

Minutes

Senate Consultative Committee November 1, 1990

Present: Warren Ibele (chair), W. Andrew Collins, Thomas Clayton, Amos Deinard, Paul Holm, Norman Kerr, K. Darby Laing, Tim Morse, J. Bruce Overmier, Burton Shapiro, Melissa Simpson, Charlotte Striebel, James Swick, Tina Tidrick, Shawn Towle, James VanAlstine, Christine VeLure, Shirley Zimmerman

Guests: Martin Conroy, Geoff Gorvin (Footnote), President Nils Hasselmo, John Howe (chair, Task Force on Liberal Education), Ken Janzen (Regents' Office), Peggy Mahoney (Daily), June Nobbe (SODC), Maureen Smith (Brief), David Snyder (chair, Student Senate)

1. Reports of the Chairs

Senate Committee on Finance and Planning Professor Shapiro reported that the last meeting of SCFP had been devoted to a discussion of the new financial management systems (CUFS). The subject is an extremely complicated one. There is a clear need for an improvement in the University's systems; the question is whether or not the University will be any better off once they are in place. The discussion will continue.

Roger Paschke has provided him figures, Professor Shapiro next reported, on the administrative costs of the University Foundation; they are, by comparison similar institutions, very low.

Professor Shapiro provided a brief overview of upcoming agenda items for the Finance Committee.

Finally, he reported that he had attended a meeting to discuss the Graduate School tuition changes. It is the ruling of the Financial Aid Office that a graduate student must be registered for course work or thesis credits in order to qualify for loan deferment; the Graduate School maintains it had no responsibility for the decision. The Financial Aid Office asserts that it made the change because of federal audit findings and the fact that Wayne State has already been assessed a \$34 million penalty--but the audit document apparently makes no mention of the need for such a change. Why the change was made is unclear, Professor Shapiro concluded, so he has recommended that the graduate students go to Vice President Hughes, to whom the Financial Aid Office reports. Another problem is the supposed lack of accountability associated with registration forms certifying that a graduate student is making progress on a degree--but involving no tuition or credit. While the change will generate no additional revenue for the Graduate School, there will be transitional problems for some graduate students. Professor Ibele urged that the students stay in touch with the Graduate School.

Student Senate Consultative Committee Mr. Towle distributed two items calling for changes in the Senate constitution and by-laws; one concerned the responsibility of the chair of the Student Senate for representing the view of students to organizations outside the University and the other was an attendance rule for the Student Senate Consultative Committee. On the latter, it was suggested that Mr. Towle ask the Senate Parliamentarian if the SSCC could adopt its own attendance policy without recourse to SCC and the Senate. In the alternative, formal amending language should be presented which would effect the change, if necessary.

After brief discussion it was agreed to defer these items to a later meeting of the Committee.

Professor Ibele asked that the remainder of the report be provided after the discussion with Professor Howe.

2. Discussion with Professor John Howe, Chair, Task Force on Liberal Education

Professor Ibele then welcomed Professor Howe to the meeting and recalled the circumstances under which the Task Force had been jointly appointed by the Committee and Senior Vice President Kuhi.

Professor Howe thanked the Committee for giving him the time to make a progress report and began his comments by recalling the circumstances of the appointment of the Task Force and its schedule (which anticipates a draft report for circulation to the University community by the beginning of Winter Quarter). The Task Force began by reviewing the literature on liberal education and the applicable University documents; it also solicited reports from other institutions similar to Minnesota. The agenda of the Task Force is important, he concluded, in part because the University has not conducted such a review for over 20 years--and much has changed in the intervening period. The actions taken as a result of the report, he observed, will affect every undergraduate who attends the University.

Even though substantive discussion will occur primarily during Winter Quarter, Professor Howe reported, he and members of the Task Force have been consulting widely on how the work is progressing. Recently the Task Force has turned its attention as well to the results of the survey of the Twin Cities faculty (the returns from which were higher from the undergraduate colleges and lower from the professional schools); Professor Howe briefly reviewed the preliminary results from the survey. Generally there appears to be widespread faculty interest and support for the activities of the Task Force.

