

Minutes*

Senate Committee on Educational Policy
Wednesday, May 8, 2013
2:00 – 4:00
238A Morrill Hall

- Present: Alon McCormick (chair), Karla Hemesath (for Barbara Brandt), Thomas Brothen, Lee-Ann Breuch, Charlene Ellingson, Nic McPhee, Thomas Michaels, Leslie Schiff, Henning Schroeder, Elaine Tarone, Eva von Dassow, Susan Wick
- Absent: Megan Chock, Janine Grebin, Robert McMaster, Kristen Nelson, William Ziegler
- Guests: Provost Karen Hanson, (members of the Senate Committee on Faculty Affairs:) William Beeman, Sophia Gladding, Joseph Konstan, Scott Lanyon, George Sell, (Faculty Consultative Committee:) Chris Cramer; Associate Vice Provost Laura Coffin Koch (Office of Undergraduate Education)
- Other: David Langley (Center for Teaching and Learning)

[In these minutes: (1) update on discussions with the associate deans for undergraduate education; (2) discussion with Provost Hanson about e-learning; (3) update on first- and second-year initiatives]

1. Update on Discussions with the Associate Deans for Undergraduate Education

Professor McCormick convened the meeting at 2:00 and began by thanking Professors Brothen and Schiff for their service on the Committee; Professor Brothen's term ends and Professor Schiff is taking a position in Vice Provost McMaster's office. He then asked Professor Schiff to report on behalf of Vice Provost McMaster, who was unable to attend the meeting.

Professor Schiff reported that Dr. McMaster has spoken with the associate deans for undergraduate education and asked for feedback about discussions that have occurred in the colleges about grading and about ways to encourage more faculty members to release the student-release data from the student rating forms. Only three colleges have reported on what conversations have taken place; Professor Schiff summarized them for the Committee.

In CLA, departments routinely discuss grading practices and typically monitor grading patterns to ensure consistency across sections. They will work to promote the release of more of the student rating data. In the College of Continuing Education, grading is done with a rubric and they use the "standard" University scale for assigning grades (which scale neither Professor Schiff nor Committee members were aware of). They also evaluate every course; most of their instructors are long-term adjuncts and they do encourage them to release the ratings—and will do so again. The Carlson School of Management reported it analyzed its grades and codified its grading practices in 2009, after study that began in 2005; they have a policy for core courses and GPA median targets for

* These minutes reflect discussion and debate at a meeting of a committee of the University of Minnesota Senate; none of the comments, conclusions, or actions reported in these minutes represents the views of, nor are they binding on, the Senate, the Administration, or the Board of Regents.

all classes. They take grading very seriously and tell instructors in core courses to check the median in their classes before submitting the grades electronically.

Professor Tarone wondered if the Carlson School grading policy allowed for the possibility that the students in a class this year might be better or worse than those last year. Professor Schiff said it appears that it does; department chairs are notified of any deviation from the standard. Professor McCormick asked if one can tell if current faculty and students know that it was the faculty who decided to adopt the policy—rather than that it was imposed by the administration. Professor Schiff said it is her sense that the faculty decided on the policy, although she was not certain if the current faculty and students generally know this (as opposed to administratively-decided).

Professor von Dassow, noting she is in two CLA departments, expressed surprise at the report from CLA; she said she has never heard any discussions about grading distributions. CLA faculty are encouraged to release the student-release data, but not usually by the department. Professors von Dassow and Tarone also agreed that the use of the term "adjunct" by the College of Continuing Education could mean different things depending on whether they are regular faculty from elsewhere in the University or if they are contingent faculty.

Ms. Ellingson asked after the purpose of the grading policy; is it so grading is standardized? It is not, Professor Schiff said; this Committee and Vice Provost McMaster agree that the colleges should talk about their grading policies and be thoughtful about grading, especially across multi-section courses. Ms. Ellingson said that a pre-determined grading scale has nothing to do with learning. The unit for specifying a grading scale could be the class or the student Professor Tarone said; in the Carlson School, it is the class. But the performance of the students in a given class can vary overall from one year to the next, and if the class is the unit, the same percentage of students would receive an A irrespective of the independently measured performance of the individual students in it.

