

Minutes*

Senate Consultative Committee
Thursday, November 15, 2012
3:00 – 4:00
Room 238A Morrill Hall

Present: Michael Hancher (chair pro tem), James Cloyd, Chris Cramer, Will Durfee, Ann Hagen, Russell Luepker, Adam Matula, Alon McCormick, Amy Olson, Jeff Ratliff-Crain, Moshe Volovik

Absent: Avner Ben-Ner, Peter Bitterman, Brandon Breuer, Nicole Conti, Sally Gregory Kohlstedt, Nancy Ehlke, Gyaltsso Gurung, Joe Inhofer, Elaine Tyler May, James Pacala, Rebecca Ropers-Huilman, Kimberly Simon, Thomas Sondreal, Richard Ziegler

Guests: Brian Steeves (Office of the Board of Regents); Athletic Director Norwood Teague

[In these minutes: (1) discussion with Executive Director Steeves; (2) discussion with Athletic Director Teague; (3) approval of the University Senate docket]

1. Discussion with Executive Director Brian Steeves

Professor Hancher convened the meeting at 3:00, explained that Professor Kohlstedt had to leave for a professional meeting, and welcomed Mr. Steeves, Executive Director and Corporate Secretary to the Board of Regents.

Mr. Steeves began by noting that he has been in the Regents' office since 2010 and Executive Director since July 1 of this year. He said that the Board of Regents is a highly-engaged group that cares passionately about the University. What sets American higher education apart from the rest of the world is that authority over the institutions is placed in citizen governing boards. These are highly-sought-after volunteer opportunities in the state.

This is also a time when higher education faces uncharted territory (highlighted, for example, by the discussion at the recent Senate centennial discussion of the question of whether faculty members can be replaced by robots and videos). Governing boards across the country are dealing with these issues. Another one is how to measure faculty productivity, which is a complicated question but one that boards will be asked to address.

Professor Hancher inquired about appointments to the Board. There are 12 members, Mr. Steeves said, who are elected by the legislature in joint session, a system that is unique in the United States. About 20 years ago the legislature created the Regent Candidate Advisory Council (RCAC), an entity charged to solicit applications for the Board of Regents. Eight of the regents are from the state's Congressional districts and four are at-large seats; by state statute, one of the at-large regents must be a student at the time of election. (Regents serve six-year terms, which are staggered, so there are four seats up for election every two years.) This year the student seat is open, one member of the Board is not

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running for re-election (the member from the Fifth Congressional District), and two at-large seats are up; in the case of the latter, the two incumbents, Regents Cohen and Johnson, are seeking re-election.

How is the fact that the student seat is open made known to students, Professor Durfee asked. Mr. Steeves said he knows that student government leaders are aware of the vacancy but he does not know what the RCAC does to publicize it. The Board of Regents and the University generally take a hands-off position vis-à-vis the process because it does not want to be seen as trying to influence the election of Board members. Mr. Volovik said the position has not been advertised at all, and based on the past practice, an undergraduate student has almost no chance to be selected [many of the students elected to the student position have been graduate or professional students]. Who might give advice to the RCAC about spreading the word among students, Professor Hancher asked. Perhaps the chair of this Committee might do so, he suggested. Professor Cramer demurred on the grounds that anything that looks organized would appear to be inappropriate. Professor Cloyd suggested that the staff who provide support for student governance could put it on the agenda when appropriate. Mr. Volovik said it is a moot point now; there are 11 days before the deadline for applications, and then it will be another six years before the position is vacant. Professor Cloyd agreed but said that their legacy could be that in six years, when a reminder pops up, student government can get organized.

Professor Cramer said he noticed that the University of Virginia has just added a faculty member to all of its regental committees. Has the Minnesota board taken notice of that step? Mr. Steeves said the Board has not talked about that option. Professor Cramer said the University has not had a crisis but it need not wait for one to act. Professor Hancher said there is the intermediate role: faculty from this Committee are assigned to attend meetings of certain Board committees, and he has heard that they are missed when they are absent.

Professor Ratliff-Crain said that a small group of Board members visited the Morris campus. He was unable to be involved but said it apparently was very instructive—and that Board members were surprised at the amount of research that is done at Morris. The coordinate campuses can feel separated from the process and the Regents can be educated about the activities on those campuses. Mr. Steeves said the Regents were glad to make the visit and try to be connected to the entire system. Because Morris is so highly touted for its undergraduate program, some Board members were surprised at the breadth of research that takes place.

Professor Luepker commented that Mr. Steeves had said the regents represent the population of the state. But Board members are not an average group, and there is a disproportionate number of ex-legislators serving on the Board. Mr. Steeves said that calling on former political leaders to serve on the Board of Regents dates back to John Sargent Pillsbury and the foundation of the University. The fact that there were recently three ex-legislators on the Board at one time highlighted the issue but neither the Board nor the RCAC has taken any position on it. He said he doubted that the RCAC would want to disqualify a segment of people—ex-legislators—from serving, but he agreed that the RCAC should probably be mindful of the balance.

