



OAKLAND UNIVERSITY SENATE

OAKLAND UNIVERSITY SENATE

Thursday, 16 March 1989
Seventh Meeting

MINUTES

Senators Present: Abiko, Appleton, Barthel, Beehler, Bhatt, Burke, Cass, Chipman, Christina, Coffey, Dahlgren, DoT@ining, J. Eberwein, R. Eberwein, Eliezer, Fish, Frankie, Fullmer, Gerulaitis, Grossman, Hartman, Haskell, Herman, Hildebrand, Horwitz, Jackson, Ketchum, Kleckner, Lindell, Miller, Murphy, Pettengill, Pillow, Schimmelman, Sevilla, Sherman, L. Stamps, R. Stamps, Stern, Theisen, Tracy, Tripp, Wedekind, Williamson, Witt.
Senators Absent: Braun, Brown, Cardimen, Champagne, Garcia, Hough, Karasch, Larabell, Lauer, Maschke, Millwood, Muir, Olson, Pine, Reddy, Riley, Wilson.

Summary of Actions

1. Minutes of 9 February 1989 (Tripp; R. Stamps). Approved.
2. Motion to approve a new constitution for the School of Business Administration (Horwitz; Theisen). Tabled.
3. Motion to modify policy on grade information in 100 and 200-level classes (Dahlgren; L. Stamps). First reading.
4. Resolution of thanks to Sheldon Appleton and his colleagues (Williamson; Gerulaitis). Approved.

Mr. Kleckner convened the meeting at 3:14 p.m. and moved promptly to consideration of the minutes of 9 February 1989. Tripp, seconded by Mr. Stamps, moved adoption; the Senate concurred without comment. Ms Mr. Kleckner then called upon Mr. Horwitz to report on the current state of the constitutional question confronting the School of Business Administration. He reported that the February Senate discussion of his unit's proposed new constitution had prompted reconsideration of two issues: election of CAP by the Assembly rather than by mail ballot of eligible faculty members and language describing the Assembly's relationship to the dean with respect to departmental reorganization. He explained that he had conducted a mail ballot of his faculty to find out whether they wanted to move ahead with the document already presented to the Senate or whether they would prefer to discuss these two issues at an Assembly meeting and perhaps amend the proposed constitution. Having been advised by his colleagues that they would prefer to discuss these matters further before the Senate takes action, he (seconded by Mr. Stern) moved to table the motion calling for approval of the new constitution for the School of Business Administration until the April meeting of the Senate. Senators agreed.

The provost then reported on the Steering Committee's exploration of the issues at question with "advise" or "advise and consent" language in school constitutions. Mr. Kleckner's

discovery from consulting with Messrs. DeCarlo and Bunger was that different language constructions are possible that would probably be acceptable to the counsel and Board. He encouraged faculty groups working on such documents to consult with him or with the Steering Committee for advice. When Mr. Christina asked for an example of acceptable prose, however, Mr. Kleckner (lacking a model sentence in front of him) preferred not to devise one on the spot.

This report cleared the way for Mr. Dahlgren (seconded by Ms Stamps) to introduce a motion from the Committee on Academic Standing and Honors:

MOVED that instructors of 100 and 200 level courses provide to each registered student some indication of his or her academic progress prior to one week before the withdrawal period ends.

He provided some context for the proposal by indicating that the committee had discussed the existing Senate policy that requires instructors to give some evaluation of academic progress to students in 100-level classes in time for them to withdraw from courses they are in danger of failing. The initial question had to do with who should remind professors of this policy, and the members of the Academic Standing and Honors Committee were happy to accept that responsibility. While considering the policy, however, they concluded that it should be extended so that freshmen in slightly more advanced courses would also be assured of some indication of their chances of success.

Mr. Stern asked clarification of what "some indication of his or her academic progress" might mean. Would it be sufficient simply to return a test with a grade comfortably before the withdrawal period? To post a grade curve so that students could see how their performance looked in relation to the class as a whole? Would it be necessary to consult individually with each student? Mr. Dahlgren assured him that returning a graded test and posting a grade-curve would more than suffice; it might even constitute overkill. Mr. Kheir, a member of the committee, explained that the intention was simply to guard against nine weeks passing without a student's getting any kind of feedback from the instructor to let him or her know that there might be a problem.

