

**Senate Committee on Educational Policy (SCEP)
September 11, 2019
Minutes of the Meeting**

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 represent the views of, nor are they binding on, the senate, the administration or the Board of Regents.

[In these minutes: Welcome and Introductions; Chair's Updates; Committee Orientation; Policy Orientation; Action on the 2023-24 Twin Cities/Rochester Academic Calendar; Volunteers for SCEP Duties; Agenda Items for the Year]

PRESENT: Jennifer Goodnough (chair), Toni Abts, Julia Brokaw, June Carbone, Thomas Chase, Dan Delaney, Stacy Doepner-Hove, Sara Hurley, Otto Johnson, John LaVelle, Nathan Mukai, Katherine Scheil, Jacob Smiley Bob McMaster, Robert Poch, Nevin Young

REGRETS: Scott Lanyon, Brian Sick

GUESTS: Stacey Tidball, director, Compliance, Academic Support Resources

OTHERS: Etty DeVeaux, chief of staff, Graduate Education; Jessica Kuecker Grotjohn, assistant to the vice provost, Office of Undergraduate Education; Leslie Schiff, associate dean, Undergraduate Curriculum, Office of Undergraduate Education; Karen Starry, assistant to the vice provost and dean, Graduate Education

1. Welcome and Introductions

Professor Jennifer Goodnough, chair, called the meeting to order and welcomed members. She called for a round of introductions, and members introduced themselves.

2. Chair's Updates

Next, Goodnough updated the committee on the following items:

- The provost search: Goodnough noted that she served on the provost search committee, as policy stipulates that SCEP should have representation. The deadline for applications was early July, and the pool was strong and diverse. Goodnough reported that she was not sure what the timeline was in terms of bringing finalists to campus.
- Women's basketball request to hold a game on a study day: Goodnough thanked those who attended the online meeting earlier in September to address this request. SCEP approved the request, and the Department of Intercollegiate Athletics was very appreciative.
- Educational policy review process: Goodnough informed members that a small group—consisting of herself, Faculty Consultative Committee (FCC) leadership, University Senate Office representation, and members of the provost's staff—was being convened to examine the process of comprehensive review for educational policies. Since there are so many educational policies that require SCEP consultation, the hope is to decide whether all need to be reviewed every four years, or if some can be reviewed less

often, and also to streamline the process so that the faculty (via SCEP, the FCC, and the Faculty Senate) have the final say on the policies that are under the purview of the faculty.

- Syllabus email: Goodnough informed members that Rebecca Ropers, vice provost for Faculty and Academic Affairs, had asked SCEP to consider sending out an email containing reminders regarding syllabi to the faculty. Goodnough composed such a message and it went out at the beginning of the school year. Goodnough reported that she had received a lot of positive feedback on the message.
- SCEP membership composition: Goodnough noted that P&A serving on SCEP are supposed to be eligible for the Faculty Senate, but it came to light the previous year that the Committee on Committees had not been following that rule. She said that moving forward, the Committee on Committees will return to following the bylaws, until and unless the committee decides to amend its membership. Current P&A members may serve out their terms, but Goodnough stressed that more tenured faculty need to be appointed, as the chair must be tenured. Stacy Doepner-Hove expressed strong support for examining the membership to determine whether it should be amended to include designated seats for P&A who are not eligible for the Faculty Senate. Other members agreed.

3. Committee Orientation

Next, Amber Bathke, senate associate, University Senate Office, provided the annual [committee orientation](#), which goes over the function and structure of the senates and their committees, committee actions, logistics, and committee and meeting etiquette. Bob McMaster asked whether the Council of Liberal Education reported up through SCEP, noting that in the past SCEP had approved CLE's membership. Bathke and Goodnough said they did not think so, but would investigate the history of this issue.

4. Policy Orientation

Goodnough then turned the floor over to Stacey Tidball, director, Compliance & Continuity, Academic Support Resources, who presented an [orientation on the policy review process](#).

