

Minutes*

**Senate Committee on Educational Policy
Assembly Committee on Educational Policy
Wednesday, February 20, 2002
1:00 – 3:00
385 Mondale Hall**

- Present: Wilbert Ahern (chair), Shawn Curley, Scott Ferguson, Christina Frazier, Gretchen Haas, Frank Kulacki, Josh LaBau, Christine Maziar, Kathleen Newell, Marsha Odom, Martin Sampson, Mary Ellen Shaw, Mary Sue Simmons, Craig Swan
- Absent: Patricia Cavanaugh, Steve Fitzgerald, Geri Malandra, Carol Miller, Karen Seashore
- Guests: Professor Lillian Bridwell-Bowles (Morse-Alumni Award Committee); Professor Charles Speaks (Committee on Finance and Planning, Associate Dean Richard Skaggs (Council of Undergraduate Deans))

[In these minutes: (1) awards; (2) distributed learning; (3) statement on graduation rates; (4) tuition rates and graduation rates]

1. Awards

Professor Ahern convened the meeting at 1:00 and welcomed Professor Lillian Bridwell-Bowles to present the nominees for the Morse-Alumni awards for outstanding contributions to undergraduate education. Professor Bridwell-Bowles presented the names of the nominees and their attributes; the Committee approved the nominations.

Professor Curley presented the nominees for the award for outstanding contributions to graduate and professional education. Again, the Committee approved the nominations.

Professor Ahern said he would call each of the award winners.

2. Distributed Learning

Professor Ahern convened the meeting at 1:00 and welcomed Dr. Billie Wahlstrom, Director of Distributed Education. Dr. Wahlstrom said she wished to provide information and would welcome comments.

Dr. Wahlstrom began by recalling that the Task Force on Distance Learning wrote a long report that had been given a lot of thought; the task force members worked very hard and all attended nearly every meeting. In order that the report not be put on a shelf, the University established the Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) Council.

*These minutes reflect discussion and debate at a meeting of a committee of the University of Minnesota Senate or Twin Cities Campus Assembly; none of the comments, conclusions, or actions reported in these minutes represent the views of, nor are they binding on, the Senate or Assembly, the Administration, or the Board of Regents.

One of the issues in TEL is the fair-use guidelines. The University has very restrictive policies; they are drafting more liberal principles and guidelines that will conform to the law but will bring Minnesota's practices into line with those at peer institutions. One provision will be that one can use materials for several years if they are in a pass-word-protected environment. She said they will want comments on the guidelines which, when adopted, will change practices in the libraries and the DMC.

Another issue is compliance with ADA guidelines in order to make the University's resources accessible to those with disabilities. The libraries have done well in this respect. There is a group working on guidelines to make web materials more accessible; what happens is that materials become available to people with many different learning styles. This issue has implications for faculty: if a syllabus is on line, it must meet ADA standards.

They are establishing a clearinghouse for partnerships that the University or individual faculty members have made and with what results and what financial arrangements (so, for example, faculty do not have to negotiate without knowing what others have received).

There is an institutional initiative to set up a portal structure (it will start as a pilot in the Academic Health Center), which allows one to put all the things one needs on one page. Once one logs on, one is automatically authenticated to use all materials one has access to. The portal project is driven more by students--who want information quickly--than by faculty. The University has a lot of visibility and is one of the most wired institutions in the country; it has received a lot of wonderful publicity it has not sought. (The umn.edu domain name is the 60th-most visited in the world--and this includes such groups as Amazon.com.)

There are issues associated with the portal, such as the role of the user and conflicts, privacy, pressure from students for information, and the need for training faculty, staff, alumni, and students.

Ms. Frazier asked who is paying for the portal project? Dr. Wahlstrom said it uses open-source code and is an aggregator that does very little itself. The Office of Information Technology is paying the cost. Dr. Maziar said the question is a good one but very difficult to answer; it may be that the nature of the effort, making people think about the way they use programs, probably includes a substitution of effort: people are putting their time into the portal rather than other activities. The expenses are very minor, Dr. Wahlstrom said.

