

Minutes*

Senate Consultative Committee
Thursday, November 2, 2000
2:15 – 3:45
Room 238 Morrill Hall

Present: Joseph Massey (chair pro tem), Wilbert Ahern, Sabeen Altaf, Muriel Bebeau, Amber Benning, Susan Brorson, Khaled Dajani, Meggan Ellingboe, Paul Enever, Adam Lyche, Jason Reed, Chris Shulstad, Charles Speaks, Billie Wahlstrom

Regrets: Linda Brady, Percy Chaby, Les Drewes, Tim Dunn, Reid LeBeau, Fred Morrison, V. Rama Murthy, Paula Rabinowitz, Jeff Ratliff-Crain

Absent: none

Guests: Professor Ed Fogelman (Task Force on Civic Engagement)

[In these minutes: Task Force on Civic Engagement; fall semester grade due date]

1. Task Force on Civic Engagement

Professor Massey welcomed Professor Fogelman to the meeting to discuss the Task Force on Civic Engagement.

Professor Fogelman reported that the Task Force is just getting off the ground and then provided the Committee with background information. On July 4, 1999, a declaration about the civic responsibilities of universities was adopted by a large number of university presidents. President Yudof signed the declaration so the University of Minnesota is formally committed to it and is doing something about it.

The Center for Democracy and Citizenship received a planning grant from the Kellogg Foundation to survey faculty and administrators about the directions universities are going. The survey found widespread unease; people felt a loss of public meaning about what universities are doing and that they are moving away from the public responsibilities of a university. This is especially true of the land-grant universities.

Executive Vice President Bruininks set up the Task Force, has provided support for it, and charged it to strengthen the civic mission of the University and to integrate civic engagement as a continuing institutional priority. The effort is unique because of its comprehensive scope; also, the Task Force will try to approach the topic from a coherent intellectual standpoint. Professor Fogelman said he did not believe other institutions were doing things this way or talking about an institutional commitment to civic engagement or how to build it into university priorities. It is a very ambitious undertaking, Professor Fogelman said, that he hopes will be successful.

* 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.

There are about 30 people on the Task Force; the membership includes faculty, staff, and students divided into six working committees. [The description of the working committees can be found at <http://www1.umn.edu/usenate/scep/00-10-11.html>] Each committee has an advisory panel composed of people from outside the University. This is a truly community effort, not one confined to the inside of the University; to redefine the role of the University IN the community requires the participation and support OF the community.

These questions about the role of universities have arisen since the end of the Cold War, Professor Fogelman maintained. Before that there was a sense that higher education had a public mission; since then its mission has not been clear and it is drifting. The Task Force will try to answer the question of whether there IS a public mission.

The first report of the Task Force will be made to Dr. Bruininks on December 15. The final report is expected by May 15, 2001. The changes to be recommended will not be accomplished in one year, Professor Fogelman warned. The Kellogg Foundation sees this as an 8-year cycle to bring about change. If one is serious about changing priorities of the institution it will take a long time. But the effort can be launched in one year and as many people as possible involved in it.

Professor Brorson inquired how the coordinate campuses are involved in this effort. Professor Fogelman said there is a member on the Task Force from each of the coordinate campuses and those representatives are asked to be a liaison with their campuses to keep them informed and involved. This is an all-University process.

What is it the Task Force hopes to accomplish, Professor Bebeau asked? What are examples of outcomes he would be happy with? Professor Fogelman said it is surprising how much is going on at the University that one would call civic engagement and how much the University deals with groups in the community. The Task Force is trying to compile a directory of these activities so we can all see what is occurring.

Civic engagement has implications for learning, what is valued as research, and what is done in the community, Professor Fogelman continued. He said he could speculate what civic engagement might mean. For example, when new faculty are hired, they are told that there are expectations for teaching and research; what if the University also says there is an expectation of civic engagement? The University could say to prospective faculty that if they do not believe in civic engagement, that it is not a legitimate professional obligation, then they should not come to the University of Minnesota.

How does one compare civic engagement to service, Professor Ahern asked? Service, as all know, is a tiny third portion of faculty responsibilities after teaching and research, Professor Fogelman replied, and is not at the level of importance of the other two. Service also includes internal University activities--which are valuable but are a limited form of civic engagement. This is a discussion about making civic engagement more central and defining it more substantially. When Johns Hopkins and the University of Chicago were founded their missions explicitly included working with the community and working on common problems--that is the way RESEARCH was conceived.

One point of resistance may come from those who believe the primary mission of the University is research; civic engagement will be seen as a distraction. He does not see it that way, Professor

Fogelman said; it is not a choice between research and engagement. Research grows out of a commitment to the community (for example, what sustains democracy?).

Professor Brorson said she was glad that civic engagement is elevated beyond service; that is critical. Much of her effort this year, she related, has been helping obtain telecommunications capacity for the city of Crookston, which is essential for a rural economy. This is an activity well above service, it creates credibility for the University, and it leads to discussion in the classroom about what it means to be in a community. Professor Fogelman agreed this kind of activity is legitimate faculty and student work and said it should be rewarded; people should be recognized, not embarrassed, for it.

