



# OAKLAND UNIVERSITY SENATE

## OAKLAND UNIVERSITY SENATE

Thursday, December 10, 1981  
Fourth Meeting  
128, 129, 130 Oakland Center

### *MINUTES*

Senators Present: Akers, Appleton, Arnold, Bieryla, Boulos, Briggs-Bunting, Brown, Champagne, Chipman, Christina, Copenhaver, Coppola, Cowlshaw, Dawson, Downing, Eberwein, Feeman, Gardiner, L. Gerulaitis, R. Gerulaitis, Ghausi, Gregory, Grossman, Hammerle, Hetenyi, Heubel, Hildebrand, Horwitz, Ketchum, Kleckner, Lambric, Miller, Otto, Pine, Pino, Sakai, Scherer, Schwartz, Somerville, Stanovich, Strauss, Stokes, Wilson, Witt.  
Senators Absent: Burdick, Eklund, Eliezer, Frampton, Hershey, Hightower, Howes, Kurzman, Lindell, Mallett, Maloney, Pak, Rhadigan, Russell, Sevilla, Swartz, Tripp.

Mr. Kleckner, in the absence of President Champagne, called the meeting to order at 3:12 p.m. and, at the request of the President who returned to campus during discussion of motion B2, discharged the awesome duties of Interim Presiding Officer throughout the deliberative portion of the meeting.

The minutes of the November 12, 1981, meeting were approved without discussion (Moved, Mr. Heubel; Seconded, Ms. Gerulaitis).

In the absence of old business, attention turned at once to a full agenda of new motions. Mr. Dawson (seconded by Mr. Hetenyi) proposed dissolution of the Performing Arts Faculty Council:

**MOVED** that the University Senate recommend to the President and the Board that the Performing Arts Faculty Council be dissolved, with thanks to those persons who have served on that body during the formative stage of the School of Performing Arts.

When Mr. Heubel inquired whether this motion represented a move to decertify PAFCO, Mr. Hetenyi admitted that it did and Mr. Kleckner suggested that the persons involved may not serve on other committees for three years after this action. No further discussion ensued.

The second item of new business was a motion from the University Committee on Undergraduate Instruction to modify policy on readmission and change of program (Moved, Mr. Coppola; Seconded, Ms. Gerulaitis):

**MOVED** that students who are readmitted to the University, or who change from

one degree program to another, shall follow the graduation requirements in effect at the time of readmission or change of program. It shall be University policy that all academic units make every effort to allow for whatever work a student has completed prior to readmission or change of program.

Mr. Coppola yielded the floor to Mr. Sudol to answer questions on behalf of the committee proposing this legislation. The first question came from Mr. Horwitz, who inquired about the definition of "degree program." He wondered whether this language included majors within schools and changes from B.S. to B.A. programs within departments as well as transfers between schools. When Mr. Sudol noted that his committee had not defined this issue but had not intended to affect changes of major within one degree program, Mr. Horwitz (seconded by Mr. Grossman) moved to authorize the Steering Committee to formulate an amendment to include all program changes, including such adjustments as the change from B.A. to B.S. in Chemistry or from Electrical to Mechanical Engineering. Mr. Appleton requested that the resolution should protect the student's right to follow the original set of general education requirements even while switching to new major requirements that prevail at the time of change of program; he had no objection to changing general education requirements for readmitted students but saw no reason for such limitations on students who continue their work at a normal pace but change majors at some point. Messrs. Horwitz and Grossman acceded to this request that only major requirements be affected by this legislation.

Questions then arose about the importance and feasibility of enforcing such a regulation in various academic programs. Mr. Cowlshaw noted that Biology majors declare their specific degree ambitions only when filing a senior checkoff sheet. Mr. Hammerle observed that a significant portion of Oakland University students avoids declaring a major until near graduation. He wondered whether it was the intent of this proposal's movers that requirements of the final catalog must pertain. Ms. Briggs-Bunting anticipated great confusion for advisors and students, if several different catalogs had to be consulted in any given semester depending on when a student entered a program. Mr. Sudol indicated that his committee had thought only of students who change majors in midstream, not those who declare late.

