

Minutes*

Senate Committee on Faculty Affairs
Tuesday, April 5, 2005
2:15 – 4:00
238A Morrill Hall

Present: Morris Kleiner (chair), F. R. P. Akehurst, Matthew Bribitzer-Stull, Carol Carrier, Dann Chapman, A. Saari Csallany, Jesse Daniels, Janet Ericksen, Patricia Frazier, Richard Goldstein, Darwin Hendel, Theodor Litman, Steven McLoon, Kelly Risbey, Kathleen Sellew, Aks Zaheer

Absent: John Fossum, Elizabeth Hjelman, Oriol Valls, Larry Wallace, Timothy Wiedmann

Guests: President Robert Bruininks; Jackie Singer (Director of Retirement Benefits)

Other: Kathryn Stuckert (Office of the Chief of Staff)

[In these minutes: (1) strategic planning; (2) discussion with President Bruininks; (3) salary instructions; (4) retirees' association]

1. Strategic Planning

Professor Kleiner convened the meeting at 2:30 and noted that the President would be joining the Committee shortly. He asked what issues the Committee wished to raise with him. One issue is what happens to faculty as units are merged and departments are moved from one unit to another. A second issue is what the goal of being in the top three public research universities in the world will imply for faculty. A third issue is how to ensure equitable treatment for faculty involved in moving the University to among the top three in the world.

The Committee discussed briefly the ranking of universities and how the structure of universities elsewhere in the world, and the criteria used for rankings, affects how an institution is ranked. It was noted that European universities, for example, are becoming more like American universities because of the pressure created by rankings and the need for resources. It would make some feel more comfortable if the goal was to be among the top three public research universities in the country, rather than the world. It was also said that at least one of the rankings indicates the three best public institutions in the world are in the U.S., so the comparison group may be this country anyway.

Professor Hendel suggested the discussion with the President might focus on faculty life. He said he believed the faculty have the potential to propel the University into the top three; the question is whether they can do so if they are also expected to do all the other things faculty are expected to do (e.g., because the University land-grant, which many public research universities are not). Another question, Professor Kleiner commented, is whether the University is willing to pay for it. Some universities already have higher salaries; are there resources behind the goals or is it just an aspiration? Or the

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

University will show how an institution can do more with less, Professor McLoon added. The University of Florida rankings at one point had Minnesota among the top three; now it has fallen to sixth. One can ask what metric will be used to decide when the University is among the top three—and what will it mean for faculty when they show up for work in the morning? Will faculty life change next year because of the strategic plans?

Professor Zaheer observed that he is in a unit that is focused on rankings and is all too aware of managing to the rankings. The University must deliver outstanding teaching and research without managing to rankings. Some rankings are based on idiosyncratic factors and some cynical units or institutions play to the rankings. The University has set a noble goal which all can support—but it must be supported in the right way.

Very little in the documents deals with the key elements of the University's mission, which are teaching and research, Professor McLoon said. All the focus is organizational; there is little to worry about and little to talk about. What about units that are merged or closed, such as General College, Professor Kleiner asked? Many believe that General College has outlived its usefulness, Professor McLoon said—and why does the University have a two-year medical school, which is extremely expensive?

2. Discussion with President Bruininks

Professor Kleiner welcomed the President to the meeting and asked him to provide an overview of how strategic planning will affect faculty.

President Bruininks said the answer to the question is fairly complex. He informed the Committee about the process thus far. He received reports last week from two task forces. Those reports were a step in a process that began last summer, when he recommended to the Board of Regents that the University go through a strategic planning and longer-term positioning process. It is valuable for an organization to go through such a process, but not to produce a report, have a public relations blitz, and then put the report on a shelf. The process should give guidance to the institution in setting priorities and strengthening the University.

The Board of Regents was involved in the process, the President said, so at every Board meeting since last fall there have been sessions on elements of strategic planning. At one of the meetings they reviewed the criteria for the evaluation of programs, which some have claimed that these are simply the ones used by President Keller in Commitment to Focus. That is not correct, the President said; the criteria were originally developed when Dr. Keller was Dean of the Graduate School and have been revised and refined over the succeeding 15 years. At other Board meetings they have discussed the environment of higher education and the sweeping trends and changes (demographic, economic, and those in higher education); at another they reviewed financial trends and budgets. Last February the Board reviewed the report of the strategic planning committee that had worked last summer and fall. In March the Board unanimously adopted the plan.

