

## Minutes\*

Senate Committee on Educational Policy  
Wednesday, February 15, 2006  
1 – 3 pm  
238A Morrill Hall

Present: Richard McCormick (chair), William Bart, Vernon Cardwell, Shawn Curley, LeAnn Dean, George Green for Gail Dubrow, Josh Feneis, James Leger, Eric Ling, Claudia Neuhauser, Mary Ellen Shaw, Paul Siliciano, Donna Spannaus-Martin, Craig Swan, Joel Weinsheimer

Absent: Maureen Cisneros, [Gail Dubrow,] Sarah Tuttle, Doug Wangenstein

Guests:

Other: Karen Zentner Bacig

[In these minutes: (1) Morse/Alumni Award Recipients; (2) N-grades and Dean's list; (3) Teaching Evaluations; (4) Chair's Report from SCFA meeting]

Professor McCormick convened the meeting at 1:05 pm.

### **1. Morse/Alumni Award Recipients**

The committee discussed the recipients of the Outstanding Contributions to Post baccalaureate, Graduate, and Professional Education award. Ms. Shaw moved to approve the slate of award winners; the motion was seconded. The motion carried.

The committee discussed the Horace T. Morse-University of Minnesota Alumni Association Awards for Outstanding Contributions to Undergraduate Education. Professor Spannaus-Martin moved to approve the slate of award winners; the motion was seconded, with Professor Leger abstaining. The motion carried.

The committee then discussed the nomination procedure for the awards and Professor Cardwell presented suggested changes in the guidelines for organization and presentation of dossiers in the nomination packets. The feasibility of electronic submissions was discussed, with committee members noting that it may create a problem in compiling packets of information for the members of the nominating committee. Professor Cardwell pointed out the varying methods as to how submitted materials are packaged for the committee's review, and said that the policy on the organization and presentation of dossiers was an attempt to standardize course reporting materials. Another dilemma for the committee was that the Crookston and Duluth campuses are unionized and use different measurements for courses, so it was difficult to compare mean scores with the Twin Cities and Morris campuses. Professor Cardwell also noted that union rules prohibit comparisons being made public, and said that in the committee's deliberations, it became clear that student scores were not the discriminating factor in someone from the Duluth campus not receiving an award. The issue then became how to level the playing field. Professor Green asked if the committee could ask representatives from Duluth to advise about how to address the matter. Professor McCormick

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clarified that Professor Cardwell was saying that it is better when departments supply the necessary data as opposed to central administration providing the information. Professor Cardwell suggested that they ask for course evaluations through spring, the information for which would be available by the time the nomination packets went out. Dr. Swan said that the data did not exist until late in the process, and although in his summary of the data he eliminated those with fewer than ten responses, but a department could potentially have more information. Professor Curley said that if it is left up to departments, the data could be a matter of comparing apples to oranges. Professor Cardwell said that the committee recommended that the nominator tabulate mean scores. Dr. Swan said that the figure should be integrated into the dossier, and Professor Curley said they should be told who to contact for data. Professor Cardwell said there were significant differences among departments, units and collegiate units in data collected. Professor Neuhauser pointed out that the data is useful for colleges whether or not they apply for the awards. Professor Green said that the Morris campus seemed to have a process in place that was useful. Professor McCormick asked for clarifications on the highlighted changes in the policy that Professor Cardwell had distributed, and asked if SCEP needed to approve the changes. Professor Cardwell indicated that that's what was being proposed. A discussion ensued about past changes to submission requirements. Professor Leger stated that he felt the guidelines were very reasonable. Professor McCormick asked for a motion to accept the changes to the nomination requirements. Mr. Feneis moved. Professor Cardwell seconded. The motion passed.

Professor McCormick asked how the changes affected the Graduate and Professional Award. The committee discussed this, and discussed clarification of the number of letters for nomination. Professor Cardwell said that the nominating committee had discussed the length of the letters submitted and said that some letters were very verbose without explicating relevant issues. However, the committee did not want to put a limit on the length of the letters. Professor McCormick pointed out that not every aspect of the process could be controlled. Professor Green moved to adopt the same amendments to the submission policy for the Graduate and Professional Award. The motion was seconded, and the motion carried. Professor McCormick thanked the nominating committee for their work.

Professor McCormick introduced to the committee Professor Cynda Clary, an American Council on Education (ACE) Fellow from New Mexico State University who will be at the University of Minnesota for the semester.

## **2. N-grades and Dean's list**

Professor McCormick referred to an e-mail from Associate Dean Peter Hudleston, who pointed out a policy on the web regarding standard academic policy and whether or not a grade of 'N' disqualifies a student from being on the dean's list. The policy states: "All colleges and programs shall publish each term a dean's list, consisting of students who achieved a 3.67 GPA or higher and who completed a minimum of 12 credits (including University College credits) on the A-F grading system. There will be a transcript notation for each term that a student achieves the dean's list." Associate Dean Hudleston said the policy as it appears in the Undergraduate Catalog paraphrases this and that there is no mention of N grades in either place. Professor McCormick said that Mr. Hudleston felt that the Office of the Registrar applies a "no N grade" rule when it generates the dean's list, but this should be explicit. Professor McCormick said that it appeared that SCEP had addressed this issue, but the policy is difficult to find nor had the policies been updated in all places. Ms. Van Voorhis said that the issue may have been discussed during the semester conversion and that it was standardized for undergraduates across campus. She clarified that N and I grades make the student ineligible for the dean's list.

