

Minutes\*

**Senate Committee on Faculty Affairs**  
**Tuesday, October 26, 2010**  
**2:30 – 4:15**  
**238A Morrill Hall**

Present: George Sheets (chair), Ben Bornshtein, Marilyn Bruin, Carol Carrier, Vladimir Cherkassky, Randy Croce, Kathryn Hanna, Theodor Litman, Chris Orlic, Jason Shaw, Roderick Squires, James Wojtaszek

Absent: Arlene Carney, Dann Chapman, Richard Cline, Barbara Elliott, Valerie Khominich, Frank Kulacki, Karen Miksch, Geoffrey Sirc, Pamela Stenhjem

Guests: Ann Freeman (University Relations); Jill Merriam (Office of the Provost), Mark Baumgartner (University of Minnesota Foundation), Jane Pribyl (Treasury Accounting)

[In these minutes: (1) internal communication; (2) proposed policy on University endowed chairs, professorships, and faculty fellowships; (3) issues before the committee]

**1. Internal Communication**

Professor Sheets convened the meeting at 2:35 and welcomed Ann Freeman, Director of Internal Communication in University Relations, to discuss work her office has been doing on internal communication. Committee members were provided copies of a set of slides.

Ms. Freeman began by saying she was glad for the invitation to the discussion. When Vice President Himle was hired in late 2006, one of the things the President told her was that internal communication needed improvement. It was not clear exactly what that meant except that it needed to get better as well as a sense that it was not working well, and she was hired in 2007 to look at strategic internal communications. Most universities do not have an internal communications office; most corporations, on the other hand, have entire units dedicated to internal communication and getting the "brand" thoroughly integrated in the organization. The corporate approach will not work at a university, so they launched a two-year effort to study internal communication. They did a lot of listening.

Professor Sheets inquired what "strategic internal communication" means. Having a conscious look at internal communications, Ms. Freeman said, and what must happen so people receive the information they need, when they need it, and have an opportunity for feedback. It is a way to get one's arms around the subject so people do not continue to say that the University needs to improve internal communications. Is the concern primarily to improve communication from the administration to the rest of the University or is it two-way, Professor Sheets asked? They are not treating it as top-down, Ms. Freeman said; it is a way for the central administration to provide information but also a way for faculty, staff, and students to communicate with each other.

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\* 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.

Ms. Freeman reviewed the contents of the slides; that content was included in detail in the October 14, 2010, minutes of the Faculty Consultative Committee and will not be repeated here; those minutes can be found at in the Digital Conservancy at <http://purl.umn.edu/96311>.

Professor Sheets inquired about one item in the executive summary: "Faculty and staff reported communication from college-level leadership as the most trusted and relied upon source. Also, faculty and staff rely upon interpersonal communications for University information more than various University electronic, print, and website sources." He suggested that "most trusted" and "relied upon" are different concepts; it is natural that faculty would rely on communications from their dean but does it follow that other official sources of information are less trusted? Did the survey results suggest that some official sources of information are less-trustworthy in the eyes of the faculty? Ms. Freeman explained that faculty place high trust in an email from their dean or the president, face-to-face conversations, Brief, and so on.

Professor Sheets said he was still troubled by the conflation of trust and reliance; a lack of trust raises alarms. If people perceive that something is not trustworthy, that is a cause for concern. All of the items were above the mean on the scale used in the surveys, Ms. Freeman said; people feel they receive information important to them but do not feel it is as thorough as it could be. People rely most in information that is closest to the source, she said in response to a question from Professor Shaw about the ratings of the various sources of information.

Professor Cherkassky said there is confusion with regard to trust and reliance because people are overloaded with information. He said he does not need to receive mass emails; the department will inform faculty of what they need to know, so faculty do not need to receive them. The problem of information overload is not reflected in their findings. Ms. Freeman said that their data suggest people do not mind receiving information if it is in the right form and from the right source.

Professor Bornshtein said that in terms of face-to-face communication, a lot of faculty use personal email that is often rich and candid; one option should be the use of personal email that is not part of the official University email.

Professor Cherkassky said one example of the failure of top-down communication was the naming of the Electrical Engineering and Computer Science Building after former President Keller (whose technical field was Chemical Engineering). It came as complete surprise to Electrical Engineering and Computer Science faculty. Many faculty members expressed dissatisfaction with the fact that the proposal (to rename the building) was not discussed with faculty nor was it communicated to them. Professor Litman recalled that there was a similar controversy about the naming of Moos Tower, because he had not been particularly supportive of Dentistry (which is located in Moos Tower). Vice President Carrier noted that there is a Board of Regents policy on naming buildings; perhaps it needs review to determine if there is a gap in it. They could at least ask the faculty, Professor Cherkassky said.

