



OAKLAND UNIVERSITY SENATE

Oakland University Senate

15 November 2007

Minutes

Members present: Andersen, Berven (D), Berven (K), Bhargava, Brown, Condic, Connery, Debnath, Dulio, Dvir, Eberly-Lewis, Eis, Frick, Goslin, Graetz, Hawley, Hightower, Khattree, Larrabee, Lee, LeMarbe, Lombardo, Machmut-Jhashi, Meehan, Mitton, Moore, Moudgil, Murphy, Nixon, Otto, Pelfrey, Penprase, Rammel, Rigstad, Russell, Sangeorzan, Severson, Shablin, Spedoske, Townsend, Voelck, Wiggins, Williams, Wood, Zou

Members absent: Doane, Downing, Giblin, Ingram, Kissock, Mittelstaedt, Polis, Preisinger, Spagnuolo, Sudol, Tanniru, Thompson, Wharton

Summary of Actions:

1. Informational Item: Budget Update ? Mr. Russi
2. Approval of amended minutes of 18 October (Ms. Goslin, Ms. Wood)
3. Motion to approve changes in membership of UCUI (Mr. Meehan, Mr. Russell) Approved.
- 4 a. Motion to amend wording of the Excused Absence Policy (Ms. Brown, Mr. Russell) Approved.
- 4 b. Motion to approve Excused Absence Policy (Ms. Williams, Mr. Russell) Approved.

Calling the meeting to order at 3:15, Mr. Moudgil invited Mr. Russi to give the annual budget update to the university senate, noting the uncertainties in Lansing. Mr. Russi greeted the senate and reiterated that the budgetary situation in state of Michigan is still in flux. He began his [presentation](#) with a slide entitled "Michigan's Budgetary Morass," which sums up the continuing pressures on higher education in the state. After seven years of budget cuts, with lower general fund revenues in FY07 than in FY96, the bleak economic picture continues. Mr. Russi remarked that a demographic shift will also plague higher education funding, noting that the population of 18-24 year olds is projected to decline 9% by the year 2017. In contrast, seniors, whose retirement income is not taxed and who spend less, are projected to increase in number by 31%.

Currently, enrollments in higher education are at an all-time high. Increased state support is necessary to produce more college graduates in Michigan, yet revenues will not grow fast enough to maintain the share of costs without cuts. Mr. Russi then noted aggressive and divisive initiatives to separate the state's largest universities (UM-AA, MSU, WSU) from the other twelve in order to receive more state funding. While these efforts have not been successful, Mr. Russi warned that they would continue. The partnership between OU and Beaumont Hospitals to create the state's first private medical school has been looked upon favorably among state officials, an initiative that has served to highlight the breadth of OU's academic and research capabilities. OU's project for an Engineering and Design Center, which

has been first on the list of capital outlay projects for state universities and community colleges, will benefit from more intensive lobbying and advocacy. Mr. Russi praised the work of Rochelle Black, describing her as "the best in the business." Her office in Lansing will expand, and her advocacy will be crucial in the increasingly competitive, demanding, and divisive environment in the capital.

A chart comparing state appropriation percentages versus OU tuition and fee percentages reveals a dramatic downward turn since 2000 (44% in 2000, 26% in 2008). Despite the severe reductions, OU has been able to protect the academic enterprise, with new faculty lines continuing to be added. The headcount of 520 faculty in FY07, as Mr. Russi commented, is something to be proud of, as many other institutions have not only been unable to add faculty, but have had to make cuts in faculty, staff, and programming. A total of 68 new faculty positions are projected for FY08. Mr. Russi also observed that most of the one-time budget allocations for FY07 involved technology maintenance and upgrade.

Mr. Russi then turned to an update of the capital campaign, currently at a figure of eighty-two million dollars. The target of \$110 million is within reach, he noted, and speaks to the quality of work being done at OU recognized by those who are willing to support excellence.

Mr. Russi ended his presentation by adding that the FY08 budget is not yet complete. Because the revenue side of the equation has not been determined, the situation could yet mean a mid-year cut after January, as has been the case for the past five years. Mr. Russi hoped that the expectations for revenue would be more accurate this year than in the past.

Mr. Frick asked whether the information that Mr. Russi presented be available on the website; Mr. Russi confirmed that it would. Mr. Russell inquired about the four institutions Mr. Russi mentioned that were not working to thwart efforts for separate state appropriation to the "big three." Mr. Russi indicated that the Boards of those four are largely democratic and are not playing the same lobbying role.

Mr. Moudgil thanked Mr. Russi for sharing the budget update with the senate. He noted that the second informational item, an update on graduate education, is postponed until a later time.

The secretary then proceeded with the roll call, after which the amended [minutes](#) (Ms. Andersen clarified a reference to the MSU excused absence policy) from October 18 were approved (Goslin, Wood).

Mr. Moudgil then turned to the first item of old business, moved by Mr. Meehan and seconded by Mr. Russell.

MOVED that the membership of UCUI consist of the following:

One faculty member from each organized faculty, with the exception of the College of Arts and Sciences, which shall include a total of four members, representing the arts and humanities, languages, natural sciences, and social sciences, appointed to staggered three-year terms by the Senate upon nomination by the Steering Committee, each of whom shall represent UCUI to the Committee on Instruction or equivalent group in her/his academic unit; the Director of General Studies; two

undergraduate students designated by the University Student Congress; the above to be voting members. In addition the following shall serve *ex-officio* and non-voting: the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education as chair; the Vice President for Student Affairs (or designee); a representative appointed by the Academic Advising Council; and the Registrar (or designee).

