

Minutes*

**Senate Consultative Committee
Thursday, September 14, 2006
3:00 – 4:39
Room 238A Morrill Hall**

- Present: Carol Chomsky (chair), Jean Bauer, Joshua Beiningen, Nancy Carpenter, Stacy Doepner-Hove, William Durfee, Barbara Elliott, Emily Hoover, Scott Lanyon, Dan Moore, Nelson Rhodus, Jennifer Windsor, Margaret Wolff
- Absent: Gary Balas, Jacqueline Cottingham-Zierdt, Megan Gunnar, Mary Jo Kane, Anthony Kouba, Cathy Marquardt, Judith Martin, Trent Senenfelder, John Sullivan
- Guests: Professor Richard McCormick (Senate Committee on Educational Policy); Vice President Kathleen O'Brien (University Services), Dean Steven Rosenstone (College of Liberal Arts); Rebecca Hippert (Senate office)
- Others: Associate Vice President Laurie Scheich

[In these minutes: (1) the future of Northrop Auditorium; (2) committee business]

1. The Future of Northrop (Auditorium)

Professor Chomsky convened the meeting at 3:00, welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the year, and welcomed Vice President O'Brien and Dean Rosenstone to talk about the future of Northrop Auditorium.

Vice President O'Brien said they were glad to talk about Northrop and are consciously not using the word "auditorium" because they are trying to think about the building in a different way. She began with a brief history of the building and a summary of its finances. It opened in 1929, has a seating capacity of 4800, has on average 51 University events per year (convocation, graduations, speeches, etc.), it has an average of 40 rental events per year, has an average annual attendance of 205,000, has an average attendance per event of 2263 (or about half capacity), and is used on average 221 days per year. Northrop has \$5.6 million in revenue, of which \$4.15 is self-generated and \$1.45 is central support (some for programmatic support and some for facilities support). The operating expenses are about the same.

They decided about two years ago to do a "forensic study" of the building, which means a look at the systems in detail, inside the walls, etc. Given the age and importance of the building, they believed they must do such a study. Vice President O'Brien commented that as the person responsible for buildings, she wanted to find out beforehand if there were problems, rather than because of a problem with an event. The conclusion of the study is that the building is safe for use but there is no structural element without need for attention. Much would be done differently were the building constructed today (e.g., access, life safety systems).

* These minutes reflect discussion and debate at a meeting of a committee of the University of Minnesota Senate; none of the comments, conclusions, or actions reported in these minutes represents the views of, nor are they binding on, the Senate, the Administration, or the Board of Regents.

The University is starting a structural stabilization project on Northrop, which will cost \$21 million (from 2005 HEAPR funds and balances that could be used for this purpose). The project has two components: building asset preservation (tuckpointing, roof repair, etc.) and life-safety issues (emergency power, safety railings, etc.). The latter are necessary for continued use of the building; without the former, there would be massive deterioration.

At the same time as the need for the structural stabilization project was identified, the administration decided it should convene a group to advise on the future of the building, recognizing that there would have to be a significant investment of money to renovate the building for the future. Last February President Bruininks appointed a Northrop Advisory Committee that was charged to do four things: (1) develop a vision for Northrop that supports the strategic goal of reaching the top three; (2) consider various options for future use of Northrop; (3) provide recommendations to the President; and (4) recommend to the President and Board of Regents a timetable for completing the work. Vice President O'Brien and Dean Rosenstone serve as co-chairs of the advisory committee. The membership includes both additional University representatives as well as community leaders. The building is iconic for the University, part of its branding, and the centerpiece of Cass Gilbert's design of the Mall.

Dean Rosenstone explained the guiding principles in assessing Northrop: advance the University's mission and goals, advance academic programs and priorities, promote stewardship and asset preservation, serve the University community and beyond, leverage the effective and efficient use of space, and develop a sustainable financial plan. But there is a reality with which they must deal: the building is safe today but no system in it is within its expected lifetime. Any one of the systems could fail any time and the building would need to be closed. The University is currently spending \$3.5 million per year to support the facility. (Approximately \$1.4 million is spent each year as an operating subsidy to current programming (\$556,000) and building expenses (\$896,000). An additional \$2 million is spent each year to cover the cost of building depreciation and systems replacement.) The question for the advisory committee is how to spend that money in ways that best advance the academic priorities of the University. How, that is, can Northrop be a more integral part of the University and the vision the President has laid out? One committee member said Northrop should be an integral part of the everyday life of the University rather than use it only for convocation and graduation.

