

Minutes*

Senate Consultative Committee Thursday, June 6, 1996 12:30 - 1:30 Room 238 Morrill Hall

- Present: Virginia Gray, (chair pro tem), John Adams, Joel Bergstrom, Carole Bland, Victor Bloomfield, Lester Drewes, James Gremmels, Russell Hobbie, Roberta Humphreys, Jarad Niemi, Harvey Peterson, Helen Phin, Jeannine Pluhar, Mary Jane Sommerville
- Regrets: Carl Adams, Laura Coffin Koch, Fred Morrison, Michael Steffes
- Absent: Bruce Bromberek, Paul Kluge, Melissa Lind
- Guests: Professor William Flanigan (Chair, Assembly Committee on Intercollegiate Athletics); Drs. Darwin Hendel and Jane Whiteside (Academic Affairs)

[In these minutes: Minutes; recognition of the student consultative committee chair; student-athlete academic performance and graduation rates; SCC approval of third-phase critical measures]

1. Minutes Protocol

Professor Gray convened the meeting at 12:30, explained that Professor Adams was out of town, and asked the Committee if it wished to approve the same protocol for minutes that FCC had adopted. The Committee voted without objection to adopt the protocol, which would include attribution of statements and a method by which the draft minutes would be approved.

2. Recognition

Professor Gray asked Mr. Bergstrom to come to the head of the table, at which time she presented him with a gift from the Committee. She pointed out that he had both been a student leader AND graduated in four years. Other students have told her, she related, how much they respect him and turn to him for counsel, so he has been a mentor, and she reported that he had served on SCC for two years, had chaired the Student Senate Consultative Committee and the Student Senate, had been vice chair of the Twin Cities Campus Assembly, and also served as chair of the Senate Committee on Student Affairs, the only student in recent years to chair a Senate committee. Professor Gray wished him good luck in law school at NYU; the Committee gave him a round of applause.

3. Athlete Graduation Rates

Professor Gray then welcomed her colleague, Professor William Flanigan, chair of the Assembly Committee on Intercollegiate Athletics, to report on how student-athletes are doing in terms of

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graduation.

Professor Flanigan began by providing background information. About a year ago, the annual Big Ten report on graduation rates was prepared; in October, a newspaper in Columbus, Ohio, had an article about graduation rates (focused on Ohio State). The article included the information that Minnesota had the lowest graduation rate of athletes of any Big Ten school. This piece of news was picked up by SPORTS ILLUSTRATED. Most of the information in the original story was dropped from the S.I. article, and it created interest locally why Minnesota looked so bad.

The simplest fact, in all of this, is that Minnesota does have the lowest graduation rate of athletes in the Big Ten; Minnesota also has the lowest graduation rate of students in general in the Big Ten. All of the other analysis in the original newspaper article compared athletes with the rest of the student body; with every other indicator that it used, Minnesota was best in the Big Ten with respect to the performance of athletes. That is purely a function of the poor performance of non-athletes in graduating, Professor Flanigan commented, but it is a mixed picture.

Athletes at Minnesota graduate at a rate 15% higher than other students. The last official figures (last year), among men, the 5-year graduation rate for the entire student body is 45%; for athletes, it was 57%. For women, the overall rate is 52% while 71% of all women athletes graduate.

The official report to the Big Ten this year will show that the graduation rate for athletes has improved once again; it improved last year, and will improve again next year. These data should be seen in the context of very, very weak graduation rates for cohorts that entered the University about a decade ago, in the years of the Madison episode and recruiting scandals. There was a low point in terms of the quality of students being recruited into athletics, and graduation rates reflected it. The recovery from that period is what is now being seen.

On an item persistently unrelated to graduation rates, Professor Flanigan said, this year both men and women, in most quarters, have had the highest GPAs in the history of the athletic programs since aggregate team records have been kept. One might not think the teams are doing so well, the students are doing as well as they've ever done academically.

