



OAKLAND UNIVERSITY SENATE

OAKLAND UNIVERSITY SENATE

Thursday, 14 March 1991
Sixth Meeting

MINUTES

Senators Present: Abiko, Appleton, Bertocci, Braunstein, Bricker, Cass, Cowlshaw, Dahlgren, Dillon, Eberwein, Eckart, Eliezer, Grossman, Herman, Hovanesian, Kazarian, Kleckner, Lederer, Mittelstaedt, Salomon, Schimmelman, Schwartz, Stern, Theisen, Williams, Williamson, Witt, Wood.

Senators Absent: Beehler, Berven, Briggs-Bunting, Cardimen, Champagne, Chipman, Fish, Frankie, Garcia, Griggs, Hamilton, Hartman, Heintz, Liboff, Long, Mabee, Meehan, Mili, Miller, Olson Pettengill, Pine, Reddy, Rosen, Schieber, Stevens, Tracy, Tripp, Urice, Walter, Wedekind, Weng, Winkler, Zenas.

Summary of Actions: "

1. Motion from the Admissions and Financial Aid Committee to adopt policy modifications for certain transfer admissions (Hovanesian; Stern). First reading.

While waiting for a quorum, Mr. Kleckner introduced the day's proceedings by moving ahead to information items. The first of these - concerned parking obstacles in front of the Lepley Center that had elicited Ms. Zenas's complaint at the Senate's February meeting. He reported that he had communicated with Mr. Hartman about the situation and learned that the Athletics staff had encountered problems in the past with efforts to reserve parking spaces for evening basketball games, which occur about twelve times each year. It seems that drivers fail to remove their cars at five and thereby block spaces for persons arriving to enjoy the game. The Lepley Center people have a bit of leverage in this interchange, as they were the ones who paid to have the area in question paved. Nonetheless, they have agreed to be flexible, try new approaches, and see how things work out.

Next, he reported on the budget outlook in Lansing, reminding his colleagues that Governor Engler's budget called for an across-the-board increase of 4% for higher education. This, of course, builds on a base already reduced by 1%. Although the bill presented by the governor is a straightforward one, its legislative destiny remains murky. Since education is the only sector of government slated for increased funding, all other claimants to state support are likely to seek redress at its expense. Hearings begin shortly, and Mr. Kleckner anticipated a prolonged tug-of-war in the legislature that may not end before midsummer. Senate support for the governor's position seems relatively secure. The provost mentioned that Senator Schwartz, chair of the Higher Education Appropriations subcommittee, visited Oakland University lately to learn about us. He spent considerable time with persons knowledgeable about the university's research programs and seemed favorably impressed with our achievements. So far,

there is no sign that leaders of the House feel inclined toward such visitation.

Mr. Kleckner noted that the governor's message included additional language indicating issues likely to be of concern to this administration. Familiar signals about holding the line on tuition seem to have disappeared, replaced by others about improving the quality of undergraduate education, enhancing levels of service to non-traditional students, and ensuring the English-language proficiency of all teaching faculty. It is too early yet to know just how these concerns may be put into action. The new administration is obviously committed to streamlining government operations and in general simplifying the system. One result of that disposition is that the Research Excellence Fund may lose its special line-item budget status, though the funding itself would continue.

Architectural drawings for the proposed science building have been completed, and a cardboard model should soon be ready for display. Mr. Kleckner anticipated that detailed planning documents would soon be sent to the State Building Authority. The next step would be to apply for funding, but construction funds are now frozen. Should any sort of thaw develop, he anticipated that Oakland's project would probably be a prime candidate for early approval. It has no opposition. Permission to move ahead is unlikely to be considered, however, until the regular budget process works its way to completion. Once authorization gets secured, it will take six to eight months before a shovel strikes the earth. Mr. Kleckner assured the Senate that plans for the new building look most attractive.

Having observed senators arriving in the course of his remarks, Mr. Kleckner officially called the meeting to order at 3:32 p.m. As minutes of the February meeting had just reached most members in that day's mail, he deferred official discussion until people had time to study the document. Other minutes from the previous year are on their way.

No old business distracted attention from the solitary item of new business: a motion from the Admissions and Financial Aid Committee concerning certain transfer students (Moved, Mr. Hovanesian; seconded, Mr. Stern):

MOVED that the Senate recommend to the President and the Board that Section IV of the Undergraduate Admissions Policy adopted in 1985 be modified to implement permanently the modifications introduced for a trial period at the April 20, 1989 meeting of the University Senate.

Presenting the motion, Mr. Hovanesian called attention to the commentary provided by the sponsoring committee. Then he yielded the floor to its chair, Mr. Dillon. Mr. Kleckner took advantage of the brief interlude between speakers to call attention to a discrepancy between that commentary and the actual motion proposed by the Committee. The commentary speaks of requiring applicants to complete 24 credits at a college before Oakland University's Admissions Office would be authorized to make a decision on the basis of the college record alone without reference to high school performance. Yet the motion proposes retaining the modified policy introduced in 1989, which requires 26 college credits. He wondered whether the committee wished to require 24 or 26 credits. Mr. Dillon, mentioning that he had not arrived at the university as of April 1989 and therefore had not followed Senate deliberations on the matter, responded with a review of relevant history. When the university adopted a new undergraduate admissions policy in 1985, its stipulation that transfer applicants must complete 40 credits (rather than the prior 26) before their cases could be considered strictly on

the basis of the collegiate record caused confusion for counselors at our feeder schools as well as for potential students. Many misunderstood the policy to say that Oakland University would not consider applications at all from candidates with fewer than 40 college credits. The result was a significant decrease in applications for transfer admission. As a result, the Senate agreed in 1989 to return to the 26-credit requirement on a trial basis, with the Admissions and Financial Aid Committee assigned to look into the matter. His committee now recommends continuing the modified policy, except that the requirement would be changed from 26 to 24 credits. The reason for that adjustment is that two semesters of 12 credits each count here as one full year of college work, enough to serve as a basis for judgment. By contrast, 26 credits correspond to no familiar unit of academic measurement, 13-credit semesters being rare. What is intended is that the candidate have completed the equivalent of one year's full-time study.

