

**Senate Committee on Educational Policy (SCEP)
February 8, 2017
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: Graduate School Updates; Graduate Policies; Undergraduate Policies; Maximum Number of Credits Without Approval Discussion; Update on Liberal Education Pre-Planning Committee; Discussion of Joint Task Force for Student Mental Health Recommendations; Other Business]

PRESENT: Sue Wick (chair), Nicola Alexander, Michael Anderson, Rani Bezanson, John Carlis, Stacy Doepner-Hove, Gayle Golden, Jennifer Goodnough, Vedant Goyal, Scott Lanyon, Kenneth Leopold, Lauren Mitchell, Rachna Shah

ABSENT: William Dammann, Keith Mayes

REGRETS: Elaine Darst, Brian Sick, Nevin Young

GUESTS: Liz Davis, chair, Graduate Education Council Faculty Subcommittee

OTHERS: David Clarey, student reporter, Minnesota Daily; Ety DeVeaux, chief of staff and assistant to the vice provost and dean, Graduate School; Rilyn Eischens, student reporter, Minnesota Daily; Leslie Schiff, associate dean, Curriculum, Office of Undergraduate Education; Karen Starry, assistant to the vice provost and dean, Graduate School; Stacey Tidball, director, Compliance, Academic Support Resources; Char Voight, assistant to the vice provost and dean, Graduate School

1. Graduate School Updates

Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Education Scott Lanyon reported on two initiatives out of the Graduate School: preparing graduate students for careers outside of academia, and diversifying graduate education. Regarding career preparation, he informed members that less than half of graduate students plan on careers in academia, but that career preparation for non-academic careers is inconsistent across the University, and takes place at the department level. Graduate School staff are currently investigating what is already in place and figuring out where there may be gaps. He asked that members inform him or his staff of programs or opportunities of which they are aware.

Diversifying graduate education is a priority for the Graduate School. The focus is on graduating, not only recruiting, students from diverse backgrounds. To this end, they are looking at how to create and maintain a welcoming environment on campus, creating a community of graduate students that transcends department. After the presidential election, the office held a forum for graduate students and postdocs. This event was well attended, and the outcomes included a series of recommendations that will be passed on to directors of graduate studies. These recommendations include encouraging departments to think proactively about recruitment and

climate, hosting Breaking Boundaries sessions, and encouraging programs to consult with the Center for Educational Innovation about inclusive course design. The Graduate and Professional Student Assembly meeting on April 15, 2017 will focus on welcoming communities, and will include guest speakers on the [Equity Scorecard](#), which is a tool the University is considering using. There will be two additional fora, on creating safe spaces and intercultural competence.

Lauren Mitchell asked what programs are doing well at recruiting and retaining minority students and why. Lanyon said that the Biomedical Sciences Department has a national reputation for attending recruiting conferences and developing relationships with schools that have high numbers of undergraduates of color and from other marginalized populations. He said that students who do their graduate work at the University and then go on to be faculty members at institutions that serve underrepresented populations frequently act as informal ambassadors.

With regard to career preparation, Sue Wick wondered if students and faculty are taking advantage of their professional organizations to find professional development opportunities. Lanyon said that graduate and professional students are encouraged to take advantage of existing options such as those available through professional organizations, as well as the [National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity](#). Access to the latter is available through the University for all faculty, staff, postdocs and graduate students, and includes many online professional development tools. The office is also connecting with graduate school alumni to better understand what the available career paths are, and to gather information about what alumni, in retrospect, think would have been useful professional development.

2. Graduate Policies

Liz Davis, chair of the Graduate Education Council's Policy Review Subcommittee, presented updates to several policies for the committee's consideration. First, she presented proposed changes to the current Appointments to Graduate Examination Committees Policy. These were to change the policy's name to Eligibility to Serve on Graduate Examination Committees, remove redundancies and streamline the policy, and to add a table detailing who is eligible to serve on examination committees for which students. The table was presented and discussed at the January 25, 2017 SCEP meeting. John Carlis moved to approve these changes; Stacy Doepler-Hove seconded, and the motion passed with a voice vote.

Next, Davis presented the [Admission for Master's and Doctoral Degrees](#) policy. Recommended changes to this policy are to clarify the roles of the graduate departments and the Office of Admissions in the admissions process, specifying that the minimum English Language Proficiency is listed on the [Graduate School admissions website](#) (rather than specified in the policy), and clarifies procedures around conditional admission. Also proposed is a change to the prerequisite that applicants must hold a bachelor's degree or equivalent in order to be admitted. There is currently an exception to this rule when a University of Minnesota student has a small number of credits to finish for their undergraduate degree; the subcommittee proposes expanding this exception to students from other institutions, as well. Significant discussion ensued around this topic. Nicola Alexander asked if there was a timeline specifying when students falling under this exception must complete their undergraduate degree. Davis said that the deadline is the end of the first term of the student's graduate program. A hold is placed on the student's record, and if the student does not complete their undergraduate degree by that time, the hold is not lifted and

the student's enrollment is discontinued. The admitting graduate program can request an exception at this time. Stacy Doepner-Hove said that she has had two students in this situation, and that in one case it became problematic. She emphasized that the Graduate School should be the only entity with the power to remove the student's hold, and that the hold should only be removed upon receipt of the undergraduate transcript or other official notification from the student's undergraduate institution. In the case she handled, the hold was removed by mistake, which was problematic. Leopold suggested that the exception should be available to applicants from other institutions, but that there should be a requirement that students admitted under these circumstances must work with the director of graduate studies to come up with a written plan to complete the undergraduate degree. Doepner-Hove said that as director of graduate studies in her department, she does not want to be responsible for holding the student accountable. Gayle Golden suggested adding wording to the policy stating that it is the student's responsibility to complete the degree and provide an official transcript upon completion. Leslie Schiff, associate dean, Curriculum, Office of Undergraduate Education, expressed concern that timing may be problematic for students from other institutions, since many institutions have different term dates. Davis clarified that the end date would be based on the University of Minnesota's schedule. Members agreed that the exception could be expanded to students from other institutions, but that a FAQ should be added addressing the written plan, timing, and student responsibilities.

