

Minutes*

**Senate Committee on Educational Policy
October 11, 1990**

Present: Thomas Clayton (chair), Martin Conroy, Edward Foster, Roland Guyotte, Michael Handberg, Ken Heller, Robert Jones, Karen Karni, Karen Seashore Louis, Marvin Mattson, David Overstreet, Clark Starr, Jennifer Wesson

Guests: Jean Congdon, Dean Robert Holt, JoAnne Stenberg (Academic Professional Staff Committee), Ken Zimmerman (Graduate School)

1. Report of the Chair

Professor Clayton opened the meeting by asking members of the Committee to introduce themselves; he then reviewed the agenda for the day.

2. Graduate School Tuition

Professor Clayton next turned to Dean Holt to take up the question of the change in the policy of the Graduate School vis-a-vis continuing registration and thesis credits for graduate students. (The change, pursuant to federal requirements, does not permit graduate students to continue to receive financial aid unless they continuously register.)

One Committee member noted that the previous policy had encouraged graduate students to take their thesis credits early and get them completed; the result is that there is a group of students who may be well into their doctoral work who will be severely harmed by the change if some accommodations are not made; their loans will now come due. It would not be equitable to now place students at a disadvantage. Minnesota, it was noted, is not the only institution in this position; presumably the Council of Graduate Schools is--or should be--protesting the change in Washington.

There is no effect on the income to the University, it was noted, but there is no indication of the number of students affected by the change.

Dean Holt said there are a number of issues which have been raised. The proposal was discussed long before the change in federal rules for eligibility for student loan deferral. The changes, moreover, are all administered in the Office of Student Financial Aid, not the Graduate School.

The Higher Education Assistance Foundation is obligated, by law, to tell the federal auditors that the University is not in compliance with federal rules. If the University were audited and the ruling held, there is a possibility for very substantial liability. Wayne State, in a similar situation, was billed for \$34 million. The change will make the tuition accommodate continuing registration with no additional payment of tuition--which also leads to a congruence between the registration for thesis credits and receipt of the advising and work on the thesis. It will also make registration after the prelims easier. All

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of this takes place in the face of increasingly stringent federal regulations.

The question is what to do with the transition students, Dean Holt said. It is not clear how many people are involved; it is perhaps a hundred or so, those who are self-funding. But there is no choice about compliance; Senior Vice President Kuhi has made that clear, in a letter to Senior Vice President Donhowe read by Dean Holt.

Committee members discussed several additional elements of the change with Dean Holt; there seemed to be broad agreement that rationalization of the tuition structure makes sense. The concern remained with those who are caught in the middle of the change; the University, it was argued, has an ethical responsibility for those students because it, not they, were out of compliance with federal rules. There was also agreement that what was needed was a "pot of money" to assist the students. Dean Holt, however, maintained that the two issues--the rules change and aid to the students harmed--are not linked.

Many units are given block grants by the Graduate School, Associate Dean Zimmerman pointed out; the units could, if they chose, use some of those funds to assist the students who are put at a disadvantage by the rule change.

The two issues seem clear, it was observed: One is a change to a more rational policy, calling for students to pay for what they are doing at the time they are doing it; the other is treatment of the 100+ students who are victims of a system which should not have been in place to begin with. It was suggested (later moved) that the Committee endorse the policy change but also urge that those 100+ students who are handicapped by the change be helped by any expedient means available and that means be found if they are not immediately available. One possibility, Dean Holt pointed out, was to pass the cost on to all other graduate students: raise tuition (or delay reduction in certain rates) marginally, temporarily, to compensate those students. The Committee, however, deemed implementation of its resolution as an administrative matter.

The impact on the ability of the University to recruit graduate students must be borne in mind, one Committee member cautioned; Dean Holt agreed and told the Committee that the Graduate School considers this continually. It was not clear whether or not the policy change would have any adverse effect on recruiting; this could be examined by the Committee in the future.

Part of the Committee sentiment should include a statement to the effect that an adjustment in rates should also be seen as a possible source for deferring the extent to which certain subgroups are disproportionately disadvantaged by the change (e.g., such as new students who enroll in two-year programs). The Committee, however, decided to support the policy change as it is and recommend transition management; it agreed, however, that the change should be the subject of continuing Committee discussion.

On vote taken, the Committee approved the motion (underlined above) on a 9-1 vote with two abstentions.

3. Program Reviews and Undergraduate Programs

Professor Clayton turned next to Associate Dean Zimmerman to speak to the question of the extent

to which undergraduate programs are included in the program reviews conducted under the aegis of the Graduate School. He recalled that this question had arisen at the Committee last year and had also been taken up by the Senate.

Mr. Zimmerman told the Committee that even though he is in the Graduate School he coordinates for the University site visits for all departments. He works, for instance, jointly with the Liberal Arts deans to review CLA units. The process has been in place since 1973. The faculty prepare a self-study on both graduate and undergraduate education and the department as a whole. Then an external team of professionals is brought in; that team writes a report which includes the undergraduate program. All the reviews they do, except for those which have no undergraduate major, include the undergraduate program. Inclusion of the undergraduate program is mandatory; it is in the protocols and in the charge to the site visitors.

