

Minutes*

Senate Committee on Educational Policy
Tuesday, May 23, 1995
1:45 - 3:00
Room 626 Campus Club

Present: Kenneth Heller (chair), Anita Cholewa, James Cotter, Elayne Donahue, Megan Gunnar, Manuel Kaplan, Laura Coffin Koch, Judith Martin

Regrets: Robert Johnson, William Van Essendelft, Gayle Graham Yates (on leave)

Absent: Darwin Hendel, Darren Walhof

[In these minutes: Questions for the Council on Liberal Education; policy on classes, schedules, and final exams; policies on teaching and advising]

1. Next Meeting

Professor Heller convened the meeting at 1:45 and noted that the principal agenda item for the May 30 meeting is a discussion of the work of the Council on Liberal Education with Professor Victor Bloomfield, its chair. Are there questions the Committee wishes to pose about the work of the Council? Three were identified:

- The distribution of courses; it is said that in some areas, there are many courses, while in others there are few.
- What is the definition of a lab course? Why are lab courses required; what is their value? Is it to learn to do experiments, to learn something in the lab the students had not known before? To provide self-demonstrations of material learned in the class or from readings? To provide students the experience of being in a lab?
- What thought has or will the Council give to the conversion to the semester system? A rational semester system would have students taking fewer courses to graduate; presumably the liberal education requirements will change and the matrix of themes and requirements will be simplified.

2. Policies on Classes and Scheduling and Final Exams

The Committee then took up, for the fourth time, revisions in the proposed policies on scheduling and on final examinations. Committee members discussed at some length longer classes that typically occur on Tuesdays and Thursdays and the extent to which they should continue; the Committee concluded that when the conversion to semesters takes place, classes of odd length should not be permitted. Committee members also expressed dismay that there appear to be variations by college in the

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number of contact hours per credit; how can all the classes meeting in one college be more "intense" than the classes in another college? The Committee concluded it should not address this issue at this time, but that when the conversion to semesters occurs, the relationship between class periods and credits should be justified.

Dr. Cholewa agreed to redraft the policy in accord with suggestions made at the meeting.

3. Policies on Teaching and Advising

Professor Koch then reviewed the policies on teaching and advising and noted several areas where policy should be considered. They are:

- Instructors should not allow some students to submit extra work in an attempt to raise their grades unless the instructor has specified at the outset of the class that all students would be afforded the same opportunity.
- Students participating in University-sponsored events shall be excused from class and not incur any penalty for a missed exam or missed assignments. This could require a make-up of the exam or assignment.
- Instructors must provide a syllabus to students by the end of the first week of class. The syllabus should include the following: grading criteria, make-up exam, late assignment and incomplete policies, grading standards, outside activities, course materials, and office hours and method of contacting the instructor by telephone and/or email.
- To ensure students' privacy and conform to state law, instructors may not post grades alphabetically or by student ID number.
- If an instructor must miss a scheduled class, it is the responsibility of that instructor to provide a substitute instructor, assign an appropriate assignment, or make up the session at a time agreed-upon by the students.

Committee members had a lengthy discussion about missed classes and what should be done about them. While agreeing that not all learning takes place in the classroom, they also concurred that missing three classes in a quarter for reasons other than illness or accident is "abusive"; medical reasons simply have to be dealt with as they occur. It must be assumed that most faculty are honest in dealing with their classes, and that a policy should pick up abuses.

With respect to the prohibition on posting of grades--not legally permitted unless with a random number agreed upon by the student and faculty member--it appeared there is a larger policy question of privacy. Leaving papers outside an office to be picked up by students is also prohibited, for privacy reasons.

Professor Koch agreed to formulate policies based on the comments at the meeting. It was also agreed that the Committee wished to hear from a representative of the General Counsel's office about privacy statutes.

Professor Heller then adjourned the meeting at 3:30.

-- Gary Engstrand

University of Minnesota