

Review and Planning Committee Minutes for October 29, 1997

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

The Chair began the meeting with our approving the October 15th minutes and by welcoming the many members of the Dean's Council in attendance.

He then turned the floor over to Dean Pence for a presentation on a staff planning proposal which the Dean hoped might replace the program review proposal we had been considering. The Dean prefaced his presentation by noting a few matters of context: 1) Confusion exists on campus about the differences and relationships among program review, program assessment, and what the college is seeking to do in terms of resource allocation. He noted that the resource allocation concerns have almost nothing to do with assessment in the professional sense of that term, and most professionals view program review as part of a cyclical activity (often growing out of assessment preparation). 2) The Faculty Manual has no policy governing program review and does not define what a program is.

He would like to circumvent the confusion produced by different uses of terms and avoid the Faculty Manual's lack of clarity regarding program review protocol by having the Dean's Council make resource allocations based upon the mandate for faculty staff planning as spelled out in Section 4-V of the manual. Formal faculty staff planning has not been pursued at St. Olaf in recent memory, but could be profitably used now, he noted. He proposed that it be pursued in the following basic way at this time, relying on the mandate in the manual: "The Dean of the College, in consultation with the department chairs and the Associate Deans of the Faculties [who will directly assist the Dean in his work], and the directors of special programs [and heads of programs where appropriate]" shall look at the mix of elements influencing "allocation of resources...availability of personnel...long-range continuity and balance in faculty competence, opportunities for new faculty appointments and tenure, assurance of sufficient flexibility to allow the College to undertake new programs and to expand or contract in response to changes in student interest, student body size, or other contingencies without being forced to terminate tenured personnel [or forgo reviews of tenure-track personnel based upon merit];" and, so forth. He will make determinations about resource allocations by sometime in April with plans for having the College fully realize those changes within 3 years. This will likely lead to decisions that include allocation of zero resources for some programs the Dean and the community finds we cannot in good conscience afford given other needs, but it will not necessarily expunge a program or involve a full review of a program. "[This particular] faculty staff planning [activity] shall be reviewed periodically by the Review and Planning Committee. Each department shall be responsible for developing both short- and long-range staffing plans within the context of the college statements on staff planning. All full-time and tenured or tenure-track part-time faculty members should be involved in the staff planning. Staffing plans shall be made available to all members of the department.."

Following the Dean's presentation, we discussed this idea and the ancillary elements of the process outlined by the Dean in his report to us. RPC, at the urging of the Chair, centered the

discussion around 3 matters: The first of these arose in the form of a motion we eventually passed unanimously: "RPC suspends discussion of all previous mechanisms for review and adopts the Dean's proposal for using faculty staff planning."

In our discussion, committee members expressed concern about what criteria would guide the Dean and Dean's Council in their decisions. How, for example, would the Mission Statement, Strategic Plan, etc. relate? All agreed that this should be studied more and be one of the topics for the Dean's first meeting with RPC once the process began. A question arose whether the targeted reductions that departments had developed this past year would now prove moot. These remain important as our only current means for staying close to budget, the Dean and President noted, but will be superseded by the faculty staff planning if all goes well. The Dean was asked if such comprehensive and change-filled faculty staff planning could realistically be done by his office within the timetable proposed. He said that it had to get done that soon (for morale and program planning purposes) but agreed that this may require an adjustment in some Associate Deans' appointments.

Having passed the first motion, RPC then discussed and unanimously passed a second motion, which helps specify the character of RPC's involvement: "Review of the current faculty staff planning by RPC will take place at least once a month in consultation with the Dean and Dean's Council. This will allow RPC to address matters of criteria, progress, means of consultation, process, etc."

We last discussed certain particulars of the process enumerated by the Dean in his communication with us. RPC urged the Dean to inform the community about the proper channels and processes by which students, parents, alums and the like should voice views about the decisions being made in the faculty staff planning and avoid improper and unwelcome lobbying this way. We discussed how RPC would work with the Dean's Council in organizing forums, seminars and the like so that the community will have open means for voicing views and becoming well informed during the year. And last, we discussed how this whole plan will be presented to the faculty at the November faculty meeting. The Chair of RPC will introduce it in the context of reporting on our deliberations this year, and the Dean will help field questions and elaborate on matters. The President will help set the stage for this by informing the community about similar administrative and staffing planning that he and SALT are developing.

More needed to be decided about the presentation to the faculty, so we agreed to meet Wed., Nov. 5, at 3:30 in Library 515; our agenda will include discussion of what should be said at the faculty meeting, and what handouts, if any, should be included.

The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
Matt Rohn