5. Action on the 2023-24 Twin Cities/Rochester Academic Calendar

Tidball then presented the proposed 2023-24 Twin Cities/Rochester academic calendar for SCEP approval, as required by the Administrative Policy: [Academic Calendars](#):

2023-24 University of Minnesota Twin Cities and Rochester Calendar

Fall Semester 2023 (70 class days)

OPTION A (two study days)

September 4	Monday	Labor Day holiday
September 5	Tuesday	Classes begin
November 23-24	Thurs.-Fri.	Thanksgiving holiday
December 13	Wednesday	Last day of instruction
December 14	Thursday	Study day
December 17	Sunday	Study day

December 15-16, 18-21	Fri.-Sat., Mon.-Thurs.	Final exams
December 21	Thursday	End of the term
<u>OPTION B (one study day)</u>		
September 4	Monday	Labor Day holiday
September 5	Tuesday	Classes begin
November 23-24	Thurs.-Fri.	Thanksgiving holiday
December 13	Wednesday	Last day of instruction
December 17	Sunday	Study day
December 14-16, 18-20	Thurs.-Sat., Mon.-Wed.	Final exams
December 20	Wednesday	End of the term

Spring Semester 2024 (70 class days)

January 15	Monday	MLK holiday
January 16	Tuesday	Classes begin
March 4-8	Mon.-Fri.	Spring Break
April 29	Monday	Last day of instruction
April 30, May 1, 5	Tues., Wed., Sun.	Study days
May 2-4, 6-8	Thurs.-Sat., Mon.-Wed.	Final exams
May 8	Wednesday	End of the term

May Session 2024 (14 class days)

May 13	Monday	May session begins
May 27	Monday	Memorial Day holiday
May 31	Friday	May session ends

Summer Session 2024 (39 class days)

June 3	Monday	Classes begin
July 4	Tuesday	Independence Day holiday
July 26	Friday	8-week summer session ends

Tidball explained that the calendar dates are fairly standardized, as there is not a lot of room for variation, except for the number of study days in the fall semester. Toni Abts asked if there was a deadline for the end of fall semester. Tidball replied that there is no official cut off date, but anything after December 22 typically elicits negative feedback from the campus community. Abts observed that there seems to be a preference for two study days, at least in the past few years; Tidball said that was true. Julia Brokaw indicated that having two study days is beneficial for student mental health.

Brokaw then asked if there was ever discussion of not holding classes on Election Day. Tidball acknowledged that it has come up and it is an important point, but fall semester is very tight. Students are encouraged to vote between classes or utilize early or absentee voting, she said; Goodnough added that voting is not an excused absence in the Administrative Policy: [Makeup](#)

[Work for Legitimate Absences](#), and that there are limitations on other activities being held on Election Day. Tidball noted that caucusing *is* considered an excused absence under [Makeup Work for Legitimate Absences](#).

Brokaw then asked whether there was a way to incorporate religious holidays from traditions other than Christian. Tidball stressed that she agrees with the principle, noting that small changes to the Administrative Policy: [Academic Calendars](#) had been made to make it date driven instead of holiday driven. However, she acknowledged that the calendar is still geared toward Christian holidays and that it is good to keep discussing the issue. She added that absences for religious reasons are excused under [Makeup Work for Legitimate Absences](#). Brokaw asked whether the semester could start in August to accommodate some of these days; Tidball responded that while other system campuses start in August, it is not considered feasible on the Twin Cities campus because of the Minnesota State Fair, as well as the K-12 system and other obligations. Tidball explained that the post-Labor Day start is why there is no fall break for the Twin Cities and Rochester campuses, although other campuses have them. Goodnough said that the fall break issue was discussed at the recent FCC retreat in the context of student mental health: there are fewer mental health intakes at Boynton Health in the spring semester, and there is speculation that this is due to spring break. She added that in the past there had been discussions of changing Thanksgiving break to October to give students an earlier break, but students generally did not like the idea. Tidball added that there had been discussion of starting spring semester before Martin Luther King, Jr. Day; this idea was unpopular with a variety of stakeholders.