The committee discussed the evolution of the policy. Dr. Swan said that the policy on the web is silent about N grades and that the new policy would need to be vetted through appropriate means. The committee discussed addendums to the policy, with Ms. Van Voorhis noting that the

policy is documented somewhere. Professor McCormick said that SCEP could recommend that the Senate not remain silent on the issue. Professor Cardwell said that it would be helpful to note that the context of an N grade is part of an S/N grading system, which was established to encourage students to explore areas of learning without it affecting their GPA. The question then was if it shows up as a N. Professor Green said that an F affects GPA. The committee discussed the policy. Mr. Ling asked if perhaps a large number of students had been excluded from the dean's list because of having an I grade, and cited his personal experience. Professor Green said that an I is not the same as an N, and Professor McCormick asked why an N affects GPA but an I does not. Ms. Van Voorhis pointed out that for financial aid purposes, an I was considered an F. Professor Siliciano asked if the dean's list could be recomputed after an I grade is satisfied. The question of K grades was raised, and Ms. Van Voorhis said that a K grade is for the first term of those classes that span two terms. Professor McCormick clarified that an S grade cannot be given unless the student registers S/N. Ms. Van Voorhis said that they run the dean's list twice, after grades are submitted and a month later to catch the students who complete their I grades. However, this does not account for students who may make up the grade within the year. Mr. Feneis cited an example where he completed nine credits, including distance learning for four credits and asked to get on the dean's list after that. Ms. Van Voorhis clarified that it was possible for individual colleges to over-ride the policy and that a student could get on the dean's list retroactively. The committee discussed letter grades and their values. Professor Weinsheimer said that there was an assumption that an N represents an F, when it is actually an indefinite grade. Professor Cardwell said that N means no credit, which is the same as failing. Professor McCormick pointed out that that was part of the bargain in registering for a course S/N. Professor Green said that some students disappear from classes when they register S/N: they fail to show up to class and they get an N without doing any work. Professor Leger asked if it was possible to get on the dean's list with an F, and Dr. Swan and Ms. Shaw confirmed that it was, although a student would have to take a very large number of credits to compensate accordingly. Professor Leger said that an N should not be exclusionary if an F is not exclusionary. The committee discussed the effect of grades on GPA if an N is not captured like an F is. Professor Weinsheimer said he preferred the rule as written and that the policy should not be changed. Professor McCormick said that the exact policy was unclear, and that another issue is that the policy is not being updated in all places. Professor Siliciano pointed out that many Is are for very good reasons and may take more than 3 weeks to make up, which should not stop students from getting on the dean's list. Ms. Shaw reiterated that a college could override that decision.

Ms. Shaw moved to modify the language in the policy and to disqualify from the dean's list students with N grades; any student with an I grade not made up in three weeks is also disqualified. Professor Green made a friendly amendment that the college can override the ruling in a reasonable amount of time. The motion passed with one opposed.

### **3. Teaching Evaluations**

Professor McCormick referred to the changes on the teaching evaluation policy and thanked the subcommittee comprised of Ms. Shaw and Professors Neuhauser and Spannaus-Martin for having re-worded the policy. The changes had been approved via e-mail vote by the committee. Professor McCormick reviewed the approved language. Professor Curley said that he felt that one principle of the policy was to maintain student anonymity and this was being sacrificed for another principle, that of participation. Professor Leger agreed, and said that it was still possible to figure out who had not complied with filling out an evaluation. Professor McCormick pointed out that if a student does not visit the evaluation website, all the instructor will know is that the student is out of compliance with the requirement to go to the site. The students who don't want to do the evaluation will go to the website and then check the option to decline to do the evaluation; such students will be indistinguishable from those who go to the site and do the evaluation. He said that the new language is in the interest of getting better data. It also moves the evaluation policy in the right direction as the

University moves increasingly toward on-line evaluations. He said that he had brought the changes in policy to the Senate Committee on Faculty Affairs (SCFA) and that he was awaiting their response, at which point it must be presented to the Faculty Consultative Committee (FCC). With changes it could mean that it would not be on the agenda for the March 2 Senate meeting, as there may not be time to address the issue.

#### **4. Chair's Report from SCFA meeting**

Professor McCormick reported on his meeting with SCFA and the proposal to create a subcommittee to reconsider the four questions on the teaching evaluations. He noted that SCFA had agreed to co-sponsor such a subcommittee. Professor McCormick also said that the SCFA officially supported with SCEP the visit of Dr. Raoul Arreola. Professor McCormick also anticipated being able to report on the status of the subcommittee at the March Senate meeting, and he reminded the committee that even though they had recommended the approval of the policy, he wanted to note the formation of the subcommittee at the Senate meeting. Professor Green suggested that a vote be taken at a later senate meeting and that perhaps FCC could take up the issue later. Professor McCormick agreed that it might be wise to hold the issue until April so as to have a discussion, and that the subcommittee would be a way to address the concerns raised at the December 2005 senate meeting. He added that the student release questions are being piloted and that they would be in a position to have new student release questions by next year.

Professor McCormick adjourned the meeting at 2:51 pm.

--Mary Jo Pehl

University of Minnesota