Mr. Goslin indicated that he read Dean Sudol's remarks sent via email, and although he agrees to an extent, he does not see a problem with UCUI as it stands. He further expressed his concern about maintaining reasonable numbers of committee members, i.e. that consensus may be difficult to reach when there are too many or too few. Mr. Dvir disagreed, pointing out that the size of CAS warrants the additional representation. Ms. Hawley expressed agreement with Mr. Goslin, and wondered what would prevent block voting. Ms. Berven noted that the intention to expand UCUI is to provide valuable information to that committee when reading proposals and reiterated the positive aspects of the expansion discussed at the last meeting. Ms. Wood expressed doubt whether four members from different disciplines in the College would necessarily agree on any particular issue, but in the event they did, they would not constitute a majority or even a plurality. She pointed out that block voting is a possibility on any committee, and that Senate oversight plays a role in voting to approve members of standing committees. Mr. Meehan supported Ms. Berven's comments, and added that the average size of Senate committees currently is 12.8756, so that the proposed total of 13 UCUI members is not an unwieldy number.

Ms. Townsend then wondered about the governance structure itself, asking whether governance should be representative of numbers of faculty, students, and so forth, or should be reflective of academic units and schools. Ms. Pelfrey returned to Mr. Goslin's earlier query by asking why UCUI in its current form is problematic. Mr. Moran responded that the current form is flawed because it is not representative. Observing that all committees are political entities whether we want to think of them that way or not, Mr. Moran pointed out there is nothing undemocratic, nor unethical, in block voting, and agreed with Ms. Wood that it was naïve to think that all representatives from CAS would agree on a given issue. Mr. Moran added that CAS is not adequately represented on most senate committees. Ms. Williams returned to the issue of committee structure, observing that there are certain committees in which all areas of the university should be represented, somewhat analogous to the house of delegates at the federal level. Other committees deal with balancing the institution, and in that sense may be likened to the US Senate, where California has the same vote as Rhode Island. From that perspective, might doesn't always make right. She suggested that the latter is a better model. Mr. Dvir commented that biological sciences offers more instruction than the entire School of Health Sciences or the School of Engineering, and that there were cases in which UCUI lacked the necessary representation to appropriately address issues that came before it. These situations could have been avoided, Mr. Dvir remarked, had those voices been heard. Mr. Dulio added that the US Senate has been called the most undemocratic institution because it lacks proportionate representation *vis a vis* the states. Ms. Awbrey expressed her desire to clarify the situation with UCUI regarding the review of specific courses; she stated that UCUI does not review specific courses, and also noted that she apologized to Mr. Dvir that his department was not consulted in the review of the joint program in bioengineering, adding that that was not a contentious program.

The motion was passed with a vote of 22 in favor, 14 against.

Ms. Williams moved the second item of old business (seconded by Mr. Russell.)

MOVED that the Senate approve an [Excused Absence Policy](#).

Mr. Goslin remarked that the number of courses involving hands-on, supervised activities is significant for the Health Sciences faculty, but having spoken to the SHS faculty, Mr. Goslin believes that the policy is workable in his unit. Mr. Brown polled her colleagues in SEHS and requests the Senate to amend wording of the policy to include "field-placement" in bullet 3 under section I. Her motion to amend wording, seconded by Mr. Russell, was approved.

Ms. Andersen thanked the Student Academic Support Committee for its hard work in drafting the proposed excused absence policy, but asked that the senate reconsider the policy so that the concerns of the rhetoric faculty could be heard. She explained that having consulted with Mr. Stewart and Ms. Meuser, who were instrumental in the development of the policy, she drafted some changes to the policy in keeping with the OU mission statement, noting specifically the passages, "excellent and relevant instruction" and "a comprehensive schedule of student development activities." Ms. Andersen indicated that she wanted to offer a motion that would allow reconsideration of the policy by both the Athletics Committee and the SASC. Before that motion could be articulated, Mr. Moudgil reminded senators that a vote was needed on the motion at hand.

Ms. Berven expressed continued concern that the policy fails to address the issue of unreasonable faculty who will continue to be unreasonable. She believes that the policy is too long, and that it should simply state: "Athletes should be excused." Mr. Goslin suggested that the senate call the question and that if the motion is voted down, Ms. Andersen's suggestions be referred back to committee for further review.

Ms. Williams remarked that academic freedom makes it impossible to harness unreasonable faculty, but the absence of a policy does not allow a standard by which to judge their behavior. She believes that the policy forces clarification for faculty on what is tolerable. Mr. Russell raised the issue of athletic practices that are added by coaches at the last minute; he noted that the proposed policy can alleviate such problems. Mr. Stewart then spoke about attending a national meeting of athletic representatives that dealt with graduation and retention rates, as well as attendance issues. Structure, according to Mr. Stewart, is the necessary ingredient, so that it is clear to students and faculty up front how many classes can be missed. He reminded senators that 68% of athletes on campus last year had a g.p.a. of at least 3.0. He noted that OU has a reputation around the country of producing student-athletes who are committed to academic success. Mr. Stewart then introduced Holly Kerstner, Senior Women Administrator in the Athletic department. Ms. Kerstner supported the necessity of an excused absence policy. In short, Ms. Kerstner outlined the rigorous compliance standards that student-athletes must adhere to, and concluded that a policy will support those endeavors.

Mr. Moudgil noted that four of eight OU Wilson Award winners have been student-athletes and that the graduation rate of studen-athletes at OU is 74%, in contrast to the overall rate of approximately 46%.

Ms. Andersen suggested that the matter be referred back to committee according to the procedure described in Robert's Rules.

Mr. Russell urged the Senate to vote on the main motion, and to give the policy a chance to work. The Senate then voted to approve the amended main motion.

With no items for the good and welfare, the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
Tamara Machmut-Jhashi
Secretary to the University Senate

posted 1/17/07

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