Minutes*

Senate Committee on Educational Policy
Wednesday, September 22, 2010
2:00 – 4:00
238A Morrill Hall

Present: Thomas Brothen (chair), Barbara Brandt, Robert McMaster, Cody Mikl, Peh Ng, Jane Phillips, Peggy Root, Paul Siliciano, Donna Spannaus-Martin, Elaine Tarone, Cathrine Wambach

Absent: Norman Chervany, Alon McCormick, Henning Schroeder, Kristen Nelson, Michael Wade

Guests: Associate Vice Provost Laura Koch (Office of the Dean and Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education); Provost E. Thomas Sullivan

Other: Susan VanVoorhis (Academic Support Resources); Suzanne Bardouche (Office of the Dean and Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education)

[In these minutes: (1) academic advising audit; (2) e-education; (3) the budget model]

1. Academic Advising Audit

Professor Brothen convened the meeting at 1:00 and welcomed Associate Vice Provost Koch to discuss the audit of academic advising.

Dr. Koch reported that about a year ago, the Office of Internal Audits decided to do something new, an academic advising audit, to provide useful information to the Board of Regents and the University as a whole. The Internal Audits office worked with the colleges and also interviewed advisers and student-support staff, student-services directors, and assistant deans. They then did a systems audit of Academic Support Resources and looked at the grad planner and how well it worked. The audit focused mostly on systems. The audit was finished in December, 2009, and the information was provided to her, Vice Provost McMaster, and Provost Sullivan, and reported to the Board of Regents Audit Committee last spring.

Vice Provost McMaster said that the Audit Committee identified a set of issues and problems in advising, identified in the report:

1. Colleges/programs have not consistently established advising goals or performance measurements that align with institutional metrics

Response: Starting with the Spring 2010 compact process, Provost Sullivan will be asking a series of questions on advising during the collegiate meetings. The messaging during these compact meetings will be clear: strong, consistent, and high-quality advising is critical for the retention and graduation

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(in a timely period) of our undergraduates. Questions on appropriate advising ratios, professional development opportunities, and quality will be asked. Deans will be informed that they are accountable for the performance of their advisors and colleges should be prioritizing strong advising.

This is raising the issue of whether the Provost's office is clear in the message about retention and four-year graduation and the curriculum. It was less clear in the colleges than one would have hoped. And the added question, Dr. Koch said, is whether the message trickles down to advisers once it's in the college. Dr. McMaster said that a number of faculty and staff may not support the four-year graduation goal; while differences of opinion are acceptable, there is need for near-unanimous agreement on this issue.

2. Graduation Planner is underutilized.

Response: The information provided by the Office of Internal Audits on the usage of the Graduation Planner was disillusioning. As mentioned in #1 above, a clear message on the need to improve these usage rates will be given to colleges during the compact process. A hard target of 95% compliance for Fall 2010 will be given to the colleges.

Professor Ng asked what percentage of students use the grad planner. About 50%, Dr. McMaster said, which is not as extensively as they had anticipated. He said he could not understand why every student did not use it because it is a spectacular tool to plan one's undergraduate education. Mr. Mikl asked if graduate students use it; they do not, Dr. McMaster said, because graduate programs are too diverse to work well with that kind of tool.

3. Limited automation is available to identify students most in need of advising.

Response: The new Enrollment Tracking System (ETS), developed by the College of Liberal Arts and being made available to all colleges, will enable a more intensive and high-touch level of advising not possible before. Near real-time monitoring and intervention will become the standard for advisors. Through ETS, advisors will be able to track progress towards degree and will be asked to monitor critical metrics, such as the completion of the 30-, 60- and 90-credit milestones. The Provost has provided $175,000 to support this project, which should be fully operational by Summer 2010 (it is already extensively used by CLA).

The question is how to identify students in trouble and intervene, Dr. Koch said, and they are working on identifying ways to do so.

4. Students are not consistently advised to enroll in courses that meet multiple requirements.

Response: Concomitant with the recertification of the new Liberal Education (LE) requirements, clear messaging on the appropriate fit of these courses, and the need to identify those "multiple requirement" courses will be provided to students. A web site has already been created. Academic Support Resources (ASR) is also updating the sample plans for each major that demonstrate the courses that are most appropriate to minimize LE requirements. A parallel initiative will involve the creation of new materials and training programs for advisors.

