

Minutes*

Senate Committee on Educational Policy
Wednesday, October 30, 2013
2:00 – 4:00
238A Morrill Hall

- Present: Alon McCormick (chair), Gifty Amarteifio, Michael Anderson, Nicola Alexander, Karla Hemesath (for Barbara Brandt), Thomas Brothen, Lee-Ann Breuch, Charlene Ellingson, Timothy Gearns, Gayle Golden, Sally Gregory Kohlstedt, Kenneth Leopold, Keith Mayes, Robert McMaster, Nic McPhee, Kristen Nelson, Moshe Volovik, Susan Wick
- Absent: Erich Beckert, Elaine Darst, Janine Grebin
- Guests: Joseph Shultz (Office of the Provost); Vicki Field (Office of the Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Education)
- Other: Suzanne Bardouche, Leslie Schiff (Office of the Vice Provost and Dean of Undergraduate Education); Tina Falkner, Susan VanVoorhis (Academic Support Resources)

[In these minutes: (1) update on Twin Cities campus accreditation; (2) Graduate School strategic planning; (3) policy on graduate readmission after an absence; (4) graduate education policy revision; (5) classroom management policy elimination; (6) new grading procedure; (7) grade posting demo]

1. Update on Twin Cities Campus Accreditation

Professor McCormick convened the meeting at 2:00 and turned to Vice Provost McMaster to provide an update on accreditation of the Twin Cities campus.

The campus is up for accreditation in 2015-16 by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC), Dr. McMaster reported, a process that occurs every 10 years, and Dr. Shultz in the provost's office has been working on it for a number of years. He has talked with the Board of Regents and this Committee about related processes, including academic program review and assessment of student learning. The HLC will be very interested in the latter, especially at the undergraduate level. Many programs are also accredited through other entities (such as ABET in engineering) and the University will try to leverage those separate accreditations with the HLC accreditation.

In terms of assessment of student learning, there is now an executive committee for assessment that is focused on the seven Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) that were approved by the Senate for the Twin Cities campus and how they are infused in the curriculum, Dr. McMaster reported. They have a new assessment director, Stephen Hawks, and have started working with each undergraduate college about its assessment strategy and how the SLOs are incorporated in the curriculum. That will be the backbone of assessment—and this is a big deal, Dr. McMaster

* 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.

emphasized, because it is a focus of the HLC accreditation process. The University does not want a "return visit" from HLC because it did not get assessment quite right. There is a great infrastructure in place and they are looking at software to assess SLOs; each college has a representative in the process.

Vice Provost McMaster turned to Dr. Shultz to talk more about accreditation and noted that Dr. Shultz is the University's liaison with the HLC.

Dr. Shultz said he would provide an overview of the process, their preparation, and how the campus will be engaged. Unlike other countries, authority in the U.S. is delegated by the federal government (Department of Education) to seven regional accrediting bodies, and that balance between the two is always a lively debate over questions of control and quality-control mechanisms. That debate is occurring now.

Many higher education organizations lobby to protect the current peer-review process, Dr. Shultz related. The University is part of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, within which there are two commissions, one for K-12 education and one for higher education, the HLC. The HLC is the largest such group in the country and covers institutions from Arizona to West Virginia and Oklahoma to Minnesota, and it includes every kind of higher education entity in the region.

There is an ongoing relationship with the HLC apart from the 10-year accreditation reviews, Dr. Shultz said, because institutions need HLC approval for some activities, and there is a 4-year review as well as the 10-year review. For the latter the HLC sends 7-8 visitors who focus on five criteria: mission, integrity, teaching and learning quality, teaching and learning assessment and improvement, and resources. The HLC visitors look at materials related to each criterion and judge whether the University satisfies the criteria; if not, there will be a review in 4 years. (Having such a return visit is not the end of the world and not unusual, and revisits are often related to assessment of student learning.)

