

Minutes*

**Senate Committee on Educational Policy
Tuesday, February 7, 1995
1:45 - 3:30
Room 626 Campus Club**

Present: Kenneth Heller (chair), Anita Cholewa, James Cotter, Elayne Donahue, Darwin Hendel, Sara Hornstra, Robert Johnson, Manuel Kaplan, Laura Coffin Koch, Judith Martin, William Van Essendelft, Gayle Graham Yates

Regrets: Jeff Bauer, Darren Walhof

Absent: Megan Gunnar, Ryan Nilsen

Guests: Jane Whiteside (Academic Affairs)

[In these minutes: Appointment of McKinley Boston; critical measures; Twin Cities campus calendar

1. Appointment of the Vice President for Student Affairs and Athletics

Professor Heller convened the meeting at 1:45 and inquired if any Committee members had comments about the recent appointment of Dr. McKinley Boston as Vice President for Student Affairs and Athletics. He noted that the appointment does have educational policy implications, because the person in the position deals with most of the non-academic University environment that has an impact on students.

- The position represents a combination of Student Affairs and the athletic departments, and returns the administrative organization to that which existed before 1988. The change, however, has not been discussed widely in any governance forum, and raises the question of whether the tail (athletics) will wag the dog (student welfare).
- One Committee member, recalling requirements for endless use of the Form 16 even for quarter-time appointments to teach one class, said the decision was offensive. The appointment speaks to the issue of bureaucratic red tape necessary for small appointments and raises questions about the process. One unit hires a lot of part-time teachers, and must go through a lot of rigmarole to hire someone they know they're going to hire. Not only is the process bureaucratic, it is unfair to those who go through it. There is a lot of hypocrisy in the hiring practice, although it is not intended, and it needs to be simplified.
- It appears that ordinary faculty are held to standards that management is not. The Equal Employment Opportunity for Women Committee, it was reported, made an offer to the President that the procedures be changed so that he could appoint vice presidents without a search; the

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President declined the offer.

- To consider changing the hiring process does not mean EEO considerations should not be addressed. The President needs a lot of latitude in picking the people who he will work with, but that is something that can be accomplished within the search process. The way the process is described, and the way it is carried out, do not fit; the guidelines should be changed to fit the practice.
- One hears a lot about the purpose of the institution and how athletics fits in, but the hoopla that attended Dr. Boston's return at the airport belies that. For example, the University will be going to the legislature, and will not get all the money it needs, which will create pressure on faculty salaries--and yet there is money made available for this position because the person is involved in athletics. There is a question of equity. This is not a new position, although the salary is higher than usual, another Committee member pointed out; the responsibilities have been changed. It may be that the University NEEDS an assessment of athletics and its role in the University.
- There are two issues involved. One is whether or not the process for academic and administrative appointments is the same, with the requirements of a search, notice, advertising, and so on. The second is where intercollegiate athletics fits in institutional priorities.
- One can make the case, at any level, that the usual mechanisms for appointment should be sidestepped if there is a "target of opportunity" hire that fits with department needs. In that case, one can justify an appointment without a search. One assumes that the correct process, which can go very quickly, was followed in this case.

One can also do an internal search, it was noted, and draw the position description in such a way that everyone knows there is only one person who qualifies. In that case, what's the point of a search?
- In terms of student affairs and athletics, they were merged in the past but separated because of a scandal. One can make the case that the athletic departments should NOT report to the President, but should report to the vice president. Given such an office, then people may worry because its occupant comes from athletics--a unit that has a very small impact on most students. In this case, it was said, one must then look at the individual in the position, someone this Committee does not know.
- SCEP has played a role in athletics, in terms of events and scheduling; that was a wise decision and provides checks and balances; it would not be desirable to see that responsibility be shifted to the vice president.
- One issue is the lack of consultation between the Committee and the administration about the change in the position.
- There was consultation about the appointment, Professor Heller reported, with the chair and vice chair of the Faculty Consultative Committee; one can question if that was sufficient. If so, it was said, and they did not object, then the quarrel of the faculty is with those two individuals.

- This Committee should probably NOT be involved in decisions concerning eligibility of student-athletes, it was said, but this vice president has a large role, such as the push for the Residential College and all of the activities that affect students outside of classes--and so from what is known about the importance of student life outside the classroom, this vice presidency will have an impact on all classes and academic activities.

