

Minutes\*

**Faculty Consultative Committee**  
**Thursday, September 13, 2007**  
**1:15 – 3:00**  
**238A Morrill Hall**

Present: Gary Balas (chair), Nancy Carpenter, Shawn Curley, Barbara Elliott, Marti Hope Gonzales, Lois Heller, Emily Hoover, Mary Jo Kane, Judith Martin, Nelson Rhodus, Geoffrey Sirc, Jennifer Windsor, Becky Yust

Absent: Carol Chomsky, Dan Dahlberg, William Durfee, Jeff Kahn, Martin Sampson

Guests: none

Other: Gayla Marty (University Relations), Pam Stenhjem (CAPA), Kathryn Stuckert (Office of the President)

[In these minutes: (1) report of the chair (welcome to Professor Curley, the AFSCME strike, science-teaching-and-student-services building); (2) reports from the chairs (Educational Policy, Faculty Affairs, Finance and Planning); (3) metrics and measurement; (4) internal communication]

**1. Report of the Chair**

(1) Professor Balas convened the meeting at 1:20, welcomed everyone to the first regular meeting of the year, welcomed and thanked Professor Curley, who agreed to replace Professor Gunnar, and called for a round of introductions. He also welcomed Ms. Stenhjem and Ms. Marti.

(2) Professor Balas reported that Provost Sullivan and Vice President Carrier asked Professor Hoover and him to a meeting earlier in the week to provide an update on the strike by AFSCME members. They mentioned that a number of faculty taking classes off campus and the administration is receiving a lot of negative comments from students, parents, and legislators. The Provost has spoken with the Twin Cities Deans Council, talked about why it is important to have the classes on campus, and asked the deans to handle the matter within the colleges. They had no additional news about an offer or negotiations but they do want to get the strike settled.

Professor Durfee, although unable to be present at the meeting, had sent an email message about the strike; he suggested the Committee discuss what punishment the University is contemplating when it makes official statements such as "faculty who move class away from picket lines may be disciplined."

In response to a question, Professor Balas suggested the Committee not issue any statement on the strike because it should not get in the middle of the bargaining process. The Committee should, however, discuss with the Provost the language used about disciplining faculty members and what might be done. Committee members assented.

---

\* 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.

(3) The Committee turned to the proposed design of the science-teaching-and-student-services building, which will replace the Science Classroom Building at the northeast end of the Washington Avenue Bridge. A number of Committee members expressed considerable dismay at the configuration and size of classrooms in the new building. (The current lecture auditoriums that seat 200+ students (4) and 70-seat classroom will be replaced with six smaller 117-seat interactive classrooms, six 90-seat interactive classrooms, and seven 30-seat seminar classrooms.) Department heads in IT have protested the configuration as not appropriate for their needs.

The question, Professor Windsor said, is how academics closest to a facility are integrated into the planning for that facility. She said this reminded her of the decision about the new CSOM/CLA building, decisions about which were made at a high level, not with the faculty. Whence the faculty who are involved in the new building? Professor Wambach recalled that faculty were very involved in the renovation of Appleby Hall; if that has not been the case with the new building, then it represents a step away from the process that has been used in the past. Professor Martin said that one question is who the client is for the building; there has been a breakdown in communication if this facility has not been discussed by the Classroom Advisory Subcommittee of SCEP and Finance and Planning. Professor Hoover commented later that the issue really is about replacement of four lecture halls that seat 200+ students with more total seats but fewer per room. With the budget model as it is, and many departments increasing class size, not reducing it, the new lay out seems counterintuitive. Professor Gonzales commented later that she has taught in the Science Classroom Building; she agreed that it is not the total number of seats available to students, but/ rather the configuration of those seats that matters, and had more faculty been consulted, that point might have been raised. She expressed concern that the right hand doesn't always pay attention to what the left hand is doing. She observed that she teaches a large 3-XXX lecture course, including in the Science Classroom Building, that is a prerequisite to other more advanced courses, and if they cannot find enough lecture halls to teach large numbers of introductory students, the students don't have the prerequisites for other courses, and their progress in the major is stymied. "So much for 5-year graduation rates in that case." Professor Durfee commented in an email on the subject that perhaps someday classroom design planning would be done in collaboration with faculty, perhaps through the Academy of Distinguished Teachers, so that issues of classroom size and what constitutes an "interactive classroom" have faculty input.

[After the meeting, Professor Wambach learned that only five rooms would remain on the East Bank that hold over 200 students. They are Smith 100, Physics 150, Rapson 100, EECS 3-210, and the Bell Museum Auditorium. She suggested that rather than base a decision on testimony from one or two faculty members, it might be wise to ask the current users of the Science Classroom Building auditoriums if they will seek similar space in the future or would prefer the proposed Smart Classroom space.]