In terms of the policy implications that arise from distributed education, there are several, Dr. Wahlstrom said: faculty workload, potential conflicts, intellectual property, new faculty training, and others. With respect to the first, how are TEL courses to be weighted? How is teaching high, low, and no residency courses (those that meet as regular courses, those that have some in the classroom and some on line, and those that are entirely on line) considered as part of the normal workload? Second, should there be additional compensation or technical assistance (or both) provided when faculty convert face-to-face courses to ITV, CD, or on-line courses?

Also an issue of faculty workload is this question: "When a unit decides that it makes programmatic sense to make its courses available to students via ITV or on line, can a faculty member refuse to teach or adapt his or her course [to that format]?" And if so, does the department have the right to get someone else to teach the course if it is critical to a sequence or creates a bottleneck if not offered?

It is the view of the TEL Council that teaching methods and delivery mode should not affect workload or evaluation. Evaluation should not single out technology-enhanced courses.

With respect to intellectual property, "who 'owns' TEL courses that faculty develop with significant University support? How does the University's investment in enhancing the work affect ownership?" By default, Dr. Maziar commented, the courses would be owned by the faculty member unless there was a separate contract with the University.

And how does the University treat faculty who come from elsewhere with such courses? In that case, Dr. Maziar said, the rules of the institution from which the faculty member came would rule. Another question is "what principles should guide the development of compensation arrangements when the University licenses faculty work? How does departmental ownership work?" Faculty establish a course and then leave the University; they want to know if they can take part of the course when they go. The Academic Health Center is developing some model agreements to address this issue.

"Is there a conflict of interest or commitment when a faculty member takes a class he or she developed with technology support from the University and markets it" to a for-profit provider, Dr. Wahlstrom asked? Or if a faculty member teaches at a for-profit provider in the summer, in direct competition with University offerings?

New faculty training will be needed to maximize University resources in support of teaching, research, and outreach, Dr. Wahlstrom said; the issue is resources. The TEL Council is also interested in best practices in the use of technology; should training in these practices be required of new faculty in departments with significant TEL programming? Should all new faculty be required to take such training?

There are other issues associated with distributed education, Dr. Wahlstrom said.

-- For example, how long should records be kept, including email?

-- What weight should electronic communications carry? The University takes the position that they carry the same weight as other kinds of notice, but when students suppress data for the directory they cannot be reached; the University may have two policies that conflict. It may be that the University will tell students they cannot suppress their X.500 address.

-- A third issue is the use of vendors not connected with the University (e.g., department or faculty arrangements with a commercial on-line bookseller rather than the University bookstores). There is a Senate policy providing that information must be sent to the bookstores and that individuals cannot profit from such arrangements, Dr. Swan commented.

-- There is no policy now with respect to scheduling exams for TEL courses, Dr. Wahlstrom said. It may not be important now, but it will matter when students take several TEL courses.

-- Quality assessment needs to be addressed. There are no institutional guidelines for e-learning or for teaching evaluations.

-- "How are staffing decisions made for covering distributed education offerings (or any offerings) if no one in the department is available or willing but a course is critical to students' progress in the program?"

-- She has taught on-line classes for five years, Dr. Wahlstrom related. In the first year, all of the students were at the University (and now the number of on-line students outnumber those in the classroom). Should there be a policy governing how many on-line courses on-campus students can take? (It would be strange to limit the number a student could take from the University but have no limit on the number he or she could take from a for-profit provider.)

What is the relationship between the College of Continuing Education and learning technologies, Dr. Shaw asked? Dr. Wahlstrom said she has overview responsibilities. But there is no catalogue of on-line University courses.

Professor Odom said the faculty already feel stretched. If they are to do more on-line instruction, they will not be able to serve as many students as they do with traditional lectures. There will be a need for more faculty to deliver on-line instruction. Best practices do help address this question, Dr. Wahlstrom said. Ms. Haas said she has heard that teaching a course of 30 students on line is much more demanding than a traditional class of 30. The email traffic is heavy, Dr. Wahlstrom agreed; the weight of a course can vary with units, which set up their own rules (such as when an instructor receives a TA).

Professor Ahern said there are two aspects to Ms. Haas's question: quality assurance and workload; this Committee does not deal with the second. In terms of quality assessment, what about on-line courses from students who transfer in? The task force recommended the University follow the same practice it does for all other transfer courses, which leaves to the departments the decision about accepting courses for the major. The matter of training and faculty development is largely a matter of money, he said.

