

3-2-2009

## Scholastic minutes 03/02/2009

Scholastic Committee

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University of Minnesota, Morris  
Scholastic Committee  
Minutes #13, 3/2/2009

The Scholastic Committee met on 3/2/2009, in IH 217.

Members present:

K. Barron, S. Boyd, C. Cole, J. Deane, D. DeJager, S. Haugen, D. Magner, B. McQuarrie (Chr), L. Meek (Secy), J. Nellis, J. Pelletier, A. Raymond, J. Schryver, C. Strand

The committee discussed the history of the Scholastic Committee; how the Committee might need to be proactive in redefining the role of the Committee, Chair, Secretary; and the interpretation of the oversight of the committee of the Office of Admissions.

The Scholastic Committee was formed more than 40 years ago, as UMM itself was developed. At that time, Stephen Granger was the first person hired to help develop the college, and he served in several administrative positions that essentially made him Dean of Students. As such, he was concerned with every aspect of student life, including student affairs, academics, enrollment projections, and admission. At this time, since a committee was needed to formulate, regulate and grant exceptions to policy, oversee academic standing of students and oversee the quality of student admissions, the Scholastic Committee was formed. Granger served as the secretary to the committee and was the administrative member of the committee. Since his retirement, and with the advent of systemwide policies and computer technology to regulate many of those policies, the roles of the committee and of the secretary have changed, but have not been formally redefined.

More recently, with the change from quarters to semesters, the Committee was very active in formulating new policies and granting exceptions to fulfill our commitment to our students that they would be able to graduate following the conversion to semesters. As we move further from that conversion, it is clear that the committee has done an excellent job of changing policies to fit the new reality, since petitions have declined precipitously in the last few years (this year, not one petition has been considered by the committee). In addition, the committee has granted the Secretary and De Jager (support staff) permission to automatically approve certain kinds of petitions without having to engage the entire committee (permission that is reviewed each year), and this has contributed to the decline in petitions.

The Chair, Secretary and Support Staff (Executive Group of the Scholastic Committee) have been engaged in a discussion this year of what the role of the secretary actually is, or should be, and how oversight of Admissions fits into that portfolio. During fall 08, we tried looking at every student who had been admitted and asking the Office of Admissions to justify or explain problematical admissions. However, this proved to be time-consuming and unhelpful, since unless the future can be informed by the past, dwelling on past mistakes is not useful. It was also personally distasteful to both the Chair and the Secretary. Thus, the Executive Group of Scholastic discussed their concerns with Dean Contant. The Dean pointed out that the Secretary position had been formed around one specific person, and since that person and the combination of positions he held are no longer at UMM, the Secretary position needs to be redefined. She suggested that Scholastic could serve as an aid to Admissions, helping them crunch data and look for trends, by analyzing what has occurred in the past. The Dean did not see our role as campus watch-dog over Admissions. She said that we need to have years of consistent, easily analyzable and interpretable data to inform us about how future Admissions decisions are made.

Since that discussion, the Secretary thought about this advice and about our lack of retention leadership and decided that what might be useful is a database that includes every new admit-- including transfers,

from the beginning of each year--in which students are tracked to determine how well they do and whether we retain them. This database could incorporate information from the weekly applicant's list, Academic Alert, Scholastic probation and suspension, triage, etc and could form a comprehensive way to inform us on future decisions based on past actions and events. This could be used to influence both Admissions and Retention efforts. The Secretary has discussed this with Admissions (lukewarm response but gave the Secretary an idea of some data they would like to have) and with the Assistant Dean (interested and intrigued) and will discuss it with the Dean on 3/5/09 and report back to the committee. At this point, she asked the committee to give her feedback on this report and on her idea.

After much spirited discussion, the committee came to these conclusions:

- 1) There needs to be someone in charge of Retention, and this should not be Admissions, in whose portfolio it currently exists.
- 2) Scholastic should remain as an oversight body for Admissions decisions, and should disseminate this information to campus, but should not try to act in such a way as to direct Admissions on their procedures and decisions. This is up to the Administration (and the campus as a whole).
- 3) We need to generate, year-by-year, consistent reports that can inform Admissions, the Administration and the retention effort (whoever that is) on variables that affect student success and retention.
- 4) The current Secretary can act as a helpful adjunct to Admissions for data crunching, with the understanding that future Secretarys may not interpret the job description in this way and/or may not have the skills to do so.