The Committee agreed it would raise questions about the new facility with the Provost next week.

## **2. Reports from the Chairs**

Professor Balas asked the ex officio committee chairs for reports.

Professor Wambach reported that the Senate Committee on Educational Policy (SCEP) had asked Vice Provost Swan and the Department of Institutional Research to report trends in retention and graduation rates and whether there was anything that jumped out at them in terms of best practices. The Committee received a lot of data and information, which will be reported in the minutes, and the upshot is

that it appears that many messages contributed in small increments to the increases in retention and graduation that the University is seeing. Also contributing to the improvement is the increasing quality of the incoming freshmen.

The Board of Regents has seen the data on the increasing qualifications of incoming freshmen, Professor Wambach said, and a couple of Board members have asked how far the University can push on increasing the high-school rank metric. What will be the tradeoffs if 90% of the students are in the top 10% of their class? Is that a realistic or politically-desirable goal? Some Board members, Professor Balas added, suggested that this may be the wrong metric; the University is a public, land-grant institution and it should seek to educate students from many parts of society. The Provost, however, has said that the University will continue to use as a metric the academic quality of incoming students.

Professor Wambach said that SCEP would be considering, among other things, a change in policy with respect to Ws (withdrawals), because the number of Ws a student has is related to retention and graduation. This is a national issue, she said, and a number of institutions have adopted policies limiting the use of the W in order to reduce the amount of "shopping" for courses. Professor Martin suggested that SCEP also keep an eye on the number of students who register for 20 or more credits and do not finish some of them; it is her sense that there are an increasing number of students who load up on credits because it is a good deal and then do not finish them promptly or at all. The current policy is engendering some perverse student behavior. Professor Wambach said that SCEP has on its agenda the question of capping the tuition band, so that the "free" tuition for the 14<sup>th</sup> and subsequent credits has an upper limit (e.g., 18 or 19 or 20 credits). SCEP will also discuss a limit on time to degree, she said, so that one cannot come back after the lapse of a number of years and pick up (under old requirements). The point of these policies is to communicate to students that graduation is important for the University and that it should be for them as well.

Professor Yust asked if SCEP is looking at the time of day of course offerings; with many classes offered during prime time, there are transportation issues across campuses. In the past, students said they could not get the classes they needed when they needed them and departments have been under pressure to spread classes throughout the day, Professor Wambach responded. They are paying attention to scheduling and this is a topic that could fall into a best practice. Professor Yust wondered if departments have actually spread out their classes.

Professor Heller asked, and Professor Wambach affirmed, that the metrics that have been discussed are for the Twin Cities campus. Each campus has its own set of expectations about the qualifications of incoming students.

Professor Sirc reported that the Senate Committee on Faculty Affairs (SCFA) has taken up one issue left over from last year, support for and assistance from retirees, and will be bringing to this Committee and the University Senate a statement. Other items coming before SCFA include a discussion with the Provost on interdisciplinary teaching and research and promotion and tenure, post-tenure review, spousal hiring (with Professors Windsor and John Sullivan), the possible development of a cafeteria plan for benefits (which would allow employees to opt for child care or tuition benefits, for example), where new faculty are being hired, and who is teaching what classes (a review of the breadth of the use of non-tenure-track faculty).

Professor Martin reported that the Senate Committee on Finance and Planning (SCFP) has the usual items before it, including the capital request, the annual budget, etc. SCFP has also heard about the responses to the RFP for a new food and beverage contract(s), a final recommendation for which will be coming in November.

### **3. Metrics and Measurement**

Professor Balas turned next to the question of metrics and measurement, a major topic of discussion at the retreat in late August. He reported that he took away points from the September Regents' meeting that made him realize this is an issue about which the Committee must be assertive. One of the Board members focused on the comparison group: who does the University want to be like, and why. Tracking metrics generates policies; if the University is tracking something, why? Another Board member said that each department every day needs to ask how it is improving on the metrics the University is using. The Committee, he concluded, must disregard the advice it received at the retreat not to worry about the metrics and measurements, because they will clearly have an effect on decisions and policies.

That raises the issue of what metrics the Committee—the faculty—think would be better used for scholarship and research to assess whether the University is becoming a top-three institution, Professor Balas continued. The measures will be different across the University but there is a need to start the conversations in each department about how to measure if they are getting better. Committee members made it clear at the retreat, Professor Martin commented, that they are not happy about the metrics currently being used.

