

Minutes

Senate Consultative Committee October 31, 1991

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

Guests: Geoff Gorvin (Footnote), President Nils Hasselmo, Senior Vice President E. F. Infante, Robert Jacobsen, Lois Regnier, Maureen Smith, (Brief), Aaron Tunheim, Garrett Webber (Daily)

1. Discussion of Computing and Other Issues with Senior Vice President Infante

Professor Scott convened the meeting at 12:40 and welcomed Senior Vice President Infante to the meeting to discuss the status of the proposed reorganization of computing.

Dr. Infante began by telling the Committee that he and Senior Vice President Erickson felt that the University's computing situation needed improvement, both to increase the level of support and to achieve economies of scale. The proposal to accomplish the goals through a subsidiary of the Minnesota Supercomputer Center, it has become clear, will not work; the employees wish to stay with the University and there are questions of control. The central idea remains the same, however, and that is to consolidate academic and administrative computing. Since there is no Chief Information Officer, and since there are a number of "turf" issues involved, the administration decided to bring in a consultant, on a short-term basis, to serve as a neutral party to advise the University.

A question was raised about the extent to which the University's technical experts would be involved--quite apart from consultation with users. Dr. Infante said that the technical staff would work with the consultant in addition to a small user group established under the aegis of the Senate Committee on Computing.

Dr. Infante also affirmed that at this point any changes would be confined to the Twin Cities campus; the situation is sufficiently complicated that coordinate campus computing need not be included. All administrative computing takes place on the Twin Cities campus; any problems with respect to the coordinate campuses is related to the connections to them, not computing itself.

A question was raised about the timetable; Dr. Infante said that a report from the consultant would be sought by the end of January.

Dr. Infante agreed that there should be review of the RFP for the consultant; it will be distributed to the Committee, to the Senate Committee on Computing, and others who will be involved in the reorganization.

In response to an inquiry, Dr. Infante said that the question of the \$60 student fee for computing is on hold. He noted the policy decision that undergraduate tuition should be uniform on each campus, so a fee to be paid by some but not others should be questioned; he also expressed the view that

computing, as a cost of being a student or faculty member, should be an integral part of the University's budget. In terms of a specific fee, however, he said he wished to have the question reviewed by Vice President Hughes. He said he has asked that students be included in the group of users that will work with the consultant.

On a related topic, one Committee member objected to the use of the term "customer" by several University units; it was argued that faculty and students are members of the University community, not customers. Dr. Infante noted that the term "customer" is a popular one in Total Quality Management (TQM), and that while there is much of use in TQM, its language need not be adopted wholesale. Several Committee members noted that the University has a difficult enough time trying to explain the difference between educational institutions and private sector organizations, and the difference between research universities and other institutions of higher education; it should not fall into the language of the marketplace. Dr. Infante agreed that the student and faculty relationship to the University transcends that of "customers" and that one does need to be wary of words.

One student member of the Committee observed, however, that the University needed to do much more in the way of treating the student as a customer; it would be out of business if it had any competition, he added.

The matter of terminology led to a brief discussion about the Governor's Blue Ribbon Commission on Postsecondary Education. Professor Scott has been asked to meet with the Commission; he noted the difficulty of explaining what a University faculty member does. This question of language is not a trivial matter, he commented.

Dr. Infante reported that he has spoken to the Commission several times and has tried to describe the University's manifold functions and its tripartite mission. He also told the Committee he saw a draft of the faculty workload survey (which HECB has been required by the legislature to conduct); he told them the instrument might be appropriate for the community colleges but that it was not reasonable for University faculty.

It was suggested by one Committee member that Senate Committees should develop statements on issues important to higher education in the state and present them to the Commission. Professor Scott agreed that this was a wise suggestion.

Professor Scott thanked Dr. Infante for meeting with the Committee.

2. Resolution on ROTC

Professor Scott next reported that the Committee had been asked to take up a resolution concerning University action with respect to ROTC. The question before the Committee at this meeting was whether or not to endorse the resolution; Committee members spent most of the time discussing the appropriateness of bringing the resolution to the Senate on such short notice, even though the timing of the resolution was a critical element. It was understood that under the rules of the Senate, the agenda could not now be changed and that the resolution would have to be brought up under "new business" and that Senate action would require a two-thirds vote to suspend the rules.

No one at the meeting expressed dissent from the substance of the motion; several objected to the short notice and it was pointed out that appropriate procedures had been followed by forwarding the resolution to the Senate Committee on Social Concerns when it was first presented in mid-October.

President Hasselmo joined the meeting during the discussion; he was asked his views on the issue. He commented that he has made clear the position of the University of Minnesota for the past two and one-half years--that the discrepancy between the University's policy and the practices of the Department of Defense are a problem. He also said that it is his view the solution must be national and that the University's views, through a meeting of Big Ten presidents with Department of Defense officials, will be communicated. He said he did not believe that unilateral action would be helpful and expressed the view that quiet negotiation holds the best hope, at this point. It may be that in the future the University will decide that is no longer true.

It was moved and seconded to endorse the resolution; the motion failed on a vote of 8 - 8.

3. Discussion with the President

In view of the lateness of the hour (shortly before the beginning of the Campus Assembly and Senate meetings), the President confined his remarks to a brief overview of the budget. He said that rather than simply trying to make cuts, the University is seeking to make decisions consistent with its priorities and which will minimize the impact on academic programs and permit quality improvement. He emphasized that cuts will not be across-the-board. Some academic programs may be discontinued. The administration has looked carefully at its own cuts in order to make sure that they are not merely transferring costs to other units. He noted that with very few exceptions, no funds are being cut from academic programs except for the 3% required for salary increases in 1992-93--which means that the deficit will be covered through savings in central administration, cutting 0100 subsidies to some units, and a change in certain "treasury functions" having to do with interest paid on department account balances and so on.

The process to be followed will be that the details on program changes will be presented to the governance structure at the same time they are presented to the Board of Regents. The consultation process will continue after the November Regents meetings, he said, and the Board will be informed that some changes will be made prior to the final presentation of the budget plan for action at their December meetings.

Professor Scott thanked the President for his time.

The Committee adjourned at 2:00.

-- Gary Engstrand