The work of the Task Force, he told the Committee, is being developed for this university at this time in its history; the Task Force is also bearing in mind the institutional restraints which exist. The recommendations must be appropriate for all of the undergraduate colleges on the Twin Cities campus and will not envision the setting of a Carleton or a community college. The Task Force will attempt to do a rough "costing out" of its recommendations, including the human costs. While aware of the fiscal situation of the University, the Task Force will formulate a set of recommendations it believes appropriate and important but recognizes that the demands on resources will have to be balanced against other University needs and priorities.

Assuming that a set of recommendations is debated and agreement is reached, there will necessarily follow an implementation period. Significant change at an institution such as this one is always difficult; for this agenda to be moved forward there will be a need for leadership on the part of the administration, the deans, and the faculty.

In response to a question, Professor Howe noted that interaction with the Duluth and Morris campuses is being effected by ex-officio membership on the Task Force although the work of the Task Force applies only to the Twin Cities campus. As far as consultation with students goes, he said,

arrangements are being made for Task Force members to meet with various student groups in the colleges and with MSA.

Professor Howe was asked about the tension between breadth and depth; is the Task Force dealing primarily with changing the distribution of requirements and putting more constraints on the courses that can be chosen or is it actually thinking about increasing the requirements? The major, it was observed, is not the only vehicle for achieving depth in study; there are also other skill requirements--might requirements in this area be increased?

Professor Howe said the Task Force is considering the possibility of increased skills requirements. He also said it is considering a distribution scheme which is organized by familiar categories (social sciences, physical sciences, and so on) which are suitable for a research university. The recommendations will, however, likely call not for a core curriculum but for courses to be developed to meet the purposes of general education, courses designed to further a set of educational outcomes and objectives which will be specified. It is probable that this curriculum will be overseen by some kind of Council on Liberal Education. The number of courses or credits which would be required of students is still being argued about. The Task Force will, in any event, try to make the general education experience more meaningful and more understandable so it is comprehensible to students.

Another issue is whether or not to increase the percent of the student's time--the number of credits--devoted to general education; the Task Force is not of one mind on this question. Yet another facet of general education is the extent to which the University can ask all students to sample the various fields, given the huge increase in knowledge and subfields within disciplines, without an increase in the number of required credits; would it, for example, be more reasonable to require a moderate amount of work in perhaps three fields. The Task Force is discussing these options vigorously.

Asked about future consultation, Professor Howe said the Task Force envisions releasing a draft report for discussion; after that discussion it will issue a final report. Presumably the recommendations would go to the Campus Assembly for action.

It was suggested to Professor Howe that the Task Force should not consider requiring more than the 180 credits now needed for a degree, that consideration should be given to the fact that the 15-credit load is not the norm, and that it was a cause for concern that there were only two students on the Task Force, one of whom is a graduate student. Professor Howe reported that the Task Force, last Spring, repeatedly contacted 4-5 undergraduate students about the meetings; only one attended.

One Committee member asked that the draft report, in addition to being provided to the University community, be specifically presented to SCEP with the request that they review it and provide comments to the Consultative Committee.

A point was made about the increasing numbers of transfer students, and the responsibility of the Task Force to take into account the needs of those students; another Committee member argued, however, that the University should set what it believes to be the appropriate standards and thereby exercise some leadership in the state in setting degree requirements. The community colleges might,

as a result, strengthen their own offerings if needed. The Task Force should consider the entire higher education system of the State, not just the University. Professor Howe agreed that the question of transfer students is a large one that will have to be addressed; the Task Force is keeping it in mind while working, in the first instance, on a set of outcomes requirements and a program for the entire undergraduate career. Should the University, he asked, accept the definitions of breadth adopted by other institutions? Not automatically, he said. But how work at other institutions feeds into the University's breadth requirements must be examined.

When the work of transfer students is reviewed, another Committee member contended, it should go beyond the "will this course substitute for that course" approach; rather there must be a consideration of all of work completed at the community college. Professor Howe responded that the general education curriculum, if it comes to be, will be a distinctive experience which will not be duplicated at other institutions; he agreed that it will be necessary to step back from the specifics and look at the larger equivalencies. It will be a different experience for transfer students.

