

Minutes*

Faculty Consultative Committee
Thursday, November 18, 1993
10:00 - 12:00
Room 238 Morrill Hall

Present: Judith Garrard (chair), Carl Adams, James Gremmels, Kenneth Heller, Robert Jones, Geoffrey Maruyama, Harvey Peterson, Irwin Rubenstein, Shirley Zimmerman

Regrets: Toni McNaron

Absent: John Adams, Mario Bognanno, Lester Drewes, Karen Seashore Louis

Guests: President Nils Hasselmo

Others: Martha Kvanbeck (University Senate), Rich Broderick and Maureen Smith (both University Relations)

[In these minutes: Discussion of planning with the President; continued discussion of planning]

1. Discussion with President Hasselmo

Professor Garrard convened the meeting at 10:00 and welcomed the President.

The President began by telling Committee members he would provide to them (which he did shortly after the meeting began) a draft of the resolution that would be presented to the Board of Regents concerning U2000. He asked that the Committee read it and provide him their views on it in the near future. The content is basically the same as the mission and values document that has been widely discussed.

The resolution, he told the Committee, could be informed by the discussion at the Faculty Senate [later that afternoon], after the December 2 Faculty Senate meeting, and also as a result of continuing discussions with stakeholder groups.

President Hasselmo said he had met with members of the coalition to stop U2000; they were seeking more opportunities to discuss the plan before the Board of Regents votes, and especially opportunities for students. He said he is exploring ways to provide such additional opportunities. He has had the forums, he recalled, and although the attendance at them was disappointing there was good discussion. There is a question, he said, about how much of this activity there should be; he said he has tried to be as open as possible.

The President then walked Committee members through the draft resolution, sketching out the contents. It is, he noted with some regret, a five and one-half page resolution; he is struggling with trying

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to condense it without getting to a level of "fatal abstraction." This is not a plan, he reiterated, but is intended to inform the strategic planning process as it evolves--and with the understanding that there will be mid-course corrections and perhaps changes in plans.

He hopes that there will be, by late spring, a status report on college and cluster planning, a process that should then be completed by fall. Each year thereafter there should be a summary statement on the status of unit and cluster planning. Such summaries would also be needed for the cross-cutting groups. These summaries would then become the evolving University plan.

One Committee member, expressing reluctance at saying any more about strategic planning and trying to phrase the statement with care, began by saying he believed the President to be one of "the smartest guys I know" as well as "one of the nicest guys" whose values are clearly right. Through his selection as President, it was said, the University was given the opportunity to be improved, and he has clearly repaired the relationships with external constituents. How is it, then, that the University comes to find itself with unacceptable planning products after 18 months? He has been trying to figure that out. One has the sense, he said, that the faculty and deans have no ownership of this plan and that faculty views run from apathy to antagonism. The next concern, he continued, is that the University has an enlightened administration with widespread external support but internal problems--a divisiveness that can damage the University in the long run. He said, finally, that he didn't know what to do about all of this. It may also be that these are the views only of the people with whom he interacts and unrepresentative of other Committee members' views or the views of their colleagues, he concluded.

In response to a query about whether or not the process has been formulated precisely to bring faculty into it and to adapt the plan, he then said that he has not seen anything that brings the faculty and deans "on board" or that what is being done is right. Is this a perception problem? he asked. Or a failure to understand? Above all else, he concluded, he wants the President to succeed--but he has significant concerns.

President Hasselmo noted that he has had these discussions at other times as well and that he has tried hard to have a planning process that will enlist the creative energies of the University community. He agreed that it has been slow to emerge and that it needs fine-tuning and faculty "buy in," but said he believed he had gone to extraordinary lengths to include faculty as well as the State. Some remain frustrated that he has not done enough, and he will explore the possibility of doing more.

The President said he felt the University is on the right track. The clusters are intended to consider the intellectual frontiers, to be an intellectual assessment of directions; the clusters themselves must decide how to go about the assessment of their fields. The faculty must be enlisted in the discussions of where their fields are going. The clusters that have been proposed are preliminary; some are self-evident groups but there clearly are intersections, and others may need to be reconfigured. There is no hidden agenda for reorganization or budget cutting in cluster planning, the President emphasized.

Another major point, the President said, is that the administration recognizes that the colleges have done a lot of planning; the strategic planning process does not require that they change their planning or adapt to an entirely new format. What the colleges are being asked to do is to assess their planning in light of the directions that have been proposed. Some may be directly on target; others may need to evaluate their plans.

There are, in addition, he reminded the Committee, other groups dealing with broad issues, such as undergraduate education and technology; their efforts will be woven in a coherent way into the institutional strategic planning process.

The President confessed to some puzzlement about how else these discussions could be initiated. The faculty leadership, he related, persuaded him to put the principles forward to start the discussions--and there have been extensive conversations as a result of having done so.

