

Senate Committee on Educational Policy (SCEP)
April 11, 2018
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:** Liberal Education Redesign Committee Update; Financial Aid; Proposed Updates to the Administrative Policy: *Evaluation of Teaching*; Proposal to Amend Twin Cities/Rochester Academic Calendars for Academic Year 19-20, 20-21, and 21-22;]

PRESENT: Jennifer Goodnough (chair), Nicola Alexander, Michael Anderson, Giancarlo Casale, Michelle Dobbratz, Sydney Elliott, Gayle Golden, Jude Goossens, Ken Leopold, Keith Mayes, Bob McMaster, Brian Sick, Abby Vogel, Nevin Young

REGRETS: Elaine Darst, Stacy Doepner-Hove, Scott Lanyon, Robert Poch

ABSENT: Lauren Mitchell

GUESTS: Ole Gram, assistant vice provost, Faculty & Academic Affairs; Stephanie Klein, assistant director and educational services manager, Office of Measurement Services; Professor Sally Kohlstedt, chair, Liberal Education Redesign Committee; Stacey Tidball, director, Compliance, Academic Support Resources

OTHERS: Jennifer Reckner, chief of staff, Office of Undergraduate Education; Leslie Schiff, associate dean, University Curriculum, Office of Undergraduate Education; Karen Starry, assistant to the vice provost, Graduate Education

1. Liberal Education Redesign Committee Update

Professor Jennifer Goodnough, chair, called the meeting to order and introduced Professor Sally Kohlstedt, chair of the Liberal Education Redesign Committee (LERC). Kohlstedt thanked members for their time, and said that the LERC is a strong committee, with about 20 members. Executive Vice President and Provost Karen Hanson appointed the committee in November, and members include Vice Provost and Dean of Undergraduate Education Bob McMaster and Julie Tonneson, associate vice president, Central Administration & Centers, University Finance. The undergraduate colleges have proportional representation on the committee. Kohlstedt informed members that discussion has centered around what should undergraduates should know and what skills they should have mastered by the time they graduate. Ideas include the University's learning outcomes, critical thinking, innovation, active citizenship, communications, quantitative competencies, etc. The committee is also looking at data on what students are currently doing. Transfer students, as well as advanced placement and PSEO credits, have been part of the conversation. Members of the committee hold a wide range of opinions, said Kohlstedt; some feel that the current liberal education curriculum is good the way it is, some feel that students to

have more choice. She added that there seems to be a consensus that the goals of the curriculum should be transparent, so that students do not see the requirements as simply boxes to check off.

As of now, said Kohlstedt, the committee is leaning toward making the structure of the requirements more clear and streamline, while also allowing more opportunity for exploration. This could take the form of more unidimensional requirements, rather than the grid of themes and cores. There is agreement within the committee that not more than 20% of overall credits should be liberal education requirements, and that the three disciplinary areas (arts/humanities, social science, and science) should not change, as this ensures that students are exposed to a breadth of knowledge. The committee feels that teaching good communication skills is important, she said, and the topic of information literacy has also come up often. The committee is also interested in figuring out more ways to allow for innovative curriculum, such as interdisciplinary courses, cross-disciplinary cutting concepts for problem-solving, and experimental pedagogy. The committee hopes to have preliminary recommendations for the Faculty Senate to consider in the fall, added Kohlstedt.

Jude Goossens asked whether there are students on the LERC. There are not, said Kohlstedt, but Vice Provost McMaster has consulted with the [Undergraduate Advisory Board](#), and the College of Liberal Arts Student Board produced a lengthy report on student feedback on liberal education requirements, to which the committee has referred. This report indicated that the biggest complaints about the current requirements were around the language requirement, but in general there were no serious criticism, and students that the current requirements provided sufficient breadth. This report showed no significant consensus on anything that should be added, said Kohlstedt. Faculty members on the committee are also consulting with students in their classes, she added. There will also likely be open meetings to gather community feedback in the fall as recommendations are rolled out.

Hearing no further discussion, Goodnough thanked Kohlstedt for her time, and Kohlstedt departed.

2. Financial Aid

Next, McMaster gave his annual report on financial aid and enrollment management, with the aid of a [PowerPoint](#). Key points of the presentation included the following:

- According to the 2017 SERU, 36% of undergraduate students are worried about their debt and/or finances “often” or “somewhat often,” and 49% of students are “concerned” or “very concerned” about their accumulated educational debt.
- According to the 2017 UMN Financial Transit Report, 69% of students will have loans when they graduate, and 32% of students currently have credit cards.
- The principles the University uses to guide financial aid for Twin Cities undergraduates are:
 - Connect financial aid strategies to University and state goals and priorities
 - Align financial aid and tuition strategies
 - Support access for qualified students
 - Attract high-achieving students

- Focus aid on Minnesota residents
- Support timely graduation
- Support the University's strengths and increase enrollments in priority areas
- The 2017-18 cost of attendance for Minnesota resident undergraduates is in the middle of the Big 10. The non-resident cost of attendance is almost the lowest in the Big 10, higher only than the University of Nebraska. For many years, the University did have the lowest non-resident tuition in the Big 10, but the Board of Regents now feels that the University should fall more in the middle of the pack, given the caliber of the institution.
- There are two kinds of gift aid: merit-based (tuition waivers for non-residents, scholarships, etc.), and need-based (Promise Scholarship, Pell Grants, MN State Grant, middle-income scholarship programs, etc.). Merit-based aid constitutes about 36% of the gift aid University of Minnesota undergraduates receive, while 64% is for need, including middle-income. The University believes this ratio is appropriate.
- 95% of Minnesota resident full-time enrolled freshmen from families making less than \$50,000 per year had their tuition fully funded by federal, state, and institutional gift aid for the 2016-17 academic year.
- The average amount of loan debt for Twin Cities undergraduate degree recipients who took out loans (excluding Parent PLUS loans) for their education was \$25,994 in 2016-17. This has been decreasing since 2010. When students who did not take out any loans are included, the average loan debt was \$14,941.

