

Minutes*

**Faculty Consultative Committee
March 5, 1992**

Present: Thomas Scott (chair), Judith Garrard, Norman Kerr, Stanford Lehmberg, Charlotte Striebel, James VanAlstine, Shirley Zimmerman

Guests: Senior Vice President Robert Erickson, Geoff Gorvin (Footnote), Thomas Huntley (UMD), Maureen Smith (Brief), a Daily reporter

1. Report of the Chair

Professor Scott convened the meeting at 10:10 and reported briefly on several items:

- He has urged Vice President Hughes to have representatives from the committees on Educational Policy and Student Affairs on the task force on student employment that she is appointing.
- A report on Boynton Health Service has been prepared, including evaluation by an external review team, and Senior Vice President Infante wishes it reviewed by the governance system. It was agreed that the report should be referred to the committees on Faculty Affairs and Student Affairs for review and recommendation to the Senate Consultative Committee.
- Vice President Heydinger wishes suggestions on how to make more attractive to faculty the Minnesota orientation tours started last year. The idea of the tours is to take faculty and staff around the State for 2 - 3 days, outside the Twin Cities, so they can learn about Minnesota. The first two tours were in greater Minnesota; a third one, planned for this Spring, would be in the Twin Cities. Georgia pioneered this activity, Professor Scott noted, and require it of all new faculty; it has been fairly successful there.

Committee members noted that two purposes could be served by such tours: introducing new faculty and staff to the State, or acquainting the State with the University. Which purpose is to be served would affect who would go on the tours. Following short discussion, the Committee agreed that outstate tours would be much more valuable than doing one in the Twin Cities, that selection of faculty would depend on the purposes to be served, that a letter from the President and the Consultative Committee might be sent inviting faculty to participate, and that if introduction of new faculty to the state is the objective, then newly-tenured faculty should be selected and the deans would be the most appropriate officers to identify the faculty who should participate. Professor Scott agreed to forward the materials to the committee.

- Revisions of the mission statement and operating principles for intercollegiate athletics

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prepared by the Assembly Committee on Intercollegiate Athletics should probably be reviewed by the ad hoc committee on athletics before the Steering Committee takes action on them.

Discussion then turned to faculty workload issues. The document prepared by Professor Gray has created interest; University Relations is now doing a shorter version for general distribution. Professor Scott noted that there is a legislative study under way and a report is to be presented to the 1993 legislature. It is now thought that the University should perhaps develop its own workload policy statement, prepared in advance of the 1993 report, which would serve both internal and external purposes. There is feeling, he said, that there are significant differences across the University in workload, among colleges and among departments, which need to be addressed. The term workload, he observed, is not teaching load per se. Should a small group be appointed to look at the issue? If so, who should be on it and who should provide its charge?

One Committee member said that the faculty should say these kinds of investigations infringe on academic freedom and professional responsibility and move the institution closer to the use of timeclocks. At some point someone must say this is not the right way to go. That point has apparently not been reached. But this proposal calls for looking at norms and telling the deans to fix the problem by meeting the norms. The faculty should be judged by what they produce, not how many hours they spend at their desks; the direction of these studies is to look at the number of hours.

Others on the Committee demurred, cautioning that such a policy could also be seen as a call for accountability; what must be made clear is what is being accounted for. It would also be wise to seize the initiative, it was suggested, rather than to have something forced on the University.

It was agreed that Professor Scott would draft a charge to a group to develop a policy and would emphasize outcomes rather than process, noting that many 9-month faculty work during the summer, and pointing out that many faculty who provide instruction and research are not on state funds. Professor Scott said he would also work with Senior Vice President Infante to appoint a small group to draft the policy.

2. Discussion with Senior Vice President Erickson

Professor Scott next welcomed Senior Vice President Erickson to the meeting and told him he thought it would be useful if Mr. Erickson could reflect on his year in office, on higher education generally and how it does business, and also on issues of management and of cost. It is clear that public financial support for higher education is decreasing, and not just because of the recession; this appears to be a long-term trend, so cost questions become even more important. The perspective of someone from outside the academy, Professor Scott told him, would be important and useful.

Mr. Erickson thanked Committee members for the opportunity to join them and began by noting that the acid test of one's decisions are whether or not one would make them again, knowing what one knows after the fact. He said he would have made the same decision about taking the job--but said he could not have begun to anticipate what would be entailed in it.

His biggest surprise, he said, was to learn how important the University is to the State and how

little he knew about it. Of all people, he said, he would have thought he would have been among those who would have appreciated the economic impact of the University--he has two degrees from the University, he is a native of the State, he has served on public and private boards, was a senior corporate officer. But he could not, he related, have articulated the impact of the University nor could he have differentiated the University from other institutions of higher education in the State.

