

Minutes\*

**Senate Consultative Committee  
Thursday, October 5, 1995  
12:30 - 3:00  
Room 238 Morrill Hall**

Present: Carl Adams (chair), John Adams, Joel Bergstrom, Bruce Bromberek, Mike Davey, Lester Drewes, Virginia Gray, James Gremmels, Paul Kluge, Corey Kopacek, Laura Coffin Koch, Geoffrey Maruyama, Harvey Peterson, Helen Phin, Michael Steffes, Amber Strack

Regrets: Robert Jones, Fred Morrison,

Absent: Benjamin Duranske, Roberta Humphreys, Malik Shabazz, Chad Tvedt

Guests: Acting Vice President and Acting Dean Mark Brenner

[In these minutes: Changes to bylaws and search protocol; policy changes from the Committee on Educational Policy (grading, degrees with distinction and with honors, and classes, schedules, and final examinations); re-creation of the support services committee; the status of the Graduate School)

### **1. Opening Business**

Professor Adams convened the meeting at 12:30, welcomed the Committee, and called for introductions.

Professor Adams then said about the future agendas of the Committee that since SCC is the steering body for the Senate, items should come to it. The exceptions will be student-only or faculty-only issues, which will go to the respective committees. In addition, he said that for discussions with senior officers, the discussions would continue to remain separate because of the different issues that would be on the agenda.

Mr. Bergstrom announced that since a review of the governance system has been put on hold, the students will evaluate the student governance system. Professor Adams asked that the full SCC receive the letter outlining the FCC position on governance and that the students be informed about the faculty activities with respect to provostal faculty councils and assemblies, because they may wish to take similar actions with respect to student consultation with the provosts.

### **2. Protocol on Senate Committee Involvement in Central Administrative Searches**

Professor Adams drew the attention of Committee members to revisions in the protocol governing Senate committee involvement in searches for central administrators. Most of the amendments were

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housekeeping and were not controversial.

One point of contention was whether or not the faculty and student consultative committees should be involved in the nomination of faculty and students to search committees for coordinate campus vice chancellors. The intent was to establish a role for search committee selection that was not simply granted by the chancellors. The coordinate campus consultative committees typically have a role to play in these searches, but they are not committees of the Senate governance system, so it would not make organizational sense to include them on the list of responsible bodies in this protocol.

It was agreed that the vice chancellors should not be included on the protocol, and that identification of the locus of responsibility for participation in the selection of search committees for vice provosts on the Twin Cities campus should await establishment of the provostal governance arrangements.

### **3. Ex officio Membership, Senate Committee on Educational Policy**

Professor Koch then explained that Vice President Anne Hopkins and now Provost Shively regularly attend SCEP meetings, both of them because they have responsibility for undergraduate education at the University. In addition to continuing the ex officio representation from the Office of the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs, SCEP wishes to make formal the role of the Provost by granting ex officio status to the position. In addition, it wishes to have ex officio representation from the Dean of the Graduate School, in order that it can be kept apprised of and involved in issues that have to do with graduate education.

The Committee approved the proposed amendments for the Senate docket unanimously and without discussion.

### **4. FCC Authority**

Professor Adams then noted a proposed bylaw amendment which would grant FCC authority to act on behalf of the Faculty Senate when the Faculty Senate was unable to meet quickly enough to make a decision that is needed; the action of FCC would then be submitted to the Faculty Senate, which body could reverse FCC if it wished.

It was unanimously agreed that parallel language would be drafted for the Student Senate Consultative Committee to act on behalf of the Student Senate, and that both amendments would be presented to the Senate.

### **5. Senate Educational Policies**

Professor Adams then asked Professor Koch to review for the Committee the policy proposals SCEP has prepared.

**UNIFORM GRADE SYSTEM** Professor Koch first took up a proposal to create a uniform grading system for the University that would include plus/minus grading; the only exceptions to the proposed system would be for the Law School and the Medical School, both of which have long-standing

grading systems that it would be impractical and unnecessary to change. It was agreed, apropos the last point, that the Duluth Medical School would be included in the exemption granted to the Medical School.

