

Minutes\*

**Senate Research Committee  
Monday, March 6, 2006  
1:15 - 3:00  
238 Morrill Hall**

Present: Steven Ruggles (chair), Dianne Bartels, Lyn Bearinger, James Cotter, Christopher Cramer, Dan Dahlberg, Sharon Danes, Penny Edgell, Genevieve Escure, Paul Johnson, James Klaas, Mark Paller, Brian Reilly, Charles Spetland, George Trachte, Barbara VanDrasek, Michael Volna, Jean Witson

Absent: Mark Ascerno, Richard Bianco, Kathy Bowlin, Arlene Carney, Robin Dittman, J. Stephen Gantt, Jake Granholm, James Luby, Tim Mulcahy, Thomas Schumacher, Maria Sera, Virginia Seybold,

Guests: Frances Lawrenz

Other: Ed Wink

[In these minutes: Preliminary Report: Collaborative Research Task Force]

Professor Ruggles convened the meeting at 1:15 pm.

**1. Preliminary Report: Collaborative Research Task Force**

Professor Ruggles introduced the co-chairs of the Collaborative Research Task Force, Professor Lawrenz and Dr. Paller. Professor Lawrenz distributed a summary of the task force's report, and reviewed the task force's progress, saying that they had had initial meetings to establish their process. They also defined a variety of words in their mission as well as the scope of their work. Professor Lawrenz said they wanted their work to be all encompassing and they had used a SWOT analysis (strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats paradigm), which they'd used to determine the vision statement. They had tried to expand on certain areas and accordingly, draft a coherent report. The Task Force gathered data within the university, including interviews with center directors regarding what "collaborative" meant to them, and the Task Force continues to collect comments via e-mail. Dr. Paller noted information about those who comprised the task force, saying that it represented a broad spectrum of scholarly and research activities across the University of Minnesota. The draft goes public on March 27 and is still open to revisions, and Dr. Paller said that they were still eager to hear the committee's comments. Professor Lawrenz added that they'd also connected with the coordinate campuses as well.

Dr. Paller noted deliverable #2 on the report, which reads: *Identification of the research areas, (current and emerging) that will require or benefit most from interdisciplinary, large-scale or team-oriented approaches, including the following: how should future opportunities be identified, evaluated and prioritized?* He noted that they considered it a daunting challenge, but that it was important to define a

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\* 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 represents the views of, nor are they binding on, the Senate, the Administration, or the Board of Regents.

process for the University to start interdisciplinary collaborate research initiatives. The Task Force set forth questions to be addressed, and much of the criteria are relevant as people develop new proposals.

Dr. Paller referred to deliverable #1, which read: *Recommendations regarding the role of interdisciplinary, inter-professional, interscholastic and inter-institutional partnerships/programs/ activities in achieving the University's goal of becoming one of the top three public research universities in the world.* He noted that that some recommendations came from analyses of what hadn't worked before. So the Task Force asked what the opportunities were to grow new initiatives, and to evaluate potential interdisciplinary proposals, which should be a faculty-driven, peer review committee. Professor Dahlberg asked who the peers would be and how they would be selected. Dr. Paller said that, at this point, the intent of the draft proposal was to outline the general process that was being recommended. Professor Lawrenz added that they were trying to be visionary and not defining details at this stage. Dr. Paller said that a major component of the methodology was a continuous evaluation of the process. Number #3 under deliverable #2 states a number of criteria for evaluating projects after they are initiated. He noted that they needed to recognize that all activities may not have the same degree of success, and said they felt it was appropriate to allow for failure and that there should be a portfolio of opportunities.

Professor Lawrenz referred to deliverable #3 and discussed the idea of culture change regarding collaborate research. The Task Force felt that 7.12 statements should be changed to reflect this, and noted specific suggestions how to do so. For instance, that the value of collaboration as well as singular pursuits are equally regarded; and improvements of peer evaluations are important to have mechanisms for external support. Professor Edgell said there should be a repetitive communication process in place, and she discussed ideas for this. Professor Dahlberg asked if there were suggested changes in what it would say, and pointed out that how much weight is given to being a team player may depend on how it is written. Dr. Paller referred to the second bullet point in response, and said that they recommended rewriting it to indicate individual contributions, and they'd recommended specific language to address this. Professor Lawrenz noted that the Faculty Culture Task Force was working on the changes and that their task force had decided to offer guidelines. Dr. Paller noted that there would be departments that go further than these recommendations, and there will be different solutions for different departments: some will be more specific, some will be general.

