

Minutes*

**Faculty Consultative Committee
October 17, 1991**

Present: Thomas Scott (chair), Mario Bognanno, Amos Deinard, Judith Garrard, Paul Holm, Norman Kerr, Karen Seashore Louis, Burton Shapiro, Charlotte Striebel, James VanAlstine, Shirley Zimmerman

Guests: Geoff Gorvin (Footnote), Senior Vice President E. F. Infante, Maureen Smith (Brief)

1. Disposition of the Ombuds Committee Report

Professor Scott called the meeting to order at 12:30 and reported that several issues have arisen since the Senate Consultative Committee voted to place the report of the Ombuds Committee on the docket of the October 31 Senate meeting. In addition to expressions of concern about the report by a number of individuals, the Senate Committee on Faculty Affairs passed a resolution asking SCC to remove the item from the Senate docket. SCFA believes the report should not be presented to the Senate until it has had an opportunity to review and comment on it. SCFA also wishes to hear from its subcommittee with responsibility for oversight of the faculty assistance office headed by Dr. Maurine Venters because that office is affected by the Ombuds Committee report.

Professor Striebel, who chaired the Ombuds Committee, pointed out that she had contacted SCFA twice during the time the committee had been doing its work and that there appeared to be no problems. She agreed that SCFA should be involved in a review of the recommendations but observed that it was only being presented to the Senate for information, not action, and that to take it off the agenda would delay action at least until Spring. She also noted that the report only deals with Dr. Venters's office in a minor way that is not central to its recommendations.

It was observed by several Committee members that SCFA was not the only group in the University that would be interested in making comments on the report; presentation to the Senate would be one way to solicit broader community reaction to it. It was agreed that there would time for consultation with various groups after Senate discussion on October 31 and that if there were sufficient meritorious suggestions and amendments, Senate action could be delayed to Spring Quarter if necessary.

2. Resolution on ROTC

The Committee was provided copies of a resolution concerning the difference between the University's equal opportunity policy and ROTC policy regarding gays, lesbians, and bisexuals; the author requested that it be placed on the Senate docket for action at the October 31 meeting. The Committee concluded that although it technically had sufficient votes to act as the Senate Consultative Committee and approve the item, such action would be inappropriate inasmuch as the student members of the Committee could not be consulted. The Committee also concluded that it would be inappropriate to bring the resolution to the Senate before it had been taken up by the Senate Committee on Social

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Concerns. **It was moved, seconded, and voted unanimously to refer the resolution to the Committee on Social Concerns with instructions that it be brought to the Winter Quarter Senate meeting for action.**

3. Discussion with Senior Vice President Infante

Professor Scott next welcomed Senior Vice President Infante to the meeting to discuss a number of issues.

FRINGE BENEFIT RATES The first item taken up was the change in computation of fringe benefit rates for graduate assistants and its impact on federal grants. Dr. Infante briefly explained the background of the change and noted that the University had obtained a two-year period breathing period before the change had to be implemented. One decision that needs to be made is whether or not the University will seek a change in the policies requiring the change; he expressed doubt that such an effort would be successful. The University could join with MIT, Cal Tech, Stanford, and Columbia in seeking a change; he told the Committee he had reservations about joining that group. There are educational policy questions raised by the issue, however; with the change, it will become cheaper to use post-docs and technicians than graduate students for research. (In Chemical Engineering, for example, the increased fringe benefit costs for graduate assistants is predicted to lead to a 26% reduction in the number of graduate students.)

Dr. Infante said he would like to have a small committee appointed, with a few faculty and a few individuals who understood the technical points of the change, to examine the alternatives available to the University. There are conflicting interests involved, and the issue also opens up the larger question of faculty fringe benefits. The Committee agreed to provide Dr. Infante with the names of individuals who might serve on the committee, which is to complete its work by the end of March.