Mr. Kleckner noted that the policy would be extended to 200-level courses because many freshmen tend to take them. Again, Mr. Stern raised questions. He wondered why the policy should be limited at that level when there are many 300-level courses without prerequisites (or with none that get enforced) that also attract freshmen. It seemed wise to him to extend the legislation to cover all undergraduate courses. Mr. Tracy, on the other hand, could envisage courses, especially 400 ones and independent studies, that required only one paper at the end of the semester so that the student would not have feedback before the withdrawal deadline. Mr. Stern, who would not wish to take such a course himself, agreed that some probably existed. He judged them scary experiences for students unless professors provided regular consultation on the student's progress with research. Ms. Stamps mentioned that she was enrolled in a course with one midsemester examination (last week), a final examination, and one paper. She agreed that this disposition of work created stress for students but supposed that the professor designed the course in recognition that it would enroll advanced students. Mr. Kheir repeated that the Committee on Academic Standing and Honors was concerned mainly with freshmen, who presumably know little about the university's withdrawal policies. Mr. Stamps assumed that upper-level students in advanced courses ought to have developed a

feel for their academic standing and should take responsibility for themselves. Ms. Beehler agreed with the senior Senator Stamps. She considered upper-level students capable of appraising their progress and figuring out what to do.

Mr. Grossman then inquired about the change in wording from "some form of evaluation" to "some indication." The sponsoring committee had modified the language to dispel the notion that the evaluation must necessarily be a test. The new language gives greater latitude to the instructor in finding ways to measure and report student progress. When Mr. Grossman asked whether the new wording was intended to impose less constraint, Mr. Kleckner thought that it might have that effect in some people's eyes; he had never read evaluation as specifying a test.

Mr. Stern then recurred to the issue of course levels. He discerned a truth-in-advertising issue with regard to Oakland's numbering system. He argued that a careful look at actual courses might show deviations from our notions of what 100, 200, and 300 mean. When Ms. Gerulaitis demanded an example, wondering what departments he had in mind as examples of confused course numbering, Mr. Stern cited Biology and one of its general education courses. He reminded his colleagues that a number of courses had been renumbered years ago in response to changes in funding. Mr. Kleckner hoped no decisions had been made that could not be justified on academic grounds.

Approaching the issue from a different angle, Mr. Barthel asked why it wouldn't make more sense simply to ask instructors to provide indication of academic progress to all first-year students, no matter what courses they happened to take. Mr. Kleckner thought it might be hard to identify first-year students, and Mr. Horwitz wondered whether the operative word should be freshman or first-year. He had known students to remain freshmen for three or four years. Mr. Kleckner remembered that the same idea had been raised years ago when the original policy was adopted, and the course numbering system had been judged more manageable than one based on individual students. Wrapping up the discussion, Mr. Fish then asked how many weeks of a term elapse before the withdrawal period ends. It turned out that there were nine such weeks in fall and winter semesters; four and a half in spring, summer, and half-semester courses. This issue, like the SBA constitution, awaits final Senate action in April.

Mr. Williamson then availed himself of the Good and Welfare portion of the meeting to inquire about the Campus Voice boards that have appeared in university buildings. He wondered why Oakland gives wall space to such advertising. Mr. Herman responded that Campus Voice is a national service operating in high schools and colleges. Its boards are provided at no cost to us and allow us to promote our own activities. His office had received only one complaint, Mr. Williamson's, and the offending board was scheduled for removal from the building. When Mr. Downing asked whether one objection would result in removal, Mr. Herman replied that it did in that case. He reiterated that Oakland benefits from these signboards by being able to publicize some of its own events. Mr. Williamson asked whether the university had any policy on campus advertising. Mr. Kleckner thought advertising acceptable, within reason. He wondered whether anyone objected to bulletin board notices of used-car availability. The upshot of the discussion was that Messrs. Williamson and Christina referred the matter to the Steering Committee for consideration.

The first information item presented by the provost was a report on the North Central accreditation visit that had concluded the day before. Mr. Kleckner announced that the visiting team had made three significant recommendations: first, that Oakland University's

accreditation be renewed for ten years, the longest possible period; second, that the stipulation be removed that had required us to report new doctoral programs to the NCA before implementation; and third, that a focused visit be conducted in five years to look specifically at library acquisitions. The second of these recommendations, initiated by the team without Oakland's request, certifies our institutional maturity at all degree levels. The third responds to continuing concerns from previous NCA visits. Mr. Kleckner thought the focused visit an appropriate action, which might be helpful to us when we report our library concerns to Lansing. He noted that the visitors had identified other problems, chiefly resource matters, that we know about and are already tackling.