The biggest change in the policy, apart from the change to pluses and minuses and the imposition of a system-wide policy, is the addition of the A+ grade, valued as a 4.33, with the caveat that no term or overall GPA could exceed 4.00. It is understood that the A+ grade would be awarded only rarely. The Committee was informed that if the Senate were to approve the change at the November Senate meeting, the Office of the Registrar could make the necessary computer changes to have the new system in place by next fall.

One Committee member urged that since this is a significant change, the policy be publicized widely before the Senate meeting and that there be forums or some other vehicles by which people could express views about it.

One Committee member argued that the 4.33 is a concession to grade inflation; it was pointed out that no GPA could exceed 4.00 and that the 4.33 tries to avoid grade deflation (students could receive A-'s under the plus/minus system, but without the A+, grades for outstanding students could decline slightly). The A+ provides the truly outstanding students the opportunity to balance an A- with an A+ in order to retain a 4.00 GPA. [Professor Koch agreed, subsequent to the meeting, that language should be inserted in the policy which would limit the number of A+ grades to no more than 1% of the grades awarded by a department in any one year.]

Other points were raised in the discussion; Professor Koch agreed that changes should be incorporated in the policy.

- An instructor or department may stipulate either A-F or S-N grading only in a course.
- Other grading systems now in use in colleges and on campuses would be prohibited.

The Committee unanimously approved the policy, with the revisions suggested at the meeting, with the understanding that there would be wide discussions of it before it would be brought to the Senate.

**DEGREES "WITH DISTINCTION" AND "WITH HONORS"** This policy proposes only slight modification in existing practices and is intended to codify the University's policy about these degrees. (Degrees with distinction can be awarded on the basis of GPA alone; degrees with honors would require participation in an honors program.) Committee members raised several issues:

- Could a student receive both a degree with distinction and with honors?
- There is a cap on the number of students who could receive a degree with distinction (no more than 10% of a college graduating class); would those who receive a degree with honors, and who met the GPA requirement for a degree with distinction, be counted in the numeric limit of the degrees with distinction to be awarded?
- There should be language explaining why the policy is being proposed.

-- It should be made clearer that degrees with honors require participation in an honors program.

It was agreed that SCEP would reconsider the policy and bring it back later to SCC for action.

**POLICY ON CLASSES, SCHEDULES, AND FINAL EXAMINATIONS** The purpose of the policy provisions on class scheduling, Professor Koch explained, is to help students better able to schedule their courses and to ensure that classrooms may be used more efficiently. Committee members raised a number of questions about the proposed policy having to do with regulation of 75-minute classes, the status of 60-minute classes, whether two-hour classes would be permitted, and whether twice-weekly courses of more than one hour would be allowed.

The point of the policy should be to specify blocks of time when classes can be offered, it was said, so that faculty are not scheduling in an ad hoc fashion to suit their own fancy, which makes it difficult for students to take a reasonable course load. But it must also accommodate variances that exist precisely to accommodate students, said another Committee member. Another complication is that when the change in course credit module was made in the early 1970s, there were changes made that did not accommodate what faculty were doing--many of whom ignored the schedule because it was detrimental to teaching. The argument that the schedule should provide what students need is a powerful one.

Should the schedule also consider the coordinate campuses, asked one Committee member, in a day when students on the other campuses may enroll in Twin Cities course through interactive television? This would increase productivity. This could be pursued when a common calendar is adopted, it was said, but not now.

Committee members took diverse views on whether this discussion should await the conversion to semesters.

The policy should take into account the desire of some students to be on campus only two or three days per week as well as the different needs of graduate and undergraduate students, it was said.

Would it be possible to have two time schedules each day, one with regular 50-minute courses, one with courses of varying lengths?

On the issue of finals and the prohibition on scheduling extra-curricular events that require the presence of students, it was noted that the Senate and its committees try to avoid scheduling meetings during study day and finals week. In some cases, however, such meetings are inevitable, because of the different schedules of the four campuses. One Committee member pointed out that the business of the University cannot come to a halt for final exam week, just as it cannot come to a halt during the summer when many faculty are not on campus.

