

Minutes*

**Faculty Consultative Committee
Assembly Steering Committee
Senate Consultative Committee
Thursday, May 6, 1999
12:00 - 1:00 & 1:30 - 3:30
Dale Shephard Room, Campus Club
Room 710 Social Sciences**

- Present: Sara Evans (chair), Kent Bales, Linda Brady, Stephen Gudeman, M. Janice Hogan, Roberta Humphreys, Michael Korth, Leonard Kuhi, Joseph Massey, Marvin Marshak, Judith Martin, Fred Morrison, Paula Rabinowitz, Matthew Tirrell
- Absent: Gary Davis, Mary Dempsey, Marilyn Grave, David Hamilton, V. Rama Murthy, all student members of the Senate Consultative Committee
- Guests: Professor Richard McGehee (Health Plan Task Force); Executive Vice President Robert Bruininks, Associate Vice President Victor Bloomfield
- Other: Maureen Smith (Institutional Relations)

[In these minutes: health plan task force; dockets; the intellectual future of the University]

Professor Evans convened the discussion at 12:00 and turned to Professor Morrison for a personnel item. It was agreed by unanimous vote to ask Professor Marshak to continue as faculty legislative liaison, and to express the Committee's appreciation for his work the last two years. It was also agreed that the Committee wished to have dinners with legislators, to encourage more interaction between faculty and legislators.

1. Health Plan Task Force Update

Professor Evans now welcomed Professor McGehee to the meeting, to report on events related to health care coverage.

Professor McGehee explained that two things have occurred since his last report to the Committee. First, things have not been going as smoothly as expected at the state level. The current system is falling apart faster than expected, and the new system is taking longer than expected to put together, so what will be provided next year is up in the air. It is likely that Medica Primary will not be an option, so about 1000 University employees will have to make a change. It will be 2001 or 2002 before the new system will be in place. Right now it LOOKS like it will be a good plan, but that remains to be seen.

The second thing that has happened is that Human Resources at the University now takes the situation quite seriously, and is willing to ask the Executive Committee for "real money" to hire

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consultants so that the University can decide in the fall whether to pursue its own health care plan. The decision in the fall would NOT be whether to leave the state plan, but whether to test the market and get proposals. It will be a tight schedule to have a plan in place by 2001 even if a decision to continue to investigate is made this fall.

The Health Plan Task Force has unanimously adopted a recommendation that the University spend the necessary money to retain consultants so that a mechanism to proceed is in place in the fall. Professor McGehee said the Task Force is not unanimous on whether it is in the University's best interests to separate from the state--there are arguments on both sides--but its members ARE unanimously of the view that the University needs to be in a position to make a rational decision. The Task Force asked that the Faculty Consultative Committee endorse its request.

Professor Evans noted that this is happening because the faculty made it happen; the issue was stalled up until about two years ago, and since then the faculty have pushed to get the health care issue addressed. Professor Morrison moved that the Committee request the administration to provide adequate financial support to Human Resources and to the Health Plan Task Force to pursue the matter. (It was noted that the University spends about \$55 million per year for health coverage for employees; Professor Morrison pointed out that spending \$50,000 - 100,000 for consultants is a small amount to identify alternatives available, in comparison to what the University spends on health care. Professor McGehee did not know what the cost would be, but said that it would be substantial.)

The Committee voted unanimously in favor of the motion, and thanked Professor McGehee and the task force members for their good work.

2. Dockets

The Committee reviewed and approved the docket of the Faculty Senate. Inasmuch as no student members of the Senate Consultative Committee had joined the meeting, acting as the SCC the Committee also reviewed the docket of the University Senate. The group then constituted itself as the Assembly Steering Committee and reviewed the Twin Cities Campus Assembly docket. Professor Morrison moved, on behalf of the Business and Rules Committee, to put over until next year a proposal to amend the bylaw of the Assembly Committee on Intercollegiate Athletics. The vote in favor of the motion was unanimous. It was also agreed that Professor Sedo should be invited to join the Steering Committee to discuss the proposed changes.

Professor Morrison moved approval of the Senate and Assembly dockets; the motion was approved unanimously.