Professor Howe was asked about the degree to which the Task Force has considered the increasing number of upper division students and the concomitant need to introduce coherency at a higher level than in the first two years? If that balance between lower and upper division students shifts, Professor Howe observed, it will then become possible to provide more to the lower division students--because there will be fewer of them. It is also likely, he said, that the Task Force will call for students to address breadth requirements throughout their undergraduate years, not just during the first two years.

Professor Ibele thanked Professor Howe for his report.

3. Report of the Chairs, continued

Mr. Towle pointed out, vis-a-vis the two resolutions to be taken up later, that SSCC must come to SCC and then the Senate for any changes to the Student Senate constitution; this procedure, he urged, should be examined and changed.

Mr. Towle then reported that the dispute over representation on the Committee between MSA and the graduate and professional students (GAPSA) has been settled for the next two years; GAPSA will have two seats during 1990-91 and one seat during 1991-92. Other questions remain unresolved.

SSCC asks that, in conjunction with the faculty, a task force be appointed to examine student-faculty involvement in decision-making at the University and to find ways to make participation more effective (on such subjects as the biennial request, unit decisions to cut programs, and so on). Other Committee members, primarily faculty, argued that the SCC is the appropriate body to take up that review; others expressed distaste for another task force (although perhaps a meeting of SCC set aside for this issue might be useful). Another Committee member suggested that a related issue is the redundancy between faculty/student and administrative groups examining the same issue--which should be avoided if possible. Timeliness of the consultation, it was also pointed out, may be the real issue, rather than consultation per se.

Mr. Towle said that the students may just feel more distant from the decision-making process

than the faculty (although several faculty member expressed doubt on that score). The students, as a result, are pleading for a better mechanism for participation. Other student members concurred. It was also said that students may feel that something is awry but don't know how to phrase the question to obtain an answer--because they haven't the necessary experience with the institution.

One Committee member reflected that this feeling of distance from the decision-making is inevitable in large institutions and that no matter what changes are made, a large segment of the community will not believe themselves part of the process because they have not personally been consulted with. There is no ready cure for this problem.

It was suggested that part of each meeting be devoted to this issue in connection with a specific matter with a view to improving generally the system that is in place.

In response to the request for a task force, another Committee member observed that "when task forces are appointed--not always, but sometimes--task forces are told to go and tell the appointing body what it was that the appointing body should have told the task force in the first place, which, if it had known, wouldn't have needed a task force to do it. And then the task force sets about trying to figure out what they ought to do--and discover six months later that they haven't a clue, and neither has anybody else, and they don't any longer remember why it was appointed in the first place and they wish it hadn't been. This is a serious matter. It is called 'the Minnesota Plan.'" Following the eruption of laughter, it was concluded that providing space on each agenda was the desirable alternative.

The question was posed about the derivation of the authority of the administration; the response was that all authority in the University comes from the legislature to the Board of Regents to the administration to the governance system--from the top down. Certain responsibilities are delegated; in other cases advice will be sought--which advice can be accepted or rejected. Constitutionally the Board of Regents has plenary authority.

Mr. Towle next asked of the Committee what number of students were required for the ad hoc committee on academic freedom and what the charge to the committee would be.

Finally, he reported, the SSCC discussed revival of the provision of counseling on the [military] draft; they believe there is the possibility of war and the draft may be re-instituted. The possibility of volunteers providing this counseling was raised.

One additional query had to do with reports received by members of the Committee: What is to be done with them? Are students expected to be prepared to comment on them during SCC meetings or are they simply provided for information? Professor Ibele said it was both; if related to an agenda item, they are background materials. In other instances they are provided for information about the affairs of the University.

4. Discussion with President Hasselmo

Professor Ibele next welcomed the President to the meeting.