The Regents are interested in and watching and see the metrics as driving policy decisions, Professor Balas said. What should the Committee do? Vice President Mulcahy has said he would be interested in partnering with the Committee to develop appropriate metrics. The upcoming NRC rankings are one measure, but some parts of the University are not included in them. He suggested the Committee appoint a subcommittee to recommend metrics for scholarship and research.

Professor Yust commented she heard from one faculty member that departments that are at the top of the game don't measure anything per se. It is difficult to define what faculty do in a way that is measurable. Professor Kane agreed and said that if the Regents are paying attention to metrics, the question is what benchmarks will be used. They will be different in the sciences and the humanities, but any measures of teaching, research, and service will go far beyond the existing standard measurements. (Professor Balas observed that there is only one metric related to research in the current set: dollars.)

Professor Sirc said he talked to Dr. Howard, Director of Institutional Research, about what would be the single best measure to improve the University's rankings; Dr. Howard said it would be to improve the graduation rate. It is not clear what any individual faculty member can do about that. In the case of his department, it has sought to hire new and interesting faculty but has been told that will not happen.

One can measure and re-measure, Professor Windsor said, but unless one identifies what is driving any comparative advantage, the measures don't by themselves help achieve outcomes. What is it that higher-ranked universities do, she asked? For example, do they have lower student-faculty ratios, do faculty teach fewer/more classes, do they admit students with better academic records, do they provide more/different advising support, do they recruit more outstanding faculty, do they have better retention

mechanisms for faculty and staff, etc.? Knowing these types of pivot points would help to identify where resources might be directed.

One of the terms that came up at the retreat was "granularity," Professor Heller recalled. There are pockets of excellence in the University but units have different standards by which they measure; there is no one macro measure to cover everything. For example, the medical program at UMD is among the top five in the country in what it does, but that does not move the ranking of the entire Medical School. If there are 100 pieces to the University and it can say that 95 of them are in the top five, then it will have measured something.

Professor Martin commented, apropos Professor Windsor's point, that they have known for a long time that Minnesota's faculty is 20% smaller than the faculty of its peers given the number of students. : It appears that CLA faculty teach more students per faculty member than other CIC liberal arts colleges, for example. Of all the discussion about getting into the top three, she has only heard one part of the University say it needs more faculty: the AHC has been forthright in saying it needs an additional 500. The rest of the University does not make that kind of statement because there would be no place to house them if they could be hired. It is an odd ambition to be really good without the wherewithal to get there.

What is excellence, Professor Balas asked? Professor Windsor responded that some would say one knows it when one sees it; departments are just excellent. His concern, Professor Balas said, is that the Regents are set on metrics and measures, and if there is nothing there about teaching and scholarship, they will be lost in the message. He said he would prefer that the Board not just talk about metrics but have a much richer conversation about what it takes to make the University great. If there were three additional metrics that would be easy to measure and that would go beyond what is being proposed, what would they be, Professor Yust asked? The University collects a lot of data; there must be some that say something about faculty excellence.

Professor Martin urged that Professors Balas and Hoover bring up the concerns about metrics in their meeting with the chair and vice chair of the Board of Regents and convey the faculty discomfort with metrics that are missing important parts of faculty activities. And that do not correspond to faculty perceptions of what it means to be a top-three university, Professor Balas added. It is the faculty's sense that other things are going on that matter but that are not measured. To the extent that Institutional Research is disconnected from the academic mission, Professor Martin said, the faculty will not see what they believe appropriate in the metrics. That is why Professor Balas is correct, Professor Kane said: the Committee must take an active role in identifying what it believes should be measured.

Professor Wambach asked if it mattered "what most of us do or what a few of us do." The University has 45 National Academy members; its peers have 65 or more. So what the University needs to do is hire 25 National Academy members who will bring a lot of grant money and reputations. That would solve the problem without worrying about the rest of the 3000 faculty. Or hire three Nobel Prize winners, Professor Martin added. The metrics reward the star system, Professor Wambach maintained. People are brought in after they have established their reputation; schools with high reputations recruit stars. That is why the Committee should develop metrics it can embrace, Professor Balas said, because the star system is divisive; do some get everything and the rest nothing? Its metrics should be ones the Committee believes are right and the discussion should start with them.

The Committee can develop measures it thinks are great, Professor Curley said, but if it cannot convince others to use them, they will not work. On some basis the University is judged to not be there; the Committee needs to identify the criteria being used and address them if it wants to change this judgment. If one asked the people in this room if the University is among the top three, no one would say it is, Professor Balas added, except perhaps in the special case of an outstanding department. All departments have criteria by which they judge merit, Professor Windsor said; they use such things as awards and publications. Those should be a starting point. Professor Kane suggested analyzing the curriculum vitae of the Regents Professors and the McKnight Professors, for example, to see what they have in common. What does it take to obtain that status? The people who have these appointments come from across the University so there would be a wide range of disciplines.