[Board of Regents policy *Namings* provides, inter alia, as follows:

**Subd. 4. Namings of Buildings for Past Presidents.** The University may name buildings for past presidents. Consideration of a naming shall take place after a president's association with the University has ended, usually between one and five years following service.

**(a) Approval.** The Board of Regents (Board) reserves to itself authority to name, rename, or revoke the naming of buildings for past presidents.

**(b) Management.** The chair of the Board convenes a committee with representatives from the Board, the Faculty Consultative Committee, and the Honors Committee to develop a recommendation. This recommendation shall be forwarded to the Honors Committee for information prior to submission to the Board for final action.

<http://www1.umn.edu/regents/policies/administrative/Namings.pdf>

The charge to the All-University Honors Committee reads as follows, in part:

## **B. ALL-UNIVERSITY HONORS COMMITTEE**

The All-University Honors Committee solicits and reviews nominations for all-University honors.

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### **Duties and Responsibilities**

- a. To solicit campuses, institutes, schools, and colleges for nominations for various University honors, naming of buildings, and nominations for outstanding achievement awards.
- b. To review such material and make recommendations to the president, who will refer such matters to the Board of Regents for final selection.
- c. To keep all deliberations and votes confidential except where publication is necessary for official purposes.

<http://www1.umn.edu/usenate/charges/alluhonorsch.html>]

There are also many questions about the film "Troubled Waters," Professor Bornsztejn added.

These are all examples of the need to improve internal communication strategies, Ms. Freeman said. With respect to the film, there will be reviews of the protection of academic freedom, the oversight of commercial communications, and roles and responsibilities.

Ms. Freeman commented, apropos the policy, that there is always a public comment period for new policies and new policies are always mentioned in Brief, but many may not see that. Perhaps there could be something on the new faculty website and people could subscribe to a service that would alert them to new policies and the comment period. They are trying to identify where there are holes in communication and to assist people in receiving the information they need. People want communications in varied ways and it is important to deliver information in the way preferred by those who receive it.

Professor Sheets noted four questions that Ms. Freeman had posed in advance of the meeting to Committee members:

1. The survey results indicate that the most effective ways to communicate with faculty are through department head or dean emails and meetings. In your experience, is this finding accurate?
2. The survey results indicate that staff significantly more than faculty describe the sense of community on their campus as warm. Why do you think this is true? How important is a campus-based sense of community to faculty?
3. As we further develop a strategic internal communications function for the University, faculty engagement is critical. How can we engage faculty in ways that meaningfully address your internal communications concerns?
4. What is important for University Relations, the internal communications department in particular, to know about faculty concerns and internal communications?

He asked for comment or reactions from Committee members. None was expressed.

Professor Sheets repeated his point that "trust" comes up in the conclusions and recommendations, he finds it alarming that staff trust University information more than faculty and alarming that faculty do not trust such information. If that is true, he would want to learn more about the phenomenon, about the reason for any distrust. Is her office trying to explore that question, he asked Ms. Freeman. This meeting is one way to do so, Ms. Freeman responded. They would like to improve faculty engagement in their work; how do they do so? Why do faculty trust University information less than staff? For what reasons? Did they identify specific sources of information that they saw as less trustworthy, Professor Sheets asked? Ms. Freeman said she would have to look at the results, but in general faculty and staff (faculty more than staff) trust information closer to the source. She said she did not have the sense that information was NOT trusted.

Mr. Croce said it was not a matter of trust; he said he trusts University information. It is more a matter of the area and source; he would want to hear what CAPA's views are on certain issues. Mr. Orlic commented that the department head or dean can distill information in terms of how it applies to the department, which is more useful than how it applies to the entire University. The best policy would be to tailor information to the recipients. There is need for both, Mr. Croce replied; a local interpretation could be too parochial, and he would prefer to weigh both sources.

Ms. Freeman reported that Vice President Carrier's communication person uses a "meeting minute" approach, with more specific information following a University-side message. That provides added relevance and richness. But there are limits to that approach, Dr. Carrier said; they cannot ask a supervisory to interpret complicated benefits questions—they want the supervisors to call Human Resources with questions because supervisors can give out bad information.

Professor Sheets said it appears that the survey results appear to an equivalency between "lack of reliance" and "lack of trust," which raises the specter that some sources of information are perceived as mendacious. Vice Provost Carney suggested that a different word could have been used, rather than "trust."

Professor Hanna reported that her college has turned to the use of some videos to convey information in its newsletter, which she sees as less efficient, because she can read faster than the time it takes to view a video. It would be helpful if there were an accompanying transcript. She also commented that the reorganization of the events website, with no way to sort activities by unit, is now much less useful for her than previous events websites such as the old AHC site.

