

**Senate Committee on Educational Policy (SCEP)**  
**September 14, 2016**  
**Minutes of the Meeting**

*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 represent the views of, nor are they binding on, the senate, the administration or the Board of Regents.*

**[In these minutes:** Welcome, Introductions, and Review of the Charge; Graduate Education Updates; Undergraduate Education Updates; Liberal Education Requirements; Council on Liberal Education; Policies; Disability Statement for Syllabi; Student Mental Health Task Force; Proposed Graduate Education Committee]

**PRESENT:** Sue Wick (chair), Nicola Alexander, Michael Anderson, Rani Bezanson, William Dammann, Elaine Darst, Stacy Doepner-Hove, Gayle Golden, Jennifer Goodnough, Scott Lanyon, Kenneth Leopold, Keith Mayes, Bob McMaster, Lauren Mitchell

**REGRETS:** John Carlis, Karla Hemesath, Rachna Shah, Yang You, Nevin Young

**ABSENT:** None

**GUESTS:** Suzanne Bardouche, assistant vice provost, Office of Undergraduate Education; Cynthia Fuller, associate director, Student Access, Disability Resource Center; Leslie Schiff, associate dean, Curriculum, Office of Undergraduate Education; Stacey Tidball, director, Compliance, Academic Support Resources

**OTHERS:** Becky Hippert, University Senate Office

**1. Welcome, introductions, and review of the charge**

Chair Sue Wick welcomed the committee members, and members introduced themselves. Wick then reviewed the committee's charge.

**2. Graduate Education Updates**

Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Education Scott Lanyon gave the following updates on his priorities for the year:

- **Diversity:** Among the initiatives related to this priority are increasing the diversity of the graduate student body and creating community for graduate students.
- **Increasing external fellowships:** Lanyon said that external fellowships are good for students not only financially but also in terms of their CV, and they are also good for departmental budgets and the institution's visibility. He said they are running workshops for students preparing proposals for National Science Foundation (NSF) fellowships. They have also changed the bridging funds, which are used to bridge the gap between a student's fellowship and the cost of tuition and health care, to allow these funds to be used with any external fellowship of a certain amount. Previously, he said, the bridging funds were only available for use with certain fellowships.
- **Graduate advising:** In an effort to improve advising for graduate students, Lanyon had the idea of requiring new faculty to go through training before accepting advisees. He invited

the committee's feedback on this idea. Some members wondered what this training would consist of, and Lanyon replied that it would include such topics as effective communication with students, setting expectations, how to manage conflict, and recognizing and responding to mental health concerns. He added that conflict tends to arise around issues such as whether the adviser expects to be listed as an author on students' publications, funding, etc., and that setting expectations around these issues up front could prevent a lot of misunderstandings. Bob McMaster, vice provost and dean, Undergraduate Education, voiced his support for this idea, citing the need for certain skills to be an effective adviser, and said that there should be a conversation around whether the training should be obligatory or highly encouraged.

Keith Mayes added that it would be useful to define what is meant by "adviser"—what responsibilities does a student's supplemental adviser, or a member of the student's advisory committee, have versus the primary adviser. For example, he said, he may be asked to advise a student on work in his area of expertise, but that student would not be his formal advisee. Lanyon acknowledged this point and added that many faculty members hold appointments in more than one department, but as they most likely are most familiar with the culture of their primary department, they may extrapolate that all departments have similar cultures, which is not necessarily the case. Therefore, a faculty member may inadvertently misadvise a student who is not in their primary department. Wick added that students who have done a master's program might similarly assume that the culture of their doctoral program will be similar to that of their master's program. These points further illustrate the need for expectations to be made clear. Lanyon added that the career paths of graduate students are becoming more diverse-- there is an assumption that most graduate students will go on to careers in academia, and this is becoming less and less true. Incorrect assumptions about a student's intended career path can also lead to ineffective advising, he said.

Lauren Mitchell asked whether the training would be for new faculty only, or would it be instituted for faculty who already have advising roles? Lanyon responded that initially it would be for new faculty, but that he would hope to institute it for current faculty as well, in the future, in order to ameliorate situations where a current faculty member is an ineffective, or maybe even abusive, adviser. If students do not want to work with a certain faculty member, he said, it affects the program negatively. He said this is something everyone knows about in academia—at the University and at other institutions across the country—but no one seems to be addressing.

