

Minutes*

**Senate Committee on Educational Policy
Wednesday, March 31, 1999
1:00 – 3:00
Room 238 Morrill Hall**

- Present: Judith Martin (chair), Shumaila Anwer, Darwin Hendel, Gordon Hirsch, Laura Coffin Koch, Darcia Narvaez, Kathleen Newell, Martin O’Hely, Jeff Ratliff-Crain, Palmer Rogers, Richard Skaggs, Suzanne Bates Smith, Thomas Soulen, Steven Sperber, Craig Swan
- Regrets: Robert Johnson, Christine Maziar, Tina Rovick
- Absent: Laura Beauchane, Angela Bos
- Guests: Professor C. Eugene Allen; Executive Vice President Robert Bruininks
- Other: Linda Ellinger (Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost)

[In these minutes: international education and exchange programs; reorganization policy; improvement of the teaching and learning environment; peer evaluation of instruction; communication of decisions and grading matters]

1. International Education

Professor Martin convened the meeting at 1:00 and welcomed Dr. C. Eugene Allen, Director of the Office of International Programs (OIP).

Dr. Allen reported that he had met with the subcommittee of SCEP charged with reviewing the policies governing international education and exchange programs. Much in those policies does not make sense and they need modification. He and the subcommittee agreed that international programs should be on the SCEP policy agenda, and that SCEP should interact with the Office of International Programs about issues and concerns related to such programs. As result of the work with the SCEP subcommittee, a major re-write of the Senate policy language concerning international education has been prepared.

There have been many changes in international education, Dr. Allen commented. His office is now dealing with about one exchange agreement per day, so they are very busy. The University has a good "brand name," and many want exchanges with it, so it is a matter of match-making. His

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office must be very careful about all-University agreements, because reciprocal student exchange agreements are VERY expensive to administer, especially when the University can already place students in many different universities. The University has asked for funds from the legislature to increase scholarships to place students in study abroad, and it is optimistic about receiving at least some of the funds.

The draft document prepared for the Committee describes the kind of exchanges that exist and the philosophy of his office, which is to encourage departments and colleges to do what they believe appropriate. OIP is there to provide assistance and, sometimes, cautions. EVERY agreement, for example, should have an escape clause in the event it does not work out.

Dr. Allen said he would like to raise annually with SCEP issues related to a variety of international program issues. For example, when tuition went into a more common pool, it did not matter what area exchange students selected for study on campus. With IMG and the tighter linkage of tuition to colleges, things have become much more complex in reciprocal exchange agreements.

At the graduate student level there have been very few all-University exchange programs. As these become more common, questions must be asked about how students fit into the University's graduate programs (e.g., language considerations, lab needs). OIP also expects to see more Minnesota graduate students who want to go abroad.

Committee members raised with Dr. Allen a number of questions.

-- Requiring the Senate to approve exchange agreements makes the process very awkward; although present policy requires such approval, the policy has not been followed. The President signs all-University agreements. It is entirely appropriate to take the Senate out of the approval process, and replace it with annual reporting, although the report should be for more than 30 minutes once a year.

-- What is the role of OIP? It should know about all the agreements that are signed (which it does not now always know). It can be helpful to departments in establishing workable agreements; departments do not have to learn everything anew; OIP is the network office and can help provide examples or answers. OIP also plays a monitoring and sensing role, once agreements are in place, to identify what is working and what is not. It also hears from students in the programs.

-- It was noted that whenever the University offers a degree at an international location, it is expected to obtain North Central Association approval before delivering it. This led to discussion of the possibility of multiple colleges/universities might work cooperatively at one site elsewhere in the world; China is one such place. If a few such sites could be identified, establishing programs might bring additional momentum to international activities, and perhaps lead to an on-site coordinator who could develop networks and connections that would assist both students and faculty coming to that country or area. This kind of effort could also include MnSCU, Dr. Allen agreed; the case would be stronger if it were to cross systems. The University, he pointed out, has tremendous contacts in hundreds of countries.

-- The University is not at the level it should be in terms of the number of students who study abroad. Without faculty and University help, and legislative funding, the University will never get to the numbers it should be at. Thought needs to be given both to capstone and introductory experiences in order to seed student participation. Faculty and advisors need to encourage students to consider study abroad from their first time at the University. The semester system will provide a great opportunity for study abroad experiences of a few weeks in duration between semesters and during May at the end of the second semester.

-- There are links with the private colleges in the state. But the University does not need any more reciprocal exchange programs, Dr. Allen said, because they are very expensive and logistically awkward to administer. The University has a great variety of programs to place students in study abroad--what it needs is a lot more students involved in study abroad. Faculty and advisors can be very helpful in encouraging students to make plans for study abroad experiences and in helping to create some short-duration group experiences associated with course work.

