

[In these minutes: Discussion of 2018-19 Twin Cities/Rochester calendar proposals, Discussion of Standards for Curriculum-based Community Engagement Experiences, Discussion of Graduate Program Learning Goals, Report from the Classroom Advisory Subcommittee, and Approval of the Evaluation of Teaching Policy Revisions]

EDUCATIONAL POLICY COMMITTEE (SCEP) MINUTES

MARCH 26, 2014

[These minutes reflect discussion and debate at a committee of the University of Minnesota Senate; none of the comments, conclusions, or actions reported in these minutes represent the views of, nor are they binding on, the Senate, the Administration, or the Board of Regents.]

PRESENT: Alon McCormick (chair), Nicola Alexander, Gifty Amarteifio, Michael Anderson, Lee-Ann Breuch, Charlene Ellingson, Gayle Golden, Karla Hemesath, Sally Gregory Kohlstedt, Ken Leopold, Robert McMaster, Thomas Michaels, Kristen Nelson, Moshe Volovik, Sue Wick.

ABSENT: Erich Beckert, Timothy Gearn, Janine Grebin.

REGRETS: Elaine Darst, Keith Mayes, Nic McPhee.

GUESTS: Suzanne Bardouche, Tina Falkner, Andy Furco, Ole Gram, Leslie Schiff, Stacey Tidball.

1. DISCUSSION OF 2018-19 TWIN CITIES/ROCHESTER CALENDAR PROPOSALS

Tina Falkner and Stacey Tidball presented possible calendar options for the 2018-19 Twin Cities and Rochester calendars. When calendars were discussed earlier this year, Vice Provost McMaster remarked that he would like to find a way to have May session end in May instead of in June. This followed a discussion at the Faculty Senate last spring regarding starting spring semester prior to Martin Luther King Day (MLK). They noted that questions about the start and end of each semester have been asked since the switch to semesters.

They, working with Professor Nelson, modeled a few possible options to realign spring semester which would then affect May and summer sessions. Option 1 is the same basic calendar as previous years, with spring semester beginning after MLK. Option 2 starts spring semester a full week before MLK. A possible sub-option for this calendar includes changing the week for spring break. Option 3 is changing the week off between spring semester ending and May session starting to possibly between May session ending and summer session starting. This might have a negative impact on students traveling to study abroad options for May session.

Q: How many courses are taught in May session?

A: In 2012, there were 121 sections. Most are intensive three-week study abroad or field work courses.

Q: Which groups of students do these changes most affect?

A: Undergraduate versus graduate students will be most impacted.

Q: Could these calendar changes be started prior to 2018-19?

A: The University tries not to change the calendar for the next two years, but any changes could be proposed to 2017-18 and possibly 2016-17.

Q: What about the difference in semester length between fall semester, 70 days, and spring semester, 74 days?

A: The University has less flexibility in changing its fall semester calendar due to the State Fair and Christmas. When the University first moved to semesters, fall semester varied between 70-72 days, but after a few years faculty asked that it be standardized at 70 days. In some years, this also permits a Thursday study day.

Members made the following comments:

- If there is not a week off between spring semester and May session, there are some instructors who could have an exam on Saturday and begin teaching on Monday. As well, some students might have an exam on Saturday and then need to be to a study abroad site by Monday to begin classes.
- The Faculty Senate reaction was to not reduce the winter break period
- The week prior to MLK is a dead week for many faculty so it would be good to start spring semester a week earlier
- Other faculty use the time in January to create and work on international partnerships
- Winter break would be very short when MLK is early in January
- Instead of starting spring semester at different times, it would be best to always start the third week in January, no matter when MLK falls
- SCEP should seek input from the Study Abroad Office regarding the week off after spring semester
- Could both semesters be 70 days?
- SCEP members should talk with their colleagues regarding the possible options
- Students feel disadvantaged for summer earnings when they cannot begin work until later in June
- Student internships are also hard when University students cannot start until later

Tina Falkner noted that the 2018-19 calendar does not need to be approved this spring, so there is plenty of time for SCEP to discuss the options and make their recommendation. They will model a few additional options prior to the next SCEP discussion.

2. DISCUSSION OF STANDARDS FOR CURRICULUM-BASED COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT EXPERIENCES

Andy Furco, Associate Vice President for Public Engagement, joined the meeting to discuss the standards for curriculum-based community engagement (CE) experiences. He noted that these standards were approved in 2007 with a narrow service learning focus and are now being revisited to broaden the designator. They have also looked into the process for CE designation. Course approval was thought to be too cumbersome so instead it was determined that the CE attribute would be added to courses when they are established in ECAS.

