

Minutes*

Senate Committee on Educational Policy
Thursday, September 30, 1993
2:30 - 4:30
Room 608 Campus Club

Present: Kenneth Heller (chair), Anita Cholewa, James Cotter, Megan Gunnar, Darwin Hendel, Robert Johnson, William Van Essendelft, Gayle Graham Yates

Absent: Daniel Boler, Craig Bursch, Sue Donaldson, Manuel Kaplan, Carla Phillips

Guests: Vice President Anne Hopkins

Others: None

[In these minutes: Teaching evaluation policy; strategic planning]

1. Report of the Chair

Professor Heller convened the meeting at 2:30 and welcomed Vice President Hopkins. Dr. Hopkins distributed and reviewed materials related to the implementation of the Senate policy on evaluation of teaching contributions. She told the Committee that she could not say enough good things about the people in Measurement Services, who have done outstanding work in the development of the materials needed. Several points were made in the discussion with Dr. Hopkins:

- There is no plan now to monitor implementation of the policy. Measurement Services, however, knows of EVERY class, so will know which ones there are no data for. They will not know WHY there are no data, however. Some units have their own evaluation programs, but consistent with Senate policy, Dr. Hopkins said she has conveyed to all colleges that they MUST use the instruments and follow the requirements of the Senate policy (although are certainly not precluded from continuing to use their own protocols as well).
- The policy, by its own provision, does not cover classes with more than two instructors-- but it does call for units to develop a means of evaluating such courses.
- Dr. Hopkins will share with the Committee the reports from Measurement Services on implementation.
- Dr. Hopkins surmised that the ORDER of the questions in the Senate policy is not of central importance. They will, however, be in the same order for all units to the extent they use the form provided by Measurement Services at no cost.

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- A mid-point has been added as an anchor; after much consultation, Dr. Hopkins said it became clear that having none was NOT acceptable from the standpoint of comparability of responses.
- It may be that the most meaningful use of the results of the evaluations will be in the promotion and tenure process--although that will take some time to ascertain. Any evaluation of the policy in the future, it was suggested, should try to identify whether or not it has had any impact on teaching--which may simply mean asking faculty members if it made a difference.
- There was concern that on some optional questions a 5-point scale is used while the Senate policy requires a 7-point scale. Dr. Hopkins explained that the optional form contains the questions that faculty most often prefer to use, and they have always been used with a 5-point scale.

It was agreed that SCEP, next year, should evaluate the use and implementation of the policy.

2. Strategic Planning

Professor Heller then asked Vice President Hopkins for a rundown on strategic planning.

The purpose of strategic planning, she began, is to ensure a high quality research university, which means strong undergraduate, graduate, professional, and research programs as well as strong outreach. If the University is doing things that do not accomplish that end, they should be changed. The research university must be defined and preserved, and the issue itself is on the table because these are not good times for higher education. Universities must be aggressive in dealing with the environment and in refining their missions.

Recent FCC minutes, involving discussion of the black box, make clear that there is a dilemma about what is put on the table. This is a direction, she said, and there is NOT a lot in the box--the details have NOT been filled in. She encouraged the Committee to think about objectives and what should be done to maintain a quality research university.

One Committee member expressed--on behalf of the Committee--confusion about what the clusters are--of whom they are made up, how they will be organized, and who will oversee them. Dr. Hopkins replied that there are not answers to all those questions because cluster planning is evolving. It became clear that if the planning process relied only on the colleges it would miss a lot because there is much that is cross-college, so the clusters were developed. They do NOT represent a massive reorganization of the University but are rather an attempt to group individuals with common intellectual interests so they could converse. The clusters are not immutable; they will be tried for awhile to see if something useful comes from them. Clusters will probably be most useful in identifying, over time, opportunities for intellectual collaboration; they will not be the budget planning units.

Dr. Hopkins reviewed the list of clusters and told the Committee that each is assigned to a vice president; many are assigned to several vice presidents. Questions to each of the clusters will be agreed

upon centrally and then the relevant deans will be charged to ensure that cluster planning takes place. Faculty will be the primary participants in cluster planning although the organizational structures through which this will be accomplished will vary by cluster.

It has, she acknowledged, taken a long time to get agreement on the purpose of the clusters--but that is now much clearer and the questions to the clusters should be ready soon.

Dr. Hopkins told the Committee that the clusters will NOT be expected to assess units, contrary to what was originally thought. The clusters are intended to be intellectual conversations; they also need to identify opportunities for collaboration and program improvement. It is difficult to imagine how clusters could assess units; that must occur through the budgetary units (the colleges)--and no one wants the clusters to become budgetary units. Most colleges have been engaged in unit assessment for the last year or more, she said, and in planning where they are going; it will not be difficult to convert that planning into budgetary questions.

