

Minutes*

**Senate Committee on Educational Policy
November 8, 1990**

Present: Thomas Clayton (chair), Martin Conroy, Ed Foster, Roland Guyotte (via telephone hook-up), Michael Handberg, Ken Heller, Karen Karni, Karen Seashore Louis, Clark Starr

Guests: Geoff Gorvin (Footnote), Joanne Stenberg (P&A), a Daily reporter

1. Report of the Chair

Professor Clayton reminded the Committee that at the next meeting, on November 20, Vice Provost Anne Hopkins would make a presentation on the new preparation standards.

2. The Morse-Alumni Awards

Professor Clayton next drew the attention of the Committee to the revised draft of the criteria based on the discussion at the previous meeting. Whatever the Committee decides about the document will be incorporated in the materials to be sent out by November 15.

One point which should be noted, he said, is the (lack of) interaction between the Morse-Alumni award process and the CLA teaching awards committee. Depending on the timing of the committee work, he suggested, the college committees should be made aware of the timing of the Morse-Alumni awards. Alternatively, faculty members should be nominated for both awards.

Several points were taken up in the discussion which ensued.

- Advising which occurs as part of the teaching criterion should be that which is over and above the routine--but the advising component of teaching should be retained because advising is conceptually separate from but overlaps with teaching. "Teaching is seamless." Documentation for a nominee should definitely not speak to normal course and major advising. It will be up to the candidate, and the nominators, to make it clear that the activities represent excellence in undergraduate education.
- It is to be hoped that the awards committee will pay close attention to the opening paragraphs, which set the spirit in which the dossiers should be evaluated.
- It is also devoutly to be hoped that the awards committee resists the temptation to use the criteria as a checklist, ticking off whether or not a candidate meets each one, and also resists the urge to attach numbers to each of them. The Committee concluded, however, that no document could be written which would absolutely prevent that practice from occurring; "there isn't any rule quite good enough to prevent fools from behaving after their kind." If the nominating committee reads the prose, and acts thoughtfully, it will do a

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good job; a bad committee will not do a good job irrespective of the prose and criteria.

- One of the principal points is that the nominating committee should understand it has latitude in judging candidates on the different criteria.
- "Innovation" in program development and courses could consist of outstanding renovation of a single course (especially one which affects a large number of students); the document was so amended.

Following changes approved, the Committee voted unanimously in favor of the revised criteria (with the understanding that Professor Clayton would slightly revise certain passages in accord with the discussion).

Professor Clayton next raised with the Committee the question of eligibility for the award. The language has previously restricted eligibility to "any full time member of the teaching faculty who has held the rank of instructor or above"; the question is whether or not others who teach should also be eligible (Academic Professionals--teaching specialists--and adjunct or clinical faculty, visiting faculty, and civil service staff who teach, for instance). The category needs to be clarified.

There is also a question about whether or not those eligible should include those who have less-than-full-time appointments. The Committee agreed that the full-time requirement should be deleted.

The Committee concurred with a suggestion from Academic Affairs that the language should be amended to read "any member of the regular teaching faculty." This would exclude PA appointees and all other faculty who are not permanent or "potentially permanent" (that is, tenure-track). After some deliberation, the Committee voted to support the proposition that the award should be limited to the regular teaching faculty. The Committee also concluded, however, that appropriate awards should be developed for individuals with other responsibilities.

There was also agreement that the materials sent out inviting nominations for the award should call for no more than ten (heretofore six) letters of recommendation, at least four of which should come from current or past undergraduates.

The Committee also concluded that a one-page summary of student evaluations was insufficient. It was agreed that there should be a summary of not more than two pages (of representative student comments), for this year, but that in general the question of teaching evaluation needed discussing. The Committee decided, as a result of the exchanges, to take up teaching evaluation.

3. Discussion of the Task Force on Liberal Education

Professor Clayton next referred to the minutes of the Task Force on Liberal Education and solicited views of the Committee members on the work of the Task Force and the comments which had been made by Professor Howe.

Some Committee members expressed doubt that much of substance could be said, given that the Task Force has not yet reached firm conclusions. The results of the survey of the faculty would be useful,

it was thought, but results are not available.

Professor Louis (a member of the Task Force as well as of SCEP) reported, in response to questions, that there is no sentiment on the Task Force for a single, standardized set of courses for all undergraduates (a "core"). A distribution requirement will not be abandoned, although the shape of it remains open and there is likely to be an expanded number of credits in it. Consideration is also being given to how liberal education objectives can be extended into the major; a senior project is also being considered. A freshman seminar, which would focus on having students become involved in planning their own liberal education, is something about which the Task Force is also deliberating. There will probably not be a required course on cultural pluralism. As far as the preparation standards are concerned, the Task Force now has an understanding of what students are expected to know and, therefore, what they should not receive credit for their degree. Most time has been spent by the Task Force in discussing how to maintain the quality of the general education courses and ensure that they have in them the components most important to the achievement of general education objectives (writing, speaking, critical thinking) and that they are not simply the introductory courses to each discipline.

Concern was expressed about the impact of a senior-project requirement on faculties which have large numbers of majors. Professor Louis responded that the Task Force has been concerned about the issue of resources; none of the Task Force recommendations can be implemented without an infusion of funds into departments which are currently grossly underfunded.

It was agreed that members of SCEP who serve on the Task Force should, at each meeting, make a brief report on its progress.

The Committee adjourned at 3:00.

-- Gary Engstrand

University of Minnesota