Professor McCormick asked if Dr. McMaster is at the point in the discussions with the associate deans that he can figure out what should be done. Or is he still gathering information? The latter, Professor Schiff said, and the Committee should return to the points in the fall. She assured the Committee that Dr. McMaster would be comfortable talking with it about what he is doing but said he would not prescribe what the colleges should do.

Professor Michaels said that there is a danger that Dr. McMaster would accept the best face the college put on; he said he believes the Committee should ask that something be done and that it then percolate down into the colleges. Professor Schiff said she thought that when academic program reviews begin, programs will be asked to talk about their grading practices, so discussions will have to happen if grading is part of the reviews.

Professor McPhee suggested that the Committee receive, in the fall, a written summary of the responses that Vice Provost McMaster receives from the colleges. To what extent will the Committee talk about practices, he asked? There are educational policy issues involved; presumably, for example, the Carlson School has done an extensive analysis. Professor McCormick said his recollection is that the Committee view is that the program level should be respected as the best place for discussions about grades. After some discussion, the Committee decided that it would write a memo, prompting Vice Provost McMaster to ask units to engage in discussions about grading practices and grade

inflation/deflation, and (as a first step) to summarize those discussions. The Academy of Distinguished Teachers believes that grading practices should be part of academic program review.

Professor McCormick thanked Professor Schiff for the report.

Following a brief report from Professor Wick for the subcommittee on graduate-education principles (Dr. Cheung was interested in knowing how to proceed, given that the Faculty Senate had a vigorous discussion of the principles that was quite negative; it seemed that some senators did not like anything that had been laid out and perhaps a 2-page narrative from each graduate program should be substituted; should they proceed and ask for a 2-page summary, revise the terminology, or throw out the whole thing and start over?), Professor McCormick turned to Provost Hanson.

2. E-learning with Provost Hanson

Professor McCormick welcomed Provost Hanson to the meeting and noted that a subcommittee on e-learning had developed a set of "starter questions"; he suggested she and the Committee could discuss the questions as well as what the Committee should do next year in the realm of e-learning. He welcomed members of the Senate Committee on Faculty Affairs and the Faculty Consultative Committee, who had been invited to this portion of the meeting. The questions were as follows:

1. What is the University's strategy for exploring and adopting new teaching and learning strategies and techniques?
 - a) eLearning was recently promoted through an RFP process. Will the university continue with this "explore many options" approach, or will it champion and support particular strategies as it did with active learning?
 - b) Do we intend to position ourselves nationally as a leader in eLearning, or are we going to let others lead? If the latter, how will the university stimulate that level of leadership?
2. What is the University strategy for entering the MOOC realm?
 - a) Do we enter this realm at the front end by developing unique MOOCs and use them as a recruiting tool?
 - b) Do we enter at the back end as a utilizer of the universe of MOOC content developed by others and package MOOCs for credit (e.g., give exams to verify them as worthy of credit)?
 - c) Do we use MOOCs as learning experiences for faculty that will ultimately improve their instruction effectiveness?
 - d) Do MOOCs require the same curricular approval as conventional and hybrid courses or are they in a special category?
 - e) Because they are potentially so visible to the outside world, will we require that the production value of our MOOCs rise to a high cinematic standard or can they simply be recorded classroom lectures?
3. What are the best ways to motivate faculty to develop innovative teaching approaches?
 - a) Through additional eLearning grant opportunities in the future. Are additional eLearning or innovative teaching RFPs planned?

- b) Through royalties or a cut of the profits (e.g., the iTunes model of 99 cents from many)?
- c) Through release time?

