

Minutes*

Faculty Consultative Committee
Thursday, February 6, 1997
1:30 - 3:00
Nolte Library

Present: Virginia Gray (chair), Carl Adams, Victor Bloomfield, W. Andrew Collins, Dan Feeney, Russell Hobbie, Laura Coffin Koch, Michael Korth, Fred Morrison, Harvey Peterson, Michael Steffes, Craig Swan, Matthew Tirrell

Absent: Carole Bland, Gary Davis, Sara Evans

Guests: Senior Vice President Marvin Marshak

Others: Martha Kvanbeck (University Senate); Maureen Smith (University Relations)

[In these minutes: Miscellany; use of faculty email lists; discussion of technology and distance education ideas with Senior Vice President Marshak]

1. Committee Business

Professor Gray convened the meeting at 1:30 and distributed a copy of an email from Professor Jay Goldman and a draft response to his allegation that FCC members select their own successors. She noted that that statement is categorically wrong and should be corrected; a special nominating committee, approved by the Faculty Assembly, nominates a slate of candidates (approved by the Assembly), who are then voted on by the faculty at large.

The meeting of the negotiating team and the administration to present the Faculty Senate tenure amendments has been scheduled, Professor Gray reported; it is after the election. What happens if the election is not in favor of collective bargaining, Professor Hobbie inquired; Professor Gray said the question is an interesting one. The view expressed by Professor Feeney seemed to have Committee support: the team seems to work well together and probably need not be changed, whether or not there is a union.

The meeting next week will be changed, because Professor Gray has to make her quarterly report to the Board of Regents on Thursday afternoon. It was agreed they would meet earlier in the day.

The names of three volunteers are needed to serve on a committee to make a recommendation whether to name a building for former President C. Peter Magrath; the recommendation would go to the Senate All-University Honors Committee. The Honors Committee acts on recommendations from three FCC members and three Regents.

*These minutes reflect discussion and debate at a meeting of a committee of the University of Minnesota Senate or Twin Cities Campus Assembly; none of the comments, conclusions, or actions reported in these minutes represent the views of, nor are they binding on, the Senate or Assembly, the Administration, or the Board of Regents.

Professor Swan recalled that there once was legislation introduced into the Senate providing that the name of a building could not be changed without at least consulting with the occupants (at the time it was proposed to name the Social Sciences Building after President Malcolm Moos); it is to be hoped that the participants understand that sentiment.

Professors Gray, Hobbie, and Tirrell agreed to serve.

The Committee went off the record temporarily to identify candidates for the committee annually appointed to nominate members to serve on the Committee on Committees (since the Committee on Committees does not appoint its own membership). Five people were identified; Professor Gray agreed to contact them about their willingness to serve. [All subsequently agreed to do so.]

2. Use of Email Lists

Professor Gray then raised the question of the use of email faculty lists; the Committee thought there was a policy on what goes out on the lists versus what goes to FacultyWrites or other bulletin boards. The Committee has a policy, that the email lists will be used only for the transmission of official Senate or Senate committee business, and was under the impression that other use of the faculty lists were confined to official business of a University group. The recent distribution of email messages from individuals about the pros and cons of collective bargaining, however, suggest that there is no policy; should the Committee develop one to propose to the administration? Or should use of the lists be laissez-faire? She has asked Professor Bloomfield to draft a policy, but wanted the guidance of the Committee.

Professor Gray noted that she was not suggesting a quick decision; there is a great deal of interest in the upcoming union election, and at this point people should be free to communicate. The issue has arisen before, however, and there is need for some kind of a policy for the future.

What occurs, with unrestricted access, is that faculty pay no attention because they receive messages with (to recite two examples from the meeting), the cafeteria menus and happy birthday messages to colleagues. The result, in at least one case, was that they HAD to develop a policy.

Committee members offered a number of comments.

- The maximum amount of information should be distributed by email, but if a document is long, people should be notified that it exists and a web site where it is available.
- Email is more effective than other means of communication, even if faculty have to "trash quite a bit of stuff."
- There is a difference between voluntarily subscribing to a list and having one's name on a list because it MUST be (as an employee, for example); if there is unrestricted use of the latter kind of list, people become annoyed and important messages get lost. Nothing precludes anyone from developing his or her own list of faculty members, but in that case people could insist that their names be removed from it.
- The Committee cannot enter into the business of censorship.

