Minutes*

Senate Research Committee
Monday, December 7, 2009
2:15 - 4:00
238A Morrill Hall

Present: Melissa Anderson (chair), Linda Bearinger, Arlene Carney, Margaret Catambay, Paula Chesley, Paul Cleary, Jerry Cohen, Donald Dengel, Demoz Gebre, Maria Gini, Seung-Ho Joo, Nikhil Kundargi, Frances Lawrenz, Jennifer Linde, Toni Leeth, Federico Ponce de Leon, Jason Neff, John Sullivan, Thomas Vaughan, Lynn Zentner

Absent: Mustafa al'Absi, Leslie Delserone, Robin Dittman, Tom Hays, Timothy Mulcahy, Mark Paller, Karen Williams

Guests: Karen Zentner Bacig (Office of the Vice Provost for Faculty and Academic Affairs)

Other: Peggy Sundermeyer (Office of the Vice President for Research)

[In these minutes: (1) faculty database; (2) draft conflict-of-interest policy]

1. Faculty Database

Professor Anderson convened the meeting at 2:20 and welcomed Vice Provost Carney and Dr. Bacig to the table to provide an update on the faculty database.

Dr. Carney began by noting that a faculty database has been discussed by the Committee over a number of years. Dr. Bacig has given the project an acronym, UDATA (University Data and Accomplishments Tracking Archive). Since the Faculty Senate, in April, 2008, endorsed the report of a joint subcommittee of this Committee and the Committees on Faculty Affairs and Information Technologies, they have consulted on all five campuses, with over 100 people, and have invited members of this Committee, the Committee on Faculty Affairs, the Committee on Academic Freedom and Tenure, associate deans for research and for faculty affairs, and faculty from across the University about the needs for a faculty-expertise database. The project has gone beyond faculty expertise to a system that can generate useful reports, including, for example, an NSF biosketch, a promotion-and-tenure template, and any other kind of template a unit might want to develop.

They have explored options with one vendor (Digital Measures) but the University is putting out an RFP itemizing all the things that it wishes the product to do. Digital Measures' software keeps track of ABET and other accreditation requirements, it can track the Student Learning Outcomes (including archival data for faculty members who want to use it). It will be a multi-purpose system.

The business requirements in the RFP are based on the eight months of consultation, Dr. Bacig reported. No system will do everything that everyone wants, so they have categorized items as mission-critical (the University will not purchase it without these capabilities) and desirable (the omission of

* 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.
which will not be a deal-breaker). They have done demos of the Digital Measures product with a large
number of people (because it is easier to react to something tangible than an abstract idea).

Vice Provost Carney emphasized that they have partnered with the Office of Information
Technology on the project—it is a joint venture because whatever the University purchases must be able
to pull data from PeopleSoft and all other University systems. They have also worked with the Office of
the Vice President for Research and everyone else they could think of to keep everyone in the loop and
assess effects on everyone. They hope to have a decision on a vendor by March (including demos by
vendors before a decision is made), and adjustments will be needed internally to accommodate the
system. (The actual cost of the software, if Digital Measures is any indication, is relatively modest.)
Then they must consider the financial requirements. It is not a done deal with Digital Measures, Dr.
Carney emphasized; they took a long time in consultation so the University doesn't end up with a product
that gives people grief. In the spring they will look at the costs and benefits and make a decision whether
to invest in a system.

Professor Bearinger said that one difficult element of a cost-benefit analysis is faculty time. That
has been part of the consideration from the beginning, Dr. Carney responded; the committees making the
recommendation knew it going into the process and nonetheless urged going forward. To make it useful
to faculty, Professor Cohen suggested, they need to keep as a high priority those things most important to
faculty—then faculty members will want to use it because it will make their work easier. Especially, Dr.
Carney agreed, in an age when larger grants require the participation of many faculty members: The
system can more easily pull needed information together. These time-saving elements are in the "must
have" category, as well as a full-text search capacity.

Will the system be publicly searchable, Mr. Kundargi asked? A version of it will be, Dr. Carney
said, but not all of it. University Relations is very interested in the public part of the system because they
are always being contacted with requests for faculty members with expertise in a certain area. Only with
the right X.500 ID would anyone have access to his or her own complete files, Dr. Bacig reported. It
would, Dr. Carney said in response to a question from Professor Bearinger, pull publications that one
wants and will rely on information from PubMed and similar sources to ensure its accuracy.

Professor Anderson asked when the system could be rolled out. If the University decides in late
spring to purchase it, they would work with selected colleges over the summer to begin implementation,
Dr. Carney said; some are chomping at the bit to get it in place. There will be phasing, Dr. Bacig added,
and there have been discussions about what will be needed centrally and what the colleges will want.

Professor Anderson asked Dr. Carney to say more about the student-learning aspects of the
system. If a course has specified learning outcomes and students are assessed for those outcomes,
exemplars can be placed on the system. So someone could upload an exemplary student paper (with the
student's consent and with redaction). The system must be able to go into PeopleSoft and pull
information about all the courses that someone has taught, the number of students in each, the grade
distribution, etc., as well as someone's directed readings/studies, number of credits, and so on. The part of
the system related to the Student Learning Outcomes can be designed as the University wishes. This
sounds like it will require an enormous amount of maintenance, Professor Anderson commented. Will
that be OIT's responsibility? Dr. Bacig reported that the items are stored locally and, in the case of
Digital Measures, the system is owned by Digital Measures, which operates it and provides customer
support. That will be one of the questions posed to vendors: How much must the University do?
Will it be platform-independent or operate only on one (e.g., Microsoft Explorer), Professor Gini asked? Dr. Bacig said she believed it is platform-independent. That is the intent, Dr. Carney said—to make it as user-friendly as possible. Professor Gini said she asked because OIT only supports Windows; it would be helpful if the system could be used from any platform. What about the NSF biosketch; what form will that be in, Professor Gini asked? .pdf? .doc? Any of them, Dr. Bacig said.

Dr. Carney said they do not know how many vendors might respond to the RFP. Digital Measures is used by a number of the University's peers and there is a large CIC Digital-Measures users group.

Professor Cleary said he assumed that they have learned something from EGMS, which is cumbersome and therefore not kept up. He said he hoped the new system would not become like that. Accuracy is always dependent on faculty and staff keeping the information current, Dr. Carney said. They will if it is useful, Professor Cleary responded. EGMS is clunky, he said, so people don't want to use it. Professor Cohen commented that EGMS is destined for burial soon, and the University will go to peer-to-peer software. They will do nothing without the endorsement of the Office of the Vice President for Research, Dr. Carney assured him.

Will one be able to pull up categories, such as faculty engaged in international activities, Ms. Catambay asked? Yes, Dr. Carney said, as well as public engagement—the system will allow tracking activities faculty are engaged in that may not show up on CV.

Professor Bearinger said the same information will be needed for postdocs. Dr. Carney said the information will cover both faculty and staff.

Professor Anderson thanked Drs. Bacig and Carney for the update.

2. **Draft Conflict-of-Interest Policy**

Professor Anderson asked that the Committee go off the record in order to develop its recommendations on the draft Conflict-of-Interest policy it discussed at the last meeting. She said it is important that the Committee provide its views on the policy. The minutes of the last discussion have been distributed and widely read, but the Committee needs to identify the most important points. She said she will craft a statement based on the comments and will circulate a draft for comment. The goal, she said, is to submit useful advice to the drafting committee.

Following an hour-long discussion of the draft policy, Professor Anderson adjourned the meeting at 4:00.

-- Gary Engstrand

University of Minnesota