Mr. Volovik asked Mr. Steeves about the proposal to increase the number of students on the Board to two. Mr. Steeves said that the legislature has the prerogative to elect as many students to the Board as it wishes. It did elect two students last time, one of whom was elected from the Fifth Congressional District.

Ms. Hagen recalled that over the last two years or so the University has been dealing with the question of whether there are too many administrators, and one Board member explicitly asked about the numbers. The question has come up again and the P&A staff are concerned because many of them might appear to be "administrators." What will the Board members do to get out to departments in order to get to know people and what they do?

There are a number of things that Board members do in order to learn and gain an understanding of the University, Mr. Steeves said. When small groups of Regents recently visited Duluth and Morris, they met with faculty and students. Is that enough? Is that the right way to proceed? He said he did not know and they are always looking for ways to improve what they do. They are thinking also about an ongoing development plan for informing Board members about their responsibilities to all of the University's stakeholders because there are many they need to know. They try to set up interactive sessions with as many as they can. But there are only 12 regents, Mr. Steeves pointed out, and the position is volunteer—and many of the Board members also have full-time jobs of their own so they have limited time. Lay citizen boards were a brilliant innovation and they have driven much of what has made American higher education the best in the world, but one drawback is that members of governing boards may not fully understand the complexity of the modern major research university.

Professor McCormick asked if there is a way the Board members get to know what the University means to the state. Do they look at what happens in the states of the University's aspirational peers?

Mr. Steeves said that the University is a member of, and participates actively in, the Association of Governing Boards, the professional association of members of boards of regents/trustees. Board members interact with their colleagues from other institutions and they do seek out information about the University's aspirational peers, and one of the regents is on the Council of Chairs of the Association. The Board does try to learn best governance practices. The question is how best to orient new regents to all of this information; it really takes several years to develop experienced Board members.

Professor Hancher noted that the Board office is in the same building as the Alumni Association. He said he assumes the staffs of the two offices work together. Do the regents learn from the alumni and take heart from what they learn?

Mr. Steeves said that the Board and the Alumni Association have an ongoing relationship and they try to ensure that Board members learn what the alumni are thinking about—and vice-versa. The Association has been making strides in alumni engagement, but there is always room for growth in this area.

Professor Hancher thanked Mr. Steeves for joining the Committee.

2. Discussion with Athletic Director Norwood Teague

Professor Hancher welcomed Mr. Teague to the meeting and began the conversation by noting that athletics is important more broadly than the Department of Intercollegiate Athletics; he asked Mr. Teague what the relationship of his department is to Recreational Sports. Mr. Teague said that the two programs share a large number of facilities, that Recreational Sports operates the golf course, and that Recreational Sports uses the practice facilities in the Bierman Building and shares use with athletics of the

Fieldhouse, TCF Bank Stadium, and the Aquatic Center. There is more sharing of facilities than at most institutions.

Does Recreational Sports benefit from financial successes in intercollegiate athletics, Professor Hancher asked? It does not, Mr. Teague said; the two departments have separate financial sources. But they have a similar mission, Professor Hancher said. They do and there is much overlap, Mr. Teague agreed.

Professor Durfee asked who owns the Aquatic Center and who pays for it. Mr. Teague said he did not know. Recreational Sports runs it but intercollegiate athletics has space in it that they use.

Mr. Volovik asked Mr. Teague what he thought about adding or cutting sports. Mr. Teague said he not believe there is any need to cut sports. Minnesota is a Big Ten school with 25 sports, which is about normal for an institution this size. Cutting sports is not worth the pain the department must go through to do it; it comes under fire from alumni and parents, among others. Moreover, the sports at Minnesota are very successful; the department would not get rich cutting sports.

Mr. Teague then offered views on what he is seeing in intercollegiate athletics and his vision for the future.

-- Football is important to building a successful program; it is obvious from what alumni say about how important it is, and it also helps keep other sports strong.

-- He will make a strong push over the next ten years to improve the support facilities in athletics—practice facilities and academic support facilities—so they are more modern.

-- He has talked about collaboration with the faculty, and he believes that the reporting lines for units associated with athletics work very well.

Professor Ratliff-Crain asked about the level of student participation at events, where it is trending, and about ways to get more students involved. Mr. Volovik noted that there has been trouble getting students to attend football games; what is the solution besides winning more games? Mr. Teague said he did not know and will spend time during the off season asking what they need to be doing; he needs to learn more rather than just guess. They may need to offer more pre-game activities (and not just for students); he hopes to identify two or three ideas that will work.