The reasons for CE designation are:

- To help students identify courses – SERU survey showed that students were looking for this information and the University had no data except what was being self-reported and available through the service learning center
- Data on the number of community-based courses offered were needed for Carnegie Community Engagement Classification
- Faculty were able to highlight this component of course offerings
- Adaptable system for a multitude of courses
- Attribute is flexible regardless of who is teaching a course or can be a highlighted component of some sections and not others

He then reviewed a revised draft of essential and desirable components for the CE attribute.

Q: Can the 25 percent component include reflection?

A: Yes.

Q: Is the CE attribute a University or college requirement? Does it appear on a transcript?

A: The attribute is not required but allows students to easily find courses, either because they want the experience or to satisfy a degree requirement. It also supports faculty and allows for an easy identification of which are offering these opportunities.

Q: Liberal education designation has scrutiny and oversight. How will CE designations be monitored?

A: His office will provide education to faculty to help determine if the designation is appropriate. Oversight will be handled through each unit and evaluation will be done by peers and student evaluations. The process is meant to encourage faculty creativity when planning a course.

Members made the following comments:

- FAQs can be expanded if members have additional questions to include
- Experiential learning is a form of service learning
- Designator should be different from liberal education abbreviations
- CE might be confused with Continuing Education, so a new set of letters should be instituted. [The members agreed to use CBL to designate community-based learning, and the new attribute will appear as such.]
- SCEP should receive a report in the future
- Second bullet under desirable components should be included in first bullet under essential components since if a student is analyzing the experience they are also reflecting on it
- Student learning outcomes are also self-reported by faculty but then reviewed at the unit level
- Once there is data, analysis can be done across the courses to show where there are strengths and gaps
- University needs to make sure that taking this type of course does not become a requirement for all degrees even though some students are pushing for it
- Faculty need to be aware that CE is not the same as public engagement

3. DISCUSSION OF GRADUATE PROGRAM LEARNING GOALS

Vice Provost Sally Gregory Kohlstedt joined the meeting to discuss graduate program learning goals. For background, she noted that in spring 2012 the Provost established a committee to set goals for the University as part of a national movement. Most institutions now have goals for graduate programs, even though the language varies. The University also has its accreditation review in 2015-16 and these goals are being asked for during that process. Therefore it is important that all graduate programs are doing them.

The Provost's committee spoke with many groups and created a seven page document including six principles guiding graduate education and an elaborate procedure to assess them. When this document was discussed, the response was that graduate education is very different from undergraduate education and student learning outcomes are not the same for both groups. Also uniform principles for graduate education conflict with creating distinction graduate programs.

The committee then reviewed the document last summer in light of these concerns. They asked five programs to review the principles and consider ways to streamline the assessment process. This lead to the development of three essential components for graduate education:

- Program should tell students and faculty the process
- Program goals should highlight what the program does that influences all students
- Evaluation is a key part of the process

10 programs went through the process this year. They determined that the process was useful and not onerous. Every program also said that it was distinct from other departments on campus or at other institutions.

Vice Provost Kohlstedt said that updates have been provided to the Provost, Faculty Consultative Committee (FCC), DGS, and the associate deans. The process will rollout in two ways. A website will be developed with pilot information and templates for a 2-3 page report. A DGS workshop will also be developed. All programs will complete the process in fall, with revisions in spring 2015 so that all assessments are completed by fall 2015.

When this proposal was shared with the Council of Graduate Students (COGS) they wanted to make sure that this did not create a measure against which all students needed to check a box to complete a degree. Instead they want to make sure that it is assumed that all graduate students will fulfill the requirements through completion of their degree.

She said that the goals are owned by the program and that deans are charged with making sure that they are in place. The Graduate School will be facilitating the process and reviewing them each few years. They encourage the goals to be in the student handbook so that they can be accessed by prospective students.

Q: What was the feeling regarding some of the pilot programs changing their goals?

A: When discussions were started in the process, half of the programs took the basic document with stated principles and worked from them to create polished goals. The other half spent more time thinking about the goals and conducting a self-evaluation.

Q: Did a performing arts or music program participate in the pilot program?

A: No, however the same questions can be asked; the answers will just be different.

