

SENATE CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

September 18, 2014

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 reflect the views of, nor are they binding on, the Senate, the Administration, or the Board of Regents.

[In these minutes: University Senate Docket Approval, Strategic Plan Discussion]

Present: Rebecca Ropers-Huilman (chair), Chris Uggen (vice chair), Katherine Cramer, Gordon Fisher for Bill O’Neill, William Durfee, Eva von Dassow, Susan Wick, Dale Carpenter, James Cloyd, Janet Ericksen, Karen Mesce, Martin Caride, Robert Stewart

Regrets: Jean Wyman, Jigna Desai, Colin Campbell, Susanne Vandergon, Gary Cohen, Nick Dalton

Absent: Bill O’Neill, Laddie Arnold, Cedric Citrowske, Valkyrie Jensen, Olivia Stiller

Others attending: Jon Steadland, Office of the President; Gary Gardner, FCC member and faculty legislative liaison, Sara Ford, Student Senate Consultative Committee member; Ryan Olson, Student Senate Consultative Committee member

Guests: Kristine Igo, associate program director; Healthy Foods, Healthy Lives (Food Science and Nutrition) and Carissa Shively Slotterback, associate professor, Humphrey School of Public Affairs

1. Professor Ropers-Huilman convened the meeting, welcomed those present and called for a round of introductions.

2. The first item of business, announced Professor Ropers-Huilman, is approval of the October 2 University Senate docket. Before walking members through the docket, she noted the Senate Consultative Committee (SCC) is a body with faculty, staff and student representation. In the past the SCC has taken on a lot of different forms, this year, in consultation with the Katherine Cramer, chair, P&A Consultative Committee and Bill O’Neill, chair, Civil Service Consultative Committee, a decision has been made to have the SCC agenda topics reflect the diversity of its membership. The focus this year will be on the Strategic Plan because it impacts all members. Professor Ropers-Huilman said towards that end, the leadership of the SCC meetings will be rotated as well so the conversations reflect the different viewpoints in the room.

Professor Ropers-Huilman walked members through the October 2, 2014 University Senate docket, which had been amended at the Faculty Consultative Committee (FCC) meeting to extend the time of the Strategic Plan discussion at the University Senate from 30 minutes to one hour. Members unanimously approved the docket.

3. Professor Ropers-Huilman introduced the main agenda item for the meeting, a Strategic Plan discussion on Goal 1: Build an exceptional university where grand societal challenges are addressed. She welcomed guests Kristine Igo, associate program director, Healthy Foods, Healthy Lives (Food Science and Nutrition) and Carissa Shively Slotterback, associate professor, Humphrey School of Public Affairs, who served on the Grand Challenges Research and Grand Challenges Curriculum issues teams, respectively. Professor Ropers-Huilman said she had posed a few questions to today's guests ahead of time to help facilitate the discussion.

Professor Ropers-Huilman began by asking how they understood the priority their issue team was asked to focus on. Ms. Igo began by noting the Grand Challenges Research issue team was charged with marshaling the University's research and creative capacity to address grand challenges critical to our state, nation and world. The issue team was specifically asked to look at evaluating potential research, recommending how specific challenge topics would be chosen and identifying areas of focus in which the University has core strengths and is well positioned to have a major impact. The issue team recommended the University take advantage of the following "quick wins" and move forward with three broad grand challenges collaborations:

- Sustainable, healthy, secure food system.
- Advancing industry while conserving the environment and addressing climate change.
- Building vibrant communities that enhance human potential and collective wellbeing in a diverse and changing society.

Ms. Igo then turned members' attention to page 26 of the Strategic Plan where other grand challenges suggestion were listed. The list was drawn from many sources, said Ms. Igo, and is in no way exhaustive. The issue team had a lot of different opinions regarding identifying grand challenges initiatives. Initial conversations centered around the process for identifying grand challenges that would be inclusive of the whole University and its external stakeholders. The committee found it difficult to justify implementing a committee-centric list of grand challenges.

