

Senate Committee on Educational Policy (SCEP)
November 6, 2019
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:** Graduate Education Update; Liberal Education Update]

PRESENT: Jennifer Goodnough (chair), Toni Abts, June Carbone, Thomas Chase, Dan Delaney, Stacy Doepner-Hove, Sara Hurley, Scott Lanyon, John LaVelle, Danya Leebaw, Bob McMaster, Nathan Mukai, Robert Poch, Katherine Scheil, Jacob Smiley, Nevin Young

REGRETS: Brian Sick

ABSENT: Kriti Agarwal, Julia Brokaw, Otto Johnson

GUESTS: Noro Andriamanalina, director, Academic & Professional Development, Graduate Education

OTHERS: Etty DeVeaux, chief of staff, Graduate Education; Leslie Schiff, associate dean, Undergraduate Curriculum, Office of Undergraduate Education; Karen Starry, assistant to the vice provost and dean, Graduate Education

Chair Jennifer Goodnough called the meeting to order. She reminded members of the conversation at the previous meeting regarding late course cancellations and the impact on teaching assistants, and said that it had come up at the Faculty Consultative Committee during a discussion of the Administrative Policy: *Hiring Graduate Assistants*. She reported that Kathy Brown, vice president, Human Resources had agreed it was a problem and promised to work on it.

1. Graduate Education Update

Goodnough then turned the floor over to Scott Lanyon, vice provost and dean, Graduate Education. Lanyon first provided an [update](#) on the [Graduate School Strategic Plan](#), noting in particular that diversity is a priority.

Lanyon next explained that in 2009 when the Graduate School was decentralized, resources and responsibilities were moved from the Graduate School to the colleges, but it is unclear whether the responsibilities are being fulfilled consistently at the college level. Karen Starry, assistant to the vice provost and dean, Graduate Education, said that a survey would be going out to the college graduate coordinators in order to gather information on what is being done in each college. The policies that have local (collegiate and/or graduate program) responsibilities following the 2009 decentralization of graduate education are:

- [Application of Credits for Students Earning Graduate Degrees](#)

- [*Appointments as Director of Graduate Studies*](#)
- [*Credit Requirements for Master's and Doctoral Degrees*](#)
- [*Doctoral and Master's Degree Completion policies*](#)
- [*Doctoral Degree: Performance Standards and Progress*](#)
- [*Eligibility to Serve on Graduate Examination Committees*](#)
- [*Leave of Absence and Reinstatement from a Leave: Graduate Students*](#)

In total, there are 23 new collegiate/program responsibilities associated with these seven policies, said Starry.

Goodnough asked what happens if the survey reveals that colleges are not fulfilling the responsibilities, and whether the responsibilities are things that could cause trouble for the University if they are not being done. Lanyon said that the Higher Learning Commission could have a problem with responsibilities related to eligibility to serve on a graduate exam committee and to teach graduate courses. Often, he explained, this is monitored at a central level, so colleges may not be aware of the requirements. Goodnough clarified that the policies related to graduate education are systemwide, and Lanyon confirmed.

Lanyon then notified the committee that results of the gradSERU are available via [Tableau](#) to anyone with a University internet ID. He showed the [Proficiency Gains: Skill Gains](#) jitter plot, and explained that each dot represents a different graduate program. The solid vertical line represents the simple average, and the dashed denote a 1.5 standard deviation. If a program is within the shaded area, it's generally doing fine. If it is a negative outlier, the program may want to investigate, said Lanyon. In addition, continued Lanyon, the gradSERU is useful for assessing the Graduate Education goals, with the caveat that it is student-reported.

Thomas Chase said that the open-ended comments are the helpful part of a survey, often, but noted that the comments are not available for public view for the gradSERU. Lanyon agreed, but said that due to privacy concerns, the comments cannot be shared without analyzing them, and that doing so is cost prohibitive. He added that there is a lot that can be learned from the data that is available. Furthermore, the Office of Institutional Research is working on an algorithm to categorize comments so that broad data about them can be shared.

Lanyon then pointed out that according to the Health and Wellbeing questions, 13% of students disclosed that they felt a lack of interest in doing things at least 50% of days; 25% reported feeling anxious/nervous at least 50% of days, and 20% reported being unable to stop worrying. These are standard measures to assess depression and anxiety, and are cause for concern, he said. While graduate school is inherently stressful, he continued, mental health is an important issue and there is a lot of unnecessary stress that can and should be mitigated. Additionally, when the data is broken down by certain populations (such as women in STEM fields, and other underrepresented populations), it is even more troubling. Lanyon encouraged people to focus on the experience of the individual, rather than the overall data.

Goodnough brought up the issue of training (or lack thereof) for teaching assistants that was discussed at the previous meeting. Lanyon said that under the Health and Wellbeing: Source of Stress question, teaching workload is listed as a source of stress.

