Minutes[*]

Faculty Consultative Committee
Thursday, January 16, 1996
1:30 - 4:30
Room 238 Morrill Hall

Present: Virginia Gray (chair), Carl Adams, Victor Bloomfield, Sara Evans, Dan Feeney, Russell
             Hobbie, Laura Coffin Koch, Michael Korth, Fred Morrison, Harvey Peterson, Craig Swan,
             Matthew Tirrell

Absent: Carole Bland, W. Andrew Collins, Gary Davis, Michael Steffes

Guests: Professors Carol Chomsky, Edwin Fogelman; Senior Vice President Marvin Marshak

Others: Martha Kvanbeck (University Senate)

[In these minutes: legislative request, wiring classrooms, tenure proposals]

1.   Committee Business

Professor Gray noted that there were a number of housekeeping items to be dealt with, and the
Committee dispensed with them promptly.

2.   Discussion with Senior Vice President Marshak

Professor Marshak asked that the Committee go off the record for a discussion of the MALG
lawsuit, the tenure situation and the Board of Regents, and correspondence on IMG.

Professor Marshak told the Committee that there a number of factors aligned in favor of the
University at this legislative session. Even in the first few days, a new president is creating a new aura.
There is a feeling, both on editorial pages and at the Capitol, that higher education and the University
have "been kicked around" for several biennia and enough is enough. The Governor will make a
recommendation for a substantial amount of money for the University, although not what the University
requested. There has also been a positive reception to the University with respect to technology, and that
the University, as opposed to other organizations, is in a position to move the state ahead on technology.
The state also has substantial resources. This is not to say the University will do extremely well, but it
should do reasonably well, even if not obtain its requested increase. This makes him optimistic, he said,
because the ability of the University to increase quality depends on resources.

Professor Bloomfield inquired about rewiring the University for a new communications system.
That will require a lot of money, and it appears that wireless communication is coming along; would that
technology work in old buildings that are difficult to wire, and save money?

Professor Marshak said he has not looked at the issue, but noted that the Federal Communications Commission has made a substantial allocation of frequencies for such purposes, and it should be explored. The University is budgeting a considerable amount of money for wiring buildings; one member of the legislature inquired about the schedule for wiring residence halls. There is an interest in this, and it would be of great interest to save some of the $60 million for the effort.

If wireless communication worked, it would also help deal with a historically significant building, which there may be resistance to tearing down but which cannot be used in a modern way.

Professor Swan reported that the legislature had considered and rejected wireless communication within its own offices, primarily because of reliability.

The number for rewiring included buildings the University is scheduled to demolish, Professor Morrison noted, so there will be some savings on the budget. It may also be not necessary to rewire ALL buildings to highest bandwidth level possible.

Professor Marshak said one policy issue the Committee might consider is, if it is a priority to have high bandwidth in classrooms, whether money could be saved by aggregating those classrooms in a smaller number of buildings. There could be classroom buildings, with high bandwidth wiring in all the classrooms. The practice followed has been that classrooms should be distributed widely, departments should have offices and classrooms next to each other; it would be a different model to have classrooms aggregated. Since the costs are so high, it could save a substantial amount of money, because other buildings could perhaps be wired at lower bandwidth or could use wireless communications.

Professor Gray thanked Professor Marshak for joining the meeting.

3.   Tenure

Professor Gray distributed a document related to tenure and welcomed Professor Carol Chomsky to the meeting; she asked Professor Chomsky to provide a status report to the Committee.

Professor Chomsky said the committees would be ready to proceed at the January 23 Faculty Senate meeting. A number of small issues have been dealt with; there remain a few issues where the committees do not agree. The Tenure Subcommittee will consider one last version for approval, with alternative suggestions from other committees. She said she hoped materials would be sent out to Senators the following day.

Professor Fogelman noted that the version before the Committee does not include a proposal the Judicial Committee wishes to see adopted. The Judicial Committee favored inclusion of a provision for financial stringency at the college level (with appropriate protections), so faculty could decide to take salary reductions rather than cut positions from the college. It also appeared that financial stringency is redundant with financial exigency if it must be institution-wide.

Professor Chomsky reported that SCFA had not favored collegiate financial stringency, and the Tenure Subcommittee will likely forward to the Faculty Senate a version that does not have it, with an

alternative proposal from the Judicial Committee. Both will be presented.

Professor Chomsky said everyone is trying to get to the same place; the question is about the mechanism and whether there is sufficient protection.

Professor Feeney said the concern is the philosophical approach, whether selected units will be permitted to reduce salaries. SCFA worried that this might be used as an administrative means of planning (e.g., propose to cut 20% of a college's budget, and let the faculty decide, so cripple a unit 10% at a time rather than close it outright). But they also understand the Judicial Committee point of view, and the regents clearly want it. So they concluded it would be best to let the Senate decide.

Professor Fogelman said the Judicial Committee understood the proposal could be abused, so included protections, but there are legitimate instances--there have been examples at other institutions-- where a college faces the situation and would PREFER to have a temporary salary reduction than cut positions. They were not thinking about the regents as much as about flexibility for colleges. Professor Chomsky said she would include language about the proviso not being used for planning purposes.

Professor Gray then walked through the various proposals from the Tenure Subcommittee and asked if there were questions. Committee members discussed programmatic change and meaning of the term "program" and agreed some amendment was needed. The language on minor disciplinary sanctions could be controversial, Professor Morrison said; it may be seen as too limiting, and the question of where to have a hearing remains. The Judicial Committee said it should have them, so that is where they are, an intermediate kind of proceeding that is less complicated than removal for cause. There may be additional discussion of this issue, Professor Chomsky said. After review of various other points in the proposed code, the Committee thanked Professor Chomsky for joining the meeting.

4.   Lunches

Professor Gray inquired whether the Committee wished to have additional lunches with department heads and chairs and assistant professors. The earlier ones were poorly attended, Professor Koch observed; they would be more productive were they better attended.

It was agreed that there should be a meeting with Provost Cerra, with an invitation to members of the AHC provostal faculty consultative committee to attend.

Professor Gray then adjourned the meeting.

                                                                -- Gary Engstrand

University of Minnesota