Ms. Schwartz thought that the heart of the issue was a matter of time. Standards change within a program over time, and the problem is one of long-protracted education, She hoped that the motion could be adjusted to recognize time as the main problem, rather than majors; although Mr. Horwitz replied that shifting requirements of the professional schools recognize dramatic program changes in pre-professional programs to the extent that it is no kindness to allow a student to graduate with obsolete credentials. Mr. Kleckner observed, in response to Ms. Schwartz, that the Steering Committee had also noticed the problem of a catalog's wearing out even for a student who remains within one academic program but who proceeds at the rate of a course or so a year, taking decades to finish; the current motion does not address this issue.

Mr. Ketchum raised the issue of voluntarism by asking whether one university-wide policy on this issue were necessary. He wondered whether the Senate could alter the existing regulations in a way that would allow professional schools to stipulate their own regulations on catalog application. Mr. Kleckner agreed that the Senate could, in fact, modify the present blanket rule. Mr. Witt complained that Engineering has tried unsuccessfully to impose such a rule unilaterally so that all students can benefit from program changes designed to help them. Mr. Miller indicated that the Chemistry Department requires each student to file an application for major standing well before graduation, using the catalog valid at that time. Some units already

put such a system into effect, although he acknowledged that students now encounter problems when transferring into such programs. Mr. Grossman noted that the Chemistry Department is now violating existing university legislation and that the Chemistry section of the catalog contradicts the general section. Mr. Cowlshaw thought his sister department had fashioned one more bottleneck through which students must pass.

Mr. Appleton recurred approvingly to Mr. Hammerle's attention to undecided students. He thought these proposed regulations would make it preferable to stay officially undecided as long as possible. He saw no reason why all departments should have hold students to the current catalog and hoped that no legislation would require them to switch to the current catalog for general education requirements.

Mr. Ketchum inquired whether there is now a problem of students changing from one school to another; he supposed that the new school's general education requirements already hold. Mr. Kleckner agreed but indicated that no particular catalog is specified. Mr. Ketchum, seconded by Ms. Briggs-Bunting, then proposed an amendment saying that academic units can require the current catalog if they so desire:

**MOVED** that the schools, College, or departments may require students who are readmitted to the University, or who change from one degree program to another or one major to another, to follow the graduation requirements pertinent to that major in effect at the time of readmission or change of program....

Mr. Hetenyi suspected a substantive change from a University-wide policy proposed by the presenters of the main motion to a voluntaristic system hidden in the guise of this amendment and asked parliamentary advice from Mr. Heubel. The parliamentarian advised that, at the next meeting, supporters of voluntarism should bring in a substitute motion to be proposed and discussed first. He indicated that the chair could so rule, but Mr. Kleckner preferred to bring the issue to the Steering Committee to work out a sequence of motions. He urged open discussion for the time being. Subsequent discussion involved suggestions of matters Senators wished to see included in eventual legislation.

Mr. Hammerle suggested some outer limits to voluntarism by restricting the right to establish requirements on the applicability of catalogs to the schools and the College not yielding this privilege to departments individually. He thought it sufficient to allow each school to determine policy on changes of major. Ms. Schwartz wondered why both the original and the subsequent motion specified the catalog in effect at the time of readmission or program change rather than subsequent catalogs; she would like to keep evolving requirements possible and asked that the possibility of using subsequent catalogs be included in the motion itself rather than restricted to commentary.

Attention shifted to readmission standards when Mr. Cowlshaw asked for a definition of that term. Mr. Kleckner observed that no readmission procedure is required of students in good standing who have been enrolled within three fall or winter semesters and formal application for readmission is required only after a six-year absence. He thought that readmission, within the intent of this motion, applied only to students away six years or more or those who had been dropped from the University within that time. Mr. Hammerle wondered whether an "automatic readmission" were not still a readmission after more than three years. Mr. Sudol indicated that the UCUI meant to include those students who leave the University for more

than three terms but less than six years. That news comforted Mr. Witt, who observed that the six-year interval would mean that his school could never be professionally accredited.

In the light of all these questions and anxieties, Ms. Schwartz suggested that the motion be returned to the original committee for reconsideration. Mr. Feeman agreed, especially as he anticipated difficulty in implementing the provisions of sentence two, if a student should appeal on the ground that a professor had not made every conceivable effort to smooth his or her transition. He preferred to leave pleas for leniency to the comment section and therefore moved to delete the second sentence (seconded, Mr. Arnold).

