

Minutes*

Senate Consultative Committee
Thursday, March 6, 2002
3:00 – 4:00
Room 238A Morrill Hall

Present: Dan Feeney (chair), Judy Berning, Susan Brorson, Tom Clayton, Gary Davis, Marti Hope Gonzales, Candace Kruttschnitt, Kari Lindeman, Judith Martin, Ryan Osero, Jeff Ratliff-Crain, Martin Sampson, Charles Speaks, Eric Steinhoff, Thomas Walsh

Absent: John Amble, Muriel Bebeau, Nick Cecconi, Arthur Erdman, Yev Garif, Kelsi Holland, Mary Jo Kane, Marvin Marshak, Nathan Saete, Teresa Wallace

Guests: Professor John S. Anderson (Senate Committee on Student Behavior); Professor Mark Pedelty (Senate Committee on Social Concerns)

Others: none

[In these minutes: (1) change in credit/contact hour standard; (2) student conduct code changes; (3) student strike resolution]

1. Change to the Credit-Contact Hour Standard

Professor Feeney convened the meeting at 3:00 and turned to Professor Sampson to lead the discussion of the proposed change in the Semester Conversion Standards concerning the relationship between credits for a course and contact hours. The proposed change involves one word; the existing language, with the one word in Section 5A underlined, follows:

SECTION 4A: The Senate affirms the standard (first adopted by the University Senate on February 16, 1922, and reaffirmed subsequently) that one semester credit is to represent, for the average University of Minnesota undergraduate student, three hours of academic work per week (including lectures, laboratories, recitations, discussion groups, field work, study, and so on), averaged over the term, in order to complete the work of the course. Enrollment for 15 credits in a semester would thus require approximately 45 hours of work per week, on average, over the course of the semester. All grades for academic work are based on the quality of the work submitted, not on hours of effort. It is expected that the academic work required of graduate and professional students will exceed three hours per credit per week or 45 hours per semester.

Instructional units should periodically review course syllabi to determine whether the course credit is appropriate.

All courses proposed for the semester calendar shall include a student workload statement demonstrating how the course conforms to this policy. College and campus curriculum

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committees and other approving bodies (e.g., the Council on Liberal Education) must consider the student workload statement in reaching a decision on whether to approve a proposed semester course, and should normally reject any course which does not meet, or significantly exceeds, the requirement of three hours of academic work per week for each course credit.

It is understood that professional norms and the nature of the activity may in some cases require more than three hours of work per week or 45 hours per semester per credit. Clinical experiences, some laboratory work, and some studio activities may be unable to adhere to this three-hour-per-credit standard; with college approval and with appropriate notification to the student of the amount of work expected for the course or educational experience (e.g., in class schedules, bulletins, or syllabi), demands on the student in excess of the 45 hours per semester credit are permissible.

SECTION 5A: The hours of contact time for a course normally shall equal at least the number of credits for the course times the number of weeks the course is offered. In the majority of cases, this would mean the number of contact hours per week would equal the number of credits for the course, but the contact hours need not be spread out evenly by week.

A contact hour is defined for these purposes as formal instruction by an individual appointed for that purpose by the department or faculty member, including faculty members, graduate teaching assistants, teaching specialists, or, in unusual instances, advanced undergraduates. This standard applies to all enrollment periods. The student workload statement (required in the preceding section) must justify fewer total contact hours than the number of credits for the course times the number of weeks the course is offered; contact hours of all types equal to or in excess of at least one hour per week per credit, on average, need not be justified. College and campus curriculum committees and other approving bodies (e.g., the Council on Liberal Education) must consider the contact hours in reaching a decision on whether to approve a proposed semester course; such bodies should normally reject course proposals which have fewer contact hours than the number of credits times the number of weeks the course is offered, barring significant evidence that reduced instructional contact hours are appropriate.

