

Minutes*

**Senate Committee on Educational Policy
Thursday, October 7, 1993
2:30 - 4:30
Room 608 Campus Club**

Present: Kenneth Heller (chair), Craig Bursch, Anita Cholewa, Thomas Clayton, James Cotter, Robert Johnson, Manuel Kaplan, Carla Phillips, William Van Essendelft, Gayle Graham Yates

Absent: Daniel Boler, Sue Donaldson, Megan Gunnar, Darwin Hendel

Guests: Pat Snodgrass (Academic Affairs)

Others: None

[In these minutes: Strategic planning; Morse-Alumni awards]

1. Report of the Chair

Professor Heller convened the meeting at 2:30 and asked Committee member to take up two items of business required by the "Guidelines for Senate Committee Minutes" adopted by the Consultative Committee last year. The Committee agreed that the current distribution list for its minutes was appropriate, subject to the proviso that everyone receiving them be given the option to remove their name from the mailing list. The Committee also decided it did not wish to approve its minutes prior to their distribution and that Professor Heller's review was sufficient.

2. Strategic Planning

Professor Heller distributed a handout summarizing a number of thoughts about each of the 4 major points outlined in the buff-colored strategic planning newsletter that SCEP may wish to consider. He then reported on the October 5 meeting of the Finance and Planning Committee (which was a joint meeting with SCEP); Vice President Eugene Allen met with the Committees at that meeting. Professor Heller said he heard some new things at that meeting and it is his interpretation that the entire University College (hereinafter UC) plan has changed. It "appeared to sound like" now there will be no separate UC and that it will exist only in name, although Vice President Allen disagreed. It appears, he said, that UC will function essentially as inloaded extension.

One Committee member also present at the October 5 meeting cautioned, however, that Vice President Allen had said he was speaking for himself, without having talked with the President or Senior Vice President, and that his comments should be seen as a snapshot of current thinking.

They can be treated as a trial balloon, it was said. The faculty of UC would be the faculty of the

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research university, the courses will basically be the same, there would be no lower division courses--so the quick and dirty summary is inloaded extension. Nor is it clear if UC students would be separated in space or time from research university students; they could be in the same classes.

This sounds like a financial shell game, remarked one Committee member. Dr. Allen was asked several times about finances, it was said, but there was never an answer. It seems that the UC idea is all over the map: from a totally separate entity overseen by University faculty but with courses taught by outsiders, to an invisible university hidden in the research university. In the most uncharitable interpretation, UC will be a stamp on a transcript so that its students will not be counted in the graduation rate--but it is hoped that there is much more to than that.

One Committee member inquired if the Committee could only react and respond or if it could try to help shape UC so that the faculty would be more comfortable with it. Professor Heller said the Committee could make proposals. A number of committees have met to discuss the plan; much has changed since before school began and much has been shaped by those conversations. SCEP can either raise questions or make proposals.

Part of the problem, he commented, is the schedule. The Board of Regents is to vote on something at its December meetings; the Faculty Senate will vote on November 18. But the vote will be on neither a "plan" nor the mechanisms to implement it--the vote will be on a concept, an empty box--but a box nonetheless, to be filled by the administration and faculty. The first question is "do the faculty want that box?" Senate committees will get first shot at questions and statements to the President at the Faculty Forum on October 21; it is the Committee's job to focus the attention of the administration on the educational policy implications of the plan.

Given what has been said about UC, asked one Committee member, why cannot it be channeled into improved continuing education? For the students thought to be appropriate for UC, the administrative structure is in place and operating. Another Committee member said he did not see UC as very much different from what is being done now. There would be some differences--up to now, CEE has not offered degrees but UC would. The questions about financing at the October 5 meeting suggested that the ideas advanced by Vice President Allen will not come to pass because they would require so much money they would defeat the purpose of the plan.

This plan, it was said, is driven by several considerations. First, to improve the research dimension of the University by sliding some student credit hours into the evening, where education can be delivered much more cheaply. Second, it is clearly political; the University is positioning itself as best it can in the higher education system when the other three systems will merge and become extremely powerful. The partnerships tie the University to schools in that other system and makes them interested in seeing that the University does well. Third, the plan will serve a group of students who do not belong in the research university but who need degrees--and if the University does not serve those students, other institutions will, thus even further reducing the University's political influence.

