

Minutes *

**Senate Consultative Committee
Thursday, February 5, 1998
2:30 - 4:00
Room 238 Morrill Hall**

Present: Matthew Tirrell (chair pro tem), Kent Bales, Jesse Berglund, Carole Bland, Gary Gardner, Virginia Gray, David Hamilton, Russell Hobbie, M. Janice Hogan, Eddie Kalombo, Laura Coffin Koch, Michael Korth, Leonard Kuhi, Jason Mattson, Amy Mertl, Fred Morrison, Kevin Nicholson, Deanne Nordberg, Martin O'Hely, Harvey Peterson, Laura Taken

Absent: Heather Aagesen, Victor Bloomfield, Gary Davis, Mary Dempsey, Ryan Falk

Guests: Professor Carol Chomsky (Law School), Julie Sweitzer (Acting Director, EEO/AA)

Others: Martha Kvanbeck (University Senate), Maureen Smith (University Relations)

[In these minutes: Teaching evaluation questions for the Senate; nepotism/consensual romantic and sexual relationships policy; resolution on cost-benefit analysis of policies and procedures; changes in grading policy; Twin Cities campus class periods]

1. Evaluation of Teaching

Professor Tirrell convened the meeting at 2:30 and turned to Professor Koch to lead the discussion of evaluation of teaching.

Professor Koch reviewed the events that led to the development of the 10 questions before the Committee. A SCEP subcommittee, chaired by Dr. Darwin Hendel, drafted the questions following Senate action last spring authorizing development of a survey instrument. The questions would be included on every evaluation form and released to students, in a form not yet determined, upon written consent of the instructor. Students were give 20 or 25 questions to review, and these 10 were identified as the most useful.

Mr. Nicholson emphasized that no faculty member would be obligated to release the results, but that it was important for the data to be collected and tabulated so that faculty could review them and decide if they should be released.

Professor Hamilton made the point that these questions were inappropriate for the Medical School, and would be confusing to students. Mr. Nicholson emphasized that the results would not have to be released.

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Professor Gray inquired about the possibility of mandating them only for undergraduate courses; the graduate students in her department refuse to fill out evaluations. Moreover, the questions do not fit well with graduate education, conducted primarily in seminars; these should not apply to graduate and professional programs.

Mr. Nicholson said graduate students had been involved in the effort, but Mr. O'Hely, a graduate student, said it was not necessary for graduate programs to have these questions, because the student populations are small and there are a lot of other opportunities to exchange information. Mr. Nicholson noted again that a faculty member would not have to release the information.

Professor Koch noted a potential problem with probationary faculty, who could feel pressures from faculty and administrators to release the results, and the process could be detrimental to faculty who are developing their teaching skills. In the case of the question about high standards, the faculty view about results could be different from the view of students. Mr. Nicholson inquired about the status of the results from the mandated questions (those are available for personnel decisions); he said that when the tenure decision is made, one would hope the views of students are taken into account.

If the intent is to give information to students so they can make choices among classes, what about the case where students have no choice, Professor Hamilton asked, as is the case with Medical School students. Asked what use is made of the results, he said they are used in the tenure decision and to provide student views on the instructor. Mr. Nicholson said that if the situation is different in the Medical School, the results would not have to be released.

Mr. O'Hely commented that in a school this size, it is difficult for undergraduates to obtain information, but that is not true at the graduate level. Professor Gray then moved to amend the proposal to make it applicable only to undergraduate courses.

Professor Hamilton said that if the principle to be established is that faculty should be evaluated, and that under certain circumstances the evaluations should be made available, the mechanism is less important. If the mechanism does not fit all circumstances, it should be modified so that it still carries out the principle. They do so in the Medical School, and they will resist questions that are not applicable to the courses they teach.

Professor Gardner asked if the students saw this as a guide to selecting courses or to improving teaching; Mr. Nicholson responded that the questions were intended primarily as a guide to choosing courses. If they help teaching, that is an additional benefit. Ms. Taken said she did not expect faculty to be improving, but to be able to teach, and the questions are intended purely to match student learning style with faculty teaching style. Professor Gardner said he would like to see a way to assess student opinions on the value of a course two years after they graduate; they often cannot do so on the day of the final exam.

Professor Kuhl agreed that undergraduates are the students with the greatest need for information; graduate and professional students have a closer relationship with the faculty, and they also have less choice in their courses. Mr. Berglund asked if SCEP might be directed to develop a different method of assessing graduate and professional instruction; Professor Koch said it could do so. Professor Gray suggested that every graduate and professional program be directed to have a mechanism to provide

information to its students.

Mr. Nicholson expressed surprise that this issue was being brought up at this late date, and said he had assumed graduate students supported the proposal and wanted access to evaluations of faculty. He said he was obligated to speak for all students, and was uneasy at this proposed change at the last hour. While the proposal might not fit all programs equally well, it could fit others, and there was no need to exclude some when faculty have the option not to release the data.