As a consequence, Mr. Zimmerman said, it is not clear to him why the issue had arisen and why the Senate adopted the statement it did. He said he could not send to the Committee copies of the reports because they are partly confidential (because they address personnel matters) but assured the Committee that undergraduate programs do receive serious attention during the reviews. (Every faculty member does receive a copy of the studies.)

To the extent possible, Mr. Zimmerman reported in response to a question, the reviews are coordinated with accrediting agencies.

In the case of negative comments about individual faculty members, the departments, in the follow-up, try to work with those faculty to improve their performance; the review comments have, in some cases, contributed to decisions to retire early. Generally, Mr. Zimmerman said, they have found very few "seriously ill" departments; most are doing their job well and some with spirit; there is little "dead wood" on the faculty.

It was commented that the student reviews are corrupt and inaccurate; how does the University take into account student views of undergraduate teaching when those views are not organized. Mr. Zimmerman explained that the team spends an hour with graduate students and an hour with undergraduates; anything missing from the written materials can be addressed directly with the team. The quality of the teaching has come up in several reviews.

Professor Clayton thanked Dean Holt and Mr. Zimmerman and said that the comments on the program reviews would be treated as an interim report; the subject will be taken up again later if the Committee wishes.

4. Review of the Morse-Alumni Award Criteria and Process

Professor Clayton next thanked Professor Jean Congdon for joining the meeting; Professor Congdon was on SCEP through last year and served as chair of the Morse-Alumni nominating committee for two years. At the same time brief notes of a recent ad hoc subcommittee meeting to discuss the criteria were distributed to the Committee.

Professor Congdon began by noting that no one has received the award who did not deserve it;

there were other individuals who were equally deserving, however, who did not receive an award. The Committee, she observed, acted without bias in making its decisions; some of those who did not receive the award should certainly be considered again in future years and will probably receive the award.

The criteria are sent out from Academic Affairs; it is they who draw up the guidelines. The nominating committee thus feels bound to use them. One question, however, is whether or not the four criteria should be considered equal in weight. At present the nominating committee ranks each candidate on a 1-5 scale for each of the four criteria. The Alumni Association, for instance, would prefer that the teaching component be weighted more heavily, something, Professor Congdon commented, she would not oppose. It would be helpful if the committee could be told that the criteria need not all be weighted the same; the numeric results of the evaluations were sometimes at variance with what the committee might have otherwise concluded. That the criteria might not be weighted equally should be made known to those who receive the materials because, Professor Congdon asserted, the perception is that they will be; such a proviso might permit some nominators to frankly indicate that "this individual has no opportunity to engage in this activity."

The greatest problem is with advising; in many departments that function is handled almost exclusively by professionals. "Student interaction" or some such phrase would better serve the process, she suggested; Directors of Undergraduate Studies will have much more advising than will regular faculty. One who does not do a lot of advising will almost be excluded from consideration because he or she will receive no significant marks in the "advising" criteria. There is also the Tate Award, she added, which specifically recognizes advising.

Another difficulty is the overlap between "academic program development" and "educational leadership"; these two categories should perhaps be collapsed into one. Those reviewing the files tend to be inconsistent in how they categorize an activity.

The nominating committee should also be changed to eliminate the graduate student representative--who rarely participates--and add another undergraduate.

Finally, Professor Congdon observed, some committee members gave less credit for advising graduate students whereas she, for instance, gave those people the highest marks--they not only took on working with undergraduates but also kept up a full load of graduate advising. This needs to be clarified.

Professor Congdon was asked if she encountered the problem where a person and his or her performance were extremely well known but the dossier did not serve the candidacy well. She said that the nominating committee tried to avoid judging on the basis of the aesthetics of the dossier; the committee also did not look at any materials which were submitted but not requested. Two who received awards last year, she recalled, had materials which came in in folders and were held together by paper clips. Personal knowledge on the part of the committee members, however, was taken into account as the nominee was considered. Departments have begun to give more care to the nominations, she added, since the award is now worth so much more money. It might be helpful for departments to have access to a file of winning nominations so that they can get some idea of what a dossier should contain. It was pointed out that the Tate Award description includes clear directions for the dossier; similar language should be prepared for the Morse-Alumni Award.

There was an inquiry about whether or not the activities of a faculty member in undergraduate research were equated or dealt with as undergraduate teaching. Professor Congdon noted that the practices vary widely among departments; another committee member said that it tried to be conscious of these differences. The perspectives on the nominating committee help to even things out; it is probably not possible, beyond that, to standardize the consideration given to different activities. Standardization of the dossiers would, it was suggested, be more helpful.

Some departments, one Committee member said, see the documentation required as too onerous so do not submit nominations. The procedure should be changed; if documentation is demanded, a small set of pre-selection materials could be submitted and the committee then choose from among those nominated for additional materials. Some colleges already do pre-select, Professor Congdon said; expansion of that process could be considered.

Professor Clayton summarized the discussion and Professor Congdon's observations and thanked Professor Congdon for her advice on the award.