3. Dinners with Junior Faculty

Discussion turned next to the dinners with junior faculty (those in their first three years of tenure-track appointments); the third such dinner was the evening of the date of this meeting. Those who had served as table discussion facilitators (Professors Bales, Evans, Gudeman, and Hogan) reported on a few items that had already surfaced:

- the 2-year wait before tenure-track faculty may participate in the retirement plan
- discovery of apparently significant variations in workloads

- astonishment at the differences in departmental culture
- implicit discouragement for young women faculty to have children
- very different ways of mentoring, or the lack there of
- the lack of links with other faculty studying in the same area, outside the department, and the wish for such faculty to participate in evaluations

Professor Evans reported that there has been much learning about how things are done in other part of the University, and the conversations have exposed discrepancies. Professor Bales observed that the intent of the dinners is to learn from the junior faculty about the problems they face, and for FCC to bring those issues to the attention of the appropriate University officers and offices.

Professor Evans now recessed the meeting; Committee members walked from the Union to the Social Sciences building to convene a discussion of the intellectual future of the University with Messrs. Bruininks and Bloomfield.

4. Intellectual Future of the University

Once people had settled, Professor Evans recalled that this was the third intellectual future discussion. The first one had rambled somewhat while the second had focused on the department and academic community that nourishes excellence. She referred to an email message she had sent to the Committee the previous day outlining possible discussion topics for this session. She had noted the Committee had earlier considered the "importance of interdisciplinarity for research innovation. That points us to the question of the intellectual 'common goods' which no one 'owns' because everyone does," an issue which Executive Vice President Bruininks had raised, as had the Regents' Professors. Among the examples she cited were (1) the faculty's responsibility for teaching and learning in all its forms (not curriculum, which rests with departments and colleges, but the process of learning), (2) the Graduate School structure which sponsors free-floating degrees, mentioned in the discussion with the Regents' Professors, as one way the University resists the intellectual balkanization. "How do we sustain and increase such possibilities in an IMG environment?" she inquired. Issues mentioned by others included (3) academic honesty/dishonesty and (4) life-long learning and how it fits into a research university.

The discussion then touched upon a wide variety of topics.

- The culture of the state seems not to put a high value on higher education. One can look, moreover, at the attitudes of incoming students; they look at education for a job, not as a process by which they are educated for the rest of their life. There has been a slow downward trend at the University for the last 20+ years, which makes it difficult to be optimistic about the intellectual future.

There are two opposing views about what higher education is. One is that it is disinterested and monastic, that it does things worthy for their own sake and does not worry about the world. The other, opposed view, is the economic value of higher education, and that faculty salaries are the most important item in the University. It is hard to convince the public that higher education is disinterested, given the emphasis on its economic value and its high cost.

1. If the culture of the state does not value the ideal of the liberal education (the undergraduate education), then students will come with an instrumental view of education.
2. The University reinforces that attitude.
3. It has been forced to do so, with accelerating pressure to market the University. Perhaps

the world has changed, and the older ideal cannot be regained, but this question is fundamental to the intellectual future of the University.

The quality of life in the state is important, not just job creation, and it is important to corporations; that is why some of them come here.

The question is how to make the case for higher education. Even in Minnesota, which has done fairly well for higher education, since 1980 higher education has received a 25% smaller proportion of the state budget. The situation has probably levelled off, but making the case has become increasingly difficult. Higher education has fallen back on the economic argument, but needs to make the case more persuasively for liberal education. Corporations value liberal education more highly than does the general population. How does one make the case for the four-year baccalaureate education when the argument is for putting more dollars into workforce education? (Cannot corporate CEOs talk to the legislature? Some have, at the request of the President. And there ARE labor shortages, while this is a more abstract argument. The quality of life argument is persuasive, however, and needs to be made more strongly.)

-- Corporations are now starting universities, and virtual universities are coming on the scene, so institutions are being redefined. The corporate world focuses on short-term profits, which puts pressure on traditional universities, which make long-term investments of time. This makes the situation increasingly difficult for places such as the University. (At the same time, if one has tenure, one CAN invest 20 years in a project that everyone else doubts, if one is willing to put up with low pay and perhaps a higher teaching load--although almost no one makes this choice.)

-- One must talk about structure when talking about the intellectual future. The demand to capture dollars, for example, has turned the writing-intensive courses into the cheapest courses that can be run. There is a complete disconnect between the student and the person teaching the course; they will be assembly lines. In one course, there will be 250 students; in another, however, there will be only 15. This depends on the economy of the college; in the case of CLA, it depends on bodies to bring in revenue.