Michael Anderson offered specific suggestions regarding the English Language Proficiency requirement, based on his experience working with international students in the English as a Second Language Department.

Carlis moved to approve the changes with the aforementioned updates; Golden seconded and the motion passed with a voice vote.

Finally, Davis addressed the [Readmission and Changes to Master's and Doctoral Degree Objectives](#) policy. Proposed changes to this policy include clarifying when and to whom this policy applies, updating procedures to reflect the switch from a paper form to an online form, and specifying that students must be notified of any changes to their degree plans in writing. Members suggested some minor changes, which Davis said she would incorporate.

Anderson moved to approve the changes; Doepner-Hove seconded, and the motion passed with a voice vote.

3. Undergraduate Policies

Stacey Tidball, director, Compliance, Academic Support Resources, first reported that the online vote to approve changes to the [Leave of Absence and Readmission for Undergraduates](#) policy had passed. Then she invited feedback from members on the [Grading and Transcripts](#) policy. Golden said that many instructors grade on a percentage basis and asked whether the percentages could be mapped to letter grades and grade points and put in the policy. Schiff said that the way percentages are mapped to letter grades varies so much that it would be impossible to do so. The current practice is that instructors need to set the grading scale for each course and put it in the syllabus. Golden asked whether the grading scale should be standardized. Tidball said that

grading scales are considered a curricular decision, which are at the faculty's discretion. Golden suggested making the requirement to include a grading scale in syllabi more explicit.

Leopold noted that the letter grade C is described in the policy as "meets course requirements in every way," but that that is not how it is used in practice. Wick pointed out that if a student gets nearly all Cs but have even one grade that takes them below a 2.0 average, they would be put on academic probation. Jennifer Goodnough pointed out that likewise, D is described as "worth of credit," but when a student is graded on an S/N basis, a D is considered a failing grade, for which the student receives no credit. Tidball agreed that this issue warranted further discussion. She offered to look at what other institutions do and return to the committee for further discussion.

4. Maximum Number of Credits Without Approval Discussion

Leopold said he had raised the subject of the maximum number of credits students are allowed to register for without approval because of a discussion at the Academy of Distinguished Teachers retreat about student mental health. He said that generally, people felt that taking over 20 credits in a semester would be detrimental to a student's mental health, and wondered if there was a policy specifying the maximum number of credits a student can register for without approval. Tidball said that there is a system stop in PeopleSoft when a student tries to register for more than 20 credits. Colleges and departments determine when to allow students to take more credits. She said it would be good to make sure that all colleges have information available for students about the circumstances under which approval to take more credits would be granted. Some colleges already have such guidance. Carlis said it would be interesting to look at how student success and mental health correlate with number of credits. Anderson wondered if there is increased incidence of I and W grades when students take more than 20 credits. Vedant Goyal said that the threshold can be problematic, because if a student is registered for the maximum number of credits and is on a waitlist, they cannot automatically be added to the course when a spot opens up. Goodnough said that it is important to consider half-term courses, as well, and Rachna Shah brought up online courses, that often have different start and end dates than in-person courses. Tidball offered to gather data for further discussion.

5. Update on Liberal Education Pre-Planning Committee

Wick gave an update on the liberal education pre-planning initiative. She said the recent forum had revealed some concern about the motives behind potential changes to the liberal education requirements. She said representatives from many areas of the University were present, including the Learning Abroad Center, student counseling, and faculty from various disciplines. Though faculty own the curriculum, she said, it affects many aspects of undergraduate education. There will be two more fora. Representatives from the system campuses and the Minnesota State system will be invited to ensure that any changes to the liberal education requirements would coordinate with those institutions' requirements, as many students transfer between the institutions.

6. Discussion of Joint Task Force for Student Mental Health Recommendations

Wick reported that the Joint Task Force for Student Mental Health, which she co-chairs, had come up with several recommendations that would be presented to the provost, the Faculty Consultative Committee, and the Board of Regents in the coming weeks. She sought feedback from members on some of the recommendations that would involve policy changes. The first

recommendation is to allow early registration for students with documented disabilities, including mental health issues. Tidball said that Honors students and student athletes are eligible for early registration, so there is a precedent, and she wondered how other schools approach this. Her concern is that there has to be some way to identify a student in the system if they are to be eligible for early registration, and some students with disabilities may not want that to be “flagged” on their record. She said, however, that advisors can override a student’s spot in the registration queue, so that could be one way to approach it. Michelle Dobbratz asked if counselors and therapists at Boynton Health Service and Student Counseling Services, and/or the Disability Resource Center, could get this permission in case the student’s college advisor is not supportive of students with mental health concerns. Golden said that perhaps the Disability Resource Center could include early registration in accommodation letters for students with documented disabilities, and members agreed that this was a good suggestion. Golden said that she would like the committee to look carefully at the policies around disability accommodation, generally.

In the interest of time, Wick said that she would seek further feedback at a future meeting.

7. Other Business

Wick said that on March 7, 2017, the Senate Committee on Informational Technology would be discussing the learning management system change and the merits of Canvas and Moodle. She asked if anyone was available to attend this meeting. Members were not available, so Leopold suggested inviting Donalee Attardo to SCEP to discuss.

Wick adjourned the meeting.

Amber Bathke
University Senate Office