



OAKLAND UNIVERSITY
S E N A T E

OAKLAND UNIVERSITY SENATE

Thursday, 14 February 1991
Fifth Meeting

MINUTES

Senators Present: Appleton, Bertocci, Berven, Braunstein, Bricker, Briggs-Bunting, Cardimen, Cass, Chipman, Cowlshaw, Dahlgren, Dillon, Eberwein, Eckart, Eliezer, Fish, Frankie, Garcia, Griggs, Grossman, Hamilton, Hartman, Heintz, Kazarian, Kleckner, Lederer, Mittelstaedt, Olson, Rosen, Salomon, Schieber, Schimmelman, Schwartz, Stevens, Tripp, Weng, Williams, Witt, Wood, Zenas.

Senators Absent: Abiko, Beehler, Champagne, Herman, Hovanesian, Liboff, Long, Mabee, Meehan, Mili, Miller, Pettengill, Pine, Reddy, Stern, Theisen, Tracy, Urice, Walter, Wedekind, Williamson, Winkler.

Summary of Actions:

- 1 . Report from Committee on Human Relations (Murphy; Garcia).
- 2 . Minutes of 6 December 1990 (Cass; Braunstein). Approved.

At 3:16 p.m., Mr. Kleckner called the meeting to order by extending a greeting to new senators: Mr. Heintz, who replaces Ms. Landry as president of the University Student Congress; Mr. Stevens, who replaces Mr. Horwitz as Dean of the School of Business Administration; and faculty members who are either reclaiming seats held by others in their absence last semester or replacing those now on leave or experiencing course conflicts. That accomplished, he moved at once to the principal business of the day: a report from the Committee on Human Relations.

The provost reminded his colleagues that, when the Senate established the Committee on Human Relations two years ago, it presented that body with an exceptionally broad charge entailing responsibility to look at all aspects of campus life that affect the educational climate, particularly for minority students. The committee is required by that charge to report back to the Senate at two-year intervals on its activities, goals, and current concerns. To accomplish that purpose, it has circulated to senators a substantial packet of materials (additional copies of which were available at the meeting for anyone not included on that mailing list). He then yielded the floor to Professor Brian Murphy, the original chair of the Committee on Human Relations, and Senator Garcia, its current chair. After their statements, he assured the Senate that the floor would be opened for questions or comments.

Mr. Murphy began his report with a promise of concision in his summary of the first year's activity. He identified the key phrase in the committee's charge as "to give strong impetus" to a great variety of activities going on around campus in all kinds of ways. Its main concerns are properly with the academic side of university life, but it has general responsibility for keeping

track of the overall campus climate that influences the comfort of members of this community. The committee, he remarked, is also responsible for promoting dialogue. Without claiming that it had completely perfected the campus climate, he ventured to hope that it had exercised a beneficial effect. one of the group's most important achievements in its first year involved self-definition, a process that has resulted in its perceiving its role as a reflective, recommending body rather than a judicial one (though it has engaged reluctantly in such matters also, responding to concerns about treatment of minority staff members and an affirmative action question relating to a decanal search). He pointed out that the main committee had formed subcommittees to deal with major concerns involving university policy and curriculum, recruitment and retention, campus life and specific cases/complaints, and information, resources, and activities. (Note: After the meeting, Ms. Bingham, asked that the report be corrected to acknowledge her active membership on the fourth of these subcommittees.) The committee sponsored a lively open forum last March that elicited frank revelation of feelings about conditions on campus. Its only action requiring formal Senate approval was a change of wording in its charge from "sex" to "gender, sexual orientation," which the Senate willingly accepted. As no questions on the first year's history followed immediately upon his report, Mr. Murphy then yielded the floor to his successor.

Ms. Garcia began by asking people to add her own name to Appendix D of Mr. Murphy's written report, admitting that she had relied on her telephone list to compile names of 1989-90 and 1990-91 committee members, thereby eliminating herself. She also brandished a current university publication to publicize her pet peeve: reference to men by courtesy titles and women by first names -- a frequent example of gender discrimination in our culture that is especially irritating to a feminist. Moving on to the substance of the report as circulated, she pointed out that the Committee on Human Relations lacks budget, judicial authority, and administrative power; all it has is a mandate to communicate and disseminate information. consequently, she and her colleagues feel grateful for the chance to address the university community and for the Steering Committee's flexibility in allowing them to adopt a distinctive format for their Senate report.

