CLASSROOM ADVISORY SUBCOMMITTEE
MINUTES OF MEETING
OCTOBER 18, 2004

[In these minutes: Demonstration of ECS Reports, Classroom Funding Meeting with the Academy of Distinguished Teachers Steering Committee, Student Evaluations – ŒSatisfaction with Classroom[1] Question]

[These minutes reflect discussion and debate at a meeting of a committee of the University of Minnesota Senate or Twin Cities Assembly; none of the comments, conclusions or actions reported in these minutes represent the views of, nor are they binding on, the Senate or Assembly, the Administration or the Board of Regents.]

PRESENT: Joel Weinsheimer, chair, Steve Fitzgerald, Michaeleen Fox, Bernard Gulachek, Steve Spehn, Jeff Lindgren for Joyce Weinsheimer, John S. Anderson, Donald Brazeal, Ken Heller, James Perry, David Dierauer

REGRETS: Roberta Juarez, Denise Guerin, Jennifer Peters, Nancy McGlynn

ABSENT: Andre Prahl

GUEST: Nancy Peterson

I). Professor Weinsheimer called the meeting to order and asked those present to introduce themselves.

II). Professor Weinsheimer called on Nancy Peterson of the Office of Classroom Management (OCM) to report on the effect the reaffirmation of the Senate policy had on the scheduling of non-standard courses. The Senate policy stipulates that standard times and day patterns are to be used and that no more than 60% of a department[1]s courses are to be taught during the peak time of the day.

Mr. Fitzgerald introduced this agenda item by providing background information to the Committee. He noted that that last November CAS wrote a letter to ACEP (Assembly Committee on Educational Policy) outlining the scheduling issues faced by OCM. In response, ACEP drafted a resolution

supporting the ECS upgrades. In Mr. Fitzgerald¹s opinion, the CAS letter was beneficial in getting resources put in place to deal with the various issues that collectively adversely impact the scheduling of UMTC courses (excess courses in peak time; excess enrollment projections; excess course cancellations; non-standard scheduling; unplaced courses).

While problems of this magnitude cannot be corrected overnight, progress has been and continues to be made around this issue. On the upside, Mr. Fitzgerald noted that the ECS implementation had clearly improved the scheduling process from the system, central scheduling and departmental scheduling standpoints. On the downside, Mr. Fitzgerald notated that for fall 2004, OCM experienced an increase in the number of sections it needed to schedule, and, as a result, much of the progress that was made by the tools that were implemented were eaten up by the number of increased sections that needed to be scheduled.

He added that since ECS was implemented, it has already gone through an upgrade that fine-tuned both the operation of the system and the availability of reports that had been requested by departments and colleges.

Next, Ms. Peterson provided members with a demonstration of each of the five enhanced reports that were part of the ECS upgrade:
- o Class Schedule Summary
- o Course Scheduling - 60/40 Rule
- o Course Scheduling - Cancelled Classes
- o Course Scheduling - Non-Standard Times
- o Course Scheduling - Projected versus Actual Enrollment

She noted these reports are very easy to use and can be found at the following URL: http://www.umreports.umn.edu/umreports/

Comments/questions from members included:
- o One member noted that the way students shop for courses impacts the Projected versus Actual Enrollment Report. Departments are forced to have a larger projected enrollment than actual enrollment due to attrition. Steve Fitzgerald noted that on average, UMTC projected enrollment is greater than actual enrollment by 20%. This means that the Scheduling Department is forced to find rooms for

20% more courses than is actually necessary. The Projected versus Actual Enrollment Report is a quantitative tool for departments to help them make more accurate projections (within the +/- 10% standard). Two areas that have continued to cause the greatest inefficiencies in the scheduling system are projected versus actual enrollments and excess course cancellations.

o Are the schedulers that populate the data into the ECS system in terms of class schedule, size, etc., required to follow any kind of procedure when it comes to looking back at actual enrollment data from previous semesters? Ms. Peterson noted that the system shows the actual enrollment from the previous comparable semester. She continued that the purpose of this is to allow the department to see the actual enrollment last attained in the course as a reference to help the department keep the current projection input as accurate as possible.

o While schedulers are very important staff members of a department, unfortunately, they tend not to hold particularly powerful positions. Therefore, are these individuals instructed to take problem situations to their supervisors? Yes, definitely stated Ms. Peterson. Mr. Fitzgerald added that sometimes, however, communication between a scheduler and department chair may not be particularly strong. One of the goals of making the ECS reports readily available through the Data Warehouse was to empower departments and colleges at all levels with current, real-time, easy-to-use information that would help them in managing their instructional effort.

o A member cautioned the administration in terms of looking at raw data (e.g. projected versus actual enrollment) when setting policy. Mr. Fitzgerald noted that the value of the ECS reports was that it made processed data, including the Projected versus Actual Enrollment report, available that accurately quantified critical parts of the scheduling process. Mr. Fitzgerald further noted that these reports should allow departments and the University to move away from scheduling based on broad estimates and move toward scheduling that was based on quantified enrollments and quantified requirements. This will greatly improve use of our scare and valuable classroom resources.

Professor Weinsheimer thanked Ms. Peterson for demonstrating these reports. Mr. Fitzgerald commended Ms. Peterson and her staff for doing an excellent job in scheduling general-purpose classrooms and maintaining the classroom database.

III). Professor Weinsheimer reported that last Tuesday, October 12th, he and Steve Fitzgerald met with members of the Academy of Distinguished Teachers Steering Committee to discuss classroom funding issues.

Steve Fitzgerald noted that the statement, which was sent to SCFP related to life cycle replacement cost funding for classrooms was shared with the Academy. The Academy was very supportive and recognized that while tremendous strides have been made in installing technology in classrooms over the past five years, this has been done without setting aside recurring funding to replace equipment that has exhausted its useful life.

Mr. Fitzgerald reminded members that technology has a finite service life. Last year OCM was funded at 24% of the recurring funding requirement for classrooms and this year it will receive 35%. This means that every year OCM is being forced to divert its operating funds to replace the technology that is reaching its end-of-service life. Last summer marked the end of service life for those classrooms that were upgraded first. Nearly 60 more classrooms will reach the end of their service life this summer. Not funding the annual recurring set-aside necessary to fund tech system replacement for each of the past four years means that one time funds are essential this year to bridge the gap and sustain this vital technology in classrooms.

Mr. Fitzgerald announced that he was very encouraged to see in the 2006 – 2007 biennial budget a specific request to fund the remaining 25% of classrooms that do not have technology, and for the ongoing life cycle replacement cost funding for classrooms with technology.

Members discussed the lack of life cycle replacement cost funding for general-purpose classrooms at length. Although no solution to this problem was uncovered, members agreed that this is a very serious issue that needs continued attention.

IV). In light of time, Professor Weinsheimer postponed the last agenda item, a discussion on moving the Œsatisfaction with classroom[1] component of student evaluations to the demographic section of the evaluation.

While recent student evaluations indicate that overall classroom satisfaction is on the rise, these evaluations do not uncover which rooms are the low satisfaction classrooms. Professor Weinsheimer suggested CAS approach SCEP and offer its services in revising the evaluation in order to uncover answers to this and other questions that the Committee thinks are relevant to classroom satisfaction. This item will be discussed further at the Committee[1]s next meeting on Monday, November 15th.

Also, at the November meeting, Professor Weinsheimer called on AVP Steve Spehn to share information related to facilities management and the maintenance of classrooms.

V). Hearing no further business, Professor Weinsheimer adjourned the meeting.

Renee Dempsey
University Senate