In November of last year he appointed the two working groups because if strategic planning is to go anywhere, the institution needed to look at programs, set priorities, and think creatively. The academic task force, chaired by Provost Sullivan, included 31 recommendations. Much of the conversation has focused on General College but there is much more in the report. The administrative task force, dealing

with the administrative/service/business culture of the University and co-chaired by Vice President O'Brien and Executive Associate Vice President Sullivan, contains a number of recommendations, some with implications for faculty and staff. It will take more time to implement those recommendations, the President said, but it has been estimated that changes in the way the work of the University is organized and supported could, over time, save perhaps \$20 million per year. He said he thought that was probably correct but that changes would not be made in a hasty manner.

The President told the Committee he is consulting with every college and campus about the plan. Every meeting creates new ideas.

By the end of the month (and probably before, in some cases) he must lay his cards on the table, the President related, and indicate which recommendations he will bring to the Board of Regents. The Board will discuss them and hold at least one public hearing on them. If his recommendations are acted on favorably by the Board in June, this will be a different approach: the Board will be asked to adopt policies and the implementation is to be left up to the academic community. There will, as a result, be a number of task forces to implement the actions of the Board; they will be expected to make their reports by December 10. In cases where departments are moving or units are being merged, the task force may decide to change the mission of the college, change the name, change the configuration of departments, and so on. Once the Regents act, the task forces will go to work.

The Board action in June, the President said, is not the last word, it is the START of the work. He said he believes the University has too many small academic units that look alike (with a dean, two associate deans, an alumni office, a fund-raising office, a public relations office, and so on). The University can save money and reallocate it into teaching and research. Saving money, however, is not the only reason to make these changes; the amount of money saved from the recommendations in the academic task force report will perhaps be \$6 or 7 million over three or four years, and much of that will be the redistribution of tuition revenues. The real reason is to strengthen academic leadership in important fields and to create less fragmentation. There will also be conversations about the alignment and strengthening of the biological sciences; there are complex questions to which the University has to find the right answers. The same kinds of issues exist in student systems; that is a case where the whole is less than the sum of its parts. Other goals include facilitating interdisciplinary work and collaboration across academic boundaries and increasing student success rates (with respect to the latter, right now the University provides access to lower-than-acceptable rates of success).

The President told the Committee he did not foresee huge faculty or staff dislocations as a result of the changes. The task force reports, he said, will be driven by deans, department chairs, faculty leaders, and perhaps some external members; central administrators will recede into the background.

Professor McLoon said that he was skeptical about the process. He has been here 20 years and the University has been engaged in strategic planning most of the time—but he has yet to see any change in his day-to-day life. Has the administration identified why previous plans seem to have failed? He is an active faculty member who teaches and does research; will he see something that changes his job? He noted that the same day the University announced the goal of being among the top three public research universities in the world, his department saw a significant budget cut. Those two things do not seem to go together.

President Bruininks said he has studied past plans. One reason they may have failed, he said, is because people lacked resolve to carry them out; that is not a characteristic people will see in him. Another reason is that those plans were developed in a different time; he believes that there is more urgency now because the University has seen large budget declines and must make important decisions to position and strengthen itself in an increasingly competitive environment. Another possible reason is that they did not approach issues in a systemic fashion and consider how things might fit together. He repeated that he does not see the current recommendations as the last set but as the first round. He said the University has also not in the past tried to align its fiscal and administrative structure with the strategic planning process and recommendations.

How will faculty life change? The President said he could not tell now, but if there is progress in administrative and service areas, for example, faculty should see a better level of service at lower cost. But this process is not a panacea. It will improve the education of students in some areas; in other areas there will be markers to achieve. He told Professor McLoon that it is healthy to be skeptical; he will not see the impact of a lot of the changes—but there will be an impact in the University.

Professor Zaheer asked if the President has a group looking at quality measures. Will there be implementation plans with markers so that the process does not slip? How can the University make commitments credibly and make the deadlines stick? The process will be very visible and the University will stick to its plans, the President assured him. "We have worked hard to build measurement and accountability systems. When we talk about being among the best, we must define what that means." It does not mean U.S. News and World Report rankings; the University must define what is important (but in a way that has some relevance to the world of higher education). There will be discussions about what matters and the University will then manage to those things (e.g., student progress, learning, and satisfaction, better graduation rates, better writing skills). They must measure progress in every area, including access, and must ask if the University is successful. There will be a broad-based management team to oversee progress and it will measure progress each year (that is done now, the President said, but it does not get much attention—they need to identify 15 or 20 broad measures the University will pay attention to).

The University will not adopt the status quo, the President said. "We will be accountable for managing the process—or I expect the University will have a new president."

