

CLASSROOM ADVISORY SUBCOMMITTEE
MINUTES OF MEETING
MARCH 9, 2004

[In these minutes: Electronic Course Scheduling (ECS) Update, Classroom Standards and Designs, Ideas for April 13, 2004 Agenda]

[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: Ken Heller, chair, Steve Fitzgerald, Bernard Gulachek, Steve Spehn, Joyce Weinsheimer, Denise Guerin, Jennifer Peters, Jane Phillips, Andre Prahl, Joel Weinsheimer, Katie Herbert Marco Perzichilli

REGRETS: Roberta Juarez, William Hanson, James Perry

ABSENT: Donald Brazeal, Rachel Long, Gina Meyers

GUEST(S): Office of Classroom Management representatives David Crane, Classroom Facilities Coordinator; Jeremy Todd, Classroom Project Coordinator; Jim Gregory, Manager of Technical Services; Chuck Bottemiller, Classroom Technical Services Design Engineer; John Knowles, Faculty Liaison and Coordination; Ray Troyer, Classroom Technical Services Design Engineer

OTHER(S): Nancy McGlynn

I). Professor Heller called the meeting to order.

II). Steve Fitzgerald provided members with a brief ECS (Electronic Course Scheduling) update. He highlighted the following:

- Departments have entered their fall 2004 course data into the system and recently began inputting spring 2005 data. Feedback from departments regarding the new system has been extremely positive.

- There are a few developmental problems associated with the program that are in the process being resolved.
- Reports detailing 60/40 compliance and non-standard class periods will be available soon.

On a separate, but related note Mr. Fitzgerald reported that Resource 25, a program that will allow department schedulers to schedule events, labs, etc. in departmental space will be rolled out to all departments across campus in the not too distant future.

Comments/questions from members:

- When will the fall 2004 course data go on-line for students to view? The goal is to have this information available to students prior to registration for fall 2004, which starts in approximately a month.
- Has any feedback been received regarding the statement CAS sent to SCEP concerning the need to enforce existing policy related to non-standard scheduling of courses and the impact it has on the unplaced course problem? According to Professor Heller, SCEP has questioned whether anything more needs to be done with respect to the underutilization of classrooms on Fridays. Professor Heller assured SCEP that CAS through OCM continues to monitor this problem. He also reported that the CAS statement was forwarded from SCEP to the FCC. The FCC endorsed the statement minus the support for the ECS system, which it was reluctant to support at this time because of the system being so new.

III). Steve Fitzgerald introduced representatives from the Office of Classroom Management who were invited to discuss classroom standards and designs.

General purpose classrooms across campus differ from each other in many ways, but they should all be similar in certain aspects. It was noted that classrooms should support the pedagogy of the instructor and share certain characteristics to make them successful teaching and learning environments.

These features include:

- A student¹'s ability to see visual material.
- A student¹'s ability to hear without noise or distortion.
- A physically comfortable classroom.

- A room that supports the instructor¹'s ability to present material and communicate with students in an effective manner.
- Rooms flexible enough to meet the requirements of a variety of departmental, faculty and students¹ needs.

Next, *Appendix DD - Requirements for University Classrooms* was referred to and discussed. This document contains a wide range of classroom standards and criteria and serves as OCM¹'s benchmark for quality and design. *Appendix DD* is used by participants and stakeholders involved in the development of classroom instruction space e.g. architects, engineers, interior design professionals, University officials, product manufacturers and sales representatives and can be found at the following URL: www.facm.umn.edu/cons/2000/APPA/DD_APPA.pdf.

Three areas of *Appendix DD* were focused on and their requirements were outlined:

1. Acoustic requirements
2. Lighting requirements
3. Basic design principles

Questions/comments from members:

- What is the cost difference between a poorly designed room with deficiencies and a well-designed room? If the space were being constructed from scratch the cost would be minimal. However, when a space is being remodeled to add features in at a later time this can get fairly expensive.
- Is the glare from white boards considered a deficiency? Yes, glare is tested for in the classrooms and the goal is to maintain a 3-1 ratio when a lighting system is being installed.
- Is it feasible to light the presenter only while keeping the lighting in the rest of the classroom low? It was noted that particularly in the larger classrooms such complex lighting schemes are frequently used to accomplish this.
- Are colors and textures taken into account when designing classroom space to make it more appealing/inviting? Attempts are made to ³warm-up² the classroom space as much as possible, while keeping in mind that the front wall must remain a neutral color otherwise