In particular, the liberal-education courses that double dip, Dr. McMaster said, so that students can be efficient in getting their degree.

5. Reporting should be strengthened for the assignment of advisors.

Response: The issue here is that college student services must keep lists up-to-date and must notify students in a timely way when there is a change. The Provost's Office will work with colleges to make certain students receive better communication on the assignment of advisors and any changes to advising staff.

The issue here, Dr. Koch said, is when advisers leave a unit, students are not always quickly assigned a new adviser. Some colleges have communities of advisers and some do not; the question is how to tell students quickly that they have a new adviser.

6. Professional academic advisors may not be diversified enough to meet the changing University student population.

Response: Through the previously mentioned compact process, the Provost will encourage college student support services to be attentive to diversity in the hiring of advisors. Yearly, the Provost's Office will require data on the diversity of advisors. We will also encourage a diverse set of advisors for those reporting directly to the Provost, including the McNamara Student-Athlete Advising Center, the University Honors Program, and the newly-established Center for Academic Planning and Exploration (CAPE).

7. There are several concerns associated with timely application for degree clearance.

Response: The Provosts' Office is in agreement with the opportunities listed on page 11, and will work to implement these.

The problem is that applications may be tripped up in the colleges, Dr. Koch said. Students are permitted to apply two weeks into their last term, but may be missing a course that is by then too late to pick up.

8. Standard reports are not available to evaluate degree clearance actions which are affecting timely graduation rates.

Response: The Provost's Office is in agreement with the opportunities listed on page 11, and will work to implement these. We have already made an adjustment to the degree clearance for financial holds, where students owing money will be cleared for graduation, but not given transcripts or a final diploma until their debt has been paid.

This is a processing issue, Dr. Koch said; the process is not as efficient as it could be.

9. A centralized university-wide notes system does not exists for academic advisors.

Response: Such a notes system will be part of the ETS. Currently, the ETS Policy and Implementation Committees are surveying colleges to ascertain the specific needs for ETS, including a notes system.

This is moot.

10. Formal processes and reports are not in place to evaluate the impact of expanding degree and/or major requirements on graduation rates.

Response: The Senate Committee on Educational Policy (SCEP) is currently creating a new all-university curriculum committee that will start to monitor and evaluate degree requirements across campus. The Provost's Office is well aware of those majors with excessive degree requirements (e.g., over 120 credits needed to graduate) and is currently working on a comprehensive curricular analysis.

11. Limited automation and reports are available to support the evaluation of classes that may be affecting the timely graduation of students.

Response: With the target goal of 95% of undergraduate students completing the graduation Planner (see #2 above) more data will be available regarding what courses students intend to take in future semesters. Better information on course demand will improve scheduling efforts to meet the demand.

12. System design documentation is missing and knowledge of APAS and Graduation Planner works is splintered.

Response: This issue needs further study, and we are discussing this with Academic Support Resources (ASR).

The audit report provided detailed data, some of which the colleges were not happy about because they were not all accurate, Dr. McMaster noted. Dr. Koch said it can be difficult to figure out who the advisers are; there can be advisers of record, faculty members, advisers provided in other offices (e.g., honors, athletics), or advisers provided by the department. It is not an easy number to identify.

Dr. McMaster said that he and Provost Sullivan responded to the report and tried to address its points. They believe the issue of usage of the grad planner is legitimate and he has said the goal should be 95%. Some advisers may not like it but the University has spent millions of dollars on it and it does help students plan their academic careers. They have looked into why some are unhappy with it and how it does not work with some degrees. Students are educated at Welcome Week on using it. In some cases, Dr. Koch said, the major program is so lock-step that departments feel it is just easier to tell students what to take.

A number of issues will be solved by A+ , a very effective, robust, real-time system that provides information to advisers, Dr. McMaster said. The University used federal stimulus dollars to expand what was a CLA system to include the entire University.

Professor Ng asked whether the grad planner, APAS, and ECAS systems communicate with one another when information is updated. Sometimes students are reluctant to use the grad system because they are unsure if its database and that of APAS/ECAS are updated almost simultaneously so as not to have conflicting information. Ms. VanVoorhis said the grad planner works with both systems and is automatically updated.