There are a number of absurdities induced by IMG. The General College and the Carlson School "cleaned up" with IMG; they have more students than they can deal with, so receive a lot of money. The rest scramble for students, and just take from other colleges, so no one gains.

Relatedly, it is intellectually interesting the degree to which faculty have bought into IMG. In the case of liberal education requirements, there was worry about "double-dipping," whereby a course might satisfy both a theme and a distribution requirement. Now courses are being offered which give students the opportunity to "triple dip." The faculty are losing sight of the picture of what they are trying to do.

This started before IMG, but advisors realized that the best way to get students through the system the faculty set up was to urge them to double-dip. The faculty created the Council on Liberal Education (CLE), which had nothing to do with IMG. In at least one college, students are TOLD not to take any liberal education course which does meet at least two requirements; those that offer only one are shunned. (What has happened is that IMG has intensified this pressure, so courses fill three requirements rather than only two.) If one is going to give students the best advice on navigating the system, one tells them to take only courses that triple dip. This is not a matter of dollars; the question is the most strategic path for the student to follow in the structure the faculty created. The CLE structure has its own distortions unrelated to IMG.

In addition, why are some themes chosen and not others? Moreover, in the areas of study, under CLE, physics courses do not meet the physical science requirement and history courses do not meet the history requirement, because other departments have been more aggressive in getting courses approved to meet liberal education requirements. It is clear that CLE must be fixed. (This matter has been the subject of discussion between Professors Evans and Martin; the lack of connection between CLE and the governance structure is seen as a problem. If it is a faculty committee, there need to be more linkages to the governance system.)

CLE was to be about the ideal of liberal education, and to be sure that a substantial fraction of undergraduate education dealt with broader themes. There was also not major disagreement about the themes that were adopted. They were ones that the private sector also agreed were important--they value multiculturalism, internationalism, and ethics. One can argue whether they are exactly right, but they are trying to achieve a common good.

Intellectual things can be taught in an unintellectual fashion. CLE identifies markers and puts a lot on paper; in 10 weeks, one learns how to think critically in Anthropology. That is absurd. In the past, one read books and studied for a period with someone, the antithesis of the CLE smorgasbord.

The freshman seminars (which may not be supported by the legislature, but which will be continued in some fashion) are a step in the right direction. What more can be done? Tinkering with the CLE requirements is not the answer. How can faculty be pulled into the issues in a serious way, not in way that they have to pull in students. Design of the curriculum has become very mechanistic and instrumental. What is absent in this discussion is a sense of intellectual excitement that goes across disciplines; instead, there is a sense that people function in a bureaucracy and respond to demands. (It is interesting that it apparently requires outside funds to stimulate intellectual excitement--as, for instance, a grant to teach citizenship and public ethics stimulated serious intellectual interest--and the thought that it does not occur in everyday academic life.)

The issues associated with CLE are influenced by other factors. Students are taking too long to graduate, something for which the University is criticized. CLE has built rules to respond to that pressure, but the rules have created other problems.

-- There needs to be a spirited discussion of IMG, because managing dollars has a lot to do with the intellectual future of the University. Far more evil has been attributed to IMG than it deserves, however; it is only 20% of the budget, and only increases over a baseline). There will be a task force to examine it and the broader budget processes.

-- The intellectual future is tied to external factors, such as the increased requirement that institutions be accountable for public funds: how they are used, student progress, and outcomes for students and the state.

Instances of bureaucratization: one applies for course development funds to get paid to develop or improve a course; every dime of Graduate School aid must be applied for. "We made a big part of our own hell ourselves in order to be able to account for every dollar we spend."

-- There are two different elements to the difficulties the University faces. One, the percentage of students entering higher education has increased enormously over those numbers a generation ago (although they are down slightly in the last few years). As a result, higher education takes a larger proportion of societal resources, it brings in people who are not ready to deal with higher education as many idealize higher education, and it draws people from the labor force at a time when there are jobs going vacant. If 50% of the population has a college education, however, society cannot absorb them all into positions requiring REAL college level work. Two, at the root of the dissatisfaction with IMG is small versus large classes. Large classes are needed to generate revenue, but what students like and what has intellectual value is small classes. The freshman seminars and undergraduate research projects are valuable experiences, but they are expensive, and the University cannot afford to do a lot of them. The question the deans raise is whether they can afford to have the faculty teaching small classes.

