CLASSROOM ADVISORY SUBCOMMITTEE
MINUTES OF MEETING
NOVEMBER 6, 2006

[In these minutes: General-Purpose Classroom Update and Office of Classroom Management Overview]

[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.]

PRESENT: Thomas Michaels, chair for Ken Heller, Caroline Rosen, Steve Fitzgerald, Doug Lund for Bernard Gulachek, Roberta Juarez, Jeffrey Lindgren, Steve Pauling, Jay Hatch, Lisa Norling

REGRETS: Ken Heller, Jean King, Roger Miller

I). Professor Michaels called the meeting to order. Members went around the room and introduced themselves.

II). The meeting was devoted to receiving a detailed general-purpose classroom update and Office of Classroom Management (OCM) overview. Steve Fitzgerald, OCM director, distributed resource manuals for committee members. The manuals contained information from the OCM website (http://www.classroom.umn.edu/) as well as supplemental information, which will augment discussions the committee will have in the future.

Mr. Fitzgerald began by noting the important role that communication plays in allowing OCM to effectively serve the academic mission of the institution. There are two groups in particular that OCM stays in regular contact with, the Classroom Advisory Subcommittee and the Academy of Distinguished Teachers. OCM pays close attention to the needs and issues that it hears voiced by these groups and works hard to respond with appropriate solutions.

Mr. Fitzgerald noted there are two types of classrooms:

1. General-purpose classrooms, which are also called central classrooms and centrally scheduled classrooms. These classrooms are centrally managed and funded, and are designed to meet the teaching and learning needs of a broad range of academic programs. There are approximately 300 general-purpose classrooms located in 55 buildings with roughly 23,000 student seats. While general-purpose classrooms make up only 3% of all total assignable space (340,000 square feet) at the University, they generate $70 million in tuition revenue each semester.
2. Departmental classrooms, which are departmentally managed and funded. The key difference between general-purpose and departmental classrooms is that departmental classrooms have a narrower focus, which is designed to meet the

specific and specialized needs of a particular department or program. The University of Minnesota Twin Cities campus has 268 departmental classrooms.

He went on to provide members with background information concerning why OCM was formed. Since that time, there have been major improvements in central classrooms, and, as a result of these improvements, OCM is seeing a trend in departments turning their classrooms back to central administration in exchange for priority scheduling.

OCM is at the heart of the University's teaching and learning mission, and the central point of accountability and responsibility for any issue related to central classrooms. Central classrooms are a common good, noted Mr. Fitzgerald.

Member's attention was turned to an organizational diagram, which shows OCM from a unique 360-degree perspective and how it interacts with its internal units (Classroom Facilities Coordination, Classroom Technical Services, Classroom Scheduling, Classroom Planning and Classroom Support) in order to provide specialized classroom-specific expertise and added value to other University units. While OCM is a centrally funded unit, an unusual facet within OCM is Classroom Technical Services, which wears two hats:

1. The technology department for OCM.
2. An ISO that sells services to the University community.

OCM focuses its efforts on classroom physical environment, classroom technology, classroom maintenance, faculty support/problem response, and scheduling/course database to mention a areas while continually emphasizing the importance of communications. Examples of major OCM initiatives include: improved classroom physical environment, developed communications with the University community, upgraded classroom technology, improved classroom scheduling and space utilization, etc.

OCM is very numbers driven. It has worked extensively to collaborate with other units and establish standards, which are used to measure OCM's performance and to communicate its performance to the broader University, and fine-tune its system as time moves forward.

Examples of physical environment initiatives undertaken by OCM:

- Classroom standards – Appendix DD, which provides the criteria and measurable performance standards necessary for the unique teaching and learning environments of central classrooms.
- Immediate impact classroom improvements.
- Construction/renovation projects.
- New construction/renovation design and project execution.
- Classroom improvement capital projects.
- Classroom strategic planning.

- Partnerships with Facilities Management/University Services e.g. Custodial Improvement Program, Facilities Condition Assessment, Classroom Work Item Tracking/Follow-up.

Mr. Fitzgerald stated that OCM is putting a lot of emphasis on making accessibility and security enhancements in central classrooms a priority. He went on to highlight specific room improvements that have taken place.

The strategy for addressing the major physical classroom environment projects has either been based on:

1. Capital funded renovation and new construction projects that build new classrooms in new buildings or major renovations to classrooms in older buildings.
2. "Systemwide Classsroom Capital Projects" designed to handle projects that are too large for the operating budget, but too small for major capital programs e.g. Blegen Hall renovation.

It was mentioned that the committee want to address whether this strategy is still viable in terms of how the physical environments of classrooms are being dealt with or should a new mechanism be considered.

University Services and OCM have a unique relationship that is essential in supporting teaching and learning in central classrooms. OCM is a service provider to all departments.

Next, information on the general-purpose classroom technology upgrade plan was shared. The standard that was developed is the "projection-capable classroom standard." Currently, 83% of all central classrooms meet this standard.