The graduation rates are probably not a bad indicator for athletes, Professor Flanigan said; they are a terrible indicator for the rest of the student body. The University may live or die by graduation rates for political reasons, but they are a terrible indicator of academic performance for the bulk of the student body. For athletes, however, graduation rates are not bad; athletes stay in school to maintain eligibility and take a fairly large number of courses every quarter to do so. They really are full time students, unlike a large part of the rest of the student body. In addition, the majority of students are recruited as freshmen, and graduation rates are only applied to new freshmen; no other group has graduation rates calculated for them. That means that the majority of graduates of the University do not enter into calculation of graduation rates; for the athletes, it makes sense.

The athletic departments keep records more or less indefinitely as to whether an athlete ever graduates. Quite a few athletes, in certain sports, graduate at a slower rate because of professional or Olympic or other athletic opportunities that come during the college career or at the end of eligibility. Athletes try to be on the pro tour in tennis or play basketball in Europe. These are not athletes most

people are aware of, but a substantial number drop out at the end of eligibility, but then return 3-4-5 years later and earn a degree. This is hard to keep track of in official statistics, but there is a delayed graduation rate among athletes.

It has long been established that athletes are much more likely to stay in school than non-athletes; this is purely a function of eligibility. As long as they have to stay in school to stay eligible, they stay in school; the attendance of the non-athlete cohort that enters with them declines over the years. As soon as eligibility runs out, the athletes catch up with non-athletes, so they are comparable thereafter. It is the five-year eligibility that keeps athletes in school. One key to graduating athletes--or any student, probably--is to keep them in school as long as possible, doing more or less full time work. This is the approach taken by academic counseling in athletics: to get athletes to graduation, or as close to graduation as possible, before eligibility runs out. If there is a lot of work to make up after eligibility, the probability of graduation is low.

Another element that helps athletes achieve a higher rate of graduation is related to eligibility: summer school work. There is some support for student-athletes in the summer, and it is crucial to the steady accumulation of credits for a large number of athletes. That probably makes them atypical in comparison to the rest of the student body; athletes basically go to school year-round. The athletic reason is that the coach wants the athletes here doing training and other permissible athletic activities.

If athletes are here for five years, more or less full time, and have to take a certain number of credits to remain eligible, why do they not have enough credits to graduate, Professor (J) Adams inquired? They do not have to accumulate credits at such a rate that they will necessarily have 180 credits plus the requirements in a major. But they will have a lot of credits.

Then it must be a rather minimal load to qualify as a full-time student, Professor Adams observed. Five years at 12 credits per quarter is 180; with summer added, it is more. Professor Flanigan noted that the summer terms are often used to make up credits they failed during the year, and they make up for non-credit courses taken at the beginning that do not count toward graduation but do count toward eligibility in the first year or two. There is a set of things that cause athletes to drop below the pace that would put them at 180 credits. But their eligibility may run out before the end of the fifth year.

Professor Bloomfield said that everything Professor Flanigan says makes it sound like athletes at Minnesota are in situations similar to those for athletes at other universities. While the University takes it as an excuse for the lower graduation rate, for non-athletes, that it is a commuter school and there are a lot of work opportunities and so on; this raises the question of why Minnesota ATHLETIC graduation rates considerably lower than the others?

There are a couple of reasons, Professor Flanigan said, and they are impressionistic. It is hard to get this in perspective, but in comparison with most other Big Ten schools, Minnesota imposes higher academic standards on athletes. Little that Sid Hartman says about the University is correct, but he has been correct in saying that the University has (marginally) higher expectations of athletes.

Unlike most Big Ten schools, the University has no program that warehouses athletes, that protects them from normal academic competition. Most do. For a valuable athlete who cannot compete in ordinary classes, there is a way to handle him or her at most other schools.

What is an example of that, Mr. Bergstrom asked? "Sports management" at one of the schools, Professor Flanigan said. It is a program run by the athletic department, the teachers are hired by the athletic department; the whole unit is funded and supervised by the athletic department; it is not a normal academic program. These are called "sheltered programs," it was said. At Minnesota, it is difficult for the athletes academically, because while the University is willing to admit students who do not meet increasing thresholds for admission, they only have about two years to get into a major. A student has to be in a major, after a time, to be eligible. There are ways around that; any student can change majors, and some athletes seem to be in a perpetual state of changing majors. One way athletes slip through the system is that they are able to survive academically for perhaps two years, but then do not qualify for the majors they are interested in. Some majors have high GPAs required, and required courses athletes may not be able to pass; athletes reach a point where they must have a major, but have no place to go.