This is a good plan, it was said, in that it lets CEE serve more constituents that it has had a hard time reaching. It is to be hoped that liberal arts degrees are offered in the evening, even if admissions standards are the same as those of the research university.

The University, it was said, is trying to wrestle with how to be both UCal-Berkeley and CCNY.

The administration has correctly identified a lot of problems, and one of them is of expectation. The University mixes students in classes, faculty can't meet the expectations of all the groups, the students get angry because every student feels this education is not for them (which it isn't), and the faculty end up pleasing no one. This plan at one point appeared to suggest more homogeneous classes, in terms of ability and preparation. It also assumed that students would have time to spend on their education. UC would be more accessible for those not prepared for the research university or who were more interested in a job. "I THINK that's the goal"; the question is implementation.

This would all work well if the state were to double the University's budget to permit creation of new institution. That won't happen, however, so whatever's to be done must be done with the same resources that the University now has. The cheap alternative is to buy faculty somewhere and set up UC--but there is then no quality control in a unit granting University of Minnesota degrees. It was argued that the only way the University now exercises quality control is through its hiring and promotion/tenure practices; this organization would require a new way to ensure quality. But now the idea of a separate institution may have been abandoned so the faculty will be the same as that of the research university. The problem with THAT is that it is very expensive. There is a cheap option, which is to simply double the workload of current faculty members.

One question for the Committee, it was said, is whether or not it wishes to support the goal of two separate student populations.

If there is any value to this plan, said one Committee member, it is that the research university student body would become more homogeneous in that it would be better qualified, which would mean there would be better instruction and learning. The UC option would be available. This plan will work if all undergraduates in the research university were from the top 15 - 20% of their class; other students could attend UC and the question is whether or not there would be some cut-off for it. Presumably General College would be part of UC. (The student numbers and other data for UC have included both CEE and General College.) The research university would be able to offer a good education and put the University in a better position. The problem is that it is not clear what is wanted; increasing the graduation rate may be so powerful a desideratum that it will override everything else.

With respect to quality control in CEE, it was pointed out, it must be made clear that the departments now exercise such control through the courses they offer. But that issue could be a starting point for an exercise in thinking about quality control.

One Committee member noted that a number of other institutions have a restricted-access unit within them and that such units sometimes offer a separate degree.

Another Committee member urged that the issue is not faulty organization; standards must be raised and redefined. If, for example, General College and CEE were melded in UC, with the quality control exercised by CEE, that would solve a lot of problems. The prospect of reshuffling the entire University is terrifying because it cannot be reinvented without major costs. More appropriate is just tightening up things.

This statement met with agreement by another member of the Committee. If the University is to try to attract top students--which it should--to what is it attracting them? The University is so underfunded in all ways that those students can't be attracted except by sitting at the feet of masters. In

one department, for instance, each faculty member is limited to 1000 xerox copies for teaching and 1000 copies for research. This is not a time for grandiose schemes--it is one thing to plan and quite another to get students.

In this sorting of students, other than those in GC and CEE, for UC, presumably there are a lot in CLA and other colleges who would fit the profile of one of the two parts. There would also be a large group who would not come from the top 25% and it will be necessary to identify and address their needs. It was pointed out, however, that the plan really only calls for a reduction of 2000 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) students in the research university and transferring them to UC. Actually, observed another Committee member, FTE students would not decline much at all in the research university; presumably the current student body would be replaced in part with more highly qualified students, more of whom would attend full time--there would be fewer students but each would be taking more credits.

How will those students be recruited, it was asked? One Committee member said recruitment of non-resident students had not been considered; other Committee members pointed out that such recruitment was in fact part of the plan.