- The question is the use of University-developed and -maintained email lists, not of individually-developed lists.
- There are legal issues involved; it may not be legal for the University to permit use of faculty email lists. Corporations may not sell a list of names unless individuals are given the opportunity to remove their name from it, and the University may be under a parallel restriction in making email lists available for anything other than University business. The answer to the question of free and open access to the mailing lists may be "no," from a legal standpoint. Either the list has to be used for University purposes or people have to have the right to take their names off the list.
- One possibility is to create a web space analogous to FacultyWrites, a place where people may post statements.
- Is it acceptable for any GROUP to send email messages? (Committee view appeared to be "no.")

Professor Bloomfield said his sense of the discussion was that a web site for placement of documents was appropriate, but that easy access of individuals--all members of the faculty--to University email lists is not a good idea.

3. Discussion with Senior Vice President Marshak

Professor Gray now welcomed Professor Marshak to the meeting, who told the Committee he had subjects about which he wished to speak.

The University has been presenting the biennial request to the legislature. Although he has no basis of making comparisons with past years, those in a position to do so believe things are going quite well this year. The University requested a substantial increase in base funding from the state, following the strategy of laying out the University's needs in order to be able to serve the state. The increase requested exceeded 20%; the Governor has recommended about half of that, which is still a substantial amount: an increase of between \$116 and \$130 million for the biennium, depending on what one counts, on a biennial base of about \$950 million). The University will continue to seek support for its original request.

In terms of interacting with the state, one area in which there is considerable interest is technology and everything associated with it. There is a similar mood in Washington, D.C., he said: great interest in using technology to improve education and to improve quality of life. There is less understanding of exactly what to DO about it, in both capitols.

Dr. Marshak said he had heard comments at NSF about "internet 2," and increasing capacity at about 100 different nodes by a factor of 100, and in 10 chosen places, by a factor of 1000. When asked what would be done with it, the answer was that no one knows, but people in universities are very smart and will figure something out.

In St. Paul, there is an expectation that the University, in particular, will be the agent within Minnesota (not exclusively) that defines what will be done with technology. Technology has been

highlighted in the Governor's budget message, as has something called "the virtual university." What "the virtual university" is is not clear; the Office of Information Technology and Office of Planning and Analysis has been trying to help the state define what it is.

The demographics of the metropolitan area are that the number of high school graduates will increase by about 5,000 over the next five years, on a base of about 30,000, so there will be 15% growth in graduates over a relatively short time. This is of interest to the state.

There is also interest in southeastern Minnesota in the university center in Rochester, and what the University's role should be in that area.

They have been trying to put these factors together into some kind of coherent plan. The MnSCU system was charged by the legislature to report (by February 15) with a plan for higher education in the Twin Cities, and to consult with the University in developing the plan. The MnSCU board has adopted a document, but the consultation with the University has been almost non-existent. As a result, the University has been trying to come up with its own plan for higher education in the Twin Cities, although it would not be a comprehensive plan. MnSCU has proposed merging Metropolitan State with Minneapolis Community and Technical College; the President has taken a neutral position on the proposal, that it sounds good but does not affect the University.

What could affect the University is development of a "virtual university" plan for the metropolitan area. As they envision it now, it would rely heavily on the world wide web front-end development that has been under way for the last several months in student systems. He explained that with this front end, one can link together a registration system and a career-planning system; a high school student could decide to be an architect, and access the web to find out what it means to be an architect, what the job market it, what the salaries are, what kind of education is required, and so on. Using the same web links, the student can find the courses needed and where they are available, as well as register for them. There are web pages for University students that will print out a map of the campus showing the location of a course, the nearest parking lot, the syllabus, the drop dates, final exam dates, textbooks and prices, and provide a real-time picture of the bookstore so they know if it is a good time to buy the books.

Professor Marshak emphasized that these are not fixed proposals, but merely ideas for discussion. The idea for the virtual university would be to integrate with other institutions in a partnership, and that University College (UC) would be the vehicle for partnership programs. There are such programs already in place with the community colleges, such as the Bachelor of Computer Networking. These would primarily be polytechnic degrees, such as those offered at Crookston (Bachelor of Precision Agriculture or of Hotel and Restaurant Administration); they could also be offered in the Twin Cities, in part by distance education and in part by live education. Students would attend community colleges for the first two years, but would be admitted to the University through UC and would receive advising from the University through the web interface so they would know that the courses they take would count towards the degree. There would also be a credit bank element; the University, through the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum, would recognize courses taken at community colleges. Eventually students would participate in distance or on-site education through the University to obtain a degree.