Goodnough asked what percentage of non-resident students receive tuition waivers. McMaster said that the percentage varies by year.

Nevin Young asked whether students attending the University receive a larger Minnesota State Grant than students attending institutions in the Minnesota State system. McMaster said no; the grant is based on the family's income and does not take the cost of attendance into account.

In the interest of time, McMaster concluded his presentation there. Goodnough thanked McMaster for his time, and he left.

3. Proposed Updates to the Administrative Policy: *Evaluation of Teaching*

Goodnough then welcomed Ole Gram, assistant vice provost, Faculty & Academic Affairs and Stephanie Klein, assistant director and educational services manager, Office of Measurement Services, who were present to consult on potential changes to the Administrative Policy: [*Evaluation of Teaching*](#).

Gram explained that the first proposed change would allow for a longer window for the administration of the Student Rating of Teaching (SRT) during fall and spring semesters. Currently, the procedure stipulates that the SRT must be administered during the last two weeks of the semester, but many other universities allow a three-week window. Earlier SRT administration may help ease student anxiety around final exam time and would also distribute the collection of results to the Office of Measurement Services (OMS) more evenly.

Nicola Alexander asked whether the SRT could be due after the last day of instruction. Klein said that depends on how finals work, as the SRTs should be completed before finals (instructors do not see results until after grades are posted). Ken Leopold asked what the distribution is between SRTs completed online versus in class for SRT? Klein responded that about 20% are completed online. Goodnough said that she liked the idea, but that it could pose some logistical difficulties in fall, due to Thanksgiving break.

Abby Vogel pointed out that some instructors do informal mid-semester evaluations, which she finds more helpful because there is time for the instructor to make changes based on student feedback.

Klein informed the committee that there is currently a pilot test underway of four new SRT questions related to online and hybrid courses. The questions were created by a subgroup of the Online and Blended Steering Committee, and the pilot includes online courses from the College of Continuing and Professional Education, the Carlson School of Management, the Humphrey School of Public Affairs, Occupational Therapy, the Crookston business department, etc. The data will be analyzed this summer and will be presented to SCEP in the fall, she said.

Goodnough remarked that there is a lot of variability in courses marked as “online” in PeopleSoft, and wondered if the questions were applicable to all of these courses. Klein said that the intent of subcommittee was to include a wide range of course types, and that she will ask them to keep this in mind when analyzing the data.

Next, Gram explained a plan to test a protocol for the use of in-class administration of the online SRT. Members of the Academy of Distinguished Teachers have been recruited to ask students to complete the SRT during the first part of a class session on their laptops or mobile devices. In-class administration of the online SRT results in higher response rates, and this pilot is intended to gather feedback from instructors and students on the advantages and disadvantages of this approach. Some units already require that students bring laptops to class for this purpose. The Rochester campus has done this since its establishment in 2006, though all students there are already required to bring laptops to class. This pilot will likely occur for summer or fall.

Goodnough asked whether students were more or less likely to provide comments on the online SRT than the paper one. Student members of the committee said that on a laptop, they would write more comments; on a phone, they would write the same or less. Goodnough asked whether most students have laptops, and students said that most do, but not all. Klein suggested asking instructors to bring 1-2 extra laptops to class for this purpose. She also noted that just because there is time allotted for completing the online SRT in class, students still have the option of doing it later, within the three-week window.

Michelle Dobbratz asked what the advantages are of administering the SRT online. Anecdotally, said Klein, online SRTs tend to yield better comments. It is also less expensive and time consuming for OMS to analyze the data. Goodnough added that it also provides true anonymity, as some students’ handwriting can be easily recognized. It is also better in terms of accessibility, said Klein.

Keith Mayes expressed concern that the online SRT could become just another survey and contribute to/suffer from survey fatigue. Klein said that this would be assessed in the pilot.

Goodnough cautioned Gram and Klein to make sure junior faculty know that a blip in data could occur due to the transition to online from paper, as this could affect promotion and tenure evaluations.

Gram added that over the summer, a small working group will talk about issues around bias in the SRT, and develop best practices for department heads, award committees, and review committees when using SRT data. He said they would come back in the fall to talk more about this.

Finally, Gram said that the classroom environment and the elective versus required course questions would be eliminated from the SRT beginning summer 2018.

The committee had no major concerns about these proposals. Gram and Klein thanked the committee for their feedback and departed.

4. Proposal to Amend Twin Cities/Rochester Academic Calendars for Academic Year 19-20, 20-21, and 21-22

The committee then returned to the proposal, discussed in depth at the March 2018 SCEP meeting, to amend the Twin Cities and Rochester academic calendars for 2019-20, 2020-21, and 2021-22 to move spring break one week earlier. The proposal had been amended as suggested by the committee, to move spring break but maintain at least seven class sessions for all seven-week courses that only meet once a week. The committee took a vote and approved this proposal, as depicted below for spring 2020. The Faculty Senate will vote on the proposal on May 3, 2018.

March 2020						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
	proposed Spring Break					
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
	Last Day A Term	First Day B Term				
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

In the interest of time, Goodnough adjourned the meeting.

Amber Bathke
University Senate Office