

Minutes*

Senate Committee on Educational Policy
Wednesday, June 17, 1998
1:30 – 3:30
Room 238 Morrill Hall

Present: Laura Coffin Koch (chair), Darwin Hendel, Gordon Hirsch, Robert Leik, Judith Martin, Kathleen Newell, Palmer Rogers, Tina Rovick, Craig Swan, William Van Essendelft

Regrets: Elayne Donahue, Gayle Graham Yates, Thomas Johnson

Absent: Avram Bar-Cohen, Adam Miller, Kevin Nicholson, Jessie Jo Roos

Guests: Jane Canney (Office of Student Development and Athletics); Jane Phillips (chair, Subcommittee on Facilities Management)

[In these minutes: Change in the treatment of the Incomplete grade; applied partnership degree program guidelines; implementation of academic policies; ROTC subcommittee and relations with the ROTC programs; management of classroom renovation]

Professor Koch convened the meeting at 1:00 and noted that it would be her last meeting as chair; she served cake and thanked outgoing members Robert Leik and William Van Essendelft for their service on the Committee.

1. Academic Policies

Professor Koch reported that two academic policies needed to be addressed. One, the Committee had deferred action on the Adult Special status. She suggested that it may not be an issue for SCEP, and proposed removing it from the Committee's agenda. The suggestion was approved unanimously.

The second issue is the "lapsed I" provided for in the grading policy. For undergraduates, the I converts to an F after the next quarter of enrollment; for graduate and professional students, the I remains an I until an instructor changes it. The new PeopleSoft system, however, cannot identify if a student is enrolled, so cannot be programmed to convert an I to an F for undergraduates only after the next term of enrollment. It could be programmed to make the conversion after a set number of days. (There has been nothing to indicate this would affect graduate and professional students, because grades can be programmed by college.) This automatic conversion to the F after a period certain could also affect students returning later in terms of their financial aid and academic standing.

One Committee member inquired what was achieved by requiring the I to convert to an F for anyone. The F does not reflect what happened, it was said, even if the F is defined to include non-completion. Committee members offered a number of comments.

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- If the I does not count in the GPA, it is little different from an F, and the I is a bad mark itself.
- The argument in favor of converting is that that encourages students to make up the I more rapidly. One problem faculty have is that students return years later and want to make up an I. In some cases (e.g., biology), the field might have changed so much after a number of years that it would nearly impossible to structure a way to complete a course.
- One possibility would be to set a time limit, after which an I COULD NOT be made up. PeopleSoft could perhaps be programmed so it did not permit a change, but on the other hand, the faculty have always been permitted to change a grade and that is the way most want it.
- Would elimination of the automatic conversion of I to F lead to students withdrawing from a course when they are doing failing work? That is why the W after a certain period must have college approval.
- The grading policy requires an agreement between the faculty member and the student for an I to be granted; there is nothing that requires a faculty member to agree to give an I. The contract between faculty member and student could include a time limit, although it is not clear that such contracts are being signed.
- One faculty member has argued that grades should be definitive, and an I says a student did not complete a course, which is what happened.

The Committee decided that it tentatively agreed to recommend changing the policy, subject to further consideration over the summer.

It was suggested that any policy change include the following: 1) that an I remains an I until changed; 2) all syllabi must indicate the time that will be allowed to make up an I, and after which the instructor would have no obligation to allow the student to make it up; and 3) the I will only be given in the rare instances when the instructor believes the student can actually make up the work. The Committee concluded that one year should be the time limit for making up an I.

The circumstances, said one Committee member, should be ones that were beyond the control of the student; it should NOT be the case that the student simply decided not to take the final, because he or she were unprepared. The University does NOT want to encourage the latter behavior.

It was also agreed that Professor Swan's office would obtain information about the practices at peer institutions, and information on the number of Incompletes that are actually made up.

2. Applied Partnership Degree Program Guidelines

Professor Koch reported that Professor Swan and Provost Bruininks had presented to FCC a draft set of guidelines for applied partnership degree programs, and said that SCEP should review the document and make recommendations to the Senate Consultative Committee.

Dr. Hendel explained that the draft tried to articulate what was both explicit and implicit in the programs and to pull all the understandings together. Professor Swan said that the programs have been between one MNSCU institution and the University; the guidelines make it clear that the partnerships could be between any of the 2-year MNSCU institutions, the 4-year MNSCU institutions, and the University. If the degree is from the University, it would come through University College; otherwise, from a 4-year MNSCU institution.

Professor Koch reported that there were concerns expressed by FCC. One example was the instance of a department not wanting a program, but it being established anyway, with students in the program taking courses from the department that had objected. Professor Swan noted that there are provisions for a faculty to object to a program; there is a process of review that includes several steps. In the case discussed, the steps were followed, it was said, and a representative of the college was on the committee that designed the curriculum.