Dr. Shultz noted that the provost is charged with the responsibility for the accreditation process. They have been looking at the criteria and engaging the University's leadership in reviewing them; they are also interpreting them (with such a wide variety of institutions in the HLC region, it is necessary to put things in the context of the University rather than that of a small private college). He has asked the leadership to code which accreditation components are purely administrative reporting, which ones are real opportunities enhance our situation in the next two years, and which ones lie somewhere in between. As they have gone through the process in the provost's office and with others, they have taken inventory of the criteria and their core components, and the ones that jumped out were assessment of student learning and academic program reviews.

In terms of participation, Dr. Shultz said they are trying to strike a balance and the process will be similar to the one in 2005. They are mindful of the distinction between the bureaucratic parts of the process and the academic substance where it is appropriate to their faculty colleagues. They will prepare the report but share it for feedback.

Professor McCormick recalled that Provost Hanson had talked with the Board of Regents about the importance of accreditation. Dr. Shultz said that the most extreme outcome would be that the University is not accredited (which is unlikely for an institution of this maturity); it could also be

placed on probation (also unlikely, unless the HLC discovered major financial or ethical issues), accredited with concerns, or accredited (and another review scheduled ten years hence).

Ms. Golden asked, apropos of assessment, if they are looking for the processes being used and not assuming that everyone uses the same one. They are, Dr. Shultz said, and they want to see the outcomes of learning, not just the process: what the University has learned as an institution, how it learned it, and what it is doing with it. Do they want departments 100% compliant, Ms. Golden asked? That is the goal, Dr. McMaster said, all engaged in learning assessment. They have allowed each college to develop a process to assess learning outcomes, so in essence there are 7 independent models for the undergraduate colleges, and it may be at the college or departmental level (most, however, assume learning is at the departmental level). And there has to be an authentic, sincere effort to demonstrate learning, Dr. Shultz added.

Professor Mayes asked if the SLOs are tied to assessment or are ongoing and forever in the curriculum. The latter, Dr. McMaster said; they were adopted independent of accreditation but they are a great way to address accreditation requirements.

Professor Breuch outlined how her department is handling assessment; Dr. McMaster said it is a good example at the department level and noted that CLA has college expectations as well (e.g., becoming a life-long learner).

Professor Leopold asked if there is a distinction between upper division major courses and lower division service courses. That has not come up, Dr. McMaster said, except with 1xxx courses in CLA's first-year program (two obligatory 1-credit classes. It may come up: what is the best place to address the SLOs? He said he expects that most would come from upper division courses, projects, and so on.

Professor McCormick thanked Dr. Shultz for his report and told him to let the Committee know if there is a way it can be helpful.

2. Graduate School Strategic Planning

Professor McCormick now welcomed Vice Provost Kohlstedt to the table to discuss Graduate School strategic planning.

Dr. Kohlstedt distributed copies of the Graduate School strategic plan summary (as of October, 2013) and reviewed its contents. She emphasized that it does not yet include action plans or outcome measures, which they are working on. The vision statement:

As a global leader in graduate education, the University of Minnesota fosters an inclusive environment that enables curious, creative and independent thinkers who work both independently and collaboratively, pursue answers to significant questions, challenge assumptions, and exercise moral responsibility in the discovery and dissemination of new knowledge.

"Courageous" means that the Graduate School wants to promote learning that does not simply accept the status quo, Dr. Kohlstedt said, and what the University really wants is "courageous thinkers" who

work not only can work independently but also in collaboration with others. "Significant questions" means something new that matters to intellectual life or the community, and the statement describes what the University wants to see in its graduate students.

In terms of the mission:

The mission of the Graduate School at the University of Minnesota is to ensure quality in graduate education, advocate for the academic and professional development of graduate students, advance intellectual communication and scholarship across disciplines, and promote cultural diversity, scholarly integrity and inclusivity.

The first thing the Graduate School must do is ensure quality, Dr. Kohlstedt said, and it must be the voice for graduate students. She noted, with respect to scholarship across disciplines, that there is also a new Graduate School committee on interdisciplinary education.