Where will the on-line courses be posted, Mr. Ferguson asked? Students may not want to walk in the cold weather or sleep in and would prefer to take an on-line course. Dr. Wahlstrom said she was working on gathering information on University courses offered on line.

Professor Ahern thanked Dr. Wahlstrom for joining the meeting and asked that she rejoin it later in the spring to take up the policy issues in more depth.

3. Statement on Graduation Rates

Professor Ahern next asked whether the Committee wished to adopt a statement. The Committee deliberated for some while and agreed that it would draft a motion for the next meeting.

4. Graduation Rates and Tuition Rates

Professor Ahern at this point adjourned the SCEP meeting and turned the gavel over to Professor Newell, who convened a meeting of the Assembly Committee on Educational Policy to discuss a proposal to alter tuition rates on the Twin Cities campus in order to promote timely graduation. She welcomed Professor Speaks and Associate Dean Skaggs to the meeting to discuss the statement adopted by the Senate Committee on Finance and Planning (SCFP)

Professor Speaks explained that SCFP had walked a delicate line. It did not believe a financial incentive alone was sufficient to improve graduation rates on the Twin Cities campus, but that there should be a financial incentive along with other actions. SCFP, however, spoke only to the financial issues. The statement from SCFP was adopted in the context of the Swan-Rinehart report from the Council of Undergraduate Deans, discussions by this Committee. SCFP did not take a position on whether there should be a 13-credit minimum, only that IF such a rule is adopted, THEN it should be accompanied by a financial incentive.

SCFP does not believe the University should "absorb" the costs that would be incurred by adopting a tuition band beginning at 13 credits, because the lost tuition would be costs the colleges would have to incur. SCFP would like to get its resolution to the President, Provost, and Dr. Swan as soon as possible because they will be making a presentation to the Board of Regents on this topic in two weeks, Professor Speaks said.

It is up to this Committee to do with the SCFP statement what it wishes--receive it for information, endorse it, disavow it, or write a parallel statement.

Professor Newell called on Dean Skaggs for comment. The context of the letter from the Council of Undergraduate Deans is that after substantial consideration during the fall, the letter represents the Council's view of the proposal for the 13-credit rule from the President and Provost; they wanted to point out several important aspects of the proposal. He said that all of the efforts have to be couched in terms of the benefits to the students and to the institution. He also said it is absolutely necessary that any policy on a credit minimum be part of a broad strategy that sets expectations and communicates to students and provides the infrastructure to support the goals.

Professor Newell expressed appreciation for the work of the Council of Undergraduate Deans and of the Committee on Finance and Planning. She then noted the 1999 statement adopted by the Twin Cities Campus Assembly (which reads as follows):

I. Introduction

In conjunction with the University's change to semesters, the Assembly Committee on Educational Policy has considered the recommendation of an academic progress policy to the Assembly. Students now commonly understand that they may enroll for as few or as many credits as they wish, at any time, and take as long as they wish to complete a degree. The proposed policy seeks to modify student behavior under the semester calendar by ensuring that students graduate in a timely fashion. The proposed policy applies only to undergraduate programs.

II. Policy

1. The University expects most students to graduate in a timely manner, defined here as four to five years. The administration shall adopt policies, and further publicize existing policies, which will facilitate timely graduation for most students (within four to five years). The Office of the Provost shall engage in regular conversations with the Assembly Committee on Educational Policy about these policies and their effectiveness.

2. All departments and programs must have in place a curricular plan that allows students to graduate in four years. Such a plan would require that students enroll for at least 15 credits per semester, on average (excluding such desirable educational enhancements as study abroad and internships). This plan may not require that students enroll for more than 17 credits per semester, on average. Course offerings must be scheduled on a two-year horizon so that students can progress in a way that leads to timely completion.

This policy called on the administration to implement it. Should it be made stronger or should a more specific statement be adopted, she asked? Does the Committee wish to endorse a SCEP statement? Does the Committee wish to endorse the Finance and Planning Committee statement?