Dr. Hendel reported that institutions similar to the University were involving themselves in such programs, but none had an umbrella policy governing them. It is believed that places such as the University are more likely than other kinds of institutions to be involved in partnership degrees that meet practically-oriented needs.

It was agreed that the Committee would take up the guidelines as soon as possible in the fall.

3 Twin Cities Undergraduate Academic Policies and Practices

Professor Koch reported that the Council of Undergraduate Deans wants to be sure that the new policies are implemented consistently and that it is clear who has what responsibilities. Ms. VanVoorhis is developing a matrix of the policies and who is responsible for them, and by when.

It is also clear that students must be informed of the changes that have been adopted. The materials to be provided them may not present the policies in exactly the same order and format as they were approved by the Assembly; the relevant policies will be presented together in a way that is sensible to students.

4. ROTC

Professor Koch then recalled that she had commented at the last meeting about the issues that had arisen with respect to the SCEP subcommittee that deals with the ROTC programs. One was that the subcommittee had no link to SCEP; to remedy that, she had begun attending the meetings. After doing so, she believed it appropriate to review the charge to the subcommittee. A related matter that had provoked the interest of SCEP was approval of the minor in Military Science, through University College, without any review by SCEP (although University College, it was said, was told that the appropriate subcommittee of SCEP had approved the proposal).

Professor Koch welcomed Jane Canney from the Office of Student Development and Athletics (OSDA), the office to which the ROTC programs report. Dr. Canney said that OSDA does not monitor the curriculum, or try to integrate the programs into the academic world; they work with ROTC to be sure participants are recognized as University students, to be sure this is seen as a campus culture, and that

there are guidelines and standards which must be met. The programs have been very receptive to working with OSDA, she said.

OSDA does want to see an effective connection with the Senate, Dr. Canney said, and worked with Professor Koch to develop a proposal for revising the membership on the ROTC subcommittee. It would have 3 faculty members, the 3 ROTC department heads, 3 ROTC students, and two ex officio members (Drs. Canney and Swan). The Committee discussed the proposal with Dr. Canney, as well as the relationship between ROTC and OSDA in terms of personnel curriculum, and what the role of the subcommittee should be. One issue that received attention was the review that takes place when there are new course proposals from ROTC, with the view expressed that the University should be represented in such decisions, as well as on semester conversion issues.

Discussion also touched on a new minor being offered through OSDA; Dr. Canney reported that the program will be run through Education and the Humphrey Institute. The problem is that these minors are not attached to a college; who reviews them? Who is responsible for them?

Professor Koch thanked Dr. Canney for joining the meeting; the Committee agreed to take up soon the proposal for the ROTC subcommittee.

5. Management of Classroom Renovation

Professor Koch welcomed Jane Phillips, chair of the (Finance and Planning) Subcommittee on Facilities Management, to the meeting to discuss the recommendations from her subcommittee concerning management of classroom renovation. She described the work that the subcommittee had done, and how it had drawn on the 1995 study of classrooms as the foundation of its recommendations. The subcommittee's work had gone to the Finance and Planning committee and to the Twin Cities Campus Assembly for information.

One reason the original 1995 recommendations were not implemented was because there was no one responsible for classrooms, and they have spoken to that absence. Another need is for an advisory mechanism, because there is no way to have issues addressed in a way that responds to the needs of students and faculty. Her appearance before SCEP is to bring a recommendation with respect to that advisory mechanism: they wish to see the process operate within the existing governance system, rather than creating an additional committee, so recommended that the classroom coordinator sit as an ex officio member of both the Facilities Management subcommittee and SCEP.

It was thought that the classroom coordinator might not need to attend all SCEP meetings, so it was agreed that an informal arrangement for at least the first year might work best. There may be times when SCEP deliberates policy without realizing the implications for classroom management, or when the classroom coordinator needs to be informed about academic policies under consideration. Another point made by the faculty on the subcommittee, Ms. Phillips reported, was to keep in mind that with the push for advanced technology, not ALL classrooms need highly sophisticated equipment.

Whether or not the recommendations from the subcommittee will be accepted or implemented by the administration is not yet clear, Ms. Phillips told the Committee. The process of transmittal got slightly mixed up, but she is working with Academic Affairs to decide how to proceed.

The Committee unanimously voted to support the recommendations and to affirm that it would work with the classroom coordinator, with the additional understanding that there is a need for balance between high- and low-technology classrooms.

The business of the meeting was completed, but before adjournment, Committee members gave Professor Koch a round of applause for her service to SCEP that had gone far “beyond the call of duty.”

The meeting was adjourned at 3:30.

-- Gary Engstrand

University of Minnesota