

Minutes*

**Senate Consultative Committee
Thursday, September 25, 1997
2:30 - 4:00
Room 238 Morrill Hall**

Present: Victor Bloomfield (chair), Jesse Berglund, Carole Bland, Gary Davis, Mary Dempsey, Susan Giovengo, Virginia Gray, David Hamilton, Russell Hobbie, M. Janice Hogan, Eddie Kalombo, Laura Coffin Koch, Michael Korth, Leonard Kuhl, Marvin Marshak, Jason Mattson, Amy Mertil, Kevin Nicholson, Harvey Peterson, Joe Skupniewitz, Matthew Tirrell

Absent: Heather Aagesen, Ryan Falk, Gary Gardner, Fred Morrison

Guests: Professor Kent Bales

Others: Maureen Smith (University Relations)

[In these minutes: Student issues; the intellectual future of the University]

1. Student Issues

Professor Bloomfield convened the meeting at 1:40, welcomed the new student members, and called for introductions. After they were completed, he asked the student members for an enumeration of the issues of high priority for them for the year. Those issues included:

- With the change in administration, the loss of local consultation through the provostal student consultative committees. Professor Dempsey explained the work of the task force, that it was only for faculty, but that its report would be brought to the Senate; Professor Gray said that had been the process with establishment of the provostal consultative committees--the faculty did not presume to decide what students wanted--but the students had then decided to seek a similar structure. Professor Bloomfield said the President wants a stronger role for the colleges, but that consultative mechanisms in the colleges may not be what they should; the students should seek participation in the colleges.
- Student access to evaluations of faculty. Professor Koch reported that little had been done over the summer, but that the issue will be on the SCEP agenda. Mr. Nicholson acknowledged this could be a sensitive issue, and one the students want to work on with FCC.
- The contract for food services with Aramark. (This is an issue for Finance and Planning, not SCC.)
- Transportation and the U Pass, and the need for a plan that includes graduate and undergraduate students. (Again, this is an issue for Finance and Planning.)

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

- Twin Cities campus housing.
- Advising, how it can be done by faculty, and possibly increasing faculty advising. Professor Bloomfield said that students often do not show up for advising, and it is wrong for them to feel students cannot talk to faculty; many enjoy working with advisees, but many students do not take advantage of the opportunities.

Asked if students are apprehensive about the new grading policy, it was said that the semester conversion was of much greater concern. Mr. Skupniewitz noted that fee statements urge students to finish before the semester conversion, if they are able, so students are aware of the change. Professor Marshak said that the crisis will come next year, when students need to complete sequences; deliberate action will be required. Mr. Skupniewitz said there are excellent web pages available and students need to be made aware that those resources are available.

2. The Intellectual Future of the University

Professor Bloomfield told the students that the previous two years had been anomalous for the faculty because of the tenure debate, and that had affected the balance between FCC and SCC. He said he would try to get back to a more usual balance between the two committees, to address a range of issues that involved students, and said there will be a number of student-related issues that would go to the Senate.

Professor Bloomfield then distributed a handout summarizing issues important to the intellectual future of the University and said he would be emphasizing how faculty and students could participate in developing that future. Last year FCC wrote two white papers; from them he developed the list of issues and to which he added items that had arisen in recent months.

It is important that faculty and students be involved in long-term planning, Professor Bloomfield said. Ultimately the regents and administration must make the calls, but what happens at the University comes from the departments and colleges, and a lot of that affects students. Higher education will see big changes, and if faculty and students do not weigh in, they will forfeit the opportunity.

The list is mind-boggling, and one can appreciate the challenges faced by the administration. As he assembled the list, Professor Bloomfield said, he realized that much of what should be done is common sense, but the University is not doing well in several cases. These are issues the Committee, the administration, and the regents must wrestle with over the next few years; is this the right mix? Will it provide the best return on the dollars invested?

Committee members made a number of observations and comments on this subject, both on the specifics itemized by Professor Bloomfield as well as the subject generally.

- The new administration is interested in planning for the intellectual future, and if President Yudof and Dr. Bruininks can be provided a coherent plan, they are ready to go. The faculty and students are responsible for taking advantage of the opportunity.

- Students will notice the infrastructure changes and more contact with faculty; they will not be involved in the behind-the-scenes activities. It is time to set about solving these problems. Now.
- Attraction, retention, and development of good leaders should be included.
- There is a change in the environment, with universities needing to turn more to industry for funding; this raises intellectual property questions as well as whether universities will begin working for industry because government does not provide enough money. It will be important to define the University's role and how it will deal with industry in order to obtain the funding it needs.
- This is a good list for almost any college; it should be different for a research, land-grant university.
- Unique to Minnesota is its location and macro-economic issues. The state has a stagnant or declining portion of the country's population; if Minnesota is a smaller portion of the U.S., and the University is tied to the state, does that mean a decline in the University's status? There could be decline in the base of support for the University, which means it must broaden its base and not be just the University of Minnesota but become a more national university. That has implications for policies. The question is, is the state better served by having a first rate university IN Minnesota or a second-rate University OF Minnesota?

Professor Bloomfield said that as he developed the list, he tried to evaluate which items on the list would advance the mission of the University; the Committee should use Dr. Bruininks' office and computer help to identify strategic investments that can grow and benefit the state.