This was a good report, Dr. McMaster said, and it is important they learn from its findings, but there were some problems that could have been addressed with more interaction with the colleges. But they did find the report helpful.

Professor Wambach asked what the long-term plan is for the continued evaluation of advising; how do they see the process unfolding in the future? This started as an advising audit, Dr. Koch responded, but the focus shifted to systems issues. They are still looking at ways to evaluate advising, which must be done through the colleges.

What about CAPE, Professor Wambach asked? It is doing well, Dr. Koch said, but the demand is overwhelming for the staff they have, and they need to target the students who can best use its services—students who are unhappy where they are educationally. They have developed an advising curriculum for the staff so they can work as coaches with the students; they are generalists. The staff are 30-50% in CAPE and the rest of their appointments are in the colleges. They are developing a course, one credit, that students must take to do the work necessary to make decisions and reflect on the information they will use.

Advising is remarkably complicated on this campus, Dr. McMaster commented. There are undergraduate advisors, then students shift to departments, and there are central units such as honors, the McNamara center, and CAPE, and ad hoc advising through career-counseling centers.

Professor Brothen thanked Drs. Koch and McMaster for the report.

<u>2. E-Education</u>

Professor Brothen welcomed Provost Sullivan to the meeting to discuss e-education and the effect of the budget model on teaching.

Provost Sullivan began with e-education. He recalled that the University invited a peer-review team last spring to review where things stand with e-education, what the University could do to increase the platforms and opportunities. Subsequent to the visit of the team, he hired one of its members, from the Sloan Foundation, to help with implementation of the recommendations of the peer-review team.

The peer-review-team members were chosen carefully: One came from Illinois, an expert on e-education and the person equivalent to the FCC chair (Illinois put $25 million into a grand e-education plan that failed), one from Penn State because it has a large and successful e-education program, and one from the Sloan Foundation, an expert on e-education, and the Executive Director of the Committee on Institutional Cooperation (the Big Ten plus Chicago plus Illinois at Chicago Circle), who is very knowledgeable on the subject.

The peer-review team found great enthusiasm and support for e-education and found significant pockets of expertise on the campus, especially in the Academic Health Center. There is also great expertise in the College of Continuing Education and at the Crookston campus. The team also advised that the technical tools and support are available but they are not coordinated a way that optimizes their use, Provost Sullivan said.

What must the University do to improve its efforts in e-education? Provost Sullivan enumerated the items: Develop clearer goals and a sharper direction, develop a common language across the University, address the duplication in systems (there is scope creep and competition where there should be cooperation), examine barriers that may exist (e.g., do the liberal-education requirements hinder e-education?), look at the budget model to determine if the right incentives are in place (e.g., there may need to be a different definition of headcount for the purposes of e-education), develop a broader understanding of copyright and intellectual-property issues across the institution (faculty knowledge here about these issues is not where it is at the universities represented by team members), and identify where there are incentives and rewards for faculty who engage in e-education.

The consultant's report suggested the University has the capacity for a first-class e-education program but its strengths are not optimized, the Provost reported, and there is a lot of faculty engagement but it is not widespread. There are impressive numbers for 2008-09: 20,000 students took web-based classes in 1500 courses. (By comparison, the University of California system has generated a lot of discussion about its proposal to put 25 courses online.) The University needs sharper and more focused strategies and a set of metrics to measure program consistency with the strategic goals, and it needs to strengthen communication and follow-up across the campus. Faculty development, support, and rewards also need attention.

He talked to the deans this week, the Provost related, and there appears to be agreement that there are strengths in the decentralized organization and structure of e-education; the faculty are leaders and have been successful. He would like to encourage and maintain that activity, and there is a need for shared services and infrastructure to encourage coordination and collaboration and to build in efficiencies. The follow-up will be to maintain and promote what the University has and develop a strategic focus.

What he would like to do, Provost Sullivan told the Committee, is appoint a group (10-12-15 people) composed mostly of senior faculty to advise on strategy and implementation. Someone must also facilitate and coordinate the work. It seems right that a body of faculty would take the two reports and plot the next stage.