The document should go to the whole community, Professor Ahern said. Some groups in society do not trust the University because they believe it to be in other peoples' pockets. A goal, Professor Fogelman said, is to keep the University free of external domination; the public should look to us as a source of independent and authoritative knowledge.

Professor Fogelman said that people can find information about the Task Force and civic engagement on the web at www.umn.edu/civic. Professor Massey thanked him for his presentation.

2. Fall Semester Grade Due Date

Professor Massey now turned to Professor Ahern to begin a discussion of the grade due date for Fall Semester. Professor Ahern recalled that this was an issue that divided SCEP and FCC last year. FCC believed there should be an extension of the deadline when grades are due beyond the usual 72 hours (i.e., three working days). The deadline was extended last year, to January 5, under authority granted to the Registrar by Senate policy. The Registrar hoped that virtually all grades would be turned in by that date; as it turned out, about the same percentage of faculty did not meet the extended deadline as normally do not meet the 72-hour deadline.

SCEP had two discussions of this issue and heard from the Registrar's office about the implications for students when grades are turned in late. SCEP concluded it saw no need to make a policy change (that is, require a later deadline for fall semesters) and that the 72-hour deadline was appropriate (it does not include University holidays). The last day of fall semester classes could be December 23; that, in effect, gives faculty members a week to get grades in. SCEP believed that if there is to be a policy change there should be a compelling reason for it; SCEP saw no compelling reason.

In addition, SCEP wondered whether it was appropriate to put the Registrar "on the hot seat" on this issue. It was the sense of SCEP that the University should see how the system works for a couple of years under semesters. SCEP was also told that there are Big Ten universities that have a similar deadline for getting grades in around the holidays and they seem to live with it.

Are there rules that make it difficult for instructors to deal with this situation, Professor Feeney asked? If so, instructors get painted into a corner. There are arguments about the quality of examinations; does the deadline push faculty into using multiple-choice, computer-graded exams? It would be better to examine educational policies than to compromise the ability of students to get financial aid and to register, he said.

Can a final be moved, Professor Massey asked? It can, Professor Ahern said, but there is a reality that must be dealt with. He has told department heads that if one student reports he or she was unable to take the final because it was moved, they have violated Senate policy. There are policies but they set parameters on behavior that accompany the commitment to offer high-quality instruction.

Is it possible to move the final to an earlier date in the semester and just give a quiz at the end, Professor Feeney asked? With the State Fair pushing the end of the semester against the holidays, and with more course material to examine on, changing the final would be helpful. That is clearly prohibited by Senate policy, Professor Ahern commented. Without that flexibility, Professor Feeney said, faculty do not have the resources to do what they need to--and in the case of clinical faculty, with patients, they may not get a day's rest during the period.

Mr. Reed noted that he had written to this Committee pointing out the numerous difficulties for students if the grade due date is delayed. Mr. Enever added that if the deadline for grades is extended, students applying to graduate and professional schools may not have the grades they need.

What are the incentives for faculty to get their grades turned in on time, Ms. Altaf asked? There are none with teeth, other Committee members responded. Professor Ahern said one incentive is that the work is DONE. Another is that one does not want to be at odds with one's department chair, the person who makes recommendations on salary and promotion. SCEP rejected adopting the sanction reportedly used at Iowa, which is that the paycheck is withheld if grades are not turned in when they are due. In some units the pressure is not only on the faculty, Professor Wahlstrom said; her college receives a list of faculty who have not turned their grades in on time and department heads are asked to "go after them." And the dean communicates with chairs who have faculty who do not turn in grades on time.

What if a student complains, Ms. Altaf asked? "That is a bigger ball of wax," it was said.

The calendar issue is a SCEP issue, Professor Ahern observed; it could recommend shortening the semester, although he said he did not see any driving need to do so. Inasmuch as there was no sentiment to take any action, the Committee let the matter lie.

Professor Ahern asked if students are frequently encountering classes where the final exam time is changed. Mr. Reed said that sometimes an alternate date is provided; Professor Ahern said that is acceptable. Ms. Altaf said sometimes the final is changed and no one shows up at the time and place the final was originally scheduled to be held. That, Professor Massey said, is an infraction. Professor Ahern concurred and said the Executive Vice President's office should send a reminder to faculty. But he affirmed that it does NOT violate Senate policy for an instructor to both honor the scheduled final exam time as well as offer the final at another time during finals week and let students pick which one they wish to take.

Could an exam be scheduled during the last week of classes, Mr. Enever asked? It cannot; that violates Senate policy, Professor Ahern said.

Ms. Altaf said she was sympathetic both to the faculty and the students; she has taught courses and had to grade in a hurry at the end of the term and she has also taken finals at the same time. Professor Ahern pointed out that if a graduate student has grading responsibilities that would be an appropriate time to take an I in a course.

Professor Massey thanked everyone for coming and adjourned the meeting at 4:05.

-- Gary Engstrand

University of Minnesota