BSUFA Faculty Senate

October 18, 2004


Absent: T. Fauchald, M. Schmit

Excused: J. Haworth, R. Koch, V. Boudry, J. Brouwer

Guests: Nancy Erickson, Colleen Greer, Deb Peterson

Called to Order: 4:05 PM

Larkin: This is a continuation meeting of 10/04/04. The next regular meeting 11/1/04

REPORTS

Committee on Committees

Gritzmacher: Referred to the handout on election results. Please check representation to make sure it is accurate. The ballot for the Career Services Advisory Board will go out soon.

Dunn: Tom Murphy should be on the CEL Steering Committee.

Kippenhan: There is a clarification of IFO/MnSCU Graduate committees. I represent one, Louise Jackson represents the other.

Larkin: Please email changes to Sharon.

Gritzmacher: Committee on Committees will be looking at each of the Senate seats based on needing 6 faculty to represent a department. Fewer than 6 and a department must be in a pool. It has come to our attention that Mass Comm has 5 members. They currently appear to have their own seat but should be incorporated into the CAL pool. That would increase the size of the pool enough to create another seat. The Mass Comm senator could hold the seat until elections.

Rosenbrock: I move we accept the Committee on Committees report.

Wolf: Second
Motion carried.

Larkin: There are some IFO/MnSCU committees seeking members. Note that there are some people who have volunteered to serve on those committees. Senate needs to approve them. And we have lots of other seats to fill.

Gritzmacher: Last year while on State Wide Action Committee I learned that BSU offers more opportunities for committee involvement than the other Universities. This is both good and bad. We can truly be involved on campus and act on items that make a difference. But, we are also relatively small which means that many of us are over-committed. These state committees are important, please consider them, but keep in mind that you can only spread yourselves so thin. I told this to Pat Arsenault when she asked me if we had found a member for the GBLTA committee.

Milowski: I move we approve the volunteers for Ethics ad hoc (Jo Jordan), Costing (Papanek-Miller) and Faculty Salary Competitiveness (K. Smith).

Wolf: Second
Motion carried.
Presidents Report
Larkin: I was given permission by this body to invite administrators to Senate meetings when appropriate. I have invited VP/Provost Fredrickson to attend on 11/1/04 to discuss the Master Academic Plan.

Liberal Education Committee
Donovan: Two weeks ago, we distributed a written motion that was the result of our committee doing its work. We had a problem 3 years ago when MnSCU insisted that we align closely with the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum (MTC) for our liberal or general education requirement. This resulted in a hasty fix. Senate charged us with finding something better. We attended a conference and from that conference we determined to create a task force to propose and pursue revisions to the lib ed curriculum. We still need to meet the MTC, but it doesn’t mandate what we have and leaves room for considerable improvement. We can have a program that is more coherent, makes more sense to students, and will articulate better with majors. A large task force will dominated by faculty association members but will also include administration, student services, and students. This is a motion for Senate to accept this report and it doesn’t require a second.

Discussion
Nielsen: A member of the Business Administration department expressed concern about equal representation from smallest departments to largest. Could there be more equitable distribution? This gives smallest departments the same representation as largest.

Milowski: The size is unworkable. You won’t get much done. A bigger concern is that the lib ed committee is charged with care and feeding of lib ed. Why are we revising beyond lib ed? We have always done this through the committee. Lib ed has lots of help to do this. If you have the need to consult, go to those colleges, chairs, etc. Express your concerns and gather their input. Then come back and work with that. There is also the structural concern – what is this? We have a planning structure that we see as bloated and overgrown. It seems that this committee wants to be even more overgrown. Is this an ad hoc IFO task force or something else?

Donovan: It is a task force. A committee would be too big, as a task force, we envision it as dividing itself into working groups and having plenary sessions only occasionally. We feel that this departure is necessary because we are contemplating going beyond the model of gen or lib as a compartmentalized program. Once you set aside that assumption, there are many ramifications. We believe that the various constituencies will be able to give us better information if we recognize them as full members. We did a lot of consulting and surveying.

Recognize Greer: We did focus groups, a questionnaire. How do faculty look at lib ed right now? We found that the variety in terms of courses and categories is seen as both a strength and a weakness. Many faculty see that with the structure now it is hard to do advising. Many also talked about the need to tie majors to lib ed in a better way than in the past. What are the goals and objectives? What is the mission? There are concerns about helping students develop better understanding/critical/creative thinking skills. They want lib ed to help get students ready for professional life. There is also a concern that we want to get control of lib ed back at the local level. Are we just warping ourselves to the MTC? Students don’t see the value of lib ed until later in school. We need to look at the smorgasbord approach to see if we can do it better. Currently, however, people are heavily invested in a particular model.

