

Minutes*

**Senate Committee on Educational Policy
November 21, 1991**

Present: Stanford Lehmberg (chair), Victor Bloomfield, Thomas Clayton, James Cotter, Michael Handberg, Kenneth Heller, Karen Karni, Clark Starr, Susan Wick

Guests: Elayne Donahue (Athletic Academic Counseling), Vice Provost Anne Hopkins, Karen Seashore Louis, Donna Olson (Women's Athletics)

1. Evaluation of Teaching

Professor Lehmberg convened the meeting at 1:15 and welcomed Vice Provost Hopkins and Professor Louis to the meeting to discuss evaluation of teaching.

Dr. Hopkins began her comments by observing that if the quality of teaching is to be improved, it must be evaluated. Different kinds of evaluation may be required for the purpose of improvement and for tenure and promotion decisions. Professor Louis noted that the Committee had talked about evaluation of teaching a great deal last year and that a group met over the summer to gather and review information from the colleges on their practices. They concluded that designing the form is not a critical problem; what is important is to begin laying the political groundwork to increase the emphasis on teaching. There is much variability among the colleges in terms of what they do, she reported; most take teaching evaluation seriously for promotion and tenure and for reviews. CLA and IT policies leave evaluation to the departments; some do very little. CBS and Public Health, on the other hand, clearly tie annual reviews to teaching evaluation.

In their discussion, the Committee, Dr. Hopkins, and Professor Louis addressed the following points:

- At present, the data provided on teaching suggest that everybody is an outstanding teacher. But there are execrable teachers.
- The USE of the information is important; some is relevant to promotion and tenure (the more global information) and some is pertinent to improvement (more specific questions and responses). The latter information should not be shared and should not be used in P & T decisions. Any University-wide policy should focus on the P & T process; enough information can be obtained to determine if the individual needs help in improving teaching. One Committee member argued that just as a department head can review research with faculty members, so should he or she be able to review teaching plans and efforts at improvement; Dr. Hopkins agreed, but maintained that the summative evaluations should not be used for promotion and tenure.

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- Evaluating EVERY class may not be productive; students tend to become jaded. But it is important to sample different kinds and sizes of classes.
- The evaluation forms, in the case of students, should not be crammed into the last five minutes of the last class or after the final is completed; they should have time to fill out the forms thoughtfully. One faculty member mentioned that he distributed the forms towards the end of the quarter and required that they be returned when taking the final; the evaluation form is the "ticket" to taking the final.
- Any proposed policy should be prepared by a group of people who are or become familiar with the evaluation literature; some of the research results, Dr. Hopkins observed, do not accord with what common sense might suggest (e.g., grades awarded do not skew the results, a proposition one Committee member expressed doubt about). The larger problem will be to sell any policy to the larger faculty, which will not have gone through the process of reviewing these findings and reaching agreement; it will be controversial and unwelcome, in part because many do not believe students can make competent judgments.
- Evaluation cannot rely solely on student opinions. There must be a mixture of evaluations, including by peers. Students are unable to discriminate between an expert and a "showman"; if the peer evaluation concludes the individual is a "showman," then the department does not CARE what the students say. But evaluation must deal with more than knowledge of subject matter; it should also take into account the effect of the teaching. Dr. Hopkins argued that it is part of the responsibility of the faculty to evaluate their peers.
- After having discussed this issue for 23 years, one Committee member observed, doing ANYTHING would be an improvement. The current Senate policy, calling for evaluation of one course per year, at the faculty member's choice, is inadequate.
- SCEP cannot issue a mandate on how colleges should conduct the evaluations, but it could recommend a policy requiring that the colleges evaluate teaching, permit local variations in practice, and leave it to the administration to enforce it. The question, Dr. Hopkins said, is not a resource question but rather a policy question with resource implications. But it is up to SCEP and faculty what is to be done.
- One Committee member exclaimed that the whole question in front of the Committee is silly; that it needs to talk about evaluation of anything means the institution does not take it seriously. It is clear that the University does not value teaching when life is made miserable for those trying to teach well but not when they are trying to do research. Anything which does not address the working conditions for good teaching will be worthless; the University structure does not support teaching. Dr. Hopkins expressed surprise at this statement and responded that this sort of complaint should be addressed to her so she can try to address it.

It was agreed that the policy information which had been collected from the colleges over the past summer should be reviewed and summarized, in order to learn what policies are already in place. It was

agreed that a subcommittee of Mr. Handberg and Professor Wick--and Professor Louis, if she would be willing--would review the materials and provide a recommendation to the Committee. The subcommittee is to report back to SCEP in January.

2. Membership on the Council on Liberal Education

Professor Lehmberg distributed to the Committee a list of the nominees to the Council on Liberal Education and asked that they communicate to him any STRONG views they might have on the individuals nominated.