Mr. Hetenyi (seconded by Ms. Schwartz) then proposed that the Senate vote to recommit the main motion, its substitute and amendments, back to the UCUI for further consideration. Mr. Appleton hoped that the committee would also consider problems of minors and concentrations in perfecting the legislation. Without further ado, the Senate voted unanimously to refer the issue to the committee.

The third item of new business consisted of a five-part proposal from the Academic Standing and Honors Committee to eliminate the N grade. This explosive topic was introduced with understandable reluctance by Mr. Miller, who likened this unwelcome Steering Committee assignment to that of a novice zookeeper responsible for elephant hygiene (seconded, Mr. Chipman). Mr. Ring attended the meeting to answer questions on behalf of his committee. Although discussion ranged freely among parts of this complex proposal, the Secretary presents material sequentially by subsections.

Part 1 stipulated that "The N, W/S and W/N grades will be eliminated from the undergraduate grading system. A numeric grade of 0.0 will be added to the undergraduate grading system." Mr. Somerville, a very-much-interested Senator inquired what would happen to a student withdrawing late in a term. Mr. Ring thought that he would now receive a failing grade or withdraw with a W, but Mr. Somerville observed that no one can get a W after the refund period. Mr. Chipman reminded his colleagues that the I grade continues to be available, if the instructor is willing to follow its proper function; it serves a good purpose in helping a student who fails to finish a course for a legitimate reason such as sickness. Mr. Grossman asked what replacement this legislation provides for students now marked N for non-attendance, those who have neglected to withdraw from a course even though they gave up on it early in the semester. Such students would get a 0.0, although others who were improperly registered because of some administrative error would be protected. Mr. Appleton asked that any failing grade be listed on the transcript as "no credit" rather than "failing" to protect the pride of students and their families. He foresaw great impact of the proposed new system on all kinds of internal decisions within the University, including retention in the Honors College, and he worried about the effect of failing grades on admission to graduate schools. He objected to penalizing a student on the public record for making a mistaken early program choice. He did, however, see merit in getting rid of the dual GPA/API system of recording progress. Mr. Ring contended that the record should be accurate and should make a distinction between two students with 4.0 records, one of whom had passed four courses while the other failed two but had them dropped from the record. He noted that there are many failing students walking around campus with high GPAs.

The second subsection of the proposal stated that "The S/N grade (Pass/Fail) will be designated by the letters S/U (Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory). No numeric equivalent will be

attached to either grade." This proposal elicited no discussion.

Subsection 3, however, ruling that "A numeric grade in the range of 0.1 to 0.9 will be added to the undergraduate grading system" brought heated reaction. Mr. Strauss wondered what merit there could be in dividing a grade into tenths of failure. Mr. Ring observed that this distinction is consistent with the general grading pattern at Oakland of giving a broader range of low grades (1.0 to 2.9) than of high grades, and Mr. Miller thought that this proposed adjustment corresponded to the system now being used in the Graduate School. It turned out, nonetheless, that the graduate grading system lacks an N grade but doesn't have a 0.1-0.9 range. Mr. Akers (seconded, Mr. Arnold) moved to amend the main motion by deleting section 3.

In defense of the proposed grading range, Ms. Schwartz suggested that there might be a possible margin of difference on probation decisions if a student earned a 0.9 rather than a 0.0. Mr. Ring agreed, and Mr. Chipman observed that the current API, in making no such distinction, may be hurting students whose work is somewhat better than nonexistent. Ms. Gerulaitis testified her belief in degrees of failure and thought the proposed range of grades legitimate; she has seen authentic D-minus productions, though Mr. Hammerle doubted she had ever seen any F-pluses.

Mr. Miller denied that it was necessarily in a failing student's best interest to keep him here. If we want to be kind, we can go all the way by keeping the N grade, avoiding any 0-range of grades, and making decisions purely on the GPA. Mr. Ketchum observed that elimination of API indexing will change the probation pattern anyway, and implementation of academic standing policy will have to be adapted to fit the Senate's philosophical bent. Observing that, with this new legislation, the GPA would do what the API does now, Mr. Kleckner agreed with Mr. Ketchum that the general average would rise by adding the 0.1-0.9 range.

