

MINUTES*

SENATE RESEARCH COMMITTEE October 26, 1990

Present: John Sullivan (Chair), John Basgen, Signe Betsinger, Mark Brenner, Robert Herman, Robert Holt, Essie Kariv-Miller, Eric Klinger, Winfred Schumi, Jeffrey Weis, James Ysseldyke

1. Vice President for Research Dean Robert Holt

Professor Sullivan introduced Dean Holt and asked him to share his views on the matter of the Vice President for Research.

Dean Holt said that for the past eighteen months he has been coordinating the function of the Research Executive Council and explained how his role came into being. After President Hasselmo assumed his position he revived some academic priorities stated in the "Blue Book," including the concept of the Research and Technology Transfer Administration and the Research Executive Council. Previously there had been no systematic way of dealing with research related issues such as indirect cost recovery. Another issue the group dealt with was matches for larger center grants. Much grant money comes with the expectation that it will be matched. Often in order to get a grant a match was arranged using discretionary money, but then the funds became fixed with the research center and ceased to be discretionary. The decision was made to build in 0100 money over a five-year period so that if the grants were renewed the money was there and money intended to be flexible could truly be flexible. Now they have grants in which the matching amount is shown as a percentage so that if the grants increase the matching amount will increase accordingly.

Another issue to deal with was safety, Dean Holt said. Responsibility for safety was diffuse and some potentially very dangerous situations existed. There was a need for uniform monitoring of hazardous chemicals throughout their progress through the University, from delivery to final use. Many matters cross lines of collegiate and vice presidential responsibility. For example, the EPA wants to give the University environmental test plots near Monticello, with the University responsible for maintenance. Decisions regarding this should have faculty input, and the Research Executive Council is setting up faculty panels to make recommendations on the basis of scholarly merit. Major administrative areas are represented in staff discussions. When decisions relate to government policies, as the indirect cost recovery issue did, the Senate Research Committee is appropriately involved.

The Graduate School also works closely with private funding from the standpoint of academic priorities. At this time, for example, they are concerned with student aid as they consider the size of the University's future requests to the Legislature and the impact of the legislative allocations on the ability of students to attend the University. Thus the Graduate School will push for private fund raising in the area of student aid. There is an interface with several national associations, including three of prime significance: The Association of American Universities, the National Association of State Universities

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and Land Grant Colleges, and the American Council on Education. These organizations provide lobbying for issues that encompass the entire University. Dean Holt added that he does a good deal of work with such organizations. He is on the task force dealing with the Ph.D. shortage, particularly as it affects research. In the U. S., he said, there is little independent government-financed research; it is usually closely related to universities and graduate education. Many nations envy this aspect of the structure of American universities. The French in particular are asking for ideas on transplanting it into their context.

The question is what to call the person who will do what he has been doing over these past eighteen months, Dean Holt said. The office is set up and a seat exists on the President's Cabinet and Council. The existence of a focal point for research is important to both internal and external communications on research and related matters.

John Sullivan stated that it is very important for the position to have the power of a vice president's office to demonstrate where the policy-making function lies. Dean Holt added that he chairs the Research Executive Council because he was asked to do so; for the Vice President for Research this could be made a part of the charge. In large organizations, he said, change is evolutionary and things move to fill voids. There are a few primary types of organization; the one represented by Harvard, Johns Hopkins, and Chicago are essentially graduate universities but with strong undergraduate missions going back to their foundation; those with a provost-graduate dean structure, represented by Nebraska; those with a vice president for research or vice provost for research structure. Wisconsin does not assign a title to the person charged with research oversight; their titles are controlled by the legislature and this avoids a salary cap. Illinois, Indiana, and Iowa have the same person in both the vice president and vice provost roles. At Berkeley and Washington the positions are the same with slight variations. At Michigan and UCLA the offices of vice president for research and dean of the graduate school are separate, but at UCLA the dean is on the equivalent of the president's cabinet and at Michigan there is a separate council similar to the Research Executive Council here. Texas has a structure similar to the present structure here, but through the provost's office. Here at Minnesota, he added, the cabinet is so large that there is need of a smaller group to deal with research.

