

Minutes

Senate Consultative Committee October 3, 1991

Present: Norman Kerr (chair pro tem), James Arcand, Mario Bognanno, Amos Deinard, Judith Garrard, Michael Handberg, Paul Holm, David Lee, Stanford Lehmborg, Tom Lopez, Karen Seashore Louis, Aric Nissen, Burton Shapiro, Charlotte Striebel, Denise Tolbert, James VanAlstine, Christine VeLure, Jeff Winker, Shirley Zimmerman

Guests: Associate Vice President Nick Barbatsis, Vice President Marvalene Hughes, Pat Kaszuba (University News Service), Marcia Fluor (University Relations), Geoff Gorvin (Footnote), Maureen Smith (Brief)

Professor Kerr called the meeting to order at 12:30 and announced that Professor Scott was out of the country and had asked him to chair the meeting.

1. Student Conduct Code

Professor Kerr welcomed Vice President Hughes and Associate Vice President Barbatsis to the meeting to discuss the Student Conduct Code. Vice President Hughes distributed materials to the Committee and noted that the Board of Regents had asked that all policies be updated; the Student Conduct Code was among them. It is a system policy but procedures vary with each campus. She told the Committee that she endorses the philosophy of the Code--it is based on student development and education. The concerns that have arisen have to do with procedure, not content, with student rights and due process. Vice President Hughes said that the General Counsel has reviewed the policy and has advised that it is acceptable as written. Among the information she provided were numbers of violations of the code; she observed that for a campus of over 40,000 students, they were very low.

Several Committee members expressed concern about the possible conflict between the disruptive demonstration provisions and freedom of speech; it appears that a demonstration is automatically a violation of the code--when such actions could be protected speech. These are not always easy cases; the classic case is a demonstration on the Mall when Physics students are trying to take a quiz. Vice President Hughes concurred and agreed that language about freedom of speech should be prominent in the Code.

Vice President Hughes told the Committee she was impressed with the commitment of those involved in the review to due process and student rights.

Professor Kerr thanked Vice President Hughes and Associate Vice President Barbatsis for joining the Committee.

2. Reports of the Chairs

Professor Kerr reported that he and Professor Scott had met recently with Senior Vice President Infante, who is interested in possible modifications of the tenure code. How the University will respond to legislative questions about faculty workload was also discussed; a small group of faculty has been asked to draft a statement on faculty responsibilities. FCC and some members of the

Committee on Finance and Planning met with the President and the two Senior Vice Presidents to hear a presentation on the outline of the budget.

Ms. VeLure reported for the Student Senate Consultative Committee. She has been elected chair and Mr. Arcand has been elected vice-chair. The SSCC intends to continue work on a search committee handbook for students, intends to bring up again the question of Duluth faculty representation on FCC and SCC, and has voted to give to Duluth students the seat that will be vacant once the Waseca campus is closed.

Professor Lehmberg reported for the Senate Committee on Educational Policy. It unanimously approved a bylaw amendment for the Twin Cities Campus Assembly creating the Council on Liberal Education, heard a report on the progress of transferring credits among institutions, took up the eligibility of "T" appointees for the Morse-Alumni Award (affirmed that they are eligible), and will take up the question of teaching evaluation in the near future. He was asked if SCEP has dealt with the question of switching from quarters to semesters; Professor Lehmberg responded that the central administration appears to be divided on whether or not the change should be considered, and until there is a decision centrally, SCEP will not address it. SCEP has also been asked to review the policy on ratio of contact hours to credits, but may put that off until a decision on quarters/semesters has been made--because any conversion to semesters would require a substantial revision of all courses.

3. Bylaw Amendment, Twin Cities Campus Assembly

Professor Kerr next drew the attention of Committee members to the proposed bylaw amendment, which would create the Council on Liberal Education. Professor Lehmberg pointed out that the bylaw is intentionally vague about the size of the Council, leaving that up to the Provost; only the proportions of membership categories have been established.

Committee members discussed for some while whether or not student membership on the Council should include graduate and professional students. It was pointed out that TAs would bring a valuable point of view; others suggested that these individuals should be part of the faculty portion of the Council or serve in an ex officio capacity. It was also argued that graduate/professional students have completed their undergraduate education recently, perhaps at another institution, so have a different perspective than one currently an undergraduate, and that TAs in some departments have the responsibility for developing entire courses and could contribute valuable insights. No one graduate student, it was rejoined, could represent all graduate students.