Gayle Golden pointed out that an ineffective adviser is very different from an abusive adviser, and asked whether there was already a mechanism in place for dealing with abusive advisers. Not an adequate one, Lanyon responded, adding that the power differential between a student and their adviser makes it very difficult for a student to come forward in such situations. He said that deans, department heads, directors of graduate studies, etc. all need to be on board to effect change around this issue. Abusive advisers are not common, he clarified, but it happens enough that it needs to be dealt with, although it will be difficult.

- Career preparation for graduate students not planning to pursue careers in academia: Lanyon said that the University is ahead of the curve in providing a Preparing Future Faculty program. However, this program now serves a minority of students. This year, his office will work to implement an equivalent program for non-academic careers. There is already a lot of work going on already he said, but it is in particular colleges or programs, and the plan is to bring those people together to talk about things that could be done centrally and to coordinate efforts. Examples of trainings that could be done centrally, as they are not tied to a specific discipline, are project management, teamwork, supervisory skills, communication, etc.

## **2. Undergraduate Education Updates**

Vice Provost and Dean of Undergraduate Education Bob McMaster shared the following updates from his office:

- Enrollment management plan: This has been a major effort over the last year and will be continuing this year. Last year, an enrollment management plan for the Twin Cities was created and approved by the Board of Regents in March of 2016. It will be implemented over the next 3-5 years. McMaster reminded the committee that he gave a comprehensive overview of the plan last spring, but provided a summary of the plan, which addresses the following: overall undergraduate growth, especially with regard to significant demand for enrollment in STEM and business fields; affordability and access in order to ensure a diverse student body; student experience and issues around classrooms and housing including the remodel of Pioneer Hall; pressures in certain areas of the curriculum, especially chemistry and computer science; diversity and the Board of Regents' score card, which was developed last year; need-based vs. merit-based financial aid; system campus enrollment management; and graduation time. (Last year, he said, the Board of Regents increased the graduation time target for 4-year graduation from 60% to 65% and 6-year graduation from 80% to 82%.) He said that this year, they will be operationalizing the enrollment management plan, and clarified that in addition to the Board of Regents' metrics, the University is also held to a set of legislative metrics. Part of the state allocation is based on meeting these goals, and three out of these five metrics apply to undergraduate students: overall graduation rates, graduation rates for students of color, and the production of STEM degrees. These metrics apply to system campuses as well.

Last week, McMaster added, the system campuses met to discuss the coordination of admissions and enrollment processes. Partly, this came out of the plan to modestly increase Twin Cities enrollment, which concerned some of the system campuses in terms of their enrollment. President Kaler, Provost Hanson, and the chancellors of the system campuses were at this meeting, and it was very productive, he said. He also clarified that "enrollment management" refers not only to admissions, but many aspects that relate to the student experience, such as financial aid, the curriculum, graduation and retention, and student success.

- Liberal education requirements and the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum: McMaster said that last year, Provost Hanson had tasked his office with evaluating whether it might be time to revisit the liberal education requirements. This is a national trend. McMaster said this his guiding question around liberal education requirements is, "what values, skills,

and knowledge are critical for a 21<sup>st</sup> century undergraduate of the University of Minnesota to have?”

- Transfer students: McMaster has asked for a comprehensive analysis of transfer students at the University. He said that 35% of undergraduate students at the University are transfer students from MnSCU, the University of Wisconsin system, the system campuses, and elsewhere. Normandale is the largest feeder and the University of Minnesota Duluth is the second largest. This analysis will look at the success of students from several different feeder schools, in all the colleges, and at many incoming grade averages. Historically, there has not been a lot of focus on transfer students, and this information will help refine the pipelines and improve support for students. For example, he said, many incoming transfers are now expressing interest in on campus housing, but there is limited access available for them.

McMaster added that there are three types of transfer students: New Advanced Standing (NAS), who come in from outside the University system; Intra-University Transfers, who come from system campuses; and Inter-College Transfers (ICT), who transfer between colleges. McMaster said he would like to take a closer look at the latter group, in order to assess how well the University is serving these students.

