

Minutes*

**Senate Committee on Educational Policy
April 11, 1991**

Present: J. Kim Munholland (chair), Martin Conroy, Joanne DeMoss, Edward Foster, Ken Heller, Karen Karni, Karen Seashore Louis, Marvin Mattson, Clark Staff

Guest: Gerald Rinehart, Carlson School of Management

1. Report of the Chair

Professor Munholland reviewed briefly the work of the Task Force on Liberal Education. Nothing is settled at this point, he told the Committee. There is no likelihood, however, that the Task Force will continue its work beyond the May 16 Assembly meeting; the report will be adopted (in whole or in part) or not at that meeting.

Professor Munholland then reported that he had just met with the Assembly Committee on Intercollegiate Athletics on the policy prohibiting events during Study Day and Finals Week. "It will be with us for a long while," he said. The straightforward policy of "no events" is complicated, such as whether or not it applies to CEE as well (he said it did; the Committee concurred). Several questions have been raised about the implications of the policy. One issue he told ACIA he would bring back to SCEP was whether or not subgroups of a team, for instance, could travel during Finals Week if that subgroup had all completed their finals; there is also a question about those years when Spring break must be condensed, which affects long-term planning. It is also a problem for students, if they wish to schedule classes so that their finals will be done early, because the finals schedule is not known early enough--although the time of the final was seen by others as an undesirable factor to take into account in selecting courses. The Committee agreed to take up these questions at its next meeting.

2. Proposal for Plus/Minus Grading in the Carlson School

Professor Munholland next welcomed Mr. Jerry Rinehart to the meeting to discuss a proposal from the School of Management (CSOM) to experimentally adopt a plus/minus grading system.

The faculty of CSOM have voted (68-13) in favor of trying a plus/minus grading system, and of the 13, 10 wanted a system with more points. The system would be used for both the graduate and undergraduate courses. They recognize that the Twin Cities Assembly, several years ago, voted down a proposal to adopt plus/minus grading because there were a number of unanswered questions and because students were concerned about the impact on their GPAs. CSOM students are certainly among the most competitive.

A number of the faculty feel that this is not a student issue, however, and believe it is an academic policy issue on which students' voices should be heard but not be dispositive. There was a serious

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discussion with the elected undergraduate student board, especially with top students. The board supports the proposal, as does the MBA student board.

As a relatively small school (100 faculty, 700 undergraduates, 1100 MBA students), the experiment could be used to gather data and learn what occurs. Does it have a negative impact on students? Does it cause more negative interaction between faculty and students?

CSOM noted that there is a provision in the rules of the Assembly which grants to SCEP the authority to permit experimental grading systems for a stipulated period of time. CSOM would collect information and report to SCEP on the impact of the change. [There was some question about the authority of the Committee to permit the experiment; following the meeting, the Assembly rule permitting SCEP to allow experiments was confirmed.]

There was some discussion of the "experimental design" of the proposal; Mr. Rinehart said that CSOM would want some guidance on the information that should be gathered. The design should, presumably, be focused on the arguments that occurred when the Assembly voted down campus-wide plus/minus grading; it should refute or support the arguments. There was agreement that this is an experiment and would be conducted for a period of five years.

Committee members appeared to agree that the experiment would be worthwhile and should be conducted. It was also suggested that this experiment would also provide data which might cast light on the issue of grade inflation (an issue the Committee will take up in the near future).

It was agreed that Mr. Rinehart would return to the Committee at its next meeting to provide additional information on the experimental design to be used. It might be useful, it was suggested by one Committee member, for CSOM to pull together a small design committee to advise it on how to structure the experiment.

Professor Munholland thanked Mr. Rinehart for his presentation.

3. Eligibility for Morse-Alumni Awards

Professor Munholland turned to the question of eligibility of "T" appointees for the Morse-Alumni awards.

The Committee had earlier decided that "T" appointees would not be eligible, but several Committee members felt that the decision was both misunderstood and unjust.

There are a number of "T" appointees, especially in the health sciences, who have faculty rank and who are good teachers, it was pointed out, and should be eligible for the award. These individuals, it was argued, obtain research grants, they are at the University for a long time, they participate in departmental meetings, they serve on doctoral committees, and generally do everything that tenured faculty do. Dr. Foster affirmed that they do have the same responsibilities as faculty on "P" or "N" appointments and the same rules and procedures for promotion apply to them. There is now a University rule in place, the Committee was told, which prohibits appointment of an individual on a "T" appointment for more than

six years; another pointed out, however, that this rule is not widely honored.¹ "T" appointees, moreover, were eligible in the past.

If the University were moving toward the elimination of "T" appointees, making those individuals ineligible would make sense. There are a number of units, however, which must continue to rely on "T" appointments because they have only a small amount of recurring State funding. (It is possible, it was pointed out, for a faculty member to be tenured but not on 0100 funds, and vice-versa.) The Committee agreed, after discussion, that it could make a decision on eligibility of "T" appointees without getting into the questions about the legitimacy of continued reliance upon that type of appointment.

Other points made included these: (1) The Committee can rely upon the departments and colleges not to nominate for the Morse-Alumni Award individuals whose accomplishments are not outstanding or whose activities are marginal to undergraduate education--irrespective of whether they hold "T" appointments. Most of the award winners have a long association with the University and tend to be more senior faculty who have a clear career commitment to undergraduate education. (2) The rationale for not including P&A appointees--who may have extensive undergraduate teaching responsibilities--is that they do not have the same mix of responsibilities generally that do faculty members; it would be unfair to compare a P&A appointee--whose exclusive responsibilities may relate to undergraduate education--with a faculty member--who has service and research responsibilities in addition to instructional obligations.

It was moved and seconded that only full-time faculty members who hold "N" (tenure-track), "P" (tenured), or "T" (temporary) appointments be eligible for the Morse-Alumni Award. The motion was unanimously approved.

4. Other issues

It was agreed that the general issues of soft funding and "T" appointments should be raised with the Senate Committee on Faculty Affairs.

Information on grade inflation should be gathered prior to the Committee discussion of the question.

The advising task force will be appointed. Professor Munholland reported that Committee questions were passed to Vice Provost Hopkins. He will be meeting with her to make the appointment of the task force.

The matter of teaching evaluation will be revisited at a future meeting.

¹The problem, Dr. Foster informed the Committee, is that tenure regulations require that reappointment of individuals on "T" appointments beyond the sixth year must be presented to the Tenure Committee with appropriate justification. Inasmuch as there is no longer a Tenure Committee, no one reviews the continued appointments. There is thus a regulation in the tenure regulations which is not being enforced and there are being individuals being reappointed year after year.

Dr. Foster said he would be providing a memorandum to the Committee on the question of transfer by students among systems and would solicit the advice of the Committee.

The Committee members agreed that they wished to retain the same meeting time for 1991-92.

The Committee adjourned at 3:00.

-- Gary Engstrand

University of Minnesota