-- With the new semester calendar, it will be possible to have smaller study abroad experiences (e.g., during January or the Intersession); interested faculty can use those times, and legislative funds could provide more help. Other institutions have found a May term to be very useful.

Professor Martin said that SCEP would soon take something to the Senate concerning international education. She thanked Dr. Allen for joining the meeting, and invited him to return any time he wished.

2. Reorganization Policy

Professor Martin welcomed Dr. Bruininks to the meeting to discuss the reorganization policy. Dr. Bruininks reported that the draft policy had been shared broadly with staff in Morrill Hall and with the deans; the sense is that the policy should emphasize, as much as possible, that consultation is best done in the area where a change is being considered (e.g., discussion about merging departments should take place in the college). He said he had done some editing of the draft to achieve that end, with college changes to be reported to SCEP. He urged the Committee not to establish a policy which allows civil wars to be fought over and over, at all levels. Decisions need to be settled at one level, and the policy ought not create a whole new decision-making level where the losers can replay the battle.

Administrative reorganization is only one tool to get something accomplished, Dr. Bruininks pointed out, and it is not all that powerful. Others can be more effective, such as use of ad hoc processes, teams, and so on. It must be possible to use these tools as well, and to work with employees and leaders in a unit. The draft was too formalistic and scheduled, and offered the possibility of continuing a debate for too long, after people of good will have made decisions.

The idea of working with leaders and employees is a good one, said one Committee member, but this Committee has seen examples where that did not take place. The Committee

wants to be sure there is REAL consultation among those involved. Dr. Bruininks agreed, and said that a statement of this important principle should be in the document. It is often the case that the University writes policies so it does not make the same mistake again, but that can lead to pages and pages of regulations that strangle the University's processes and decision-making. The policy should speak to building and maintaining a civic culture, where people respect discussion and consultation. In all cases of moving, merging, eliminating, thought is required, people will have to change, and there is no perfect solution.

Dr. Swan noted that the deans believe that there could be cases where it would be a mistake to prescribe a process, but expect to require consultation with the FCC on the appropriate process.

3. Other Issues with Executive Vice President Bruininks

Dr. Bruininks then noted that the University has a range of activities to improve teaching and learning; in the aggregate, he said, they are less than they ought to be. One issue at hand is how to ensure intelligent investment to improve teaching and learning on all campuses and how to better leverage existing funding to improve these activities. Certain things must be in place to improve teaching, such as training and development of people and support for them, and a reward strategy that makes sense. Maintaining a good classroom learning environment is another, because it affects teaching. One approach is Classroom, Inc., an organizational strategy to ensure that resources are brought into alignment with what needs to be done, and appoint someone to care about the full range of issues that affect the teaching environment. The University owes this attention to its students and to its faculty; if its teaching is not good, students suffer, and the University suffers competitively.

What conceptual model and organization strategies should be used to improve the coordination and effectiveness of the way to improve the teaching environment and practices?

The same query can be directed at the University's outreach activities, which can be ignored--or people assume others are carrying them out.

Dr. Bruininks said he has also spoken with the deans about the problem of classes without classrooms and the possibility of putting departmental classrooms in the classroom inventory, which will permit them to be scheduled, but which allow departments to retain priority. In addition, Dr. Swan noted, some departments want to schedule classes at times different from the Senate-approved class schedule, which creates problems with the change to semesters and the construction that is taking place.

The question of the teaching and learning environment is more important than it was 10 or 20 years ago, Dr. Bruininks explained to the Committee. For example, if activities related to teaching and learning are scattered, how can the University effectively support investment in technology within classrooms? He said he would appreciate advice from the Committee on the appropriate strategy to address issues in teaching and learning and how the University might set priorities.

Professor Martin promised that the Committee would take up the matter this spring, and thanked Dr. Bruininks for joining the meeting.

4. Application of Policies to Transfer Students

Professor Martin turned next to Ms. Bates Smith, who served on a subcommittee to consider if changes for transfer students were needed in the uniform policies and practices adopted for the Twin Cities Campus last spring. Ms. Smith said the subcommittee found that no changes were needed for transfer students, but that some changes may be needed for distance education students.

Dr. Swan reported that the colleges have been looking at those 25 or 26 policies and have identified a few things that need changing. It is unclear which changes would need to go to the Assembly.

5. Peer Evaluation of Teaching

Professor Hirsch now reported for the subcommittee that evaluated the policy addressing peer evaluation of instruction. The existing policy is useful, he said, and should be retained. It is very laissez-faire, letting each unit decide how to approach the matter. The same questions about student evaluation of teaching arise also with respect to peer evaluation; there is controversy about how it should be done and about its validity. Still, the literature suggests that peer evaluation is a useful complement to student teaching evaluations.