The discussion is circling a primary point: what does it mean to say that the University will offer a "world class educational experience"? What is it that attracts students to Berkeley, Michigan, and Wisconsin but not to Minnesota? In part it is the physical plant, but there must be some positive things about being a research university that would attract students (e.g., active researchers teaching all levels and sizes of courses, application of the latest research in teaching techniques, undergraduate participation in research). One can agree to that list [plus other things]; one of the major points students constantly make, however, is that they want more contact between undergraduates and faculty members and they want smaller classes. The University falls short in having "active researchers teach all levels and sizes of classes" and it isn't clear how that could be accomplished short of coercion. One faculty member (not on the Committee), it was reported, has suggested to the Consultative Committee that there be a University rule REQUIRING all faculty to teach at least one lower division course per year.

The language Professor Heller used in describing what it might to improve the Twin Cities undergraduate experience is active (uniform high standards for student achievement, provide opportunities for peer learning, provide contact with professors both in classes and in some informal settings, provide adequate classrooms, provide time for faculty to update their teaching methods, etc.). None of this kind of language appears in the strategic planning newsletter, however--it is all devoted to admissions and recruitment with nothing on teaching or the environment. This goes back to the point about trying to attract high ability students; if they are somehow "tricked" into coming here, what else will there be other than an increase in their numbers?

But, it was pointed out, education itself is better if the peer group is better--if one could wave a magic wand and change the student body, the education would be better.

The nature of the student body is because of the community, it was said. Students see themselves as working at a pizza place who also go to the University rather than as University of Minnesota students. If the University wants to draw high-ability students, it must get students whose life is identified with the University. Most drive to campus, take a class or two, know no one, and then go to work or home.

This plan addresses that problem in one way, observed one Committee member. If 80% of students

in the research university are to be full-time, that in effect achieves the change needed. Full-time students cannot work 30 or 40 hours per week; those who believe they must do so will be directed to UC. Commuters, however, will remain problematic. That could be addressed by requiring that students be residential; even full-time students will go home, it was rejoined, even if they don't work. With only 18% of the students residential, it is no wonder the campus is a ghost town in the afternoons.

One could also accomplish the end by building BARRIERS. Right now, for example, the class schedule makes it easy for students to work because courses are offered in blocks in the morning--a practice that meets student demand. One could respond to the problem in part by a scheduling fiat, scattering courses throughout the day, making it impossible for students to take classes and then leave--and in doing so simultaneously annoying virtually every student on the campus. Faculty members would prefer to scatter their courses more through the day, it was said in response to a query; the current schedule is NOT driven by faculty interests at all.

Simply allowing students to park on campus and study with friends would be a help, observed one Committee member. The difficulties of life on campus are such that students find it easier simply to go home. There has been talk, recalled another Committee member, of a residential college with classes in dorms and faculty members going to students. That could be accomplished at very little cost if private financing for housing could be obtained.

If the University requires full-time attendance and residence on campus, warned one Committee member, it will be cutting off a significant number of students if financial aid is not increased. There has been talk about the University not being a small elite liberal arts college--the reason many students are at the University is because they cannot AFFORD an elite liberal arts college. If residency and full-time enrollment are required, the University will become ELITIST. Those who attend the elite institutions, it was added, obtain grants and loans and attend them because they want to. Eventually that would have to be the case here, because students could not work much.

The implication of the plan, said another, is that students will attend the University by obtaining loans and grants because working will not be possible. This brings up a related point: the University employs a huge number of students but in a way that is not coordinated. At private institutions the aid package includes a student job and the financial aid office knows what jobs there are. If student employment were coordinated with financial aid the University could better help students.

The question one might pose, said a Committee member, is if one is a parent with kids who are going to college, what is it about the University that would attract or repel them? What does one consider as a parent? How many faculty members send their kids to the University? There are not many. Is the educational environment serving students the one the University wants? One hears that it is not. What is the University's tradition? Academic excellence? A commitment to students? Does it have adequate resources? What is its commitment to one's children? None of this Committee member's children attended the University, although some thought was given to Wisconsin--what is different about it? Clearly the environment is different, although the academic tradition may not be. What needs to be done to transform the University into a place where faculty would send their own children? One cannot change tradition but the University can address questions of resources, the environment, and commitment to students. Can it change enough so parents are happy sending their kids here?