The values that guide their work (staff and Graduate Education Council) are these:

Integrity/Dependability
Creativity/Inclusivity
Perseverance/Community
Courage/Joy of Life

These are common goals, Dr. Kohlstedt said, and one would hope they would guide people outside of graduate school as well as in it—including a joy of life.

Dr. Kohlstedt turned next to the goals in graduate education; her comments about items appear in brackets:

GOAL #1: ENSURE QUALITY IN GRADUATE EDUCATION

Recruit and admit the best students by improving quality and efficiencies in graduate admissions [which starts with doing innovative things to improve the process]

Direct service
Admissions technology
Outreach
Quality assurance
Communication
Funding support/recruitment fellowships and funding packages for incoming [central support is essential but much of the funding occurs at the college level, and they want to make these opportunities visible to prospective students]

Improve the graduate student experience – from start to finish

Graduate student orientation
Obtain funding support/funding packages
U-wide survey/partnership with OIR
Advising & mentoring
Academic and professional development

Administer graduate student fellowships

Track placement

Work with appropriate partners to develop a central tracking system for graduate student placement [no one has the answer to how to do this but everyone is interested in it, including students, legislators, and alumni; there is talk about one system across the institution]

Support Directors of Graduate Studies

DGS orientation
Portfolio/plan/handbook assistance

Provide leadership for new models of program assessment

Establish models, metrics, standards and approaches for measuring program quality [establish GOOD models, that is; there is a need for ways to measure outcomes and gain information about quality that is not quantifiable]
Maintain and analyze data needed to conduct program review/assessment
Program goals for student learning
Graduate Review & Improvement Process

Dr. Kohlstedt said they have heard the complaints about program assessment in the past and this year provided more guidance for narrative responses. In terms of metrics, they provide central data on all programs and also information from CIC and AAU about national data in all fields. The narrative, among other things, was to invite explanations why programs might differ from their peers. The numbers are a place to start. Professor Wick suggested that if the goals of program assessment include student learning, assessment should be under improving the graduate student experience; she said it is dangerous to confuse assessment with goals and learning outcomes. Dr. Kohlstedt said it was a good point.

Professor Mayes said he questioned the way graduate education is increasing in some colleges but eroding in others. Graduate education in CLA has shrunk to the point where there are only 1-2 graduate students in some departments. Is she thinking about ways that graduate education could be expanded rather than retrenched? Some CLA programs were very robust; he said he did not know if this is a financial issue, a market issue, or a national trend, but the discussion within CLA around graduate education has typically not been a good one.

The conversation in metrics is about quality, Dr. Kohlstedt said, and not necessarily related to size. There are many national conversations around this question, and she would like to think that at the University the decisions are made strategically, with an awareness of market forces. She is very concerned about financial support for graduate students; there are a number of ways of providing it at the University. One is assistantships, but often the stipend equals the cost of the fringe benefits and they can be very expensive for colleges; if there is no change in the funding available as fringe and tuition increase, the colleges can only hire fewer graduate students.

Professor Mayes said he is concerned about signature programs (such as American Studies); if they are limited to a few students, they will not be able to maintain their status. Dr. Kohlstedt said that colleges make decisions and help departments plan. CLA is being creative, such as with the

Humanistic Commons, which has students from several departments. They are aware of the problems and must pay attention to markets.

Ms. Ellingson said she did not see, under improving the graduate student experience, creating community. Dr. Kohlstedt said that's a very important point, something she feels strongly about. Some sense that one belongs to graduate education at the University of Minnesota may have eroded in recent years. She said she would like to enhance that sensibility. One sees that the most successful graduate programs at major research universities tend to have designated spaces and events where graduate students can meet. She is looking for ways to create that literal as well as figurative space.

