provide departments with instant notification at the time of course submission so that they can correct any problems that are flagged by the system before the algorithm is run. Hopefully, this will allow the campus to identify and solve problems as schedules are submitted instead of building toward a last minute crisis just before the semester classes start.

Does this mean that if a department decides not to conform that all their classes will be penalized? No, stated Mr. Fitzgerald, it gives departments the option of complying or teaching its courses that exceed the 60% maximum in departmentally controlled classrooms. Departments will be given the opportunity to decide which courses they consider to be excess courses. Alternatively, if departments do not want to schedule these excess courses in departmentally controlled classrooms, they would have the option to resubmit them for scheduling during non-peak hours.

One member noted that in the past departments have been given incentives to turn their departmentally controlled classrooms into central classrooms. Is there any concern on the part of OCM that departments will want to recall some of the classrooms they have turned over to OCM or that they will not be willing to turn over their classrooms to OCM in the future? Mr. Fitzgerald believes that the incentives that encourage departments to turn over their departmentally controlled classrooms in return for getting technology and priority scheduling in these rooms are still very powerful. He also noted that the number of departmentally controlled classrooms is quite large, 224, but their utilization for classes tends to be very low. While Mr. Fitzgerald shares this member¹'s concern he believes there is enough excess in the departmental inventory to allow departments to retain some classrooms in addition to migrating some of their classrooms over to OCM.

What about departments that do not have departmental classrooms? According to Mr. Fitzgerald, for those few departments that do not, their

colleges have departmental classrooms. Mr. Fitzgerald was asked to provide members with an inventory of the departmental classrooms and how they are allocated at the Committee¹'s next meeting. Also, a member suggested incorporating the departmentally controlled classroom figures into the draft language being presented today.

Mr. Fitzgerald distributed a handout that outlined non-standard teaching hours and peak time scheduling policies in general purpose classrooms for select Big Ten institutions. It was noted that most institutions have much more restrictive policies than Minnesota.

One member asked for a definition of a departmental classroom. Are departmental classrooms actually standard classroom spaces where classes can be held or are they large seminar rooms not particularly suited to holding a class? This member noted that departments need flexible space to entertain visitors, hold special seminars, etc. A University is more than classes. Departments need to have nonscheduled space at their disposal so that individuals can get together to discuss research or teaching topics. There appears to exist disproportionate unit controlled spaces.

Mr. Fitzgerald defined departmental classrooms as a room that is officially¹ designated as a departmental classroom (Higher Education General Information System HEGIS code 120) in the University¹'s space management system. Pedagogically speaking, a central classroom is designed to meet the teaching and learning needs of the broad campus community (hence, general purpose² classroom). This contrasts with a departmental classroom that is more specialized in order to meet the unique teaching and learning needs of a particular department or program (such as a studio, clinic, etc.) Central classrooms are centrally managed and funded. Departmental classrooms are managed and funded by the respective department or college. Mr. Fitzgerald believes the proposal before the Committee, which addresses only centrally scheduled classrooms, will help utilize existing space better. It was noted that any across the board rule or policy at the University impacts different departments differently because of the differential access to departmental classroom space.

A member would like to see the proposal discussed today piloted and then re-evaluated after a specified length of time to see if departmental space

has been more efficiently used. Another member wanted more information before feeling comfortable with moving forward with this proposal. Still yet another member added that one of the advantages of the proposal is that it is a relatively minimalist approach and a very modest proposal. This member sees no harm in moving forward with the proposal.

One member stated that the impact to students was being overlooked. It would be difficult for large departments to reschedule their classes without causing massive conflicts for students. In this proposal, as written, difficulties will fall on the shoulders of students. Another member stated that there will be difficulties for all students if the number of unplaced courses continues to increase. Departments will need to make changes to how they schedule their courses. Students ultimately will have better access to courses across campus by being able to choose a larger number of courses in the non-peak hours. Mr. Fitzgerald stated that a more standard course schedule provides better student access to all courses, and that student access is one of the main reasons why standard times are useful. Additionally, he noted that one of the goals of ECS is to surface scheduling problems (like unplaced courses) early so they can be resolved before students register for courses. In this important way, ECS will reduce impact on students.

Another concern was raised regarding departments already compliant with the 60% policy being tempted to overbook courses and then cancel them at a later date. Mr. Fitzgerald stated that OCM has been working with departments for quite some time to raise their awareness concerning course projections and actual enrollment numbers. This data, in the past, was provided to departments two semesters after the fact, but now, with the new ECS system, it will be provided when they submit their scheduling requests. The intent is to provide departments with this information instantaneously, so they can make necessary adjustments before the scheduling algorithm is run.

A member noted that no new policy is being implemented but rather a new mechanism is being put in place to enforce the current policy. Is OCM looking into proactive communication techniques to mitigate the problems that commonly occur during the scheduling process in light of the fact that

real time data is being used? Shared data levels the playing field for all parties involved.

A member made the following motions:

- CAS accept the amended document language and recommends it be forwarded to SCEP for immediate action in response to their request for guidance from CAS on this subject.
- CAS recommend to SCEP, assuming they endorse this language, that departments be alerted to the fact that these changes are imminent.

CAS then asked OCM to verify that the proposed language enforces the Senate and Provost policy as it is written. CAS also emphasized the importance of OCM notifying department schedulers of the changes that will be taking place. Mr. Fitzgerald noted that ECS does reflect current policy and that OCM will verify this. Ms. Peterson reported that her communication with departmental schedulers regarding ECS has been ongoing for the past 8 months. The department schedulers are not only aware of ECS, she reported, they are clamoring for it because use of the web for course submission is long overdue!

Mr. Fitzgerald will make the changes recommended by the Committee to the draft language and send it to Renee Dempsey, Senate staff, who will distribute it to members electronically for any additional suggestions they may have. Mr. Fitzgerald requested Ms. Dempsey contact Gary Engstrand to get this item placed on SCEP agenda.

III). A written response from EVPP Maziar to an inquiry made last spring by CAS, SCEP, SCFP and STCFSS regarding funding for classroom technology was distributed to members for their review. Professor Heller was charged by the Committee to determine whether the committee mentioned in EVPP Maziar¹'s correspondence has been formed yet.

IV). New Business:

- A member requested information be provided at the next meeting concerning the distribution of classroom spaces across departments. Mr. Fitzgerald agreed to provide this information.

- A member expressed concern over the ergonomics of student workstations, particularly as the campus is becoming more wireless and students are using laptop computers. CAS may be able to play a role in conveying information to students on laptop use as it relates to their ergonomic needs. Conventional classrooms do not meet the ergonomic needs of students using laptops. What is the University's liability if it requires students to have a laptop and use it in a classroom setting? It was noted this issue is part of a larger issue, which is, are standard classrooms suitable for the future. Mr. Fitzgerald suggested CAS discuss classroom design and related issues during the spring semester. Regarding the issue of laptop use on campus in general, he also suggested that Neil Carlson from Environmental Health & Safety had significant expertise in this area.

IV). Hearing no further business, Professor Heller adjourned the meeting.

Renee Dempsey
University Senate