

Review and Planning Committee Minutes for January, 7 1998

Present: Tammy Leja, Kris MacPherson, Alan Norton, Jim Pence, Matthew Rohn, Charles E. Umbanhowar (Chair), David Van Wylen.

We approved the minutes for the December 18th meeting with some minor corrections and spoke about how we should inform in a timely fashion each of our domains about the Dean's Council consultations. We decided that each of us will take turns drafting a summary and send it on to other RPC members. Members may use the summary as they see fit in their communications with their own domains.

We next turned to the major item on the agenda, consideration of sabbatical leave proposals. The committee reviewed the report of the Sabbatical Leave Proposal Subcommittee and recommends to the President 17 proposals that the Subcommittee found currently of value. RPC asked that the 11 being further evaluated go through the full process in their final consideration. The Dean will be working with the proposers and others to try and make sure that these individuals have before the committee sound proposals meeting the guidelines. He will pass his findings on to the Subcommittee in a timely fashion (before early February), which will present its final recommendations to RPC.

The discussion of the report led to a broader discussion of sabbaticals at St. Olaf and issues that RPC also found itself facing last year. Faculty increasingly appear to regard sabbaticals and the 20% salary stipend allotted to some as de facto entitlements, and this has created problems for the review process and morale when proposals are not seen as fitting criteria. What, we wondered, are minimal standards if a sabbatical is an entitlement versus an opportunity? Some faculty thinking of it as, in essence, an entitlement admit to submitting hastily drafted proposals and of sometimes paying little attention to the guidelines. Some of these people have good projects but don't make that clear in the proposals, or haven't developed matters well by the deadlines. Some do activity totally different than they propose, which poses additional problems when the Dean reviews their required post-sabbatical reports. The climate of a sabbatical and stipend as an expectation and other factors has also apparently lessened the incentive for people to seek grants to fund proposals. St. Olaf will spend about a quarter of a million dollars this year if we fund all of the proposals (as we have budgeted to do). We could, though, experience significant savings if more people had outside funding, and they would serve themselves and the institution well if they had their scholarship better known and honored through the grant process as is more common at other institutions.

RPC considered what we could do about this set of problems. The Dean noted that the faculty had to make some clearer decisions about what a sabbatical is (e.g., entitlement, a faculty development tool, etc.) particularly with a new, more flexible climate ahead of us where faculty will need time away from teaching to sharpen their knowledge in new areas, develop new skills, take part in internships, etc. We should probably work with the Faculty Development Committee on this. But, a new consensus is needed now on the nature and status of sabbaticals before it becomes more of an ambiguous and contentious issue. Most changes in sabbaticals require major legislation involving the Manual, so we saw little value at the present in remedying things by

legislative means now. We hoped that some communications from RPC to the faculty could clarify matters. We also talked about involving chairs more fully and earnestly in the review process; having peer review for chairs submitting their own proposals; and, establishing means so that people could reform poorly done proposals or seek funding after they submitted a proposal. The Dean has asked the staff in Corporate and Foundation Relations to start noting 2 years before applications are due who are faculty expecting sabbaticals so that early efforts can be made to seek funding for their projects.

Once we concluded our discussion about sabbaticals, the Dean then told us about an opportunity he had to allot Tony Becker time next year to work on revisions in the Faculty Manual and sought our approval, which we gave, for taking advantage of this possibility.

We ended the meeting with the Chair informing us of 2 matters that we need to address this month. We will meet again on January 21st and 28th for each. The meeting that best suits the associate deans' schedules will be devoted to the next consultation on faculty staff planning. The other meeting will take up a concern some faculty have about the structure of the Admissions, Retention, and Financial Aid Committee. Those who have voiced concern about this and members of the committee will be invited.

The meeting was then adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
Matt Rohn