



OAKLAND UNIVERSITY SENATE

OAKLAND UNIVERSITY SENATE

Thursday, 9 February 1984
Fifth Meeting
128, 129, 130 Oakland Center

MINUTES

Senators Present: Appleton, Barthel, Bertocci, Boddy, Boganey, Boulos, Brown, Burke, Bledsoe, Chagnon-Royce, Chapman-Moore, Chipman, Copenhaver, Downing, Easterly, J. Eberwein, R. Eberwein, Edgerton, Eliezer, Evans, Feeman, Gerulaitis, Grossman, Hamilton, Hartman, Heubel, Horwitz, Howes, Ketchum, Kleckner, Maloney, McClory, Moore, Pine, Russell, Sakai, Scherer, Schwartz, Shichi, Snider-Feldmesser, Splete, Stevens, Titus, Tomboulian, Tracy, Witt. **Senators Absent:** Champagne, Christina, Coppola, Federlein, Frankie, Hammerle, Hough, Lindell, McCabe, Moorhouse, Schimmelman, Sevilla, Workman.

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

1. Minutes of 12 January 1984. Moved, Mr. Chipman; seconded, Mr. Copenhaver. Approved
2. Amendment to specify application of grading proposal to all undergraduate students in any University course. Moved, Mr. Bertocci; seconded, Mr. Moore. Approved.
3. Amendment to extend to two calendar years the period for completing a "P" grade. Moved, Mr. Bertocci; seconded, Ms. Bledsoe. Approved.
4. Amendment to revise section b of the grading proposal to replace S/U courses with those graded S/0.0, with the 0.0 recorded on the transcript and figured into the GPA. Moved, Mr. Horwitz; seconded, Ms. Titus. Defeated.
5. Amendment to extend period for removing "I" grade from four weeks to eight. Moved, Ms. Gerulaitis; seconded, Mr. Stevens. Approved.
6. Motion from the University Committee on Undergraduate Instruction and the Academic Standing and Honors Committee to revise the undergraduate grading system. Moved, Ms. Eberwein; seconded, Ms. Boulos. Approved as amended.
7. Motion from the Research Committee to modify membership. Moved, Mr. Brown; seconded, Ms. Gerulaitis. First reading.
8. Motion from the Steering Committee to disqualify members of Senate standing committees from applying for funds to those committees. Moved, Mr. Edgerton; seconded, Mr. Eberwein. First reading.
9. Motion to table the preceding motion. Moved, Mr. Moore; seconded, Ms. Gerulaitis. Defeated.
10. Motion from the Steering Committee to fill vacancies on certain standing committees. Moved, Mr. Downing; seconded, Ms. Titus. Approved.
11. Good and Welfare motion from Mr. Horwitz to initiate consideration of a policy allowing students to elect courses on S/U basis. To be referred to UCUI by Steering Committee.
12. Good and Welfare proposal from Ms. Scherer to move Senate meetings to a room with

superior acoustics. Taken under consideration by Steering Committee.

In the absence of both Provost and President, Senator Feeman called the meeting to order at 3:13 p.m., requesting the Steering Committee to remain briefly after adjournment to approve the Fall 1983 graduation list. He then directed attention to the minutes of the 12 January 1984 meeting, which were approved without comment (Moved, Mr. Chipman; seconded, Mr. Copenhaver).

The first agenda item was the second reading of the undergraduate grading proposal from the University Committee on Undergraduate Instruction and the Academic Standing and Honors Committee (Moved, Ms. Eberwein; seconded, Ms. Boulos). Mr. Bertocci initiated action on the proposal by offering two friendly amendments circulated in advance to all senators by their sponsor, Mr. Bartalucci. The first amendment altered the first sentence to begin: "MOVED: that for undergraduate students in any Oakland University course..." (Moved, Mr. Bertocci; seconded, Mr. Moore). The Registrar, to whom Mr. Bertocci yielded the floor, justified this change as a way of clarifying the Senate's intent to maintain one grading system for all undergraduates, even when enrolled in graduate-level courses, and thereby obviating confusion that occasionally exists when an instructor applies undergraduate grading conventions to graduate students in undergraduate-level courses. The amendment carried with neither discussion nor dissent.

