

Minutes\*

**Senate Committee on Educational Policy**  
**Wednesday, September 25, 1996**  
**1:00 - 3:00**  
**Room 238 Morrill Hall**

Present: Laura Koch (chair), Elayne Donahue, Darwin Hendel, Gordon Hirsch, Judith Martin, Cleon Melsa, William Van Essendelft, Gayle Graham Yates

Regrets: Avram Bar-Cohen, Anita Cholewa, Thomas Johnson, Robert Leik, Kathleen Newell

Guests: Senior Vice President Marvin Marshak

[In these minutes: The accreditation report; credits and courses under semesters; policies to be taken up during the year; discussion with Senior Vice President Marshak (reorganizations, student evaluations of teaching, other issues)]

Professor Koch convened the meeting at 1:00 and began by welcoming Professor Cleon Melsa, the new Committee member from the Crookston faculty. She also noted minor changes in the Morse-Alumni procedures proposed by Academic Affairs, which the Committee accepted.

**1. The NCA Accreditation Report**

Professor Koch then asked Dr. Hendel to review the accreditation report from the North Central Association of Colleges (NCA).

Dr. Hendel started by pointing out that the NCA team has recommended re-accrediting the University for another ten years; the recommendation has to be reviewed by the appropriate levels in the NCA.

The NCA recommended a focused site visit to the Twin Cities campus during 1999-2000 to look at three issues: changes in the Academic Health Center and the sale of the University Hospital; the status of internal management and governance systems, including the Board of Regents; and progress on re-engineering the major management systems. The team wanted to see how the University is progressing on these major fronts.

The team visited the campus in May, which was not a calm time, and met with dozens of people. It is no surprise to see comments in the report about the incredible amount of change occurring at the University. The team did not see that as a weakness, but did want to return in three years to see how the University was handling it.

The site visit team identified several issues for the University to consider, Dr. Hendel reported;

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several of them fall within the Committee's bailiwick. One is assessment of student academic achievement, especially with respect to the change from quarters to semesters. The concern about assessment of student learning is common to many accrediting associations right now, and the concern is not about individual courses but about what the student has learned at the point of graduation. Other SCEP issues include distance education and the University's relationship with MNSCU.

The NCA report and the University's response to it are all available publicly.

Committee members then asked Dr. Hendel about various issues associated with the report.

- The team report and the formal response will be the starting place for the review in ten years.
- The three-year second visit is not unusual, and has nothing to do with the change to semesters; one year is too soon and five years is too close to the next visit. The 3-year lag also gives the new president a chance to establish an agenda. The team concluded that what it saw would not be easily verifiable in a report, so recommended a visit. Dr. Hendel did allow that such a visit is somewhat unusual for institutions such as the University. In reality, however, the University is not alone in making changes, but it may be facing the greatest and most rapid changes.
- When the team visits in three years, it will have options for action in the three areas it identified for scrutiny. The accreditation is for the entire campus, however, not a part of it. If, in the three areas of interest, the situation has worsened in one or more of them, the team could recommend that the University not be accredited for the full 10 years but should be reviewed sooner (this is not likely), or the team could continue to express concern.
- There is a disconnect, in student academic achievement, between the administration's view of U2000 and departmental implementation of it; given everything else going on, this is not an issue that people are paying attention to right now. It is not clear anyone can do anything about it.

The Committee discussed ways in which the report might be used. The 1986 report was largely lost, but it was followed by the unraveling of the administration. In this case, the University needs to identify salient issues and find ways to bring them to the awareness of the University community; they should be highlighted in the strategic planning process. It was noted that the administration and Board of Regents must also take up the report; the faculty cannot act on it alone.

The Committee congratulated Dr. Hendel on his work with the site visit.

## **2. Credits and Courses**

Professor Koch next recalled, apropos discussions that have occurred, that SCEP felt strongly that most semester courses should be 3 credits. Some believe CLA and other units will be compelled to offer 4-credit courses, because IT will be doing so. The question of faculty workload in CLA has also arisen, because it has been said that for CLA faculty, four semesters courses per year would be taught (which is equivalent to six courses per year with the quarter system). The question is whether faculty workload will be measured in courses or in credits. For a number of faculty, this raises questions of increased faculty workload. It was SCEP's position that the change to semesters should NOT increase faculty workload.

The Committee discussed for some while the question of workload. It was noted that SCEP proposed standards to the Senate, which the Senate adopted; it is now up to the colleges to implement them. The credit module question is not a workload issue per se, but it could have implications for workload. If IT prefers 4-credit courses, that may reflect labs; all courses must go through collegiate review and must meet the Senate standards; if courses are 4 credits, the faculty must teach more. It was noted that if the 4-credit module is widespread, there will be a significant drop in the number of courses offered; there could also be a cost to departments, if students take four 3-credit courses under semesters, versus four 4-credit courses under quarters.

It was noted that this would not be a problem at Crookston, where faculty are expected to teach 12-14 credits per quarter, with 14-18 contact hours, plus a minimum total for the year. Three 4-credit courses or three 4-credit courses are exactly the same.

It was agreed that SCEP should have a meeting with college representatives to discuss this issue on November 6. [To be scheduled later Fall Quarter]

### **3. Tasks for the Year**

Professor Koch reviewed a number of items in front of the Committee.