Professor Flanigan commented that he has heard it said Minnesota loses athletes because they could not find a major, although he does not know of a specific instance when this occurred. It may have happened. But Minnesota does have a different standard of academic performance: the University expects them to perform the same way that the rest of the student body does.

In the major sports, such as a football team with a record that is not very good, competing for athletes with schools with much more impressive facilities and opportunities in football, Minnesota tends to get what is left of the pool both academically and athletically when it recruits football players. The best players are long gone before Minnesota recruiters have a chance. Minnesota may increasingly take student-athletes who are more and more at risk in this academic setting, which brings up the role of academic counseling in the athletic department.

The counseling program has the responsibility for taking a substantial number of students who enter with predictions, in comparison with the rest of the student body, that make it unlikely they can survive academically. The counseling office gives them support, help in learning to study, and so on, to keep them viable. Academic counseling at the University--although these things are hard to assess--has the reputation for being the best athletic academic counseling unit in the country. It is used as a model by the NCAA.

The NCAA also uses the University as a model in the sense that Minnesota is considered a deviant case in the integrity of the athletic operation. Minnesota is considered bizarre because it has such high standards. Both the outgoing and incoming athletic compliance officers have high visibility nationally. There is also a culture here that is different from other major institutions; it is a wonder to the NCAA that Minnesota can exist. Most other schools do not believe could run a program like Minnesota's and still survive athletically.

There is a tension of which everyone is keenly aware: the playing field is not entirely level. As far as they can tell, however, Minnesota is not cheating either technically or spiritually on academics, which puts some of the teams in a difficult position when good players are not performing academically.

Ms. Sommerville inquired why graduation rates for athletes have increased so much in the last two years. Professor Flanigan said the requirements have not changed; as general University requirements have increased, more and more athletes who have required exceptions. Most of the increase in standards

took place in the past two or three years; the graduation rate is for earlier cohorts. That they look better is in part because of how bad the rates were several years ago, plus summer support and academic counseling getting better each year. Another possibility, he speculated, is that Minnesota gives the maximum amount of financial aid for athletes that is permissible under NCAA rules. That has not always been the case; there may be some connection between student success and receipt of financial aid. Several factors could be contributing to the increase. The people in athletics also caution that the rates may get worse, as the University tries more and more to compete in football. In women's basketball, the University is bound to recruit people who are not as good students.

Mr. Bergstrom asked if athletes receive five years of support, no matter when they use up their eligibility. Professor Flanigan said that if an athlete uses up four years of eligibility in four years, they do get a fifth year of support. There may be other combinations that permit a fifth year. A number of students go to graduate or professional school on their athletic support.

What proportion of University athletes are in revenue sports, Professor Bloomfield inquired? Professor Flanigan reported on the numbers of athletes in the revenue sports, how they receive aid, and how much aid they receive. He also reported that the University would not truly reach a 60:40 ration of male to female athletes until it had a women's varsity ice hockey program in operation. Participation rates, he noted, change daily, and athletes can be counted a number of ways.

Professor Gray asked Professor Flanigan to describe the team audit process and interviews with exiting seniors. The athletic committee, since the Madison incident, has had a set of procedures for reviewing the academic performance of teams, Professor Flanigan said. The way the rules say it will be done is that every team is reviewed every three years by a panel of three faculty. They are changing that; it was too burdensome to do every team every three years, and it has only been accomplished once several years ago. It made more sense to review the teams with the poorest academic records; last year they audited men's wrestling and men's tennis, the two squads with the lowest GPAs. They also decided the process would continue, and not simply be one hour with the coach and three faculty once every three years, so that if the coach survived, he did not have to think about academics for three more years. They intend to maintain the review until the committee is satisfied the coach is taking steps to improve academic performance, and to see that the changes are in place and working.