One topic that elicited considerable discussion at the Faculty Consultative Committee was the forums that University Relations is conducting, Professor Sheets reported. Most FCC members had not heard of them. They are scheduled for the third Thursday each month, Ms. Freeman said, and they identify topics by keeping their ears to the ground. They gather information from a variety of sources, including reading minutes, what they hear, leadership emails and responses, and things happening.

Mr. Croce said that he would find it very valuable, when decisions are being made, to read about the pros and cons and then, once the decision is made, information about the alternatives that were not chosen. Professor Hanna said that it was clear, when the salary reductions were being discussed, that other alternatives were considered, but that information was not provided as background; the Faculty Senate was just told that "this is the choice." Professor Sheets agreed and said this point is related to transparency: There would be less controversy if the reasons were given. Ms. Freeman added that people also want an opportunity to express their views, even if the ultimate decision is not the one they wished.

Professor Sheets thanked Ms. Freeman for joining the meeting.

## **2. Proposed Policy on University Endowed Chairs, Professorships, and Faculty Fellowships**

Professor Sheets next welcomed Ms. Merriam, Mr. Baumgartner, and Ms. Pribyl to discuss a proposed policy on University Endowed Chairs, Professorships, and Faculty Fellowships.

Ms. Merriam explained that the policy proposal came about because of a need to make revisions to an existing policy on endowed chairs, a policy that referred to Permanent University Fund (PUF) funds. PUF funds available for endowed chairs, land-grant dollars from the state, are entirely committed for the foreseeable future. Kathryn Stuckert in the President's Office was involved in revising the Board of Regents policy on awards and recognitions, which includes endowed chairs. The decision was made that the Board policy had too many administrative matters in it, so those were abstracted and included in what became a more comprehensive policy that would be more consistent and clear. She reviewed the changes that were made, none of which were intended to be substantive.

Professor Sheets inquired if an endowed chair continues in perpetuity while an endowed professorship does not. That varies by college, Ms. Merriam said. All endowed positions exist in perpetuity, Mr. Baumgartner said, except those that have X dollars for a period of Y years. What if a person leaves the University or dies, Professor Cherkassky asked? The position reverts to the college or department and it selects someone new, Mr. Baumgartner said.

Ms. Pribyl explained that there are four kinds of endowments: true (the principal cannot be spent), quasi (it is permissible to spend the principal), term, and life (the income to the University is dependent on an event, such as someone dying). Whether a life endowment becomes a true endowment depends on the donor's intent, she said.

Professor Cherkassky inquired what the distribution rate from the endowments is. Mr. Baumgartner said that for the endowment and the University Foundation, the current payout rate on endowments at the University of Minnesota Foundation is 4.5%. The Board of Regents determines the rate, Ms. Pribyl added.

Professor Sheets thanked Ms. Merriam, Mr. Baumgartner, and Ms. Pribyl for joining the meeting.

### **3. Issues Before the Committee**

Professor Sheets reviewed the bylaw charge to the Committee and the issues that are slated to come to the Committee. He asked if there were suggestions for other items to address.

Vice Provost Carney noted that the Women's Faculty Cabinet did a salary-equity study, with assistance from Institutional Research and support from the Provost, and the Provost is now hiring an outside consultant to review the data. The review and conclusions from the study will take place in stages. It would be reasonable for representatives of the Women's Faculty Cabinet to present the information to the Committee.

Professor Hanna noted that the 2% salary increases are to go into effect in January for faculty and P&A staff; she reported that she is hearing that in her college there will be no raises on the base but that they will perhaps be one-time raises. The Committee should hear about that, she said, because she did not believe that was the intent of the Faculty Senate when it approved the salary reductions and delayed increases. That decision is college-specific, Dr. Carney said, and is not what other colleges are doing. Usually compensation instructions indicate there is college discretion, Professor Sheets added. The letter is clear, Dr. Carney said; it is up to colleges to decide. If they have more money, they can give more than 2%; she said she did not know if some colleges were not giving base increases. Is a decision not to give a base salary increase consistent with the instructions, Professor Sheets asked? It is a local decision, Dr. Carney said; central administration sets the amount of the compensation pool and decides if it will be merit, and then it is up to the units to award the increases. Professor Hanna suggested the Committee should hear about what is being done.

Mr. Croce noted that the Committee had adopted a resolution to protect P&A participation in governance; the Senate Consultative Committee returned it with some questions. That resolution needs to be taken up again. The civil service staff have also expressed interested in being covered by the resolution. He would like the Committee to take it up again.

Professor Hanna recalled that last year the University began offering a transitions phased retirement option; what happened?

Professor Sheets agreed that these issues would be put on the agenda in the future and then adjourned the meeting at 4:15.

-- Gary Engstrand

