

SENATE RESEARCH COMMITTEE*
Minutes of the Meeting
April 8, 1993

PRESENT: Paul Sackett (chair), Daniel Feeney, N.L. Gault, Sara Evans, Bob Jones, Anne Petersen, Eric Klinger, Essie Kariv-Miller, Signe Betsinger

REGRETS: John Basgen

GUESTS: WinAnn Schumi, Mark Brenner, Fay Thompson

The minutes of the last meeting were approved with noted clarifications.

The next meeting of the Research Committee is May 13, 11:00 - 12:30, 606 Campus Club.

Announcement

Professor Sackett announced that the Research Committee has been asked to nominate a member to serve as a judge in a contest sponsored by the University Building Energy Efficiency Project. Anyone interested should contact Professor Sackett.

Follow up Discussion on Human Subjects Committee (HSC)

Professor Sackett asked members if they thought there were any actions the Committee ought to take other than hearing Moira Keene's report and providing her with recommendations that were made at the last meeting? He summarized the key points made at the last meeting: 1) the issue of sensitivity in the tone of letters, particularly when the Committee is reviewing proposals from students; 2) asking the Human Subjects Committee to be careful in not going too far in evaluating research - the task of the Committee is not to pass judgement on the quality of a research proposal but on the protection of the human subject; 3) the revised Regent's Policy on the Use of Human Subjects will come before the Research Committee; and, 4) a self-evaluation.

With respect to item 4, Professor Sackett posed the question to the Research Committee whether it should be involved in a self-evaluation of the HSC. Professor Sackett suggested three possibilities of how the Committee might involve itself in the self-evaluation of the HSC:

- should the Committee be involved in the design of a mechanism employed to evaluate the HSC such as a survey to a sampling of investigators who send materials to the HSC?
- should the Committee encourage the HSC to conduct a self-assessment and request to see the results?
- should the Committee suggest that a statement such as the following be included on the

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required HSC forms: individuals with concerns regarding the process may contact the Senate Research Committee?

Professor Sackett asked the Committee for its input regarding the above suggestions. One member remarked that the third option seemed to be the most realistic since most committee members simply do not have the time. Another member added that the least cumbersome mechanism ought to be considered - the Committee needs to hear concerns, but that does not necessarily mean that another layer of bureaucracy needs to be added.

A considerable amount of time was spent on discussing procedures and practices relative to review activities.

Professor Sackett concluded that he would follow up with the HSC to inquire about a mechanism for getting information to people relative to concerns about the process.

Follow up Discussion on Guidelines for University-Wide Centers

Professor Mark Brenner distributed a revised draft of the Guidelines on University-Wide Centers.

He walked the Committee through the document, noting the revisions. Professor Brenner pointed out a recommendation made by the Research Committee that was not changed (bottom of page three). The question being whether the proposal (for new centers) and related documentation be submitted to the Vice President for Research. He said the only alternative would be to go to the academic vice president. The question is "where is the appropriate place to start?"

One member brought up the issue of publications for new centers. Vice President Petersen identified two issues relative to publications, especially in the framework of cost - 1) quality and 2) redundancy. Members spent some time discussing the issue of the use of funds (allocated to centers) for publications.

Professor Sackett turned the attention of the Committee to page five of the document - Centers' Life Span/Disestablishment. He suggested that "Deliberation on continued funding will be based upon these guidelines" be moved to the beginning of the document. One member suggested that it should be made explicit that it is University funding. Professor Sackett commented that it was not clear as to how the review of the center is to be initiated. Would the director of the center form a review team or will the Office of the Vice President of Research form a review team? Relative to the process, one member asked, "shouldn't the appropriate administrator approve the process?" Another member interjected that the administrator who approves the review should pay for the external review. Vice President Petersen commented that a good advisory group could serve that function (review).

The Guidelines will serve as a set of working principles not a Regents Policy. It is a shared set of values, concluded Vice President Petersen.

Assessment of Research Climate on All Campuses

Professor Eric Klinger brought before the Committee for discussion the issue of the assessment of research climate on all campuses.

Professor Klinger began by informing the group that he had brought this issue up for consideration as an agenda item last year. The basic notion, he said, is that although we are a major research university, there are a number of faculty who are under-productive in research. Some of the under-productivity is due to the institutional climate in the units in which they operate. The University could do better if it were to improve the climate, he said. The Research Committee has no systematic way of knowing what the climate is in the various units and therefore has no way of knowing what the problems are. The thrust, he said, is that somehow information needs to be gathered from the unit level and appropriate steps need to be taken to improve it. He identified several pressing reasons for this: 1) a long term structural issue - there are units who have developed an internal structure that is hostile to significant research; 2) some units have taken their instructional mission very seriously, but have responded to financial pressures by overloading themselves with instructional tasks with a result of under-productivity in the area of research; 3) the major move from top level administration to improve undergraduate instruction within the University - he said he is supportive of this but it should not happen at the expense of the research climate; and, 4) the University is at the beginning of a major generational shift, as the large cohort that entered in the 1960's begins to enter retirement age - we are going to need to be competing for able young faculty and will need to promote the research endeavors of the young faculty that the University has already attracted. This will be difficult, he said, unless we optimize the research climate within the University.