What has been done to involve the legislature, Professor McLoon asked? They are seeing legislative involvement, for example, in the effort to close a department in the Medical School. President Bruininks said they have worked with the legislature on these changes (starting, for example, with the restructuring of the Extension Service). The proposed closing in the Medical School was not handled the way that the other proposals in the strategic planning documents have been. He agreed that the University needs to think both about legislative as well as donor relations. "We have briefed many legislative leaders," the President said. The legislature has, up to now, been relatively quiet about the strategic planning process.

The President commented that he believes there are resources at the University that can be used to better support teaching and research. And to raise more money, such as raising scholarship funds. The University is using matching money (tuition, private funds, institutional funds) for raising scholarship money. The University needs to think about using resources in different ways. What is his priority in fund-raising, Professor McLoon asked? Right now, first is student financial support, the President said,

and second is the research mission (chairs and professorships and infrastructure). He noted that he has gone to the legislature and explained that the state cannot have a great research university without a strong research infrastructure; the University has requested funding for technology, equipment, labs, and so on. He is trying to get the legislature to understand that this is a unique place, unlike any other institution in the state. Most fund-raising, he concluded, is for education and research.

Professor Akehurst asked if enough attention had been paid to the power of words. "We know about Garrison Keillor's 'Ralph's Pretty Good Grocery' but what we are aiming for here is 'Ralph's Magnificent Grocery.'" If one were going to improve a lake in northern Minnesota, one might build a golf course, or a resort; or on the other hand one might just raise the level of the lake by an inch. In the latter case, no one would notice. Could we get Garrison Keillor, or perhaps Patricia Hampl, to write something lapidary, glittering and prismatic, that we can shout to the world? The President agreed that the power of words is important. When he sought a new Vice President for Institutional Relations, he felt the University needed to bring in someone steeped in strategic communication so it can communicate in a highly effective manner. The Twin Cities is a major center of marketing in the world so he met with leaders in the business and asked for help. They provided help and were involved in the search. Vice President Thrane's approach will strengthen the quality, reach, and strategic nature of the University's communications.

There is a sense that the University does not get its message out, but at the same time there were over 1200 positive stories in the Twin Cities media in the last year, and "those were your stories," the President remarked. Sometimes, however, the words the University uses may not resonate outside the academic community. The University also needs to use different media to get its message out. He said he would welcome ideas for stories.

Professor Litman asked how the strategic plan recommendations are playing in outstate Minnesota. Some say the plans do not go far enough, the President said. With respect to the coordinate campuses, there is a recommendation that they be academically and financially accountable, which means that they must be viable and productive. The Duluth campus is thriving; the smaller campuses are in sparsely-populated areas, although the people on those campuses are working hard to make them successful (e.g., Crookston and Morris recently identified savings of \$250,000 in administrative costs through a joint effort).

Does being in the top three mean extending the coverage and draw of the University outside the state, Professor Zaheer asked? The University needs to do so more than it does today, the President said, and it also needs a higher rate of success. Low graduation rates become part of the University's reputation—and can even affect units like the Medical School. The University must also retain more good students from within Minnesota and recruit them from elsewhere. There are few institutions in Minnesota that can draw students from outside the state, and of those who do come here for school, 70% stay in Minnesota after graduation. That is a powerful way to draw intellectual capital to the state.

Will there be a campaign, Professor Zaheer asked? There will be, the President said. They cannot assume that all high-ability students in Minnesota will stay in the state, but 18% should not go elsewhere; that figure should perhaps be 14-15%. The University is losing too many top students at both the undergraduate and graduate/professional levels. That is why he believes the University must have a much higher level of student financial support at all levels.

The President said he would be glad to return to the Committee to respond to additional questions and said he would welcome ideas that it may have. Professor Kleiner thanked him for joining the meeting.

3. Salary Instructions

Professor Kleiner next drew the attention of Committee members to a resolution approved by the Senate Committee on Finance and Planning last week. The resolution read:

The Senate Committee on Finance and Planning respectfully requests the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost to consult with it and with the Senate Committee on Faculty Affairs about the salary instructions for 2005-06 before they are presented for final action to the Board of Regents.

Does this Committee wish to endorse the resolution, Professor Kleiner asked? "Absolutely," Professor McLoon said, and moved that the Committee do so. It voted unanimously in favor of Professor McLoon's motion.

Is this a done deal, Professor Kleiner asked Vice President Carrier? It is, Dr. Carrier said, but the Board of Regents approves the budget, which includes the salaries. The units, however, must do their work before the final Board action, so the guidelines went out.