The second amendment, establishing that "the 'P' grade, if not removed within two calendar years of its assignment, be changed to a numeric grade of 0.0" (Moved, Mr. Bertocci; seconded, Ms. Bledsoe), was introduced to correct what Mr. Bartalucci perceived as an innocent error on behalf of the sponsoring committees that unintentionally restricted the period for completing the "P" grade, making it seem parallel with the "I". Ms. Eberwein noted that her research on this subject indicated that a previous Academic Standing and Honors Committee, the one that launched this proposal, had indeed intended to limit the "P" grade to one year for undergraduates even though graduate students have two on the assumption that the particular courses in which this grade is permissible are chiefly populated by seniors. The amendment carried by a show of hands, allowing attention to revert to the main motion.

Mr. Horwitz, responding to an editorial on the grading proposal in the *Oakland Sail* that faulted this motion for penalizing a student who ventures into a class that may prove too rigorous, noted that the editors had disregarded the extension of the period in which a student could withdraw without penalty. Nonetheless, he took the student complaint seriously and promised to offer a Good and Welfare resolution at the appropriate point in this meeting to provide a vehicle for students to take courses they would like to attempt but about which they feel apprehensive. He then called for an amendment to item b in the existing proposal to build in a penalty for failing work. He moved that the language be changed to read "the grade N be eliminated for S/N graded courses and replaced by the grade 0.0, which grade will carry no credit, will enter into the grade point average, and will appear on the academic transcript" (Seconded, Ms. Titus). He explained that he wanted to arrange the system eventually so that, instead of offering a few courses on an exclusively pass/fail basis, the University would let students elect a greater range of courses through an individual pass/fail arrangement. Nonetheless, he wished to place continuing emphasis on academic incentive even in designedly pass/fail work. Mr. McClory immediately inquired how Mr. Horwitz planned to incorporate the S grade into the GPA if he was going to count failures. Mr. Russell, pointing out that the current cut-off point for an S is 2.0, inquired whether Mr. Horwitz

planned to lower that cut-off to 1.0. Mr. Horwitz left that question to UCUI. Mr. Stevens opposed the proposed amendment as punitive. Mr. Appleton, another attentive *Sail*/reader, observed that the editorial assumed that an "N" does not appear on transcripts. It does (even externally) although it is not figured into the GPA. He pointed out that, when a student repeats a course, it is the most recent grade that counts, not necessarily the highest. The legislation now before the Senate, then, threatens a student with forfeiture of 4 credits if a 0.0 in a course should succeed a 1.5. Should the Horwitz amendment pass, someone could lose credits originally earned. Messrs. Tracy and Russell wondered which grade would prevail if an S should yield to a 0.0, and Mr. Moore feared that a student working for a letter grade could wind up with numerical one that hurts him. Mr. McClory had difficulty justifying assessment of a student in a course for which no credits were expected but learned that an S in an S/N course carries credit, though a failing grade does not. Both Mr. Witt and Mr. Burke recalled attention to the original purposes of pass/fail courses. Mr. Witt remembered that limits originally placed on S/N courses were meant to prevent students from taking the same course in two different ways; while Mr. Burke reminded his Senate colleagues that S/N courses are supposed to be designed very differently from others and were never meant to be evaluated in conventional ways. The amendment was defeated by a show of hands.

Considerable confusion developed about the application of the new system to student already enrolled. Mr. Grossman wondered whether either sponsoring committee had considered Mr. Appleton's point that a student could make "negative progress" toward a degree by having a low grade replaced by a 0.0. when repeating a course. Ms. Easterly had no recollection of UCUI thinking on this issue; the members of her group had hoped that students might improve their scores. Mr. Chipman pointed out that loss of academic standing for such mischances is already the case in computation of the API. Mr. Appleton noted, however, that the issue has relevance in more than one realm. Loss of previously earned credits would influence Financial Aid eligibility.