The future vision for Northrop has several elements. First, that it is a place of distinction (that enlightens, inspires, provokes); second, that it is a place of honor (where the University community convenes for ceremonies); third, that it is a portal to the University (a vehicle for partnership and outreach, connects the University to the state and world, and connects the state and world to the University); and fourth, it is a cultural center of attraction (acoustically superior concert and performance space). It should be a forum for discussion and debate about innovative and challenging ideas of the time, a gathering place that is part of the everyday life of students and faculty from across the University (e.g., use the entrance hall for many more events). It must have a sense of place (it is a special place reflected in its interior design and furnishing, when in it one feels at the center of the University, it should use advanced technologies to connect ideas and people, and it is more than an auditorium—it includes communal spaces, flexible meeting spaces, and food and beverage service, all of which should complement other spaces on the Mall.

In the course of their work thus far, Dean Rosenstone reported, they have looked at space and programmatic implications. They concluded early that it was more cost effective to gut the building except for the entry hall than to renovate the existing spaces. The vision realigns and re-prioritizes

Northrop's programmatic elements: (1) academic, (2) cultural, (3) performance. A new Northrop would provide a home to programs of distinction, advance interdisciplinary education and research, promote academic collaboration, increase awareness and appreciation of the arts, serve as a gathering place for the campus, community, and state, and preserve and celebrate history and tradition. The result of this work has led to identification of three options:

- Maximize the number of seats in the auditorium (which minimizes the amount of space that can be recaptured for other uses), to about 4,000 (there would never be 4,800 again). This option would still leave poor sightlines and poor acoustics for many seats and limited program space.
- Maximize the quality of the auditorium space and the amount of program space, to about 3,000 seats. This would provide the best sightlines and acoustics (it would be the best hall that can be designed). The drawback to this option is that when the University wishes to convene as a community—commencements, a major speaker—this would provide more limited seating.
- A middle option that would include some reconfigurable seats, but this would be the most expensive and would not work well acoustically.

The University must also think about how to sustain the new facility. If there are other programs in the building, that will expand the financial base (e.g., if the new honors program were housed there, and they can also attract renters and patrons, that would help reduce the proportion of costs that are treated as common good expenses). The committee has broadly consulted with a large variety of people in the Twin Cities, including the deans and Regents Professors and members of the national academies, the University Foundation and the Bush Foundations, Twin Cities performance groups (Minnesota Opera, St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, Minnesota Orchestra, Ordway, etc.) and TPT and MPR. They tested the idea of bringing in more performances and learned that the "backstage" space required for theatrical and operatic performances would dramatically reduce the programmable space available for other academic purposes.

The questions at this point are: (1) is this the correct vision of Northrop? (2) Now can Northrop better serve the University's academic mission? (3) What is the best configuration of the auditorium? (4) What are the priorities for the available program space? Dean Rosenstone and Vice President O'Brien welcomed comments from the Committee.

Professor Lanyon asked how many University events now require 4000 or so seats. Very few, Dean Rosenstone said. Convocation does not require that many; CLA, IT, and Graduate School commencements use 4800 seats. The question is how much does the University want to tie up space that is used infrequently? Professor Lanyon said he hoped they would confirm the convocation number because if convocation cannot be held in one place for all students, that would be a heavy price to pay for the renovation. Dean Rosenstone agreed and said they are getting a precise count.

What about the jazz series and dance series, Professor Rhodus asked? They are part of the University community function; how would they do if the number of seats were reduced to 3500? It would help, Dean Rosenstone said. Very few of those events use all 4800 seats; most are around 1800-2000. Market analysis suggests the niche is the same whether there are there 3500 or 4000 seats. Right now it is not an attractive facility for performer or patron in terms of building amenities. They also

envision a place more attractive for seminars and meetings. They also need to do a better job of making the building visible and letting people know there are 2800 parking spots within two blocks of Northrop.

It is nice to think about using the building more, Professor Windsor said, but convocation is special, and a little of the special nature of the place would be lost if the building is being used everyday. It would be best if the purpose of convocation is kept in mind as building use is planned. Dean Rosenstone said that the committee must seriously examine the opportunity costs associate with a large auditorium versus a smaller auditorium and holding large events like convocation in another venue, such as Mariucci Arena. He said that personally he has a hard time thinking of convocation and commencement being held in Mariucci.

Would the renovation be more than maintenance and upkeep at present, Professor Windsor asked? Right now the University is spending about \$3.5 million per year, Vice President O'Brien noted again. But that is not sustainable because some systems will break and the building could be closed, so it must be renovated. The exterior stabilization project will cost \$20 million; it will cost \$50 – 70 million to renew the building (beyond the building asset preservation and life-safety issues that are currently being addressed). The University must think about the utility of the building for the investment. The President has said he would like to continue convocation and other celebratory uses of the building and it would probably be difficult to change his mind on that point.