It was agreed that Professor Heller would communicate to the Faculty Consultative Committee the concerns expressed by Committee members, especially with respect to the need to reduce the red tape in hiring. The Committee also concluded that it wished to meet with Dr. Boston, once his appointment has been approved by the Board of Regents.

2. Committee Business

The Committee voted unanimously to approve the Morse-Alumni Nominating Committee that Professor Cotter had been asked to assemble.

Professor Heller reported that the Senate Consultative Committee had approved for the February Senate both of the motions that SCEP had forwarded (concerning changes in the Morse-Alumni award and in preparation standards). SCC had changed the Morse-Alumni motion so that the financial part of the award would be a supplement, not an addition to the base salary. If that does not work out as intended, Professor Heller noted, it can always be changed later. The Committee registered no objection to this change.

3. Critical Measures

Professor Heller then turned to Dr. Hendel and Dr. Jane Whiteside to lead the discussion of the development of the next set of critical measures.

Dr. Hendel reviewed the development of the first set of measures, approved by the Board of Regents in December, 1994, and explained that the process would be different for this second set. Last time they presented draft measures; this time they would like to have the discussions very early in the process. Once that consultation has occurred, they will bring drafts back to Senate committees and others for review. Dr. Whiteside pointed out that there also remain measures to be developed in the first set, those having to do with graduate and professional students and with transfer students. Those, when developed, will be brought to SCEP for review.

The focus of the first of the next set of critical measures is the student experience--something, Dr. Hendel commented, that both internal and external audiences said must receive a HIGH priority from the University. He drew the attention of Committee members to the discussion outline and asked for comments. Several points were raised in the ensuing discussion.

- Student evaluation of teaching may not be a good measure of student satisfaction; it would be better to ask about that after students had been gone for a few years. Immediate student evaluations may be a response to how much the faculty member entertained the students, not a measure of satisfaction. Student evaluation results are important, said another Committee member, but must

be viewed cautiously, and measuring at a later date would be important. But if students are NOT satisfied, they let you know right away. Moreover, there are cases of students being very unhappy with a course at the time, but after reflecting on it, they realize it was an extremely good experience and they saw the payoff. Student evaluations should not be done away with, but they are not the way to measure a "product" of the University.

Relying on student evaluations alone, as a measure of student satisfaction in course work, may also OBSCURE information, in that there is a lot of other work that goes into instruction that may need attention as well.

- There is no easy mechanism to obtain information on advising, as there is with teaching. It also varies in terms of who does it and how it is done. Some units evaluate advising, and the students' reactions are positive. But if students are asked about advising at graduation or after, then their reactions tend to be more negative. One hears from students who've gone through four years that the advising was not appropriate for their next stage, that they took courses they did not need, or the information they needed was not made available--but they only found this out later.

About the disparity in evaluation of advising, it was said that in their last years, students do not get very much advising and they are not linked to the faculty.

Dr. Hendel noted that faculty say they have office hours but no one comes, and that they do want to see students.

It appears, Professor Heller observed, that if any student evaluation is to be used, it should come from those who are seniors or who have left the University. Asked if a senior exit poll is conducted, Dr. Hendel said there are periodic surveys of graduate, about every five years. Crookston and Duluth do conduct such surveys; some departments on the Twin Cities campus may also do them.

It is disturbing that there is no reference to the Astin studies about what is important to the student experience; the measures do not propose to ask questions about what has been shown, in enormous studies, to be important.

For now, it was said, the University could ACCEPT the Astin measures as important; there is no need to replicate the work. The Astin work says the MOST important factor in student success is student-student interaction; there is nothing in these measures to show how the University would facilitate such interaction. The second most important factor is faculty-student interaction outside of classes. That is not easy to measure; one could ask students, but that may not be very objective. Dr. Hendel observed that on the Twin Cities campus, in fall 1994, 70% of entering freshmen lived in University residence halls. One thinks of it as a commuter campus, but it is not for entering freshmen. There have been no studies of whether students in residence halls do better or come back.

One can also be bothered by the use of grades received as a measure of student learning and performance. Dr. Hendel pointed out that use of grades is not a proposal; it is part of a list of possibilities. He pointed out that the University would not be confident student learning had increased if grades increased, and the same would be true of student evaluation of teaching--it is important to pick measures which, if they change, make one confident there has been underlying change in what is being

measured.