Is it still the plan to also look at research, outreach, University College, undergraduate education, etc., across the campus? Dr. Hopkins said it is. Special task forces are or will be looking at these issues. Faculty are strongly encouraged to offer comments about the organization of the process and/or substantive directions the University should pursue.

One Committee member said one can understand how clusters help with degree programs and training, but one can be concerned if they will help identify potential areas of research collaboration. Dr. Hopkins said clusters could be quite useful in that regard. It is, however, important to break down college barriers to research--are there plans to do so? At Pittsburgh, for example, there are NO walls in setting up research grants. Dr. Hopkins replied that she believed that we need to work very hard to ensure such collaborations and to remove any barriers. The clusters should help.

One Committee member expressed disappointment that the clusters would not be used for sorting reorganization of the University. Dr. Hopkins affirmed that they are for intellectual exchanges among people who do similar things. Where those discussions go will be up to the clusters. The structuring of the clusters may change over time, and it is to be hoped that they reflect configurations that support use and productive faculty exchange. It is possible that potential reorganizations might emerge from such cluster conversations.

Asked how those intellectual conversations will be translated into budget cuts, Dr. Hopkins said that it has not been decided how to feed the results of these conversations into the budget process. It is likely that the cluster reports will be to the dean(s) and/or the vice president(s) in charge of the cluster. Collegiate units will be asked to set priorities for future goals and opportunities as well as reductions or other changes. To the extent a dean finds the cluster plans useful the plans may be incorporated in the unit budget recommendations; where there is an overlap in units, the integration may occur at the vice presidential level. If there's a good idea in the cluster plan--the University should have a center to study X/Y/Z--then the University will have to identify a means to try to accomplish it. The idea, with a steady budget, is to look for ways to change through reallocation.

It is important that the governance committees have a voice in the organizational plan. It appears that the cluster discussions will be more informal than the committees and task forces already or to be

appointed and involved in the planning process, said one Committee member; one can be concerned that reorganization discussions will occur outside the governance system. the major intended reorganization is University College, Dr. Hopkins said. Reorganization of the University is not driving cluster planning. If the Committee wants to say something about the process, it should feel free to do so.

It is not easy to understand, commented one Committee member, where the administration and faculty governance are putting their energy--it isn't easy to grasp the object of this effort. Dr. Hopkins agreed that it is hard to keep one's eye on the objectives, which are to have a high quality research university and better serve the community. If the University is not doing what it needs to in order to achieve that objective, the Committee should say so.

Asked what the Faculty Senate and Board of Regents will vote on, Dr. Hopkins affirmed that it will be an IDEA. The President will add details in his State of the University address, and there is some detail in the second strategic planning newsletter. The draft materials intended for the Board will be available in mid- to late October, Dr. Hopkins thought, and they will be very general--but probably with some more detail than now. The draft will be shaped by the current conversations.

The Committee has been charged by FCC to develop questions or statements for the Faculty Forum on October 21. These questions and the forum could have an effect on what is presented to the Board of Regents. Dr. Hopkins suggested the questions could focus on moving to/remaining a high quality research university. The President has indicated that if the clusters work for the long-term, organizational changes could emerge (but that possibility should not distract from the intellectual discussions). She has, she said, no agenda on reorganization, and if everyone appeared to want a change it could emerge.

Professor Heller reviewed the goals contained in the second strategic planning newsletter and reiterated that they are just that, goals, and the Committee should not worry about specific structures. Goals are not value free, it was said, and they must be examined for reasonableness within the context of constant resources. The four goals, moreover, are not given priorities, in the President's view, because there is not enough money to do all of them fully; if there were priorities, #1 could use up all the money. So all must be considered.

One Committee member expressed support for the use of clusters as a way to gain perspective on what the University is doing--while colleges must be the budget units. Is it envisioned that the clusters would continue? (Possibly, it was said.) They can provide a useful source of advice for deans and central administration. Dr. Hopkins said the clusters would not be dissolved after a year if they turn out to work; they might be reconfigured based on their usefulness.

The goals of the plan are admirable, it was said, but the measures proposed are open to question. By using comparisons with AAU institutions--which are research universities--to evaluate and strengthen programs, the University is using research measures. Will the University then teach (the strengthened research units) how to teach or will it strengthen units that teach undergraduates? One suspects the former.