How long would it take (that is, how long would the University lose use of the building), Professor Chomsky asked? About two years, Ms. O'Brien said. They are exploring other options even now, Dean Rosenstone added, given the frailty of the building systems.

Professor Durfee said he thought the proposal was exciting. Have they given any thought to what will be said to the legislature when this is part of the capital request? The President will decide when this is a part of the bonding request, Dean Rosenstone said, and they envision three parts to the funding: state funds, private funds, and University resources.

Vice President O'Brien said they wished to bring this matter to a wider constituency. They have had excellent staff support from the University, especially Associate Vice President Scheich and Ms. Westergaard, and unfortunately lost one member of the team, Dale Schatzlein, who died this week in Colorado and who had a distinguished career as Director of Northrop, its jazz and dance series in particular. She said they appreciated the opportunity to speak to the group and welcomed an email with thoughts.

Professor Lanyon asked if Northrop is on the six-year capital plan. Vice President O'Brien said that in order to integrate strategic positioning in the six-year capital plan, they are delaying completion of the plan until the spring. It may be the case, Dean Rosenstone commented, that as capital projects are more aligned with strategic positioning, the more support they might receive because they would help advance broad University priorities. Vice President O'Brien urged that anyone who has not done so should go into Jones or Nicholson Halls (or Imholte Hall at Morris) to see how an old building can be renovated.

Mr. Moore said that if the space includes classrooms, he hoped that they, too, would be special and not just four walls and desks. Dean Rosenstone agreed and suggested that one possibility would be

advanced technology classrooms, classrooms that could be used for honors students or classes offered by members of the Academy of Distinguished Teachers, special lectures, etc.

Professor Chomsky thanked Vice President O'Brien and Dean Rosenstone for their presentation.

2. Committee Business

Professor Chomsky now explained to the Committee that the Faculty Consultative Committee had approved a "responsibilities of faculty senators" statement for members of the Faculty Senate. It seemed to FCC members that the statement they adopted was specialized for faculty but that other groups represented on this Committee (students, civil service staff, P&A staff) might wish to consider a similar document for their senators. She said she distributed the Faculty Senate statement for illustrative purposes.

Next she reviewed the draft guidelines for committee members and chairs. Some on FCC have been thinking about how to articulate the governance functions and how to make them more effective. One idea is to have, at the beginning of the year, guidelines for effective committee membership that could be provided to the Senates and committee members. This draft has been sent to FCC, to committee chairs, the Committee on Committees, and the Senate staff for comment. She invited comments from Committee members. Is this a good idea? Does it go in the right direction?

Ms. Doepner-Hove said she assumed it would apply to the Faculty, Student, and University Senates but not to CAPA and the Civil Service Committee. Professor Chomsky said that was correct.

Mr. Beiningen asked why, if committee members are to try to represent the best interests of the University, committees cannot have alternates. Professor Chomsky said that senators may have alternates because they are elected by units to represent that unit. Committee members, however, are elected or appointed in a different way, the Senate Constitution does not authorize alternates on committees, and continuity in discussions is important. The Senate Parliamentarian ruled a number of years ago—and that ruling has been incorporated in Senate bylaws—that committee service is personal, not representative.

Ms. Hippert from the Senate office joined the meeting; she prepares the Senate dockets. The Committee reviewed the docket of the University Senate meeting. Professor Chomsky said that the Business and Rules Committee suggested senators be given the opportunity to speak about their concerns; the question is how to structure that discussion. Senate meetings are often only information TO senators; this would be a time for the Consultative Committees to hear from senators. What questions should be asked to elicit helpful conversation? Committee members offered several suggestions for questions that might be posed.

Professor Carpenter cautioned that there is a danger in asking these questions and asking senators to respond, because it will be frustrating for them if nothing happens afterwards. What will SCC and FCC do with the comments? Professor Chomsky agreed that the Committees will need to pay attention and respond.

Professor Chomsky noted the proposed language governing final authority over Senate dockets. Last year a question arose about whether an item should be on the docket and the language in the constitution and bylaws was determined to be ambiguous in identifying final authority for the docket.

This proposal makes it clear that the consultative committees, in their steering and executive roles, have final authority (FCC for the Faculty Senate, SCC for the University Senate).

Ms. Doepner-Hove suggested that there should be a break in the docket where the University Senate meeting ends and the Faculty Senate begins; she also suggested starting anew the numbering of items on the Faculty Senate dockets. These are two separate organizations, she said, and the dockets should reflect that separation. The Committee concurred and then unanimously approved the University Senate docket.

Professor Chomsky adjourned the meeting at 4:30.

-- Gary Engstrand

University of Minnesota