Historically, transfer admissions has worked differently than freshman admissions: whereas all freshman admissions are coordinated through the Office of Admissions, transfer admissions are handled mostly in the colleges. This results in different standards, processes, etc., and we can gain economies of scale by coordinating these processes more centrally, he said. For example, when Carlson admits a student, that student will also need access to courses in other colleges, so there are effects beyond the admitting college.

Michael Anderson asked whether there was a time-to-graduation target for transfer students. McMaster said that yes, transfer students are expected to graduate in three years after admission. However, he said, that standard was set based on students coming in with 60 credits, but applies to all transfer students, even those that come in as seniors. Anderson asked whether the effort to coordinate transfer admissions more centrally included ICTs, or just NAS and Intra-University transfers. McMaster responded that it mostly pertains to NAS and Intra-University transfers, but that they would like to coordinate ICTs as well to a certain extent.

- Grand Challenges Curriculum: The program is going well, but challenges remain. In the fall semester, there are four Grand Challenges courses being offered, and seven or eight will be offered during the spring semester. The enrollments have not been high, he said, because of two things: colleges are concerned that they will not get the same tuition revenue from a Grand Challenge course, and students are concerned because often Grand Challenge courses do not apply toward their major. Associate Dean for University Curriculum Leslie Schiff is working to encourage departments to incorporate Grand Challenge courses into their major requirements, he said.
- Financial aid planning and analysis: There is a lot of action around this topic because of the capital campaign that will launch shortly. McMaster said that he is on a committee that is looking at the priorities for undergraduate student support in terms of need-based, merit-based, and middle-income aid. He also talked about the idea of a “Greater

Minnesota Scholarship,” which would support and encourage enrollment from greater Minnesota.

- University Honors Program: Matt Bribitzer-Stull, a professor of music in CLA, is the new director.

### **3. Liberal Education Requirements**

McMaster referred to three documents: a spreadsheet detailing raw numbers and percentages of liberal education course enrollment by college for the last three years; a matrix showing the number of liberal education courses offered by college, theme and core; and a document detailing the existing LE requirements and talking about revisiting liberal education. There is a small working group that will be thinking about changes to these requirements, he said, and he and Leslie Schiff serve on this committee in an advisory role. Ken Leopold, Gayle Golden, and Sue Wick also sit on this committee. During the fall semester, this committee will look at whether and how much the liberal education requirements should be revised. This committee is separate from Council of Liberal Education (CLE). Students will be part of the process as well, McMaster said, and any changes will also need to harmonize with the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum. Therefore, they will be meeting regularly with MnSCU. There will also be a faculty/instructor forum in order to gather feedback from teachers. He also commented that the new requirements should relate to the Grand Challenges Curriculum.

### **4. Council on Liberal Education**

Ken Leopold discussed the role of the Council of Liberal Education and how it works. This group is charged with reviewing proposals for liberal education courses. There are about fifteen members, including three students, and they meet once a month. Last year, he said, they reviewed 137 proposals. He explained that proposals are not reviewed by the whole committee, and neither are they parsed according to discipline, because if a course is to fulfill a liberal education (LE) requirement, the connection from the course to that LE should be readily apparent. He also specified that the CLE’s only task is to review courses in terms of whether they meet specific LE requirements; it makes no determination as to whether a course is good or bad, and if a course is decided not to fulfill a certain requirement, that should not be taken to mean that the course is not a good course. He then referred to a pie chart showing the breakdown of cores and themes [attached]. Mitchell asked whether these liberal education requirements apply to the system campuses, and McMaster replied that they have their own requirements.

### **5. Policies**

Suzanne Bardouche, assistant vice provost, Office of Undergraduate Education, reviewed the University Policy Library with members. She explained that SCEP deals mainly with matters that relate to educational policy, and said that under the Education and Student Life section, there are 23 policies that apply to all students, 13 that apply to grad students only, and 16 that apply only to undergrads. These policies apply mostly, but not entirely, across all campuses; therefore, each policy is named with the subject of the policy and which campus(es) it covers. She noted that Duluth has its own policies, as its faculty is unionized. She also shared that the University is seen as a national model in terms of best practices for policy review and revision. Policies come to SCEP either by way of the comprehensive review, which is a process by which all policies are reviewed every four to five years, or when a concern or issue arises involving an existing policy or the need for a new policy.

