

# MARPECK DEANS

## Minutes of the Meeting

November 7, 2015, Baltimore, MD

**Present:** Trevor Bechtel, Michael King Fred Kniss, Robert Milliman, Deirdre Longacher Smeltzer, Sally Weaver Sommer, Brent Yoder

**Absent:** Rebecca Slough, Gordon Zerbe

1. **Opening activities.** Sally Weaver Sommer called the meeting to order. Sally invited each person to introduce himself or herself and offer an expression of gratitude.

Michael King provided an opening reflection using excerpts from the writings of Clayton Christensen and Jill Lepore on *disruptive innovation* and *refuge*. Engaged discussion followed, exploring the ways in which our institutes of higher education are and are not like a business. We recognize that we are “selling” a process of transformation that we want young people to go through. The goal is to maintain a clear mission and then think about how to work toward that mission within changing cultural demands.

It’s important to determine what to stop doing at our institutions when we simply can’t sustain all that we are doing.

2. **Approval of minutes.** The minutes of the 28 May 2014 meeting of the Marpeck Deans were approved as distributed.

Trevor Bechtel raised a question about the discussion noted in the minutes about resources for international students.

3. **Review of agenda.** Fred Kniss requested that a discussion of academic freedom policies and practices be added to the printed agenda.

4. **Update on Marpeck Fund.** The minutes from May 2014 Marpeck deans meeting indicated that there would be a policy revision at Portland in fall 2014, based on a request from the Mennonite Foundation for more detailed documentation of the disbursement of funds; however, Brad Born later reported that this policy revision was not needed. Bob will check to see if any further action is desired.

Because Robert Kreider has specified that “management” of the fund should remain in the North Newton, Kansas, region, Bob Milliman has inherited oversight of the Marpeck fund. Bob distributed a report (attached), which showed the endowment fund balance as of 30 September, 2015, was \$1,391,231.19. A three-year average of the fund using the 31 December balance for each of the past three years is \$1,386,776.76. We are limited to spending no more than 4% of that total in 2015, which would be \$55,471.06. To date, we have spent (or committed) approximately \$30,800 this year.

We noted the comments from Robert Kreider included at the bottom of the financial report, “I have no special counsel for your meeting, simply encouragement to use all of the funds in this year’s

allocation to enhance stimulation and fellowship among student and faculty on our several campuses. Not the least – to undergird the bonds of our shared faith community.”

**Consensus: Travel expenses and one night’s lodging will be covered for each Marpeck dean’s in attendance at this meeting.** (Receipts should be sent to Bob.)

## 5. Marpeck grants.

### **a. Review of process for applying and reviewing Marpeck grant proposals**

Sally reviewed the process for submitting and awarding grants: proposals are due January 1 and July 1; decisions are due back to applicants within two months; summary reports are due within one year of completion of the projects. The review of reports has been done primarily via email, although we could review via conference call if needed. The institution(s) running the project pay for expenses and then submit receipts to the fund manager (currently Bob Milliman) for reimbursement.

The decision has been made that EMU should have two voices or votes in deliberations about Marpeck grant proposals – one for the seminary and one for the rest of the university.

### **b. Reports from those receiving Marpeck grants during the last year**

Reports previously sent via email were reviewed.

### **c. Reports on what grant proposals we might expect**

Fred mentioned the spring 2017 History conference to be held at EMU.

Ross posed the question as to whether the Marpeck deans might benefit from an additional meeting specifically for the purpose of discussing institutional collaboration. The most pressing matter to be discussed is that of a possible online learning institution. We should have a conversation at the philosophical level first, before we examine the logistical considerations. Ross will work on determining when and where we might meet and drafting an agenda and budget.

6. **Planning for faculty conference in May 2016.** The 2016 MEA-Marpeck conference will be held in Kansas, jointly hosted by Bethel and Hesston. (See attached handout from Bob.) The facilities for eating, sleeping, and meeting have been confirmed. A goal of the conference is to help with the orientation of newer faculty to Mennonite higher education.

The proposed theme, “Fidelity of Place,” evoked significant conversation about the meaning of the phrase. The concept of *place* has been an important one in the Mennonite world. The theme can be pushed many different ways, which should be promising for the robustness of this as a conference theme.

The planning committee should consist of 5-6 people, including representatives from the various schools and from MEA. Elaine Moyer is the MEA contact person; MEA will help with logistics and funds. The group suggested various faculty members who would provide helpful input and represent diverse disciplines.

**Consensus: The 2016 MEA-Marpeck conference will be held in Kansas, May 25-27, with a theme of “The Fidelity of Place.”**

7. **Academic Freedom.** Fred explained that EMU has an “academic freedom policy” in place, but this is not a true policy (rather, it’s essentially a white paper). Consequently, EMU is now working on drafting an academic freedom policy. When Fred contacted Ross and Sally, he learned that neither Bluffton nor Goshen have one either. Subsequent discussion revolved around how the AAUP statement might be modified to serve the needs of our institutions.

8. **Institutional Updates.**

- a. **Sally.** Bluffton has had recent discussion about what appropriate expectations are for the number of hours that a full-time faculty member will work in a week. Ross stated that Goshen also needs to figure this out because they have some faculty at 1.0 FTE, some at 0.75 FTE, and some at 0.5 FTE.

