

**Senate Committee on Educational Policy (SCEP)
February 19, 2020
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:** FCC Updates; gradSERU; Policy Business; More Updates]

PRESENT: Jennifer Goodnough (chair), Toni Abts, Thomas Chase, Dan Delaney, Stacy Doepner-Hove, Sara Hurley, Scott Lanyon, John LaVelle, Danya Leebaw, Bob McMaster, Nathan Mukai, Robert Poch, Katherine Scheil, Jacob Smiley, Nevin Young

REGRETS: Kriti Agarwal, Julia Brokaw, Brian Sick

ABSENT: June Carbone, Otto Johnson

GUESTS: Stacey Tidball, director, Compliance & Continuity, Academic Support Resources

OTHERS: Matthew Croft, student senator; Ety DeVeaux, chief of staff, Graduate Education; Jessica Keucker Grotjohn; assistant to the vice provost and dean, Undergraduate Education; Leslie Schiff, associate dean, Undergraduate Curriculum, Office of Undergraduate Education; Karen Starry, assistant to the vice provost and dean, Graduate Education

1. FCC Updates

Chair Jennifer Goodnough called the meeting to order and gave the following updates regarding Faculty Consultative Committee (FCC) business:

- FCC has not yet discussed P&A membership on SCEP, but it is still on their radar.
- FCC has been asked for faculty-specific feedback on the systemwide strategic plan; Executive Vice President and Provost Karen Hanson will attend SCEP's meeting in March 2020 for this purpose.
- A meeting has been scheduled regarding the backlog of comprehensive reviews on educational policies and how to get caught up. Goodnough will update the committee after that meeting takes place.
- FCC wants to discuss the revised criteria for courses to qualify as liberal education requirements that were proposed by the Liberal Education Redesign Committee. SCEP will discuss the topic in March or April. Goodnough said that she had already notified Professor Kathryn Pearson, chair of the Council on Liberal Education (CLE) of this discussion. Goodnough emphasized that these would be minor updates to the existing criteria for courses to qualify to meet existing liberal education requirements.

2. gradSERU

Next, Goodnough turned the floor over to Scott Lanyon, vice provost and dean, The Graduate School, who gave a [presentation](#) about the results of the Graduate Student Student Experience at the Research University (gradSERU) survey. He began with some background information about

the survey, and then talked about results regarding student satisfaction with advising. At the institutional level, students are overall very satisfied with advising, and there is little variation in satisfaction levels between different populations such as race and gender. However, he said, some areas for improvement become evident at the program level, where there is greater variation in satisfaction between individual programs, as well as between different student populations. Goodnough asked if anyone was making changes as a result of this data, and Lanyon replied that some programs are, but most are not.

Lanyon then discussed several initiatives within The Graduate School aimed at improving advising:

- New advisor training
- College/program procedures for faculty appointments
- Individual development plans
- Advisor + mentor model
- Advisor expectations statement
- Program expectations statement

The mention of mentors prompted Goodnough to suggest creating an award recognizing excellence in mentors. Lanyon agreed that it was a good idea, noting that many faculty are already doing this, especially faculty from underrepresented groups.

Lanyon then discussed data regarding student mental health from the survey. He noted that this area intersects with Administrative Policy: *Leave of Absence and Reinstatement from a Leave: Graduate Students*, as mental health concerns (or other health concerns) are often the reason students take leaves of absence. But when graduate students take leaves of absence, they lose their health coverage, which results in a catch-22 situation.

Next, Lanyon discussed survey results with regard to student satisfaction around professional development. He explained that the graduate student experience was designed for students who want to pursue careers in academia. However, nowadays, not all PhD students want to be faculty. This has changed, commented Lanyon, but the graduate student experience has not changed. Goodnough reflected that some advisors are not supportive of their students wanting to pursue non-academic careers. Lanyon agreed, stating that the advisor expectation statement would help alleviate problems around this.

Lanyon then talked about his vision to make it possible for graduate students to play a role in designing their graduate education to prepare them for the career(s) of their choice without diminishing the primary goal of graduate education which is to train scholars; loading faculty or staff with yet more responsibilities; diminishing the role of the advisor in graduate education; or lengthening time to degree. He opined that graduate education be thought of as consisting of four components:

- Core disciplinary knowledge and skills
- Elective disciplinary knowledge and skills
- Interdisciplinary knowledge and skills

- Transferable knowledge and skills, such as communication skills, intercultural competency, project management, leadership, time and stress management, and professional networking.

