

Minutes*

Faculty Consultative Committee
Thursday, September 17, 2009
1:00 – 3:00
238A Morrill Hall

Present: Marti Hope Gonzales (chair), Nancy Carpenter, Carol Chomsky, Chris Cramer, Shawn Curley, Janet Fitzakerley, Kathryn Hanna, Caroline Hayes, Emily Hoover, Brian Isetts, Walt Jacobs, Jeff Kahn, Russell Luepker, Jan McCulloch, Michael Oakes, Martin Sampson, Kate VandenBosch, Cathrine Wambach, Becky Yust

Absent: Melissa Anderson

Guests: McKnight Land-Grant Professors Arindam Banerjee, Giancarlo Casale, Ryan Elliott, Christy Haynes, Tian He, Alan Love, Julian Marshall, Katsumi Matsumoto, Jennifer Powers, Elizabeth Wilson; President Robert Bruininks

Other: Kathryn Stuckert (Office of the President)

[In these minutes: (1) discussion with the McKnight Land-Grant professors; (2) Faculty Senate docket; (3) discussion with President Bruininks; (4) committee business]

1. Discussion with McKnight Land-Grant Professors

Professor Gonzales convened the meeting at 1:00 and welcomed the McKnight Land-Grant professors to talk with the Committee about what is working and what is not for them and to encourage them to think about participating in faculty governance at the University. She informed them that the discussion would be off the record and only a notation of topics discussed would be included in the minutes. Those topics were as follows.

-- Accounting (mere mention of it elicited wide agreement from the guests that it is a problem): It takes a day to place a simple order; what used to take two minutes now takes 30; one does not know how much money one has in accounts; one must certify effort for more time than people spend on their work for a PI; the amount of effort and staff resources departments must spend on EFS is enormous; with budget cuts, departments have fewer support staff, and those staff are being used to deal with financial issues rather than supporting faculty and students; people need to keep shadow systems.

-- Distance education: This is not a good idea; it depends on what it entails—if it requires a lot of work to deliver special courses (that is, via online technology rather than in person), funds should not be used to support them; there are tradeoffs because what one does in classes and discussion sections is not translatable to distance education; there is a unique atmosphere at the University that cannot be delivered online; on the one hand, some students believe distance education just means sending videos of a class, while, very different and a great idea, is relying on two faculty at different universities to simultaneously conduct an online class; with budget cuts, the less-spoken foreign languages could be eliminated, but

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could be saved by dividing them up among institutions; it may work better for 5XXX and 8XXX level courses; who is in charge of content is important because if there is to be more emphasis on distance education, there must be a way to ensure comparable content with regular courses. The discussion suggested there is need for better coordination between the College of Continuing Education and academic departments.

-- The cost of research: Large grants (i.e., more than \$1.5 million) must be interdisciplinary, but it is difficult to reach out to colleagues; seed grants can work wonders in that they can bring people together to facilitate applications for large grants because they allow collaborators to work 4-6-8 months before seeking NIH or other federal grants; there is no support for development for a grant; the University should not build too many bureaucracies and faculty should be responsible for identifying collaborators, and seed grants are a good way to help accomplish that, but big grants do require a lot of knowledge and administration to get them together (if one finds the right people to work with, who know the agency, that is an enormous help); it is of great help when faculty can talk with people who know what's going on in the federal agencies; it is illogical that people paid on grants cannot receive salary increases when the grant funds provided money for the increases, but the Provost's office has said "no" to salary increases even where the funding is available.

-- Foreign students: The University wants to be an international institution but the situation here is very difficult for foreign students because the restriction to one-year contracts means students cannot get a Green Card; graduate students can only work as RAs or TAs, which pays less than \$1000 per month, but they face a lot of fees that U.S. citizens do not; most fellowships are only for U.S. citizens, so coming to the University of Minnesota essential means a student must come from a family that is independently wealthy, which is not one's idea of an international university .