Bluffton just hired a director of Nursing because they are starting a program in conjunction with Northwest State Community College. This is a four-year program in which students will take courses at both NWSCC (to get an Associate’s degree) and then complete an RN-to-BSN program through Bluffton. They hope to have their first RN-to-BSN class in fall 2016.

Last year, a New Program Task Force at Bluffton was charged with determining what new programs should be started to reach students who aren’t currently choosing Bluffton. The conclusions of the task force have initiated plans to start a Speech Language Pathology and Audiology major. A master’s degree is required in order to work as a speech pathologist, so Bluffton is working with a consultant from Calvin College, hoping to eventually have a five-year BS/MS program.

The first-year class this fall was unexpectedly low. Therefore, replacement of positions has not yet been approved for this year. Discussion of the approval process for faculty positions followed.

- b. **Brent.** Hesston is in a presidential search, with Howard Keim planning to leave at the end of June. A new president may not be in place by July 1.

Hesston has been working on launching their new BSN program. Currently, students can enroll in either the BSN or the ADN, but Brent anticipates that the ADN program will be phased out within the next few years. An RN-to-BSN program is also in the works, to begin next year. The next program to transition to four-year is likely to be Aviation, in fall 2017. Although some of Hesston’s signature programs are being expanded to full bachelor’s programs, there are currently no plans to expand all programs to bachelor’s level.

Men’s golf is also being reinstated at Hesston.

- c. **Bob.** Bob Milliman is the new VPAA/Dean, coming to Bethel from Cedarville University in Ohio. Andy Johnson is the new VP for Admissions, coming to Bethel from Fresno Pacific in California.

The fall enrollment was up this year (525, compared with 483 in 2014), with 130 new first-year students.

The Bethel Bridge program was successfully initiated in the fall 2014 with all Bethel students; this fall, only new first-year and transfer students participated. This is a three-day program in which students register and move in on day 1, take “fun” classes on day 2, and

participate in a service project on day 3. Plans are to continue the program yearly for new students.

The Board of Directors passed a strategic planning map, representing several dozen initiatives that will guide activities over the next 3-5 years.

Several new faculty were hired to begin this fall. Morale on campus is good.

- d. **Ross.** A lot of transition is occurring at Goshen: a new provost, changes in Enrollment, Ross in a two-year interim position.

Accelerated programs in Business and Social Work don't seem to be working, so they will be closed down. They are putting an RN-to-BSN program in place for the fall, which they hope to go online with. If approved for that as an online program, that could open the door for other online programs. Goshen, Bluffton, and EMU are investigating the possibility of a collaborative DNP.

Working on addressing budget shortfalls is a key challenge. Ross feels that they need to think about mission-driven ways to grow.

Participating in faculty development activities is not optional at Goshen. Every faculty member must choose something to work on, and this must be a topic at every department meeting, every Faculty Senate meeting, etc.

- e. **Trevor.** Trevor reflected on the Conrad Grebel strategic plan that was created last year, entitled "Extending the Grebel table," which has community at its center. This was a good process, which allowed faculty and staff to think about continuing their work in sustainable ways.

Two faculty were hired last year. A search for a practical theologian to start next year is underway. The Arts faculty at University of Waterloo is dropping precipitously, which is problematic for CG.

Grebel committed to a Musicology program. They also started offering some certificate programs (in theology and peace studies) as a way to increase the amount of community education they do.

- f. **Fred.** EMU is in the midst of a presidential search, with Loren Swartzendruber planning to retire at the end of June. This naturally raises uncertainty about the future and the direction the new president will take the university. A new president may not be in place by July 1.

The CCCU turmoil has taken energy. EMU wasn't getting a lot out of CCCU membership, but the withdrawal is of symbolic significance. Some conservatives claim this is an indication that we aren't really Christian.

EMU is feeling some budget stress. The incoming first-year class increased again this year, but retention is declining so the overall UG enrollment dropped by about a dozen. In addition, we have some investments in growth along with presidential transition and centennial costs that are anomalies.

- g. **Michael.** The seminary contributes to the budget stress, particularly because a very large class graduated in the spring.

Lonnie Yoder plans to transition out of being Associate Dean at the end of this academic year, and a full-time staff person is retiring. This presents an opportunity (and challenge) to figure out how to absorb the work of these people without replacing the FTE.

Michael is hoping for greater collaboration with AMBS, especially now that both institutions are increasingly able to offer fully online courses. Trevor noted that Canadians aren't going to the US for seminary education anymore. Conrad Grebel is considering offering an MDiv in the near future. Perhaps there would be opportunity for collaboration between all three programs.

- h. **Deirdre.** Working on the anticipated Engineering bachelor's degree has been time-consuming but exciting. The availability of space to be renovated in the Suter Science Center, along with two engineering faculty members, provided the impetus for crafting this new major. The board has approved, but SACS approval is still pending. A bachelor's in Aviation, offered primarily through EMU Lancaster, is another program being considered.

Undergraduate faculty are experiencing a variety of challenges: under-prepared students, students who aren't familiar with the Mennonite faith, a workload that is too heavy. Several steps are being taken in response: Last year, a Faculty Sustainability Task Force reviewed the workload situation and made recommendations. We have invested in the EAB Student Success Collaborative, which provides a platform that is intended to facilitate more comprehensive, data-driven advising (which should in turn increase retention). We are working on increasing collaboration between Undergraduate Academics and Enrollment and Marketing.

## 9. Adjournment.

Submitted by

Deirdre Longacher Smeltzer