Technology upgrade goals include:

- Rapidly establish the projection-capable classroom standard as the baseline for technology infrastructure in every UMTC general-purpose classroom.
- Install affordable, usable, and reliable technology, which is flexible with modular add-on capability, readily able to be upgraded/replaced, and with a user-friendly laptop interface and smart control system.
- Establish an effective faculty support structure.
- Provide powerful web-based support (http://www.classroom.umn.edu/). This is a nationally recognized site, which members were encouraged to visit if they have not already done so.
- Funding for life cycle maintenance and replacement costs, which were identified at the front end of this project.

To date, 258 general-purpose classrooms have been upgraded. This represents substantial progress since the project was launched in 2000. Mr. Fitzgerald reminded members that Classroom Technical Services is also an ISO business, which has upgraded approximately 125 departmental classrooms, meeting rooms, conference rooms, etc. to the projection capable standard. This statistic serves to validate the value of this system.

A member asked whether Student Response Systems/Personal Response Systems fall within the scope of the projection-capable classroom standard. Mr. Fitzgerald noted that there are several systems on the market, and OCM has not designated one system for use by the entire campus; yet it does support the use of these systems in central classrooms. OCM believes that these systems are a transitory technology. It is expected that in the not too distant future that browser-based cell phones, PDAs or other personal computing devices will have an application, which will allow for the use of this type of technology.

Classroom scheduling continues to be a complex issue, and one that the committee needs to examine periodically. The Classroom Advisory Subcommittee was very supportive in going on record to endorse the Resource 25 (R25) initiative, which the Provost designated as the enterprise-level classroom scheduling system. Scheduling will play a particularly important roll when Folwell Hall (1300 student seats) and the Science Classroom Building (~1000 student seats) go off-line at approximately the same time. Assuming these projects continue to move forward, 2300 student seats could be out of inventory on the Minneapolis campus for a two-year building cycle. This would mean that the remaining inventory would require extremely efficient scheduling. The aftereffect of renovating these buildings, however, would go a long way in improving the classroom teaching and learning environment on campus.

A member asked whether classrooms with tiered seating are expected to be the standard of the future. Mr. Fitzgerald stated, for the most part, no. In terms of large classrooms, the question of whether these types of classrooms will be needed in the pedagogy of the future needs to be looked at. Team teaching with an emphasis on interactivity is becoming much more popular. This would be an excellent design discussion for the committee in the future.

Mr. Fitzgerald went on to communicate scheduling and classroom utilization challenges:

- Too many non-standard time courses.
- An excess number of courses being taught during peak classroom hours.
- Too few courses being taught at off-peak times (e.g. 8 a.m., Monday mornings, and Friday afternoons).
- Inefficient schedule demands from departments and colleges.
- Excess projected course enrollments by departments – both in number of sections and enrollment within sections).
- Excess course cancellations by departments.

A member asked what happens if a department consistently over projects its enrollment. Mr. Fitzgerald noted that the scheduling system defaults to the previous corresponding semester’s enrollment. Departments then need to provide an affirmative action on their part to override the default. If the department deviates by plus or minus 10%, OCM requests that the department interact with the college to vet that number as a means of making sure this is a conscious decision.

In terms of funding, the Classroom Advisory Subcommittee has also been very supportive when it comes to interacting with central administration on behalf of central funding for classrooms noted Mr. Fitzgerald. Recurring funding for classroom lifecycle requirements has greatly improved over the last two years.

How is the for classroom lifecycle requirements funded asked a member? In order to fill this gap, OCM has been forced to use approximately $900,000 of one-time funding each year to cover the gap noted Mr. Fitzgerald. Now that lifecycle requirements are funded at 72%, however, OCM is in a less vulnerable and healthier funding position.

OCM believes that there has been a major cultural change at the University when it comes to how classrooms are viewed. There is a growing realization that classrooms are teaching and learning systems and resources that require funding, staffing, management and attention in order to deliver the quality of instruction that the institution should be delivering.

A member asked two questions:

- With respect to projection-capable standards of the future, is technology being influenced by incoming student's expectations?
- Is thought being given to installing technology that will capture lectures so they can be streamed on-line?

Mr. Fitzgerald acknowledged that student's expectations based on their K-12 experience, coupled with increased expectations from faculty and the University's inability to meet the output requirements of the Digital Technology Center's Multi-Media Training Programs all accelerated the projection-capable standard being installed in classrooms.

Regarding capturing lectures and streaming them on-line, Mr. Fitzgerald does see this as a definite possibility for the future. He mentioned a pilot project by Professor John Anderson, which incorporated the use of "Low-End Asynchroneous Video Streaming." The system was the result of a joint project between OCM and CBS to evaluate the concept of adding modular technology to the standard U of M Projection Capable Classroom system that would provide faculty with the capability of capturing and asynchronously streaming classroom activity without the requirements of an additional operator. The system was designed and built by
Classroom Technical Services, and uses server support from CBS. Additional information on this pilot project is available at:
http://www.classroom.umn.edu/index.asp?sid=114

III). Hearing no further business, Professor Michaels adjourned the meeting.

Renee Dempsey
University Senate