-- Job climate: with a lot of retirements, faculty positions are disappearing because of budget cuts; from a junior faculty perspective, the senior faculty retire and are not replaced—but the burdens all remain, so junior faculty see that it is just a matter of time before they "get hammered with an increased workload" (this may vary by area, and units with more endowed chairs may be better off); the situation is good now, but junior faculty could be ripe for recruitment by other institutions if their administrative workload increases; if the University wants to develop loyalty so that faculty want to pursue their research AT THIS INSTITUTION, some steps must be taken to remove that sense of future dread; it is not bad for junior faculty today but the experience could turn negative in the future, especially given the budget cliff and the disappearance of federal stimulus funds; in the case of one department, it has hired three junior faculty while another Big Ten school has hired seven, and recruited 80 graduate students versus 15 at Minnesota; the Achilles heel for Minnesota is support for graduate students: the best applicants are going elsewhere because they receive much better packages (e.g., a \$30,000 fellowship versus a \$10,000 teaching assistantship here), so no matter what they do they cannot get the best graduate students; the Graduate School fellowships are very good but the needs to increase the number of multi-year offers.

-- Promotion and tenure: The new 7.12 statements are finally coming into effect but there is no formal mentoring for junior faculty in some departments, and one wishes there had been; one individual up for tenure was happy with the process because in the department the junior faculty are allowed to sit in on the tenure-vote discussions (not about them, and they do not participate), so all understand how the process works and there is no mystery, and the junior faculty also serve on the promotion/tenure/merit committee; mentoring is completely a function of the individuals doing it and there is no commitment on the part of the department to the process; an annual letter simply informing one that he or she is "doing

OK" is not helpful because there are always areas where one can improve; being designated a McKnight Land-Grant Professor helps prepare for the promotion-and-tenure process and also facilitates departmental review because the professorship is a University seal of approval.

One of the McKnight professors commented that "as a group, we are (I think) pretty content. Despite the free flow of complaints, I think that we as a group are overall quite happy with the University. I also believe that the McKnight program does help build loyalty to the institution."

Professor Gonzales thanked the guests for their comments and said the Committee would follow up on them.

2. Faculty Senate Docket

The Committee approved the Faculty Senate docket after removing one item.

3. Discussion with President Bruininks

Professor Gonzales welcomed the President to the meeting. The President and the Committee touched on a number of topics over the next hour.

-- Light-rail transit; the President is committed to supporting faculty interests.

-- Sustaining excellence and change in the "new normal."

-- The desirability of a Committee discussion of the "high tuition, high aid" environment for students (this year, for the first time, tuition revenue will exceed state funding, by \$60-70 million; that environment is one reason the University has raised much more money for scholarships and fellowships; the question is not how to keep the rate low but how to ensure affordability).

-- The need to revisit the liberal education requirements and degree requirements in order to improve the four-year graduation rate, but the effort should be driven by the faculty, not from the top, and it should not supplant existing college and governance processes; any special groups appointed should feed back into the regular governance process.

Professor Gonzales thanked the President for joining the meeting and recessed it at 3:10.

4. Committee Business

Professor Gonzales reconvened the meeting following the Senate Consultative Committee and raised three issues.

-- The Health-Care Savings Plan has been discussed with some faculty who opposed it because of the inequities in federal tax law that bar the benefits of the HCSP for same-sex partners. Professor Hanna reported that she had meetings this summer with several faculty who are concerned about this issue and that the Committee on Faculty Affairs had unanimously passed the proposal again. [Subsequent to the meeting, the Faculty Consultative Committee voted to withdraw the item from the Faculty Senate docket and to cancel the Faculty Senate meeting.]

-- An athletics matter.

-- Whether the should join "Futurity," "an online news source featuring the latest discoveries in science, engineering, the environment, health, and more from North America's leading research universities." The participating universities are: Brown, Carnegie Mellon, Case Western Reserve, Cornell, Duke, Emory, Iowa State, Johns Hopkins, McGill, Michigan State, NYU, Northwestern, Penn State, Princeton, Rice, Rutgers, Stanford, Stony Brook, Texas A&M, Tulane, SUNY Buffalo, California – Berkeley, California – Irvine, Chicago, Colorado, Florida, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, North Carolina at Chapel Hill, U of Pennsylvania, Rochester, Southern California, Texas at Austin, Washington, Vanderbilt, Washington U in St. Louis, and Yale [<http://futurity.org/>]. Those Committee members left late in the meeting thought the University should do so. [Subsequent to the meeting, Vice President Himle, University Relations, after receiving an inquiry from FCC about it, decided that it would be a good idea for the University of Minnesota to participate.]

Professor Gonzales adjourned the meeting at 3:40.

-- Gary Engstrand

University of Minnesota