

Minutes*

**Senate Consultative Committee
Thursday, November 14, 2002
3:00 – 4:00
Room 238A Morrill Hall**

Present: Dan Feeney (chair), John Amble, Judy Berning, Susan Brorson, Nick Cecconi, Gary Davis, Arthur Erdman, Marti Hope Gonzales, Kari Lindeman, Marvin Marshak, Judith Martin, Ryan Osero, Jeff Ratliff-Crain, Charles Speaks, Eric Steinhoff, Thomas Walsh

Absent: Muriel Bebeau, Tom Clayton, Yev Garif, Kelsi Holland, Mary Jo Kane, Candace Kruttschnitt, Nathan Saete, Martin Sampson, Teresa Wallace

Guests:

Others: Rebecca Hippert (University Senate)

[In these minutes:

1. Student Senate Chair Voting on the Senate Consultative Committee

Professor Feeney convened the meeting at 3:10 and noted that the student members of the Committee proposed that there be one additional voting member (the student senate chair is currently ex officio on this Committee). At present there are 10 faculty votes (8 from the Twin Cities and 1 each from Crookston and Morris), 9 student votes (across all campuses), 1 voting P&A staff member (Ms. Wallace), and one "wild card": the vice chair of the Senate. The last position has typically been held by a faculty member. If an additional voting student is added, there will be 10 faculty and 10 students in addition to Ms. Wallace and the Senate vice chair.

Ms. Berning explained the rationale for the proposal (the student senate chair can vote on the Student Senate Consultative Committee but not at this Committee while the student senate vice chair does vote at this meeting; it will lend credibility to the senate chair position). She also suggested that the times when the faculty and students would divide 10-10 would be very rare and said they have no intention of bringing proposals that they will try to get by the faculty.

Professor Feeney suggested that perhaps the proposal could include a sunset clause so it could be reviewed in two years.

Professor Ratliff-Crain said he was less bothered by the numbers of faculty and students. The question is the definition of ex officio. The point is to bring perspective to the Committee, not whether or not the person votes.

* 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 represents the views of, nor are they binding on, the Senate or Assembly, the Administration, or the Board of Regents.

Professor Gonzales moved to table the motion until the next meeting in order that the students could either develop a fuller explanation of the need for the change or rearrange the designation of who from the Student Senate Consultative Committee would serve in a voting capacity on this Committee. The motion passed.

2. Open Meetings

Professor Ratliff-Crain spoke next to a motion that would allow committees to close their meetings. At earlier meetings there had been concern about a proposal to allow committees to close meetings at will (by a two-thirds vote). He proposed the following bylaw amendment (new language IN CAPS; language to be deleted in [brackets]):

Committees of the Senate shall have a policy of open meetings. Closed or executive sessions may be held only after approval by a two-thirds majority of the committee members present and voting and only when personnel matters are discussed, when quasi-judicial functions are carried out, [or] when closed sessions are required to protect the right of individuals, OR IF FULL DISCLOSURE MIGHT OTHERWISE UNDERMINE THE ABILITY OF THE COMMITTEE TO CARRY OUT ITS FUNCTIONS. Under this rule, all regular sessions of the All-University Honors Committee and the Judicial Committee shall be considered closed or executive sessions. As an exception to this rule, the Senate Consultative Committee, the Faculty Consultative Committee, and the Student Senate Consultative Committee are granted the right to close a portion or all of a given meeting, after approval by two-thirds majority of their respective members present. The committee shall keep a list of all topics discussed in its closed meetings and incorporate that list in its minutes.

An additional amendment, proposed earlier, was not changed: ONLY COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND OTHERS DESIGNATED BY THE CHAIR MAY REMAIN IN THE MEETING ONCE A MOTION TO CLOSE HAS BEEN ADOPTED.

This amendment sets a guideline, Professor Ratliff-Crain explained, so two-thirds of the Committee must be persuaded that it is necessary to close the meeting in order for a committee effectively to perform its functions.

Professor Feeney pointed out that a number of committees have established close ties with senior administrators who are willing to speak candidly if they are not required to do so in a public meeting. Does the Committee wish that practice to continue or should committees just receive pablum? Or, alternatively, the administration appoints ad hoc groups, Professor Erdman pointed out; if the administration needs views expressed by faculty, staff, and students, it should be able to use the existing governance structure.

Professor Ratliff-Crain's proposal was approved unanimously for placement on an upcoming Senate docket.

3. Application of the Missed Meeting Rule

Professor Feeney reported that the Senate Parliamentarian ruled that the Senate rule on absences from committee meetings for non-student members applied to the Consultative Committees as well as all others: if a committee member is absent from three consecutive meetings, the seat is considered vacant.

He noted, however, that a committee may by majority vote excuse one of its members from the rule (e.g., if someone is temporarily on leave, or must undergo major surgery, etc.)

4. The Meaning of "Abstain"

Professor Speaks inquired about the meaning of "abstain" when a committee member abstains from voting on a motion. Does it count, he asked? Is it a negative? What does it mean compared to someone who simply does not vote?

It was agreed that the Senate Parliamentarian should be asked this question.

5. Increase the Number of Student Members on Two Committees

Ms. Berning next reported that the Student Committee on Committees wished to change the membership provisions of the Senate Committee on Finance and Planning and the Senate Research Committee to increase the number of students. Professor Feeney said that before this Committee took up the matter it would be appropriate to consult with the two committees. Ms. Berning agreed to do so.

Professor Feeney adjourned the meeting at 4:25.

-- Gary Engstrand