4. In addition to providing incentives for innovation, can we reduce disincentives to innovation that may be affecting faculty activities through, for instance, student evaluations and tenure, promotion and merit considerations?

Provost Hanson began with #1. The University continues to explore many options; not all material can be taught the same way nor are all faculty members interested in e-learning—nor do all students wish to learn that way. The University will leave it to the faculty to incorporate technology in teaching and will provide support services that empower faculty members to do so if they wish.

Professor Sell commented that the missing element is personnel, whether staff or undergraduate or graduate students, to help set up technology. The University cannot ask all faculty members to be experts in it; if wider use of technology is sought, the University will have to provide staff support. Provost Hanson observed that some faculty members are experts in technology and pointed out that while the university is not in a position to supply each faculty member with a dedicated tech support person, support offices are being reorganized and realigned, and some clustered resources are being added, in order to better serve faculty. For example, Dr. Langley's office can help faculty members interested in expanding the use of technology in their teaching. Her office does intend to apply resources as it can and where they are needed for faculty members who want to be more involved in the use of technology.

Professor McPhee said that many of the conversations at this Committee have been around the subject of bringing resources together and providing help. There is considerable help available on the Twin Cities campus but it is difficult for Morris faculty members to get access to it; they cannot just walk to another building to get help. Provost Hanson said that most of the campuses are resource-poor in this area and that she should perhaps talk with the chancellors about allocating money to technology support. She said that resources in her office are already stretched to the limits.

In response to question #1b, Provost Hanson said that in the long run, e-learning is not something special. The University wants to be very good at teaching, very good at helping students learn. It does not aim simply to be a leader in the use of technology; the point of technology is to help students learn. Nor will the University simply wait for others to lead; it works with its peers on a daily basis about what works and what does not.

On question #2, Provost Hanson said the University signed an agreement with Coursera and a number of faculty members stepped up quickly to offer MOOCs. They had varying experiences; she asked Professor Cramer—who is offering one of them—what his experience was. Professor Cramer said he wanted to experiment, has been "flipping" his classes and using videos already, and wanted to provide access to the course materials around the world. Provost Hanson said faculty members will have various reasons for being interested in offering a MOOC.

Provost Hanson reported on recent developments. An agreement with Coursera has been reached for courses going live on its "Signature" track so that students can pay a small fee to verify their identity and then receive a certificate of completion. The revenue is split between Coursera and

the institution, but it will be in the range of \$10,000s, not millions, so it will be unlikely even to cover production costs, at least with only a single iteration. The University needs a policy for the long run if it intends to pursue this option. She also observed that the University took the position that it would offer high production quality for its MOOCs and they would not simply resemble Skype turned on from the back of the classroom. The faculty members who developed MOOCs worked hard on them and the University had a good production team. She said she did not know if the University will need to continue to insist on such high production quality, but she felt it was important that the University's first effort look good—not all Coursera courses are at the same level of quality as the University's.

Another development is that Coursera has signed an agreement with a number of publishers to provide free textbooks for the duration of its individual courses, which is a stunning accomplishment, Provost Hanson said. That will clearly affect textbook publishing and will be important for the spread of the courses; it will be of great value to people in underserved areas.

Professor Beeman said that throughout these discussions he has heard no comprehensive statement of the University's philosophy with respect to e-learning. He has had long involvement with e-learning, he said, and everyone can imagine many uses for it. The MOOCs in the University's pilot project were interesting because they were all quite specialized; one can understand how people not on campus would be very interested in them, and one can also see how MOOCs could be useful for providing basic undergraduate information that all must have in order to go further in a field. But these are anecdotal and fragmented considerations and the University may not have a clear picture of where it is going, any guiding principles. It is difficult to answer questions about getting faculty involved, and compensating faculty, or evaluating the impact on the cadre of instructors, or what to do about funding courses, in the absence of principles. Perhaps her goal, as chief academic officer, is to look at the forest rather than the trees.