This is in some sense an updated version of the California Master Plan, the essence of which is that admission to the University of California would be highly restricted at the level of the high school

graduate (in the top 12%). But if a student attends a community college and graduates with a 2.4 or higher, he or she is guaranteed admission to a UC campus; if one graduates with at least a 2.0, he or she is guaranteed admission to a Cal State campus. With a 2.4, after two years of community college, it is relatively easy to gain admission to a UC campus.

The new twist on the Master Plan would be virtual university element, using the web interface and distance education in order to offer a late 1990s version of the plan. This would be a way of addressing the needs of a 15% increase in high school graduates in the Twin Cities, and aimed especially at polytechnic education without requiring a vast increase in the number of campuses or facilities. The plan would use the existing community/technical college base.

Another aspect of this would be to integrate it with the university center in Rochester. That center would be primarily a virtual university, tied together using distance education, and using the web to ensure a student could pick courses from different places but be assured of a coherent framework. The University's costs could be kept at a reasonable level by using a self-service web-based information technology.

Professor Marshak said he would be glad to answer questions, but pointed out that there are few details; this is an idea in its very preliminary stages of discussion.

Professor Bloomfield said that the educational policy implications of this idea are profound. On the one hand, it seems to make enormously good sense to serve an expanded clientele better and more conveniently, and to satisfy the state that the University is responsive to student needs for access. On the other hand, it very much changes what it means to get a University of Minnesota education. Some are already uneasy about this, with the UC expansion; what thought is being given to this, and what kind of consultation is being had with SCEP? How far is the University likely to go down this road, and find itself irreversibly committed to something that a lot of faculty could be uncomfortable with?

The idea has evolved over the last few weeks, Professor Marshak said, and a lot of things are changing very quickly. There is no intention to commit the University to a plan of action, and is only for discussion. He said he wished to emphasize that the University of Minnesota currently has four different kinds of educational programs (a research university with land-grant, academic health center mission serving an urban community; a comprehensive regional university mostly addressed in Duluth but it is also mixed with the research mission on the Twin Cities campus in a way that is not easy to untangle; a polytechnic program, mostly at Crookston but also at the Twin Cities to some degree; and a small liberal arts college, mostly at Morris but perhaps also through CLA honors). When one receives a University degree, there are already four different kinds of overall missions wrapped into the institution.

The Regents have instructed the administration to improve the quality of the University. It is important to preserve and enhance the quality of the research university; he said he did believe it possible for the research university to get away from "in your face" education for a long time, especially in the core undergraduate programs. So it is important to improve the quality of the research university, with its hands-on nature and face-to-face to socialization that occurs at both the undergraduate and graduate level--while at the same time trying to meet the needs of the state for polytechnic education and for other kinds of education, in an efficient way, and in a way that is mostly self-supporting. The idea of using a virtual university, and working with MnSCU, to deliver polytechnic-type education in the Twin Cities

will meet a lot of needs.

Professor Marshak pointed out that another part of the urban strategy is accomplished through UMD; two-thirds of the entering students at UMD are from the metropolitan area and only 20% are from northeastern Minnesota. UMD is a way to provide higher education for Twin Cities students who want to go away from home or whose parents want them away from home or both.

There is discussion of possibly expanding UMD as part of a metropolitan strategy; it would be an expansion in student numbers within existing facilities. This would help address the Twin Cities urban education issue.

The alternatives for the University is either to find an efficient way to address the 5000-student per-year increase in the Twin Cities, or to allow a large Metro State to grow and require \$100 million capital investment by the state. He said the latter is problematic.

One of the things one hears from the University's critics, Professor Bloomfield responded, is that the University cannot decide what it wants to be, and that it ought to pick a few things and do them well. A certain amount of that comes from the private sector, organizations with an interest in high technology. At the same time, one wonders if those people would think it a good idea for the University to diversify in a direction useful to them.

Professor Koch said she understood MnSCU was directed by the legislature to develop a plan for the metropolitan area; the plan called for consolidating the two schools seems like an ill-conceived plan put together at the last minute, and it was devised without consultation with the University. What is of concern, if one looks at what MnSCU is trying to do by consolidating Metro State with one of the community/technical colleges, is that what Professor Marshak has proposed is in some ways the same idea: to provide more opportunities for student to four-year degree programs. How will the MnSCU mission differ from that of the University, or will they be the same, with the two institutions competing for the same type of students, and both leaving some students out in the cold?

A second question, Professor Koch said, is if this plan were come to fruition, and more students come from community colleges (metropolitan or not) to the University, what will happen to lower division courses? Will the University then offer primarily upper division education?