McManus: I’m perplexed. It seems to be preliminary. A task force carries out a task but the task isn’t all that well formulated. We need a set of principles then we can implement them. Reform
of lib ed is a vague term. Donovan said he had some principles, but the task force needs to be charged with those.

**Oldham:** I’m unclear about what Senate is being asked to do. Are we asked to establish a new body? If lib ed is proposing a process then Senate doesn’t have any action to take. I would say to lib ed that if this looks like what you want to do go ahead, your committee will bring back a product for our approval.

**Milowski:** What reform envisioned here? Maybe we could make clearer sense of the task force if we understood that. In response to Oldham and based on the charge at the top of the page, I think it looks as though this task force is going to do the work of the lib ed committee.

**Welle:** I represent six departments in the pool. I have had people come to me concerned about the email describing this. They don’t see how anything will get done with 42 members. There are concerns that the elements that need to be reformed are a ramification of the stakeholder issue – we need to think about the students.

**Hauser:** We would like to respond to each issue as it comes up. We looked at assessment and models. There are many colleges and universities that have gone through this process. You need a dynamic process rather than stipulated principles.

**McManus:** Can you describe an example of how this was done elsewhere.

**Hauser:** the most effective explanation was that this is a little like building an airplane while flying.

**Recognize Erickson:** The vision and purpose of lib ed has shifted ever so slightly in the modern world. Lib ed is no longer elite, but becomes an integral part of all learning. The program should make sense to students and to faculty. We need to make a connection based upon our culture here. It needs to be connected more carefully so that everyone buys in.

**Recognize Peterson:** I can respond to Milowski. One of the reasons we decided to suggest a task force was because we reviewed an article about this process. There are potholes that stand in the way of implementing curricular reform. One of those is working through an existing lib ed committee – assuming that it can be done through the usual structure. That committee already has much too do that takes much time.

**Drago:** I agree that size is too large. I also wonder why we are modeling after an institute. We should be modeling after schools of excellence like Harvard.

**Witt:** There is tension between need to get agreement and the concern about the size of committee. Can we meet in the middle? What are goals and objectives of lib ed. How do we accomplish those. Can a smaller committee provide us tentative goals and objectives? Once we agree on those then we can ask the question how will lib ed look. Then it would be more fruitful to look at a larger body.

**Dunn:** I appreciate hearing these comments. We thought long and hard. This discussion reinforces the need for the larger task force. I’ve actually served on a large task force and it worked well. But, it needs to be administered well. It can work. Size doesn’t have to be a barrier. This reinforces the need for the larger task force. As far as distribution of membership based on size of departments, all I can think of is senate vs. house of representatives. This is going to messy and we need philosophical debate. Please take a leap of faith with us. We need the whole university involved.

**Donovan:** I’d like to respond to Oldham. How does this relate to our current committee charge and why do we need to bring this structure to Senate at all? Lib ed as constituted must administer the currently liberal education curriculum. We are having to work on that regularly and assiduously. Our motion to the Senate is to keep you in the loop. Our meetings are open to all.
We also feel that it’s not appropriate for lib ed to bypass Senate in opening meaningful arrangements with administration. That belongs in the Meet & Confer process. Senate can give the Meet & Confer team direction. We want administration on board. Welle suggests that this will bring out of the turf war mentality. Part of what keeps us locked in is that we are afraid of losing FTEs. The MTC doesn’t mandate the smorgasbord approach. If we are ever going to break out of that we will need some assurances that FTE numbers aren’t going to come crashing down and cause a loss of positions. We need some safeguards in order to free the process for lib ed reform.

**Donnay:** It seems that the lib ed committee is still needed. There are lots of external factors. The lib ed committee has been informing itself of changes in lib ed. The committee is needed to spearhead and integrate the process. There may need to be some subgroups. There is no leadership within this structure. Is there enough strength to bring it all together? We still need the lib ed committee to know that we are following the constitution. I don’t feel comfortable with lib ed handing this off to the task force.

**Donovan:** Lib ed will be present in the task force. A positive majority of us. We are also suggesting in our motion that the initial convener be a lib ed committee representative.

**Dada:** I have been invested in liberal education for many years. Listening to all of you, it seems that most important element in this whole process is a vision - a 21st century liberal education vision. For that, for an excellent vision, only one person is needed - a creative thinker with a vision. Without a vision we will be lost like ducks in the fog. Once we do have vision, we need to make a comparison between where we are now and where we would like to be. We may start with an inventory of what we have, and than determine how to get where we would like to be. We have to be mindful, though, since this may create a lot of stress for all of us. Funding cuts and other obstacles that may be awaiting us in the near future, have to be taken into account throughout this process.

**Bland:** My department wanted to know why we are changing it now. Why do it again? It’s happened several times over the past few years. I need more specifics. How much flexibility do we really have with the MTC?

