

2-2-1987

Campus Assembly minutes 02/02/1987

Campus Assembly

University of Minnesota, Morris
Campus Assembly Meeting
2 February 1987

The campus assembly met on Monday, February 2, in the Science Auditorium.

Imholte announced that no new motions would be accepted after 5:30 p.m., and the meeting would adjourn at 5:45 p.m. unless a motion to extend the time was offered prior to 5:30.

Imholte said discussion would continue on the Fall Course (FC) and more specifically on the motion to drop the FC from the proposal.

Uehling offered a set of questions/comments about the FC that had not yet been raised and said he was concerned not so much with the answers, but with how the issues will be addressed.

1. If the alleged purpose of the FC is an introduction to liberal education, doesn't the use of a common syllabus suggest orthodoxy?
2. What is the place of the FC in faculty reward considerations?
3. What is the role of faculty in the FC? There have been suggestions that faculty put aside their degrees - perhaps in the sense of transmitting a body of learned doctrine, but certainly not in the sense of methodology or puzzlement about the process of liberal learning itself.
4. What is it that the supporters or architects of the FC want at this time? Is it an expression of trust and good will, and if so, what are the concrete reasons for extending them?

Purdy said he was not sure where the idea of a common syllabus came. The description of the FC calls for a common theme--common intellectual experiences. Ahern said that he had used the "common syllabus" phrase in the previous meeting because it reflected the task force and Curriculum Committee (CC) discussion. What he meant by it is the expectation that students will react to materials in common and there will be an emphasis on general lectures in common. He thought there was a connection between Uehling's #1 and #3 questions. The strength that faculty will bring to the fall course is methodology (raising questions and puzzling over material), not orthodoxy.

Imholte replied to question #2. He said that individuals teaching the course will be evaluated as they are for other courses. Individuals not participating in the teaching of the course will not be penalized. In reference to #3, faculty teaching the course will come from disciplinary backgrounds. As far as #4 is concerned, he noted that "trust and good will" are terms seldom recognized by administrators.

Uehling elaborated on question #4. He felt that what the architects and supporters of the FC need now is the assembly's endorsement for the "skeleton" (framework). Since nothing will be implemented prior to F88,

there will be a year to "put flesh on the bones." Guyotte said there were compelling reasons to move now, the most important one being the availability of resources. He noted that resources will be not available to UMM in the absence of something new. It is important to use these external funds and assemble people to move ahead on the establishment of a FC.

Purdy asked if this meant that the group putting it together would have a free hand or whether they will be bound by what is in the proposal, i.e., must the course be offered in the fall and must it be offered for three credits? Lopez said that because the votes taken in the CC were so close, he felt there should be some flexibility for those working on the course. Imholte said if the vote is in favor of keeping the FC in the proposal, the group working on it will be obligated to work within the restrictions stated in the proposal. Farrell agreed. He said there had been considerable discussion in the CC and he believed that the document says what it means. Although Underwood agreed that there were a number of close votes in the CC, he pointed out that in the end, the CC voted overwhelmingly to support the document as is.

Straw said he has a suspicion that the course will not work. In support of his motion to eliminate the course, he outlined the following reasons:

1. Limitation of participants

- Can the majority of students as first quarter freshmen handle it?
- Can the majority of faculty handle it?
- Will a majority of faculty support it?

2. There are great expectations for the course. The three central foci are:

- It will define liberal arts;
- It is the answer to CTF;
- It will be "a" or "the" distinctive course.

The rest of Prosper is not too different from what is in place now. Is the FC what UMM wants to have as the distinctive element in its curriculum?

3. Is the assembly confident that the course will not deteriorate and become a "slough" course?

In response to #1 above, a student said that because UMM entrance standards are high, she felt that students could handle the course as freshmen. Another student felt that students in college for their first quarter would not get out of the course what they should.

Farrell said that the questions are unanswerable now because there is no course. Spring said the course is lacking in merit. He thinks it is a poor idea, but indicated he would be willing to set his feelings aside if the majority of teaching faculty are eager to go ahead with it. He suggested a straw vote to determine if two-thirds of the teaching faculty

support it. Van Alstine said there is confusion about what will go on in the FC. Right now the assembly is asked to vote on a framework, not a topic. He said the course could be an incredibly exciting opportunity and suggested as one possible topic, "the finite nature of the earth." This could be looked at from several different disciplinary viewpoints. Hinds spoke to those students who had reservations about the course. He had experienced those same reservations before taking such a course. He did, however, meet the challenge and felt that maybe one has to have had the experience to believe in it. He believed this to be true for faculty as well.

Latterell said he was opposed to taking a straw vote of certain subsets. He felt it inappropriate and said he would not participate in one. Hodgell felt just the opposite. She said it would be the teaching faculty who are involved in the FC and they should be the ones to decide if it is a viable program. If they are not going to support it and do so with enthusiasm, the course should not be implemented. C. Braithwaite agreed with Spring's suggestion. Imholte explained that the assembly is made up of several constituencies and pointed out that the constitution did not provide for separate votes.