Professor Lawrenz spoke to incentives and rewards, and said that a new incentive system was also part of the process. The Task Force felt these were more achievable, and there was a need to balance the needs of collaborative work with the needs of the department. Professor Bearinger asked where collaborative research grants would be housed, pointing out that it wasn't just how a grant was paid out but where it is housed affects a school's ranking. Dr. Paller said that it is addressed in the draft, acknowledging that attribution does matter and that dollars can be dealt with internally. Professor Ruggles said he felt there was a myth about rankings that use administrative data to determine amount of funding, and the committee discussed funding attribution. Professor Bearinger said what she was referring to was that in the school of nursing, there are two tenure faculty whose grants do not appear in their tally, and it was essential to address this. Professor Ruggles added that they would have to look at the ranking system.

Dr. Paller referred to #2 on the draft, which states: *Form a new office to support collaborative research, The Office of Collaborative Research.* He said he felt that this was complex and controversial, and it needed to be addressed, so they recommended the formation of a new office of collaborative research. It would be led by an experienced senior administrator who can look beyond feuds and help people collaborate in their research. The office could also serve as a home for some interdisciplinary work. He stressed that they felt this needed to be outside the departmental level. The office would do the things recommended in the task force draft, including supply administrative support, serve as support for larger projects, facilitate projects, etc. and it could also have potential collaborators meet each other. Professor Sera clarified that this would be a new office, and that this would call for additional administrators. She was reluctant to add to the

bureaucracy of the institution. Dr. Paller said the office would require new people, and noted her concern, adding that they felt the best way to address some of the concerns was to designate and create some infrastructure. Professor Edgell asked if there was a way within the document to clarify how they envisioned the office. Professor Ruggles suggested that it clarify that one can use the office but that it was not mandatory. Professor Dahlberg cited his experience as an interdisciplinary group leader. The group had agreed that these things came from the bottom up, and they were against installing more bureaucracy. Professor Ruggles said that they'd tried to allow for that. Professor Dahlberg said that what he felt was missing in the document was that interdisciplinary research is a tool, not a specific research area, and this needed to be clear. He also added that in developing interdisciplinary research, there should be hiring within the department, and he felt that this should be a stronger statement up front. Professor Ruggles concurred. Dr. Paller said this was a good point, and said that it was not their intent to change the process for faculty who are successful in how they do it now. Professor Dahlberg said that was important but that it needed to be stated clearly that individual scholarship is not going to be done away with. Ms. Witson said the statement should indicate that the office is support to collaboration but not required. The committee discussed suggestions for changes in the text of the draft. Professor Cotter suggested that bullet point #8 be changed to read "facilitate visits by collaborators and outside scholars."

Dr. Paller and Professor Lawrenz continued reviewing the draft and noted the 3<sup>rd</sup> item in deliverable #3 which cited, in part, that faculty who are involved in major interdisciplinary projects should be proactive to engage students and post-doctoral assistants with similar interests. Its intent was to develop an incubator where interdisciplinary activities could begin, and Dr. Paller noted that this was a specific recommendation that may not fit for everyone. Researchers would not stay there but would go to the appropriate college. In some cases there would be a need for new space, and there may be a need for people to work side by side. He said that they wanted to have a space where teams could work: to that end, existing space could be found or a donor could be found to build a new structure. Dr. Paller emphasized that the people and their students needed to be supported and appropriate money had to be supplied. In the task force's considerations, they imagined two years of funding to initiate the collaborate research effort, and then it would be subsequently funded independently. He pointed out that not all activities would thrive, nor should they. Professor Ruggles said that projects could start in the "incubator", then have an administrative home, and he said that there were several reasons to have an administrative home. Professor Bearinger asked for clarification on a couple of points, and asked why the office wouldn't embrace research training. She cited a grant of hers that was housed in nursing and that it would be an ideal activity for the mission. Dr. Paller said that would be an ideal scenario, and acknowledged that it was a somewhat artificial construct. Professor Bearinger said that the research project grant parallels other areas of research, and said that, for example, it was difficult to fund a medical fellow with a grant housed in nursing and such an office would provide some guidance. Professor Dahlberg asked why these activities might not be under the purview of Sponsor Projects Administration (SPA). Dr. Paller said that the new office would be more flexible. The committee discussed ways the document could encompass this.