Mr. Dillon called attention to a memorandum from Mr. Appleton, which was even then being distributed, as a source of insight into Oakland's retention rate for transfer students admitted in fall 1989 from Michigan community colleges. That study showed no appreciable difference between those who entered the university with 26-39 transferable credits and those entering with 40 or more and no real difference between those transferring fewer than 40 credits and FTIACs entering the same semester, allowing for the statistically significant distinction between full-time and part-time students (transfer students being more likely to attend part-time than those reaching us directly from high school). Mr. Dillon also referred back to previous studies that showed similar patterns, demonstrating that the difference between full-time and part-time status accounted for much more difference in retention than did number of credits transferred from other colleges. Had the university held to its 1985 policy between 1989 and the present, we would have denied admission to 110 students, most of whom are succeeding here.

Mr. Bertocci then redirected the line of discussion by asking whether the issue should be viewed simply as one of retention or whether the difference between 24 and 40 credits might influence academic performance as measured by grade-point average. Mr. Dillon thought a student's GPA elsewhere a better predictor of academic performance than number of credits. Mr. Stern added that age is a factor also; he would anticipate better performance from a 24-year-old student than from someone 18. If all this were so self-evident now, Mr. Bertocci wondered why the Senate felt any need to raise standards for transfer admission in 1985. As a veteran member of the body, Mr. Stern recalled the impact of the Commission on University Excellence report, which came out at a time of high enrollments when many university leaders looked favorably on downsizing while stressing academic excellence. Later concerns about enrollment declines and confused signals to feeder institutions prompted modifications in the 1985 policy. He stressed that clear communication with community college counselors remains extremely important. Mr. Kleckner's memory supported Mr. Stern's, though he also mentioned that the higher GPA standards for transfer admission that were introduced in the 1985 policy had been retained in 1989 and would continue in place under the policy modifications now proposed. He reminded his colleagues that the state's curbs on tuition increases, coupled with demographic changes that reduce the number of high school students available to apply for admission had increased Oakland's reliance on transfer students to maintain healthy enrollments.

Mr. Appleton suspected that the 1985 decision had been heavily influenced by a limited number of statistical studies mainly focused on the academic performance of young men. He saw no justification for denying transfer students a chance to come here and succeed. The best predictor of retention, he asserted, has been the number of college credits already completed,

and they might as well be completed here as elsewhere. He pointed out that the actual retention rate for the transfer students whose enrollment he tracked for the handout presented at the meeting might actually be greater than the two-thirds rate it appeared, as some of those who dropped out of school for a semester might well return. Mr. Kleckner then wrapped up the discussion by mentioning that he had worked out some figures projecting what would have happened if we had held to the 1985 policy and found that we would, indeed, have achieved the gradual slight decline in enrollment we then envisaged as desirable. On that note, he deferred further consideration of this issue until the April meeting.

With no new motions to consider, the chair then introduced an item of information, calling attention to the need to staff Senate committees for the subsequent year. Volunteer sheets would soon appear in mailboxes. He also mentioned that the Ad hoc Subcommittee on Conference Center Planning would report to the Senate in April. Mr. Bricker took advantage of the Good and Welfare portion of the agenda to inquire about winter enrollments. He mentioned that the secretaries on the fifth floor of Wilson Hall, vigilant in their scrutiny of adjacent parking lots, had noticed a considerable lessening of automotive congestion. Did that observation, he wondered, indicate declining enrollments? Mr. Kleckner thought not. Although he had no immediate statistics on winter numbers, he reported that the fall headcount had been virtually identical with last fall's and that FYES for the 1990-91 year as a whole were projected to rise slightly over the previous year's base. How those statistics coordinated with parking patterns remained a mystery, though he saw no evidence of increased commitment to car-pooling. Mr. Dillon suggested that a shift toward evening enrollments might make a difference. When Mr. Kleckner pointed out that all classrooms are heavily used throughout the day, Mr. Stern mentioned a chemistry class currently meeting in a hallway. According to the provost, Senator Schwartz had been very much impressed by data on Oakland's facility utilization factors. Mr. Hovanesian's inquiry about the balance of academic and continuing education courses in the evening elicited assurance that all evening use of campus classrooms is for credit courses. The Continuing Education program leases space at Adams High School. When Mr. Bricker asked if there were any interest in expanding the university's Saturday program, Mr. Kleckner responded that Saturday morning classes have a few faculty devotees. Increasing the number of sections available in that time block would probably attract some students, but there has been no push to extend the schedule that way because of problems with providing support services. On that note, he welcomed Mr. Stern's motion for adjournment at 3:58 p.m.

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

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