Beranek recounted a conversation he had overheard among three faculty women after the last assembly meeting, in which one of them had remarked that they were certainly more intelligent than a group of freshmen students. This disturbed him. If this attitude is prevalent among faculty members, how could the class be a stimulating one for students or faculty?

Gremmels said he was concerned with the amount of resources required for the course and felt there were other ways of using the resources more wisely. He said the course could require as many as 40 faculty. The dean would have to go to the division chairs, and they in turn would go to the discipline coordinators to find faculty to staff the course. Most of the Humanities faculty have indicated that they do not want to teach the course. The disciplines already are facing problems in trying to meet the needs of majors and non-majors. Something may have to be eliminated. Gremmels said he has great reservations about the proposal as written and would vote in favor of the motion to eliminate it.

Goodman referred to the course as a phantom and wondered how he could possibly vote on such a proposal. He used the analogy of buying a car without knowing the facts in advance. Ahern thought the analogy could be a useful one in comparing it to what is before the assembly now. He said the first decision to make is whether one wants to buy a new car. Then one needs to decide who will search for it. Folks are not being asked to "put money down" sight unseen. The vehicle will come back to the assembly for approval.

Ahern pointed out that the FC will give faculty the opportunity to know freshmen better. It will give faculty the ability to identify which students are having difficulty and need help. In regard to the issue of resources, 40 faculty would be the very maximum number needed, and that would be very unlikely. It more likely will take about 30 faculty over

the first couple of years. The desire is to have wide participation, but Ahern cautioned the assembly not to confuse desire with necessity. Necessity calls for about one-third of the faculty to participate.

Klinger stated that nothing in the FC calls for the elimination of courses. Faculty members might not offer a course during the year they are teaching the FC, but that does not mean the course will be eliminated. He thought the car analogy was a poor one. The assembly is not being asked to buy a "pig in a poke." Money will be provided from outside sources for someone or some group to design a course and bring it back to the assembly. This is a very different situation from that implied by the analogy of buying a car. Goodman reminded the group that many people had also voted for Nixon because of his secret plan to end the war.

Uehling said he opposed Straw's motion for the following reasons:

- It will deny UMM part of its future;
- He has an aversion to killing "skeletons";
- He wants to see what the course looks like;
- Within the context of the institution at this time, the course has more of a chance of working than it would have 20 years ago;
- The resource issue is a bright one;
- The course could cause faculty to reconsider their own views regarding the process of liberal education itself;
- The course will continue to stimulate faculty to examine what it is they do in the context of liberal education.

Hodgell said the resources available depend on taking them from the upper division courses and putting them in the lower division courses. What happens to classes if 30 faculty teach the FC? What happens if a course is not offered in the only year a student can take it? Ahern replied that the statement Hodgell is concerned about was in the original task force report, but is not included in the proposal before the assembly. He said in assessing the need for additional resources, the CRPC felt that the resources should go to disciplines needing to free up faculty for the FC. He stressed that no one is talking about reallocation as the sole source of faculty for the course. However, if the FC did have to be staffed by reallocation only (which it does not), the reduction would be from 3 1/3 to 5% of the course sections UMM offers in a single year based on 1984-85 figures.

Hinds made the following observations:

- The central administration has made it clear that UMM needs to be innovative in order to receive additional resources. The FC is one aspect of the document that addresses innovation most clearly. UMM must be responsible in a constructive way if it wants to maximize the opportunity to receive additional resources.
- The proposal has been widely debated and holds a lot of trade offs; it is a political compromise.
- If a major section of it is ripped out, the whole thing might topple.

- In answer to Gremmels' concern about disciplines being understaffed, the proposal calls for a commitment. Everyone will make sacrifices. There must be good will and trade offs if the document is to survive.

Campbell said it seemed clear that UMM does not have a choice. Keller and Benjamin have both indicated that there simply will not be new resources for UMM to continue to do what it has been doing. If UMM is to capture resources, it needs to do something different.

Kissock said that change is difficult and sometimes traumatic, but there is value in this proposal. It will bring faculty from different disciplines together for the purpose of creating a common experience on this campus. UMM needs to make changes and this is an improvement over what there is now. Three credits is 1/60th of a degree program, and amounts to 3-4% course time of faculty. It is an important change that can make UMM grow in the future.

Klinger pointed out that resources will be plugged into holes left by the FC. The hiring of additional faculty will mean an opportunity to meet some of the competencies. New positions can be designated to missing parts of the curriculum, not simply the FC.

C. Johnson asked if the course remains in the proposal, will it be contingent on new resources? Imholte said additional resources will be needed, but he could not be specific as to the amount.

A secret ballot was called on Straw's motion to eliminate the FC with the following results:

Yes: 28

No: 68

Abstentions: 3

Imholte said the assembly would meet again on Monday, February 9, at 4 p.m.

The meeting adjourned at 5:40 p.m.

Submitted by Pat Tanner