Problems of using such grades were explained by Mr. Hetenyi, who thought he would have great difficulty as a teacher in distinguishing a 0.8 essay from a 0.4. Mr. Heubel replied that professors would retain their current option of using only such grades as each feels comfortable in assigning; no one is required to use the full scale. Mr. Ring thought some professors might prefer awarding a high failing grade to a total wipeout of 0.0. Calling upon long experience in interpreting evidence about Oakland grading practices, Mr. Beardslee volunteered that, despite the extremely ideological aspect of any grading practices, an empirical study of the old university grading system, back when it included 0.5-0.9 grades, shows that grade information of this sort is valuable as a projection of a student's chance of completing a degree program. Mr. Akers objected, nonetheless, to the absurdity of subdividing low grades rather than As and Bs.

When Mr. Grossman asked whether other universities, such as M.S.U., utilize such a range of failing grades, he learned that the committee had not inquired. Mr. Heubel expected that our grading system would remain unique. Mr. Somerville, however, worried about the danger of misinterpretation of transcripts, if we give numerical value to a failing grade.

Moving ahead to the next subsection of the proposal, the Senate confronted the provision that "The I grade, if not completed by the end of the prescribed time of the term in which a student registers, or P grade, if not changed within 2 years of its assignment, shall be changed to a numeric grade of 0.0." This suggestion proved non-controversial, though Mr. Pino inquired whether this change would be consistent with the current graduate grading system. Alas, no.

Mr. Chipman pointed out that the Graduate Council had agreed last year to disagree with the undergraduate grading system by allowing I grades for graduate students to last beyond the next term of the student's registration indeed, forever. This discrepancy recognizes the smaller number of credits required for a graduate degree and the higher required grade point average. Mr. Wilson wondered why the "next" term was not specified but accepted clarification on the point that students must complete such grades during the next term of actual registration; this policy protects a student from being compelled to complete work during the spring or summer term if not otherwise registered.

Subsection 5 evoked no praise, questions, nor complaints. It stipulated that "Undergraduate students who enroll at Oakland University for the first time after the implementation of the legislation shall have their academic standing determined solely by their Grade Point Average (GPA)."

A number of issues were raised during discussion which pertained to the motion as a whole more than to any of its parts. Mr. Heubel initiated discussion by indicating his general support for the motion as simpler and more understandable than the University's current grading system, with its bewildering history. Mr. Miller, however, worried about some predictable effects of prohibiting a student from failing a course without hurting the GPA; he expected to find more students repeating courses to replace abysmal grades when they should not continue to attempt a particular discipline or program at all. He feared that professors might keep confronting the same uncomprehending faces. Mr. Witt noted that many students even now attempt to survive in computer science by dint of balancing their low grades in CIS courses with better marks in courses they can predictably succeed in?thereby managing to stay in place academically so far as one can tell from the GPA although making no progress in their degree program.

Mr. Chipman favored abolition of the dual GPA/API system. He supported this motion's endeavor to communicate a student's academic progress more clearly to the student and to anyone else examining the transcript. Mr. Hammerle concurred.

In an effort to clarify the whole grading system, Mr. Gerulaitis (seconded by Mr. Hetenyi) proposed an amendment to change from numerical grades to the letters A, B, C D, and E. He acknowledges the tremendous ideological backlog in Oakland s grading system but hoped most problems would be overcome by reverting to standard letters in the faith that modern people can still read as well as compute. Mr. Kleckner suggests that this motion should be remanded to committee for a thorough study of its implications.

Discussion of this multifaceted proposal ended with attention to the parliamentary mechanics of putting the motion and all amendments and substitutions on the Senate agenda for the January meeting. Mr. Heubel indicated that the main motion should be perfected by its friends, in the light of December's discussion, and that any substitute motions should also be perfected so that the Senate may vote at the next meeting on which motion it chooses to consider. When Mr. Feeman inquired whether Mr. Gerulaitis and the friends of his amendment are required to propose a completely documented substitute motion, he was assured that they could propose simply that the appropriate committee be charged with exploring the issue and making a recommendation on letter-grades to the Senate.

The Senate then left behind the grading-system proposal and all its attachments to turn to

another motion from the Academic Standing and Honors Committee with the intention of extending the withdrawal period (Moved, Mr. Miller; Seconded, Ms. Briggs-Bunting):

**MOVED** that the period of granting the W grade will be extended to 9 weeks in fall and winter semesters and 5 weeks in spring and summer sessions.