Explicitly exempted from this standard are research seminars, studio courses, clinical experiences, correspondence courses and independent study, directed study or readings or field work, directed research, internships and practicums, honors thesis credits, and other experiences faculty offer to students outside the normal laboratory or classroom setting (many of which include activities beyond the physical boundaries of the campuses). Included in the standard are interactive video classes (which in practice should be no different from in-class instruction) and one-way transmission of instruction from the instructor to the students (it is assumed that other avenues of two-way interaction are used in this instance, such as email and the telephone).

The members of the Committee on Educational Policy, Professor Sampson explained, were informed that when Section 4A was adopted, the intent was that 5A would be repealed. The Committee thought that linking credits to the amount of student academic work (4A) made sense but that linking credits to the number of times a student sees an instructor (5A) did not. The Committee did not want go down the slippery slope of having courses with a larger number of credits but few contact hours but concluded that 5A was perhaps not the best way to avoid that end in a day of on-line course work, email contact with instructors, video interaction, computer-assisted instruction, and the like. 5A could be

obsolete very soon. The Committee came to the conservative outcome that inserting the word "normally" in 5A would provide the flexibility needed without suggesting that courses could have many credits and little contact.

Professor Martin said she saw this change as opening the door to abuses that they thought they had shut tightly when the conversion to semesters was made. Ms. Berning said that the Student Senate Consultative Committee agreed with Professor Martin; the students are paying tuition and want to see their instructors.

Professor Sampson inquired about a writing-intensive course: the instructor and students would be expected to meet four times per week for a four-credit course, rather than meet three hours and expect an extra hour of work. If the instructor must do the preparation for that fourth hour of instruction, there is less time for him or her to work with students. Mr. Osero said the contact did not have to be a class but if the class has four credits then there should be four hours of contact.

Professor Speaks argued that to remove 5A completely would have been "a disaster" and that he was not satisfied with insertion of the word "normally," either. He related that he had been a member of the semester conversion committee and had at one point analyzed the course offerings in three colleges in terms of the number of credits and the contact hours listed; he said he found MAJOR abuse of the credit-contact hour rule and found an inordinate number of 4-credit courses that only had two hours of class meetings listed.

Professor Feeney suggested that the matter be put in front of the Senate. The Committee concurred. It was suggested that this Committee vote on the matter as well, to express its view to the Senate; the Committee voted 6-5 in favor of inserting the word "normally" in Section 5A.

2. Student Conduct Code

Professor Feeney now inquired if the students had reached any conclusions about the revisions to the Student Conduct Code. Ms. Berning reported that they had; the unofficial consensus of the Student Senate Consultative Committee ("unofficial" because a number of students were participating in student lobbying and had been unable to attend the meeting, although they did have a quorum) was that they accepted the changes proposed with the understandings outlined by Vice President Brown: Jurisdiction is defined as on University of Minnesota own property, or directly related to the classroom environment, or representing the University (e.g., an athlete); the revisions are simply to update the language, not to change the current interpretation of the code; and past judgments and rulings will continue to be precedents.

With that understanding, the Committee voted unanimously to approve the changes. The proposed changes in the Code will be placed on the docket of the March 27 Senate meeting.

3. Student Strike Resolution

Professor Feeney next welcomed Professor Mark Pedelty, chair of the Senate Committee on Social Concerns, to discuss a resolution the committee had adopted calling for faculty not to penalize students if they participate in a strike should the United States go to war against Iraq. Professor Pedelty related that the alumni members of the Social Concerns Committee asked if something could be done

around the issue of Iraq; they talked about the matter and drafted the proposed resolution with the help of Professor David Fox (who has been instrumental in acquiring signatures nationally on a statement opposing a U.S. attack on Iraq).

Is this Committee supposed to do something with the resolution, Professor Feeney asked? Is the request that it be forwarded to the Senate? Is this Committee asked to take a stand? He reported that he had spoken with some members of the administration about precedents that may exist; he has learned that there is no formal University policy and there are no precedents, so the issue of releasing students from class/class obligations in order to participate in a strike is discretionary with the faculty. Faculty can excuse students, can use the class period for a discussion of issues, can conduct class as usual, and so on. The Faculty Consultative Committee, he said, needs to be careful about weighing in on something like this because it has no authority to tell the faculty what they can do.