Provost Hanson said she did not believe it appropriate for the University to be too fixed in its position about MOOCs. These are an experiment. Her overall philosophy is that e-learning is just learning mediated by technology, and that technology was being employed in a great variety of ways, from Moodle, to online, to flipped classrooms, to e-books, to gaming, and so on. People can use different approaches and the University will not say that there is one path to go down. The University expects to retain its focus on residential students on its campuses and expects to use both new and old technology, including talking and using a chalkboard in the classroom, to help students learn. Again, e-learning is just learning mediated by technology, not a special kind or special area of learning.

Professor Beeman said it is helpful to know that. There are for-profit institutions that see e-learning as their core instructional philosophy. But just because MIT put its courses online probably does not mean it will stop classroom teaching. He said he agreed with the provost and added that technology is becoming easier to use. There are things one can do with 10,000 students that one cannot do in a seminar of 20 students, Provost Hanson observed—and vice-versa.

There is a concern that technology will replace the faculty, Professor Beeman said. That point is brought close to home with a philosophy course at San Jose State University, Provost Hanson replied, where the local faculty refused an administration request to make use of a Harvard MOOC and wrote the Harvard faculty member to, in effect, complain about the situation in which they found themselves. One sees arguments on both sides in terms of anxiety about replacing faculty members. She said she does not see that becoming an issue at the University of Minnesota because it is

committed to the residential instruction of its students. The institution must be clear about that vision because it is one way it fulfills its tripartite mission, which is closely tied to undergraduate and graduate students and faculty members. Higher education is fragmenting and it essential to make the case that direct student-faculty interactions are important. If the focus becomes obtaining a cheap four-year degree, much of what the University does is lost—so we need to remind the state and our various publics about what we do. MIT recently sponsored a conference of MOOC-offering institutions, and none of them expect residential education to go away, because they understand it is important for education for democracy and for pushing forward the frontiers of knowledge -- but they also see the importance of technology-mediated learning.

Professor Konstan agreed that conceptually e-learning is not different; learning is learning. What feels different is what is done by outside entities versus what University faculty members do. Faculty teach, and if they want to spread the word, they may write a textbook, but in general the incentives for textbook writing are outsourced. A publisher may pay costs associated with its development, or provide royalties, but the University generally doesn't treat the textbook as replacing any other obligations. That situation is flipped with MOOCs: the institution is the point of contact. Coursera did not contract with individual faculty members, it contracted with the University, which changes the question of who selects the content and how investments are made in developing the materials.

Provost Hanson did not agree. She said faculty members do not write textbooks as something apart from their job; decisions to write textbooks often emerge because of university curricular responsibilities, or may be connected with perceived responsibility to the discipline. They are tied to professional and teaching responsibilities that have an institutional context. One gets "credit" for these sorts of pedagogical activities in annual merit reviews; sabbatical leaves may provide time for this sort of activity. In the case of MOOCs, certain support is indeed provided by the University, at a greater level of individual support than has generally been the case for other sorts of course preparation, and this work still takes place in the University setting and with perhaps more University equipment and staff support. With technology presently available to individuals, faculty members could in principle offer their own MOOCs. Professor Konstan observed that the University of Pennsylvania, as reported in the news today, has taken the position that faculty members may not offer their own MOOCs unless the university first refused to offer them. The issue, he continued, is that unlike textbooks, right now the University decides which courses are offered through Coursera; how can that become a process that is owned primarily by the faculty of the university?

There has never been absolute freedom for individual faculty members to offer whatever courses appeal to them, Provost Hanson said, because faculty members must work within their departments and within their areas of expertise and because they have the responsibility to provide certain elements of the curriculum, elements that have been decided on by the faculty; departmental programs have the institutional stamp of approval. The curriculum is indeed owned by the faculty, but by the faculty collectively, not individually.