Student outcomes are absent from the discussion, Professor Carpenter said. Do students graduate? Get jobs? It is difficult to gather some of those data, but what is the University about? Graduate program reviews track what happens to students, Professor Kane commented, and those data would resonate with the legislature and public.

The Committee agreed to appoint a subcommittee to develop measures important to the faculty and agreed to draw on measurement experts on the faculty. The Committee also agreed to suggest that the existing metrics committee, chaired by Dr. Howard, should have more than one faculty member on it. Professor Kane asked that the Provost be requested to assign a staff member to help the subcommittee and to provide data, since this group will be constituted to help the faculty and since the idea of better scholarly measures is one the Provost has endorsed. Professor Gonzales added that the subcommittee should obtain data for other universities and study such factors as students, geography, and other pivotal factors it may select; if there is a data set, the subcommittee can begin to identify measures of importance.

#### **4. Internal Communication**

The Committee last year, after discussions with department chairs, identified internal communication as an issue that needed attention. Up to now the Committee has been a strong advocate but it and the administration have been two ships passing in the night, Professor Balas commented. What ideas does the Committee wish to propose? Things have not changed this year; sometimes he (a department head), as a member of this Committee, knows more than his dean, but sometimes his dean knows things that he would have expected to know as a member of this Committee. The faculty generally are clueless about many things; they know that budgets are increasing but that costs are up 10% so that the departments must make cuts.

Professor Martin inquired if anyone had any experience at or knowledge about any top-three university—is their internal communication better? Her general impression, she said, is that it is about the same here as other places, and that it could be worse. Professor Yust said it has been her sense that Minnesota has been among the most consultative institutions; in the past there was one person responsible for certain kinds of decisions and one could call that person to get an answer. Now responsibility is diffused over a number of people and it is difficult to identify responsibility. It may also be that the speed of decisions has increased because of strategic positioning. The result is that the University is not as consultative as it was before; she agreed that Minnesota is probably about the same as other institutions but urged that it do what it thinks best irrespective of what happens elsewhere. Professor Windsor commented that some central officers may believe there is communication, not recognizing that the issue is consultation. And they might not agree with that assessment.

A lot of faculty were involved in strategic positioning, Professor Martin observed, but they are no longer. The Provost created a culture of consultation with the task forces that has since diminished. That is a critical issue in developing the metrics, Professor Rhodus added. There was a metrics task force, Professor Yust recalled, that did have faculty; Professor Balas suggested the Committee revisit the work of that group to see if its recommendations have been implemented. He said he thought the administration would move forward from the various task force recommendations. The Committee should have a conversation with the Provost to express its views that the measures the colleges are being held to do not fit what faculty do and that the process as constructed did not have enough academic participation.

With respect to communication, Professor Kane commented that the view of most faculty is that "unless it is really important, just tell me about it at a meeting" because they are overwhelmed. The challenge is what should be communicated. This issue has many elements, Professor Balas agreed: too much information, not the right information, what are the effects of the information locally, etc. How does one even start to consider the problem? He said the Committee will have meetings with the department heads again and provide them the list of issues from last year; before the Committee goes to the Provost, it will be instructive to see if the department heads believe there remains a problem.

There was so much time and money spent on the task forces, Professor Yust said, and the disconnect between their work and what has happened may lie with whomever was charged to carry out the recommendations. One question is the extent to which those obligated to carry out the recommendations were also obliged to consult. Professor Kane suggested focusing on the "wave one" colleges because they were the first ones to feel the impact of the recommendations. Professor Balas said he would ask Professor Chomsky what the Committee did last year and repeat the process to learn if there have been changes.

Professor Curley said that it sounded to him like "internal communication" was the wrong term. The problem is sending the wrong message; faculty need a filter. There is a natural tension in this kind of organization between the things one just wants handled centrally and things one wants to be consulted on. Some things are being done centrally that the faculty believe they should have been consulted on; it is not clear if the reverse is also true. It is this problem that needs work. It is not clear if these are policy matters or individual items. Professor Balas said he did not believe it is policy matters and that he did not believe central administration was evil; it is simply that the University moved fast on strategic positioning and this Committee is the group that must voice faculty concerns. What appears to have happened is that decision-making has been centralized and the work has been decentralized, Professor Windsor said; she wondered if that is a disconnect that department chairs are responding to.

Professor Balas said these are issues the Committee will work on during the year, and if it can help improve things, the faculty would appreciate it. Professor Balas adjourned the meeting at 3:00.

-- Gary Engstrand