Professor Koch explained briefly the provisions on overlapping final examinations, noting that the computer system cannot now alert students when their finals overlap, but it will be able to do so in the future. The goal is a common exam schedule that would not permit overlapping exams, but they may inevitably occur. One problem is the incessant student demand to move final exams, said one Committee member, often because they have purchased airline tickets and want to leave; this policy, Professor Koch pointed out, makes that very difficult. One Committee member commented that students never learn to

look at the schedule; the answer should be "no, that's tough, it's part of learning" when they ask to move a final to accommodate vacations and travel plans.

Professor Koch agreed that the provisions on class scheduling needed reconsideration, and said SCEP would bring the policy back to SCC in the near future.

It was agreed, on this subject, that SCEP would discuss the recent policy announced by the administration that 40% of all classes should be held in the afternoon.

#### **6. The Assembly Committee on Support Services**

Professor Adams noted that the Assembly Committee on Support Services was not convened last year, because of the lack of a chair and because earlier committee members had expressed confusion about the role and responsibilities of the committee. There has been a proposal to re-establish it as a subcommittee of the Senate Committee on Finance and Planning, parallel to the Subcommittee on Facilities Management.

It was agreed that the proposal would be forwarded to the Finance and Planning Committee for advice on whether to structure the subcommittee as a permanent body created in the Assembly bylaws or as a standing subcommittee that exists at the discretion of the Finance and Planning Committee. The Assembly bylaws creating the Support Services Committee will then be dealt with accordingly.

#### **7. Status of the Graduate School**

Professor Adams next welcomed Acting Vice President and Acting Dean Mark Brenner to the meeting to talk about the future of the Graduate School.

Dr. Brenner began by informing the Committee that he has been charged with making the case for the value the Graduate School adds to the University; the future of the Graduate School will be determined this fall, after which there presumably will be a search for a Vice President (and Dean). He took this charge seriously, Dr. Brenner commented, and has paid attention to the issues. The provosts have raised the same questions. There will be closure on the issues soon, although it is not clear who will make the final decision; it is clear that Senior Vice President Infante will participate, but it is also on the agenda of the President.

Dr. Brenner noted that there are varying degrees of opinion on whether or not there should be a Graduate School, and if so, what role it should have. He is now taking advantage of the opportunity to present the case. One Committee member interrupted at this point and asked about the source of the questions about the issue of the future of the Graduate School; this has been on the table for a number of years, but the source of the questions is not clear. In some units, the Graduate School is taken for granted; there may be questions about what it should do, but not if it should exist.

Dr. Brenner said the origins of the questions were amorphous. Some do not see the need for the Graduate School. As he has talked about the issues around the campus, it appears that the perspective varies with the amount of interaction with the Graduate School. One-third of graduate programs are an overlay of departments; one-third involve two or more departments but are under one dean; one-third are

cross-college or cross-provostal area.

One Committee chimed in to echo the earlier point; what's the argument? There are issues to discuss, but not the future of the Graduate School. Things appear to be heading to a quick decision; where is the debate in this group about the Graduate School, asked another Committee member? In budget-cutting discussions among administrators, said another, units are put on the table; the Graduate School is there because it has no faculty advocates--it would be easy to cut compared, for example, to a coordinate campus.

One argument some Directors of Graduate Study have advanced, said one Committee member, is that Vice President Anne Petersen increased the responsibilities of the programs but did not increase the funding; under those circumstances, why is there a Graduate School?

At this point Dr. Brenner was permitted to turn to his slides. He said the Graduate School adds value to the educational enterprise in five ways: it strengthens the quality of graduate programs, it promotes and supports interdisciplinary scholarly efforts, it is an advocate for the quality of the student experience, it champions faculty development, and it envisions and initiates change.