The issues between the research university and University College need to be better defined; University College cannot be permitted to detract from the research university but must instead enhance it. One then asks how to strengthen units that are performing all their missions well--which they must do

and the University should not accept less. It is important to think about how to respond to the community.

This plan sounds better now than the original slides presented to the Board of Regents, said one Committee member. People seem, however, to be getting caught up in turf wars rather than concentrating on where the University should go. Dr. Hopkins cautioned against trying to impute too many details to the plan--details that are not yet settled. It may be, said another Committee member, that those details can be settled by the process of governance participation in the discussions.

Dr. Hopkins then pointed out that there was NEVER a discussion of two separate universities--what would be in University College is open to debate, but a split in the University has never been proposed.

Professor Heller then recalled questions that had been raised by the student members of the Senate Consultative Committee, such as whether or not undergraduate students support graduate students through the tuition structure and the conditions under which graduate students will be educated vis-a-vis University College--will UC be run on the backs of graduate student instruction? Dr. Hopkins responded that roles and expectations in graduate training and use of graduate assistants are not as clear as they might be.

Graduate students are "brought up on a research diet"; would they be the right ones to teach in University College when its undergraduates are not tied into the research university? This, observed another Committee member, raises the question of the background of students doing the teaching and the training the University should provide. A number of units--more than in the past--do provide teacher training for their students, Dr. Hopkins reported. Some graduate students want to be primarily teachers, not researchers--and vice versa--and while all do research, some are hesitant about the research university. Those who want to emphasize teaching are left out. That is not intended, Dr. Hopkins responded--and there are important issues about TA training. Committee members continued to discuss the subject for some while, touching upon programs to educate graduate students to be good teachers, the careers of graduate students, and the role the clusters should play in thinking about education as well as research.

Dr. Hopkins then asked the Committee to consider, vis-a-vis University College in general and the partnership programs in particular, the question of how to ensure educational quality. What structures or mechanisms would best accomplish that? Normally departments develop curricula and have them reviewed by college faculty as well as having periodic external program reviews. How do we ensure improved quality control for degrees offered through University College as we currently do the Day School. For partnership programs, how does one create such a structure to ensure quality for collaborative programs in University College? Another question is whether or not one can do an English major in the evening and if so, how does one ensure it is as good as the Day School? In the case of the two existing partnership degrees, she told the Committee, an ad hoc group of Twin Cities faculty not involved in designing the curricula reviewed the degree proposals.

The University has relied on the hiring process to ensure quality, it was observed. Dr. Hopkins pointed out that there is no intention to hire faculty in University College. If graduate assistant and adjunct faculty are used, they will not see each other or be integrated into the University. All we do now, it was said, is pick faculty, and do not know of another method to ensure educational quality. There are

even fewer standards when it comes to TAs, said one Committee member, most of whom are here because they were deemed qualified to be students in the research program.

Dr. Hopkins said the faculty must carefully review the curricula for the new partnership degrees. If some faculty, some TAs, and some adjunct faculty are used, there must be interaction between them. Faculty need to help the administration by developing appropriate mechanisms to ensure high quality. There could either be one institutional set of procedures or the departments could establish them, said one Committee member, and concluded it may be time for an institutional procedure. Dr. Hopkins responded that the faculty control of program quality is essential; the faculty need to identify mechanisms to enable it to occur.

Some faculty are concerned about inloading, observed one Committee member; it would be useful if the University College issue focuses that discussion. Another Committee member reported hearing from colleagues that faculty fear what all this may mean. In part they worry that they will lose their jobs because the process will lead to doing things more cheaply. Part of the plan is to grow smaller and cheaper and some faculty may be threatened by a watering-down of what they do because community people without faculty qualifications will be hired to teach.

Dr. Hopkins said she thought that was the wrong view to take. There is an important question of cost with respect to University College, she agreed. But the idea is to serve the community better, not create a drain on the resources of the research university. She said she does not see this as a matter of faculty losing their jobs. We need to ensure program quality. TAs and adjunct faculty should be used as appropriate in particular programs subject to faculty quality assurance. Adjunct faculty, for example, are already used to great advantage in engineering to enrich the programs.

An important aspect of the proposal, Dr. Hopkins said, is that the research university will grow several thousand students smaller and University College larger without shifting significant resources to University College. One Committee member had gained the impression that the number of STUDENTS would go down but the number of credit hours would not. Dr. Hopkins said that was not the case; the hope is that the number of full-time-equivalent students on the Twin Cities campus would decline; one way to look at this is that it advantages the research university by sizing the number of students closer to faculty capacity. If there are 2000 fewer students in CLA and roughly the same resources, significant program improvement should be possible. The idea is a shift of some of the student FTEs whose needs could be better served from the Twin Cities to the University College. The student FTEs in University College would be expanded from the current evening school program base. This would likely occur primarily from offering more current Twin Cities degrees through this new delivery system and to a lesser extent by selected additional partnership degrees. Which degrees should be offered will require significant consultation regarding community need and willingness of faculty to offer such degrees.