Professor Siliciano asked how many of the 20,000 students were on-campus students and how many are students who never come to campus. Provost Sullivan said he did not have the data but believed that most are on-campus students. Dr. Brandt agreed and said that getting courses outside the University is challenging, so most of the Academic Health Center (AHC) offerings are hybrid courses that are part of the programs. Professor Tarone asked if there is a definition of "hybrid" outside the AHC; Dr. Brandt said there is a standard national definition. They have had discussion about using hybrid courses in the languages, Professor Tarone said, and they find them to be more time-consuming and expensive. Is the goal to save money or to ensure quality in delivery?

The latter, Provost Sullivan said. Many external constituents believe such courses are cheaper but there has been testimony to the legislature on the matter. MnSCU charges more for online courses; the University charges the same rate. The legislature was surprised at the upfront costs; legislators thought they were cheaper. The upfront costs are large in faculty time; perhaps those costs can be amortized over time, but the courses still need updating. These courses are costly and that fact needs to be communicated to constituents. Professor Tarone reported that one university she knows of awards more credit and salary to faculty who teach online because the courses take more time.

Professor Wambach observed that the Committee has talked for a couple of years about where online and hybrid courses should be focused. There are a lot of freshmen at the University who want to be in class and would perhaps take hybrid courses. Upper-division students could use online courses to help them finish their degrees. Are the colleges talking about that possibility? And Masters programs could consider online courses; niche programs can have more online courses and attract students from across the country.

Provost Sullivan said that Vice Provost Wahlstrom has identified a substantial number of students who were at the University six or more years and are within two courses of their degree but who are not here now. Her program is intended to reach those students online and help them finish. That will not help the University's four-year graduation rate but it is important that those students be helped. Courses for upper-division students who have moved away finish their degrees as well, Professor Wambach said.

Vice Provost McMaster observed that there are not a lot of 3XXX and 4XXX courses to help students get their degree. The focus has been on 1XXX courses such as in Chemistry and Psychology where there are bottlenecks. The Provost may need to talk to colleges about more advanced courses. The question is the goals and whether the strategy fits with the goals, Professor Wambach said.

They talked about these same issues at the AAU meetings, Provost Sullivan related (revenues, size and scope, and efficiencies). Almost everyone talked about new professional Masters programs because there is a sense that there is a demand not being met. They believe the University can serve that demand with web-based courses, something the AHC is already doing in part. There are also continuing professional education courses, Dr. Brandt said, courses they use for students and re-purpose for continuing education. The blue-ribbon committees in the colleges are talking about the optimality of professional Masters programs, the Provost said, in order to increase revenues and meet demand. The reports suggest the scale is large and there are larger markets that they can aspire to with the right incentives, goals, and strategies.

What is in it for the department to offer professional Masters programs when the revenues go to the college, Professor Brothen asked. That question is on the next Budget Model Advisory Committee agenda, Provost Sullivan said, beginning with the discussion of the 75/25 split in tuition. The budget-model peer-review team said the University should look at that question.

What can the faculty incentives be in an era of constrained budget, Ms. Phillips asked. Units lose support staff so faculty need to teach more courses to keep the revenues up. That is an important issue, Provost Sullivan said; faculty on the blue-ribbon committees have said there is excitement about the opportunities. The upfront costs have to be dealt with, as do strategy and capacity. There will have to be budgets to free up people to prepare online courses; then it will be up to the departments to create them. Ms. Phillips reported that her college just gave up its professional Masters program because they could not afford the cost-pool charges. They lost money on the program because of the cost-pool charges (most of the students were part-time). Provost Sullivan agreed that the present headcount definition is discouraging because part-time students are counted the same as full-time students; the Budget Model Advisory Committee is discussing that issue as well.

Professor Root asked if there are examples of universities that have cooperated to develop programs (e.g., such as veterinary programs). The biggest success in course-sharing is in the CIC, Provost Sullivan said, and there are about 300 such courses.

3. The Budget Model

Provost Sullivan turned next to the budget model. It has been in place for six or seven years now, he said, and there was a group of deans, faculty, and administrators (the Budget Model Advisory Committee) charged to design, promote, and implement it, and then deal with technical changes that needed addressing. It was not a policy group. This spring, he suggested to the President that the Budget Model Advisory Committee needed a significant change in function and goals. The President asked him to chair it; everything is now on the table for examination.