Professor Shively Slotterback who served on the Grand Challenges Curriculum issue team said that her group focused on figuring out what grand challenges education would look like if grand challenges were integrated into the curriculum. Both undergraduate and graduate curriculum were taken into consideration and, in the end, the group settled on a different approach for each level:

- Providing exposure for all undergraduate students to grand challenges coursework.
- Creating more opportunities for graduate students by allowing them to do things that they currently might not be permitted to do.

From a big picture perspective the issue team, noted Professor Shively Slotterback, looked at new learning opportunities for students by looking at how education is

currently delivered and thinking about grand challenges as a stimulus for facilitating learning and a culture change.

The issue group also wanted to explore curriculum in terms of the broader land grant mission of the University. The delivery of grand challenges education, said Professor Shively Slotterback, is very connected to the research that takes place at the University, especially for graduate students. There was a lot of talk about experiential learning and enhancing these opportunities for students by connecting them to grand challenges. In its deliberations, the issue team talked about the University of Minnesota being a model for other institutions and looked for ways that the University could distinguish itself in terms of a more external orientation and addressing big problems.

Professor Ropers-Huilman asked Ms. Igo and Professor Shively Slotterback how people from across the institution can be involved in advancing the priorities that have been set out in the Strategic Plan. As a P&A staff member, Ms. Igo said that a number of P&A staff have interdisciplinary connections and are engaged in multi-sector problem solving, which has allowed them to develop relationships that put them in a good position to work as liaisons who can connect external partners with the internal research community of faculty and students. There is a strong role P&A and other staff can play, especially as more thought is being given to grand challenges.

Professor Shively Slotterback said every person at the University contributes to the educational experience the University delivers. Besides curriculum, there are a variety of ways to deliver educational experiences, e.g., study abroad, research opportunities at the undergraduate and graduate level, internships and practicums. Outside the classroom training opportunities are a way to enhance and build skills students might not otherwise get in the classroom. It will be important to promote and share best practice models that already exist. While implementation of the plan has not yet begun, said Professor Shively Slotterback, re-orienting the curriculum around grand challenges will require an open mind and creativity. Gathering student feedback about the types of experiences they would like to have will also be important.

Professor Ropers-Huilman asked Ms. Igo and Professor Shively Slotterback about what they see as the challenges and opportunities coming out of the Strategic Plan. Ms. Igo said from her experience in the funding world, she worries about “isolated impact,” which is funding individualized projects without strong cohesion between the projects. From a funding perspective, the goal will be to move toward “collective impact,” which would involve a coordinated and sustained effort around grand challenges. In addition, the ten-year timeline seems quite short. In her opinion, thought should be given to transforming the institution to be better equipped to address these issues not in ten years, but over a twenty or thirty year cycle in order to have generational impacts. A commitment to long-term, sustained work in the areas identified will be important.

In terms of challenges, noted Professor Shively Slotterback, delivering and implementing grand challenges education will connect people in units in ways that they have not been connected before. Change is hard and requires people to come out of their comfort

zones. There will be a need for cultural changes, administrative changes, financial changes, etc. She said she is hopeful that barriers can be broken down, e.g., co-teaching across colleges. On the other hand, in terms of opportunities, the ability to connect the research and education missions is exciting. She sees pilots as a way to see what works and what does not work and to share best practices across the system. The Strategic Plan also presents opportunities for thinking about technology and how it fits in to the delivery of education. According to Professor Shively Slotterback, nothing worries her about the plan. She is excited about how grand challenges redefines/reshapes the University's orientation and makes it think externally to a greater extent.

Professor Ropers-Huilman thanked Ms. Igo and Professor Shively Slotterback for their comments and solicited members' comments and questions. Professor von Dassow voiced a number of concerns about the plan including, but not limited to:

- The term "grand challenges," which she believes was the slogan chosen to get the attention of the Board of Regents, legislature and media.
- The plan positions the University as the solver of the world's problems, but other organizations make the same claim. Nowhere in the plan is there any language about what distinguishes a university from a political party, NGO, a corporation, etc.
- The plan implies the University is considering retiring *Driven to Discover* and replacing it with a slogan that is even more general and unintellectual. The phrase "grand challenges" has been adopted as if it were a meaningful term, but it has no definition or content.
- The plan's description of how the curriculum for undergraduate and graduate students would change, fails to take into account the sustained, substantive and highly detailed criticism about the University's liberal education requirements.