Mr. McClory wondered whether the benefits of eliminating API/GPA confusion outweighed the loss of flexibility caused by sacrificing WS/WN options. He also raised a murky question about how the GPA will be figured out in practice for students already here. He suggested phasing in the new system gradually so that current students might complete their programs under the rules in effect when they entered. Mr. Bartalucci pointed out that, despite appeals from Mr. Stevens and Mr. McClory for grandfathering of this policy, grading systems have never in Oakland University history been phased in by degrees. This arrangement made sense to Mr. Chipman, who argued that curriculum change, are implemented gradually to protect students from incurring penalties for previous choices—a problem that need not arise if the new policy is adequately publicized upon adoption next fall. The Registrar, while not attempting to speak for the Academic Standing and Honors Committee that devised and monitors the API, also maintained that it would be "idiotic" to have two concurrent undergraduate grading systems simultaneously, with instructors expected to figure out each person's entry date when assessing performance. He thought that, since the new GPA would be identical with the old API, the Academic Standing and Honors Committee should continue using the API for persons already in the system. When Mr. McClory raised the specter of a GPA calculated on two different bases and urged gradual phase-in of the new system, if feasible, the Registrar pointed out that some students never leave the University. We could be phasing in this system for ten to fifteen years. He urged adoption of a simple, unified grading system. When Mr. Tracy Indicated his understanding that the old API would become the new GPA for returning students as of next fall, Ms. Chagnon-Royce objected to a retroactive GPA based on decisions made under other circumstances. Mr. Feeman explained that the API and GPA would be equated in the future but

not merged for the past. Messrs. Heubel and Grossman attempted to explain how the new GPA would be figured with the former thinking that the GPA for returning students would be recalculated in the fall and the latter maintaining that the old Ns would remain such without reverting to 0.0. The question was at length resolved when Mr. Kleckner, just returned from the state capitol, assured his fellow-senators that nothing changes; no grade ever issued by Oakland University will ever be changed by this legislation. For any student already here, therefore, the API will forever exist.

Reporting the judgments of the University Congress, Mr. McClory reported unhappiness with the short time given by both the existing and proposed systems for making up I grades. He listed policies in effect at other Michigan colleges and universities, noting that-despite great discrepancies in time allowed-only one other institution requires students to complete work within a month. Ms. Gerulaitis, also unhappy with the four-week limit (especially as the Library closes for more than a week over Christmas break) offered an amendment to substitute eight weeks in line two of section g (Seconded, Mr. Stevens). Mr. Edgerton thought that leeway sufficient, given the likelihood that few schools with more lenient policies have a P-grade option. Mr. Heubel supported the amendment for the sake of the faculty, who also struggle with the current time constraints. The amendment passed by a substantial majority.

With Ms. Chagnon-Royce formally requesting that UCUI or some other appropriate body look into the problem raised in this discussion about a student's vulnerability to forfeiting academic credits when repeating a course unsuccessfully, Mr. Feeman called for a vote on the main motion, treble amended. The motion, as it appears below, was approved:

MOVED that for undergraduate students in any Oakland University course:

- a. the grade N be eliminated for numerically-graded courses and replaced by the grade 0.0, which grade will carry no credit, will enter into the grade point average, and will appear on the academic transcript;
- b. the grade N be eliminated for S/N-graded courses and replaced by the grade U (unsatisfactory), which grade will carry no credit or numerical equivalent and will appear on the academic transcript;
- c. the grades WS and WN be eliminated;
- d. the P grade, if not removed within two calendar years of its assignment, be changed to a numeric grade of 0.0;
- e. the period for granting the W (withdrawal without assessment of progress) grade be extended to nine weeks in fourteen-week courses and to five weeks in seven-week courses;
- f. in the case of severe hardship beyond the control of a student which occurs after the cut-off date for use of the W grade and which prevents the student from completing course requirements, the I (incomplete) grade be utilized,
- g. completion of work to remove an I grade is to be accomplished during the first eight weeks of the next semester (Fall or Winter) for which a student registers,

unless an extension is requested by the student and approved by the instructor and the dean of the appropriate School or college. The I shall be changed to a grade of 0.0 at the end of the semester if the work has not been completed. If more than three terms intervene before the student next registers at Oakland University, the I grade shall be changed to a grade of 0.0; and

h. the effective date for implementing these changes shall be September 1, 1984.

After successfully presiding over the old business on the agenda, Mr. Feeman then yielded the floor to Mr. Kleckner, who conducted the remaining part of the session. The first item on the agenda was a motion from the Research Committee (Moved, Mr. Brown; seconded, Ms. Gerulaitis):

MOVED that the membership of the Research Committee be:

Eight faculty appointed by the Senate

Two faculty appointed by the Graduate Council

The Director of Research and Academic Development (ex officio and non-voting.)

