

Minutes*

**Faculty Assembly Steering Committee
Monday, May 18, 1998
2:00 – 4:30
Dale Shephard Room, Campus Club**

Present: Victor Bloomfield (chair), Kent Bales, Carole Bland, Gary Gardner, Russell Hobbie, Laura Coffin Koch, Fred Morrison, Matthew Tirrell

Absent: Mary Dempsey, Virginia Gray, David Hamilton, M. Janice Hogan, Leonard Kuhi, Marvin Marshak

Guests: Executive Vice President Robert Bruininks, Vice Provost Craig Swan; Senators from the professional schools

Other: Deb Cran (Academic Affairs)

[In these minutes:

1. Discussion with Executive Vice President Bruininks

Professor Bloomfield convened the meeting at 2:00 and turned to Dr. Bruininks for a review of the issues at hand.

Dr. Bruininks raised a number of issues with the Committee, including the libraries, consultation on academic planning and intellectual directions for the University, the Campus Club, the five academic initiatives from the supplemental legislative request, and partnership degree program guidelines.

With respect to the libraries, Dr. Bruininks reported that he has appointed a task force on the needs and future of the University libraries, and discussed with the Committee the financial and use pressures on the libraries and their role in the state (including Law and the bio-medical libraries). Committee raised with Dr. Bruininks the question of the cost of journals and how that might be changed. The impact of IMG was considered, and how an increase in the number of students increases library usage. It was agreed that the needs of the libraries have become a major issue that needs attention, and that additional funds are needed for them.

With respect to consultation on academic directions, Dr. Bruininks suggested that the incoming and outgoing chair and vice-chair of FCC serve as a small, ad hoc group to identify how such consultation might be effected. The Committee discussed with him who might best participate in such consultation and how it might be structured. There was agreement that the focus should be intellectual vision and future, rather than management and budget, and that whatever the mechanism, it should not conflict with or usurp the normal governance functions of Senate committees. Such consultation could, for example, advise on, or develop, the kinds of ideas that made up the initiatives in the legislative request, as well as

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address longer-range issues. In the past, Dr. Bruininks observed, there have been ad hoc groups to deal with long-term issues, and he urged that the kind of consultation being considered be more permanent. Committee members supported this idea but emphasized that it was important not to dilute or replace the voice of FCC and other Senate committees, particularly Finance and Planning, which already has the assigned responsibility of participating in University planning.

With respect to the Campus Club, Dr. Bruininks spoke about the financial status of the Club and how it might be configured with the proposed remodeling of Coffman Union. There was agreement that the Club should be continued.

With respect to the five initiatives (molecular and cellular biology, digital technology, new media, agricultural research, and design), Dr. Bruininks assured the Committee once again that the ideas came out of the capital request (i.e., academic plans were linked to capital plans), from mapping out trends, and from existing college plans. Planning for the five initiatives will be launched shortly, with work groups and target budgets. The plans will be tied to the compact process, and the funds will follow the plans.

With respect to partnership degree programs, Dr. Bruininks distributed a draft document setting out proposed guidelines that had been prepared by a group he had appointed. He said he has sensed there is confusion about the degree programs that needs to be clarified, and it should be made clear what is the appropriate role for a research university in partnerships with MNSCU colleges and universities. In order to respond to faculty concerns, the document will go to Senate committees for review, and then for wider distribution. It was agreed that FCC members should read the document, that Professor Koch (who served on the drafting committee) will highlight the issues to which FCC may wish to attend, and that it would also be taken up by the Committee on Educational Policy.

Professor Bloomfield thanked Drs. Bruininks and Swan for joining the meeting.

2. Discussion with Senators from the professional colleges and schools

Professor Bloomfield next welcomed a number of the Senators from agriculture, natural resources, architecture, and the Humphrey Institute, and explained that the Twin Cities members of FCC have begun meeting with Senators from the colleges on the campus to learn of issues of concern to the faculty. After a round of introductions, he asked that the Senators highlight the key issues they are hearing about from their colleagues.

Those present mentioned several items, and there appeared to be considerable agreement among the Senators from the various colleges on the issues of importance.

- Faculty salaries. Even with the excellent increases obtained for faculty for two years, faculty are still well below their peers. Faculty morale has increased, but it could be better, and this is an issue that needs to remain on the forefront. Faculty in one unit, when surveyed, overwhelmingly preferred an additional 2% in salary increases (rather than only the 6% allocated by the administration) over increased faculty support, and creation of new positions was the third priority.
- Improvement in faculty appointments for non-tenure-track faculty, and the balance between tenure/tenure-track and adjunct faculty.

- The impact of IMG on interdisciplinary programs. What may be in the best interest of the University may not be in the best interests of the units under IMG.
- With respect to IMG, for professional programs broadly, low enrollment courses and costly programs at both the graduate and undergraduate level. They are necessary, but IMG has not wrestled with their problems. These programs also rely heavily on other colleges, and often cannot themselves have large classes (e.g., because of limits in laboratory spaces). They could begin offering large undergraduate courses, to generate revenue, but that would not necessarily be sound academic practice. They may also focus on more mid-career and life-long learning options.
- The role of research in relation to other faculty tasks. How can faculty sustain a research program when the incentives of IMG are to teach more? What about the instances where a college permits a faculty member to buy out teaching – or where the financial incentives DRIVE faculty to buy out their teaching, because they can generate more funds in research grants? It is to be hoped that the University does not forget what it is about, try only to get more bodies, and downplay research in a consumer-based system. It was suggested that FCC develop a white paper on research at the University.
- Projections suggest there will not be significant increases in the traditional college-aged population; if the University is to have a larger audience, it must be through life-long and mid-career education. Professional schools do that more than other units, and are more accustomed to teaching at the convenience of clients and offering targeted courses. Competition can lead to more offerings in an effort to generate revenues. This can create considerable pressure on faculty to work all the time, and there is need for discussion of how the culture has no built-in provision for relaxation and flexibility. The question of the nature of the workload with distance education, compared to traditional on-campus, in-class instruction, is also a concern. Time is money, space is money, and everyone must hustle. That is bad policy and bad culture. But the culture seems not to encourage interaction or to allow relaxation.
- Faculty are concerned about teaching versus research, individual versus team efforts, and the impact of IMG on cross-college efforts, but the reward system is still oriented to what research the faculty member does himself or herself and what class ratings they receive. Until there is more flexibility in the system, it will not change; FCC should look at how to broaden the evaluation of what faculty do.

Professor Bloomfield thanked everyone for coming, and adjourned the meeting at 4:30.

-- Gary Engstrand

University of Minnesota