There is a huge difference between for-profit and not-for-profit organizations, Provost Hanson said. That is why the University is dipping its toes into the MOOCs—it intends to embrace values that are consonant with its core philosophy. Coursera came to institutions because it wants the institutional name on the courses, not just a particular faculty member's name. This is not that different from a

college decision on programs and on who will teach which courses. MOOCs are not yet different in kind.

In the next round of MOOCs from the University, Provost Hanson said she wants a faculty group to judge proposals, a process that will take a little time and will need extra resources to manage and perhaps provide small incentives to faculty members. Offering MOOCs is not exactly the University's business, she pointed out, although it is connected to some of its business, such as public engagement. But it is not the University's primary business to create courses that are offered for free.

Professor von Dassow said she agreed with Professor Beeman that Provost Hanson articulated a good starting point for a philosophy of e-learning and offering MOOCs, but many elements remain to be filled in. These elements fall mainly under two rubrics, how MOOCs fit into the existing curriculum and how they fit into the existing faculty workload. Can a MOOC be a course offered on campus that a student could take for credit? What she is hearing is that faculty members are being asked to volunteer their time for free to create the University's MOOCs. Provost Hanson emphasized that there is no pressure on faculty members to produce a MOOC; it is entirely voluntary—and there is no reason the University would put pressure on faculty members to produce something for which there is no financial return.

There is also no incentive, Professor von Dassow pointed out. She had indicated she would be willing to offer a MOOC and asked if she could receive a course release for doing so. She was told she would not. Provost Hanson responded that one needs to think about why a department or college would give a course release for something that produces very little directly for that unit; it is not really surprising that some departments and colleges might not want to offer course releases. Well, she already has a job, Professor von Dassow added. That is true, Provost Hanson said, but the higher-education landscape is changing and it could be that increasingly the nature of a faculty job will include forays into technology-enhanced efforts. If someone is not interested in developing a MOOC, they do not need to do so. It makes no sense to try to transform the faculty into MOOC providers.

Students cannot receive credit for MOOCs, Provost Hanson said in response to Professor von Dassow's question. Students can receive credit at the University for knowledge by taking an examination. That is a question the Committee needs to look at; that is a place where the landscape is changing. It is true that departments are not required to offer examinations for credit, but students may soon be clamoring for them as a way to recognize what they have learned in a MOOC. Professor McPhee asked if Provost Hanson had any data on her last point; she does not, she said, but believes that right now the number of students seeking credit by examination for MOOC learning is not high. Professor McPhee said they had two recently at Morris and he agreed that there may be many more in the near future. Provost Hanson agreed, noting that at present one must already be a student in residence in order to request an examination for credit, which makes the issue manageable—but it has to be managed by the faculty. One can ask about how much of a degree should be handled in that way, and there are budgetary implications (the student only pays a small fee, rather than taking a course for credit and paying tuition).

Professor Brothen returned to the question of whether the University should be a leader in e-learning. On the one hand, universities continue to be what they have been for 800 years; on the other hand, if an institution is not a leader in technology, it could be dead. Where is the University of Minnesota on this dimension? Universities talk about their longevity, Provost Hanson said, but it is a

changed institution—it is not the same institution it was 800 years ago, it is not the same institution it was 30 years ago. Its aims are enduring but the way it delivers its mission has changed. Students learn in different ways, she said, and some like MOOCs—even though some MOOCs are very much like a traditional lecture course.

Ms. Ellingson asked how credit by examination is different from transfer credits and the volume of such examinations. Provost Hanson said they are different for all of higher education; students who transfer credits and bring Advanced Placement credits have taken courses somewhere. With credits by examination, they may have taken courses nowhere.

The University of Minnesota is not above the fray, Provost Hanson said; if the higher-education landscape changes radically, it will be a different world for research and graduate education as well. The University's business model for these is intertwined. It is necessary to look at the whole environment of higher education, and the aspirations of a research university go beyond credentialing students for mastery of a fixed body of knowledge.