The review of tennis and wrestling continued through last spring and to this winter. A student tennis player receiving all "F"s and carrying a lot of credits left the team; the tennis squad shows one of the most remarkable improvements, academically, of any group in the University. Both teams improved considerably. At the end of winter quarter, the committee initiated reviews of men's basketball and football, the two squads performing least satisfactorily academically--although by traditional standards, football is doing extremely well (above a 2.7 GPA and increasing). The years of Coach Wacker may not have led to Rose Bowl appearances, but there has been a steady improvement in academic performance. The football team is so big, however, and even though their overall numbers are quite good, there are a large number of students on the squad who are not performing too well.

These reviews used to be quick, one-hour sessions where basically three faculty harassed the coach about academic performance. Now they interview the coach, the academic counselor, some student-athletes from the squad, and the athletic director, all BEFORE a meeting is held. After the meeting, the committee may interview more people, then write a report and recommendations that serves as the basis

for a subsequent meeting that may involve MORE interviewing. That process continues until the review panel is satisfied. This puts them in a position that some coaches resent, in that they allegedly do not have an opportunity to appear to be praised for how well they are doing. Whether any live coach really wants an hour with three faculty to talk about good academic performance is doubtful, but this has been a criticism. They are trying to think of ways to honor teams that are doing well, without having a review.

Professor Bloomfield said there is a general perception that the University exploits athletes. Part of that perception is the feeling that they are not receiving a good education, and odds of making it in professional sports is very small. What real career opportunities are out there? How many students end up in a job that their experience has prepared them for?

Professor Flanigan said they do not know very much. The last information they receive is from the exit interview; after that, what is known about them is random. In a couple of sports, a high percentage continue in competition. In tennis, a lot of the players get on tours, perhaps in Africa or the Middle East. The same is true of basketball players; almost all get to a professional league somewhere, but few get to the NBA. In those sports, there is a lot attracting them away; their incentive for being here is that opportunity, and once they can achieve it, they leave.

The University has no curriculum in place that prepares coaches. One of the weaknesses of recruiting in Minnesota is because the University no longer trains coaches. Once almost all of them were; now, hardly any of the first-rate football teams are coached by Minnesota graduates. The reason is that the College of Education abolished undergraduate programs. It was a decision for other reasons, but that was one consequence. It is not common for Minnesota's graduates to go into traditional coaching careers. But no one has any idea how many athletes are getting a good career opportunity through the combination of school and athletics.

It would be easier to estimate how many are being exploited badly, who get little or no education and have little else when they leave. The number would be small, but if it exists at all, the University ought not be doing it. This is a concern, in both athletic departments and in the counseling program, as well as in the athletic committee: that the University not compete so fiercely for athletes that it begins to recruit students who should not have been let out of high school, much less admitted to college. Occasionally people are recruited who may look deceptively good, or a coach may know the athlete should not be recruited but who is needed for the athletic talent. Sometimes it happens, but it is very hard for them to survive here. They are not protected academically, and are probably washed out pretty quickly.

In response to a question, Professor Flanigan clarified that the committee on this campus has no responsibility for the other campuses; each has a different athletic status and different oversight.

Professor Gray thanked Professor Flanigan for joining the meeting.

4. Critical Measures

Professor Gray next welcomed Dr. Jane Whiteside and said Committee members should have received the third-phase discussion draft of the critical measures.

Dr. Whiteside reported that they had had a last meeting with one of the Senate committees only two days before this meeting, and had made changes as a result, so had been unable to get the revised draft out in a more timely fashion.

Dr. Whiteside told the Committee that the third phase critical measures started out with seven measurement categories; they had left for last the most difficult, and they WERE the most difficult. What is now being recommended are two new measurement categories (out of the original seven); one of the two pulls three of the original seven together, but three of the categories will not be critical measures. Some will be included in the earlier measures that were developed, and one is not being recommended as a critical measure at all.

Dr. Whiteside then reviewed the measures. The measure of reputation has been the most controversial, and on the recommendation of SCEP it will not be a critical measure. There has been a great deal of debate about this; some believe it very important to use reputation as a critical measure, while others believe it has already been covered in the other measures and that the methodological problems are so great that a meaningful measure is not possible--and that the University could do damage to itself if it used reputational rankings. SCEP had very strong feelings about this, and urged that the rankings not be used.