Professor McCormick noted that there has been discussion of the future of the St. Paul campus. Would any athletic facilities be built there? Mr. Teague said he did not know. If they do build any there, doing so will involve moving people. He said he knows that President Kaler wants to enliven the St. Paul campus and intercollegiate athletics would be glad to help if it can.

Ms. Olson asked Mr. Teague about his department's policies on grades and graduation numbers. Mr. Teague reported that 84% of Minnesota student-athletes graduated, according to the most recent NCAA statistics, the highest graduation rate ever. Are there required study times, Ms. Olson asked? There are, Mr. Teague said, although it depends on the sport. In many cases they must work with advisers because students have to miss class because of their sport. Some have more requirements, some have fewer. Men's hockey, for example, had a 3.4 GPA recently. Is that known around the University,

Professor Cloyd asked? Mr. Teague conceded that they do not always tell their story as well as they could. Fifty percent of the teams have a GPA over 3.0 and a number are over 3.2, he said. Professor Durfee said that student-athletes have a higher GPA than students in general, and if one takes a couple of sports out of the comparison, the gap is even greater.

Professor Luepker asked about a new baseball facility. Mr. Teague reported that the field is done but the stands are not. They need the new facility because baseball at Minnesota is a great program.

Mr. Matula asked if there is variation across groups in academic performance. Mr. Teague replied that the graduation rates for African-American athletes needs to improve, although it is not terrible now. They would like to be a national leader in that category. He commented that the two basketball coaches—Smith and Borton—had 100% graduation rates.

Professor Hancher commented, apropos of student attendance at football games, that a 2:00 p.m. start time would likely draw more undergraduates than an 11:00 a.m. start time. He said he understands that start times are controlled by the media, but is there any possibility there will be a change? By doing better, Mr. Teague said. The Big Ten has six primetime football games, but some institutions have asked not to be on at that time because a late game leads to rowdy behavior. For the future, the games will be at 11:00, 2:30, or in the evening.

In terms of telling their story, Mr. Teague commented, the Big Ten network is great; it reaches 19 of the top 20 TV markets. Each school employs 40-50 students who produce something about sports and who receive hands-on production experience for national television.

Professor Durfee asked if it the tactic never to have items such as new practice facilities on the University's bonding cycle and fund them entirely internally. Mr. Teague said that right now it would be difficult not to bond some of the facilities if they can estimate a revenue stream to pay off the bonds, but much of the funding for the facilities comes from private sources. They have a firm coming in to evaluate what they need and how far they need to go in making improvements. But they want to be citizens of the University. Professor Durfee asked if thought should be given to putting any of the facilities on the University's official bonding request. If so, the matter should be treated very carefully because it would be controversial. Mr. Teague said he understands that many departments have needs that they want on the University's capital request and that it is very difficult to get on the list.

Professor Luepker asked about arrangements with the Vikings while their new stadium is being built. Mr. Teague said that it is likely the Vikings will be playing in the University's stadium during the 2015 and 2016 seasons, but there are many dominoes yet to fall before any final agreement is reached. Will this be a good deal for the University, Professor Durfee asked? It will, Mr. Teague said, and he said he hoped it would also be helpful for Dinkytown. He added that he also hoped that things do not "go over the top" when the Vikings play on campus. The crowd at Vikings games is different from the one that attends Gopher games. Professor Durfee said he thought it was tremendous publicity for the University when the Vikings played a game at TCF Bank stadium, with the University's logo on national television.

Professor Hancher asked how athletics coordinates with the Alumni Association. They do many events together at away games, Mr. Teague said, and those are only a few of the many. He said that he does a great deal of speaking around the state at alumni events and said he did not believe they could have enough of such events because they build good relationships for the University.

Professor Hancher asked how social media was working to get the word out about the program. They use Facebook and Twitter, Mr. Teague said, and repeated his interest in using the football off season to explore what people are following and where and how so that they don't waste their time on unproductive efforts.

Mr. Volovik asked about the expanded availability of alcohol for regular seating at football games. Mr. Teague said that the president has been concerned about the effect, for reasons one can understand. He said there have not been any major incidents of which he is aware and there is a rather short period of time when one can purchase beer at University games. They will evaluate the situation after the season is over, but he thought it unlikely they would be more aggressive about selling beer in future years. Once it has been introduced, they cannot go back, Professor Ratliff-Crain commented. Mr. Teague agreed but said it appears that things went well this year and he observed that last year—before alcohol was available in the stadium—there were 24 incidents involving alcohol. This year, when it was, there were only 7.

Professor Hancher thanked Mr. Teague for joining the meeting.

3. University Senate Docket Approval

Professor Hancher reviewed quickly the items on the University Senate docket; the Committee forthwith approved it unanimously.

Professor Hancher adjourned the meeting at 4:00.

-- Gary Engstrand

University of Minnesota