- The list should include recruitment of a high-quality student body, including undergraduates.
- There needs to be an elaboration of what the endpoint is; what does the intellectual future mean for the University? Professor Bloomfield said that the earlier comments implied that the state and the University are on the cusp of declining into irrelevance; competition is becoming more stiff, and more populated parts of the U.S. are becoming more dominant; no other state supports a university like this one on a population of 4.5 million, and that will become even harder to do in the future. Unless the University improves its competitive position, it will lose out; with declining industrial and federal support, there will be an adverse effect on the state's economy. The real issue is to keep a competitive position as the number of research universities declines, how can the University continue to provide good education and research and contribute to the economy of the state?

This doom and gloom may be excessive, it was said, but the birthrate data are that Minnesota was 2.25% of the United States population in 1900; in 1.75% in 1985, and that figure has remained stable since. The reason there are so many college students in Minnesota is that it sends a higher proportion of students to higher education than almost any other state.

Relatedly, there is a labor shortage; almost everyone over the age of 14 and anyone not senile is working, so the state is tapped out in terms of growth. There are no more people to work. The only way to fix that is through in-migration, which is an important role for the University: it brings

in students who stay. People with high skill levels are needed. The addition of the southeast Asians to Minnesota's population has been a very positive development, something in which the University played a major role.

The region is even a worse story. The populations of Iowa and the Dakotas are stagnant and their percentage of the total is declining. The Twin Cities takes young people from rural areas; the region the University depends on cannot produce new people. Taking the Minneapolis Federal Reserve District, the University has always been the best in the area. But it is an area of declining population growth.

- It is important to recruit new students; there is a high correlation between where undergraduates go and universities that are doing well. Wisconsin is no better funded than Minnesota but does better on many indices; it has more alumni loyalty. The curriculum and the shape of the undergraduate experience must be dealt with, and that means bringing more students together (e.g., the Residential College). Of the top 10% of students, only 10% go to the University; high achieving students prefer the private universities, although this has changed in the last few years.
- The University must take advantage of modern technology and increase its distance education efforts; it could then draw students from everywhere. This will be a powerful tool but it is not clear how it will play out. The Internet was developed on the cheap, but that won't continue; fancy web pages cost money. The University can hire media specialists, or faculty--or define faculty to be media specialists.

Professor Bloomfield revised the document, following the SCC discussion, and it now reads as follows.

Planning for the Intellectual Future of the University of Minnesota

Attract and retain good faculty

- * Provide competitive salary and benefits
- * Provide pleasant, stable working conditions
- * Provide adequate support for research and teaching

Recruit a first-class student body

- * Emphasize the attractiveness of the U of M as a residential campus
- * Structure the undergraduate experience to take advantage of the research environment
- * Develop better practices for graduate student recruitment, training, and placement

Attract and retain high-quality non-faculty colleagues and support staff

- * Develop a rational, explicit, humane policy for academic professional employees
- * Make U of M more attractive for high-caliber secretarial, clerical, and computer staff

Provide good quality infrastructure to support productive work

- * Classrooms and teaching laboratories
- * Research laboratories

- * Performance/practice facilities
- * Offices and conference rooms
- * Reliable networking
- * Libraries and computing

Provide for faculty growth and renewal

- * Invest systematically in faculty productivity and development
- * Develop more attractive sabbatical policy
- * Encourage and support on-the-job renewal
- * Develop rewarding career paths for non-tenure-track faculty

Develop mechanisms for appropriate evolution of academic programs

- * Give most power to the fundamental academic units: departments and colleges
- * Establish effective mechanisms to encourage and support interdisciplinary efforts
- * Encourage individual entrepreneurship, balanced with collective purpose
- * Seek new funding sources, without compromising university autonomy and academic freedom
- * Regularly assess existing and experimental programs, and act on the assessments
- * Expect that the new will occasionally, but not too readily, replace the old

Establish positive internal and external climates which encourage self-esteem

- * Develop and appoint high-quality leaders at all levels: faculty, administration, Regents
- * Demonstrate commitment to shared governance
- * Use faculty as valued source of advice and counsel
- * Develop shared goals and values
- * Provide valued service to agricultural and non-agricultural constituencies
- * Communicate the significance of the research university to the general public

Develop appropriate relations with other systems of higher education

- * Devise suitable division of responsibilities with MNSCU, etc.
- * Develop cooperation with other states in fields that can have a regional impact
- * Provide distance education, life-long learning, etc., at a level appropriate for a research university
- * Recognize that if on-line education is to be done properly, major investments in instructional resources and specialized personnel will be required

These are all obvious, worthwhile goals, but in most of them we are well below the optimal level, and most of them will require major resources for significant improvement to be achieved. The job of faculty consultation and governance, along with administration and Regents, is to figure out a sensible, productive balance among the many good things to which we might devote our resources.

Professor Bloomfield asked Committee members to let him know if this kind of discussion is inappropriate; his view is that this is what it should have time to discuss. There is a need to identify productive ways to make progress on these issues, and to work with the administration and regents on them.

He then adjourned the meeting at 4:00.

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September 25, 1997

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-- Gary Engstrand

University of Minnesota