Professor Speaks said that timing was critical in terms of the administration going to the Board of Regents. At the same period the University must consider tuition increases, it may be appropriate to take steps to improve graduation rates. The more the committees can make a joint effort, the more helpful for the administration it would be.

Dr. Swan outlined the costs of the several tuition options that Dr. Zetterberg had provided to the Committee on Finance and Planning. To have the band begin at 12 credits (that is, every credit would cost more money, up to and including 12; all credits after the 12th for which a student registered would be free) would be quite expensive in terms of projected lost tuition income. To have the band begin at 13 credits has only a modest expense in terms of projected lost tuition income. The student taking 15 credits would pay less per credit than they do now, and for 16 or more credits students would save more money.

Professor Speaks reported that Finance and Planning rejected one of the options, a tuition band from 13-17 credits, because it was not simple to explain. There is also no evidence that students will play games with the system.

Professor Speaks agreed that part-time students would pay slightly more if there is a 13-credit tuition band. It is the view of the President and the Council of Undergraduate Deans that the University should expect students to graduate in four or five years and that if there is to be a financial incentive, it should be revenue-neutral as far as the institution is concerned. If some will pay less, others will have to pay more. The increased cost for part-time students should not be excessively burdensome, Dr. Swan added.

Part-time students also pay more with the discounted tuition now offered, Professor Speaks observed; the principle is the same. The problem is not that too many students register for fewer than 12 credits, he said; the problem is that too many register for fewer than 15 credits.

The plan provides a disincentive for non-traditional or returning adult students to attend the University, Ms. Frazier said. Professor Speaks said the question is whether the University absorbs the \$3.7 million in lost tuition or charges those students \$5.36 per credit more. Dr. Shaw said she did not believe \$5.36 per credit was an undue burden.

The University must be careful about a 13-credit rule, Dr. Maziar commented. That is the MINIMUM; it must be made clear to students that they are expected to take 15 credits per term--and must do so in order to graduate in four years.

Professor Kulacki inquired if part-time students start in lower division and work their way up, or if a lot of them come as transfer students. Dr. Swan said the University would expect students either to be full-time or part-time. The question is what kind of student body the University wants to serve, Professor Kulacki said. There are two types of students that the policy tries to address: traditional undergraduates who can get their degrees in four or five years, and returning students, whom the University must work with because they are on a slower track. The educational landscape in the Twin Cities is very different from what it was 30 years ago, Professor Kulacki pointed out, and the University should establish itself as the Research I, residential university.

The Committee voted unanimously to endorse the statement from the Committee on Finance and Planning, which read as follows:

The Senate Committee on Finance and Planning (SCFP) has read and discussed the document, *Improving our Graduation Rates: The Report of the Graduation and Retention Subcommittee of the Council of Undergraduate Deans* (August 13, 2001). The Committee concludes that the University must establish and communicate an explicit expectation that, upon admission, most students will be full-time students and will be expected to graduate within four-to-five years of matriculation. In reaching that conclusion, the SCFP strongly endorses the comments and recommendations prepared by the Council of Undergraduate Deans and sent to the President and Provost on January 22, 2002. In addition, the SCFP offers the following additional recommendations for undergraduate students in all colleges of the Twin Cities campus.

-- A policy that mandates a minimum average credit load of 13 credits per semester should be accompanied with a financial incentive in the form of a tuition structure that will support the University's objective.

-- After review of three tuition-banding options (13 credits and above; 13-17 credits; and 12 credits and above) and a new tuition-discount option (75% discount for more than 12 credits) expresses its strong preference for the *13 credits and above band option*.

-- A 13 credits and above band model, with no upper limit, is projected to cost the University \$3.7 million dollars in lost tuition revenue. Rather than accept that cost as an investment to improve undergraduate graduation rates, the Committee believes that the per-credit tuition charge for students who register for fewer than 13 credits should be adjusted upward to offset the projected cost of the 13-credit band model.¹

-- The Committee further concludes that the 13 credits and above band model should become effective fall 2002 for all undergraduate students—entering freshmen, entering transfer students, and returning students.

The estimated per-credit increase in cost, in 2001-02 tuition rates, is \$5.36 (2.9%).

Professor Newell adjourned the meeting at 3:20.

-- Gary Engstrand