

Minutes*

Faculty Consultative Committee
Thursday, July 15, 2010
1:00 – 3:00
238A Morrill Hall

Present: Kate VandenBosch (chair), Elizabeth Boyle, Colin Campbell, Nancy Carpenter, Carol Chomsky, Chris Cramer, Shawn Curley, Nancy Ehlke, Janet Fitzakerley, Marti Hope Gonzales, Caroline Hayes, Jeff Kahn, George Sheets

Absent: None counted for a summer meeting

Guests: None

Other: None

[In these minutes: (1) major issues for the year; (2) reorganization policy; (3) policy review and communications; (4) review of Senate committee structure; (5) Alumni Association Board; (6) New Faculty Orientation; (7) committee chair orientation]

1. Major Issues for the Year

Professor VandenBosch convened the meeting at 1:05 and asked Committee members to indicate which issues, on the list distributed, they believed to be the most important for the Committee to address during the upcoming academic year. The issues identified by Committee members were these:

- the budget and strategic planning for 2012, and metrics associated with the latter
- the presidential search/the transition/succession planning
- vice presidential reviews and issues related to the central administration (this is related to transition, and there could be big changes coming, and also includes the structure of the administration, a topic on which the Committee might wish to offer comments)
- communication with colleagues (and learning of their concerns)
- Senate reorganization (the addition of CAPA and Civil Service senates, postdoc representation, and representation for the Rochester faculty)
- possible tenure-code changes from Academic Freedom & Tenure (the intent is to fix problems in the tenure process and make things clearer, not to make substantive changes)
- the impact of realignment on the AHC colleges and how they will function (raise with the AHC FCC, and the AHC FCC should talk with the Provost about the implications of the change and for governance in the AHC)
- reorganization of the Graduate School/changes in graduate education.

Professor Chomsky noted that the budget, including implications, impact, and planning, is a comprehensive issue that covers a lot, so the Committee will have to define which aspects it wants to address. It includes the blue-ribbon committees as well as the impact of decisions being made. Professor

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

VandenBosch noted that the Committee will have discussions with the AHC deans and with department heads from across the University, so can ask them about how budget cuts are playing out in their units. Professor Gonzales said that the budget could include revisiting the cost pools and how rates are set, and whether there should be an advisory committee of faculty members for the cost pools.

Professor Chomsky also suggested, apropos of the budget discussions, that the Committee will need to pay attention to the number of tenured/tenure-track faculty and the number of non-tenure-track faculty, because there may be increasing pressure throughout the University to use non-tenure-track faculty due to the financial situation. We have been assured in the past that the administration is not seeking to move away from tenure-track positions, but it is worth watching, especially given recent reports in the press about such changes.

Professor VandenBosch reported also that the Provost has a number of issues on his list, including review of the budget model and the report of the external visitors, e-education and the report from the external review, software intellectual property, Graduate School issues, and enrollment management (which is a shorthand title for how quality issues meet budget issues and the need for "right-sizing").

2. Reorganization Policy

Professor Chomsky introduced this item by recalling that when the initial proposal was made to eliminate the Graduate School, there were questions about the existing reorganization policy (which was approved by the University Senate and by the administration in 1999) and why its requirements for consultation were not followed. A number of people reviewed the policy; the truth was that both the administration and the faculty forgot about it, but it is clear that it may be important in the future. It was also not clear how the Graduate School fit in the provisions of the policy (is it an academic unit?) and therefore how it would have applied to the decision-making regarding the Graduate School. As a result of the confusion, a small subcommittee of she and Professors Hoover and Martin met to redraft the policy to make it clearer and, in some places, stronger; the draft is now being presented to the Committee. The administration was supportive of the idea of making the policy cleaner and clearer on the consultation process when there is to be organizational change.