(1) THE GRADUATE SCHOOL STRENGTHENS THE QUALITY OF GRADUATE PROGRAMS The Graduate School plays a role in this area in several ways. (1) It defines the principles and scope of graduate education. It plays a major role in program reviews that lead to mergers, closures, and creation of new programs. It determines graduate faculty membership and participates in the tenure decision

(2) It provides an institutional perspective on graduate education. In national associations, it provides a conduit for information while it is a spokesperson for graduate education locally. It allows the University to speak with a single voice on issues of graduate education to governmental and other external agencies.

(3) It provides review and oversight mechanisms for graduate education admissions standards to maximize quality. All but four programs have set up program management plans to set standards and goals. The workload of the Graduate School is not different from before, in that it continues to provide data and review and continues to handle 15,000 applications per year.

The Graduate School helps evaluate international candidates for admission, pointed out one Committee member. Dr. Brenner agreed, and said he was shocked to learn that some institutions do not provide that assistance to departments.

(4) The Graduate School assures consistency of student progress standards across all academic disciplines. The Policy and Review Councils set the standards; the Graduate School is the oversight mechanism to ensure that programs comply.

(5) The Graduate School distributes fellowship funds through annual all-University competitions, assuring that the fellowships and block grant funds go to the highest quality students and programs. For example, Dr. Brenner said, 65% of the funds go to the top 25% of departments while only 8% go to departments in the bottom quartile. These allocations are made by faculty committees, he noted, to be

sure the criteria are contemporary, open, and reasonable. It has been argued that the fellowship funds should be fixed in units; they have argued that the funds have an effect on performance. With the NRC rankings, the Graduate School is confident that it has been allocating dollars to the strong programs. They believe they should be able to invest in programs, rather than have the funds frozen, so that they can respond to changes.

(6) It assumes leadership for diversity in graduate education; they have made a strong effort to recruit students of color. While there is a ways to go, and the need to provide a supportive environment, the numbers of minority students admitted and degrees they receive are going up.

(7) The Graduate School provides a specialized database to allow the ability to forecast and provide University-wide data as well as retrospective analyses of program performance and quality. The Johnson Committee report, under Vice President Petersen, called for an increase in the expertise of the data office; the DGS's can get information on-line.

(II) THE GRADUATE SCHOOL PROMOTES AND SUPPORTS INTERDISCIPLINARY SCHOLARLY EFFORTS Sixty percent of faculty are in more than one graduate program; the structure at the University is unique. The Graduate School also has a history of creating new interdisciplinary programs. During the past six years NSF has had a program that provides training grants; Minnesota has received at least one every year during the period, which is uniquely above the average of other universities.

(III) THE GRADUATE SCHOOL ADVOCATES THE QUALITY OF THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE It provides a uniform and standardized process from admissions application through graduation. It is important that students be treated the same across programs, and this is one reason that a number of institutions are re-creating their graduate school after having earlier eliminated it.

The Graduate School serves as an advocate for students' intellectual development and emphasizes the institution-wide importance of training future college and university teachers. It also supports and furthers graduate students' non-academic concerns, such as health insurance, FICA, and tuition remission.

(IV) THE GRADUATE SCHOOL CHAMPIONS FACULTY DEVELOPMENT It provides support for scholarly activities, it provides the optimum structure for a cross-University perspective in research and education, and it enhances the intellectual community of faculty scholars through such programs as the McKnight professorships, mid-career faculty grants, and so on.

(V) THE GRADUATE SCHOOL ENVISIONS AND INITIATES CHANGE It presides over changes in graduate program management. It introduces new technology, such as the Graduate School web page with an electronic admissions form, the optical storage of files, and provides an information network (it has a server for DGS's). It also initiates new collaborative programs, such as with Wisconsin, where institutions can share students, funds, and facilities.

Dr. Brenner then noted the national experience with centralized versus decentralized graduate education. A number of institutions, including Stanford, USC, Penn, Houston, Florida, Oregon, and Michigan State, have either closed or downgraded their graduate school in the past and are now re-centralizing or re-creating them. In almost all cases, it is because of huge program inconsistencies and a

decline in the stewardship of graduate education. Dr. Brenner pointed out that in both Australia and Europe, which have traditionally not had graduate schools, they are being created, because they see that graduate education has flourished in the United States.