An important point about the student experience is how well students feel they are being prepared to do something productive in the world, although it isn't clear how that would be measured. Part of the reason students are here is because they want jobs. There are two ways that could be looked at, Dr. Hendel said: consider what the University does to help students move into employment, through such programs as internships and by advising, and find out what graduates are doing. There is an increased emphasis nationally on education for employment, he noted, but one must not lose sight of the fact that there are other effects from education that do not have an immediate or even long-term effect on employment. But the University would have trouble answering the questions about employment.

Different types of students should be studied, it was said--those who work on and off campus, participate in co-curricular activities, and so on. Minnesota students are heavily employed, both on and off campus, Dr. Hendel said; as is true nationally, on-campus employment is typically a good experience while off-campus employment pulls students away from their education. The percentage of students who want to work and who are employed on campus might be one measure, it was said.

One Committee member inquired about rate of debt accrual; Dr. Hendel said the data suggest Minnesota students accrue debt at a lower rate than is true nationally--they have fewer loans and work more.

It was suggested that contributions by alumni be measured, something that could change over the lifetime of an alumna/us. Students may not be happy about their education the first few years after leaving, but twenty years later may have a different perspective. Dr. Hendel agreed that participation in the Alumni Association and contributions could be measured; the numbers for the University, compared to peers, are very low. It seems that students finishing their degree here do not feel good about their experience, and would not join the Alumni Association if that is so. Student, he reported, say that the University makes the process of finishing a degree as difficult as getting through; rather than making the last quarter more positive, the University imposes fees and creates hurdles.

Discussion turned to the language in the introduction to the student experience measure; one Committee member said it made the University sound like a small liberal arts college, when it uses words like "nurturing," and that it is MISSING language about research and a challenging environment. What may be true at Morris is not true of the Twin Cities; the latter is not nurturing, and some students don't WANT a nurturing place. There are some things small colleges do well and some things the University does well; it should be clear what it is that the University does.

It may be a matter of degree. When faculty speak of holding office hours and no students show up, that could be a reflection on the faculty or on how students feel about faculty. Changing it could be a matter of nurturing. While the University does not want an ALIENATING environment such as it has now, it was rejoined, it will never have a "nurturing" environment on the Twin Cities campus. Perhaps encouraging, but the University must distinguish between what it and other colleges offer. The Twin Cities campus should not be judged by what Morris or Carleton do, it should be judged by Michigan and Wisconsin. Dr. Whiteside asked that the Committee help in thinking about the kinds of measures that might be developed to identify the challenging and "stretching" nature--of the Twin Cities campus, in particular. One possibility, it was said, might be the number of students in research, academic, or artistic

projects. Others might be internships and community involvement.

These are institution-wide standards, it was noted; the Twin Cities campus is a rough place for students, and that cannot be avoided. It may be that different measures are needed for each of the campuses, because they will never be similar.

In terms of faculty-student contact and student expectations, Dr. Hendel reported that there are periodic surveys of freshmen about why they chose the Twin Cities campus; in the most recent one, two out of 3,000 respondents checked a box indicating the choice was because of individual interaction with faculty members. Sometimes expectations get in the way of what the University wants to accomplish, he observed.

One issue NOT in the discussion outline, Dr. Hendel said, but one which they would appreciate hearing Committee views on, is whether or not there should be any measures related to the liberal education curriculum. It was pointed out that it will be awhile before any results can be known, because the curriculum is new; another Committee member said that students will likely not see the positive results of it until later in their lives.

Students might be asked if they had more than a five-minute interaction with a faculty member in the previous 30 days. The goal, said another Committee member, should be that undergraduate students WILL work with faculty members. The student:faculty ratio is not so bad that that isn't possible.

One problem, Dr. Hendel pointed out, is that there could be FIFTY good measures of the student experience, and it may be that the University needs to do better on all of them. But they cannot all be used as critical measures; which ones should be highlighted? That is the challenge; what is so important that it should be elevated to a critical measure? The focus should be on measures where what the University does has a reasonable chance to affect the results.

It is important to understand what the University is and is trying to provide, and measure those things. Have there been studies of what affects retention, asked one Committee member? If there are things that can be done to improve it, and that lead to graduation, that would IMPLY satisfaction.

There is nothing new in University graduation rates, Dr. Hendel replied; what is new is the elevated concern about them. The rate is known to be lower than it should be, given the students the University has; what in the student experience contributes to that?