The team had commended Mr. Appleton and all who collaborated with him on the self-study; it also commended the quality of the university. This response is especially gratifying in that all members of the NCA team hailed from research or doctoral universities rather than comprehensive ones like Oakland. The official report is expected toward the end of April. When it comes, we may correct matters of fact before its submission to the NCA for official accreditation action in August. This encouraging news led Mr. Williamson and Ms. Gerulaitis to move an informal resolution of thanks "to good old Shelly and his friends" (unanimously passed, with enthusiastic applause). Mr. Appleton, noting that he had been officially designated as "old" ("and good," heard in the background), credited the Senate scribe and Karen Hill for the elegance of the prose that distinguished the self-study report. He also commended Priscilla Hildum for her organizational skill and expressed his gratitude to Mr. Kleckner for his support at every stage of the project. Now that the danger was finally behind him, he confided that he had been threatened with a one-way ticket to West Beirut, had Oakland been denied reaccreditation; instead, he looked forward to returning to the classroom. Mr. Kleckner, meaning to offer a reward, suggested that the university might find means to send Mr. Appleton to Comiskey Park but was reminded that a Cubs fan could only be happy at Wrigley Field.

Mr. Kleckner's next news item proved less cheering. He reported that he is not prepared to push the secondary education proposal ahead at this time because of serious resource limitations. He saluted the proposed program as well conceived and promising but concluded that it could not be implemented at a time when the university is already cutting into existing programs. Not wanting to cut even more, he preferred to delay action on secondary education. Still, he held out the possibility that College departments that could figure out with SHES ways of introducing secondary education programs without new resources might submit proposals, which he would consider on a case-by-case basis. Aside from that, he had determined that the secondary education proposal (a very fine one) must be put on the back burner for a time.

The issue of resources led naturally to discussion of budget issues. Mr. Kleckner reported briefly on Tuesday's meeting of Oakland representatives with the House Subcommittee on Higher Education Appropriations. The tone of the session had been friendly, and things had seemed to go well. Yet the day ended with legislators pressing spokespersons for each university to find out what tuition increases they would project if the legislature should find itself unable to find the money to improve upon the governor's recommendation. Oakland's guess amounted to 8 or 9%. He anticipated a period of jawboning between Lansing and the universities. So far, no ceiling on tuition raises has been indicated by Lansing, but the provost's personal guess is that pressure would be exerted to hold below 7 or 8%. The Senate committee hearing is still to come, and no bill has yet emerged in the House to be worked out eventually in the familiar House / Senate joint conference committee. At this point, it seems likely that the total revenue picture for next year will fit Ray Harris's projections of six months ago. Oakland

has been proceeding on the basis of those projections as it figures out how to carry on, and no final budget decisions have yet been made.

Mr. Kleckner then availed himself of the opportunity to inform the Senate about what the process has been by which the university is working its way toward budget decisions. He reminded his colleagues that severe reductions would be necessary for the next two years to overcome the deficit caused by this summer's tuition rollback in the absence of substantially increased state funding. Different units of the institution are responding on different schedules, with Academic Affairs choosing to make decisions once for both years and some other divisions opting to go through the budget-slashing exercise two separate times. That divergence explains why the percentage of budget cuts in Academic Affairs looks greater than the cuts in certain other units.

When considering cuts in his share of the budget, the provost has taken certain items out of the pot and protected them. These include the total budget for faculty positions (to be dealt with separately). He has been asked to come up with 17 faculty positions, a request that is in line with an enrollment drop of about 350 students. The effect will be to raise the student / faculty ratio a bit but not severely. The remaining budget must be cut by about 2%. Taken overall, the dollar cuts are a little less severe on the academic side of the university than others. Each unit has been presented with a dollar target that amounts to a total of about \$1.2 million for the whole Academic Affairs Division over a two-year period. Meanwhile, some internal needs must be taken care of, with existing activities and positions made permanent. In addition, the provost wants about \$100,000. to allow himself the flexibility that he now lacks. These needs add up to a cut of \$1.4 million. Mr. Kleckner indicated that he then arbitrarily padded the goal to reach \$2.2 million, substantially more than the minimum needed.

With that goal in mind, he asked the people reporting to him to indicate how they would make cuts. Certain items were protected from assault, however: library acquisitions and graduate assistantships. A study of staffing patterns was conducted to ascertain which units were enduring worse staffing problems than others. Positions that might be pulled out were identified across the full spectrum. Each unit got a specific dollar total and instructions to propose how it could get to that point. The provost stressed that there was no requirement any position be included; still, given the dreadful state of operating budgets, he anticipated that personnel cuts would be preferred to those from other sources. Proposals came to him with suggestions of ways to get to \$2.2 million, all listed in priority order by those who submitted them. Not all these proposals need to be accepted, he reassured the Senate. Given the disparity between the stated goal and actual necessities, a cushion exists, making it possible to examine a number of factors when considering actual cuts.

