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Page 1

Notes from Division Heads meeting

Re Dean KENE

August 18, 1988

The Division Heads reviewed the status of the Dean's accounting of School of Public Health funds available. They acknowledged that more is known now than before as a result of requests for review with the Dean's office, and that the Dean responded minimally to a request for openness of the budget. The detailed breakdown we requested was not completely provided, nor was the history of funds available and used over his tenure. There was no solicitation by him of on-going collaboration with the Division Heads in setting overall priorities for recurring 0100 and ICR funds. There was, however, discussion of priorities for the lump sum University award from reserves as well as the priorities (changing) that the Dean has provided for Commitment to Focus funds in the event of a successful legislative appropriation. All issues of the discretionary funds available to the Dean are not clear. The School of Public Health budget information is not yet presented in a way seeking collegial development of School goals and priorities in their use.

The Division Heads conclude that the review process so far with three meetings with the Dean represents a significant improvement in knowledge and understanding of the Division Heads. It has not yet indicated a sincere desire by the Dean for on-going or full collaboration in planning and decision-making and therefore, has not yet established the trust essential for the Division Heads to work in consort with the Dean to forward School needs and priorities. The Division Heads find evidence the Dean may not trust the Division Heads' direction. There may be an attitude of the Dean sitting in judgement on all faculty and appearing to know what is best for all. He customarily makes unilateral major decisions without openness, without consultation, and

without sharing of the decision process. These budget meetings appear to be making progress in modifying his customary behavior.

Division Heads note that they are required to seek out the Dean to get the needed information about School budgets and policy, that we have done this repeatedly and in a positive manner, that we have consistently indicated our desire to support the Dean, requiring only common courtesy, basic collegiality and normal accountability. They note that mutual confidence and trust can only occur when the decision-making and governing process is open and consultative. Division Heads note that they are often bypassed on faculty issues, issues of reorganization and planning and only "dealt with" when they take the initiative and request it. The Dean usually attempts to direct and set the agenda of Division Heads meetings with him, not seeming to recognize these first meetings are at our direction. If and when a normal, functional and trusting working relationship develops with the Dean, Division Heads could consider his agenda setting. At the moment, Division heads require to set the agenda because of the evidence the Dean has different agendas, or avoids collaboration.

The Division Heads note that the Dean requests and requires a full and regular budget statement from the Divisions, but apparently provides full accountability of the SPH office budget to no one.

Division Heads observed that the Dean had made real progress in getting the lump sum from the University reserves and projections for sizeable new continuing allocations to the School if the University budget goals are achieved in the Minnesota legislature. They also recognized progress the Dean has made in the area of longterm care and its Chair, the Dean's personal area of skills and priorities. Division Heads noted the excellent progress that the Dean had made in

appointing three fine new Division Heads. They also recognized the necessity for the evaluation and some reorganization of School of Public Health programs and faculty that the Dean brought about. They noted, nevertheless, that the reorganization was "planned" without help and implemented with maximal damage to individual faculty self-respect and maximal political backlash. This was clearly due to the abrupt, nonconsultative, non-attention-to-detail manner in which it was carried out. Moreover, the Division Heads find that much of the "reorganization" is little more than a facade. Major faculty, academic, fiscal, and organizational responsibilities were shifted to different Division Heads. Faculty were transferred that the Division Heads would not have recruited, having activities and skills largely unrelated to Divisional goals.

The Division Heads reviewed and discussed whether the Dean had provided major new direction and vision to the School in respect to the national public health and the School itself. They found some. The Division Heads considered the Dean's representation of the School in contacts with the community, within the School, in the University academic administration, at the legislature, and in the scientific and public health community. They came up with a wide impression and real evidence of a lack of relational skills and a consistently and widely-held negative image of the Dean affecting now the national and international image of the School.

The Division Heads were able to document further widely held concerns about the administration:

- 1) lack of openness on budget and academic School decisions and planning;
- 2) unilateral action and nonconsultative decision-making;
- 3) changing values and priorities with resulting confusion;
- 4) possible mismanagement of recruitment for positions and funding in the Division of

Environmental and Occupational Health;

- 5) possible mismanagement of the acquisition and reorganization of the Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention Office with long delays in building the academic program in AODAP, with antagonism of outstate campuses and maximal political damage at the legislature and others interested in alcohol issues;
- 6) possible mismanagement ~~of the Public Health Nursing program~~ of the Public Health Nursing program, with maximal damage to individual self respect and reputation and maximal political backlash from the public health community;
- 7) evidence of negative influence on personal decisions of solid School of Public Health faculty to leave the School, in several cases, and failures to recruit good faculty in several others;
- 8) exploitation of faculty for inappropriate grants and proposals;
- 9) lack of development of concerted, consistent approaches to major issues, such as health promotion, AIDS (research and community action);
- 10) breakdowns in the Dean's direct collaborations in research with faculty and staff;
- 11) acquisition of unfilled positions and ICR funds and holding them unused.