Professor Marshak said the plan is NOT to make the University upper division. The research university needs to have undergraduates for four years (or more); particularly for traditional-age students, the socialization aspects of education are perhaps the most important, and they need that time. This plan is about polytechnic education, not liberal arts or pre-professional education that are the programs of the research university. It is not about getting rid of any students already at the University, but additional programs. In terms of the critical measures, there would have to be a distinction drawn between students in the research university--where certain goals are sought--and students in the polytechnic programs, who might have different characteristics.

With respect to Metropolitan State, it is necessary to consider the numbers. At present Metro State has about 7500-8000 students, and 2500 FTE students. If there will be 5000 more high school graduates per year, not all will go on to higher education, not all will stay in the Twin Cities. If, as a guess, one

assumes half of them need to be accommodated in the Twin Cities, there will potentially be 2500 FTE students per year; even if it is only 1500 FTEs, that would be an increase of 6000 students over four years. Metro State could be doubled in size and still not meet the need. If a need is to be met, should Metro State be vastly increased, or increase it a large percentage AND increase the University by a small percentage in order to have some balance? To ask Metro State to accommodate this entire need opens for discussion a \$100 million capital investment. It would be more reasonable, from the University's perspective and a general public policy perspective, that there should be some accommodation by the University of this need.

But the University and MnSCU should have been working together, Professor Koch said; instead, they have come up with a plan and the University has come up with a plan, and the two are very different. There has not been the collaboration that was needed.

Professor Marshak said they have been attempting to discuss this, and the idea of the California Master Plan came from someone at MnSCU. There have been discussions, but much has barred discussion that were idiosyncratic events. To the extent there are partnerships with community colleges--which are part of MnSCU--there is cooperation.

Professor Adams said he endorsed an aggressive position by the University on distance education; it is behind the curve on competition in this area. However, as he told the President, when it was alluded to at the last meeting, there is substantial risk involved in the current thinking. The seeds of this thinking go back to the ill-fated concept of a bifurcated university that was perceived in a first stage of U2000 that "went down in flames" because people SAW it as a bifurcated university and were worried how it work out over time. It is not possible to escape that worry.

The University can help out the state, in terms of its public responsibilities, but there are short-term activities and long-term activities. The consequence of this current thinking, in part, could be a classic case of the unfocused organization running in many directions at once. It is interesting that the University could put a lot of resources into this type of distance education, and then starve units where those resources should be going. For example, distance education might be most powerful in collaboration with other major research institutions in small Ph.D. seminar interactions, rather than the large audience cases.

If this is going to be done, Professor Adams continued, it should be cast in the context of a long-term plan. For example, if in 5 years the plan were to spin off activities and help build Metro State to accommodate this kind of educational need, then the University will help the state but say that it should not be involved in the long term. Perhaps everyone could talk about that.

If the University were to take half of the new students, Professor Hobbie pointed out, it and Metro State would each enroll 3,000, not 6,000. But that figure is still half the size of IT, and is a big group of students to cope with. The University just finished improving the quality of undergraduate education, in part by downsizing. How will the University maintain quality if it has that many more students?

The emphasis is on polytechnic education, Professor Marshak emphasized. One can criticize it, but the University is in that field at Crookston and has started in it in the Twin Cities with the partnership degrees. Much of the instruction for polytechnic instruction would involve faculty in IT, some in other

professional schools, some would involve adjunct faculty more than in the research university because one goal is to integrate the educational experience with the applied experience. The idea would be to make it largely self-supporting, he said. The market is there, if one looks at what local colleges are charging for tuition. If the University charged a similar rate of tuition for a polytechnic education, the rates could be in excess of costs per student.

One can argue the idea is fatally flawed, and that UC should not be an enterprise that provides services similar to that of local colleges, but there is a market for this kind of education in the Twin Cities, and there is a lot of interest in the state in the University supporting the economy of the state by providing the kind of education that workers need.

That is even more confusing, Professor Hobbie said. A lot of the market those other institutions are meeting was post-baccalaureate education, and it is not clear that those 5000 new high school graduates are going to want a polytechnic degree.

There is the question of how many will want a polytechnic degree versus a liberal arts degree, Professor Marshak agreed, but there is no notion of the University offering a second degree in French Literature in cooperation with the community colleges. There would be no point in that; the University is not going to compete against itself in the liberal arts. The idea here is focused on polytechnic degrees, of the type offered at Crookston.