The question, he said, is "what do we do and how do we do it?" How can we best develop information that will let us know where the problems are; what the problems are; and, what kinds of University-wide policies might be developed?

Professor Sackett commented that all units undergo reviews - wouldn't these reviews uncover those areas where there is an issue of under-productivity? Professor Klinger responded that it might depend on how the review is conducted. Regardless, he said, the Committee is not systematically informed.

Vice President Petersen commented that this is an important issue and it relates to overall planning. She suggested one way to review this might be to look at the percentage of faculty bringing in research funding, keeping in mind that some areas do not have a chance for research funding. A survey might be another way to look at this, she said.

One member commented that the external reviews are very thorough and that this information is systematically known somewhere - probably in the Graduate School. It may not be hard to sort out the more and less productive units. Units have different missions, therefore, any measure developed would be difficult to apply across the University but easy to apply across discipline. Productivity can be viewed in terms of output -- publications in books and articles rather than the amounts of money brought in, she added. In terms of individual fellowships, the dollars are not going to be high, but the number of fellowships is very meaningful.

Yet another member commented, if there is an ongoing policy of review, if it is external and in-depth, then it seems that process ought to reveal the pressing reasons suggested by Professor Klinger.

Vice President Petersen explained that the program reviews that are being discussed are organized around graduate programs, but these reviews do not include Morris. She went on to say that Anne Hopkins has raised this issue relative to undergraduate programs and that it might be helpful to invite her to an upcoming meeting.

Professor Klinger thought it would be helpful to have the information as to how the reviews are performed.

Professor Evans commented that budgetary cuts will impact on research endeavors.

Professor Klinger added that it would be beneficial to get a systematic impact statement regarding the effects of retrenchment on research.

Professor Sackett stated that the Committee will continue these discussions at the May meeting.

Ken Zimmerman, Graduate School, was suggested as an individual who might be able to provide the Committee with information relative to the review process. Professor Brenner suggested inviting individuals from collegiate units that have made a concerted effort to change the research environment, such as Dentistry and/or the School of Nursing.

Academic Integrity Committee

Professor Mark Brenner brought before the Committee for information/review, a set of general principles of the Academic Integrity Committee. He reported that the committee has been meeting regularly since January. The Committee plans to address a number of important issues. These include examining several existing policies - a) the Disclosure Conflict of Interest Policy; b) the issues of external and internal consulting will be reviewed and set in one policy; c) a discussion, but not resolution, has taken place relative to a subset of the policy that will deal with commitment or conflict of time. It is anticipated that these policies will be completed by next year.

Professor Brenner discussed the changes in the Conflict of Interest document. One change he pointed out is the proposal to form an Institutional Review Committee. Professor Brenner commented that the Vice President for Research would have the authority to create subcommittees of specialization to conduct the review. Another change being recommended, he said, is to put in place proper controls for funds that come from other sources besides those that flow through ORTTA.

Vice President Petersen related to the Committee the activities of the Public/Private Partnership Task Force. She said it was designed as a companion activity for the internal committee - the Task Force is largely an external group. The Task Force was charged to develop principles with some recommendations. The Task Force recommends that a review committee review problematic arrangements (largely external). Part of the problem the Task Force identifies is the perception that the institution is behaving inappropriately. The final report is ready to be forwarded to the President. The Research Committee will receive a copy of the report. The report will go to the Board of Regents at the May meeting.

Vice President Petersen went on to discuss the Sea Grant activity. She said there is interest in moving the location of the director of Sea Grant to Duluth (part of the activities have been at Duluth). Concerns have been expressed relative to this proposal. She felt that the concerns regarding this move has to do with the way the issues were introduced as well as some underlying issues. The underlying issues are whether the move of the director's office would mean that Duluth would then conduct the same kind of research - would it mean that Duluth would be giving doctorates? She pointed out that Duluth already has research components - the ORTTA Office, and that there is significant funding in specific areas such as water.

She informed the group that a search is underway for a director of the Lake Superior Research Institute. She said the search has produced three strong candidates. She went on to say that a proposal to consider the move of the director will be put on the table. The position would continue to report to the Vice President for Research and activities would continue on this campus. She added that it is largely a grant making endeavor that has always included both campuses. She said that she has established a research advisory committee that consists of faculty from both campuses.

Vice President Petersen asked the Committee for its input relative to the proposal. With having little background information, Professor Sackett suggested that he work with her as to how the Committee might provide some input. Vice President Petersen emphasized that there has been no intent to bypass the governance structure relative to this issue. She added that she values the input of the Committee and would like to have a discussion as to the role of the Committee relative to issues that originate from the Research Office.

Meeting adjourned at 12:30 p.m.

- Vickie Courtney

University of Minnesota