The literature on the topic suggests that the most effective use of peer evaluation of instruction is in working with faculty to improve rather than to evaluate. There are, however, certain times (the promotion and tenure process, merit salary decisions) when the information is used for evaluation. The Senate policy does not emphasize a flying squad visit, though, but rather the collection of data from items such as syllabi and handouts. Faculty are also encouraged to assemble teaching portfolios or otherwise to reflect on their pedagogy. Some departments do collect such information as part of the review process.

The subcommittee concluded that some departments are doing a lot in peer evaluation of instruction while others are doing less, and some did it and later forgot to keep on doing it. The policy is sound. It is appropriate, five years after it was adopted, to remind faculty that this IS Senate policy, that it can be useful, that it should be part of the promotion and tenure process, and that it could be part of the merit review process. Emphasis should be on the constructive, collaborative, learning aspects of peer evaluation, and the punitive elements should not be stressed. Pedagogy needs to be part of the culture, and materials collected to encourage attention to it. Faculty could engage in mutual mentoring.

One Committee member agreed that the policy is a good one, but departments have a problem if they want to revise what they are doing in peer evaluation of instruction, or develop such

evaluation: it is not clear where they turn for assistance. This is related to Dr. Bruininks' point about how teaching and learning resources are scattered; there needs to be a better way to make the expertise available.

What about the faculty member who is good at undergraduate teaching but not so good at graduate instruction, or who is best at advising; has there been thought about evaluating in the areas where faculty perform best? That is a matter for department chairs, Professor Hirsch suggested. Perhaps, it was said, a booklet or suggestions could be prepared to help department chairs. It could also be a part of the Committee's look at the use of resources in teaching and learning.

This is a small part of teaching and learning, said another Committee member. Certain documentation is appropriate at certain times. There could be communication with departments that identify resources they could draw on; to some extent, this is also a collegiate responsibility. In some colleges, there are promotion and tenure committees which provide information on how to put together promotion and tenure documents, and the committees have the responsibility to document teaching in THEIR college. College autonomy is needed, but the administration can tell the colleges that it will not deal with personnel recommendations unless they consider teaching. One Committee member said promotion and tenure committees should be helped in understanding their role in this regard; another recalled that former President Hasselmo said promotion and tenure recommendations would not be considered favorably if there were not adequate attention to teaching in them--has that happened? (No one present at the meeting knew the answer to the question. Dr. Swan noted that recommendations come to central administration late in the game, and in a practical sense, it does not have the same leverage as a college committee would have.)

It is not expected that peer evaluation would occur annually, said one Committee member, but rather it should be done at certain points (unless a department wishes to use the evaluations for annual merit evaluations). Some departments, it was observed, do allocate faculty effort on the basis of faculty strengths.

Professor Martin suggested that the Committee accept the recommendation that the policy stand as it now exists, and that it is to be hoped there is a mechanism in the colleges to be sure they attend to evaluations of teaching. Dr. Swan added that the Committee could recommend to the Executive Vice President that he remind deans and chairs that these policies about evaluation of teaching exist, and that Professor Martin would write to him to that effect.

6. Communication of Decisions

Professor Martin reported that there had been a series of email exchanges with individuals on the Morris campus expressing concern about how Senate policies are being implemented.

Professor Ratliff-Crain explained that it is a matter of communication. There are concerns about changes with respect to the W and to repeating courses; information seems not to be getting to the right people. The campuses approved the Uniform Grading Policy, but now changes are being made without campus approval. There is confusion over what is policy and where units have

autonomy. On the matter of grades, he said, people need to be informed. One Committee member observed that "communication on the Twin Cities campus is not so great, either."

This is a question that often comes before FCC, said one Committee member: who is responsible to keep people informed about what goes on in the Senate, what is the role of a Senator, and from where is communication to come? It was noted that the staff to the Committee will be meeting with Vice President Gardebring on this very subject, and will report back to this Committee as well as to FCC.

Another problem is that some do not understand that what is reflected in the minutes is often only DISCUSSION, and that there needs to be clarity about what policy is, when it changes, and when changes are effective.

It was also said that the way policies are posted on the web can lead to confusion, because they may appear in several places, and are sometimes hard to find. Statutes are arranged by major area, and perhaps Senate policies should be as well.

It was clarified that there were no changes with respect to the W or the policy on repeating courses. SCEP had talked about such changes, but had not recommended any changes to the Senate. The only change approved since the original policy was adopted was that the S is to be equal to the C-.

Another issue, it was said, is that proposals and draft policies are sometimes not circulated in timely enough fashion to permit discussion with groups of faculty before the Committee takes them up. In some cases, moreover, the Committee may discuss a problem and suggest a solution, which the Registrar, for example, may take as a valid decision and implement it. Some decisions are thus made outside the Senate. There is also a Registrar's Advisory Committee which makes a lot of decisions outside this Committee; Dr. Swan said he would talk with Ms. VanVoorhis to be sure that important items are brought to the Committee.

Professor Martin adjourned the meeting at 3:00.

-- Gary Engstrand

University of Minnesota