Professor Speaks suggested the resolution be referred to the President or the Provost with a request that they notify faculty of the proposed strike and that the decision is a faculty matter on how to respond to it. He said he was not sure this was a matter for this Committee. Ms. Berning agreed that this was perhaps not the most appropriate place for action, even though the resolution comes from a Senate committee; she expressed concern about the precedent that might be set.

Professor Sampson said that while he was aghast at what the U.S. government was proposing to do in the Middle East, and that as a Middle East scholar he was appalled at the notion that the U.S. believes it can effectively intervene in the way it proposes, he nonetheless concurred that this Committee is probably not the right venue for the resolution. He also suggested that the resolution as worded implies that a strike could go on as long as a war; while some may think it will be very short, it could drag on, and the resolution could be construed as arguing for the cancellation of the semester, even though that probably was not intended.

Professor Pedelty agreed that that was not the intent and that inserting words making it clear it referred to a one-day strike would be considered friendly. He said that the Committee thought very hard about what the University could do, given the enormous amount of research funding it receives from the Department of Defense, for the ROTC programs, and its general involvement in a war effort, to show SOME opposition without going farther than many would be willing to go. He said the Committee was leery about shutting off democracy inside the University; the reaction outside could be even bigger if it did so.

Professor Speaks suggested that the language not refer to a "strike" and to a "walk out" because those have specific meanings in American society; they imply that students who choose not to participate in a strike could be labelled "scabs" or strike-breakers. The resolution should also recognize the right of students to exercise their responsibilities as a student (e.g., by going to class). Professor Pedelty said he accepted the first two suggestions but that the resolution does not preclude a student from attending class. Professor Speaks maintained that the resolution is implicitly coercive; a student may want to go to class or may agree with U.S. policy--and should not feel stigmatized.

Professor Martin said she did not believe the resolution should go to the Senate but that it should instead be referred to the Provost's office; the Provost in turn should send a message to the faculty. The reaction will be somewhat like what happened after the events of 9/11: some faculty cancelled classes (eventually the University did so, too), some used it as an opportunity to discuss the events. It is the

faculty's responsibility to meet their class but also their prerogative to alter the content in the face of an extraordinary event.

Does the Committee wish to defer to the administration when a collective, representative body (this Committee) could make a statement, Professor Pedelty asked? Is that turning over its responsibilities to the administration? Professor Feeney responded that he has been concerned about the number of issues brought to this Committee, and the Faculty Consultative Committee, that are not germane to its business. He pointed out that the Committee has no authority to excuse anyone from class but it can send a message to the Provost recommending she contact the faculty. There is no need for the Senate or this Committee to weigh in on United States policy, he said, but he supported the right of a faculty committee to do so and sending a message to the Provost asking that she take appropriate action.

The Committee concurred that the resolution should be revised in light of the discussion and that it would then be transmitted from Professors Feeney and Martin to Provost Maziar.

The final resolution, after amendments, read as follows:

Student Protest Resolution

Whereas the University of Minnesota encourages students to become active participants in the democratic process, and

Whereas the University of Minnesota seeks to internationalize the curriculum and encourage students to become conscious actors in the world community, and

Whereas demonstrations and protests are a fundamental aspect of political involvement and expression in a democracy, and

Whereas some political issues are so significant that they supersede the content of a single lecture, discussion, or lab in importance in the student's life and learning

Be it resolved that the faculty at University of Minnesota will not penalize students who miss classes, discussions, or labs as a result of participating in a potential, one day student protest on the first day of a United States invasion of Iraq, should the United States invade Iraq in 2003. Nor should those who choose to attend classes be in any way penalized for doing so.

Adopted unanimously by the Senate Committee on Social Concerns on March 3, 2003

Professor Feeney then adjourned the meeting at 3:30.

-- Gary Engstrand