Lanyon then directed the committee's attention to the question on Post-Degree Completion Plan, noting that 50% of students who wish to pursue a career in academia believe they will be able to secure a position as a faculty member at a research university. Only 10% of students feel that their advisor is supportive of or helpful in regards to non-academic careers. This is another area where there is a disconnect, he said. His office is currently working with an independent analytics firm to gather data on where the last ten years of PhD students and postdocs are now. Goodnough said that this may be an opportunity to take advantage of the system, and give students an opportunity to teach at Morris or Crookston to see what it is like to teach at a non-R1 institution.

Goodnough then asked whether it was possible to see data on students who left without obtaining their degree, noting that if students are leaving due to stress and mental health concerns, that could motivate programs to improve in that area. Lanyon said that it is difficult to track students who leave without a degree, but there are some avenues they could look at.

Finally, Lanyon asked Noro Andriamanalina, director, Academic & Professional Development, Graduate Education, to talk to the committee about [digital badging](#). Andriamanalina explained that students can earn gold or maroon badges for different professional development or learning activities, and that people can click on the badge to see what the student did. The concept has been well-received by students, she said. Nevin Young observed that there are many entities on campus that could offer digital badges, and Lanyon agreed.

Hearing no further discussion, Goodnough thanked Lanyon for the update and turned the floor over to Bob McMaster, vice provost and dean, Undergraduate Education.

2. Liberal Education Update

McMaster gave the committee an update on the work of the Liberal Education Redesign Committee (LERC). He shared the committee's [draft report](#) and provided an overview of the [two proposed plans](#) that would be presented to the Faculty Senate the following day. He added that the third option was to retain the current liberal education curriculum as is.

McMaster then summarized the process by which the two plans were developed. First, he said, a pre-planning committee worked for two years to determine whether changes to the current liberal education curriculum were needed; this committee came to the consensus it was time to look at revising the curriculum. The LERC was then formed based on nominations from the faculty, and this body proposed three plans (A, B, and C), which were released during summer 2019. Over the summer, it became clear that B and C did not have support, and also Plan D emerged. It was created by an independent faculty body, not the LERC. The LERC then consulted with students, the Undergraduate Advisory Board, the All University Advising Committee, the Faculty Consultative Committee (FCC), and SCEP. They also held two live, open fora and established an online forum for providing feedback.

One of the main concerns voiced about Plan A, said McMaster, was that double certification would no longer be allowed. Nevin Young remarked that 26 liberal education credits without double certification would pose problems for engineering students. McMaster acknowledged this issue, but countered that many engineering students come to the University with a lot of credits already fulfilled. However, he noted, low income and first generation students are less likely to come in with a lot of credits. Goodnough wondered if any of the major courses in engineering disciplines could also fulfill liberal education requirements. Thomas Chase said that had been discussed, and it is not compatible with ABET requirements. He remarked that it would take years to figure out how to implement Plan A in the College of Science and Engineering (CSE).

Sara Hurley remarked that many students are coming in with First Year Writing fulfilled, but many are ill prepared on information literacy, how to do research, etc. She asked how to ensure that students coming in with First Year Writing already fulfilled know how to do research. McMaster said that this has always been an issue and it will likely continue to be one. First year Writing is increasing from three to four credits, which will help, added McMaster, but it also that sections will need to be added.

Robert Poch asked why double certification is such a big issue. McMaster replied that there has been a problem with double certification being forced in order to boost course enrollment, and the LERC felt that was not in the best interest of pedagogy and learning. Some LERC members changed their minds when Plan D came out, he added. Poch then asked how undergraduate students feel about the issue, and McMaster conceded that the students are pretty strongly opposed to getting rid of double certification.

With regard to oversight of the liberal education curriculum, McMaster said that the Council of Liberal Education (CLE) would probably still exist, but it has been proposed that at least two experts approve disciplinary inquiry courses. Thematic inquiry courses would involve a new concept, faculty interest groups. Young pointed out that if only two people are deciding on disciplinary inquiry courses, there might be a perception that it is not fair. For example, he said, it is highly unlikely that all colleges that feel they have a stake in biological sciences could be represented with only two individuals. Goodnough noted that there is a similar issue at Morris; there is a high bar for teaching a course approved for Historical Perspectives if the instructor is not a historian.

Poch commented that his discipline is educational history, which is inextricably entwined with civil rights history. It is impossible to teach educational history without focusing on diversity and justice.

Finally, McMaster noted that the liberal education curriculum would likely henceforth be called the general education or core curriculum.

Goodnough asked if any changes to the liberal education curriculum would apply to Rochester. McMaster said that Rochester opted out of the Twin Cities' liberal education curriculum a few years ago, so would not be affected. Goodnough then wondered if Rochester has its own faculty

governing body to make decisions regarding curriculum, or whether the Faculty Senate is in fact that body. No one knew the answer to that question. She then asked if Rochester has representation on the Faculty Senate, and if so, whether they can vote on this issue. Amber Bathke, senate associate, University Senate Office said that they do have senators on the Faculty Senate, but they are not part of the Twin Cities Delegation and therefore would not be able to vote on the Twin Cities liberal education requirements.

Hearing no further discussion, Goodnough adjourned the meeting.

Amber Bathke
University Senate Office