Professor Tarone said that the questions about MOOCs and credit by examination go to the basic philosophy of education. She said she can see a clear division between what students can do (their skills) and what they know. MOOCs focus most easily on what they know. In her classes, as in most, she is working interactively to develop skills such as thinking, analyzing data, and process writing, which are much more difficult to test by examination. MOOCs and credits by examination are not good measures of what people can do.

Provost Hanson said that this may not be all about testing and certification, and she is not offering a brief for MOOCs over residential education. Some are interested in MOOCs, however, because they lead to interactions around the globe that cannot be replicated in a local classroom, and there may be no testing involved. What the University must be alert to is a public perception about what is being delivered in higher education. Testing and certification alone do not guarantee preparation for students on the job, and there may also be public skepticism about MOOCs if there is proof that students cannot perform on the job; time will tell how MOOCs play out.

Professor von Dassow observed, with regard to Provost Hanson's remarks about the changing landscape of the job, that that didn't give her more hours in the day. For most faculty members, there is a great deal of effort and learning required to develop a MOOC; if the message is that it does not fit into their existing workload, most faculty members will not be able to develop one. Provost Hanson said she did not mean that people are being asked to take on a MOOC—far from it; she asked Professor Cramer how he handled the demands. Professor Cramer said that, to be honest, he gave up a lot of sleep—he further said that he viewed it as a collegiate responsibility to decide what should be done in the area of eLearning in general, and MOOCs in particular, and to provide faculty with the necessary resources to ensure experimentation and novel initiatives can be undertaken. Professor von Dassow said that she inquired with her college, CLA, and no support was forthcoming. Professor Cramer said he hoped that CLA has a vision that select faculty members should be given time to experiment.

Professor Breuch observed that not all e-learning is MOOCs; e-learning occurs in many ways and at many levels. And it also does not require central mandates, Professor Konstan added. It requires a vision in the academic leadership chain, not all at the top.

Professor Konstan said, with respect to credit by examination, in early online courses, students did an independent study and he assessed it. The University received full tuition, there is individual assessment, and it is a way for students to learn materials that might not normally be offered in a course. In terms of credit by examination, one receives a degree because one has reached a certain level; he would prefer that a student receives a degree for moving forward—the point of residency requirements—"otherwise let's just give a U of M degree to anyone who already completed a high quality undergraduate degree elsewhere." The idea of using MOOCs—much like using textbooks or other materials—in the context of regular or independent study courses seems more consonant with the University's values than opening up a range of credit-by-exam opportunities.

Provost Hanson said she absolutely agreed and suggested the Committee formulate a policy. It needs to define pragmatically what it wants to happen with respect to mixing credits from examination vs. residential learning accumulating towards an ultimate degree.

Professor Beeman commented that the online course is old; what they have found is that the effort to develop an online course is so great, and so unappreciated, that he could not advise any non-tenured faculty member to do it because it would be death for his or her chances of promotion. That problem is still an issue, the provost said, and was raised by the Faculty Consultative Committee, which asked whether promotion-and-tenure guidelines should reflect contributions such as MOOCs and also publishing textbooks. Professor Beeman said the result is that it leaves the field of MOOCs to those who are secure, mostly full professors, faculty members who must decide if they will develop a MOOC or advance a research career at a senior stage. That is the more subtle question of incentive that needs a decision at the highest level—will such efforts be recognized and should the definition of scholarship be rewritten? Provost Hanson demurred, saying that is not a central decision, it is one that is up to the college and department. But they take their direction from the central administration, Professor Beeman maintained, and said it took a long time to get public engagement into [the tenure policy] 7.11 statement. The departments take their clue from the central philosophy.