Professor Leopold asked about placement tracking. Is the plan to do more than that? Continue to nurture students? Now graduate students are mainly nurtured post-graduation through their research adviser. Can the institution do more? It would not cost a lot; what if there were central dollars for seminars for former Ph.D. students up for tenure? Professor Leopold also mentioned the possibility of reduced rates at University facilities (e.g., machine shops, etc.), relative to normal rates for external users, as well as library privileges. These would be great recruiting tools and morale-builders for students. Dr. Kohlstedt agreed and said some departments do that already. In her program, for example, there is an annual alumni lecture and the program alumni who come back are very helpful to current students.

Dr. Kohlstedt turned to strategic planning goals 2-5.

GOAL #2: ADVANCE INTELLECTUAL COMMUNICATION & SCHOLARSHIP ACROSS DISCIPLINES

Facilitate paths to work and communicate across disciplines

- Support infrastructure, policies, facilities, activities and relationships that foster interdisciplinary opportunities
- Administer interdisciplinary funding
- Raise awareness among students regarding the complexities and rewards of interdisciplinary work

GOAL #3: ADVOCATE FOR GLOBAL & INTERNATIONAL INITIATIVES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Work collaboratively with other University offices to support and promote international aspects of graduate education

- Promote international experiences for graduate students
- Partner with UMN programs (e.g., COGS, GAPSA) to promote intercultural activities and discussions on or near campus
- Assist graduate programs' international work
- Improve graduate experiences of international students

Promote international graduate study opportunities to students

- Communicate opportunities/possibilities of international graduate study
- Provide travel grants
- Workshops/cultural competency training to help students develop global skills

GOAL #4: PROMOTE SCHOLARLY INTEGRITY AND RESPONSIBILITY

Work collaboratively with other University offices and faculty to promote responsible research and scholarship

- Educate faculty and students about their roles in promoting responsible research and scholarship
- Highlight resources already available on campus

GOAL #5: FOSTER DIVERSITY AMONG GRADUATE STUDENTS AND FACULTY

Recruit and retain high-quality and high-potential students and faculty from diverse backgrounds

- Recruitment of under-represented students
- Retain students from under-represented backgrounds
- Preparing Future Faculty (PFF) and Higher Education Recruitment Consortium (HERC)
- Support the recruitment of an internationally diverse student body

On #3, Dr. Kohlstedt reported that a group of international graduate students had recently formed their own organization and one of the Graduate School staff may serve as adviser; this may be a place where Minnesota and its peers have not paid enough attention. This is already an international university, she said, because more than 20% of graduate students here are international students; the University has an important responsibility to prepare all students to live in a global world.

Professor McCormick said the University needs to think about the incoming end, building pipelines, in order to compete in recruiting students. Have they thought about helping support REUs to help attract students? [Research Experience for Undergraduates: an REU is generally a summer program specifically designed to pay undergraduate students about 8-10 weeks' salary; the undergrads are generally selected from other institutions and the idea is to expose "non-local" students to Minnesota and inspire them to come here for a graduate experience.] There were 17 REU programs last summer, Dr. Kohlstedt said, and the Graduate School provided some matching funding—and it will continue to do so. They were also supported through the Office of Equity and Diversity. Now the supporting staff and working to figure out the yield (students come in a summer program, after they graduate from undergraduate college; does the experience get them to come to the University as graduate students? and if not, what should be done?)

Professor Leopold said it would help to let graduate students know that the University will look out for them beyond graduation.

3. Policy on Graduate Readmission After an Absence

Dr. Kohlstedt next said she had an item not on the Committee's agenda but something about which she would like its opinion. Graduate students come to the University, then some may leave for 1-2 years or longer; how should they be readmitted? Historically, the Graduate School has said that for up to 5 years, there could be an "express readmit" process: students can go to their department, get

a form filled out, and can have express readmission. Somewhere that option got lost in the recent changes at the university.

Her question, she said, is whether that limit should remain in place. Right now a student could come back after 12 or 15 years (for example) and someone in the department could, in principle, agree to readmit the student without reapplication. In her view, after 5 years a department and the Graduate School should take a careful look because requirements (and disciplines) can change. Should the 5-year limit on express readmission be reinstated or should things be left up to departments?