It is VERY important, Mr. Erickson said, that as the University moves forward, that it demonstrate its impact. If asked what his one objective as senior vice president is, it will be that if one asks Minnesotans what impact the University has on the State, they will answer that it creates a lot of jobs. If the public can learn that, there would not be much debate about the importance of the University.

He has recently focussed on the consultation process; at a large institution such as this one, there are two benefits to it. First, it allows administrators to find out who to talk to; second, it creates relationships so that if something is on someone's mind, they'll call. Both of these are more difficult to accomplish without a consultative process, and he has found it very useful. Consultation occurs in other organizations, he observed, but it is more formalized at the University, due to its size.

One of his frustrations, Mr. Erickson related, is that it takes as long as it does to do things. There needs to be a sense of urgency, things need to be driven by circumstances. They still must be done properly, he commented; the point is that once a decision is made, the time to implementation should be shortened. Organizationally, the longer the time to implementation after a decision, the greater the loss of energy put into the implementation. He recalled that ASAP in the private sector, in his experience, meant one or two hours, but certainly TODAY. At the University, ASAP means a week, maybe two weeks--even within the Finance area, which should be more business-oriented.

The focus of the Finance and Operations area must be on satisfying the "customer"--recognizing that some may not like the term. Their job is to serve the customer, and to do so more efficiently and effectively. It must be recognized that the University does not exist for Finance and Operations but rather for teaching, research, and outreach; too often, people get their perceptions of that relationship turned around, and it is important to keep them focussed on the job of providing service and support.

People in the academy, Mr. Erickson observed, are not financially motivated. It is the job of Finance and Operations to create an environment so those on the academic side can do their jobs with the least amount of hassle, in a way that will attract create people and let them get their work done. At this institution, the faculty are the CEOs.

Discussion turned to the health plan; one Committee member told Mr. Erickson that if faculty are customers, they haven't felt very well treated in the case of the health plan--or one has that impression, certainly, if one reads the letters of faculty members involved with the health care task force. There is the perception that the University would take care of the Hospital rather than its "customers" and its attitude has been such that the faculty are not seen as the customer.

Mr. Erickson expressed regret that that perception was held. Although late into the process, he said he would take responsibility for what he had done. He said he felt strongly that the process should drive the decision and it must be the case that the facts should speak for themselves. Clearly, however, the faculty perceive that the recommendations were driven by other factors, and that perception has

become the reality. Part of the problem was that the consultants were seen as talking at people and did not understand they were dealing with people who can both judge and replicate their data. His own view, he said, is that for the long term, even though the University is a slightly heavier user of health care (by 3 - 4%), because it is different from the state group, with unique needs, it would make sense to separate from the state plans. That option is now not supportable.

The legacy of this episode, however, will be faculty mistrust, and it will not be confined to that issue, it was said. Mr. Erickson responded that no institution can go through the amount of change the University has and not have distrust be a result. Consider the non-tenured staff, he pointed out, who for years lived with a situation where there were no lay-offs for years; now they are being made all the time. Long-held opinions are being challenged (such as that we're doing a good job in this area or that--it isn't clear that's true), and that does cause trauma. It does appear, however, that people are beginning to see that there is life after reorganization, such as with Facilities Management and the Police Department.

The good news about all of this, Mr. Erickson reflected, is that with increased administrative efficiency and better support for the academic enterprise, the University can emerge stronger. It is ahead of its peers in making these changes, he said, which could give it a competitive advantage.

Mr. Erickson said he had three questions for the Committee:

1. What can he do to make the process work better?
2. What advice would it give him, in general?
3. What objectives should he have; what things are important?

Committee members mulled over the questions; one individual commented that one finds, throughout the University, a lot of little pockets of inefficiency, little empires, which we are all used to but which cause horror stories. Part of the problem is that nobody cares. And there is little accountability; one can talk to those units until one is blue in the face; "this is the way we do it, it's the way we've always done it."

Treating the faculty as a customer would be a switch, said one Committee member. Another one noted that the University is largely to blame and recounted his recent experience at the State Capitol: 1) the building is clean, and 2) there are a lot of support staff. It may be that the University needs more staff and fewer faculty, and that cutting staff when budgets are reduced is a mistake.

Mr. Erickson then mentioned that he believed people tend to make the institution more complex than it is. The University has 28,000 accounting units; he speculated that half of them could be done away with. What he wants to do is simplify; one must always ask "why are we doing this?" With the old accounting system, the right questions could not be asked; part of the benefit of CUFS should be that as the system is decentralized, these questions can now be asked.

One Committee member expressed distaste for the notion of student as customer and the institution providing a service; that dehumanizes education, it was argued, and makes higher education the merchants of a process rather than seeing as students and faculty mutually engaged in the activity of learning. The pervasiveness of the customer/client relationship is understandable, but the idea of education as a product detracts from what it is all about.