Professor McPhee said the question he struggles with is what questions belong in front of this Committee. Credit by examination does; are there others in which the Committee should have a role? Provost Hanson said that if the Committee believes there are educational benefits from forays into digital technology, having a statement to that effect would be helpful. Statements on tenure and how it is earned are at the unit level; there needs to be a broader-based conversation on technology and learning by the faculty. It would be a mistake for the central administration to push e-learning; some faculty members may want to work in these ways, some may not.

Professor Beeman said it would be helpful if the administration would just say that it is acceptable for departments to decide contributions in e-learning are acceptable—so they understand that the institution does not view it as simply fooling around with electronics. The faculty do not seem to think such contributions are worthwhile. Provost Hanson said she believes that they do, when done well. This is around teaching, not scholarship, in her view, but there are dossiers coming in with e-learning as part of the faculty member's contributions. People can do things that are not very good, and departments must decide what is good. It is, she added, an evolving standard.

Professor McPhee suggested that what is worthy of credit for a student belongs in this Committee while what is worthy of credit for a faculty member belongs with the Senate Committee on

Faculty Affairs (SCFA). Professor Lanyon, the SCFA chair, agreed and said that e-learning is a broad concept—but often the focus immediately turns to MOOCs. They are new and interesting, but students are coming to the University with more and more experience with e-learning, and they are changing faster than the faculty. The University must provide assistance to faculty to update courses in order to meet student learning expectations.

Part of the recommendations to be made are to define the terms, Professor Lanyon said. Today the focus has been on MOOC e-learning; next must be the other kinds of e-learning. Provost Hanson concurred. The other kinds of e-learning are crucial, on a day-to-day basis. She said there are policy questions for this Committee as well as SCFA and there are also administrative questions about marshaling resources to support the faculty and the variance across colleges in support available. Professor Lanyon said that 7.12 statements are around teaching students in ways that will work for them; that has always been true and the advent of MOOCs and e-learning changes things a little bit.

Ms. VanVoorhis reported that she is hearing from her colleagues (registrars) at other institutions that what they are facing, in terms of credit by examination, is about courses that are offered in residence plus as a MOOC: a student at the institution takes the MOOC version and then asks how to get credit for it. The University needs a policy on that question, she suggested.

One question that students ask, especially at the high-cost private institutions, Provost Hanson related, is why they are paying high tuition for a course while others are receiving it for free. The difference is peer interaction, in-class activities, interactions with faculty, and so on—all of which is true but that response has not yet gotten very far with the public. The University must be sure that what it is doing in face-to-face courses is distinctive and valuable.

Professor McCormick thanked Provost Hanson for joining the Committee.

3. Update on First- and Second-Year Initiatives

Professor McCormick welcomed Associate Dean Koch to the meeting to provide an update on first-year and second-year initiatives.

Dr. Koch began with first-year initiatives, which include Welcome Week, @Home in MN, first-year courses, and freshman seminars. Welcome Week has seen significant changes since it started in 2008; over 97% of first-year students participate, over 500 upper-class students serve as leaders or volunteers, most units on campus are involved, and a new tradition of making the "M" at TCF Stadium has begun.

@Home in MN is a new program to engage out-of-state students, many of whom leave after the first year. It is intended to develop program connections in different ways from those who have lived in Minnesota all their lives.

Four colleges now have some kind of required first-year experience or courses for their students, a mechanism that provides more cohesion for students. Many students who leave have high GPAs, so it is not because they have not done well; these are an attempt to help retain them.

After 16 years, the freshman seminar program is going strong, Dr. Koch reported; about 150 seminars are offered each year and about 30% of first-year students take them. Retention and graduation rates are higher for those students (Dr. Koch pointed out that these students self-select, so one cannot draw any causal inference).

Dr. Koch turned to second-year initiatives, which are new. The second-year experience cohort is new high-school students who have completed one year at the University and are in their second year; transfer students may be included as appropriate. They have discovered that second-year students have issues of their own that the University can help address. Until recently the University has assumed students have a great first-year experience and are set up to go, but that isn't always true and there hasn't been the same level of support and activities or the availability of people to guide them.