IMG does not affect the size of classes WITHIN colleges, but between them. And part of the problem is in the minds of faculty.

People make a mistake about small classes. Some of the best classes (e.g., at Berkeley) had 500 students. They had amazing faculty, and wonderful graduate students in sections. There has developed a fetish that the only good education is in small groups with a faculty member. There are other kinds of good education, and to emphasize small classes is to denigrate graduate students (most of whom are from outside Minnesota). Graduate student instructors are seen as a terrible thing, but they are not necessarily; students are studying with people doing dissertations, at the cutting edge of their field. The University should include small classes and a capstone experience, but there are intellectual reasons for also teaching with graduate students. Even though the University may be looking for a balance, the discourse is that it is bad to be taught by graduate students. (What the University is battling is that it did big classes badly.)

What must be emphasized is the quality of the graduate assistants. It is likely Berkeley gets better graduate students than does Minnesota. Using graduate assistants is a good way to deliver higher education, but the institution must have good TAs. One of the points made by one of the Regents' Professors was that the University is not competitive in fellowships and loses students. It is to be hoped a capital campaign would provide funding to overcome this problem.

The University may need to spend more, and raise more; it may also not be spending its money as efficiently as it could. It may be necessary to decentralize graduate assistant aid to the faculty and to allow them more flexibility (e.g., offer more than one year of aid). (One study, however, showed that departments that offer a timely package of aid did not do better than departments which did not, and when students were asked why they did not come to Minnesota, there was no single set of reasons.) What will be important is the ability to offer 4-5 years of aid.

-- Minnesota puts considerable money in higher education, and there are other states of the same size that have worse flagship universities. Where the University is losing out is to the private institutions and the University of California. Minnesota is doing acceptably vis-à-vis a place like Tennessee--but Minnesota does not want to compare itself to Tennessee. The California system is very different, in that it only takes the top 12.5% of students; Minnesota takes the top 40% or 50%. The state is generous with resources, but wants its flagship university to cover a huge range; that is the populism of the state. The University cannot compete with the University of California schools; they get better students, which also permits a greater efficiency in operation. It might be said that the California economy is like that of a

third world, very pyramidal, with the top of the pyramid supporting the University. There are no pyramids in Minnesota.

One way to improve the University is to shrink it to a size proportionate to its economic base. It should have half the size it is, and could cut itself down, limit students to the top 20%, and cut loose some of the professional schools. But the University cannot get there, and if it did, it would erode support for itself, which would be a disaster. On the other hand, if the University does not do that, it cannot catch the University of California--which is even going to open more campuses.

One difference that leads one to be pessimistic is the trend of a number of years in a difference between the public and private institutions. Elitism is increasing, so there is less support for putting money into public higher education. The \$57 million that has been proposed for student financial aid--rather than directly to public higher education--is money that can also flow into private institutions. The nature of the public state university is changing, and it may be becoming a dinosaur. (One can imagine, for example, the state saying that it is not necessary for someone with a Ph.D. to teach freshman seminars.)

It is not that the teaching in the freshman seminars is better; it is different. Few students at that age have had a serious conversation with an older adult; that is a missing piece of their lives, and it what the seminars can offer. The idea of fitting the seminars into CLE is not a good one. It does not matter what is taught; the point is to add something to a student's life, to have a conversation with older adults and hope the effect carries over into the rest of their University career. Students often seem to think that professors are a product of immaculate conception, who emerge full-blown at age 40, and who have no idea about the real world. The seminars help students get over that view.

Negotiating the gap between the pessimism about catching the University of California and glorying in the undergraduate education of Berkeley will be difficult. Students had to pass an exam to get into Berkeley that many faculty now could probably not pass, and they had to edit complex writing; faculty were lecturing to very bright students. That requires a very different professional life, where one has 10 hours per week to prepare a lecture. The University cannot get the brightest students.

-- University rules have a heavy superstructure, which discourages one from becoming involved in governance. CLE has little to do with education. In Britain, one reads a subject for a long time and obtains an education through it. Here, one spends so much time on bureaucracy it is tempting to become an anarchist. The University has visited CLE upon itself, while holding on to the ideology of Newman. This needs much deeper thought.