Thomas Chase asked why there are three study days in the spring semester, and Tidball explained that student feedback indicates that more study days are valuable, especially at the beginning of finals period, rather than the Sunday study day that sometimes falls after the start of finals. Goodnough observed that the Sunday study day is also related to the Christian holiday and wondered whether a study day could be on Saturday one semester. Chase said that bus service is reduced on Sundays, which could be one factor. John LaVelle asked why there are exams on Saturdays in the first place, and Tidball answered that it is primarily due to physical space constraints, as well as student exam conflicts. Goodnough wondered if holding exams on Saturdays encouraged faculty to violate policy and hold finals during the regular term. Tidball encouraged members to encourage their colleagues to notify the Office of Classroom Management if they will not be using a classroom on finals day; this would be a way to recoup and make better use of space, she said.

Returning to the issue of religious equity in the academic calendar, Sara Hurley asked if there was an appropriate body to look into the issue. Tidball supported the idea, but she was unsure of the process. She suggested that SCEP itself could look into it, or perhaps appoint a subcommittee to do so. Leslie Schiff, associate dean, Undergraduate Curriculum, Office of Undergraduate Education, reminded members that last year, the provost's office did send out information to faculty encouraging them to work with students who were observing Ramadan during finals week. She noted that when there are ways outside of the academic calendar to accommodate diverse student needs, the University encourages those conversations. Goodnough suggested finding out who initiates the calendars at each campus, and encouraging them to consider equity before sending the next one for approval. Tidball said that such a change would require careful

planning and work (such as communication, change management, consultation, etc.) in preparation for approval. Goodnough wondered if a FAQ could be added to [Academic Calendars](#), explaining calendar constraints such as the number of instruction days, the State Fair, public transportation, number of study days, so that people would know that the University acknowledges the equity concerns around the calendar and is seeking solutions to this very complex issue. Members agreed, and approved the calendar and the proposal to create such a FAQ.

6. Volunteers for SCEP Duties

Next, Goodnough solicited volunteers to serve as SCEP representatives to the following bodies:

- Public Engagement Council - Katherine Scheil volunteered
- Student representative to the Morse Teaching Award Committee - Jacob Smiley volunteered
- Student representative to the Graduate and Professional Teaching Award Committee - Julia Brokaw volunteered
- SCEP liaison to the Student Senate Consultative Committee (SSCC) - Otto Johnson volunteered

Goodnough thanked those who had agreed to serve.

7. Agenda Items for the Year

Next, Goodnough shared her list of possible agenda items for the year, which comprised issues left over from the previous year, concerns brought to her by the community, and the priorities of the vice provosts and deans of undergraduate and graduate education. She also solicited member suggestions for agenda items. The comprehensive list of possible agenda items mentioned is as follows:

- Continued discussion with Boynton Health about excused absence notes for one-time illnesses
- Continued discussion about equity in Student Rating of Teaching (SRT) surveys; Goodnough noted that the Women's Faculty Cabinet had presented a proposal for the provost to convene a task force to look at the issue
- Student mental health
- Update from the Office of Information Technology on the syllabus database idea
- Committee membership composition (regarding P&A participation)
- General education; Goodnough said that the October meeting would probably be devoted entirely to that discussion
- Update on the Graduate School's strategic plan from Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Education Scott Lanyon
- Digital badges for soft skills in graduate education
- Whether SCEP is meeting the needs of graduate education
- The changing higher education landscape, with Bob McMaster, vice provost and dean, Undergraduate Education
- Whether Big 10 athletics exceptions request have to come through SCEP - there was an assertion that they do not, but that does not seem to be borne out in policy

- Balancing academic freedom with consistency when there are many sections of one course,; perhaps invite Professor Jessica Larson, chair of the Academic Freedom & Tenure Committee, to join
- Student experience in hybrid and online courses
- Bookstore issue of faculty turning in book requests in April and being told in August that the bookstore could not get the books; this conversation could tie in with the access and affordable content discussion
- Team teaching
- Boynton Health insurance issues (resources for online students, access to insurance for students taking fewer than 6 credits on physical campus)
- Update on professional education
- Classrooms - shortage in the College of Science and Engineering of big classrooms
- Reports from the Classroom Advisory and ROTC Subcommittees
- Appropriate use of University and research funds; ethical practices training for researchers

Hearing no further discussion, Goodnough adjourned the meeting.

Amber Bathke
University Senate Office