The challenges for second-year students include career development (developing the self-awareness and autonomy necessary to make a decision regarding major and possibly career plans), student motivation (lacking a specific direction or undefined goals can affect motivation and desire to persist), social integration and involvement (fewer opportunities that promote involvement on campus compared to first year initiatives), financial issues (heightened financial concerns due to fewer scholarship opportunities for second year students and the reality of first year financial costs setting in), and satisfaction (less satisfaction with their college experience compared to the first year). In the case of motivation, many second-year students remain undecided, but because the University pushes them to identify a major, they feel under pressure to decide something.

Dr. Koch noted a table of data demonstrating that between 2004 and 2010, the Twin Cities campus did see an increase in first-to-second year retention as well as an increase in second-to-third year retention. They will also be looking carefully at the third-to-fourth year retention rates.

Dr. Koch next looked at the characteristics of students who leave.

Academic Characteristics

- Sophomore year drop-out rates are higher for students who ranked below 50% in high school or scored below 24 on the ACT
- Roughly 60% of students who earned a GPA below 2.50 during the first semester of the freshman year will not persist to the third year

Race and Ethnicity (retention to year 3)

- African Americans – 74%
- American Indians – 75%
- Asian Pacific – 83%
- Chicano-Latino – 83%
- Other students of color – 80%
- White – 88%

GPA is a significant predictor of which students will get to their third year, Dr. Koch commented. Professor McPhee asked Dr. Koch if she had similar data for first-generation college students. She does for the first year but not the second, Dr. Koch said. Professor McCormick asked if there a

correlation between leaving and low income; Dr. Koch said she did not know for second-year students.

Dr. Koch presented information from the Office of Institutional Research on the first-year versus second-year experience.

- First-year students spend more time than second-year students...
 - Attending classes
 - Entertainment events
 - Socializing with friends
 - Participating in physical exercise

- Second-year students spend more time than first-year students...
 - Working
 - Performing community service
 - Participating in student organizations
 - Watching television
 - Commuting to school and work

On the last, Dr. Koch said the increase is expected because fewer second-year students live in residence halls.

Dr. Koch described the steps being taken to build a second-year experience, recommendations based on the work of a group of President's Emerging Leaders. They will not create a new office and add staff but are trying instead to build on what they already do, and are receiving considerable support from the colleges and other offices. They have established a campus-wide advisory committee, increased communication with second-year students, created a living-learning community in the new residence hall on University Avenue (for 80 students, and they have 120 applications from students who must be willing to take a course from a set of choices about careers, etc.), and there are also collegiate initiatives.

During the first year the goal is that students feel part of the University, Dr. Koch said; for the second year, the intended outcomes are development of a sense of purpose, a sense of community, and a sense of self. They know there are more students who need support and they are trying to reach out to them.

Dr. Koch provided, last, a report on the SMART Learning Commons, which are in three locations and provide consulting and tutoring (undergraduates helping undergraduates) and attach a peer-assisted learning section to a class (sessions outside the class with an undergraduate who has been through it and is trained).

APLUS is a system developed by CLA and that is now used more widely with which advisers are provided up-to-date information on student actions. It is a fabulous tool that has helped advisers work with students. One problem is a lack of information from faculty members because of an antiquated alert system—faculty members do not provide alerts about students at risk in their courses. Advisers can put notes in APLUS that other advisers can see; all advisers are now trained in the use of

APLUS and can see all the notes for their students so that a student does not have to repeat the same story over and over (or successfully tell different stories to different people).

Professor McCormick asked if there is anything the Committee can do to assist the University in these efforts. Change the alert system, Dr. Koch responded. Ms. VanVoorhis said the system can't do anything by itself; the more information it can have about how students are doing in class, the better advisers can help them.

Professor McCormick thanked Dr. Koch for her presentation and adjourned the meeting at 4:05.

-- Gary Engstrand

University of Minnesota