The President turned the discussion to the process of reallocation, the process which defines in

greater detail the priorities of the University. There is considerable continuity in the process, he said; it flows from the planning effort of the last 15 years and is reinforced by the resolution adopted by the Board of Regents last June (where the Board urged a more vigorous program of reallocation within the University in order to ensure resources are used in a way most beneficial to the mission of the institution). Reliance upon reallocation is further reinforced by the directions from the Finance Department of the State, which told institutions to request no additional funding for the next biennium and to justify the uses of the existing funds.

The University remains optimistic it will be able to obtain some additional funds--but the ability to do so will hinge on the demonstration that the current resources are being used effectively.

A number of difficult issues will be placed on the table, the President said. A statement has been sent to chancellors, deans, and directors concerning the reallocation process which is now underway; the process, he emphasized, has a very positive objective, which is to use the resources more effectively and to put them in programs at the heart of the University's mission--whether in teaching, research, or outreach.

The negative side is that lower priorities will have to be identified--activities where other higher education systems or agencies will have to take over the responsibilities or which will have to be left undone if resources are going to be moved into units which are "grossly underfunded and overextended at this particular time and which are essential to the mission of the University." These hard decisions will have to be made.

The first report on the options for programmatic change are due on December 15; after that there will be a "good deal of give and take between central administration and the various units." After institution-wide consultation, including with the Committee, by late February or March the review of the options will be completed; discussion will then be had with the Board of Regents. By late Spring specific 1991-92 budget recommendations will be presented to the Board.

At that point more will be known about what the legislature will do and general directions for the next five years can be laid out. It is over the next five years that the changes are to be made; about \$50 million will be reallocated (about 10% of the core taxpayer-funded portion of the University).

The five-year period is necessary because many of the programmatic changes will require time to implement, the President said--because contractual obligations will be honored.

The pattern which will be followed for resources will be based on the Academic Priorities document; he suggested that Committee members refresh their memories about its provisions. The changes proposed in Academic Priorities are not carved in stone but are the basis for the plans; if changes are to be made they will be made on the basis of deliberate decision to do so. Refinements and additions will be needed, he said, but the process is based on existing plans as they have been promulgated over the past several years and approved by the Board of Regents.

The President stressed again that contractual obligations will be honored--because if the process is to be of benefit, and is to truly identify priorities and make the University more effective in providing education and fulfilling its mission in research and outreach, then the entire University

community must be engaged in the process. Central administration cannot dictate what will be done. It will be an open process--and one that will be surrounded by some controversy because as soon as a question about a program is raised there will be conflict because of different perspectives on what should be done. Some of the constituencies which the University serves will be adversely affected. The President concluded that he could see no other way to conduct the process and said he would need the support of the entire University community to make the effort a constructive one.

The issue of the Waseca campus is not a new one; the question of whether some of the two-year programs are an appropriate part of the University's mission has been raised a number of times over the years, including at the legislature. President Hasselmo told the Committee he has defended the viability of the programs many times, in valid terms, but the resource constraints have become tighter and the question of the viability of certain programs has been more compellingly forced upon the University recently.

In the case of Waseca, the program has been increasingly expensive--which leads one to ask if it is the best use of resources. No decision has been made, he affirmed; difficult questions have been raised and he has promised the Waseca campus that every avenue will be explored to make it a viable unit. As things now stand, however, it is not. There is programmatic overlap with other institutions and enrollment is below what it must be. Exploration of the possibilities will continue up to December 15, including continuing the present program, with better marketing, if that is deemed appropriate. Changing the program to make it more attractive and useful to students will also be considered. Any other possibilities will also be considered. But the possibility that no solution will be found is real and it may be necessary to phase out the campus (within the general guidelines of meeting contractual obligations, etc.). A consultant will be engaged to help the Waseca community to ensure that no stone is left unturned in the search for options.

The President reaffirmed, in response to a question, that faculty tenure is with the University, not with a specific program.