The policy speaks to change within units as well as change at the all-University level, Professor Chomsky noted. The idea is that there should be consultation before changes are made, both within the affected units and possibly at University or Faculty Senate committees. The policy provides a process for consultation between the Provost and the chair of the Senate Consultative Committee (who is also chair of this Committee) about which other parts of faculty governance should be involved. The intent is that there be an orderly process. The policy also addresses organizational change at the central level, calling for discussion; neither in that instance nor in any other does the policy require Senate or committee approval of changes.

This is the first conversation about the proposed amendments, Professor Chomsky concluded, and eventually it needs to be brought to the Senate Consultative Committee and the University Senate for action. She said that the more the policy is known and used, and if the administration endorses it, the greater the comfort level within the institution on how changes will occur.

Committee members made a number of editorial suggestions that Professor Chomsky promised to incorporate in a revised draft, including the need for a definition of "academic unit" and clarification of which central officer the chair of the Senate Consultative Committee should consult with when questions arise, based on the scope of each central officer's portfolio. It was agreed that Professor Campbell would speak with the AHC FCC about the policy and how the Academic Health Center fits in it. Professor Chomsky suggested it might be helpful to have an informal conversation with Vice President Brown to sound out the administration's view of the proposed changes; she recalled that the President had supported the proposed changes when the ideas were floated earlier. It was also agreed that the draft would be reviewed by the Senate Committee on Faculty Affairs, then brought forward to the Senate Consultative Committee and the administrative policy-review machinery, and to the University Senate in December.

3. Policy Review and Communication

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At the last meeting the Committee discussed a faculty member's concern about difficulties inherent in commenting on administrative policies posted for comments during a limited comment period: Policies are usually posted for a month, sometimes more, but the dates of posting vary, making it difficult for interested faculty to keep track of comment deadlines easily. Comments are private, in that anyone who wants to post a comment has no access to others' comments, unlike the comments in response to *Strib* articles or *Chronicle of Higher Education* articles. It might be helpful—in the interest of social comparison and transparency—for new commenters to have access to prior comments. Finally, it's sometimes difficult to use a search engine using key words, because those key words on the internal web site are embedded in graphics.

Given that the concerns the FCC discussed are really more about communication than about policy contents per se, Professor Gonzales met with Vice President Karen Himle and Ann Freeman in her office. She relayed the faculty member's concerns and suggestions and the substance of FCC discussions, and shared with them the relevant sections of the minutes from our June 29th meeting.

It just so happens that Professor Gonzales's meeting with Vice President Himle and Ms. Freeman was especially timely. Vice President Himle is beginning work on a single employee Web interface as part of the "Reinventing Internal Communications" initiative, and will soon begin assembling a group of faculty and staff to join an Internal Communications Infrastructure Work Group, which will provide feedback and advice on ongoing internal communications infrastructure development. Among the topics discussed in the meeting with Professor Gonzales, Ms. Himle, and Ms. Freeman:

- The current University home page is designed for both internal and external audiences, unlike links to MyU or One-Stop that are solely for faculty and students. One option is to provide something more like an "internal audience" home page, with links and information of special interest to faculty and staff. That might be the site for information on which policies are up for comments, when they were or will be posted, the number of days remaining for comments for specific policies, and the like.

- It's even possible, once it's determined what kinds of information faculty members would be most interested in receiving, to allow faculty users to "subscribe" to certain kinds of internal communications, including information on policies up for review and comment.
- They discussed the pros and cons of a number of issues, including allowing commenters to authorize having their comments available to those visiting the site, with or without identifying information. One problem with that approach, as faculty governance leaders have learned, is the multiple audience problem: Communications targeted to internal audiences—like FCC minutes—are often read by external audiences. Moreover, lists of comments can be thought of not only as feedback to the policy owner, but as an ongoing collective thought process; those exchanges are not exactly "ready for prime time" until at least some of the issues are worked out. In short, although communicative transparency is invaluable, it's sometime better that private and preliminary collective thoughts are not subjected to public scrutiny.
- They also discussed the complexities associated with establishing a uniform date for when policies are posted for comment—for example, the first of every month. That would involve a lot of coordination, given the large number of policy owners. Moreover, there are sometimes exigencies that preclude posting policies on a fixed schedule—for example, when Regents discussions or actions are imminent, or when external regulatory pressures mean that the University needs to move faster than waiting for the first of the following month.
- And finally, results of a survey of faculty and staff conducted by Padilla Speer Beardsley and the University's Office of Internal Communications—scheduled for FCC discussion in October—have revealed that faculty and staff view internal communications differently. Sources of internal communications are viewed differently by faculty and staff in terms of their trustworthiness; staff members are more likely to read *Brief* than are faculty; faculty and staff differ in terms of the information in which they're most interested; and they differ in terms of their preferred method of information sharing. These faculty and staff differences are important and information from the survey will be used to guide development of the internal communications infrastructure in the coming months.

