

Minutes*

Senate Consultative Committee
Thursday, November 1, 2001
3:00 – 4:00
Room 238A Morrill Hall

Present: Joseph Massey (chair), Wilbert Ahern, Muriel Bebeau, Judy Berning, Susan Brorson, Dan Buechler, Khaled Dajani, Arthur Erdman, Trevor Ewanochko, Candace Kruttschnitt, Kari Lindeman, Judith Martin, Jeff Ratliff-Crain, Charles Speaks, Jason Stingl

Absent: Ryan Brux, Les Drewes, Shawn Lavelle, Matt McBlair, Ryan Osero, Paula Rabinowitz, Matt Wohlman

Guests: Vice Provost Craig Swan (Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost)

Others: none

[In these minutes: (1) classroom upgrades; (2) syllabi policy; (3) governance participation in the capital planning process]

1. Classroom Upgrades

Professor Massey convened the meeting at 3:15 and welcomed Vice Provost Swan to discuss classroom upgrades. He said the University needs a systematic way to fund these upgrades and the Committee wishes to support the administration's efforts.

Dr. Swan noted that there is a plan to provide baseline technology in all classrooms, at a cost of \$5.4 million in one-time funds on the Twin Cities campus. Some of the items have recurring costs of about \$1.5 million. These numbers can be scaled to the size of the coordinate campuses to reflect similar needs there. The University's capital request includes money for classrooms; the way the Committee could help is by communicating with the President and Provost on the importance of funding for classroom improvements and maintenance.

Professor Kruttschnitt inquired if there is central funding for classrooms. She noted that the colleges have asked students to pay technology fees; where did that money go? The colleges collected the money, Dr. Swan responded, and spent it with active participation by students in deciding how to use it. Colleges could, in consultation with students, decide to spend the money on classrooms.

Would this help graduate and professional students, Mr. Dajani asked? There is a concern that centrally-funded classrooms are not used by graduate and professional students as much, so that any fee to improve such classrooms would be unfair for those students. Dr. Swan noted that there has been no discussion of any such fee, but even if there were, graduate and professional students use many of the general purpose classrooms funded by the University. He agreed that it was a legitimate concern on the

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part of students that funding for classrooms might be changed to incorporate a student fee. When central funds are used for classrooms, one cannot follow the dollars back to a source, so essentially everyone pays. If there were NEW fees, that money could be followed. Classroom upgrades and maintenance, however, are the kind of expense that should be handled within the existing budget allocation process, Dr. Swan concluded.

Professor Speaks suggested this item should be folded into the discussion of common goods and taken up in the discussion with the deans. He said he would hate to see undergraduate, graduate, and professional students divided on the issue of classroom improvement. Classrooms were terrible at the University for many years but they are one of the most important common goods at the institution and improving them must have the support of the Committee. Dr. Swan said he believed that significant improvements have been made in recent years but that expectations have risen faster than the funding to make the improvements.

What action should the Committee take, Professor Massey inquired? Be clear in its communication with the President and the Provost about the importance of classroom upgrades. When would that be most useful, Professor Erdman asked? When budgets are put together, early in the winter. It was agreed that the Committee on Finance and Planning would work with Dr. Swan and Mr. Fitzgerald to draft a resolution that would be brought to this Committee and then forwarded to the President. Professor Ahern suggested that the Committee on Educational Policy also review it.

2. Syllabi Policy

The Committee turned next to the Syllabi Policy brought from the Committee on Educational Policy (SCEP). Professor Ahern explained that at present there is no requirement that an instructor provide a syllabus for a course. The Classroom Expectations Guidelines approved by the Senate call for a variety of statements and information on a syllabus--but no syllabus is required. Professor Massey made a number of suggestions for the policy which were quite good; he said he would bring the policy back for discussion at the next SCEP meeting. The policy, he noted, is not as comprehensive as the suggestions in the Classroom Expectations Guidelines.

One proposal is that the syllabus be required the first day of class. Professor Ahern recalled that SCEP members imagined a number of good reasons why a syllabus would not always be available on the first day of class, but agreed that it should be prepared by the end of the first week of classes.

Committee members spent some time commenting on what should or should not be in any syllabi policy.

-- When tests will be given should be included. But: one worries about legislating too much what should be included; if all tests are announced, does that preclude the use of pop quizzes or open up the question of litigation?

-- One size will not fit all.

-- One has heard an argument that sometimes students should be involved in creation of the syllabus; one would hate to see so many requirements that such collaboration would be barred.

-- Senate policy should not be too detailed; faculty are evaluated by their department head, which should include review of syllabi, if appropriate; the Provost should be sure this is taking place. The system seems to be working; if an instructor handed out a blank sheet of paper except for the word "syllabus" on it, there would certainly be discussion of the practice in the review.

-- There was an administrative ruling quite a number of years ago that if the institution did not provide a syllabus in a course, a student could have his or her money back, if they asked. That ruling has been lost. It is important that the faculty underscore the importance of the syllabus; at the same time, there have not been a lot of complaints and the Senate should not legislative itself into a corner.

-- If there were no syllabus, the absence would certainly be noted on student evaluations.

3. Report from Committee Chairs

Professor Speaks reported again on the issue of faculty participation in the capital request process. He recalled that he would recommend to the Committee on Finance and Planning (SCFP) a subcommittee on capital projects, which would advise SCFP and FCC, which in turn could advise the President. SCFP, however, did not express overwhelming sentiment in favor of such a subcommittee.

The faculty have complained for a long time about the lack of faculty voice in the capital process and they should NOT back down simply because there is potentially too much work. The President has invited faculty participation; they must bite the bullet and accept the invitation. He said he would bring the proposal back to SCFP but scale down the work. It is not possible for a subcommittee to work with a \$3-billion list of proposed projects. The University's capital request typically consists of 10-15 projects, rank-ordered, but the Governor and legislature can cherry-pick from the list or even add to it, if they wish.

Professor Speaks said he will recommend that either SCFP or a subcommittee (SCFP can choose) take the administration's judgment on what the top 20 or 30 projects will be and decide what makes most sense from an academic perspective. SCFP or the subcommittee would not get into political or geographic considerations, but would focus on whether a project supports the academic program.

Committee members expressed concern that SCFP members would turn down this responsibility. Professor Erdman suggested looking beyond SCFP membership and bringing in others. Professor Speaks said it was his intention that there be one or two SCFP members and the rest drawn from elsewhere. Professor Massey urged Professor Speaks to pursue this item because it is too important to let slide; he also strongly urged the appointment of a subcommittee.

Professor Massey then adjourned the meeting at 4:00.

-- Gary Engstrand