

Minutes*

Faculty Consultative Committee
Thursday, December 2, 2010
1:00 – 2:15
262 Mondale Hall

Present: Kate VandenBosch (chair), Melissa Anderson, Peter Bitterman, Thomas Brothen, Colin Campbell, Nancy Carpenter, Carol Chomsky, Chris Cramer, Shawn Curley, Nancy Ehlke, Barbara Elliott, Marti Hope Gonzales, Michael Hancher, Caroline Hayes, Jeff Kahn, Jan McCulloch, Michael Oakes

Absent: Elizabeth Boyle, Russell Luepker, George Sheets

Guests: Provost E. Thomas Sullivan

Other: Sharon Reich Paulsen (Office of the Provost)

[In these minutes: (1) report on compact meetings; (2) discussion with Provost Sullivan]

1. Report on Compact Meetings

Professor VandenBosch convened the meeting at 1:00 and began by reporting on the compact meetings she had attended at the invitation of Provost Sullivan. She attended the compact meetings for the Office of the Vice President for Research, University Libraries, undergraduate education, and graduate education. She reported that several Committee members had also joined some members of the Twin Cities Deans Council and had a candid discussion that touched on the compact process. She asked the deans how much effort they thought FCC should put into making the process more transparent, given the upcoming presidential transition; there was no conclusion, but there did seem to be agreement that the deans and the Committee should advise incoming President Kaler on any changes they believe should occur in the compact process.

Professor Bitterman said he sees the compact process as very administrative and constitutive, and that it could be improved by being more strategic. The quality of data is poor, because of the shortcomings of the Enterprise Financial System, which impairs the ability of colleges to prepare compacts. Providing a strategic context for compact reporting, Professor VandenBosch commented, enables use of the compacts to guide strategic budget decisions.

Professor Carpenter asked if there would be any communication with the coordinate-campus chancellors about their views. Professor VandenBosch said she would email them and see if their responses correlate with those of the Twin Cities deans.

Professor VandenBosch said that the compact discussions followed a standard format, and she provided Committee members with an outline of the major points units were asked to address. For their compact presentation, administrative and service units were asked for information in a standard format.

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Units were also asked to model 3% and 5% cuts, and to describe the impact of the cuts. Units also outlined financial concerns and funding requests. Following the compact presentation, the Provost's Office and the Budget Five will review units' strategic priorities and funding issues. The deans have not yet received their compact instructions.

In addition to budget detail, the following information was requested for the compacts for the FY12/FY13 biennium:

Part 1. Budget realities

1. Strategic partnerships: In what ways is your unit developing, strengthening, or sustaining strategic partnerships with other university colleges/departments, leveraging synergies with outside organizations, and creating new opportunities to increase support for the mission of the University?
2. Workforce management: Describe your current work to create a leaner, nimble, and productive unit without job losses or steep cost increases. For the future, what are ways you are preparing to develop a deliberate long-term human resource plan and workforce management strategies (e.g., strategic hiring, leadership development, and succession planning)?
3. Meeting strategic priorities: Describe how, in the absence of increased (and perhaps decreased) funding you will continue to meet your strategic core activities and respond to the changing environment.
4. Increasing non-state revenues: Are there ways in which your unit could increase non-state revenue? If so, identify what goals and initiatives would need to be implemented.

Part 2. Core Activities and Programs

1. Completed core activities, programs and initiatives
2. Continuing high priority core activities, programs and initiatives
3. High priorities core activities, programs and initiatives for coming biennium

Part 3. Highest Priority Facility Needs (for inclusion in 6-year capital plan)

Part 4. Describe the consultation process.

Professor VandenBosch provided highlights of the discussions with the two units that she sat in on, in addition to highlights from the other two reports that she received from the Provost's office.

Professor Chomsky asked if there are oral presentations along with handouts; Professor VandenBosch said there are, followed by discussion. There is 90 minutes for presentation, and a lot of material to cover. She said that there was active engagement between the Provost's group and those doing the presentations, and the compact discussion is one of a series of discussions on the unit's goals and progress, so it was an iterative process.

Professor Curley said he struggled with whether the compact discussions are strategic. It sounds like the units say they are doing good things and dealing with cuts by reorganization and that they will continue to do what they do. He said he didn't hear the strategic nature of the discussions from Professor

VandenBosch's descriptions. Professor VandenBosch said there were conversations about how to make cuts and the impact the cuts would have on reaching the units' strategic goals.