She referred to her written report to illustrate her point that this has been a year more of reaction than of action for her committee; although it attempts to make progress on the four priorities identified the previous year and highlighted on the first page of her report: A) to increase minority faculty; B) to retain more minority students; C) to attract more minority students; and D) to consider curricular recommendations. As yet, her committee has made little progress on curricular issues, but it expects to devote most of the remaining academic year to that topic. It continues to recognize increased minority faculty hiring as its number one priority, with the goal of helping Oakland University reflect the cultural diversity of our communities without violating departmental autonomy or fair labor practices. She urged trial of the experimental recruitment methods suggested in Appendix B of the Murphy report, having concluded that traditional recruitment methods are unlikely to work in the competitive academic marketplace currently existing. Oakland's chance of hiring minority candidates looks weak in a world where even the major research institutions have fallen to raiding each other, attracting away recruits already contracted to their rivals. She also stressed the importance of inaugurating a training program in multicultural awareness for faculty members, they being the only identifiable group on campus not yet included in such educational efforts.

Reviewing actions the Committee on Human Relations has already taken, Ms. Garcia announced that her committee would contribute to Black History Month observances by sponsoring an interactive videoconference February 20 on causes of and responses to the rise

of campus racism. Dr. Marie Dykes, Associate Provost for Academic Programs at Wayne State University will moderate the Oakland University portion of the conference and Julian Bond will serve as national moderator. With people here enabled by the conference format to participate actively, she urged members of the community to involve themselves in this program. She also called attention to documentation provided by Esther Martinez and Desiree Deschamps, the two student members of the committee, reporting results of a preliminary study of student responses to the idea of establishing a campus Office of Minority Affairs. The students, who initiated this project and carried it out with impressive care, have made plans to conduct a more extensive, statistically accurate follow-up study of this question. Ms. Garcia declared herself thrilled by the students' accomplishment and most grateful for their contributions to the committee's understanding of an issue likely to have considerable impact on students.

She then called attention to "reaction issues," those matters initiated by others to which the committee has felt an obligation to respond. The first of these was Operation Graduation. Two members of the Committee on Human Relations, Mr. Herman and Ms. Martinez, participated in last spring's deliberations, and the committee has followed the process without actively participating. An issue immediately confronting her committee and eliciting divided response is the question of whether Oakland University should institute an office of Minority Affairs. Although not asking for Senate action on this matter, Ms. Garcia thought it best, to apprise her colleagues of the division within her committee since the best way to deal with conflict is to talk about it. She pointed out that this university has chosen to follow a difficult administrative model that does not constitute one office to centralize all minority affairs issues but instead requires all it: officers to concern themselves with the wellbeing of minority students and staff. The attempt has been to avoid dumping of all ethnic affairs issues onto one office or administrator, thereby freeing everybody else on campus from responsibility for seeing that things work well. This approach has come under criticism from those who advocate a more centralized administrative model, and there has been pressure from Lansing as well as from within our community to institute a special office to look after minority interests. This issue arose last year from students involved with operation Graduation. To acquaint senators and other community members with the arguments on both sides of this question, she called attention to two internal committee documents attached to her report: a report by Mr. Herman on changes implemented at Oakland over the past five years to improve conditions of life for minorities and a statement from Professor Frances Jackson advocating trial of a new administrative structure.

Looking ahead, Ms. Garcia announced that her committee would meet the next week to formulate its goals and activities for the rest of the semester. Their objectives included passing on models for curricular development to appropriate Senate committees, talking to the provost about minority faculty recruitment, and advancing the cause of faculty training on minority issues. As a point of information on the third matter, Ms. Bingham called attention to the array of events scheduled this academic year by the School of Human and Educational Services to promote multicultural awareness. Ms. Garcia recognized that school's efforts as a model for the rest of the university.

Upon the conclusion of this comprehensive report, Mr. Kleckner thanked both speakers for their excellent presentations. He noted that the issues confronting the committee had been accurately portrayed and joined with Ms. Garcia in recognizing SHES for its workshops, lectures, and similar activities geared to improvement of the climate for learning. He also mentioned that faculty members in other academic units are meeting with the Director of the

Office of Equal Opportunity to consider ways of improving the learning environment for minority students. Although the university has not established a single program model for all faculty units, it encourages groups to make appropriate efforts to strengthen multicultural education. He then opened the floor to questions but elicited no response. Ms. Garcia, recalling her father's story about a funeral for a dead stranger in the Lone Star State took advantage of the opportunity to "say a few words about Texas." She informed the Senate that Eleanor Lewellen Reynolds and Virginia Allen have organized a coming together of black faculty and staff members and have circulated to all participants copies of the report from the Committee on Human Relations. She thanked them for their efforts and indicated that her committee encourages their initiative. On that note, Mr. Kleckner thanked all members of that committee for their informative report.