It was noted that this was a policy issue that had been approved by this Committee and the Faculty Senate and it somehow didn't make its way into the policy library. Professor McCormick suggested that reviving the policy (by checking Faculty Senate minutes, for example) would be a technical correction that the Committee does not need to revisit. He thanked Vice Provost Kohlstedt for the update on strategic planning.

4. Graduate Education Policy Revisions

Vice Provost Kohlstedt and Ms. Field introduced three policy revisions. Dr. Kohlstedt explained that two of them seek to reinstate earlier policy providing that for Ph.D., Master's degrees, and post-baccalaureate certificate, only grades of A, B, C (including C-) and S could be included in the degree plan. Courses that are not degree-related and not counted toward the degree would be listed but not interfere with graduation. The policies set a minimum GPA for the degrees (that students "should" maintain) but provide that graduate programs may set higher requirements. They propose changing "must" to "should" so that students are not automatically terminated from a program and so that programs have discretion in allowing a student to continue.

If a student has a D in a class that is in the degree plan, the plan must be changed or the student must re-take the course.

The Committee voted unanimously to approve the revised policies, with minor editorial suggestions.

Ms. Field next introduced a policy to reinstate a practice that was in place for many years, although not policy, requiring that a majority of the members of the final doctoral examination committee be University of Minnesota faculty. The distinction is between those who hold University appointments and those who have no formal standing at the institution (e.g., outside professionals); in some cases, the latter have outnumbered the former on committees.

Committee members deliberated over the meaning of the term "faculty" and whether it included part-time or temporary faculty, P&A staff with a Ph.D. who teach in graduate programs, contract faculty, and so on. The Committee endorsed the general idea but agreed that the definition of "faculty" needed to be clarified. [Subsequent to the meeting, Vice Provost Kohlstedt withdrew the proposed change, at least for the time being.]

5. Classroom Management Policy Elimination

Dr. Falkner presented to the Committee a proposal to delete the existing policy on classroom management, which had come up for review in the normal cycle of three-year policy reviews. Upon review, it became clear that while the language provides an excellent philosophical statement about classrooms, it is not a policy because it does not direct anyone to do anything or identify sanctions for failing to follow it.

It was agreed that the Classroom Advisory Subcommittee should be asked to review the language of the to-be-deleted policy and consider perhaps recasting it as a senate resolution or incorporate elements of it in an FAQ for other policies dealing with classrooms.

The Committee voted unanimously to endorse removing the policy.

6. New Grading Procedure

Dr. Falkner reported to the Committee that with the PeopleSoft upgrade, to post grades to transcripts they need a new transcript entry, NR, or "not reported" (something that all Big Ten schools have). NR is not a grade and carries no GPA points, and the instructor has no control over it. At the end of the grading period deadline, PeopleSoft will scoop up all the grades registered, and where there are none, it will automatically insert NR, and grades can then be posted. Students want to see their grades but the system cannot post grades without a full complement of entries.

This is not like an I, Dr. Falkner said; there is no interaction with the instructor. There will be one place to go to make grade changes, and the instructor can change the NR to whatever grade was earned. The NR, if unchanged, will remain indefinitely; it can only be changed by the instructor.

7. Grade Posting Demo

Professor McCormick next recalled that the Faculty Consultative Committee recommended that grades be posted publicly in a way that had not been done before. Vice Provost McMaster asked Ms. VanVoorhis to implement the suggestion; today she is providing a demonstration of how the grades would be reported. (These are undergraduate grades only.)

Grades will be reported by course level and designator but no cell with fewer than 10 grades will be included. Access to grades for specific courses requires approval.

The Committee was satisfied with the demo.

Professor McCormick thanked Ms. VanVoorhis for providing the demo and adjourned the meeting at 4:00.

-- Gary Engstrand