Professor Gonzales commented that they are seeing a lot of guidelines at the 50,000-foot level for making difficult financial and other decisions, but they need to see the connection between the guiding principles and the decisions made as a result of the compact discussions. To what extent do the principles fit the decisions by the "Budget 5"?

2. Discussion with Provost Sullivan

Professor VandenBosch welcomed Provost Sullivan to the meeting. She began by recalling Professor Luepker's question: The time is coming when there will be changes in the Academic Health Center (AHC), and Dr. Friedman is about to step in to succeed Dr. Cerra. Dr. Friedman will join this Committee later in January, and one thing they intend to ask him about is the memo that he and the Provost sent out about the AHC changes. She asked the Provost about what will be different, and suggested he might also say a little more about the compact process.

Provost Sullivan said that he had spoken with Professor Luepker after the memo about the AHC went out. The formal discussions about the structures in the AHC will begin in January, to determine if there is overlap or duplication. The AHC deans will have their compact discussions with the Provost and the questions and processes will be identical to those currently used with the non-AHC colleges, with additional elements as needed (e.g., the clinical enterprises, interprofessional opportunities, etc.). The budgets of the AHC colleges will also be part of them now reporting to the Provost. The distinctive pieces, such as the clinical enterprises and interprofessional joint ventures, will be subjects the deans discuss with Dr. Friedman.

Professor VandenBosch asked if the AHC faculty have questions about all of this. Professor Oakes said he thought not; the memo was quite clear about the changes. Provost Sullivan said he has had meetings with the AHC deans throughout the semester and more, regular meetings are scheduled with the AHC FCC as well. Professor Bitterman commented that it is the perception of the Medical School faculty that the clinical practices, the relationships with the health systems, and opening a new hospital together constitute a job for more than one person; it appears that Dr. Friedman will focus most of his energies on those activities. Professor Kahn said that chairs and others have been asking questions and they appear to feel comfortable that the change in January will provide answers. Provost Sullivan said that he and Dr. Friedman have also been talking about the location and reporting lines for centers, and those will be dealt with first. Professor Oakes said he believes these changes will be healthy for the University. Many in the AHC may have had no idea who the Provost is and know only about the Senior Vice President for the Health Sciences; this will be a better arrangement as the institution moves to a more holistic university. Provost Sullivan said that he and Dr. Friedman are meeting about twice per week and he looks forward to working with him.

Professor Cramer commented that shifting the portfolio may make Dr. Friedman's job more manageable; what about the Provost's job? It is doable, Provost Sullivan responded. The new responsibilities will be built into the schedule and he is making no decisions now about whether he will need additional help. He said he is comfortable with the situation, and it will evolve.

As for compacts, Provost Sullivan noted he had spoken with the Committee about the process the last time he visited the Committee. They are now finalizing the academic compact instructions; the discussions will start in January. They will ask specific questions about the college strategic plans and activities coming out of the blue-ribbon committees and how they align with the priorities of the college. He said he has told the deans he would like to hear their own recommendations and would also like to have a three-year strategic and budget plan in order to see how the budgets align with the work of the blue-ribbon committees. He said they will also ask about priorities within the college and the options considered. The Provost said he would provide to the Committee a draft of the compact instructions to the academic units.

Professor VandenBosch commented that this is a pivotal year and important tasks are being assigned to the deans. It seems difficult to think strategically and deal with the budgets. Each unit sees its own strengths, not its weaknesses; she said she imagines that the Provost receives many more new ideas than a willingness to take cuts. The Provost acknowledged the accuracy of her observation. How does he work with the deans to sift the wheat from the chaff, she asked?

Provost Sullivan said it is a great question. He has the benefit that for 14 of his 16 years at the University he has been dealing with compacts, first as a dean when President Yudof brought the process from Texas, and then for the last six and a half years as Provost. They keep good records of the conversations so that each compact meeting doesn't start over from square one. They have lists of investments that have been made over the years and metrics on how well the investments are doing, and those metrics are discussed. They are ongoing discussions from year to year, not conversations with a beginning and an end within a year.

