

Minutes*

**Senate Consultative Committee
Thursday, September 30, 1993
12:30 - 2:00
Room 238 Morrill Hall**

Present: Judith Garrard (chair), John Adams, Amanda Geist, Love Goel, James Gremmels, Kenneth Heller, Derek Jensen, Robert Jones, Tom Lopez, Karen Seashore Louis, Geoffrey Maruyama, Linda Pham, Sandy Pham, Phuong Phan, Irwin Rubenstein, Anne Sales, Rabun Taylor

Absent: Mario Bognanno, Lester Drewes, Eric Harper, Toni McNaron, Harvey Peterson, Dale Vatthausser, Shirley Zimmerman

Guests: None

Others: None

[In these minutes: bylaw amendments; strategic planning

1. Reports of the Chairs

Professor Garrard called the meeting to order at 12:30, following a very brief lunch break, and told Committee members that electronic mail will be the primary means of distributing minutes and other information and urged that everyone on the Committee make use of it. She then recognized Ms. Denise Tolbert, who announced that the new chair of the Student Senate Consultative Committee (SSCC) would be Ms. Anne Sales, a graduate student in the School of Public Health, and the vice chair would be Mr. Love Goel, an undergraduate student from UMD. Professor Garrard also recognized Ms. Sandy Pham as the new Senate vice chair and member of the Senate Consultative Committee. She then asked for reports from the committee chairs.

Professor Heller reported that the Committee on Educational Policy was just starting to take up the strategic plan and that considering the educational implications would constitute SCEP's agenda for most of the quarter.

Professor Rubenstein reported that the same would be true for the Committee on Finance and Planning, except that it had to consider money. It will also take up the idea of establishing a budget committee (as is used at three of the peer institutions visited to gather data) consisting of faculty and perhaps students to join with administrators in making major decisions.

Ms. Sales reported that the SSCC was just organizing and expected to spend much time on strategic planning, in parallel with the faculty, and expressed as a goal that the December 2 Senate meeting would

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consist of joint ideas and resolutions to be taken up.

Professor Garrard reported that FCC was also enmeshed in strategic planning and seeking to encourage faculty participation. She agreed that with the December 2 Senate meeting preceding Board of Regents action, students and faculty should be positioned, jointly or separately, to say what they think about the strategic plan.

2. Bylaw Amendments

Professor Garrard then turned the meeting over to Professor John Adams for a brief while. Professor Adams took up the four bylaw amendments that were being proposed:

- bringing Senate bylaws into conformity with Assembly bylaws with respect to student membership on the Consultative Committee
- moving the chair of the Committee on Faculty Affairs from ex officio membership on the Finance and Planning Committee to the Faculty Consultative Committee
- to create a vice chair of the Faculty Senate when the vice chair of the University Senate is a student; the individual would serve on FCC
- to provide, if a student is ever chair of Educational Policy, Faculty Affairs, or Finance and Planning, that the faculty members of that committee would designate from among themselves an ex officio representative to the Faculty Consultative Committee (the chairs of all three committees now sit ex officio on both SCC and FCC).

All four amendments were unanimously endorsed and approved for the December 2 University Senate with little discussion.

3. Strategic Planning

Professor Adams then turned the discussion to strategic planning and asked if anyone had a statement to make. Mr. Goel began by saying that it appears to be the view that the coordinate campuses have a well defined mission and that most of the problems are on the Twin Cities campus. That may not be completely true. There is some feeling on the Duluth campus that the Twin Cities may begin to reject students that UMD would like to have. There will be a need to increase opportunities and UMD will want to expand; UMD will come in with a plan by December. Duluth went through two years of strategic planning; the efforts were directed to focused research programs and increased graduate programs. That, however, was before the University College alternative--the educational scene in the state has changed and UMD believes it has an opportunity to grow, so it will wish to reshape its plan.

Most of the growth is expected in the Twin Cities, pointed out one Committee member, and most students are expected to stay in the metropolitan area, especially those who work and go to school. The opportunities to work are limited in the non-metro areas. Perhaps, it was said in response, but UMD has educational advantages compared to other opportunities in the Twin Cities and it could attract students not from the top 25% of their class who want a traditional undergraduate education.

One member of the Committee then asked how joint consultation would take place and how the Committee could be sure that some voices are heard in a constructive way. The key events coming fast, said another, are the November and December Board of Regents meetings. If there is to be meaningful consultation, the Committee must know what will be on the docket; the President has promised to provide that information by mid-October. Guessing, one could speculate there will be about five items:

- a strong research and land-grant university in graduate and professional education
- assuming leadership in cooperative education in the Twin Cities (HOW to do so would best be left for further discussion; at this point only general direction and fulfilling a state need would probably be acted on)
- a strong undergraduate program IN ORDER TO strengthen the research and land-grant missions
- a more user-friendly institution
- strengthen the two-way communication between the University and the community through outreach.