**Drago:** Why do we have to accept a certain model in advance without discussing alternatives?

**Hauser:** The institute we went to had representatives from many small universities like ours. They told us that you need to figure out what you need to do; you can’t impose a model. The only model is that there is no model.

**Greer:** As we looked at models, many schools have developed models that work for them. The question is can we get stuck in one spot. We are constantly changing. We are in the moment. We made quick changes a while back, and now we were asked to look at what would work for this institution, by Senate. This is why we are looking at things the way we have been.

**Drago:** A model would cost nothing. I don’t see a plan. I don’t like the idea of you experimenting with students. I was in a country that did that. You can’t experiment with real people without accepting responsibilities for the consequences.

**Dunn:** What do you mean?

**Drago:** You can’t walk into a dark room without turning on the light.

**Dunn:** A task force will do that. I think it is riskier if eight of us come up with a model. We have the MnSCU categories and we can manipulate them in whatever way we want. No one says this will be easy or streamlined. It will be messy, but it has to be done and it has to be democratic.
Milowski: Are we ready to take action, or would you as a committee regroup in light of this discussion. This is a very important decision. Will you go back and bring a slightly revised motion to us?

Drago: It seems that a science person should head science; a math person should head math, etc. Then the committee should reorganize that section. I wouldn’t want to influence history. I don’t think we should waste the time discussing in advance what we are going to do given that we don’t know the direction we are going.

McManus: The task force isn’t being empowered to do anything. It would have to come back to us. I am not free of doubt that this will be successful, but we don’t have much too lose. The risk certainly seems worth it. It is a risk but the committee thinks we should take it.

Donovan: Like Dunn, I am having trouble understanding some of the objections of Drago. But one was why not model our program after a “leading institution like Harvard.” That might be a great idea but it’s kind of a package deal. Their lib program is designed to fit certain profiles. We would have to reject lots of students.

Welle: This is a good discussion. I think I can go back and say to people that the process will be a leap of faith. It is good to want to be more inclusive. Considering the amount of time we have, we need to get the broadest representation. We need to think about the culture of the institution and the administration – we need to pursue this an ideal rather than worrying about job security. We could look at departmental mergers – I was disappointed that the administration wouldn’t give us approval for that when we proposed it before.

A Henry: I need specifics. What can I take back to the Department of Education? I would like to hear what it is that you want or need. I have heard lots of generalizations; I only do specifics.

Hauser: I agree. There are many models that we would draw from but we haven’t given you the idea. I move that we extend the meeting until 5:30.

Nielsen: Second. Motion carried.

Dunn: Some ideas we are discussing are fewer models and more principles. Connecting the majors to lib ed is a good idea. Oral and written communication and critical thinking skills are important. What would lib ed look like that connected better to the majors? How can we get to them as freshmen rather than waiting until they are juniors? We need to get away from the check-off categories of lib ed. We haven’t brought you a model, because we have spent our time talking about principles.

Bland: Greer said Senate charged the lib ed committee with revamping lib ed.

Hauser: We said look at lib ed, not necessary revamp it.

Witt: I believe that before we do any of that we need to figure out goals and objectives. Then we can look at models. This needs to be brought back piece meal rather than the entire package. That way we can have input and meaningful debate.

Milowski: If you have already had this discussion, why haven’t those principles been shared with us? Connecting lib ed to the major makes me think of vocationalism and I don’t see that as a positive. What do you mean by that?

Nielsen: I have the same question.

Lee: The question is one of procedure – either lib ed should do it, or we let them go with the task force. We need to wrap this up.

Drago: With all the situations involving outsourcing, we need to help our students understand the global environment.
**Weaver:** Milowski asked what does lib ed want to do. It is our decision, not the decision of lib ed.

**Hauser:** Vocationalism is also a concern of mine, but the principles of critical thinking will be to prepare students to do better in the major. It is more comprehensive.

**Donnay:** Related to structure, how would decisions be made in the task force. How will the task force determine a quorum?

**Donovan:** The task force would have to devise rules of its own. That’s why we are holding back a bit on some of the principles. Rules of procedures and quorum could have the effect of getting nothing done. We haven’t even stipulated that the chair must be a faculty member. We don’t want to lock in all their options. We would want these ideas brought back piecemeal. Historically, the whole package has been brought back and then there is argument. It’s take it or leave it. That is a pitfall.

**Brown:** We are doing the work of the task force right now. I keep hearing principles. We as a body should take on the principles. That would give a charge to the task force.

**Oldham:** I move we amend the resolution to include: The liberal education committee will make monthly progress reports to the Senate during the tenure of the task force.

**Drago:** Second. I also want to make a further amendment that it is bi-monthly.

Motion carried with amended language.

Vote on the original motion by Donovan.

Motion carried.

Adjourned 5:30 PM

Respectfully submitted,
Sharon Gritzmacher