Professor Gonzales reported that she had agreed to serve on the Internal Communications Infrastructure Work Group, and this Committee is invited to suggest the names of faculty members who might also be interested. This is an ongoing process that will develop as feedback is received. She said, in response to a comment from Professor VandenBosch, that the proposed "internal audience" home page could be combined with MyU and One Stop. Such a site could also hold promise in terms of addressing policy-review questions.

Professor Hayes commented that she feels tired every time she thinks about communication because everyone is so fatigued by so much communication. There is a balance between what one needs to know and being bombarded with information. This is a difficult challenge and she commended Professor Gonzales for joining the Work Group. Professor VandenBosch said the idea of having communications bundled and tailored is an attractive one. Professor Kahn said, however, that it is not just the delivery of information but also how faculty members communicate with each other. Faculty members should not feel they are living in their own bubble and not able to know what others are thinking.

The problem is avoiding damage to the University while ensuring adequate transparency and consultation, Professor Curley pointed out with respect to public posting of comments and the hostile uses to which others could put those comments. Professor Gonzales said that when it comes to modern technology, she often wonders if people any longer ever TALK to each other. One possibility, Professor Kahn said, is a moderated listserv, but that requires a moderator. Professor Chomsky said that often when a proposal is made and comments go to the administration, the administrators revise the proposal in response—but this Committee and the commenters don't see that part of the process. There are problems with open comments, she agreed; perhaps they could be shared with governance leaders, or perhaps comments could be generated through the governance system and transmitted to the administration. There are 155 faculty senators, Professor Cramer observed, and they could be informed and asked to communicate with their constituents; senators could be given time at faculty meetings. This point, if pursued, should also be raised at the orientation for new senators, Professor VandenBosch added. As well as to the orientation for new chairs and heads that Vice Provost Carney conducts.

It was agreed that Professor Gonzales would report back as appropriate on the activities of the Work Group.

4. Review of Senate Committee Structure

Professor VandenBosch next reported that Ms. Courtney in the Senate office has suggested it might be an appropriate time to review the Senate's committee structure to consider issues of overlap, function, and coverage (the last time such a review was conducted was 1989). She would like to set up a short-term ad hoc subcommittee; it was agreed that Professors Curley, Hoover, and Sheets would serve.

5. Alumni Association Board

Professor VandenBosch noted that a member of this Committee is invited to serve on the Board of the Alumni Association. Professor Cramer agreed to represent the Committee.

6. New Faculty Orientation

Professor VandenBosch also reported that the chair of this Committee is invited to make a short presentation during the new faculty orientation to talk about why it is important that faculty members be engaged in the governance process and how it works at this university. She said she would ask the ex-officio committee chairs who serve on this Committee to attend.

7. Orientation Session for New Committee Chairs

Professor VandenBosch reported that Ms. Courtney also suggested having an orientation session for new committee chairs. Many who take the role of chair are experienced but some are not, and advice could be helpful. It was agreed to include a brief orientation in the fall meeting with committee chairs and to draw on experienced chairs to participate.

Professor VandenBosch adjourned the meeting at 2:55.

-- Gary Engstrand

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