Professor Sullivan suggested that if there is no position called vice president for research the extent of the graduate school dean's involvement with research may depend on how the dean defines the job. Dean Holt said that this is possible, but there will be pressure from the President for the dean to deal with research. The linkage between research and finances is so close that it is hard for a dean not to be involved. The vice president for research role also tends to evolve into a financial role.

Eric Klinger asked about how Dean Holt's time is divided among the various aspects of his job. Dean Holt replied that there is little or no connection with research in the aspect involving student records, tracking, etc. Here he is involved only with regard to policy issues and problem cases (generally involving students from non-accredited institutions or foreign institutions whose transcripts require translation into terms corresponding to requirements here). In program review there is a close relationship between research and education. His role with the Research Advisory Council is almost entirely concerned with research and much less directly with graduate education. The problem involving time is that the Council is given tasks but not additional staffing. They have two half-time people they knew would give more than half time to the job and who, as experienced faculty people, would learn the job very quickly. Another problem has been a rapid turn over of associate deans - three in six years. The work load was incredible at the time Dean Brenner came on, he said, and there is still a back log from the past ten years that they are gradually chipping away at, including such issues as safety and off-campus

rental of research space. Despite the problems, he added, he is convinced it is important to keep research and graduate education together.

Professor Sullivan noted that the problems are partly a result of lack of staff and asked what the needs are. Dean Holt replied that he needs one more half-time position in student affairs and soft money for a secretary in Dean Brenner's office, plus possibly some additional administrative help. John Sullivan suggested that in negotiating with the new person staffing will be an issue. For faculty the addition of more administrative structure in a tight financial situation will also present an issue. Dean Holt agreed, but said that it will be much to the advantage of faculty to have research issues resolved. Developing clear policies will save time.

Asked by Signe Betsinger about the source of soft money, Dean Holt said that he has a little for the position of Dean Brenner's secretary and he hopes to harden this up. The pressure of the work load is so great that they have had a rapid turnover in the job: three people since the job began. The discretionary funds are soft at present. Committee members agreed that these staffing goals are not excessive, and John Sullivan suggested that the needs should be made clear to faculty across the colleges. The positions should not be limited to half time because the present incumbents who are called half time actually work more. He went on to say that a job description should be developed soon so that the new person will be in place to take over when Dean Holt leaves, avoiding an interim. Dean Holt said that the ads should be out by Christmas. Dean Brenner said that there is a need to be more proactive in graduate recruiting. In order to maintain leadership the University needs to be visible. Some units are doing well; some are seeing stress. There must be a balance between dealing with back log and working on new initiatives.

It was noted that when the Faculty Consultative Committee discussed the flow chart which included a vice president for research, some sectors of the University resisted the idea. However as the role becomes understood and evolves, he said, deans will see it as a help with their research activities and a means of dealing with things that fall into the cracks, rather than as an encroachment on their territory. Asked if there are still people who don't see the vice president for research as a good idea, Dean Brenner said that there is concern about adding another cost segment at the administrative level in this time of budgetary constraint. Faculty are concerned about reallocation and need to be convinced that the cost benefit ratio can be favorable to them. Dean Holt said that the testimony on indirect cost recovery, which involved much work, made the case that there are seed resources which will pay off if there is staff available to work on them. A research super fund is needed to allow the University to compete for grants that will bring in money. Proposals are expensive to write, especially if large numbers of people from different units and institutions are involved.

