

Minutes*

**Senate Consultative Committee
Thursday, October 1, 1998
2:15 – 3:45
Room 238 Morrill Hall**

- Present: Sara Evans (chair), Jesse Berglund, Linda Brady, Gary Davis, Mary Dempsey, Ryan Falk, Stephen Gudeman, M. Janice Hogan, Roberta Humphreys, Nathan Hunstad, Michael Korth, Judith Martin, Fred Morrison, V. Rama Murthy, Brandon Lacy, Deanne Nordberg, Martin O'Hely, Gita Uppal, Matthew Tirrell
- Absent: Jason Anderson, David Hamilton, Leonard Kuhi, Marvin Marshak, Kelli Rusch,
- Guests: Executive Vice President Robert Bruininks, Senior Vice President Frank Cerra (Academic Health Center), Dean Robert Elde (College of Biological Sciences); Kent Bales (chair, Senate Committee on Faculty Affairs), Professor Carol Chomsky (drafting committee, policies on Sexual Harassment and on Nepotism and Consensual Relations); Julie Sweitzer (Interim Director, Office of Equal Opportunity)
- Others: Vice President Carol Carrier; Ann Cieslak and Katie DeBoer (both Office of the Board of Regents); Maureen Smith (University Relations)

[In these minutes: biological sciences reorganization and new departments; sexual harassment policy and nepotism and consensual relations policy (and whether to return it to the Senate or accept changes)]

I. Reorganization of the Biological Sciences

Professor Evans convened the meeting at 2:15, welcomed everyone, and called for a round of introductions. She then asked Dr. Bruininks to begin the discussion of the reorganization of the biological sciences.

Before turning to the topic at hand, Dr. Bruininks reported to the Committee that the administration was completing the final phase of the compact planning process and that the compacts were finished. Notebooks will be provided to this Committee as well as to the Senate Committee on Finance and Planning by the end of next week. He invited the

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members of the two Committees to review the documents, said it is a very public process, and that he is pleased with the results while acknowledging that improvements can be made.

The reorganization of the biological sciences is probably the most ambitious planning effort of the last 30 years, Dr. Bruininks said. He noted that the process had begun in 1995, under the leadership of a committee chaired by Regents' Professor Ronald Phillips, and that the faculty have worked very hard in the intervening three years to reorganize the biological sciences. The proposal being presented today calls for the creation of four new departments. Dr. Bruininks turned to Drs. Cerra and Elde for further discussion.

Dean Elde distributed a summary of the proposal for the departments and a chronology of events in the reorganization effort. Dr. Elde made several initial points, after reviewing the chronology: why are the biological sciences at the University not held in higher esteem in the national perceptions?; the University is one of the few places in the world where virtually every discipline in the biological sciences is represented; the biological sciences have connections to other disciplines (such as public affairs and psychology); they believe that strength in the core biological science disciplines is important for a land-grant university; and there have been repeated reports over the last 30 years calling for a strengthening of the core biological sciences, and the Phillips Committee warned that earlier reports could no longer be ignored.

The deans and provosts (at the time) developed two principles with respect to the reorganization: (1) the University needs to bring critical masses of faculty together to better deliver both undergraduate and graduate education, and (2) faculty needed to be brought together to steer the future of the disciplines, which are changing constantly. The graduate programs have been dynamic, but there has been no departmental structure underpinning them – there have not been enough faculty in any one department to steer new disciplines (e.g., neuroscience) into the future.

So dramatic action was taken, and the proposal is for four new departments. One of them is actually an expansion of an existing department, Plant Biology, in partnership with the College of Agriculture, Food, and Environmental Science. The other three are new: (1) Biochemistry, Molecular Biology, and Biophysics; (2) Genetics, Cell Biology, and Development; and (3) Neuroscience. The heads of the departments report to two deans, the Medical School and Biological Sciences; the fiscal arrangements are being worked out and should be completed by next year.

Dr. Cerra explained that the capital request for funding for the new cellular and molecular biology building was linked to the reorganization, as was the acquisition of funds for recruiting new faculty for these fields.

Asked if there were plans to add departments in the future, Dean Elde said there are not, at present. The boundaries between the biological science disciplines are disappearing, and it is perhaps best to eliminate as many barriers as possible, so the creation of additional departments may not be a good idea. There will, however, be additional faculty involved, drawn from other areas of the University. Dr. Cerra noted programs in Veterinary Medicine and Psychology that will work with the new departments, and said it will be up to the faculty

to recommend whether to form new departments. There will in any event be joint faculty recruiting, he said.

One question that arises is where to put money into the biological sciences, Dr. Cerra said. They started the process with an external review team composed of stellar faculty from around the country (the report is awaited); that group was impressed with the strength of the faculty at Minnesota and thought the University was doing things right. The University is coming through a crisis of confidence in faculty recruitment, they said; it is reassuring just to know that there are a lot of first-rate faculty at Minnesota. A similar internal review is being conducted as well.

Asked how these units would set priorities in the compact process, since three of them cross college lines (only Neuroscience is within one college, the Medical School), Dr. Cerra said they are in the compacts already in rudimentary form but need further development. That, however, must await on development of the departments and further thought about what should be in the compacts. Professor Hogan said it will be important to set priorities and provide funding for units such as this, because it is important the University foster these activities. Dr. Bruininks agreed, and said that as the process evolves, it may be appropriate to have a compact for the entire area – and the same could be said for other areas of endeavor, such as biomedical engineering.