Other more detailed documentation follows about several of these events:

- 1) The arbitrary unilateral assignment of Mayo Chair to Environmental Health without consultation with Division Heads or the Administrative Council, assigning the only available School Chair to one Division. The decision was not a bad one, it was simply made without consideration of School-wide needs by others responsible for carrying out the mission of the School and without the common courtesy of discussion of the issues with them. Subsequently, a basically fraudulent search was allowed in which the strongest candidates recruited for this position were toxicologists, as included in the job description, for which persons the Dean had

no intention of passing if recommended to him by the search committee. This badly blackened the name of the School of Public Health in toxicological circles, a central basic discipline of Environmental and Occupational Health.

The Dean's interviews with the Mayo candidates were negative in every instance, including vagueness about what the Chair would bring with it, even to the principal candidate preferred by all, including Dean Kane, Dr. Pat Buffler.

2) The arbitrary and unilateral decision to break off the behavioral epidemiology group from Epidemiology into a separate Division and organization. This was deliberate, based on the Dean's prior concept derived from the perceived organization of other Schools, but poorly informed about the strengths and weaknesses of such arrangements. The deliberate threat to break up Epidemiology achieved a negative reaction. There was no attempt to bring the issue in front of the Administrative Council or Division Heads. When Epidemiology voiced its arguments against such a move the reply was: "I'll take your arguments into consideration, but in Rand Corporation our experience, when Divisions became too big, we simply had to break them up." So we had a direct threat based on preconceived ideas. The outcome of this threat which Dean Kane planned to vigorously implement with other aspects of the so-called School reorganization was that Dr. Blackburn called a general meeting of the Epidemiology faculty and invited the Dean and Assistant Dean Jim Boen for a full discussion of the issue. The weaknesses in Schools of Public Health in which Behavioral Sciences are separated off, the barriers to communications and collaboration created by such a separation, the intent of the faculty who came here to work on real health problems in collaboration with epidemiologists and physicians, the esprit de corps of the group, the competitive strength of the group and the strong insistence of the group that they had no desire or willingness to set themselves up as a separate Division, "convinced"

the Dean. He dropped the issue immediately. In two years it has not reemerged but the way in which he made and attempted to implement this decision arbitrarily, unilaterally and without discussion, created a major threat, the dissipation of much energy in worry, and a confrontational meeting that cost a great deal of energy, could have been spared by a normal consultative process of decision-making. It also resulted in friction and a basic distrust of the Dean, on realizing how directly and arbitrarily the Dean functioned and intended to function in dealing with his particular view of the organization of the School on issues directly affecting the lives of many people. Though the faculty and the Division "won" that battle, and learned what kind of arguments and/or power confrontation could be successful with this Dean, he lost a great deal of trust, and revealed that he would not be orderly and thoughtful in decision-making, weakening the School, and his role, as a result of this loss of trust.

3. AODAP

Based on discussions among the administration (Vice President and Kane), a unilateral and arbitrary decision was made to eliminate the Office of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention and incorporate its staff and funding into the School of Public Health. It had initially been set up by a legislative special, operating as an independent organization, reporting to the Vice President for Health Sciences. The office carried out a service function and administered small research awards. It could in no way be called an academic activity but was a successful operation in what it regarded as its, the State Legislature's, mandate for alcohol and drug abuse prevention. It's well-paid co-directors had administered what they and the community considered a successful program. That office program was removed from them, Dr. Schaefer's academic title was taken away (put in K-track) and the group arbitrarily assigned to Epidemiology. The funds, nevertheless, continued for two years and still to be administered out of the Dean's office and the Dean continued to avoid consultation with the Division of Epidemiology responsible for this