Professor Cramer said that, according to his calculations, each project could be a half to one million dollars roughly, and asked where the money would come from. Dr. Paller said that it was indeed a big ticket item but the expectation is that there will be several million dollars available. Professor Ruggles said that the alternative might be that the Provost, etc. determine the way and shape the project will take. A discussion ensued as to how funding is decided. Professor Dahlberg noted that one concern was that, in his experience, the collective process ends up being above the individual. There has been an erosion in CLA and it has become a zero sum game. Dr. Paller reiterated that it was not the assignment of the task force to determine where the money would come from, but noted that if there'd been a mechanism like this, it might have positioned the University to apply for certain grants. Professor Dahlberg referred to his funding issues as examples of how funding was wasted, and Dr. Paller invited him to be on the proposed peer review panel. Professor Dahlberg asked if it would be reasonable to put in the task force report that the money would come from new funds. Ms. Van Drasek said that this was the future of CLA, and asked about the possibility of a

flexible, open-ended space. Professor Johnson suggested less language regarding "centers" and more language about funding. He cited certain issues which had affected him and that he disliked "centers", saying that the goal was to create initiatives and fund research, not to create "centers". Dr. Paller said that was a good point and that the office has aspects of support for research projects. Professor Ruggles said that the language should be looked at to make sure it is reasonable. Many of the centers that the task force had talked to were doing well.

Professor Lawrenz continued to #4, saying that there were two types of leadership that needed to be supported, and the Task Force had wanted to consider different aspects of leadership. The Task Force had noted that the University needed to help change the culture and train for leadership roles, and generally promote leadership, as explicated in the document. Professor Danes said that there were different kinds of leadership, specifically academic, management, and scientific, and that she would like to see wording that identifies leadership. Each takes different skills. She said she would prefer a more specific statement speaking to and identifying those roles. Professor Bearinger said that section four, which talks about nurturing effective leadership, needed to interface more with the research objectives. The committee discussed how to apply the proposed principles. Dr. Paller noted that these were only support mechanisms for those who want them. He said he didn't think it was unreasonable to want to support the objectives of the work of the office and to set a higher threshold for those competing for funds. Professor Lawrenz acknowledged that it needed to be clear that this was optional. Professor Danes said that she'd seen examples where no one was paying attention to leadership, and that sometimes there wasn't good leadership to forward certain initiatives. Professor Trachte said that collaborative research was a major emphasis in the medical school so this was a very important issue for him. He said he was supportive of everything in the document and very supportive of the idea. Professor Danes asked Professor Lawrenz what the idea of institutional partnership was vis-à-vis the mission statement, saying that she saw little in the document that would foster institutional partnerships. Professor Lawrenz said that they'd inherited the task force mission statement and the idea was that it was just another kind of collaboration the draft report had tried to encompass. Professor Ruggles said that visits from outside schools could be facilitated by the office. Dr. Paller added that if the culture is changed, the University might be more willing to take advantage of scholarship opportunities, no matter where they exist. Professor Danes said that should be added to the document and that some statement should be added to clarify this. Professor Cramer said that the document does not say how to make it easier to work with one's colleagues across fields. Dr. Paller said that they had not seen that as problematic. To Ms. VanDrasek's question, Dr. Paller said that when "faculty" was referred to, it was also intended to include faculty-like faculty. Ms. VanDrasek said that those words mattered and so should be indicated in the document. Professor Bearinger said that it was important to acknowledge and build on the fact that the University had a track record of interdisciplinary research, and to acknowledge that this is a building block for new projects.

Dr. Paller said that the task force report would be on the web on March 31, and Professor Ruggles said the committee had offered many useful comments, and he encouraged committee members to summarize them and send in an e-mail to Dr. Paller and Professor Lawrenz. Dr. Paller reiterated that they'd like committee members to submit feedback and possible changes to them. Professor Ruggles asked if they wanted to meet again before the final version for further recommendations. Dr. Paller said that the public comment phase would still allow for this, but that they probably wouldn't be able to get it done and meet with them again before the deadline. They would, however, do their best to incorporate the comments.

Professor Ruggles adjourned the meeting at 2:55 pm.

-- Mary Jo Pehl