COMPUTING Discussion next turned to the reorganization of computing on the campus. Dr. Infante diagrammed for the Committee the many different organizations and locations which are involved in computing. Two large areas, the stand-alone mainframe systems which support specific operations (such as LUMINA, Admissions and Records) and the large amount of standalone computing supported by and conducted within the various academic departments, are not included in the current reorganization plan. He told the Committee that he began to work on this issue with former Senior Vice President Donhowe, before he himself became Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs, and continued his attention after his appointment. He noted that there are a series of systems in the University which are on their last legs; he also observed that at the supercomputing level the University is in the forefront, in distributive computing it is way behind, and in mainframes it is close to obsolescence and ineffective because of too many separate centers.

The present structure provides no economies of scale and the systems do not communicate with each other or with CUFS. Dr. Infante said that he saw no significant problems with the computing supported and operated in the academic units and that no changes were proposed for it. The large stand-alone systems such as LUMINA will be evaluated, but not now. The units which must be consolidated, in order to increase efficiency and service, include the six separate centers now operating (including AIS, the Health Sciences Center, the St. Paul Center, etc.). The University is spending \$30 million per year on computing (outside the Supercomputer Center, department computing, and the stand-alone systems such

as LUMINA) and it is clear that something must be done, Dr. Infante said, because many of the systems will need to be replaced and it would make good sense to consolidate the six separate mainframes.

The Committee spent a long time quizzing Dr. Infante about the consolidation and the proposal to administratively house the consolidated computing function in a private-sector organization that will be located with the Minnesota Supercomputer Center. Committee members were emphatic in expressing concern about the levels of service that would be provided to users once the consolidation had occurred; they were also unpersuaded of the necessity to locate the operations in a private-sector organization off the campus.

Among the points made during the exchanges were these:

- Even though there are problems with computing at the University, there are pockets of excellence (such as the Micro group) which are apparently being eliminated by the change; people have already been told they will be out of a job effective January 1.
- There will be reductions in staff, without doubt; the question is how to accomplish that reduction. It is not clear how the University will prevent the most talented people from leaving--the best will leave unless they are assured they will have jobs and a role to play in the new structure. Dr. Infante noted that all of the unit heads have been asked to stay and help develop the new organization; they have also been asked to identify the individuals in their units who should be retained.
- The faculty must have assurances that the cost of computing for education and research will not become so high that they will have to go elsewhere to obtain the services they need. Dr. Infante agreed and said he wanted to create a small group (a development shop) to keep in mind what is needed at the University and what packages are available; this would also prevent the University from being at the mercy of external consultants. The goal is also to make computing free to the faculty, up to a certain level.
- It is not clear where the boundaries of the consolidation should be. Dr. Infante rejected separating the Micro group from networking--those two activities should be separated.
- The expectation, Dr. Infante said, is that the consolidation will reduce costs by 30% and increase performance by a factor of three.
- The faculty are deeply concerned that those who are most knowledgeable and service-oriented in their approach will be the people who will leave--and that those who remain will be from units which have had the least interest and experience in providing user assistance.
- Individuals currently on the staff must be informed who is "on the lifeboat" and who is not; people cannot face uncertainty for the next two or three months. Dr. Infante affirmed that there will be a reduction in personnel; the question is how best to accomplish it.
- The Micro group will be located on campus, and probably stay where it is in Shepherd labs. Some have argued that its functions should be distributed to departments, but Dr. Infante said he

believes it is necessary to have a concentration of experts to which the departments can turn for assistance.

- Asked about the virtues of privatization versus consolidating within the University, Dr. Infante said that there is considerable expertise at the Supercomputer Center which can be used, the "babysitting" functions can be substantially reduced, and there is space at the center to locate the consolidated functions. Another reason, he told the Committee, is so that in the future the consolidated operations can serve as a feeder to the outstate campuses and to the other higher education systems--it does not make sense for them to have separate mainframes, and joint effort would permit the overhead costs to be spread among several users. It would not make sense, he observed, to remove the libraries from the University, but for computing it does not matter where the machines are located, given the advances in networking.
- The faculty are willing to put up with a period of inconvenience, during the transition period, if they can be assured that the new arrangements will be better.