Another Committee member pointed out that the Assembly discussion last Spring had called for appointment of academic advisors; the language in the bylaw permitting appointment of academic staff was not sufficiently specific to meet that objective.

The Committee deliberated whether to amend the bylaw, return it to SCEP, or to forward it to the Assembly for action. It was pointed out that it is important to get the Council created and appointed and that no bylaw change will necessarily get everything right in the first attempt; a number of changes will doubtless be required as the Council takes up its work. There was dispute about the appropriateness of SCC amending documents already acted on by other committees; Professor Kerr affirmed that either the Steering Committee or the Assembly could amend them without referring them

back to committee.

The Committee voted, with one dissent, to forward the bylaw to the Assembly. It also voted, with two dissents, to endorse the bylaw.

4. University Economic Impact Activity

Professor Kerr welcomed Marcia Fluer and Pat Kaszuba to the meeting to explain to discuss the communications initiative being undertaken by University Relations. It arises from the President's frustration that there is insufficient understanding about the importance of the role of the University in the State. Part of the impact is economic--jobs and the leveraging of state dollars into additional funds for the state. Another part is service to the State. The current project is an attempt to coordinate the information about the University's activities in the State; many faculty and staff know of their own activities but little about what is occurring elsewhere in the institution.

Ms. Kaszuba explained that what they are doing is running a clearinghouse, which will be continuously updated, on information about the University and the State. Specific information from across the University is being sought on how it affects the State, the more geographically-identified the better. For anyone giving a speech or presentation, the information can be tailored to the locale. She distributed a sample of information provided for a speech in the Red River Valley. It will be, Ms. Fluer said, a data base, on computer and available to all who need it. Anecdotes are also being requested.

It was suggested that many of the colleges already collect this information; Ms. Fluer said that each dean has been asked to identify a contact person in the college from whom information can be obtained. It was also suggested that the information provided should not focus solely on undergraduate education; the University must also emphasize the research and service missions and activities.

The turnaround time, for a request for information, will be about one day. They decided not to publish anything--such as a brochure--because on-line computer access is easier and because the expenditure of funds for another brochure did not seem to be wise.

Ms. Fluer emphasized, in response to a question, that this is not "public relations" but rather a "toolbox" for those giving speeches; it can help individuals tailor their speeches for the audience. She also affirmed, in response to another question, that it will fulfill a genuine news need; they constantly receive questions from reporters, she said, and this will help answer those questions. University Relations has no interest in controlling access to or use of the information, Ms. Fluer told the Committee; anyone who wishes may use the service. Ms. Fluer urged the Committee to help in gathering the information.

5. Report of the Ombuds Committee

Professor Kerr turned to Professor Striebel for the report of the Ombuds Committee. The changes recommended, Professor Striebel explained, would be a big improvement over the way grievances are currently handled on the campus. The University Grievance Officer position could be

eliminated, for the most part, if grievances were handled earlier through mediation; they would not have to go to a full grievance hearing. Of the grievances she has seen as University Grievance Officer, Professor Striebel told the Committee, a large percentage could have been better handled at a lower level with less anger and hostility in the departments. The grievance policy would still be needed, but at present the University has far more grievances than comparable institutions because there is no bona fide ombuds service (except for students). The report tries to invent a structure that fits the current units.

There will be some additional costs associated with the new procedures, Professor Striebel affirmed; Professor Kerr suggested that the elimination of grievances would be a savings so that the report should not be looked upon as leading to increased costs.

There was some discussion of whether or not the ombuds service being proposed would provide employees in bargaining units two shots at resolving problems--this service plus the grievance provisions of the collective bargaining contracts. Professor Striebel responded that there was not supposed to be a choice; moreover, the ombuds service will deal with a wider range of problems than those which can be grieved under a bargaining contract, and prospective bargaining employees had expressed an interest in being able to use the ombuds service rather than the contract grievance procedures.

The Committee agreed that the report should be presented to the Senate for information at the Fall meeting and for action in Winter Quarter. There was discussion about whether or not any specific recommendations should be pulled from the report and highlighted; it appeared to be the consensus of the Committee that the report as a whole could be endorsed by the Senate and that the administration would be requested to implement it on a 2-year basis with review thereafter (as called for in the report).

The Committee voted unanimously to place the report before the Senate for information at the Fall meeting and for action at the Winter Quarter meeting.

The Committee adjourned at 2:50.

-- Gary Engstrand