

Senate Committee on Educational Policy (SCEP)
March 25, 2020
Minutes of the Meeting

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 represent the views of, nor are they binding on, the senate, the administration or the Board of Regents.

[**In these minutes:** Higher Education Landscape; Spring 2020 SRT Modifications; Educational Policy Backlog Project; Systemwide Strategic Plan]

PRESENT: Jennifer Goodnough (chair), Toni Abts, Thomas Chase, Dan Delaney, Stacy Doepner-Hove, Sara Hurley, Scott Lanyon, John LaVelle, Danya Leebaw, Bob McMaster, Robert Poch, Nathan Mukai, Katherine Scheil, Nevin Young

REGRETS: June Carbone, Brian Sick, Jacob Smiley

ABSENT: Kriti Agarwal, Julia Brokaw, Otto Johnson

GUESTS: Ole Gram, assistant vice provost, Faculty and Academic Affairs; Karen Hanson, executive vice president and provost; Rebecca Ropers, vice provost, Faculty and Academic Affairs; Marlo Welshons, assistant to the provost; Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost

OTHERS: Etty DeVeaux, chief of staff, Graduate Education; John Hoffman, vice chancellor for academic and student affairs, University of Minnesota Crookston; Bri Keeney, assistant to the president, Office of the President; Jessica Kuecker Grotjohn, assistant to the vice provost and dean, Undergraduate Education; Leslie Schiff, associate dean, University curriculum; Undergraduate Education; Karen Starry, assistant to the vice provost and dean, Graduate Education; Stacey Tidball, director, Compliance and Continuity, Academic Support Resources

1. Higher Education Landscape

Chair Jennifer Goodnough called the meeting to order and turned the floor over to Robert McMaster, vice provost and dean, Undergraduate Education. McMaster provided the committee with an update on the higher education landscape, with the aid of a [PowerPoint](#). McMaster noted that the number of Minnesota high school graduates is expected to increase until the 2023-24 academic year, and then drop off. This phenomenon is known as the “enrollment cliff.” In addition, reported McMaster, the number of high school graduates in Greater Minnesota has been declining over the last decade, while the number in the Twin Cities metro has been increasing. Both the state legislature and the Board of Regents have emphasized their desire for the University to maintain the number of students from Greater Minnesota in each freshman class; this is getting more difficult due to the factors described above.

McMaster emphasized the following points:

- Students of color, particularly Hispanic/Latinx students, will constitute most of the growth in new college students over the next few years. Little growth in the number of white students is expected.
- Minnesota as a state is a net exporter of students, meaning more students leave Minnesota to go to college than come here from other states. Out-migration to North and South Dakota primarily affects the Morris and Crookston campuses; for Twin Cities area high school students, the University of Wisconsin at Madison is the biggest draw.

McMaster enumerated several ideas for new initiatives related to the relationship between the University and the Minnesota State system around the declining number of Minnesota high school graduates:

- Initial and/or yearly Minnesota Higher Education Summit with the University, Minnesota State, and the Minnesota private colleges and universities
- Continued focus on effective specific transfer between and among these systems
- Possible sharing with certain functions (e.g., IT)
- Common online liberal education courses
- More integrated lobbying with the state legislature

2. Spring 2020 SRT Modifications

Next, Goodnough welcomed Ole Gram, assistant vice provost and Rebecca Ropers, vice provost, Faculty and Academic Affairs; Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost, who were present to consult on modifications to the spring 2020 Student Rating of Teaching (SRT) due to covid-19. Gram explained that due to the mid-semester switch to remote instruction, the SRTs are likely to be heavily skewed. In consultation with faculty, department heads, etc., there was pretty broad consensus that this semester's SRTs should not be considered for reappointment and promotion decisions, etc. Some institutions are not doing student evaluations of teaching at all this semester, he noted. However, Gram continued, this is also an opportunity to get information from students about their experience during the semester, which is important and valuable. Therefore, most of the questions have been modified or replaced with questions relevant to this unique situation. The results will be annotated and circumstance explained, he added.

Goodnough asked if there were any plans to advise faculty on how to improve response rates, given that online SRTs usually have lower response rates? Gram responded that they have already developed best practices around improving response rates on online SRTs, and those will be sent to all instructors. Gram acknowledged that some of the suggestions are not currently possible, such as administering online SRTs while the students are physically in the class. Goodnough commented that instructors who are lecturing via Zoom could do a modified version of the in-class online SRT.

Sara Hurley asked if courses that were always planned to be online would also receive the modified questions, and Gram said yes.