Mr. Brown explained that this alteration of membership is intended to broaden faculty representation to allow for a greater range of disciplinary expertise and to help discharge an increasing workload while holding the total committee to a manageable size. His committee proposes that there be ten voting members and one non-voting. Both the Dean of Graduate Study and the Director of Research and Academic Development concurs with this arrangement. Mr. Feeman, speaking as the "non-voting" ex officio member identified on the agenda, spoke in favor of the change. The Director reports to him and he has confidence in that worthy and in the committee as a whole to do their work properly. When Mr. Boganey asked why this body, alone among Senate committees, has no student representation, Mr. Brown suggested that its primary tasks (evaluating faculty proposals and allocating funds) might make such involvement inappropriate. When the committee allocates money for student research, however, he thought students as well as alumni might make a contribution. He volunteered to communicate with the Congress on this issue. Mr. Appleton, speaking as former chair of the Research Committee, suggest that a few outstanding students might be invited to attend meetings as guests.

Ms. Titus then inquired how a range of disciplinary expertise could be assured. According to Mr. Brown, the Steering Committee considers that factor in nominating members, and the Graduate Council takes academic balance into consideration when naming its representatives. Mr. Kleckner observed that the Steering Committee spends disproportionate time in identifying persons to serve on the Research Committee but pointed out that the Senate, which actually elects members, takes final responsibility. Mr. Heubel, anticipating the effect of the next resolution on the agenda, noted that the self-interest of faculty units would prevent attempts at packing the Research Committee should its members be precluded from applying for funds. Final decision on this issue awaits the March meeting.

The next motion, thus anticipated, was then placed on the floor (Moved, Mr. Edgerton; seconded, Mr. Eberwein):

MOVED that the Senate adopt a policy that disqualifies any member of a standing

committee from applying to that committee for funds during his/her period of service.

Considerable discussion ensued, with questions raised about the necessity of establishing a policy at all, even for the two committees now affected, and about the possible preferability of passing a more general resolution applying similar restrictions to faculty members serving on other bodies. Mr. Ketchum wondered whether this policy would bind members of the Bio-Medical Research Group (BRSG), while Mr. Bertocci inquired about its relevance to members of CAPs and the FRPC. Other members suggested still other areas of possible conflict-of-interest. Both Messrs. Ketchum and Bertocci believed that the Senate was dealing with a general ethical issue pertinent to many situations. Both suggested that the problem might continue to be dealt with informally simply by continuing current practice of having a member of any such body withdraw temporarily when his or her case comes under consideration. Mr. Kleckner pointed out, with respect to broad policy implications, that the Senate has no direct authority over committees outside its direct purview, though they may choose to be guided by its example. Mr. Heubel liked the motion as written with its specifically limited application. He pointed out that a person who withdraws from a vote on his or her own case still influences the general context in which a committee makes its decisions. Mr. Stevens recalled suffering from a greatly increased workload when two members of a Research Committee on which he served withdrew from a particular round of voting. Mr. Brown concurred in lamenting such excessive burdens and expressed concern also about the discomfort of a group, thus put under pressure by one or more of its members, when dealing with related issues. Mr. Eberwein pointed out that this policy provides a kind of protection for members of these committees. He has never heard charges of unethical behavior brought against any Senate committee but is aware of muttered complaints. Ms. Gerulaitis agreed with him that mutterings injure morale. When Mr. Maloney inquired whether the Steering Committee could fill temporary membership gaps by naming replacements, Mr. Kleckner explained that it could do so only by going to the Senate with nominees to fill vacancies.

Mr. Ketchum's question of why the Steering Committee wants to correct a system if it already works thereby elicited various indications that the existing system of informal adjustments no longer works in a way all committee members find comfortable. As Mr. Feeman pointed out, the fact that both affected committees have recently adopted such a policy voluntarily indicates that they find it an improvement on past practice. Experience with the policy is still too new, however, to answer Mr. Bertocci's question about its impact on the number of faculty volunteers. Mr. Downing observed that a Senate policy on this matter would allow faculty to fill out their annual preference forms with eyes open, thereby making the process more open and honest.