It was noted that goal of making the campus more user-friendly is not without cost implications. Dr. Hopkins said that is the cheapest thing the University can do--there is much that would not cost a great deal of money. It may be, it was said, that much of the unfriendliness of people comes because they are overworked--many feel pressed and must budget their time and don't, as a result, welcome people at the door. This is not about reallocating funds or workload, Dr. Hopkins said; we all owe it to help one another and to value the contributions of all faculty and staff for their significant contributions to the quality of our enterprise.

Advising will be key, suggested one Committee member; it is important to have a responsible and responsive system of advising. One senses that some places do not do this well; there must be people who CARE about the student. Dr. Hopkins concurred that getting students on track can be helped by advisors. Working 150% time makes people cranky, pointed out one Committee member; peer advising is a great mechanism that should be used. Dr. Hopkins noted that nature and means of conducting advising varies greatly by unit; in units with a reasonable number of students, the faculty do it, but when there are huge numbers of students, faculty are not doing the advising--and they COULD not do it. The question then is how to do it. Yet a typical student complaint, observed another Committee member, is that they want but cannot obtain advising from a professor. And there is some advising that the faculty cannot do that peers can, it was also pointed out.

Student records are being computerized, Dr. Hopkins told the Committee; students can now review their transcripts electronically. In a year or two she hopes reports indicating what has been taken and what they need to take to complete their degree will be provided to every student every quarter and to advisors as well. Students can then get different kind of help on what is GOOD to take, careers, etc.

Dr. Hopkins then informed the Committee that she annually provides to the Board of Regents a report on the Undergraduate Initiative begun a few years ago. One question for planning is suggestions on how to plan for undergraduate education on the Twin Cities campus in the future. To do so, it will be necessary to know what the University College will look like, which will depend on part-time/full-time status, and ability levels. Dr. Hopkins solicited the views of the Committee on planning for undergraduate education. First the Committee needs to be informed about the Undergraduate Initiative, it was said--and user-friendliness is interwoven with the undergraduate experience. Many of the things broken in undergraduate education, Dr. Hopkins said, are non-educational. In some areas there have been radical changes (such as in admissions), the results from which should be seen soon. Committee members agreed that much that needs fixing is non-teaching. (Conversation turned to classrooms--the difficulty in changing them and the difficulty in improving them, and the fact that so little support has been given to those in charge of classrooms.) Generally, Dr. Hopkins said, it is not fair to throw problems at people and expect them to make the University more responsive to student needs without also providing them the resources to make changes.

Discussion turned to the emphasis in planning on the research university versus undergraduate instruction. They do not have the same problems, Dr. Hopkins averred; the University is a fine research university while the undergraduate student experience needs improvement. She agreed that the problem is NOT the objective evidence about the education students receive but rather the undergraduate EXPERIENCE--that evidence indicates students are dissatisfied about what they receive.

The Committee should spell out what it thinks--what the faculty think--the University should do to strengthen undergraduate education, said one Committee member. Another noted that it will need to distinguish between undergraduate EDUCATION and the undergraduate EXPERIENCE; students must tell the Committee what is important. There is evidence available on that point, Dr. Hopkins commented. One must not place too much emphasis on all the numbers--graduation rates in five years, etc.--because Minnesota is not Michigan. It was agreed that there would be further discussion with Dr. Hopkins on planning for improving the undergraduate experience at a later meeting of the Committee.

Two of the campuses visited earlier in the planning process (UCLA, Washington) are very similar to the Twin Cities campus (minus the land-grant role), Dr. Hopkins observed. What an institution educating students does is symbolized by the degree. It is not a collection of courses, but it is a curriculum designed for students to do in four or five years. The University cannot ignore the political reality because it is being judged by state leaders on its graduation rates. One question is whether or not the University sets high expectations and then pushes students to achieve them; there is evidence that it does not. One example has to do with "Incompletes," observed one Committee member--at the institution he attended, getting an I was inconceivable while here it is the norm. One cannot paint all students with a single brush, cautioned Dr. Hopkins; the University should set high expectations and then stretch students. If they are ignored, then the University delivers the message that expectations don't matter.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:30.

-- Gary Engstrand

University of Minnesota