4. University of Minnesota Retirees Association

Professor Kleiner now welcomed Professor John Howe, President of the University of Minnesota Retirees Association (UMRA).

UMRA is for faculty, P&A staff, and civil service staff, Professor Howe began, and has about 600 members. They are trying to build the organization and make it more visible; he said he has been surprised at the extent to which UMRA is not known. They are trying to overcome that problem. UMRA is the only campus-wide organization that represents all three groups of employees; it seeks to represent the interests of its members.

UMRA has two missions, Professor Howe said. One is to improve benefits; to that end, they have negotiated discounts with intercollegiate athletics, recreational sports, the bookstores, and parking. They are also publicizing two important documents, the Regents' policy on retirees and the Faculty Retiree Bill of Rights, approved by the Faculty Senate in 1998. The latter, while not adopted as University policy, is a vigorous statement by the Faculty Senate about retirees. They are bringing these documents to the attention of retirees and administrators in order to make them known and to get people to heed them. They have had meetings with the Civil Service Committee and CAPA, since those two organizations represent two of the three constituencies of UMRA, and those two groups are interested in exploring the possibility of adopting statements similar to the Faculty Senate document.

UMRA is also dealing with the problem of faculty who were significantly invested in the pre-1963 retirement program, which works to their disadvantage. They are trying to identify the extent of the problem (there are about 340 people in different situations vis-à-vis the pre-1963 plan).

The second UMRA mission is to find ways for retirees to maintain connections with the University, if they wish (some say they had enough and walk away), and lot of faculty do want to keep up connections. UMRA works to make that happen, including monthly lunches at the Campus Club and sponsorship of the retirees' center at the University, which provides about 2000 hours per month of on- and off-campus volunteer work. They have also spoken with the Foundation about how retirees may contribute and will explore ways that retired faculty can contribute to the strategic planning effort. The retirees represent a large reservoir of energy, experience, and skills that many find difficult to use—and many do not find a welcome. There was a study at the University that found many faculty wish to remain active and contribute to the University but that they are often not welcomed. UMRA is trying to help deal with that problem.

Any organization depends on new members, Professor Howe observed; any organization that depends on retirees must bring in fresh blood. They receive lists from Human Resources for one-time mailings and they seek other ways to contact retirees to invite them to join UMRA. As with any association, there is strength in numbers; with increased membership, they can better represent the interests of retirees.

Professor McLoon commented that he will join UMRA when he retires, although he can't see the day when that will occur. What is it like, he asked Professor Howe. For him, Professor Howe said, it is a perpetual sabbatical. He recently finished a book and is working for UMRA. Professor McLoon inquired about Professor Howe's health care situation, the financial transition to retirement, and his current financial situation, if Professor Howe did not mind telling the Committee. Professor Howe responded to Prof. McLoon's question concerning his own retirement experience.

The Faculty Senate resolution of 1998—which is not University policy—is a strong statement on what faculty retirees should be able to count on from the University, department, and college. That includes office space, telephone, and professional support—but the provision of these elements varies wildly across the University and even within colleges. It is wise for individuals, as they approach retirement, to talk with department heads about what they can expect.

Professor Litman recalled that Ms. Risbey and Professor Bland, in a study of faculty members who were 55 years or older, found that the items Professor Howe referred to are high on the list of what retirees want. If they have that support, Ms. Risbey said, faculty want to remain affiliated with the University into retirement.

One issue for this Committee is the different retirement plans across the University, Professor Kleiner said—some are defined benefit and some are defined contribution. Post-retirement health care is also an issue; Wisconsin has it while Minnesota does not, and Minnesota faculty retire at a later age than do Wisconsin faculty. He asked Professor Howe if he had any suggestions on these points. Professor Howe said that people make their own decisions; if their finances are shaky, they will stay, while others cannot imagine not teaching and meeting with students.

Do they meet with other Big Ten schools, Vice President Carrier asked? They do, annually, Professor Howe said (minus Northwestern). The meetings provide a useful exchange of information.

Professor Howe said that UMRA would continue aggressively to explore options for the pre-1963 retirees and would keep the Committee informed about its work. They will also spend more time on the

Regents' policy, trying to make it more public, and then wish to communicate with the deans about talking with chairs and offering the help of UMRA. They would like to see the policy improved and will keep the Committee informed about this work as well.

Professor Kleiner thanked Professor Howe for joining the meeting and adjourned it at 4:05.

-- Gary Engstrand

University of Minnesota