His recommendations are as follows: (1) That the Graduate School maintain centralized management of graduate education; this means supervision and oversight. (2) The Provosts should provide ex officio representation to each of the six Policy and Review Councils; they need clear interaction with the provosts. (3) The Graduate School voice should be heard at the highest levels; this may sound self-serving, but they need to be sure they are at the right discussions. (4) The Graduate School should remain within the Office of the Vice President for Research, because there is much synergy between the two offices in a significant number of areas. There are complicated policy issues in research that are distinct from the Graduate School, but they are so intertwined with scholarly activity and graduate education that they cannot really be separated.

Dr. Brenner agreed that the faculty in the departments manage graduate education; the Graduate School, he said, is driven by faculty, who set policies that administrators must follow.

In response to a question about professional schools, Dr. Brenner said he is using an ad hoc advisory council at present to deal with professional school issues (for programs that are already within the purview of the Graduate School, not those outside it). The professional school representatives are a minority on the P&R Councils and their concerns are not heard.

Asked about the role of the Graduate School in the production of Ph.D.s and the gluts that exist in some fields, Dr. Brenner said it should provide placement data to prospective students and share it with departments, both for local and national markets.

One Committee member, who acknowledged being negative about the Graduate School in the past, commended Dr. Brenner for the presentation. It should include information about the things that do not work and need improvement. He used to say there was too much overhead in the Graduate School; now there is less, and the Graduate School may not have ENOUGH money, for example, to foster interdisciplinary research or new initiatives. Other Committee members agreed. It does not have the tools to do the job. For example, in the past few years in programs that cross provostal areas, where deans are headstrong about their money, the Graduate School has been ineffective in refereeing disputes and ensuring that programs stay together. If one dean does something, another dean cannot do much about it. The Graduate School should have a major voice in these decisions; this is not the fault of the Graduate School, but it needs more money.

The Graduate School should continue to review promotion and tenure files, said one Committee member. Dr. Brenner agreed that this is important for program quality.

One Committee member recalled a point that former Graduate School Dean Robert Holt made with FCC last year that should be reinforced: the Dean of the Graduate School is the only central officer with knowledge about the quality of faculty, graduate programs, and departments across the University. Deans know areas, provosts are busy. One wants to think all the central officers know these things, but they do not.



One Committee member recited a list of issues raised about the Graduate School, but emphasized that they may or may not be valid concerns. One is coverage: the Graduate School does not cover all graduate programs, including in Law and Medicine, and a number ask why they are covered. A second is the inclusion of professional schools; some are involved that think they should not be and question the value they are getting. A third issue is that there is too much overhead--not that what the Graduate School is doing could be done more cheaply, but rather that it is trying to do things it should not; some units want a more decentralized model, but the Graduate School has kept on doing jobs it should not. A fourth issue, perhaps especially for CLA, is that it is primarily oriented to undergraduate education, so its departments look to the Graduate School and there is no CLA orientation to graduate education. A fifth issue is that of tenure and quality; the Graduate School should look at higher level quality measures than through mechanical devices such as tenure and program reviews.

Dr. Brenner said the Graduate School has analyzed what has been done in response to the Johnson Committee report (calling for more decentralization). Graduate faculty status is determined by programs and all the Graduate School does is maintain a roster. Admission decisions are now the exclusive responsibility of programs. The Graduate School provides oversight to ensure the programs are complying with the criteria they established for their own program.

Dr. Brenner agreed to include critiques and a response in his presentation as well as alternative models of admission.

Professor Adams thanked Dr. Brenner for joining the Committee.

## **8. Names**

Professor Adams told FCC members that he needed names for a search committee for Provost Allen and asked that Committee members email him with suggestions. He then adjourned the meeting at 3:00.

-- Gary Engstrand

University of Minnesota