Ms. Igo said that the issue team she was on struggled with the "grand challenges" term in the beginning, but then resolved that it would use the language that it had been provided knowing the other teams were working with the same language. This, in part, is why their team focused more on the process and not identifying "grand challenges" given the lack of a definition. Professor Shively Slotterback said her group also had an initial discussion about the term "grand challenges," but realized that what was being talked about was preparing students to tackle and engage in grand challenges. The curriculum team identified four course categories that were preliminary ideas about the nature of content that might be delivered. The document, as written, provides the institution with the opportunity to engage in discussions with a little more definition around curriculum grand challenges. She added that she is excited by the thought that the University will take an explicitly outward view.

This document seems to view education as instrumental and not an end in itself, and not simply as discovery of knowledge just for the sake of discovering knowledge, noted Professor Carpenter, and this seems to be an increasingly popular view. Were there any instrumental choices left out of the list of priorities that were considered but ultimately did not make the list? Professor Shively Slotterback said her group did not have a conversation about what priority grand challenges might be and this discussion did not

take place in the larger Strategic Planning group either. Ms. Igo added that discussions in her group did not focus on identifying grand challenges, but rather the strengths of the State of Minnesota, research strengths at the University, etc. Her group identified some quick wins, which she believes were chosen because there was already momentum in these areas. In Ms. Igo's opinion, the Strategic Plan should be read as how the University can become more interdisciplinary/transdisciplinary and how it can affect larger societal changes that are happening outside the University. Rather than focusing on the quick wins the research group identified, she encouraged members to think more broadly about the document. The Strategic Plan is an opportunity to transform the University and make it more competitive.

Professor Carpenter said the Law School developed a similar plan 5 – 6 years ago. Once the plan was adopted, Law School resources were directed to the areas of concentration that were identified, but not to other areas.

A member added that there are pros and cons to having an ambiguous plan like the Strategic Plan. While an ambiguous plan can create ambition and creativity, it can also be something that is easily put on the shelf and forgotten. What is the implementation strategy for the Strategic Plan? Professor Shively Slotterback said each of the issue teams was asked to identify key considerations for implementation. She said there remains a lot of work to do around implementation. More engagement needs to happen e.g., gathering expertise and diverse perspectives if this is to be done well. The Strategic Plan is only the beginning and is an expression of aspirations and potential ideas to be pursued.

Professor Ropers-Huilman asked who will serve on the implementation teams, e.g., faculty, P&A, Civil Service. Assuming there are implementation teams, noted Professor Shively Slotterback, and assuming the process continues as it has, she would expect there to be broad engagement on the part of faculty, staff and students. Broad engagement has been a priority throughout this process and it is important to remember that this is not just a plan for faculty, but a plan for the whole University community.

Professor von Dassow said the ambiguity of the question about implementation leads back to the issue of resource allocation. The document clearly states that implementation will involve reallocation of resources. Certain areas will get more resources than others, and some areas will likely lose resources. Those who will lose resources will want the document to remain ambiguous and the implementation to be loose or not happen at all. Who will lose? Professor Durfee stated that throughout this process senior leadership has made it clear that not everyone needs to be working on one of the grand challenges and grand challenges are only one aspect of the University and not the whole aspect. If everyone were working on grand challenges, the University would lose disciplinary expertise. Professor Shively Slotterback added the way money is distributed across the University is not based on topics. Money is allocated to a range of activities, services, functions and facilities that are not tied to particular topics.

Hearing no further questions, Professor Ropers-Huilman thanked Ms. Igo and Professor Shively Slotterback for a good conversation and adjourned the meeting.

Renee Dempsey
University Senate