Professor Gray and other faculty members pointed out that they had never realized, until this meeting, that the questions and release of data would apply to anything other than undergraduate education, and that this Committee has not discussed this issue since last spring, so it was not an eleventh hour suggestion. Professor Gray moved, however, to change her amendment to provide that graduate and professional programs be permitted to apply to SCEP for authority to use different mechanisms of assessing instruction.

The Committee unanimously approved Professor Gray's amendment and placement of the item on the Senate docket.

2. Nepotism and Consensual Romantic or Sexual Relationships Policy

Professor Tirrell next welcomed Professor Chomsky and Ms. Sweitzer to discuss the revised nepotism/relationships policy. Ms. Sweitzer explained that the policy had been amended in response to questions from FCC, but that there had not been substantive changes, and that they were now consulting on the changes. It is intended that the policy be brought to the Senate for action, along with the (separate) policy on sexual harassment, which was approved by the Senate last year (but which also have some changes in it).

Professor Chomsky then highlighted briefly the changes that had been made, and the Committee then had a discussion with her and with Ms. Sweitzer over the issue of how responsible administrators would know of arrangements that might be made under the provisions of the policy. Professor Chomsky assured the Committee that anyone who had to know of such arrangements WOULD know, but the policy does not stipulate particular individuals. Following agreement on a slight amendment that would satisfy the concern, the Committee unanimously approved the policy for the Senate docket (for information).

Professor Tirrell thanked Professor Chomsky and Ms. Sweitzer for joining the Committee.

3. Constitution and Bylaw Changes

Professor Tirrell next explained to the student members of the Committee the constitutional and bylaw amendments that have been prepared in response to recommendations from the Task Force on Faculty Consultation. The intent of the changes is to remove reference to the provostal faculty consultative committees from the documents, reflecting the change in the structure of the central administration. These are not controversial changes, he assured the Committee.

4. Senate Research Committee Resolution

Professor Kuhl then explained to the Committee the resolution that his committee had approved, and that FCC had recommended making a resolution for Senate adoption.

Apropos the call for a cost-benefit analysis of policies, Ms. Mertil suggested that in some cases, such as the treatment of human and animal subjects, there is a moral issue involved, not merely costs. Professor Kuhl agreed, and said that moral questions turn into procedural matters, which become more complicated, and then increase costs to the institution. The concern is not about what is morally required, but about when regulations go beyond what is reasonable; he suggested that language on this point could be added to the resolution. With that, the Committee voted unanimously to place the resolution on the docket of the Senate.

5. Grading Policy Changes; Twin Cities Class Periods

Professor Koch next introduced two matters related to the grading policy. One, the change approved by this Committee at its December meeting and now requiring presentation to the Senate for information (and reversal, if it wished), provides that the I does not revert automatically to an S or an N for graduate and professional students, but rather stays on the transcript as an I until changed by the instructor or department.

The other change arose as a result of SCEP review of policies and practices across the Twin Cities campus in an effort to make them as uniform as possible. She told the Committee that there are a number of inconsistencies with respect to the S and the C/C-, when a D is acceptable, and so on. After considerable discussion, SCEP voted to recommend changing the policy so that the S will be set equal to the C-, rather than the C (the present policy).

SCEP has also been considering the issue of staggered classes on the three Twin Cities campuses. A subcommittee looked at a large number of options (including Saturday classes, different times for the East Bank, West Bank, and St. Paul, time between classes) and also walked across the campuses and rode buses to test the various possibilities. Originally the subcommittee recommended one starting time for the East Bank and another starting time for the West Bank and St. Paul (the same for both); SCEP, however, rejected that recommendation and called for a uniform start time for the East and West Bank.

A proposed schedule will be presented to the Assembly in February for information and discussion; it calls for Minneapolis campus classes to begin at 7:45 and for St. Paul classes to begin at 8:15; this will permit all campuses to have the same number of class periods in the day without running too late.

Professor Koch expressed surprise at the lack of opposition she had encountered to the proposed 7:45 start time for Minneapolis. The reason for the earlier start on Minneapolis (as opposed to St. Paul) is that more students start from Minneapolis, that it is more of the transportation hub. Professor Morrison inquired why classes could not start at 8:00 and 8:30; Professor Koch said that the St. Paul campus then loses a class period. Professor Morrison responded that the 7:45 class hour would be lost anyway. The 8:00 start time is something people are used to; it will be difficult, he surmised, to get faculty or students to come to classes before then. Professor Koch said she shared that concern, but that no one with whom SCEP and others have consulted have seen it as a problem.

Ms. Taken commented that students would NOT like 7:45, and that they only take 8:00 classes if they must.

With no further discussion, the Committee unanimously approved the agendas for the Senate and Twin Cities Campus Assembly; Professor Tirrell then adjourned the meeting at 3:50.

-- Gary Engstrand

University of Minnesota