Committee members repeatedly noted that they found the arguments for consolidation to be more persuasive than the arguments for privatization. They urged him to clarify, in writing, the factors which support consolidation and the factors which support privatization (the latter of which will be the more difficult, in the view of several Committee members). They also strongly suggested that he deal with the personnel matters so that the best people do not leave.

Dr. Infante thanked the Committee for expressing its views.

4. Miscellaneous Matters

Professor Scott brought up several matters:

- The Committee has been invited to join the Board of Regents for lunch on November 7. He will also be making a formal report to the Board the next morning; he solicited the views of Committee members on points which he should address.
- Committee members were asked to submit names to him, within the next two weeks, for the small group which will deal with the graduate assistant fringe benefit issue. It was the consensus of the Committee that this small group should NOT be the one that examines much larger questions related to fringe benefits but should focus on the immediate issues of the graduate student tuition-fringe problem.
- Senior Vice President Infante remains interested in reviewing procedural issues associated with the tenure code; several Committee members, in different meetings with him, have advised Dr. Infante that this is not the time to ask the faculty to consider changes in the tenure code. It was agreed, following some discussion, however, that several procedural problems can be fixed without changes in the tenure code. It was agreed that Professor Scott would draft letters to (1) Dr. Infante concurring with his concern that at present the procedures are too time-consuming, particularly in cases where there may be reasons to consider removal for cause, and (2) to the Judicial Committee instructing it to identify ways to speed up the procedures so that a dismissal

for cause action could be completed in three months. (It was noted that in some cases delays are caused by inaction in administrative offices--but that Dr. Infante has the authority to deal with that problem.) It was agreed that these drafts would be reviewed at the next meeting, before being sent. There was also short discussion, without conclusion, of the issue of temporary suspension (of faculty) without pay during proceedings.

- The graduation rate data continue to be a problem in terms of the public perception of the University; the numbers are being re-examined and it was agreed that the Committee should learn the status of that inquiry. Data from other urban universities should also be considered.
- Given legislative interest in faculty workload, Professor Scott reported, he has asked Professor Virginia Gray, Faculty Legislative Liaison, to pull together a small ad hoc group of faculty to help the administration consider how it will respond to the concern. The goal is to develop a response that is consistent among those who deal with the legislature--as well as one that makes sense. Professor Scott said he would report back to the Committee once Professor Gray's group has met.
- The Committee discussed briefly the continued interest on the part of the students in seeking Duluth faculty representation on the Committee.
- Professor Striebel brought to the attention of the Committee the fact that there are people in departments who are coming to her with grievances about their annual reviews; with the consolidation of units and movement of tenured faculty from one unit to another (e.g., Waseca faculty), there is a feeling that those doing the reviewing cannot properly assess the capabilities and performance of the faculty moved in from other units. The system works better for promotion and tenure decisions, because there are outsiders involved, but the annual merit reviews occur almost completely within the units. Professor Scott suggested that the issue should be referred to the working group on academic salary structures.
- Professor VanAlstine reported that the Morris faculty have asked that their salary questions not be forgotten; the campus is often referred to as the "jewel in the crown" of the University--but its faculty salaries are at the bottom of the bottom quartile among their peer groups. There is considerable frustration and resentment, sentiments which are only exacerbated when it is suggested that if the campus is to grow it should increase its enrollment. The reason it is good, the faculty believe, is because it is small and selective; when their enrollment went over 2000 in the past, they had students living in the local motel. The campus has never been fully funded and feels that it has no power, and it is now being asked to fund improvements through increased tuition for its students. Graduates of programs in law, management, and public affairs can find jobs with salaries that will permit them to pay back the increased tuition; Morris graduates, on the other hand, are liberal arts students who have the same difficulties finding jobs that any such student has. It is also a source of dismay for the Morris faculty that they must meet the same performance standards as faculty on the Twin Cities campus--but are paid much lower salaries. Nor should it be forgotten, he said, that those who were promoted this year received only token increases.

The Committee adjourned at 3:30.

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-- Gary Engstrand

University of Minnesota