- presentations are ³wiped-out² by dominant hues. Indirect lighting is one of the techniques used to make space more inviting.
- Are the requirements outlined in *Appendix DD* something that can be ignored if the cost of adhering to the guidelines is too exorbitant? *Appendix DD* is part of the official University of Minnesota Facilities Construction Standards. The parameters outlined in *Appendix DD* are institutionalized, but clearly when the cost of abiding by the guidelines is excessive, concessions need to be made. It was noted that *Appendix DD* speaks to ³ideal conditions² and there is a need for compromise in dealing with the many unique challenges that buildings/classrooms present. Ceiling height was used as an example of a very important factor that must be taken into consideration when designing classroom space.
 - Are the requirements and standards outlined in *Appendix DD* considered optimal conditions or minimum conditions? The requirements and standards outlined in the document are considered minimum.
 - How does OCM solicit feedback from faculty on whether specific classrooms are effective teaching and learning environments? OCM has an on-line feedback form that both faculty and students can use to evaluate classrooms. This evaluation form can be found at the following URL: http://www.classroom.umn.edu/room_comments.aspx
 - What percentage of general-purpose classrooms meet the current standards outlined in *Appendix DD*? There are numerous classrooms on campus that do not meet the standards discussed today. To quantify this calculation would be difficult because the equation is quite complex and takes into account many factors.
 - The teaching and learning environment in which students learn and faculty teaches should be a higher funding priority at the University than it currently is.
 - Physical space and how an individual feels in that space plays an important role in how an individual learns. With several older buildings on campus, physical infrastructure and code compliance are a couple of the major challenges that OCM is forced to deal with.

Members shared their comments regarding classrooms on campus and where they would like to see improvements made. Comments and suggestions included:

- It is difficult to maintain eye contact with students seated in the upper sections of tiered classrooms.
- Additional classrooms with more than two aisles are needed. Such classrooms would benefit both students and the instructor.
- To access a seat that is not on an aisle is an exercise in physical ability. An OCM representative noted that code now requires there be greater passing space between rows, which should help to alleviate this problem.
- There should be screens on the document cameras so the light does not blind students sitting in close proximity.
- Devise an adapter for slanted lecterns to make them flat in order to accommodate laptops.
- Design multi-level lecterns.
- Improve acoustics in classrooms so that when a student asks a question other students in the room can hear it.
- Install additional portable microphones in larger classrooms.
- Student ergonomics are being compromised in certain classrooms. In particular it was noted that many AHC classrooms are deficient.

Professor Heller asked today's guests to talk to the future of classrooms and what is on the horizon for University classrooms in terms of technology, etc. The following enhancements are either going to be installed in the not too distant future or are at least being explored/discussed:

- Wider screens to allow for a 16¹ x 9¹ presentation space.
- Multi-screens and multi-projectors for larger classrooms.
- Slide to video converters.
- Writing surfaces made of acoustic paneling in classrooms; thus, the room will become the palette for the instructor.
- Low-end video streaming is being explored.
- Classroom/student response systems are a possibility for the future, but, currently, this technology is not mature enough to operate in the University's general-purpose classrooms.

Comments/questions from members included:

- Does OCM have a budget for equipping a select number of classrooms with technology of the future? Mr. Fitzgerald noted that OCM selectively looks for innovative approaches; however, it needs to be

mindful that for budgetary reasons a majority of its funds are targeted for the technology upgrade plan currently underway.

- Steve Fitzgerald was asked whether he sees the results of the student evaluations, which contain a question regarding classroom satisfaction. If so, do students generally like classrooms? Mr. Fitzgerald stated that he sees the results of this evaluation in an aggregated format. A member suggested that the classroom satisfaction question should be divorced from the faculty evaluation.

In closing, Mr. Fitzgerald noted that CAS is a resource for OCM. He encouraged members if they have observations, issues, opinions or thoughts about classroom designs to feel free to contact him.

IV). Professor Heller requested ideas for agenda items for the April 13, 2004 meeting. The following suggestions were made:

- Explore departmental classroom allocations in an attempt to see if the distribution makes any sense whatsoever.
- Draft a resolution requesting that the classroom satisfaction question be taken off the faculty evaluation.

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

Renee Dempsey
University Senate