As an example he cited the super computer geometry project which involved ten people, only one of whom is at this university. The project is centered here because of the presence of the Supercomputer Center. It includes a component for high school math and ranges from applications for talented youth to very sophisticated applications. The professor in the Math Department, the Dean of IT and people at the Supercomputer Center were involved in the proposal. When so many people on a project come from outside the University it is important to have a policy on space allocation. Other examples cited of projects spanning many units was microbiology, which involves Medicine, Soils, and Ecology, the Center for Electron Microscopy which has applications for the Interfacial Engineering Center, but also for many other units.

Robert Herman commented that he was on the committee years ago and was convinced then by arguments for a vice president for research, but at that time there was strong resistance from some units and the idea failed. Dean Holt said that today there is still some opposition, but also greater awareness of who research and the need for sophisticated research equipment crosses unit lines. During his eighteen months with the Research Executive Council he has had good experiences of cooperation. He added that he wants the OK of the Senate Research Committee to approach the administration with a recommendation. At some point a formal proposal will be made. Professor Sullivan asked the Committee members to discuss the idea with their colleagues and tell them that if they have input they should communicate it now.

2. New Agenda Items

Turning to the list of new items on the meeting agenda, Professor Sullivan said that he included them to inform the committee about them and determine which the members want to discuss directly.

A. Impending Cuts in Federal Research Support. Dean Brenner said that over the summer President Hasselmo sent a memo to all units asking them to develop their own contingency plans to respond to possible cuts. In particular there was concern about the potential results of the Gram Rudman-Hollings act going into effect. Current changes in tax laws and the federal budget won't address individual programs. They are considered in the aggregate and let support rise with inflation, but little growth can be anticipated. There is little the SRC can do on this matter now.

B. Space Planning and Research. Some research support funds can be used to rent off-campus space, but it is necessary to keep up commitments to maintain existing space. The University is already dealing with a major lease for the Army High Performance Computing Research Center without a formal policy in place. Dean Brenner said he wants to share proposals for a policy with the SRC, probably late this fall. Space awarded should be consistent with the Minnesota Facilities Model and with program needs.

C. Policy for Research Centers. Research centers often go to central administration for seed money, which then becomes a retention issue as funding tends to become permanent. There is a need for a selection policy possibly including peer review.

D. Policy for Matching Funds. A policy was written last year for major grants and it is expected that there will be a shift to harden funds over the life of a grant. Copies of the policy will be made available to the SRC.

E. Safety Issues In Research. Dean Brenner reported that over the summer several near-crisis situations were found: the Duluth chemical storage facility, pest control in a St. Paul campus facility, the impact of changes in the ordering system that allowed departments to bypass safety procedures in ordering isotopes. The last is corrected under a new policy under which reduced prices can only be obtained on orders made through Environmental Health and Safety. These safety concerns, Dean Brenner said, are essentially administrative matters, but it is good for the SRC to be informed about progress on them.

F. New Financial System - CUFS. Purchasing's bid limit has not changed for two years. There is concern to adjust it to reflect inflation. The Regents' limit is \$5000, and it is thought desirable in rush cases to have fax bids accepted for amounts between \$2000 and \$5000. In addition it would be possible

to get standing discounts on common items such as computers if the University as a total institution knows its average yearly needs.

G. Fraud Policy and Policy on Money Raised by Private Companies for Research. Dean Brenner said that the need to rewrite the University's fraud policy was surfaced by the Faculty Consultative Committee last year. Several revisions were made which were presented to the SRC. The criticism made of the latest version was that the panel hearing charges of fraud functions as both prosecutor and judge. To correct this, panel findings should be sent forward to another body. Professor Brenner said that he will make this revision and return the document to this committee.

As policies on disclosure move along that aspect for the policy will need to be revisited. Present disclosure policy requires identification of funding bodies in the publication of research results. There is a question of whether relationships of individual researchers and authors should also be stated to avoid conflict of interest. Discussion on this issue should appropriately begin with this committee, Dean Brenner said.

Professor Sullivan concluded the meeting by saying that the committee can discuss these topics more fully at the November 16 meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:15.

-- Catherine Winter

University of Minnesota