3. Request for Exemption from the Scheduling Policy

Professor Lehmberg next welcomed Dr. Elayne Donahue and Ms. Donna Olson to the meeting to discuss an exemption from the Senate policy prohibiting events during Study Day and Finals Week. He began by explaining that this was a different issue from that presented earlier by the men's program; in this case, the question has to do with post-season competition. In the past, when the Assembly Committee on Intercollegiate Athletics exercised control over approving such events, it granted an automatic exception for post-season competition. The Committee, Professor Lehmberg explained, needed to decide if it wished to grant a blanket exemption in such instances. If it does not, he added, a subcommittee or individual will have to be identified with authority to decide, because sometimes a decision is required within 24 hours.

Ms. Olson then explained that there are three types of events to be considered. One is regular season competition (prohibited by the Senate policy), the second is an event which is in natural progression to a championship (automatically allowed under the earlier ACIA policy), and the third is in between: an invitational championship event. The women's volleyball team has been invited to participate in the National Invitational Volleyball Championship, which is a national event similar to the NIT in men's basketball and every post-season football bowl game except the Rose Bowl (in which the Big Ten and Pac-10 regular season champions automatically play). It is one of a number of such post-season events explicitly recognized by the NCAA, although not conducted under its aegis.

Ms. Olson provided the Committee information about the NIVC, the academic standing of the members of the volleyball team, and the department's procedures in assessing the impact and feasibility of participating. Academic counselors are asked to review the academic status of the team members and make recommendations on each student. The athletic director then decides if students with "fragile" records should be left home and, if they are, whether or not the competitive ability of the team is affected--and if it is, to withdraw from the event. The student-athletes themselves may also choose not to participate.

It was suggested by one Committee member that the academic evaluation of the student-athletes should be conducted by the student's major department, not counselors in the athletic programs. Dr. Donahue concurred with the general proposition but noted that students without a major do not have department advisors to rely on and that college advisors require appointments long in advance; the logistics make it difficult to rely on college and department advisors. One Committee member expressed the view that the academic advising provided through the athletic departments is superior to CLA lower division advising and often superior to that provided by departments.

One Committee member said that this appeared to be a reasonable request and noted that part of the role of student-athletes, sanctioned by the University, is to compete in athletics; it would not make sense to deny them the opportunity to participate in such an event.

On vote taken, the Committee unanimously approved the request for the exemption for the women's volleyball team.

Professor Lehmborg then inquired of the Committee if it wished to grant an automatic exemption for events which were in natural progression to a national championship. **The Committee voted unanimously that such events would be considered to be granted an exemption.**

It was agreed, however, that events of the nature of the one approved today should be brought to SCEP on a case-by-case basis for review.

One Committee member, in closing the discussion, expressed concern about the "disconnectedness" of athletics and the rest of the University. Dr. Donahue explained the ways in which her office works with college offices and faculty in terms of the academic performance of student-athletes. It was observed, however, that the future for a student-athlete lies with his or her chosen field of study, not athletics, and that the people best suited to make judgments about whether or not competition will hurt them are those in the disciplines. There is a perception that athletics is "over there" and walled off from the University.

Professor Lehmborg thanked Dr. Donahue and Ms. Olson for their presentation.

4. Morse-Alumni Committee

It is the responsibility of SCEP, Professor Lehmborg noted, to designate the membership of the committee which is to nominate Morse-Alumni award winners. It was agreed that Professor Clayton and Mr. Handberg would serve as a small subcommittee to bring recommendations for membership back to SCEP early in January.

5. Revised Policy on Makeup of Missed Examinations

Professor Lehmborg next drew the attention of Committee members to the revised draft of the policy prepared by Professor Clayton. The draft presented read as follows:

A student who is unable to take an examination owing to verified illness or absence on other legitimate account is entitled to take a make-up examination as soon as possible at a time mutually acceptable to the student and the instructor, and in accordance with any special terms that may be announced by the instructor at the beginning of the term. It is a student's responsibility to notify the instructor, as far in advance as possible, of a scheduled event requiring his or her participation and absence from class.

Comment

This policy is intended to insure that students will be able expeditiously to make up examinations legitimately missed, with as little disruption of the pattern of other students' regular course work and as little inconvenience to the instructor as possible. Among activities justifying absence and warranting a make-up examination are those undertaken on behalf of the University (e.g., intercollegiate athletics, University band, and the like) or required by government agencies (e.g., subpoenas, jury duty, National Guard service, and the like). Except for the kinds of activity specified, for which accommodation must be made by the instructor, absences warranting special arrangements are at the instructor's discretion in the course concerned.

Committee members discussed briefly the difference between a quiz and an exam; generally, there appeared to be agreement that exams are big and quizzes are little and that faculty will generally understand the difference.

In the case of a student who disagrees with the faculty member's decision, it was agreed, the student would have recourse to the normal grievance mechanisms available.

On vote taken, eight members of the Committee voted to approve the policy, none were opposed, and one abstained. The policy will be forwarded to the Senate Consultative Committee for review and placement on the Winter Quarter Senate docket.

The Committee adjourned at 3:00.

-- Gary Engstrand

University of Minnesota