The second category, interdisciplinary and/or applied programs, was not controversial at all. The Research Committee discussed the terms over several meetings, and concluded one could not define those things in ways that they could be counted and measured--and one could do damage by trying to count and measure because some things would be included and others would be omitted and there would be invidious distinctions made. The recommendation is that it is important to encourage interdisciplinary and applied work, but as a measure they should be included in the scholarship, research, and artistic accomplishments measure, which will reflect the highlights of the work of the faculty. Some of those highlights will be interdisciplinary and applied, and that will be noted.

The third measure, the University's interaction with society, partnerships, service, and impacts, pulls together outreach and public service, responsiveness to market demand, and responsiveness to compelling state needs. Early in the process, as they were trying to figure out what those terms meant, they concluded they were so interrelated that they could not and should not try to separate them. In terms of what was important to report, they concluded it all came down to the University's interface with the external community. This plays out in many ways, across the entire mission. This measure says there needs to be a way to report this activity, to be able to paint a better picture of what occurs, but it is not something that can be counted and included in goal-setting.

They also say, in this measure, that in addition to getting this information reported by both the academic and administrative units, the University also needs more of an external look. There is need for survey work, on some periodic basis, with external organizations--public and private--that the University can say what it is doing, but it can also know what people outside see.

There are other recommendations that call for adding elements to some earlier measures. One is to the characteristics of entering students, to pick up those who come not as new high school freshmen or transfers, but who come as non-traditional students. It has also been suggested, in the student experience category, some measure of service learning. A lot of people have said that part of the connection between

the University and the community is through the students who are in internships, providing community service, and so on. This fits with one of the new recommendations for the liberal education requirements.

The student services measures (earlier called customer service and streamlining) has gone through multiple versions. They ended up focusing on student services; the recommendation from SCEP was that this should not be a separate category but should be part of the student experience measure.

The last one, information resources, is the other new measure; it includes three elements. Part of it considers access to technology by faculty, staff, and students. Another part looks at use of technology in teaching and learning. The third element is access to information, recognizing that information technology is a means to an end, but that the information is important to what the University does and what it is.

It was reported, on behalf of the Finance and Planning Committee, that it had taken no formal action but was generally pleased with the measures and happy to see them go forward. Professor Gray reported that Professor Koch had left her a message that the revisions are a result of conversations with SCEP and wanted to be sure the changes were made.

Professor Gray asked if there were questions or comments, and whether or not any action should be taken. The measures cannot go to the Senate before they go to the Board, because the Regents will be acting on them this summer.

Professor (J) Adams asked, apropos all of the critical measures, if there is any explicit or implicit ranking of the measures, so that down the road in a few years they will be looked at and judgments made about where the University is doing well and where it is not, and where it ought to be allocating resources?

The question came up with the Regents when they were discussing the second-phase measures, Dr. Whiteside reported. It was noted that these are a lot of measures, and some seem to be going in different directions; somewhere the University needs to see where these sort out and make judgments about where it will be most important to allocate resources.

They have also been saying, for the last year, that these categories exist by themselves, but they are really quite inter-related. The third phase measures have pulled a lot together, but once the third group is finished, there is a need to reconceptualize the entire package and to get a better picture of what they look like as a whole. That will be the next task, Dr. Whiteside. In their preliminary thinking, they have seen that many of the measures are about students, and many are about faculty and the work of faculty, and a lot are about the infrastructure. They may sort into such categories; ultimately, when priorities are set, it might be in such categories.

Dr. Hendel reported that one of the things that has been essential in their work has been talking with faculty, students, and committees, about whether the measure should be included and how it should be developed. In that same spirit, their task in the coming year is to return and characterize the overall set of measures and perhaps to address the issue of ranking priorities. They used a rating form, when they began the process two years ago, and asked committees to indicate their priorities for the measures; they

will look at what the groups (mostly internal but a few external) said was more important.

The other issue is the connection between a measurement and a goal, and the resources within the University that will be needed in a particular area.