This summer they went through areas that needed change and discussed the underlying incentives. They have made significant progress and will be making additional changes soon in a number of areas.

-- Headcount: programs with a lot of part-time students, who do not generate full-time tuition revenues, have costs greater than revenues and cannot be sustained, especially the College in the Schools program. The Budget Model Advisory Committee set the headcount for the CIS at .5; should there be a different number also used for e-education?

-- They are looking at financial aid and how it is treated in the budget model. The financial aid costs are all in the student-services cost pool, which inflates the charges. They will take all financial aid and create a separate cost pool for it so there is complete transparency about the amount of money the University is spending on financial aid. There will also be conversations about whether the University can sustain the financial aid programs it has; these are important questions for the Board of Regents.

If there is a question about whether the University can sustain the programs, should there be a mechanism to pay for them? Should the costs be allocated through a single cost pool or should some of the money come "off the top"? That has not been decided. One argument is that if money is taken off the top, it is easy to forget about; if the costs are paid through the cost pool, there is more vigilance about growth, amount, and the common good.

-- Headcount includes faculty and staff, but the AHC has a lot of professors included who are not paid salaries by the University, so they are looking at whether there is a need for proportionality for those appointments.

-- They have looked at the sustainability of the presidential matching scholarships; they have been hugely successful, and the University matches donations, but it is also very costly. Can the program be sustained or should it be scaled back or stopped? Reducing or eliminating would have an effect on donor incentives.

-- They are looking at the cost of administering research awards.

-- They are looking at the 75/25 tuition-attribution model. The peer reviewers reported that all three of their institutions had changed the model they had initially adopted. Michigan started with 25/75 (the opposite of Minnesota's model), then flipped it to 75/25, decided that didn't work and now uses 50/50. The reviewers suggested the University look at the incentives and disincentives with the various models.

So that is how the Budget Model Advisory Committee has been charged, what its agenda is, and the timeline, the Provost concluded. He noted that it includes three faculty members, the current and two previous chairs of the Committee on Finance and Planning.

Professor Wambach predicted that if a 50/50 model is adopted, the freshman-admitting colleges will keep their own students in the large classes and ship off to other colleges students who need to take smaller classes that are more expensive. No matter what they do, people will try to make money on the system. The system drives behavior; they all do. Provost Sullivan agreed that there will be gaming. They are looking at the eleven underlying principles that drove the present budget model to see if they are right. They all looked about right, but the key is how they are working on the ground. They asked the peer-review team to look at two in particular with respect to incentives: the 75/25 tuition split and predictability. The Budget Model Advisory Committee is now looking at them.

Professor Siliciano asked if, as they try different formulae, they can model how they affect the colleges. Can they look at major requirements and courses required in and out of the college and model the effects of a formula? They can, Ms. Bardouche said. And can they look at courses and the proportions needed to stay afloat, Professor Wambach added, such as in biology and composition? If those courses only receive half the tuition revenue, can they work? Ms. Phillips said they would not necessarily have to look class by class; in the case of her college, it would receive more revenue because their students take many classes outside the college. The College of Science and Engineering, for example, however, might lose money. So they at least need to look at all the majors and see what the effect of a change in the formula might be, Professor Siliciano said.

Ms. Phillips asked if units would be better off with 75/25, or 50/50, or maybe 90/10. She was on this Committee when the budget model was adopted; the big question is whether the University is better off after tweaking the budget model than it was 15 years ago. Are there other universities that could be looked at? Provost Sullivan said that all the AAU schools use a formula-based system and are trying to create incentives. There are consequences and gaming; it is not clear that there is any perfect model. The question is how much the system encourages entrepreneurial colleges, Professor Brothen commented; the Provost agreed.

Professor Wambach asked if they had any idea about the extent to which the budget model has had an impact on the growth of financial-support staff in the colleges. Ms. Bardouche said the number should be about the same, although a different set of skills is required, and he did not believe the system had increased the workload. Provost Sullivan said he believes the colleges need a person to do strategic thinking about broader factors, not just someone doing the accounting. That would be helpful for the deans.

Professor Brothen thanked the Provost for joining the meeting at adjourned it at 3:30.

-- Gary Engstrand

University of Minnesota