

Senate Committee on Educational Policy (SCEP)
January 23, 2019
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:** Library Committee Statement on Affordable Content; Discussion of SCEP Communication to Faculty; Administrative Policy: *Academic Calendars*; Administrative Policy: *Syllabus Requirements*; Updates on SRT Related Initiatives]

PRESENT: Jennifer Goodnough (chair), Toni Abts, Nicola Alexander, Michael Anderson, Julia Brokaw, Elaine Darst, Dan Delaney, Stacy Doepner-Hove, Gayle Golden, Jude Goossens, Ken Leopold, Robert Poch, Emily Shilts, Sophia Vrba, Nevin Young

REGRETS: Scott Lanyon, Bob McMaster, Brian Sick

ABSENT: Yan Liang

GUESTS: Ole Gram, assistant vice provost, Faculty & Academic Affairs; Stephanie Klein, assistant director and educational services manager, Office of Measurement Services; Stacey Tidball, director, Compliance and Continuity, Academic Support Resources

OTHERS: Jessica Kuecker Grotjohn, assistant to the vice provost and dean, Office of Undergraduate Education; Kendra Okposo, associate to the director, Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action; Leslie Schiff, associate dean, University Curriculum, Office of Undergraduate Education; Jake Steinberg, reporter, *Minnesota Daily*

1. Library Committee Statement on Affordable Content

Professor Jennifer Goodnough, chair, called the meeting to order and welcomed members. She then reported on her visit to the Senate Library Committee that morning, noting that the Library Committee would like SCEP's support in bringing their Statement of Affordable Content to the University Senate. Goodnough added that the Minnesota Student Association (MSA) had passed a similar resolution. Members offered the following comments on the Library Committee's statement:

- Some specialized content is difficult to obtain outside of textbooks. Goodnough said the intent of the statement is not to require instructors to use open content, but rather to encourage it when possible.
- Textbooks may be expensive but are also long-term resources. Emily Stilts, a student member, commented that when students rent textbooks, they are only available for that academic year. The cost may be less, she said, but the student does not have the book as a resource in the future.
- Resources of the libraries on system campuses vary.

- Julia Brokaw, a graduate student member, said that anything to make books more affordable is helpful, especially for undergraduates. Also online resources are searchable, which is useful. Goodnough commented that most students seem to be comfortable with accessing learning materials online, but some populations of students, such as non-traditional students, may be less so.
- Members were not comfortable endorsing the Library Committee's request that the administration support affordable content through funding sufficient for the libraries to support the initiative.

Because the committee was hesitant to endorse certain aspects of the Library Committee's statement, but supports the idea of affordable content overall, Goodnough said she would transmit feedback to the Library Committee. If the Library Committee does not want to amend these sections of the statement, the committee discussed issuing a separate statement saying that while it is not within SCEP's purview to comment on library financial allocations, from an educational standpoint, the committee supports using affordable content when available.

2. Discussion of SCEP Communication to Faculty

Next, Goodnough informed members that Rebecca Ropers-Huilman, vice provost, Faculty and Academic Affairs, and Bob McMaster, interim executive vice president and provost, had asked her how SCEP would feel about communicating with faculty in some regular way once or twice a year about the University's expectations for their syllabi. She opened up the floor for comment. Members felt that faculty may be more likely to pay attention to a communication from SCEP than the administration, for several reasons. Goodnough suggested that such a communication could include links to policies and could highlight a particular best practice or aspect each semester. She stressed that it should pertain to syllabi only, as SCEP should not be responsible for disseminating information about all educational policies. Members agreed that this was a good idea, and that a couple of weeks before syllabi are due would be a good time for the communication to go out. They suggested sending to department chairs or directors of undergraduate or graduate studies to push out to the faculty. Nevin Young said that in his department, the academic technologist had provided a template syllabus with all of the required statements already included, so that would be another target audience for the communication.

3. Administrative Policy: *Academic Calendars*

Goodnough then turned the floor over to Stacey Tidball, director, Compliance and Continuity, Academic Support Resources, who presented proposed revisions to the Administrative Policy: *Academic Calendars* based on the committee's discussion on December 5, 2018, when, in the interest of inclusivity, members had suggested removing the reference to December 23 as the latest end date for fall semester. At the time, the committee had discussed replacing the date with a maximum number of days from the start of the semester, but Tidball felt that solution was not user friendly and suggested simply eliminating the provision. Goodnough commented that SCEP and the Faculty Senate have to approve the academic calendar, and that in the unlikely event that a campus proposed a later end date, those two bodies would be able to reject the proposal. Some members felt more comfortable with a deadline, but agreed that for equity purposes it was best to eliminate the date. Stacy Dopener-Hove noted that there was likely to be some push back against removing the date, but members agreed that it was the right thing to do. Tidball pointed out that

the policy does stipulate that there should be 70-75 days of instruction, and that the equity lens aspect of the Policy Advisory Committee's work would likely flag the date anyway, were it left in.

The committee engaged in minor wordsmithing and then approved the revisions unanimously by voice vote.

4. Administrative Policy: *Syllabus Requirements*

Tidball then explained that she had received a request from Tina Marisam, director, Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action (EOAA) to amend the appendix to the Administrative Policy: *Syllabus Requirements* to align with the Administrative Policy: [Sexual Harassment, Sexual Assault, Stalking and Relationship Violence](#). The requests consisted of revisions to the section on sexual harassment and sexual assault to encourage students to access the resources available to them, and to disclose that instructors, as University employees, are obligated to report to EOAA if they become aware of instances of sexual misconduct. Members made suggestions such as including contact information for system campus resources and changing the voice to third person (from first person) to match the rest of the policy. Jude Goossens asked whether the new federal guidelines on Title IX would affect this, and Kendra Okposo, associate to the director, EOAA, replied that the University does not need to amend its policy based on the new guidelines and does not intend to do so.

5. Updates on SRT Related Initiatives

Next, Goodnough welcomed Ole Gram, assistant vice provost, Faculty and Academic Affairs, and Stephanie Klein, assistant director and educational services manager, Office of Measurement Services, who were present to update the committee on several initiatives related to the Student Rating of Teaching (SRT):

- A pilot of four new SRT items related to online and blended learning was recently completed.
 - One hundred and twelve courses from seven academic units participated
 - Three new items emerged from analysis of pilot data: “Interactions with the instructor helped me learn,” “The activities in this course supported my learning,” and “The course site was easy to use.”
 - All students completing their SRT online will receive the new items
 - Results will be reported *only* for online and primarily online course formats
 - Future analysis is required to understand whether new items may also provide value in evaluating other course formats (partially online, classroom)
 - All of the above applies to Crookston, Morris, Rochester, and Twin Cities, but not Duluth.
- A protocol for improving response rates via in-class administration of online SRTs has been developed and will be tested this semester.
 - [Guidelines](#) have been drafted and instructors will be recruited on a volunteer basis to participate in the pilot
 - The rationale for the project is as follows:

- Low response rates are the primary reason cited by instructors/units for their reluctance to switch to online administration
- Benefits of online SRT administration (vs. paper) include:
 - Better accessibility for students with disabilities
 - Open-ended comments more frequent, higher quality, and lengthier
 - Reduced paper processing time increases capacity to support wider SRT-related requests from academic units, administrators
- A guide to mitigating the risk of bias when using SRT results in decision making was completed very recently. Gram and Klein said they would distribute it to the committee and return for a discussion on this item.
- OMS is currently conducting preliminary investigation of additional methods to improve online SRT response rates

Goodnough thanked Gram and Klein for their time and adjourned the meeting.

Amber Bathke
University Senate Office