Proposed policy changes typically involve consultation and discussion with groups such as advisers, graduate and/or undergraduate deans, and others, as relevant to the specific policy. Minor changes and clarifications, such as adding an FAQ, come to SCEP for information. Moderate or major changes, such as adding a new policy, come to SCEP for review and approval.

Last year, Bardouche said, SCEP reviewed and approved changes to 12 policies; this year there will be several as well, including *Managing Student Records* and *Withholding Diplomas and Official Transcripts from Students*.

Michael Anderson asked how many graduate policies the committee could expect to see this year. Bardouche said that she did not know. Stacey Tidball, director, Continuity and Compliance, Academic Support Resources, added that last year, the Graduate Education Council (GEC) created a subcommittee to look at grad policies, but that may be in flux since there is a new dean and leadership. Wick said that last year they looked at *Application of Graduate Credits to Degree Requirements*, and said that policy might be discussed again this year. Tidball affirmed that it would, and explained that there were an unusually large number of comments on this policy during its 30-day review, so the policy is being re-reviewed and will come to SCEP again. Nicola Alexander inquired as to the nature of the comments. Tidball said that she is not privy to all of the comments, but that some of them had to do with the financial consequences of changes to this policy, the degree of program control, etc.

As was done last year, most policies will be vetted online before they are brought to SCEP for discussion or action. The online process will allow members to ask questions and be provided with responses prior to action at meetings.

Wick said that Boynton had recently approached the Faculty Consultative Committee (FCC) regarding the *Make-Up Work for Legitimate Absences* policy. She explained that Boynton was asking for an addition to the policy, encouraging instructors not to request absence verifications when students have the flu or a cold.

## **6. Disability statement for syllabi**

Cynthia Fuller, associate director, Student Access, Disability Resource Center, outlined the proposed changes to the disability statement on syllabi [attached] and asked for members' feedback. The purpose of the proposed changes is to make the statement more welcoming and to address short-term disabilities such as a broken arm.

Bardouche clarified that there is a policy about syllabi that lays out what should be included in a syllabus, and then there is an appendix that includes sample language for these requirements. This statement is not part of policy, but is the suggested language included in the appendix to that policy.

Members gave the following feedback:

- The information on short-term disabilities is unclear. It seems to suggest that short-term accommodations can be worked out between the student and the instructor, but needs more clarity.
- It would be helpful to define what constitutes a “current” accommodation letter.
- The new opening statement, while welcoming, feels less legally binding. Members suggest incorporating the new wording but also keeping the existing language.
- Make the contact information more generic, so that it can apply to system campuses as well.

Mayes asked whether accommodations for a disability that was undiagnosed can be retroactively applied upon diagnosis. Fuller responded that it this cannot be part of the syllabus statement because the law doesn't provide for retroactive application. However, she said, instructors can choose to do so on a case-by-case basis.

## **7. Other business**

Wick informed members that she is co-chairing the Student Mental Health Task Force with Gary Christenson, chief medical officer, Boynton Health Service. SCEP members Lauren Mitchell (also representing COGS) and Gayle Golden are also on this task force, and it also includes representatives from MSA, the Professional Student Association, and the Postdoc Association. She said that this committee is tasked primarily with investigating what faculty can do to promote good mental health and recognize and support students with mental health concerns, and that it is supposed to report to the provost and the FCC by the end of Fall Semester. She also clarified that this is separate from the Provost's Committee on Student Mental Health, which has existed for some time.

Wick also informed members that there has been a proposal for a separate graduate education committee, which would deal with all aspects of graduate and postdoc student life. She said the FCC had issued a counterproposal suggesting that SCEP should be an umbrella committee with three subcommittees, focusing on undergraduate education, graduate education, and professional education. This issue is being discussed in the FCC and SCEP will be asked to weigh in as well. Members expressed concern that having separate committees would make it more difficult to see linkages on issues that span the student populations or affect more than one group, and that it would be more difficult to make sure policies for each group are in alignment.

Hearing no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Amber Bathke  
University Senate Office