One hopes that there need not be quarrels about the last 18 months--the process has gone in fits and starts, he agreed, and slower than he wished. But at this point the University must look forward and try to work together to move into a productive planning process that can include annual summary statements about how well it is doing.

The University could use any number of processes or structures, one Committee member said; there is no one right way. The test for faculty and deans will be whether or not there is a statement of direction that is uplifting, exciting, and something they can start working on. It isn't clear that kind of statement now exists. Is there a process that faculty can understand and have confidence in, a process that will finish the design? The answer to that, now, is "no." Is there a financial match with reality? Again, the answer is seen as "no." The particular process used is not important; it's where we are at the moment, using that simple test.

Another Committee member tried to recast these sentiments. It seems that faculty, staff, and the deans lack a clear understanding of their roles in the process. The goal statements should be liberating and should call forth their creative efforts to foster the directions--the statements should not be seen as confining. The process must start with the deans--they must be given a clear role and must elicit the creative efforts of the faculty. That description of roles must go beyond an amorphous statement that the process "needs faculty input."

One Committee member reacted differently, noting that faculty are reacting to history. The planning process flies in the face of faculty preconceptions about how the University runs. This faculty has not had a good experience in the last several years. It is correct to say, if one could read the documents with a blank mind, that they are liberating. Unfortunately, they cannot be read with a blank mind. In a way, this process is coming close to a new paradigm--and faculty are going through a period of disequilibrium; to get to something new, one must first get confused. The University is going as fast as it can, and faculty have moved from moroseness about the way it works to confusion as each new version of the plans fails to meet their preconceptions. One cannot simply make a clear statement and expect everyone to change; one must say things over and over again. There is no way to get "instant happiness."

No one expects instant happiness, it was rejoined, and that characterization of the faculty is cause for concern. It suggests the ideas are great but the faculty are confused and many want simply to keep the status quo. But the faculty leadership, over the past several years, has worked fast and effectively with the administration (e.g., on faculty workload, on supercomputing, and on development of a new grievance policy). One can understand that a certain amount of confusion is unavoidable but it is not fair to say this is the faculty's problem.

Faculty are human beings, was the response, and come to situation the same way everyone does.

They have been invited to participate in planning but somebody had to get the ball rolling. This is a new paradigm that does not meet faculty preconceptions. And faculty do NOT want the status quo; quite the opposite, faculty are in favor of change--about that there is widespread agreement. The preconceptions come into play with respect to the institutional management. It would be comforting to know what the process will be--and it could also be spelled out by the colleges and clusters.

The President commented that the administration has honestly reported what the stakeholders have had to say, even though some of it hurts. Those perceptions must be reported, even if the University believes they are factually dead wrong. He said he sees those misperceptions every day. "Heavens," the President exclaimed, the faculty are dedicated to making this the strongest possible institution--they do that every day and go to great lengths to do so.

He again admitted to being perplexed about what other ways the administration could have gone about the planning process. What statement would have met the "simple test" that was suggested? What will bring the faculty and deans into the process? The administration has made its best effort; what could or should have been done differently?

One possibility, suggested a member of the Committee, would have been to develop a siege mentality--the world is changing and crumbling around us so we need a new plan developed by faculty and administration together.

Another Committee member commented that some are trying to retain the 60s academic culture--doing what one wants--which runs against the needs of the community. The spirit has been one of individual effort. Now there is a value shift and it is not clear what that means to the academic way of life. Some will resist any change and will oppose any plans. At the same time, one sees all this information from the budget office and talk about Total Quality Management and hiring of new attorneys and accountants--and must ask about the academic values of the institution. The University isn't hiring new faculty but it's hiring attorneys and accountants. The University cannot stop planning, and while most outsiders would support the efforts to provide more outreach and better education, the views from the inside about the process and the goals may not agree with the external views.

Clearly higher education, like all other institutions in society, is being challenged, the President said; this discussion is national. And it is being challenged by the outside. These planning documents say the University is listening to society but that it has institutional values that will be strongly asserted. The University will try to meet the challenges, but in a way that accords with academic values.

The President said he did not, for instance, see research as in conflict with good undergraduate education. These documents say this is a RESEARCH university--they make no bones about it--and the documents are driven by the values of a research university. They also say the University will not serve everybody but rather those students who can best take advantage of what the research university can offer. That goes against the public grain, to a certain extent. Outreach will be performed, but again, in a way appropriate to this University; it will be knowledge transfer of what the University can produce and what society needs. The documents seek to affirm fundamental academic values while acknowledging the University's responsibility to serve the public. The strategic directions do NOT "open the floodgates" to every public demand; to the contrary, it asserts academic values. What alternative statement, he inquired, would get the University to the same place?