5. Discussion about Space with Associate Vice President Kvavik

Professor Clayton next welcomed Associate Vice President Kvavik to the meeting to talk about classroom space renovation and associated policy issues.

Like most other institutions, Dr. Kvavik began, the University has no plan for its classrooms. Buildings are programmed and built; the program may or may not include classroom space. As a result there are good classrooms in some parts of the campus and not in others. Moreover, resources for classrooms come from various sources, and have not been leveraged very well.

There is now in place a committee which will try to develop a strategy for classrooms: the number needed, the quality, distribution, access, and technology needed. When an individual project is being considered it must accommodate the broader University interests in classrooms. For instance, Botany and Zoology--which have classrooms--will be torn down to make space for the new Basic Sciences Building--which will not have classrooms. As expenses increase and the funds available decrease, the first two items removed from building plans are study space and classrooms in order to protect laboratories and administrative space. This situation must be remedied.

Also being examined is the optimal need for classrooms, assuming 100% efficiency in use; departments and colleges, however, adopt policies and practices which make that impossible to achieve. Students and faculty, moreover, often do want to teach or take classes at certain times of the day--or, for example, do not want to go the St. Paul campus even though a good room may be available. Classrooms are thus taken out of the inventory, reducing efficiency and requiring more money to maintain the number of classrooms. This problem will be addressed shortly.

In the absence of a policy, however, funds have been committed by the President to improve existing study and classroom space; Dr. Kvavik said he had been charged with making the decisions on improvement. The classrooms that were used most heavily were examined, except in those buildings which are not worth putting money into or which are to be remodeled in the future; the residual was a cluster of rooms in various buildings which will be improved. Dr. Kvavik explained that money will be

spent on a number of high-use classrooms; the total to be spent will be \$570,000.

There will in addition be \$290,000 spent for improving study space, following the expenditure of \$425,000 for this purpose last year. The problems were high-lighted last year when it appeared there was insufficient study space on the Twin Cities campus. An ad hoc committee in Academic Affairs, including a number of students, studied the quality, quantity, use, and distribution of study space. The committee established priorities for spending the money; those priorities will continue to be followed when the \$290,000 is spent.

What was discovered was that there was no shortage of non-library study space; the problem was quality, not quantity--or the students could not find it. There was, however, a shortage of library study space. The strategy became one of improving the existing study space; Dr. Kvavik described where the improvements would be made. Also needed is simply a signage system which tells students where the student space is. There is now a plan, he concluded, on how classrooms and study space will be improved. In fact, Dr. Kvavik said, with 31,000 undergraduates the University will have excess study space if national standards are any guide.

All of the funds being used are soft monies; any spending next year will depend on the availability of funds. The University, by comparison to many institutions, has very little recurring money available for classroom improvements (this same dilemma applies to research laboratories); the U of Washington, by comparison, has \$30 million per year to renovate and remodel.

One strategy which would stretch the funds further would be to maintain fewer classrooms. Departments control over 1/3 of the campus classrooms and use them at about 20-25% of the rate that generally scheduled rooms are used. It would be desirable to bring those rooms back into the central classroom inventory. The standard for usage normally sought is 30 hours per week and 60% occupancy overall; most departmental space is used at 6-7 hours per week with an occupancy rate of 10-15%. Dr. Kvavik said, in response to a question, that some of those classrooms could be remodeled for office use, especially for departments which now have very poor space.

A more general policy question bears on the decisions made when buildings are constructed or remodeled. Dr. Kvavik said there is a plan for study space; a statement from SCEP and perhaps the Senate which called for the inclusion of study space and classroom space in buildings would give the administration a stronger hand in planning construction or remodeling. A document which sets out the optimal inventory of space the University will need, in light of declining enrollment and new liberal education requirements, will be issued in the near future. The Committee, Professor Clayton said, would be interested in commenting on it.

Professor Clayton thanked Dr. Kvavik for meeting with the Committee.

6. Policy on Events During Study Day and Finals Week

Professor Clayton asked the Committee to briefly take up the resolution concerning events scheduled during Study Day and Finals Week. The draft had been referred back from the Consultative Committee last Spring for improvement; the original draft had not provided any protection for students who are legitimately granted an exemption from the policy.

The Committee discussed several events which might have to be granted exemptions and debated the merits of whether or not there should be any exemptions.

It was suggested by one Committee member that Study Day and Finals Week were not the same and that the policy need not cover Study Day; the decision to study is optional with students whereas finals are not. It was argued that there should be no exceptions to finals because they are integral to the academic mission of the University. There are, however, certain events which the University has countenanced and must, therefore, be exempted from the requirement.

The point of the policy, it was contended, is to protect students from having to make a choice between taking a final and participating in an event sanctioned by the University and where the student's presence is obligatory. It was also noted that the authority to grant the exemption rests with SCEP so that the merits of a particular case can be decided upon by the Committee.

After reviewing alternative language which would provide protection to students who are granted an exemption under the terms of the policy, the Committee voted in favor of an amended policy.

The Committee adjourned at 3:00.

-- Gary Engstrand

University of Minnesota