Members made the following comments:

- Goals are meant to protect students by having faculty agree on what will be required for all graduates and how the program is unique
- Four general principles were present in each of the pilot programs

Vice Provost Kohlstedt then took the opportunity to talk to SCEP about the doctoral dissertation showcase taking place April 8 at Northrop. 82 posters will be featured and there will be demonstrations, panel discussions, and a photo contest. Building tours will also be conducted during the event. Graduate and professional students will be holding an event on digital knowledge on April 4 to highlight how graduate students connect with the digital age.

4. REPORT FROM THE CLASSROOM ADVISORY SUBCOMMITTEE

Thomas Michaels serves as the liaison to the Classroom Advisory Subcommittee (CAS). He provided a report from the last meeting. CAS felt that it had lost traction and was considering disbanding as it had been ineffective in making changes in classes, scheduling, and room updates. They have also not been able to affect the balance between central and departmental

classrooms as departments will not relinquish control and the Office of Classroom Management (OCM) does not have the budget to take over the technology in these rooms.

However, Jeremy Todd from OCM wants to keep the committee as an advisory body. OCM is also wanting to develop a learning space master plan. At the end of the discussion, CAS found new purpose and will therefore be helping with the comprehensive classroom inventory that has not been done in nine years.

Q: What is the reporting line for CAS?

A: It only reports to SCEP but has issues that overlap with several other committees.

Q: Did they review their charge?

A: He is not sure.

Members noted that CAS should be aware of problems in active learning rooms. Due to staff cuts, the response time from OCM is much slower. The scheduling software, Astra, is also very slow and creates long waits when trying to do scheduling.

5. APPROVAL OF SRT REVISIONS

Ole Gram from the Office for Faculty and Academic Affairs, presented the revised Administrative Policy on Evaluation of Teaching. These policy changes were discussed with the Faculty Senate in December and are slated for approval at the May 1 Faculty Senate meeting. Today's version incorporates the changes from previous Faculty Senate and SCEP meetings.

It also addresses student concerns to increase the faculty response rate. The Minnesota Government Data Practices Act (MGDPA) does not permit automatic release of personnel data. This means that any questions that refer to a person instead of the course cannot be released without the instructor's permission.

The policy amendments have been reviewed by the Office of the General Counsel and have the support of Vice Provosts McMaster and Carney.

Items 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, and 7 already exist in the current policy and have not been changed due to the accumulated data the University already has that relates to these questions. The main changes are in questions 5, 8, 9, 10, and 11. Those are either new questions or have been taken from the previous Student Release Question section. Questions 6 - 11 will be automatically released to students.

Q: Are there size constraints on what data will be released?

A: Yes. Data will not be made public if there are fewer than six responses in a given course.

Q: How will faculty be protected when they are the only person to teach a specific course?

A: This concern was raised by SCEP and the Faculty Affairs Committee. The results will not be identified by instructor name, just semester and course information.

Q: Will each component of a course have an evaluation?

A: As a rule, each graded component of a course includes an evaluation.

Q: Can a teaching assistant be evaluated?

A: Teaching assistants listed in PeopleSoft as an instructor will be administered the SRT. Depending on whether paper or online SRT is used, teaching assistants in recitation sections can also be evaluated.

Q: How are courses with multiple sections handled?

A:

Online - If the names of the multiple instructors are listed for the course in PeopleSoft, each instructor's students receive SRTs, instructors receive separate reports.

Paper – Students must be informed that they need to evaluate each instructor separately.

A committee member noted that some faculty provide extra credit for completing an evaluation. This is the wrong reason to complete an evaluation, and therefore the policy should prohibit this practice. As evaluations are meant to be confidential, there is no way to know which students have and have not responded, and therefore which students should receive extra credit. Other members agreed that this practice should be prohibited by the policy.

Members then made the following comments:

- New policy should have strengthened communication from the Office of Measurement Services to faculty
- Students are pleased that question 11 has been retained; this question also provides important information for faculty
- The length is good; students are less likely to complete the evaluation if it is too long
- Form now combines a mix of questions to evaluate the instructor as well as the course
- Responses will be more helpful than at ratemyprofessor.com

With no further discussion, members approved the revised policy with the one addition of language prohibiting incentives for completing evaluations.

6. OTHER BUSINESS

With no further business, Professor McCormick thanked all members for attending and adjourned the meeting.

Becky Hippert
University Senate