There is NO doubt, averred one Committee member, that the University has a strong faculty. That is not open to question. The most important factor for the undergraduate experience is that students be full-time on campus together. The University of Chicago is a very good example; one never sees faculty in the evenings but it provides an outstanding intellectual experience. Columbia and Chicago are institutions the University could have learned from, suggested another Committee member.

Those are private institutions with very small undergraduate populations that are very expensive, it was rejoined, and those circumstances would be VERY difficult to duplicate here. They also draw from the top 1% of classes while the University is seeking students from the top 20%. It does not make sense to compare the University with Chicago, it was also said, because the University is public and urban with a large student body. But one can ask how the University might move in, or be pulled in, the direction of Chicago or Columbia--without denigrating it because it does not replicate those places. Whatever is done, it must also be recognized, will take place over the long term.

It has been said over and over that the University must attract the top students. What will it do to make itself more attractive to them? It will not get increased state funds because the University has had bad PR with the legislature. (It was later suggested that the University's relationship with the legislature is quite good, in fact, and that the problem is the state budget problems along with the decline in the priority of higher education in state appropriations--both in Minnesota and across the country.) That may be true, it was said, but we have to give students credit--they don't come to the University because they have a place to park. One thing that students are told by some faculty is that the size of the University is an ADVANTAGE--students can do just about anything here, with some of the best faculty in the country. If the University were to figure out a way to get research faculty into the classroom, that would be a major drawing card for students from across the country.

The University's budget will not increase and this plan seeks to change with constant resources. If something costs money, the University must stop doing something else. As Dr. Infante has pointed out, ultimately that means terminating people.

There must be a view of where the University is going to get; doing more with less is not specific. If one thinks of a community of scholars, with students on campus, more dorms, and research faculty teaching courses, the faculty must be encouraged, with a rifle if necessary, to teach undergraduates, even if only once every two years.

Committee members then mulled over possible questions about the plan that could be brought to the Faculty Forum:

- How student life can be changed so students will want to be here
- How the classroom environment can be improved
- How to reward or provide incentives for faculty to teach in the undergraduate curriculum; if the rewards value research, those who teach will be slighted

There are an infinite number of possibilities of where the University might go; one way to proceed is to start at the end, which is students graduating with a degree. If, for example, the degree is from the research university, the teaching requirements should be the same as a traditional university.

To the assertion that the questions should be about the concept, not how to accomplish it, one

Committee member responded that there is nothing in the box now--which is part of the problem, because while much of what one sees here is desirable, the concept is only as valuable as its applications. But there are some things in the box, pointed out another Committee member, noting the items set forth in the strategic planning newsletter (e.g., 80% of the students in the research university should be in the top 25% of their class and the student body should be predominantly full-time and degree-seeking). To say there is nothing here means one is talking about mechanics--and to let mechanics get in the way of implementing a good idea is the reason most things do not happen in higher education.

Other questions that could be posed to the President include amplification of points, perhaps even with three or four possibilities. For example, how might the University be structured differently under the plan? How would different student populations be served differently? What are the possibilities for low-cost or cost-free changes to improve services to students? Who will the faculty of UC and the research university be? How would the faculty be organized?

These are important questions, said another Committee member. At first faculty were enthusiastic about the plan because it appeared that at last the University could focus on what is important in the research university without closing the door to other students. As time goes on, however, alarm and cynicism are growing--if courses are to be inloaded to save money, that would be a disaster for the research faculty.

It was agreed that Committee members would submit questions to Professor Heller, who distribute them to other Committee members and also attempt to draft Committee questions for consideration at the meeting next week.

3. Morse-Alumni Awards

Professor Heller then turned the attention of Committee members to the materials related to the Morse-Alumni awards that had been distributed in advance of the meeting. SCEP, he recalled, has the responsibility of appointing the committee that judges the nominees; that committee recommends the award winners to SCEP, which makes the final decision.

Committee members reviewed briefly the history and nature of the award and the criteria by which nominees were judged. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the existing policy governing the awards.

It was agreed that the Committee would designate the members of the nominating committee at its meeting on October 20. It was also agreed that the nominating committee should consider ways to ensure that all faculty members are notified of the award.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:30.

-- Gary Engstrand