One Committee member raised again the issue about two different groups of students. Half NEVER graduate--they drop out--while about 75% of the other half graduate in five years. At Morris, there is also a half that never graduates, but Morris graduates nearly 100% of the remaining half. What is similar about Morris and the Twin Cities? Not much, other than that they're in the same state. Maybe it's because Minnesota has a lot of educational opportunities. It should not be assumed students will stay at any one institution.

Dr. Hendel said the administration is mindful of that fact, but the University nonetheless graduates fewer students than would be expected. It may be related to the number of credits per quarter that students take. The majority of freshmen, when asked, expect to graduate in four years. But most of them

are disabused of the notion they should or want to take a full load.

If one puts the two numbers together, it was argued, and the University will NEVER achieve better than a 50% graduation rate, since half the students disappear. The critical measures will give the wrong impression and drive behavior in the wrong direction. It is also known that the University graduates as many students as it takes in, so it has great throughput. As many students transfer to the University as leave it. The number of degrees conferred per faculty member is very high. If the University had fewer drop-outs, it would have to accept fewer transfer students; would that be good? Maybe that should not change--the University has a wide mouth at the beginning, and students can try lots of institutions before they finally decide where to go. The University needs to find out where the drop-outs go. That has rarely been looked at, Dr. Hendel commented.

One critical measure could be the number of students admitted compared to the number who graduated four or five years later. Forget which PEOPLE are graduating and measure of PRODUCTION. But presumably the University is tracking students, observed one Committee member, in order to improve its delivery of education.

There is much at the University that is controlled by the bureaucracy that causes students problems, it was said--things such as classes, rooms, schedules, availability of classes and so on. Students would be better served if the organization of offerings and classes and other parts of the student experience better fit with student goals. Dr. Hendel concurred, noting that it is said the University is easier to get into than out of. The University makes it difficult for students in many bureaucratic ways--navigating the complex system needs to be addressed, but the its complexity makes it difficult to do so.

One Committee member inquired if the data about lower debt levels of students might not speak to motivation; might not more debt suggest greater motivation? Are students here coming without commitment, seeing the University as something easy to try--and easy to leave? It may also be a reflection of the job opportunities in the Twin Cities, it was said. And with some students, the job takes a higher priority than the education--some do not believe it appropriate they should work less, because their jobs are more important than their classes.

Dr. Whiteside reminded the Committee that the administration is seeking 2-3 volunteers from each Senate committee to be involved in a cross-committee planning group to discuss the critical measures. Professor Heller promised that the Committee would identify people to serve, and thanked Drs. Hendel and Whiteside for joining the Committee.

4. Twin Cities Campus Calendar

Professor Heller then turned to Professor Koch, who commented that the calendar had to be ready by either the April or May Assembly meeting. She noted that the only possible change in the calendar has an early start--that is, Fall Quarter begins earlier and ends at Thanksgiving; Winter and Spring Quarters remain the same.

One Committee member urged that the Committee recommend the early-start option. It is unlikely the University will make its operation more expensive, by extending the contracts of nine-month faculty to September 1, so some arrangements would be made to accommodate the adjusted payroll dates. That

calendar might also provide more consulting opportunities after Thanksgiving.

Committee members discussed the likely impact on faculty and students. One noted that Carleton has no school between Thanksgiving and New Year, and freshmen feel alienated and cut off; after having gotten rolling, they have to gear up all over again in January.

The change would NOT have an impact on the late end of the academic year. That will only be changed, it was pointed out, if the University moves to semesters or if Winter Quarter is broken into two pieces on either side of the holidays. Those who know of a broken quarter at other institutions did not have positive things to say about it; one Committee member said that his experience with it worked well, but that may have been because his discipline was susceptible to being broken into modules that fit an interrupted school schedule.

The change could have an impact on Housing, it was pointed out, as well as other units of the University. These impacts should be explored.

It may be that the University needs to re-think winter quarter, and consider offering intensive courses for a three week period. Faculty reaction to changing their courses would not likely be positive, suggested one Committee member. Nor can all classes be condensed in that fashion. There is also the problem that students would opt out of courses for that short period, creating havoc with housing and other activities.

Professor Heller agreed that the discussion needed to continue, and said he would bring it up with the Senate Consultative Committee and perhaps other committees. He then adjourned the meeting at 3:30.

-- Gary Engstrand

University of Minnesota