A question was raised about a recent article in The Chronicle of Higher Education (the September 5 issue), which reported that HECB has requested the University to phase out a number of undergraduate programs in the liberal arts and to concentrate solely on research and development. The President said he was unfamiliar with any such recommendation and that he had not seen the article. The point, supposedly, is part of the expected MSPAN recommendations. If so, the President said it was a "gross misstatement" of any recommendation made to the University; it is totally incompatible with University plans to have at least 25,000 undergraduates on this campus even at the point of lowest enrollment. The President reminded the Committee that the University has been engaged in a major effort to strengthen undergraduate education for the past two years and it will remain a fundamental responsibility of the University; the report is "totally off-target."

There are at present, the President observed, over 34,000 undergraduates at the University. By the late 1990s the numbers will begin to rise again; by that time it is to be hoped that the University has put its house in order so that a quality undergraduate education can be provided. Achieving that objective is one of the fundamental assumptions of the reallocation process.

As the decisions about reallocation are made, the President was asked, is there a way to ensure

that consultation with groups of students and faculty takes place within the colleges? An administrator must make a hard decision, at some point, on the basis of the evidence, but how is that final point reached? The President reported that the document calling for the preparation of recommendations on reallocation refers specifically to the expectation that the recommendations will come about as a result of constitutionally-required consultation within the unit. The central administration also expects to consult with appropriate groups. It would be useful, he said, for the Consultative Committee members to try to ascertain, through their colleagues, if consultation occurs; if there are problems, he said, the administration will emphasize that it is necessary.

The timetable is tight, the President continued, and as soon as the possibility is raised that a program will be curtailed or abolished the very exposure makes it appear to be a fait accompli. It is therefore necessary to move with some speed to reach final conclusions in order that programs are not left hanging in unnecessary jeopardy. At the same time there must be a consultative process; if the December 15 deadline precludes consultation in some units it may be necessary to extend the time.

The President's aim to control administrative overhead is to be commended, one Committee said; in places such as CLA plans for consolidation are driven by the same consideration (one argument is that there is a minimum faculty size that functions well for the given administrative costs). The President was asked if the same consideration is being applied at the collegiate level. Is there a minimum faculty size for a college, with all of its administrative apparatus? The President said that the question is being raised but also pointed out that a particular size cannot be prescribed; the nature of the discipline and its function in the national professional community dictates to some extent what the structures must be. But the question is a legitimate one and raised almost daily. The question of additional administrative cost is a driving concern when proposals for establishing a new unit are made; will it simply be additional cost or will there be better service provided to the students if it is incurred? And in the non-academic units minimization of administrative overhead is an overriding concern.

The President was asked if he would send a memo calling for consultation with the appropriate groups as the discussions occur. Even though a decision must be made, students in particular would then at least feel that their voice was heard and the evidence considered. The President said he would do whatever he could to enhance the consultative process.

Professor Ibele thanked the President for his comments.

5. Review of the Assembly and Senate Dockets

Professor Ibele asked Professor Collins to lead the Committee through the docket; he briefly reviewed the items which would be discussed and those which would require action. He clarified that the Business and Rules subcommittee had been uncomfortable with putting the Social Concerns Committee resolution concerning ROTC on the docket for action without discussion within this Committee; it was, as a consequence, put on for information and discussion in order to make the Senate aware of the efforts being made. The students, he reported, wish to work further on the resolution before it is brought back to this Committee and then to the Senate.

Professor Collins reported that he has asked committee chairs to deliver items for the Senate and

Assembly dockets in time for the Consultative Committee to review them; the Business and Rules permitted this particular one to go forward because that injunction has perhaps not been clear.

A question was raised about the proposed policy on events during finals week; it was seen, in some quarters, as a pig in a poke because the procedure for granting exceptions is not made explicit. There is no quarrel with the philosophy of the policy, only with the lack of a procedure. The Committee was told that it was the understanding of SCEP that a policy would be drafted after there was some experience with the number of requests received; if there are a considerable number then a policy will be drafted. There is no conspiracy involved.

It was suggested that the attachment of the name of the chair of the Consultative Committee to Senate docket items implies that it carries the endorsement of the Committee; Professors Ibele and Collins agreed and said that the practice would be reviewed.

The Committee adjourned at 3:00.

-- Gary Engstrand