Professor (J) Adams asked if the measures that have been approved and these new ones tie in with the budget request in any way. (Dr. Whiteside responded "not yet.") Is it anticipated that this will be part of the conversation over the next few years, he then asked? How do these parts fit together? One has the sense there are separate activities going on, but down in the trenches, where the work is being done, one wonders if a faculty member could tick off not only the critical measures or understand who's being held accountable to be sure they are being used. That may be down the road, but no one has talked about this, he said.

To put some of those things in place must include more than those who developed the measures, Dr. Whiteside responded. One of the things that will be very important is putting the measures together into a whole picture; only when that is done do they become coherent and meaningful to people. If put together in the right way, it can be more readily communicated both within and outside the University. This will be an important step.

She tries to think about putting the measures together in a way that relates them to the University's mission and to the strategic areas, so there is more of a whole picture. Short of that, it is hard for people to understand the measures.

Professor Bloomfield said that this entire exercise struck him as another attempt to emulate business practices by measuring a lot of things. Business has certain accounting measures, such as crucial ratios that they pay attention to, and they increasingly measure quality control and customer satisfaction. In the non-profit world, are there other organizations that have undertaken this kind of exercise and found it useful? What is their experience?

Dr. Hendel said he did not know about the non-profit sector, but in higher education, there are many institutions involved in a process similar to the one the University is using. In those institutions where the process is moving forward by initiative and direction from within, it fits what the institution wants to accomplish. In other instances there has been a set of measures imposed on the institution; it is not clear they accomplish what the measures do what they are supposed to, which is to help the institution move forward. In those cases, they may not reflect what the institution values and sees as important goals and objectives. The University is not alone, and its experience is one of doing something internally that expresses the broad concerns of faculty, staff, and students--and at the same time recognizing issues of concern from outside the University. There are other agencies involved in the same process, but they have sometimes gotten lost in the detail of trying to measure hundreds of things, rather than focusing on a small number of items that are at the heart of what the organization wishes to accomplish.

Professor Gray mentioned that she is on the board of a non-profit health care organization, and it is doing things similar to the critical measures.

Professor Bland said she wanted to mention the accreditation report and to give Dr. Hendel the recognition he deserves for his work in that effort. This is related to the critical measures; there is a

danger that they are too fragmented and detailed and will not be put to good use. It takes a master to make sense of the University with a few measures. She commended to the Committee the accreditation document that Dr. Hendel prepared, which describes the entire University in meaningful ways in a few pages. It can be done, and one can be more confident about that after seeing the accreditation report. Professor Gray asked that the Committee receive a paper copy of the report.

Professor Gray asked what the Committee wished to do with the critical measures. It could act as a Committee to endorse them, or it could act on behalf of the Senate; the latter action would require review by the Senate at its next meeting in the fall. For the first two sets of measures, they were presented to the Faculty Senate. Professor Bloomfield suggested there might be a virtue on consistency, and that they be placed on the docket of the Faculty Senate in the fall. Professor Gray noted that THIS Committee would be responsible for placing it on the docket of the UNIVERSITY Senate, and the faculty had previously granted the premise of the students that these measures should go to the University rather than the Faculty Senate.

Professor (J) Adams said some action should be taken, but that the measures belong on the Senate docket for discussion simply so that people know about them. One can be concerned that committees can agree on them, but that will be the end of it; "we have a way of endorsing virtue and then holding someone's feet to the fire, two or three years down the road, at the provostal and dean and department head level." The second step is important, but easier to take if the first step has been taken properly.

Professor Gray inquired if there was a motion. Professor Hobbie moved that the measures be placed on the Senate docket in the fall. The Regents want these items in July, Dr. Whiteside said.

Professor (J) Adams commended Drs. Hendel and Whiteside for bringing these measures to everyone's attention and getting feedback; the second-best solution is for the group to endorse them in principle, with the understanding that they would be brought to the Senate for information in the fall. Professor Hobbie amended his motion to that effect; it was unanimously approved.

Professor Gray thanked Drs. Hendel and Whiteside for their work, and then adjourned the meeting at 1:30.

-- Gary Engstrand