

Minutes\*

**Faculty Consultative Committee  
November 15, 1990**

Present: Warren Ibele (chair), Thomas Clayton, W. Andrew Collins, Amos Deinard, Paul Holm, Norman Kerr, J. Bruce Overmier, Charlotte Striebel, James VanAlstine

Guests: Barbara Muesing (Regents' Office), Geoff Gorvin (Footnote), Maureen Smith (Brief)

**1. The Draft Mission Statement**

The proposed redraft of the University mission statement, distributed with the agenda, was the first major item of business. The last time the statement was reviewed was about 10 years ago; this draft has been discussed by the Board of Regents but there is no specific schedule for adopting it.

Several comments on the draft were offered by Committee members:

- It is a mixture of goals, objectives, aspirations, and mission; there is no overarching and succinct statement of the enduring aims of the institution. Some elements of the statement are rather routine. Short-term goals should not be a part of the mission statement.
- The language dealing with teaching does not describe in sufficient detail the special nature of an undergraduate program at a research university. One Committee member said teaching should not be tied to research and the language should convey more enthusiasm for the high quality of teaching offered by the University; other Committee members disagreed in part and averred that the link between research and teaching must be made clear since that link should distinguish undergraduate education at the University.
- "Generally, it's harmless and while it doesn't promote much, it doesn't prevent much, either." Others suggested, however, that the document, as written, is not strong enough; it is like having no mission statement at all--and mission statements are important as an "anchor when the political winds blow hard."
- What is not addressed in the statement is the issue of quality; if it cannot be claimed that the education is better, the faculty is better, and the choices and opportunities for students are better than at other institutions, then it really is not a university. The University should be forthright in asserting its quality.
- The term "research" is not a good one because it envisions a monolithic activity which in fact is not descriptive of the breadth of endeavors in the University; "scholarship" is more appropriate.

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- The service mission is too closely linked to research activities. Not all departments conduct research but serve the State well (e.g., the museum and the libraries); in other instances, research units serve the public through non-research activities or do research which is not of immediately direct service to the State.
- It is far too long (although it is approximately the same length as the existing mission statement). "You know when your mission is more than a paragraph that it's not serving anybody very well." Future drafts, it was agreed, should be no more than half the length of the draft and framed in more felicitous language.

One Committee member summarized the discussion by observing that the draft needed much more work and suggested that attention be shifted to the next agenda item.

## **2. Academic Priorities**

The Committee turned its attention to a review of the Academic Priorities document. Professor Ibele reminded the Committee that the 1991-96 planning period takes as its point of departure Academic Priorities; that document must, therefore, be reviewed. At a later point, he said, it will be useful to exchange views with Senior Vice President Kuhi about the document.

It was suggested that Academic Affairs should be asked what points in Academic Priorities have been modified and which points should be considered for modification. Much of what is in the document, it was also observed, has been implemented; other parts have not and should be re-examined.

Other points were made:

- One Committee member said it appears that the only purpose of the University is raise external research funds. Other Committee members took issue with this view and discussed the importance of external funding at considerable length.
- The changes called for in the appointments (from 12 months to 9 months) of those whose teaching responsibilities do not extend through the entire year has not been made--and will not be.
- With respect to external funding and 12-month appointments, appropriate account is not taken of the (lack of) availability of funds in core arts and humanities. The document should address the problem of research support in areas where external agencies do not provide funding. (The Graduate School, it was pointed out, does try to do this, with the limited funds at its disposal.)
- The language describing the role of the University in the State is not sufficiently inclusive. While economic development and the provision of certain services are important, the transfer of University research, scholarship, and creative activity is much broader and includes knowledge supporting a wide range of human services and the fine arts, for example.

- The "educational policy" provisions seem to speak to rather unimportant issues. One of them is grading policy. Grading policy changes, in some units, create pressure to inflate grades (a "D" does not count in the major or towards graduation, so a "D" counts in effect as an "F"). Publishing departmental grade point averages is a practice which could be considered.
- The document should contain some vision of what the University should be like and how it plans to move toward that vision; revisions of Academic Priorities should follow from the vision. Even with the statements in the first part of the document, which the Committee appeared to accept, there is a feeling in some quarters that "we do not know where we are going." That situation needs to be corrected.
- There needs to be a statement about when and where the University will seek outside funding and provide the necessary support and space: Decisions must be made about what activities are central and what are peripheral to the mission of the institution.
- This is a Twin Cities document; there is no mention of articulation with the coordinate campuses, even though the coordinate campuses must articulate their roles with the Twin Cities campus. In many areas, however, there is consultation and in some places there are active relationships with the coordinate campuses; this should be acknowledged positively.

### 3. Voting on Tenure Decisions

There are at hand instances where faculty members of the University have been appointed to departments by the Provost or the Dean, and appointed with full voting privileges (one instance cited is Computer Science, where three associate deans have been appointed to the faculty). What implications does this have for subsequent decisions, especially those on granting tenure, in the departments? The steps taken by administrators have generally been recognized as necessary and desirable, but should be guided by some general principles when such intervention is required.

There should perhaps be provisions for declaring a department in receivership, and surrogates appointed, but the circumstances which would warrant such a declaration should be made clear. Whether or not there is a conflict with the tenure code is not clear; those appointed, in the present instance, are not being given an initial grant of tenure (when a vote of the tenured faculty in the department is required). Tenure, it was made clear at the previous meeting of the Committee (in connection with the discussion about Waseca), is with the University, not a department.

It was agreed that Professor Ibele would write to the chair of the Tenure Subcommittee of the Committee on Faculty Affairs and ask that this issue be examined, especially since there may be faculty reassignment as a consequence of departmental restructuring following from the planning process.

The Committee adjourned at 2:45.

-- Gary Engstrand