Before proceeding to Good and Welfare, the secretary suggested backtracking to the formulaic business of considering the minutes of the previous meeting. Mr. Kleckner took the hint and called for a motion to approve the record of the 6 December meeting (Moved, Ms. Cass; seconded, Mr. Braunstein). No discussion ensued, and the minutes were approved.

Mr. Grossman then led off the Good and Welfare portion of the agenda by inquiring about the whereabouts of the elusive minutes for the three winter 1990 Senate meetings. Mr. Kleckner, patting a folder before him on the table, reassured his fellow senators that they were safe and would be distributed before the March meeting. With one problem seemingly under control, Ms. Zenas called attention to another: Could anything be done, she wondered, about the recent practice of blocking off part of the Lepley parking lot all day in order to reserve space for night events? Mr. Kleckner promised to look into the matter.

With no other concerns raised for the good of the order, Mr. Kleckner drew the meeting to a close by providing useful information. He began by announcing formation of the promised Ad hoc Subcommittee on Conference Center Planning, chaired by Mr. Pettengill from the Steering Committee and ably staffed by Rita Gallagher, Ronald Horwitz, Nan Loh, Tonja Long, Pamela Marin, and Donald Morse. Suggestions for that group, already hard at work, should be referred to its chair. Mr. Kleckner noted that misinformation printed in a recent OU Magazine reflects earlier optimistic thinking on the part of conference center advocates: no proposals have been requested or received. Absolutely nothing is now happening with respect to conference center development or will happen before the spring. Thus, there is plenty of time for the Senate's committee to carry out its study and for the Senate to make its recommendations.

With respect to the outlook from Lansing, the provost indicated that he had just returned from the capitol and could report nothing with assurance beyond the fact that it was snowing there. Governor Engler is trying to withdraw state government from many areas in which it has been involved, but education (his stated priority) can be expected to fare better than other programs under his budget plans. Nevertheless, it is unlikely to get all that it wants. So far, higher education has been hit with a 1% funding cut by contrast to 9.2% cuts for other state agencies. Some of the other cuts strike Oakland University, however, by reducing support for Meadow Brook operations in the arts. Whether all proposed cuts will take effect this year remains unclear, but there is a discernible trend toward long-term withdrawal of state support. At this point, the legislature is marking time until the governor presents his March budget message for next year. The size of the likely deficit remains a matter of dispute; hence, there is no agreement yet on the size of needed cuts in appropriations. The legislature wants to see the big picture before making this year's decisions, but it seems unlikely that education faces more

losses. Still, Mr. Kleckner pointed out that the identification of our shortfall as only 1% is something of a misstatement, since Oakland University has also been notified of deferral of a formula grant of funds previously appropriated for building maintenance and repairs. This Blanchard-era pullback will not be repaid until October, so we have had to borrow in the short term to pay for already-made repairs. This money may ultimately be deducted from next year's appropriation, thus amounting to an additional 1% loss.

So far as the new science building is concerned, we can proceed with the architect's work that has already been funded and then try to get authorization to finish the project. At the moment, however, appropriations remain on hold. Mr. Kleckner reported that Oakland is moving ahead on its calendar, positioning itself to slip through any crack that may appear in the wall currently blocking access to state funds. He noted that legislators feel understandable concern about the costs of operating buildings as well as constructing them; they want to control add-on expenditures. While disappointed, Oakland people are not without hope that the state will move ahead with bonding authority.

So far as the widening of Squirrel Road is concerned, Mr. Kleckner reported that nothing is happening. The university is getting closer to agreement with the city of Auburn Hills, and the land in question has now been reduced to about 23 acres. If there should be a sale, the money would go into an endowment rather than being spent for operations. Specific dedication of the endowment has yet to be determined, but possible uses include the library and perhaps scholarships with other projects eligible for support later.

Wishing all a happy Valentine's Day, the chair then welcomed Ms Briggs-Bunting's call for adjournment, and the Senate concluded its work at 4:11 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:
Jane D. Eberwein
Secretary to the University Senate

Back to
OAKLAND UNIVERSITY
S E N A T E
Home Page