If the Regents' docket contains those items, their action should give a clear sense of the direction as a whole. The President sees the University as pursuing, or consisting of, all five, and not saying that one is better or of higher priority than another. If all this is true, then the Committees should start asking questions about those points.

The consultative process, said another Committee member, should take place primarily through Senate committees--that is the most effective way to obtain student and faculty views. The committees are dealing with various aspects of the plan, and chairs are charged to come up with questions or statements of concern and support. Faculty and students should make sure everyone on the committees serves faithfully.

In the view of one Committee member, faculty are depicted negatively in the planning documents. The student body is seen as heterogeneous and casual; do they feel they have been made out to be good or "bad guys?" Another question is whether or not the various groups of students who come to campus are well served the way the University is doing things. For a lot of students, responded one Committee member, this is an excuse for a job not well done; instead of improving the system, it is an excuse not to improve.

Another Committee member said she had heard that the strategic plan was a "shock job" for something wrong with the University. One can hope that the strategic plan will find waste in management and that colleges will be gone if they are not serving their purpose.

There has been mention of the casual student and a University environment conducive to learning; the environment may reinforce the casual student. For some faculty, it goes both ways: with classes of 200, faculty do not know any students or know what they are learning; students only care about the test and moving on, not learning. The system is creating casual students and makes teaching worse.

One Committee member spoke at length, saying the dual system (University College/research university) could work; it works elsewhere. A major concern is that University College will be very populist and the legislature will love it--and will fund it with research university resources. The University, however, wants the research university to be the beacon of research and teaching. University College is being advanced for political purposes and the University would not propose it were it not a

land-grant institution; the University also wants good graduation numbers, but the legislature will fund the University College. Who controls the purse strings can set conditions, but the President and Vice President have said they could not consider political implications but are instead doing the right thing. A number of other Committee members took exception to these statements, saying among other things that the legislature is unlikely to meddle with the University's plans--especially since there would not be new money.

On a different tack, one Committee member said she hoped that the definition of casual student did not include those who work full time but who are serious about their education. Another Committee member recalled that the President has distinguished between part-time/full-time and casual/serious students. Within the serious category, there is the academic and the professionally- or job-oriented student. Those are different groups and different programs are needed to meet their different needs. The President and Provost were pressed on the issue of whether to change the culture or change the students, recalled another, and they responded that both need to change (such as not taking only 12 credits per quarter!) and that financial aid should be increased to reduce the need for students to work.

The problem with getting students engaged in University life, said one Committee member, is the lack of infrastructure, places that encourage student interest around intellectual activities--and there are not enough dormitories! The University will not become Michigan or Wisconsin without addressing the infrastructure problems. It should be possible to get private money into dormitories, added another Committee member, because it is important to offer places to live near the University.

In terms of part-time students in the research university, said another, the President has said he would like to see a 50% graduation rate within five years. That means that 50% will take more than five years--a big portion of the students will not be taking a full load.

While infrastructure and the use of space is a problem, said one Committee member, one piece missing from the discussions is graduate education. Undergraduate problems are more pressing, but one cannot forget the amount of instruction that comes from graduate students. One issue is how graduate students will be involved with University College--one could guess that a lot of them would be expected to teach in University College; what would that mean for their research and their development as faculty members? How instruction would be restructured, added another Committee member, has not been made clear in the presentations, and there could be a teaching vacuum that the research university might not be able to fill immediately. If graduate students are to teach in University College, how will they be prepared to teach professionally-oriented courses?

At this stage, cautioned one Committee member, one should be asking questions on WHERE to go, not HOW to get there. Drs. Hasselmo and Infante may be back pedalling on the University College concept.

In terms of graduate education, Vice President Petersen has been leading a review of graduate education for nine months; there will be a report. The focus has been the assessment of the relative strengths of graduate programs--there has been a question of measures, how to make judgments. But data are being gathered and there will be a report. It is not that graduate education is being ignored. It is to be hoped that funds will be directed first to high quality programs that are vulnerable, second on retaining high quality programs, and then on programs the University must keep. The cheapest thing to do is keep

what the University has; it is expensive to build high quality programs. Funds must be focused on what the University already has--perhaps at the cost of other programs.

And one should not forget, said another Committee member, that the University is NOT bad across the board; the numbers who graduate with bachelor's and advanced degrees annually compare favorably with peer institutions. It may be that students take longer. Nor is there any evidence in an objective sense that the University's undergraduate education is any worse than that offered by its peers. But it is obvious that undergraduates do not feel as good about their education as do students at peer institutions--which is a problem of perception and spirit.