Ropers asked if members had any concerns about this approach; members indicated that they had no concerns, and appreciated the attention to this matter, as it will relieve anxiety for some instructors.

Nevin Young pointed out that many instructors will likely become ill due to covid-19. He asked how that would be handled. Ropers said that it was a good question, and that she did not have an answer that would apply for each circumstance. She encouraged instructors to have a contingency plan in case they become ill. She also noted that she had received a question from a peer institution about whether the University planned to provide any guidance for instructors about how to work with students who get very sick. This issue might come to SCEP in the future for consultation, she added.

3. Educational Policy Backlog Project

Next, Goodnough explained that she and incoming chair Thomas Chase met with Marlo Welshons, assistant to the provost, Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost; Stacey Tidball, director, continuity and compliance, Academic Support Resources; and Amber Bathke, senate associate, University Senate Office regarding the educational policies that are overdue for comprehensive review. This group proposed a plan to form a small group or several small groups of SCEP members, who will work over the summer to review a group of policies and report to the full committee in the fall. Goodnough noted that this is entirely voluntary, and that there may be funds available for those who are not on contract over the summer. Future discussions will focus on developing a system to “fast track” policies that are working fine as they are, so as to avoid future backlogs. Welshons said that there are about 30 policies to catch up on, and emphasized that the intent is not to cut out consultation, but to streamline it. Goodnough asked members if anyone had concerns about this plan, and no one did.

4. Systemwide Strategic Plan

Finally, Goodnough welcomed Executive Vice President and Provost Karen Hanson, who was presented to conduct consultation on the [Systemwide Strategic Plan](#). She gave some background information about the development of the plan up until this point, and then revealed the draft goals under each of the five commitments:

- Commitment 1: Student Success
 - Attract, educate, and graduate students who represent the diversity, talent, workforce, and citizenship needs of the future.
 - Enhance student experience, wellness, and success.
 - Increase innovative and high-quality educational offerings across modes of delivery to reach students where they are.
- Commitment 2: Discovery, Innovation, and Impact:
 - Increase high-impact discovery and scholarship.
 - Drive creativity, collaboration, and entrepreneurial spirit.
 - Engage Minnesota.
- Commitment 3: MNtersections
 - Drive innovation for next-generation health.
 - Build a fully sustainable future.
 - Advance natural resources and agro-food systems to elevate human security and potential.
- Commitment 4: Community and Belonging
 - Recruit and retain diverse talent.

- Cultivate a welcoming and inclusive campus climate.
- Advance understanding and nurture enduring partnerships.
- Commitment 5: Fiscal Stewardship:
 - Reduce financial barriers to student achievement.
 - Align revenue with forward-thinking mission fulfillment.
 - Build comprehensive long-range capital facilities and land-holding strategies to drive strategic growth.
 - Re-envision risk management and safety.

Hanson then opened the floor for feedback, as well as ideas for action items to fall beneath each of the goals. John Hoffman, vice chancellor, academic and student affairs, University of Minnesota Crookston, suggested that there are a number of opportunities to get more specific with recruiting and retaining diverse talent under Commitment 4, such as a statement that leads to specifics about how job descriptions are written; use of strong terms for equity, justice, and belonging (e.g. the ability to interrupt systemic barriers and practices); job qualifications; recruitment plans; questions asked in interviews; ensuring that finalists are reflective of applicant pool demographics; doing more to ask about just, equitable, and inclusive education through reference checks; and so on.

Members had the following suggestions:

- Under Commitment 1, goal 1: Covid-19 has made it clear that one way to serve the state would be to produce more teachers and child care providers.
- Under Commitment 1, goal 3: Find out the colleges' experience with remote learning, especially regarding ensuring quality.
- An action item around support for open access to scholarship and research, open science, etc. applies to a number of goals—for instance increasing access to modes of delivery under goal 3 of Commitment 1, under goal 1 of Commitment 2, and also related to the various goals of sustainability and financial issues.
- Under Commitment 2, goal 2 may be a good place to reference the pending creation of the Office of Interdisciplinary Initiatives, if this conversation is still happening. This may also be a good place to encourage and recognize interdisciplinarity.
- The goal of cultivating a welcoming and inclusive campus climate under Commitment 4 is critically important and one that has a challenging history (institutionally and nationally) attached to it.
- Under Commitment 4, explore holistic admissions and whether the GRE should be required.
- Under Commitment 5, goal 1, implementing a free tuition program would be easy to do quickly, for Minnesota families making less than \$50,000/year.

Hanson thanked members for their feedback, and Goodnough adjourned the meeting.

Amber Bathke
University Senate Office