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forced merger and continued to make numerous arbitrary and eventually extremely harmful decisions about the AODAP program. He arbitrarily and rapidly eliminated the AODAP research projects and its outreach service programs to other campuses without consultation with those program offices, or with the Director of Epidemiology purportedly now responsible for the Alcohol Program. This quickly came to the attention of the presidents of the University branches affected and then to the legislators who had been responsible for putting together the Office. Thus, an immediate political backlash occurred because of an arbitrary, poorly thought out and brusquely administered reorganization. The formerly successful careers of the two administrators ~~became~~ ^{12/03} became miserable: interim, ill-defined responsibilities in a highly "quantitative" Division in which they did not have faculty status to apply for research grants, little authority and their funds now controlled by the Dean's office. The emotional toll on all people concerned was untold, including the family of Dr. Schaefer whose wife was stricken with cancer at this time. Dr. Schaefer, through his normal contacts with friends in the legislature, expressed his dismay, not in any behind-the-scenes manner, but in a very natural way. One of the results was a threatened audit by the Attorney General's Office of the Dean's handling of the AODAP funds. We don't know whether that audit was or will be carried out. The Dean continued to administer and make decisions about the unit that he had assigned to Epidemiology, and appointed an external review committee, as a result of the political flack to the Vice President's office, to consider AODAP's future and make recommendations. This inhibited the Division for another year from making rational plans to develop an academic unit of alcohol studies, the viable alternative to the "take-over". Plans could have been developed quietly, quickly and effectively and within a year we could have had such an academic program and development, to which the Dean and Vice President could have "pointed with pride". Meanwhile, the School and Health Sciences was put in a highly defensive posture by inappropriate, ill-advised, rapid and arbitrary decisions. The situation is still not resolved, but the Division of Epidemiology, a year and a half later, received

permission from the Dean to advertise for a Senior Behavioral Scientist in the field and the search is now being completed in August, 1988 with three strong candidates. There may eventually be a modest alcohol program in the School of Public Health but the research funds and the outreach funds were lost completely, some \$80,000. Two fine people were rendered virtually nonfunctional for two years at a tremendous waste of money and human resources. The University got a black eye in the outstate University system and in the legislature and in the alcohol community, all quite unnecessarily.

FCC Visit

Division Heads were called before the Faculty Consultative Committee on the same day as their August 18 meeting to react to an FCC proposal to seek a faculty vote of no confidence in the Dean's administration. The Division Heads responded as individuals, but agreed completely on a number of issues in giving advice solicited by the FCC:

- 1) The Division Heads agreed that there was a broadly shared dissatisfaction with the Dean's administration and concern about the course and image of the School as a result.
- 2) That an anonymous faculty vote of confidence or no confidence would not be appropriately open or useful in solving the issues.
- 3) That the issues and complaints and proposed changes in administrative process should be sharpened and carefully focused by the FCC.
- 4) That the FCC confront the Dean directly with these issues within the purview of its responsibility, asking for open discussion and earnestly seeking specific steps to resolution.

5) The Division Heads agreed with the FCC proposal that immediately after the first meeting with the Dean on these issues, the issues and the steps proposed to solve them be made known by an FCC visit to the Vice President.

6) Division Heads will continue their regular meetings and discussions with the Dean to address issues it has identified and will keep the FCC apprised of progress.

7) That the Division Heads and FCC would share documentation of the strong and weak points in the present administration and continue to work together with the Dean and Vice President's office to improve working relationships and strengthen the School.

8) The FCC and Division Heads agree that there is some apathy, tension and fear of retaliation among the faculty and not just among those faculty identified by the Dean for poor performance. They agree that there is wide evidence that the Dean has carried out poor public relations internally and externally, with some notable exceptions as with private donors.

9) There is evidence the Dean has "insulted" numerous individuals and audiences by talking down and the appearance of intellectual arrogance. ["]
" appearing as if"

10) Decision-making and major policies are carried out in vacillating and highly autocratic, isolated fashion.

11) There is a general absence of any consistent, concerted, joint effort at planning and decision-making.

12) The Dean's office is isolated from issues and from people and the impact of this administration has become negative and sometimes destructive, both within and outside the University.

13) The Division Heads emphasize that they have repeatedly supported the Dean, including some of the more difficult early days of his administration and recently. They have consistently offered their support, but have usually been dealt with only at their request, and this year (1988) began to share with other faculty a failure of confidence and trust in their relationship with the Dean. They believe, however, that an open, direct and problem-solving approach to these issues can and should be taken, rather than revolution or attempts to discredit the Dean. The Dean has shown evidence of being responsive to rational argument and thoughtful confrontation.

It is nevertheless felt that unless recognition is clear of these complaints and issues at the level of the Dean and Vice President, and steps taken to improve the direction of the School of Public Health, that a problem- solving approach may eventually (soon) become impossible. In any case, it is agreed that the Dean, as well as Division Heads, should undergo a thoroughgoing objective review of performance at the five year tenure mark, or beforehand, if progress is not achieved in direction of the School of Public Health.