Professor Curley said that all have seen the seven strategic-planning principles, which are at a high level. What is needed is a bridge to the point at which decisions are made. It is not clear how that is happening, either to this Committee or the deans. That leads to the impression that the process is not transparent; one can see the principles at a high level but not how they affect the outcomes.

Provost Sullivan provided an example of a conversation he had recently had with a dean about a major faculty hire that involved a spouse. The discussion focused on the centrality of the faculty member's field of research to the school and how it aligns with its priorities and whether the dean could demonstrate the impact of hiring the person. The department has an area with significant strengths in this area already; how would this hire help its comparative advantage? He went through all seven principles with the dean, who made a very compelling case. It is a case where the seven principles were the foundation for the discussion. Professor Curley said that is a good example; what does not come across is whether there are specific metrics being argued in bringing the principles to practice at the ground level in this discussion. Provost Sullivan said that he asked for peer letters on quality, productivity, impact, and so on. The department in question is one of the top ten in the country, one of the top in the University, so it is a priority for investment. As he has told this Committee before, he has a hierarchy of priorities: (1) what are the great departments in which the University must continue to invest? (2) what are the near-great departments where a reasonable investment would make them great ones? (3) what departments are not "great" but are foundational to the University and/or serve a lot of students? And (4) what departments do not fall into one of those three categories? In the example at hand, he decided the investment should be made because this is a great department, and the dean will provide information on how the investment fits into the college's strategic plans.

Professor Chomsky asked if the decisions about (1) – (3) are made by the colleges and they then make the case to the Provost. They do, the Provost said. In this example, the department went to the dean; the dean made a considered judgment and came to him.

How is he ensuring that those choices, what the deans say to him, reflect deep enough consultation within the college, Professor Chomsky inquired? He asks the deans to tell him what consultative processes exist in the college; in this case, he said there had been conversations in the college. This is an important point to emphasize, Professor Chomsky said, because Committee members hear that there isn't always consultation, and not just about the compact process.

Professor Hancher said that the example of the hire shows the application of the principles to an investment. Do they work the same way for disinvestments? Provost Sullivan said that one responsibility of a dean is to be a strong advocate for the college and to make the best case he or she can. In the conversations with the colleges, it becomes clear that one conversation is more persuasive than another; the evidence may not be as strong in one case as in another and an argument may not carry the burden to receive additional funding, or perhaps even steady-state funding. Deans identify priorities but they may not all carry the same weight. So the principles are engaged on the downside as well, Professor Hancher concluded. The Provost concurred.

Professor VandenBosch said that the Provost's experience is an important point. She noted that she also serves on the Enrollment Management Committee, which has talked about metrics and the need for cumulative data ("are things improving as a result of this investment?"), because some trajectories can be long. She said she has emphasized the importance of the longitudinal view; the compact process can accumulate data and provide institutional memory.

Provost Sullivan said that they have looked at all University-wide centers and developed a timeline for peer review. They have completed reviews of three of the seven and are in the midst of two more. These are areas where the University has made significant strategic-positioning investments; the review by the peers has been helpful. The Provost recalled that the first year President Yudof was here, the University benefitted from a substantial infusion of funds from the legislature, including funding for 12 new faculty positions in one college. His thought was that it had been ten years since those positions were created, and perhaps it was time for a peer review to learn about the results of that hiring in terms of productivity, impact, and national reputation. They did such a review and concluded that the hirings had been a success; they learned where the strengths were and where things needed shoring up.

Professor Curley said he wished to make a plea: The University is moving toward difficult decisions, and last year the decisions were made very late (the University is hamstrung by the legislative calendar, but there is a general understanding of the magnitude of the decisions that will need to be made). He asked that the administration come sooner rather than later to the Committee. Provost Sullivan agreed; they are preparing project and budget plans and are also looking at the blue-ribbon panel reports. He said he understood Professor Curley's request and that he would bring information to the Committee as soon as it becomes available. He said that the support-unit compacts have been finished and that support units are on notice that there will be substantial cuts that will be differential, and that priorities have been identified (e.g., the libraries, graduate-student financial aid, the programs of the Vice President for Research, and programs in the office of undergraduate education). Professor VandenBosch observed that all of the units have been asked to model cuts of 3% and 5%; might some units take larger cuts? Yes, that is possible, the Provost said.

Professor VandenBosch thanked Provost Sullivan for joining the meeting and adjourned it at 2:20.

-- Gary Engstrand

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