The world is a much broader place than it used to be, and the University is trying to respond to it. For the amount of material students must learn, the University is doing an amazing job of throwing information at them. Students know more, and they are smarter than they used to be.

-- Is there an intellectual future? Storage of more information is archival, not intellectual. Students know more modern statistics, less about the Codex of Justinian and the Peloponnesian War. But the purpose of learning them was not to refight the Peloponnesian War but to learn about thinking. The institution has been transformed, from one that does what is appropriate for 10% of the population to one that that does what is appropriate for 40% of the population, so it must be USEFUL. (It does not support 40% of the population thinking about things.) One question is whether society is as intellectual today as

it was 50 years ago, or is it more task-oriented? The University as an intellectual core and leader has a much smaller influence than it did earlier.

There is nothing relevant to anything in most English classes, nothing of use, but one sees the intellectual hunger of students for learning--so that when they are in the unemployment line, they read a novel. The interest in the novel *MOBY DICK* in one class was amazing, and students felt their education was limited by CLE. The whole notion of what knowledge is has changed, but the University has no mechanism to deal with that change. Students do not always know they hunger for knowledge, and the University needs to wake it up. Students also need places to hang out, which they do not have on this campus.

There are three things in this discussion that can be pursued, Professor Evans suggested. One, the Council on Liberal Education; she and Professor Martin need to meet with Vice Provost Swan, to deal with the concern that CLE simply floats out there, not connected to the faculty .

Two, the need to reconnect faculty with intellectual excitement, why they are doing what they are, perhaps with outside funding. When the bureaucracy is driving things, that does not occur. There is a need to create more ways for faculty to talk to each other to achieve the goals they believe in. This is about creating an intellectual community, one that is linked to the teaching mission.

Three, there is an outreach issue; the community needs to hear from the faculty. They have to make the case.

-- In the case of outside funding, it may not all be dollars; it may be the *IMPRIMATUR* of outside funding, which makes things easier to do in the bureaucracy--it is a validation process.

Or, the problem is that expectations have been created, and there are 17 hoops that faculty have to jump through, which takes all day--which denies the opportunity to be intellectual, when one is doing all the other things. That has happened because over the last 10 years the infrastructure within units to support intellectual activities has been deprived. If one needs a secretary, one better have a grant. What used to come with being a professor now comes with getting a grant. This problem goes to IMG but also precedes it; it is a response to fiscal crises: the University cut support services until the *FACULTY* are the support services.

One way to leverage the intellectual programs of the University is through distance education.

The place of lifelong learning in a research university offers enormous opportunities and conflicts. It is construed as education on demand, customized and updated. But it does not fit well with the way faculty allocate time, and it takes a lot of time. The way faculty currently teach while preserving the time to do research (to exaggerate considerably) is by lecturing to 1000 students and having TAs handle sections. Being on demand all the time is the implication of lifelong learning.

One can imagine a piece of the University in charge of this activity, but then there is worry about a disconnect with the faculty. University College is very entrepreneurial, and may be perceived as competing with regular course offerings and lowering standards. There is not much oversight of that curriculum. There has been talk with University College about the need for more faculty involvement in degree programs. In the M.A. in Liberal Studies), for example, there is a loosely-constructed faculty

advisory group. It doesn't equal "a faculty." The students (primarily working adults) are not well connected to the faculty.

Lifelong learning costs more, in part because it is directed to adults--who are not going to sit in classes of 400. They want danish and coffee. But older students may also be willing to pay more.

This is linked to the problem that the University is understaffed as an institution. President Yudof has pointed out the University has lost 400 faculty lines in the last 20 years, and would like to regain 100 of them. The University may not get them, but distance education will expand its mission.

One theme from this discussion is that faculty governance could look at policies adopted over the last 20 years, look at the number the faculty have imposed on themselves, and try to get rid of some of them. The Committee on Educational Policy has been looking at policies for the last several years, trying to clean them up. Part of the problem is that they are there because faculty are involved in decision-making. That is part of Minnesota Nice, said one Committee member wryly; at many places, deans and department heads who do bad things are taken out and shot; at the University, a rule is adopted that one will never do that again, and a committee is appointed.

On that note, Professor Evans adjourned the meeting at 3:20.

-- Gary Engstrand

University of Minnesota