Mr. Kleckner reported that he had consulted with the deans and provostial officers at an all-day meeting on 4 March, at which time all proposals were considered -- along with the possible consequences of adopting each. He commended all those who participated in this painful exercise for the statesmanlike way which they approached their task. Nobody submitted ridiculous proposals or conducted attacks on other units. At the end of the day, the provost took a straw poll to rate the proposals. The outcome turned out to be pretty much as he had projected. The vote showed honest recognition of problems that resulted in near unanimity in response to particular proposals. No action has been taken as yet, but he expected to be talking soon with each dean about where we are; after that he will make his division's report to the president. He indicated that conversations would also be held with the Board about some

possible revenue enhancements such as fees and differential tuition schedules. He hoped it might possible to eliminate the need to make some cuts, although some are unavoidable. As yet, Mr. Kleckner saw no bottom line, but praised everyone involved in the process for the way in which a have approached a very difficult problem.

When the provost opened the floor to questions, Mr. Ketchum asked who were "they" who gave Academic Affairs and other divisions their target figures for cuts. Mr. Kleckner replied that the president had made the request, following advice from vice presidents. The Board has directed that this year's deficit be corrected after two years. He noted that the cuts would not made equally across the institution: those in Academic Affairs are slightly less deep than in other divisions.

Mr. Christina then inquired whether the 17 faculty positions that had been mentioned were part of the \$2.2 million. Mr. Kleckner indicated that they were. Mr. Sevilla wondered what happened to unexpended funds at the end of each budget year. The provost acknowledged that Oakland had annually salvaged such funds over a period of years but that the surplus had been decreasing each year. Any stockpile was eliminated by last summer's tuition rollback. The university hopes to be back in the black by June 1990. He could not predict the situation beyond that but doubt that that significant fund balances would accumulate thereafter. He reported that the Board had shown some interest in setting aside a modest balance at the end of the year to guard against emergencies, but that strategy is impossible at this time.

When Ms. Stamps inquired whether administrators had wholly discounted a major tuition hike to protect against faculty layoffs, Mr. Kleckner responded separately to the parts of her question. He stressed that layoffs were not being considered -- just non-replacements. He saw no way for a massive tuition increase to get through either our Board or state agencies. Raising tuition would do nothing to increase revenue if the state should react by cutting its appropriations. He estimated that it would take a 19 or 20% tuition increase to eliminate the deficit.

Mr. Barthel asked whether anything could be done to persuade the Board to let us catch up over a longer period of time. Reluctant to speculate on what the Board might do, Mr. Kleckner replied that the administration is now complying with its request, providing clear information on what it will cost us to make these cuts. Nobody, he lamented, sees any realistic hope for improvements in state funding. Even while Michigan thrives, higher education now suffers. Things could get worse if the economy falters.

The next question came from Mr. Ketchum, who wondered what we might expect with regard to downsizing of enrollment and the size of the faculty. Mr. Kleckner replied that the current strategy is to hold enrollment while the budget-balancing process moves forward. He commented that we had known all along that reduction of the student population would cost some faculty slots. When Mr. Ketchum reminded him of hopes to improve the student / faculty ratio, Mr. Kleckner indicated that Oakland is already doing considerably better on that score. We now rank fifth instead of first in the state by that index. What complicated our arrangements was the tuition rollback.

Mr. Appleton then inquired what other Michigan public universities were doing to cope with their situations. Mr. Kleckner's first response was "not much is evident." He then reported on a few schools. Michigan State University is asking all academic units to come up with proposals

for 5% cuts each year for three years. They are in especially difficult straits because of forward funding decisions. Ferris is talking about 3% reductions. Mr. LaTourette, the chair of the North Central team, had passed on to him an interesting article from *Midwest Living* on public higher education throughout this region in terms of funding in proportion to inflation. The article shows that the same problems crop up all over the Midwest and that institutions are responding in fairly consistent ways by reducing enrollments rather than sacrificing quality. He sensed considerable realization in the Michigan House Subcommittee on Higher Education Appropriations about what bad policy it is to commit the state through the MET program to educate Michigan children without being able to assure the necessary public support to maintain quality in the institutions that will be expected to serve these young people. He was discouraged in his hopes for reform, however, by the sad spectacle of what is happening with attempts to pass a K-12 funding proposal that is foundering despite highly organized pressure in its behalf such as higher education could never hope to enlist.

The last question came from Mr. Christina, who wondered when the Senate would receive information about budget-cut decisions. Mr. Kleckner saw no reason why he could not report at the final meeting of the year, which has been rescheduled for 13 April. On that note, he welcomed Mr. Barthel's call for adjournment at 4:30 p.m

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

Back to

OAKLAND UNIVERSITY

S E N A T E

Home Page