Asked if other university presidents face the same kinds of faculty sentiments, President Hasselmo said that generally it appears that they do. He also said that the University has hired attorneys and accountants because it has taken such a beating on compliance issues with federal and state rules and regulations over the past few years--something that would not have happened had there been a strong infrastructure.

Money has been put into the faculty, the President also observed--to the point where there is no support infrastructure for them. They must be provided support--it might be better to hire another secretary or technical person than another faculty member when the University cannot support the faculty it already has.

One wishes, he said with some dismay, that one could ignore the infrastructure. The ideal status of an infrastructure, he added, is when it CAN be ignored.

There is faculty distrust of the administration, commented one Committee member, but faculty are also so involved in their own activities and trying to obtain funding that University-level issues are far removed from their concerns. "The `me generation," added another.

One Committee member, noting a recent meeting the President had had with faculty--and complimenting him on it--said there was nonetheless some uneasiness with his comments because he used considerable business imagery and sounded to some more like a corporate manager than a president. (President Hasselmo, considering his own academic background and inclinations, said he amazes himself sometimes! He tries to temper the imagery, he added, by resort to Icelandic poetry.) One can appreciate, it was then said, the proposition that each campus will develop its own appropriate mission. All will be touched by U2000 and faculty and students must be made responsible for it. There is much in the plans that could benefit all the campuses--and faculty and students will welcome the opportunity to propose ideas.

In addition to calling for each campus to develop the appropriate mission, declared one Committee member, each COLLEGE AND DEPARTMENT should also be charged with the responsibility for the developing their strategic directions. The documents do not now make it clear that plans to foster the University's strategic directions must be developed--but it is at that level where the movement will take place. There needs to be a clear mechanism for empowerment of departments rather simply a reference to departments.

"I LIKE the directions," said one Committee member; they capture the sense of where the University should go. What is NOT clear is what an individual faculty member is being called to do. Through the deans, there must be empowerment of the faculty.

What is HIS vision of the next steps and how faculty and students are to become involved? the President was asked. Not this Committee; the faculty generally. The planning document, the President said, call for each campus, college, and department to become involved, in concentric circles, along with the cross-cutting groups--that is absolutely necessary. The President's Forum on Teaching and Learning was gratifying, he said, because there were about 120 faculty discussing cooperative learning. That kind of activity must occur because it is only in the individual classroom and laboratory, in individual advising, and in faculty-student interaction that undergraduate education takes place. Unless the planning process affects that basic level of activity, it is all meaningless. That is a problem in large

institutions, he concluded--one that he encounters every day.

The planning process was not approached from a hierarchical standpoint, the President told the Committee, because the broader view is needed; working through a structure is not always the best way to proceed. He said he hoped the process could continue that way--the administration and the faculty must drive the agenda together rather than having a central administrative proposal that the faculty reluctantly support. He still considers himself a faculty member, the President said, and wants interaction with his colleagues as well as merciless criticism--but combined with advice on how to proceed so the result is not simply an impasse. He reaffirmed that unless the faculty are involved in a significant way, the effort will not mean anything.

The President commented that the people ARE the University and that this is not a place where goals are established and people are ordered to achieve them. That is not the way universities were founded--they were scholars who banded together and were granted certain rights and privileges in return for freedom of inquiry. While one must use modern management techniques, those are intended to liberate the faculty from BAD management and compliance problems. The aim, he said, is to liberate the human spirit in a place committed to free inquiry.

Students are not on board the process, observed one Committee member, in part because they have learned from their elders, who have mortgaged the future. They are asking what is good for them, not what is needed to keep the institution of high quality.

Professor Garrard thanked President Hasselmo for joining the meeting; he expressed the hope that this was only the first installment of what must be an intense and continuing discussion of the issues.

2. Continued Discussion of Planning

One Committee member said that a lot of the problems, based on conversations with colleagues, is that many good things have been proposed in the past--and then budgets are cut. One begins to make the connection that if one says something is important, it will get cut. This experience needs to be addressed. And the planning process MUST include statements that it is NOT about "doing more with less." Faculty have been doing that for years--and they end up doing less with less. The administration needs also to say what planning is not.

A deficiency of this process, responded another Committee member, is that there has been no connection with financial issues. There doesn't need to be specific financial plans made, it was rejoined, but there needs to be a statement that the University will not do undergraduate education and all these other things in the goal statements--and have less money to do them. Does this mean, it was then said, that these are contingent goals? Whence the money? What it says, it was again rejoined, is that the University must make hard decisions.

There are two possibilities with respect to resources, one Committee member said. One is that there will not be new funds and choices will be required; if that's true, the administration should say so. Another is that there will be an increase in resources, from some source. It is correct to say that specifics are not needed, but right now there is no understanding or concept of how this will work. Will resources for undergraduate education be reduced? Will comprehensive programs be cut to achieve a more focused university? A lot of people will imagine a lot of things if not provided some connection between

aspirations and resources.