- The grading policy is before the campus assemblies; Morris passed it, Crookston has indicated it will do so [has now done so], Duluth appears to be favorably inclined. It will be brought to the Twin Cities Campus Assembly in October [where it was approved, on October 16].
- Professors Koch and Martin will revise the proposal for the Twin Cities Campus Undergraduate Curriculum Committee.
- On the transfer policy and the policy on credits for work outside of regular courses, it was agreed that Sam Lewis, Linda Ellinger, and Carol Klein should be asked to join the Committee to discuss them.
- On international education, it was agreed that Michael Metcalf and others should join the Committee.
- On the housing policy, it was agreed that it should be reviewed with the housing officers during winter quarter.
- On the policy on college/department reorganization, it was agreed the policy would be brought before the Committee on November 13; Professor Martin will bring a draft for discussion.
- On prospective students, it was agreed the Committee would take up the policy on November 27; Professor Koch and Mr. Sigler will develop a draft.
- On policy on credits and degrees, it was agreed the Committee would have a draft policy from Dr. Hendel and Professors Bar-Cohen and Johnson on December 4. The policy will also include

discussion of naming of degrees. Honors degrees will also be included.

#### **4. Discussion with Senior Vice President Marshak**

Professor Koch now welcomed Senior Vice President Marshak to the meeting, and told him the Committee wished to hear about what is occurring in reorganization. The Committee heard about it last year, but does not know the end of the story.

Professor Marshak said it was his understanding that the merger of Education and Human Development with Human Ecology was not going forward, and said he has heard nothing about it recently. The reorganization of the biological sciences is proceeding; there was concern whether the cease and desist order would affect it, and it may affect some aspects of the reorganization. Educationally, however, the reorganization makes sense.

The only other issue is the question of underprepared students and further review of the General College situation; the Regents have requested that it be addressed. What is the role of the University with respect to underprepared students? If it has a role, how many such students should it take on? If it has a role, how will it best serve those students' needs? Through cooperation with MNSCU and its metropolitan campuses? There are a number of questions that need to be answered, Professor Marshak said.

There must be an exit strategy, he told the Committee; if students are not doing well, in any unit, the University should not say "go away" but should direct them to another program.

There have been discussions between Provost Shively and Dean Taylor, but there is need for more organized discussion and decision, in order that the Regents' concerns can be addressed.

Professor Marshak then turned to a list of issues he had prepared for discussion with SCEP.

The first three come from Dr. Brenner's office: intellectual property, (discussion of which has been postponed because of the cease and desist order), conflict of interest, and professional commitment. Professor Marshak briefly commented on each.

Other topics now being discussed administratively include:

- changes in the libraries, including a decrease in the number of journal subscriptions and fewer open hours (especially during breaks)
- grants management training (the University told NIH it had policies and practices, and then departments tell NIH they don't follow them)
- distance education, a subject of worry for the private institutions: if cognitive education can be delivered "just in time," 24 hours per day, on demand, how will they justify charging \$30,000 per year for a traditional education? The answer is student-student and student-faculty interaction. What universities really run is a pressure cooker: put together students and faculty and turn on the heat. Students learn self-esteem, communication, about working together, resolving disputes, and

so on. For cognitive learning, in courses where 70% of the students are in class and 30% taking them on the web, there is no difference in result. That kind of education will be a commodity, with low time value. Distance education needs to be understood, Professor Marshak said.

In terms of authority to grant degrees, doing so through distance education remains a question. The western governors' "virtual university" is supposed to be recognized by everyone. The provosts believe that the value of higher education at the University is the pressure cooker phenomenon, not mass courses. The emphasis must be on small classes, writing, presentations, and so on. If it can be worked out, Professor Marshak said, faculty would have more time to work with students.

- Intra-university transfers are something Admissions wishes reviewed. There are barriers all over the University (e.g., if one is in IT and has a GPA of 2.49, one cannot transfer to CLA and into certain majors, but if one is a CLA student with a 2.49, one can get into the same major); if these barriers are to exist, they should be limited and the reasons for them articulated. Students should not be penalized because of the college in which they initially enroll.
- Transfer credit policies need review because MNSCU now includes technical colleges; their four-year institutions recognize credit from the technical colleges while the University does not. This needs attention.
- Honors programs are attractive and help in recruiting high-ability students, and so does honors housing. The housing office has a bias against honors housing; what educational policy is in play? Should there be an honors housing cluster? More honors programs?

Discussion then turned to the use of student evaluations of teaching. Professor Marshak noted that one college makes the results available to students, by waivers granted by faculty; the question, he observed, is whether or not this is a coercive process.

One Committee member recalled that there have been twenty or more years of effort to make information available to students so they can make decisions about what courses to take. How useful the information really is is open to question, but there is increased pressure to make the evaluation results available. There is probably no evidence available on whether students use the information in appropriate ways.

It is to be hoped, said one Committee member, that students are told that the numbers mean almost nothing, and that an instructor "must be a real bozo to be ranked below `good.'" The difference between "extraordinary" and "good" is quite modest.

Professor Koch thanked Dr. Marshak for joining the meeting, and then adjourned it at 3:00.

-- Gary Engstrand