

Minutes*

Senate Committee on Educational Policy
Wednesday, November 10, 1993
2:30 - 4:30
Room 624 Campus Club

Present: Kenneth Heller (chair), Craig Bursch, Anita Cholewa, Sue Donaldson, Robert Johnson, Manuel Kaplan, Carla Phillips

Regrets: Thomas Clayton, James Cotter, Megan Gunnar, Darwin Hendel, Gayle Graham Yates

Absent: Daniel Boler, William Van Essendelft

Guests: None

Others: None

[In these minutes: The strategic planning documents]

1. Strategic Planning Documents

Professor Heller convened the meeting at 2:30 and announced that the first half hour would be devoted to reading the documents that had been distributed.

After the reading period, Professor Heller then reported that the SCEP resolution on greater consultation that was sent to FCC had been approved, although on a divided vote; there was, however, more support for the concept than the vote indicated, for a variety of reasons. The resolution has had, he believes, a salutary effect. The chair of FCC will transmit the FCC action to the President. There is considerable concern about the consulting process that will be used in planning and implementing U2000 (if it is approved), Professor Heller said, and that concern was communicated by FCC at its meeting with the Board of Regents at the open forum.

What does the Senate wish from the Committee? inquired one of its members. Professor Heller said FCC--and the administration--is looking for feedback from this and other Senate committees to help articulate the vision and shape it into a concrete plan of action.

In response to a call for general comments, one Committee member said this version of the mission and vision statement was much better, more fleshed out with goals and things the University intends to do. University College still looks loose, it was said by another--it has no defined faculty; is it all the faculty? A subset of the faculty? This IS an issue when hiring researchers--especially when the Committee last week called for everyone to be involved in undergraduate education.

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The latest view of UC, Professor Heller said, is that it will be analogous to the Graduate School--an administrative entity whose major concern will be the welfare of non-residential undergraduates on the campus. There are faculty associated with the Graduate School, it was pointed out, because they choose to be. Will the same be true of UC? Initially, speculated one Committee member, all of the faculty will be considered part of UC--but there will also be no special courses. It will be a bureaucracy to deal with non-full-time students. This represents a new set of functions for CEE, it was said; the integration and coordination of part-time students has not traditionally been among its responsibilities. One issue this raises is whether or not to make it symmetric--let UC deal with all undergraduates, just as the Graduate School deals with all graduate students.

Committee members then turned to a careful consideration of the language in the mission and vision statement. For the remainder of the meeting they worked on editing the document; in the course of the discussions a number of more general issues were also raised:

- There are a number of statements about "interdisciplinary this and new programs that" that raise red flags. This, it was said, raises the old University of Minnesota disease of too much on the periphery when the need is to strengthen the core; the references to new programs and activities should be deleted. The University should not commit itself to a major program of new activities when the core is suffering. Graduate education got in trouble, recalled another Committee member, when massive new interdisciplinary programs were encouraged that had no departmental base--they attracted bright students without departmental support. The document, reflected another, seems to say that all activities must be based on strong departments--and then seems to deviate from that position.

The problem is an old one; the University develops a series of research centers, many of which are very good. But the result is a well-supported ring of centers around a series of core departments that have shrunk to virtually nothing. This is not the intent of U2000, it was said, but in an environment of constant resources all these centers come at the expense of the core. If the University had a strong core, these statements would be fine--but since its core has been weakened, they are not.

- While there is much language about improving undergraduate education, there is nothing in the undergraduate section that corresponds to the language in the graduate and professional section about strengthening core programs.
- While there is no statement about priorities in the five goals, there have been any number of intimations and statements that research must be seen as coming first; the others cannot be rank-ordered. But it also the case, as the President has said on several occasions, that they must all be taken together as one piece.
- Several Committee members expressed a distinct dislike to such "new age" terms as "empowerment" and "nurture." Editorial revisions were drafted wherever these terms appear.
- When setting forth the brief descriptions of the roles of the various campuses, the items

that are the same for all campuses should not be repeated. The differences are what should be highlighted, perhaps preceded by language describing common activities and goals. It is questionable whether the section should be retained at all; perhaps it should perhaps be included as a separate piece at the end. The language about the campuses tends to describe means rather than mission. The mission of the University presumably would not change if a campus were closed.

- Based on conversations with colleagues, said one Committee member, there has to be language added to the statement somewhere that U2000 does not envision a "speeding up of the assembly line." It does not appear that the administration intends that faculty be expected to go faster, to do more with less.
- The initial language in the vision statement seems to be largely reactive; there is no sense that what the University is doing is anticipatory or exercising leadership. While the University must, of course, respond to its environment, there needs also to be a component of the vision saying the University will seek to change or affect that environment and that the results of its activities will help to shape the state, the nation, and the world.
- The vision also needs to focus more on faculty--it talks about citizenship, internationalization, quality, students, and the qualities of the University; where are the faculty? There is a statement that the University is a premier research university, and there is a statement lauding quality and high expectations for faculty and students--but there is nothing in between about the faculty; there needs to be a "faculty vision" statement.
- The section on undergraduate education contains what appears to be a laundry list of items that need to be addressed. While it is true that many have urged more detail, in this instance the provision of detail appears to go too far for a mission and vision statement.

Because of the lateness of the hour, the Committee agreed it would finish its review of the mission and vision statement during the first hour of its meeting next week; Professor Heller thereupon adjourned the meeting at 5:00.

-- Gary Engstrand

(In a brief discussion following the adjournment of the meeting, two Committee members expressed the hope that the "final" draft of the document would be submitted to someone or some group to add grace and eloquence to the language. At present it reads like it was prepared by a committee--no insult was intended for the administrators who have labored at great length on the draft, and there was rueful admission that SCEP's own editing did not always add grace and eloquence.)

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