Dean Elde said that the external team observed that the University missed the boat on the first and second wave of research in molecular and cellular biology, but that with the sequencing of the human genome, it is a new era. The external committee believed that with the reorganization, the University will be in a very good position to serve the state and region. With the breadth it has -- that few can match – and the opportunities for talk across disciplines, it will be able to achieve synergies unmatched elsewhere. That will especially be true if NIH funding increases.

Professor Evans summarized by saying that this reorganization provides a lesson to be learned. Many are concerned about the impact of IMG and the boundaries that exist across colleges; this effort crosses boundaries in ways that must be sustained, and it is important that the lesson be learned. She thanked Drs. Bruininks, Cerra, and Elde for joining the meeting.

II. Policies on Sexual Harassment and on Nepotism and Consensual Relations

Professor Evans now welcomed Professor Carol Chomsky and Dr. Julie Sweitzer to the meeting to discuss the revisions to the policies on sexual harassment and on nepotism and consensual relations. Professor Chomsky drew the attention of Committee members to materials which laid out, in side-by-side columns, the changes from the Senate policy adopted last spring proposed by the Regents' office and thereafter reviewed and negotiated by the drafting committee.

Professor Chomsky reported that after the Senate adopted the policies last spring, they were worked on by the Regents' staff, and there were significant changes proposed. Over the summer, the drafting committee worked with the staff to assure that the substance of what the Senate had adopted was retained; those changes were presented to this

Committee during the summer. Professors Bales and Chomsky said they believed the revised language conveyed the same substance as the original Senate version, and some of the changes improved the policy. The Committee must now decide if the policies as drafted are substantially the same, and can be forwarded to the President and Board of Regents, or if they must be returned to the Senate.

Professor Chomsky then spent the better part of an hour reviewing, sentence by sentence, the changes in the two policies and the implications and meanings of the changes. One issue that arose again was the removal of the “purpose” language by the Regents’ office; the drafting committee believes the language important, and it will be in training materials and brochures distributed by the Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action, and the Regents’ office is considering whether it will be possible to include on the website the “purpose” language and any resolutions adopting the policies.

At the conclusion of the presentation, Professor Bales presented a motion: “The Senate Consultative Committee has reviewed the changes made by the Office of the Board of Regents to the policies approved by the University Senate on Sexual Harassment and on Nepotism and Consensual Relationships (April 16, 1998). We find the policies as prepared for the Regents and now amended by the original drafting committee to be substantially the same in intent as those approved by the Senate.”

Professor Morrison complimented Professor Chomsky and Dr. Sweitzer on the careful work they and the drafting committee had done, and on the substantial improvements that had been made to the policy. He announced, however, that he would vote against the motion, because it proposes to substitute the views of the Committee for those of the Senate, and because the explanations provided to the Committee should be delivered to the Senate. These issues should arise earlier in the drafting process, he maintained, and while they did very good work, it was a waste of time because this should have taken place before the Senate acted.

Professor Bales urged Committee members to vote in favor of the resolution, because the policies ARE substantially the same in intent as what the Senate adopted. He observed, however, that removal of the “purpose” language was disturbing, and that the tone of the document has changed considerably. While the Regents can adopt any policy they wish, the Senate document was carefully negotiated through several meetings, and he will so inform the Regents.

Professor Dempsey concurred with Professor Morrison, and said that with all due respect to the Regents’ office staff, she did not believe people should have to go through this process. The Board of Regents, she said, should know there is a problem and take steps to correct it.

Professor Evans recalled that at the last meeting, the Committee asked for a presentation so it could assure itself that it was not substituting its judgment for that of the Senate, and that the policies were not substantially different – and that if they were, they should be returned to the Senate. The Committee should NOT act in the Senate’s stead, she agreed. The discussion has identified a very serious problem of process that must be addressed no matter what the disposition of these particular policies. Now, however, there

needs to be established a timely working relationship with the administration and Regents, and while the process stumbled badly this time, she will vote in favor of the resolution – but would not necessarily do so again. She urged that these policies be adopted, because they are substantially the same, but without any message that the process was acceptable.

Professor Morrison responded that his concern is about the precedent set, not about the text itself. After long effort in drafting the documents and Senate action, they were then rewritten. Unless it is an emergency, or the changes are in numbering and spelling, this Committee should not substitute its views for that of the Senate. Mr. Hunstad agreed, arguing that changes should be made before Senate debate, and that to make them afterwards makes a mockery of that debate.

Professor Chomsky said that if the resolution is voted down, the Senate Consultative Committee should present the redrafted policies to the Senate with a recommendation about what action it (the Senate) should take. The policies they are substantially the same as the ones approved last spring. She agreed, however, that the process was a problem, but pointed out that the redrafting process also improved language in some parts of the policies, she hoped those improvements would not be lost. Professor Evans added that it was not accurate to say that changes were made without Senate involvement and that the policies were rewritten by others, because the drafting group was chartered by the Senate and supported the revised version.

Professor Evans called for a vote on the resolution; it failed 4-5-1. It was then agreed that an additional Senate meeting would be scheduled, for November 5, to take up this and other items from the Committee on Faculty Affairs.

The Committee thereupon approved the dockets for the October 15 meetings; Professor Evans then adjourned the meeting at 4:00.

-- Gary Engstrand

University of Minnesota