But there could be tremendous pressure to expand enrollments in CLA, Professor Hobbie observed. There are common elements to a polytechnic and liberal arts education, Professor Marshak agreed; communication skills are one. He will not say these students would take no courses in CLA; they probably would.

Professor Bloomfield turned the discussion to the implications for faculty work and the nature of the faculty who are at the University. Professor Marshak has almost described this as a pass-through, so students receive the U of M stamp, but the regular faculty of the University are not involved. Professor Marshak replied that that was not what he said.

If not, Professor Bloomfield continued, it implies the regular faculty--in areas that have heavy workloads now--are going to be expected to do more, and of a sort of activity that is more lower-level than what the faculty believe they are about.

Professor Marshak said that if he were a faculty member at Crookston, he would be upset at that comment. The fact is the University does have four campuses, and offers polytechnic degrees in Crookston now. There are regular faculty of the University who are involved in teaching those programs. He said he thinks of what is done at Crookston as valuable and contributing to the welfare and education and economic benefits of the state.

Professor Bloomfield said he understood the point, but the regular research university concept is valuable, and it is also more distinct. Crookston serves its purpose, but what IT or CSOM professors do is different, and that is where most of the faculty believe the unique contribution of the University to the state can be made.

MnSCU does not offer a polytechnic degree, Professor Marshak said; there is no "Minnesota Poly." The programs at Crookston are also unique to the state. It is a philosophical question: Can the University be broad enough to include both the research university, which has unique contributions to make, AND include Crookston and Duluth and Morris? If the University is defined only as a research university, then there is a problem with its EXISTING structure. He said he believed the University is unique, and quite positive--that it has not only a research university, but the other components that are also very valuable and important to the state. It may be that he and Professor Bloomfield do not agree on this.

Professor Bloomfield concurred that they may disagree, but said it is more important that the faculty and the administration have a chance to decide to what extent they agree or disagree on this. Professor Marshak agreed.

Professor Swan said he was somewhat confused by the discussion. It appears that the planning or discussion on this issue is occurring at the administrative level between the University and MnSCU, to the extent it is occurring at all. He suggested that as this idea is fleshed out, there should be regular contact with a subcommittee that SCEP sets up, so there is regular feedback and the confusion here would not have to be repeated and there would be a variety of contributions to the ideas.

Professor Swan also asked if the comparison with local colleges, and the model of self-financing, does not occur more at the quasi-professional and post-baccalaureate level, rather than at the pre- or baccalaureate level. At the Masters or professional level, there is a strong case to be made that tuition should cover full cost. At the pre-baccalaureate or baccalaureate level, the argument is perhaps that these are "practical" degrees and that tuition should also cover costs--but that introduces a new dynamic into undergraduate tuition. If there are University students, some of whom are paying full cost and some of whom are not, there could be a dynamic some would like (those who favor high tuition and high aid), but it is not clear what the implications would be. Someone needs to think this through.

Professor Adams said he believes it is possible to construct a win-win situation in the context Professor Marshak described, but he has not heard a win-win proposal. The long-term set up of UC, in some isolation from main-line colleges, is not desirable. If that is a feature of the plan, it is a loss long-term. There is NO problem with Crookston; if there were a proposal to double its size, that would be fine, because it has a mission, and expansion would not impose on other faculty. Professor Marshak's proposal, however, creates something else on the Twin Cities campus, something with which the faculty will have to be involved.

Professor Adams said he has had experience with two of the programs already in place, Bachelor of Business Management and Bachelor of Information Networking. Both of them directly affect the faculty in his department. When talking to students in the community, they do not understand the difference between those two degrees and a Bachelor's degree in Business, or a Bachelor's degree in Business with a concentration in information systems. There are differences, but this is getting into a situation where people will not know the differences. The incentive in UC is NOT to make them different, but to make them look as much like a regular University program as possible. And one can't blame them for doing so. But there is a fundamental issue for the University.

The problem with Crookston is that the population in that area is low, Professor Marshak said.

What if Crookston were to open a branch in the Twin Cities? That would make sense, with a larger population in the Twin Cities. Say that branch were to administered by the Crookston campus.

That would be halfway home, Professor Adams said. The other half the way is whether people can identify the distinction between the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, and the University of Minnesota, Crookston branch in the Twin Cities.

Can Crookston run its activities on the Twin Cities campus, administered by Crookston, Professor Marshak asked? He had recently been in Crookston, and challenged the faculty to replicate their programs at other places in the state, especially where there is a heavier population. The population imbalance is a reality; Crookston can never grow a great deal because there are not a lot of people in the area.