And all must be aware, it was continued, of the resource question: Where will the University get the money? State funds will not increase. Federal research funds will not increase. The University already receives a lot of private funding and it probably will not change a lot. That leaves only tuition--so any improvements will mean eyeing tuition levels. Other state universities have increased tuition. Either the University obtains the funds internally or it must get rid of something in a big way. Any grand goals must be paid for.

The planning documents, pointed out another Committee member, call for 30% of the teaching in University College to be done by University faculty. FCC has already noted that part-time instructors are cheaper than regular faculty; graduate teaching is even cheaper. But the Provost has also indicated that money for graduate assistantships is likely to decrease. He also said that units might not be closed but they could be starved--which means elimination of discretionary funds, leading to a cut in assistantships.

But much can be done with undergraduate education, argued another Committee member, that does not cost a great deal of money. Some University College programs will be inexpensive, which may be a place to obtain benefits--that remains unclear. A major issue for students, it was said--that will come up in the legislature again--is "high tuition, high aid." That would have a much more dramatic impact on students than anything in this plan. And that, responded another Committee member, will mean students will be subsidizing University College programs.

There is no evidence for that proposition, said another Committee member--again, this is only a direction, not implementation, and those details have not yet been figured out. Once the direction has been agreed on, then how to do it will have to be faced. It is important, however, to get these questions in the record.

The administration talks of direction, it was then said, and then a decision--and then the students will get stuck with the bill. Would you be satisfied, inquired another Committee member, if in five years students were paying more but getting a substantially higher quality education? What would be dissatisfying, it was responded, would be to be paying substantially more but not seeing a corresponding increase in quality.

Looking at the peer institutions that were visited (Michigan, Wisconsin, Washington, UCLA), one can see that Wisconsin has LOWER tuition than Minnesota--but there is a general sense that Wisconsin undergraduates feel better about their education. Improvements do not mean the University needs high tuition to obtain results; there must be changed expectations. Undergraduate education is not expensive at Minnesota because of General College or a University College; the professional and graduate programs

make the University expensive. But Minnesota has fewer faculty than its peers, who must still do research and provide graduate education; the cost per student at graduate and professional levels is very high. CLA students pay 40% of the cost of their education because of the presence of professional schools.

Those rates are being uncoupled, it was noted. On the issue of high tuition, high aid, it is the FRIENDS of the University that are making the arguments for it--and there are strong arguments. The only way to obtain new funds for higher education is to change the balance between tuition and state funds. If a student is paying only 1/3 of the cost of education, and the parent makes \$1 million, the state--we, the taxpayers--is subsidizing that student for 2/3 of the cost of education. If the formula is changed, so higher income families pay more, and aid is increased so needy students receive the support they need--financial aid would be increased to cover families with a household income of up to \$50,000 per year--then the state stops subsidizing "a bunch of rich kids at the University who take seven years to graduate." Another Committee member contended that families of wealthy families pay more in taxes and create jobs in the state.

The problem, said another Committee member, is that the financial aid system does not recognize the needs of all students. Some wealthy parents do not provide any support to their children, and a lot must work. Financial aid does not reflect that balance between work and school. There is also data, it was pointed out, indicating that Minnesota parents are less likely to support kids in college than elsewhere in the nation.

It is unfortunate that the focus of the discussion is on tuition said the Committee member who brought the subject up; the only point was to note that things must be paid for. On that issue, however, it should be pointed out that graduate programs pay for themselves--they bring in federal funds. Graduate students help support undergraduates, not the other way around. Another Committee member expressed uncertainty that this was true.

There has not been sufficient discussion of what drives the problem of negative student perception, said one Committee member. Another concurred, saying that it would be helpful to hear from students what it is that would strengthen the undergraduate experience.

One part of the plan that should be supported strongly: In the rest of the world, higher vocational and university education are divided, and the institutions are EXPECTED to attract different kinds of students. Here they are all put into one school--and then we are confused when students seek different things. Students have different instrumental needs in higher education; this is an admirable attempt to accommodate two needs in one institution. There will not be two systems of higher education, so we must meet both needs in the major state institution.

Maybe one could be persuaded that the University could be made more user friendly but the track record isn't very good. The perception of students is that even if one gets great instruction, one must then turn around and do battle with different systems (except in those few small units that do the battles for their students). It was agreed that the student members of the Committee would develop a list of improvements to the undergraduate experience that could be made. They also agreed, at the suggestion of the faculty, to develop a list of ways to save money, inasmuch as they bring a different perspective from the faculty. Professor Heller said that SCEP would be very interested in the comments on undergraduate

education.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:00.

-- Gary Engstrand