Mr. Erickson replied that it all depends on how broadly or narrowly you define "customer." The customer relationship can range from buying a 15-cent item to a sophisticated consulting relationship. It is important, on the business side of the University, that there be recognition that it exists to serve the academic side. When resources are short, he went on, people will focus on the cost and efficiency of the delivery of services. There is a feeling, for example, that in K-12 education is not providing enough for the money; that is less true for higher education, where the United States is seen as having one of the premier systems in the world.

It was suggested that rather than a business/customer model, the University could more profitably consider the legislator/constituent model. The University is part of the state government and the model is more appropriate; it is spending state dollars, and if not doing as the constituents wish, then it is failing. Mr. Erickson said he failed to see any significant difference in the two models; whether in business or in the legislature, one responds to complaints.

Professor Scott next noted that there appears to be an internal as well as external perception that the University cannot manage itself effectively, be cost effective and accountable. One of the sources of the internal frustration, he noted, was that many faculty obtain their information from the news, just like all other citizens, and form the same perceptions.

Mr. Erickson said there is general recognition in the legislature that the University has tried hard to aggressively address issues, especially in Facilities Management. Much remains to be done, and more changes are needed. As for public perceptions, he noted, the press tends to focus on the negative, which is frustrating for the institution as a whole. He makes a quarterly report to the Regents on financial information and how the University is doing; it might be useful for FCC and Finance and Planning to discuss regularly those reports as well; the system doesn't take enough time to talk about them but it should. In a general sense, he said, the University is making progress toward operating more efficiently.

Mr. Erickson was asked if had any regular way of communicating with faculty and staff and students to find out about problems and complaints (some of which are justified, some of which are not). He said he has regular meetings with the student leadership but there are a lot of additional things that could be done on a regular basis, such as this very meeting. There is a tendency to focus on big issues, Mr. Erickson observed, when it is often the little issues that can be addressed and that affect perceptions and daily life at the institution.

An overall problem is the flow of information, within and among departments, said one Committee member; how we communicate with each other. This goes beyond faculty and includes students and staff. The University is in the business of producing and communicating knowledge--but, at the same time, it is tremendously difficult to even obtain something like an electronic mail account.

Discussion also touched briefly on University supervision of construction projects (some concerns have been expressed about Ferguson Hall) and the contest between two buildings to reduce energy consumption on the St. Paul campus.

One Committee member then commented that while there had been a number of complaints registered at this meeting, it was his sense that there is widespread support for the progress that Mr.

Erickson has made and that he has accomplished an amazing amount for only having been in office for one year. Mr. Erickson expressed gratitude for the support and noted that it takes some strength to talk about issues. He said he has sensed that there are a lot of issues that people do NOT want to talk about. In the health care debate, for instance, something went wrong and in some way "we failed."

"I will make mistakes," Mr. Erickson concluded, and if he doesn't, then he's not doing anything. But he would like to limit the number of mistakes and to learn from them. The intensity of events at the University is astonishing, he said, but there are also opportunities to get excited about. No one has looked at infrastructure questions for a long time, for example, and 20-year problems are now being solved (e.g., the transitway). What is absolutely lost during such a process is the "pick-up and put-down" time--if one picks up a problem, and puts it down without solving it, then the time is wasted--and more time will later be wasted in getting back up to speed on addressing it. There needs to be a mentality that if one picks a problem up, one fixes it. One Committee member responded that the Senate and its committees could profit by following that advice. . . .

Professor Scott thanked Mr. Erickson for joining the Committee.

3. Representation of the Duluth Faculty on the Committee

Professor Scott then reminded the Committee that the Senate had defeated the proposal to change the representation of the Duluth faculty on the Committee so some alternative had to be developed. He said he had asked Professor VanAlstine to meet with the people from Duluth to have an informal discussion of how the issue might be resolved.

Professor Huntley was invited to join the discussion with Committee members. He explained the views of the Duluth Medical School faculty; the Committee discussed various aspects of membership on the Committee, who or what is being represented, the implications of the faculty at Duluth being unionized, and the advice tendered by the General Counsel's office about the Senate bylaws.

One idea proposed at the meeting was that ALL faculty on the Duluth campus be permitted to vote in the election of the FCC member from Duluth, but that only Medical School faculty would be eligible to serve; this might permit the individual to "represent" the entire campus while at the same time avoiding conflicts with public employee labor relations statutes governing discussion of the terms and conditions of employment. It was unclear what the reaction of the union would be, but it was thought to be an option which could be considered.

It was agreed that Professor Bognanno would join Professor VanAlstine in meeting with the Duluth faculty and that the union would be contacted about the meeting. Professor Scott concluded that in the spirit of the advice from Senior Vice President Erickson, this time the issue would be picked up and not put down until it was solved.

The Committee adjourned at 12:00.

-- Gary Engstrand