That statement should be made at the Faculty Senate meeting, urged one Committee member. Another, however, expressed doubt about its validity--the University has new attorneys and accountants because they were needed. When will come the point when the faculty are understood to be overworked and more are needed?

That's not necessarily the problem, responded another Committee member. "A lot of my overwork IS accounting"--that is an enormous amount of work and could be reduced by a decent accounting system. It would be wonderful if the infrastructure were transparent, as President Hasselmo observed--the difficulty is that everyone knows it is NOT working. The problems of the University are not due to evil or incompetence, they are because people are overworked at every level. As a result, they focus on themselves. The "Minnesota spirit" is to make it work--people do things one cannot believe to "make it work. Just do it." That all takes time and effort, however, and by not making waves but simply getting the job done, the University finds itself understaffed and underfunded at every level. And this all means that the University needs additional resources to do what it is doing.

This is related to the notion of second-order changes, explained one Committee member. If one is in a car going up hill and one's foot is on the floor pressing the accelerator, it does not do any good to press harder--one has to shift gears. In the private sector it involves "re-engineering the corporation." One must forget working harder; the University must work smarter--the system must be changed to make it work smarter. Everyone is already working hard--in an inefficient system.

There is no evident that the planning process will make the University work smarter--it will just be different.

One must look to see what others have done--just because something has been done in industry doesn't mean it cannot be done in academe. We must shift gears, it was argued, rather than trying to push harder on the gas pedal. This could be a significant element in a financial plan, maintained another Committee member--making investments to do certain kinds of things. A number of "re-engineering" activities have concluded that a lot of jobs are people passing paper to other people. If this is to be part of a financial strategy, it was said, it needs to be addressed and understood so that as planning moves forward people are not blindsided. These are not concepts on the table for discussion right now but faculty and deans intuitively understand that they will be.

One can agree, it was then said, that faculty and deans cannot be expected to develop these strategies--planning cannot simply be turned over to them. There must be communication between the administration and the faculty and deans--but the administration cannot create the plans. One must assume that "the rubber meets the road" in deans' and department offices--all the rest is facilitative.

One wonders if it might not be possible to articulate, in perhaps two pages, the changes in direction for the University that all agree on, the process that would show deans and faculty their roles, and perhaps a financial strategy. The latter might say, for example, that if the University is going to be like Michigan in the delivery of undergraduate education, it will also have a tuition structure like Michigan (i.e., high). That kind of proposition, however, is not welcomed centrally--one cannot presume that there will be a receptive audience that will just "drink in good ideas."

The University is a complex system, protested another Committee member, and it is a mistake to expect good ideas to be adopted just because they are presented. Decisions are not made in a linear fashion. This process has been creaky and annoying but it is what a university must do. One must put ALL the problems on the table and not try to fix one without considering the impact it will have on others--the University should NOT, for example, raise tuition to Michigan's level without looking at the other issues. True, agreed another Committee member--and that should have been occurring over the last 18 months. The entire mosaic must be considered.

On the other hand, observed one Committee member, people are being paid to lead the institution. One can be willing to let them set five broad directions, "if I agree with them--and I do," and if it then said that the faculty must develop them. One can be willing to let the process go along as it has--these goals have not been drawn out of thin air.

If one knows the administration is willing to put money in a particular set of pots, "I am willing to try to get some to foster" the achievement of the goals--and at last we will know where we are going. One need not be unhappy with the end result--one can wish this had all emerged from a faculty committee, but that's not where the University is now. Faculty can work with these documents if they are careful--if the process is laid out. It is not easy to get faculty "buy in; I would not want to be the President," concluded one Committee member.

One can then construe the faculty as saying, after all this time and anxiety, that they endorse five statements that everyone knew about all the time. Is there no other meaning that would have been hoped for? It was these five statements, not five other statements, pointed out one Committee member. But no one identified any other statements, it was said in response--and these are uninformative, in a way, because anyone can hang on them any idea they've had in the last ten years.

One must think about where the process has been, one Committee member reminded his colleagues. The process started with ideas being presented, some of them bad, and they were shot at. The plans have evolved. To a certain extent there was heat on the administration for being too specific--but examples were needed to learn what was being thought. The documents have changed and reflect the change in thinking. How do they change? By having ideas brought up and shot at. That's how theory development works--over time, ideas converge. University College is a good example. One should not see the process as hopeless.

It was then moved, seconded, and unanimously voted to approve the docket of the December 2 Faculty Senate meeting.

Professor Garrard then adjourned the meeting at 12:00 for lunch.

-- Gary Engstrand