

Minutes*

**Faculty Assembly Steering Committee
Thursday, November 12, 1998
12:45 – 3:00
Room 238 Morrill Hall**

- Present: Sara Evans (chair), Linda Brady, Mary Dempsey, Stephen Gudeman, David Hamilton, Roberta Humphreys, Fred Morrison, V. Rama Murthy, Matthew Tirrell
- Absent: Kent Bales, M. Janice Hogan, Leonard Kuhi, Marvin Marshak, Judith Martin
- Guests: Senators from the Academic Health Center and members of the Academic Health Center Faculty Consultative Committee; assistant professors
- Other: Linda Johnsrud, American Council on Education Fellow

[In these minutes: issues of concern to AHC faculty; issues of concern to assistant professors]

1. Discussion with Academic Health Center Senators and FCC Members

Professor Evans convened the meeting at 11:00 and welcomed the representatives of the Academic Health Center (AHC). She explained that FCC is holding several meetings with various groups of faculty during the year (Senators, department heads, assistant professors); the purpose of the meetings are for FCC members to hear about the major issues and concerns of the day. Those present made a number of comments, summarized as follows.

- The University has lost its compass, moved in the direction of bean-counting as the standard by which to make judgments, and has thus lost sight of its core values and mission. Creativity is not efficient and does not pay off immediately. This is especially true in the AHC, which has been driven by the need to generate clinical income; this emphasis constrains the advance of medical science.

There is no rhetoric from the top about “who we are and what we must be.” The President and the Regents must speak to scholarly creativity – if this is not to become a technical training institute. One hears the University has aspirations to be in the top five, but one does not SEE anything that will get it there.

- There are fewer and fewer tenured and tenure-track faculty, which has a serious impact on the research potential of the AHC and the entire academic environment. The proposed transfer of funds into clinical departments so those faculty can teach requires careful scrutiny. With more and more temporary faculty brought in, to replace tenure and tenure-track faculty, there is loss of control over education. The tenured and tenure-track faculty are more pressured to obtain outside

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research funding, and judged to have no merit if they do not do so – no matter what teaching or governance they do.

- Re-engineering continues, with the central consolidation of power of decision-making over teaching, research, and service. Administrative directors are appointed, secretarial staff are pooled, and departments do not control their budgets or space. (In one unit, departments were dissolved and staff pooled; the result was a drop in morale and staff departures, increased administrative expenses and diversion of funds from faculty, and increased incompetence in how things were done. The departments have since been restored.) The administrative staff in central AHC offices continues to grow, while there is no money for new faculty. Most new funding goes into interdisciplinary programs and centers, to which faculty must apply for funding; this undermines the departments.

The status of departments is critical. They have been eliminated or merged, and faculty lose their affiliation, a way to express their views and position. It is not clear if this is a plan or a plot, but the result is that faculty lose their voice and their morale. Departments are the core of the institution. (The reorganization of the basic sciences is going well, and will as long as the administration continues to support it. In this case, there WILL BE departments and they have effective leaders; the concern is that the effort will peter out and funding drop.)

Parallel to the erosion of the departments is erosion of the colleges. Special pools of funds are created to support initiatives, which are supposed to be decided on by peer review. In the case of small grants, there is peer review; in the case of large grants, “there is a veneer of peer review.” Legislative funds seem, however, to go to the issue of the moment; “scientific priorities seem to be set by PEOPLE magazine.” The funds for these items are taken from the colleges

- Consultation is after the fact or faculty are only given hours, and decisions become emergencies. Things happen under the table. Decisions are being made by administrators that should be made by the faculty. The faculty are demoralized and have given up – this is true of all the AHC schools. They have turned inward, and protect their territory. They work and push on things, and see no change. On the other hand, morale was dismal when Dr. Brody left, and things have now settled down some, and it will be hard to get the faculty roused again.

In the case of the compact process, faculty had virtually no time to consult. Everything is an emergency – that is the largest indictment of the administration. There is a recurring problem that there is never enough time for consultation – while the faculty are trained to meet deadlines and deal with them all the time. The only time there is an emergency is when the administration is involved. The faculty should have 3-4 months to participate in compact discussions. The problem is also related to the confusion in the AHC about the purview of the dean and the lack of clear budgets and departments.

- There is considerable dissatisfaction with the leadership of the AHC. Those responsible for bringing re-engineering to the AHC, under former Provost Brody, remain in office. Reviews of deans are not completed; what is FCC doing to press administrative reviews?

- It appears that education is also being centralized in administrative offices, such as the dean's office or the senior vice president's office, and it is there decisions will be made about what will be taught and who will teach.

2. Discussion with Assistant Professors

Professor Evans next welcomed a small group of assistant professors to talk with the Committee about the elements of their jobs they find problematic and those they find positive. The following points were made:

- There is a lack of staff support
- There is mentoring for research, but not for other parts of their job
- It is hard to get a sense of the size of the University; they are disconnected from the rest of the institution, it is easy to feel affiliation only to their own department, and they would see value in building relationships across units. Facilitating such contacts would be helpful. [FCC is joining with AAUP to sponsor such events.]
- Assistant professors are not asked to do too much, although the job is stressful; a very big problem has been the change to semesters, which takes a huge amount of time and makes it difficult to manage one's work.
- There is NO "typical" workload across the University.

Professor Evans thanked everyone for coming, and adjourned the meeting at 1:15.

-- Gary Engstrand