To achieve this goal, the Graduate School proposes that the delivery of the graduate experience becomes a partnership between the graduate program and the broader University community. In this model, the program is responsible for core and elective disciplinary knowledge and skills and the University is responsible for interdisciplinary skills and transferable skills. In practice, graduate programs would encourage students to gain transferable knowledge and skills, but the student would have the freedom to decide which transferable knowledge and skills would best prepare them for the career(s) of their choice, and that participation in these extracurricular activities be documented with digital badges.

Goodnough asked if there is a central authority who decides who can authorize digital badges, and Lanyon said not yet, noting that there is a committee looking at that issue and how to regulate it. A challenge is that digital badges are often revenue generators, and serve a need in the community. Too much regulation could slow that, cautioned Lanyon. But on the other hand, he said, the University of Minnesota's name is attached to these badges, so there should be some sort of oversight. Goodnough pointed out that it could blur lines around certificates.

Hearing no further discussion, Goodnough thanked Lanyon for his time.

3. Policy Business

Next, Goodnough turned the floor over to Stacey Tidball, director, Compliance & Continuity, Academic Support Resources. Tidball reported that she had presented Administrative Policy: *Course Enrollment Limits and Cancellation* at the Policy Advisory Committee (PAC), and that no concerns had arisen from that body. Goodnough added that SCEP had also approved changes to the policy via electronic vote.

Tidball then turned the conversation to Administrative Policy: *Syllabus Requirements*. She informed members that it was last reviewed in 2014, and was due for comprehensive review. Very few concerns had been raised about the policy, she noted, but she does receive a fair amount of questions on the appendix. She added that SCEP reviewed the appendix last academic year and updates were made to address new policy language related to sexual misconduct and reporting. In addition, continued Tidball, she received some questions from students about not getting a syllabus in a timely manner. The policy does not stipulate a deadline, she commented. Goodnough pointed out that there is an implied two week deadline which could be made explicit and official. Leslie Schiff, associate dean, Undergraduate Curriculum, Office of Undergraduate Education, told the committee that new courses are not approved anymore without syllabi, but whether they get updated and a student-facing version goes out is a different story. There is variation between colleges in the level of detail that goes into a syllabus, she added.

Matthew Croft, a student senator from the College of Science and Engineering, commented that if a course has multiple sections, instructors can take the course in many different directions after the syllabus is created, so syllabi are not always accurate. Schiff acknowledged that this is an issue, but explained that it is not centrally managed.

Sara Hurley added that contingent faculty are often hired very close to the start of the semester, so they have no time to come up with syllabus. She also suggested creating a website with all the policies that are required to be listed in the syllabus, so that syllabi can refer to the website and the policies can be removed from the actual syllabus document. The required sections add a lot of content, she said, that tends to be seen as boilerplate and therefore ignored.

Goodnough observed that the Higher Learning Commission would probably visit again before the policy would be up for review again, and asked whether they would have any recommendations. Schiff said she did not think so.

Robert Poch stressed that having a deadline by which students must receive a syllabus is important, because students need sufficient information to decide whether to remain in the course. The current implied deadline is 13 days, he said, which is beyond the drop/add deadline. Lanyon agreed, stating that the deadline should be right at the beginning of the course. Goodnough noted that there is an educational trend where instructors work with students to develop the syllabus, in order to increase buy-in. She agreed that a syllabus should be available as soon as possible, but commented that she would not want to restrict such activities. Lanyon said that those changes should not be major; the core should be set. Schiff added that syllabi can always evolve, but students need to understand how they will be evaluated and what the expectations of them are. Goodnough summarized that the committee was in favor of setting a deadline. Goodnough added that the earlier the syllabus is available, even before a deadline, the better it is for everyone. This was a recommendation from the Joint Task Force on Student Mental Health, she added.

4. More Updates

Finally, Goodnough provided additional updates to the committee:

- The nominees for the Graduate and Professional Teaching Awards were approved by electronic vote.
- Other senate committees are discussing bias on the Student Rating of Teaching (SRT), which SCEP talked about last year. The issue may come to SCEP again.
- Professor Thomas Chase has agreed to chair SCEP next year.

Goodnough called for a vote on the Morse Teaching Awards nominees. A motion was made and seconded, and the nominees were approved.

Goodnough then asked if there were any updates from the Senate Committee on Information Technologies (SCIT) meeting on classroom technology. Chase commented that he found it illuminating, especially with regard to the magnitude of work that the Office for Classroom Management (OCM) does. His biggest takeaway, he shared, was that OCM is struggling for funds. They receive about \$10,000 per classroom per year, but that includes everything from cleaning to technology.

Goodnough thanked members and adjourned the meeting.

Amber Bathke
University Senate Office