That structure might address part of the problem, Professor Adams said, and he might find it more acceptable than one which involved the administration of the Twin Cities campus. There would still be problems. There are other alternatives that would be win-win for the University in the long term. Why does not the University say that there is a capacity issue in the Twin Cities, and how the Twin Cities is served is not an issue that will be solved today or tomorrow, but will be solved over the next ten years. The University can say it will be part of the solution, and will do some things now to help handle the load, but with the express intent of spinning off those activities into an entity that can, over the long term, serve those clients and have a separate mission. If done right, it might help the University and provide a long-term solution. But the University doesn't seem to be doing that; it suggests that it will handle things forever and ever.

What is the entity that would be spun off, Professor Marshak asked? This is just a creativity discussion, Professor Adams responded. In the first U2000 discussions, it could have been said that the University would spin UC off after a few years, because its mission is different and the Twin Cities needs it, but it is not something that should forever be connected to the University. The University would try to create something good for the state, good for the University, help everybody, and create a permanent long-term solution. This may not itself be a good solution, Professor Adams said, but if people would think like that, then it might be possible to garner support. Without it, people cannot grasp how it will lead to a long-term good.

Does he not consider polytechnic education a long-term good, Professor Marshak asked Professor Adams? It would not be "good" in the sense that there could be a bifurcated University, with competition and misunderstanding on the part of the clientele about what the University of Minnesota is producing, Professor Adams said. He recalled that the University reduced the size of the School of Management by half, because it was trying to do something. What happened? Students in a lot of other programs are saying they are in "business." If the University is going to have that happen, it should have built up the business school. The University chose not to do so.

The point, Professor Adams said, is that the University needs to decide what it wants to do, and to the extent it does things that do not engage the mainline units, there is significant risk. Whether doing extension activity or non-credit teaching, the programs need to engage the mainline units long-term, or the University is not doing itself any good.

What about Crookston, Morris, and Duluth, asked Professor Marshak? They are fine in the SYSTEM context, Professor Adams said. The issue is on the Twin Cities campus.

Must the University keep those units with different missions from the research university geographically separated from the population center of the state, where the concentration of population is growing, Professor Marshak inquired? The state is becoming more and more urban, but the University is going to insist the polytechnic program stay in an area with a relatively small population--because if it moves into the Twin Cities, it will somehow undercut the research university? That is the question.

Professor Adams said there are two issues, administrative diffusion and customer confusion. If Crookston is brought into the Twin Cities, the administrative diffusion problem is addressed; now the customer confusion problem has to be solved. It will require hard work to do so. If Crookston is not brought in, but UC is, then there is both administrative diffusion AND customer confusion.

Professor Gray said the last word should be from Crookston, and called on Professor Peterson. Professor Peterson said the conversation was interesting, but philosophically way above where the Crookston campus is; they are in the trenches. He asked Professor Marshak to elaborate on the difference between a virtual university and an electronic, correspondence university.

The difference, Professor Marshak said, is that there are two places where technology can be used. One is in the instructional venue itself--for distance education, or to enhance on-site education. Electronic instruction has to do with instruction itself. The virtual university would be different in that it would INCLUDE the instruction, but also would use technology to organize student service. In the virtual university, it would be a "place" where a student could learn about areas of interest, possibilities, requirements, and be able to select instructional modules from a variety of institutions. Those could be delivered electronically or on-site or in combination. A student could select courses, in consultation with an advisor; the virtual university would run a credit bank, approving composition at one place but not algebra at another, and integrating the courses into a degree program. Much of this could be accomplished without being on campus.

Professor Peterson said he understood the philosophy, but pointed out that delivery is reduced by a factor of 10. He can handle 60 students in a normal classroom setting, but could handle only 6 in the virtual university, because of the correspondence demands.

Professor Marshak recalled that he had discussed this with the Crookston faculty, and it was clear that a major issue in virtual instruction is its asynchronous nature, where everyone works at his or her own pace. It is not the face-to-face issue, it is synchronicity of instruction: in a class of 60 students, everyone is on lesson 10 at the same time. If students are allowed to be on every lesson, it is a problem for faculty; there need to be developed techniques (which do not yet exist) in order to deliver virtual instruction in an efficient way. This is a big challenge for the virtual university. Can one run an educational operation that is completely asynchronous and independent of place? No one knows how to do that.

Professor Gray thanked Professor Marshak for joining the meeting, and adjourned it at 3:10.

-- Gary Engstrand

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University of Minnesota