Other senators explored the application of this policy in particular circumstances. Mr. Boddy wondered whether the restriction applied to a committee member applying as part of a research team; Mr. Kleckner replied that it did. Mr. Maloney wondered what would happen if the department of a committee member were to apply for a departmental grant and was told by Mr. Brown that awards in recent years go only to individuals. Mr. Ketchum sketched out a scenario in which a member of the Research Committee might feel constrained to resign in order to apply for funds to respond to an unexpected research opportunity. Mr. Shichi reverted to the problems of scientists who must apply on short notice to the BRSG for money to deal with equipment breakdowns and was reminded by Mr. Kleckner that the motion on the floor applies only to standing committees of the Senate and not to other groups with more limited pools of possible members.

Whether this motion belonged on the floor at all turned out to be a point of debate. Mr. Ketchum preferred the idea of a broadly-inclusive ethical resolution that would extend beyond Senate committees but would apply no absolute behavioral restrictions. Ms. Gerulaitis, too, would like the Steering Committee to address broader questions of conflict-of-interest; she suggested that the current motion be tabled. Mr. Eberwein, by contrast, while not disregarding the relevance of wider ethical issues, hoped that the Senate would vote on this motion at its next meeting. When Mr. Moore (Seconded, Ms. Gerulaitis) moved to refer the motion back to the Steering Committee, Parliamentarian Heubel ruled the motion debatable, amendable, but possibly out of order. In any event, it was rejected by voice vote, and senators are at liberty to search their consciences for insight between now and the next meeting.

The next motion, by happy contrast, proved less controversial. Upon motion by Mr. Downing, seconded by Ms. Titus, the Senate approved the following membership changes on standing committees for the duration of the winter semester: Professor Hoda Zohdy to be appointed to membership on the Academic and Career Advising Committee, replacing Mr. Hatfield; Professor Steven Miller to be appointed to the Admissions and Financial Aid Committee, replacing Mr. Shepherd; and professor Janet Krompart to be appointed to the Teaching and Learning Committee, replacing Mr. Bryant. The motion carried without opposition.

The presiding officer introduced the Good and Welfare section of the meeting by calling the attention of his colleagues to the new division of the house into clearly labeled No-Smoking and Cancer sections in response to Mr. Stevens' January suggestion. Mr. Horwitz then offered a motion for the good of the order in response to problems identified by the *Sail* editorial in connection with the new grading system. He asked the Steering Committee to direct UCUI or other appropriate body to study the possibility of allowing students to enroll in courses on a pass/fail basis under specific conditions without the need for the entire course to be graded S/U. Mr. Kleckner responded that the Steering Committee would forward the proposal to UCUI, as requested.

Ms. Scherer then proposed, for the good of the order, that Senate meetings be moved to a different room so that members could hear each other speak. Mr. Kleckner promised to look into room availability and to introduce a public address system if no preferable location turns up. There were several information items, beginning with a brief presentation by Mr. Feeman of revised plans for the projected Master of Science in Nursing program. He called attention to a detailed report distributed with the agenda to inform the Senate about developments and amendments. He stressed that such information is presented on the basis of the new Graduate Council/Senate relationship just established and indicate that he will continue to present information items to the Senate and the Board, ready to take additional steps if these groups so request. All new programs will still come through regular channels. This is the only time he can recall when major program changes have been introduced between Senate approval and implementation; so he thought it appropriate to call attention to these changes, confident that such communication can only strengthen graduate education at Oakland University. Mr. Kleckner, just back from Lansing, reported that representatives of Michigan universities are hard at work trying to find ways for the Governor's Commission on Higher Education to validate institutional requests to meet deferred maintenance and equipment (instructional, research, and operational) needs. He also discussed possible responses to Governor Blanchard's budget allocation of a ten-percent increase for higher education, with full commitment of the increased funds restricted to schools that freeze tuition. Since the actual increase amounts to considerably less than announced? approximately four to five percent, state universities are reviewing their options and reminding legislators of the long-term after-

effects of recent budget cutbacks. Although all would like to hold the line on tuition, actual tuition freezes may have to be phased in gradually. Meanwhile, our development plans continue, with formal announcement of the campaign scheduled to coincide with next September's 25th anniversary celebration now being planned by Mr. Matthews, who would welcome suggestion for the festivities. As that esteemed former presiding officer of the Senate is also engaged in writing the saga of Oakland University, Mr. Heubel wondered whether his colleagues could take the opportunity to rewrite history. On that note, Mr. Tracy called for adjournment, and the Senate disbanded at 4:54 p.m.

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

Back to

OAKLAND UNIVERSITY

S E N A T E

Home Page