The first issue that arose about this proposal concerned its linkage to the previous motion. Ms. Schwartz asked that the Senate be allowed to vote on the withdrawal issue before considering the abolition of the N grade; while Mr. Miller recommended incorporation of the withdrawal motion into the other because it was obviously offered as a means of ameliorating the effects of the grade-change policy. Mr. Ring indicated that the committee considered the motions separate in intent and felt they should remain separate. Mr. Cowlshaw and Ms. Schwartz objected to tying the fate of the withdrawal motion to that of the N-grade proposal, and Mr. Chipman announced that he, as seconder of motion B3, would not agree to incorporation. Mr. Heubel noted that the Steering Committee could fix the order of the agenda.

Mr. Hammerle wanted the number of weeks in which a student could receive an I grade to equal the number of weeks he would have to make the work up. Mr. Ring acknowledged that his committee had not considered this issue, and Mr. Witt noted that these items are not consistent now, when the I-grade can be given only in the final week of a term. Mr. Chipman mentioned, however, that a professor can make out an I-form in week fourteen for absence earlier.

In response to Mr. Grossman's question about whether this policy is supposed to apply to all courses or only selected ones, Mr. Ring replied that it applied to all. Ms. Gerulaitis mentioned that sequential courses are often not completable with an I-grade so that the student must file a petition for exemption now and still would; we cannot hope for a system that accommodates every eventuality. Mr. Chipman objected to a pattern of encouraging students to deal with problems by withdrawing; he thought students should have to cope with their situations and that faculty members should provide feedback on course standing before the seventh week. Ms. Schwartz hoped that the Provost's Office would direct faculty to get feedback to students early and pointed out that grading a course only on the basis of work submitted late in the semester presents grave difficulties for students.

Recognizing that the problem of interpreting evidence about course standing is particularly difficult for students new to Oakland University, Mr. Appleton then proposed an amendment (seconded by Mr. Gerulaitis) to provide extra leeway for the first semester student. He asked that the motion be extended by a sentence: "During their first semester of (regular) enrollment at Oakland, undergraduate students may be granted a W grade until one week prior to the beginning of the final exam period." He wanted to be able to pick up the pieces when a student's program hopes crumble in the first term, noting that not even the first exam can give reliable advice on a person's prospects in the course as a whole. As our alpha-lists clearly indicate a person's semester of entry, he thought a system of this sort could be implemented readily. Without such protection of new students, he feared that a number of good students who made ill-advised initial program choices might be pressed into leaving the University instead of simply exploring alternative majors. Mr. Ring anticipated bookkeeping problems with such a system and observed that students who fail in their first semester are not actually dropped but only placed on probation; he felt that allowing students to bail out late would encourage irresponsibility. The Academic Standing and Honors Committee is even now working to

develop legislation to require a first grade for all freshmen within the first six weeks. Mr. Appleton, on the other hand, intended all new students in his amendment, not just freshmen.

Mr. Somerville asked a definition of "regular enrollment." Mr. Appleton explained that he wished to exclude non-matriculating students or those on special status because of taking courses only at extension sites. When Mr. Somerville indicated that there was no difference in practice, Mr. Appleton deleted the word "regular" from his proposal. Mr. Christina asked the committee to provide the Senate with full information about the long-range implications of its plans.

The final item of new business was a procedural motion from the Steering Committee nominating Ms. Pastor, Mr. Appleton, and Ms. Lentz to vacant seats on the Teaching and Learning Committee: Ms. Pastor and Mr. Appleton to serve one-year, at-large terms; and Ms. Lentz to replace Ms. Guerriero for the remainder of her term (Moved, Mr. Miller; Seconded, Mr. Hetenyi, "with enthusiasm"). There was no discussion of the Teaching and Learning Committee's decision to fill its at-large seats with a graduate teaching assistant and a person from an academic advising office, an alumnus/a, or someone from the office of Continuing Education for one-year terms on a rotating basis. Mr. Grossman, however, raised a question about Ms. Lentz's appointment in that she now serves productively on a Senate committee which he chairs. He would not want to weaken her efforts there and wondered whether it might not be better to spread out such burdens or opportunities more generally through the University community. Both Mr. Christina and Mr. Kleckner assured the Senate of the candidate's capability and willingness to serve, and they noted the value of retaining a seat for Ms. Guerriero's academic unit. Eligible for final vote at this meeting, the motion carried without objection, providing a well-earned sense of accomplishment for the Senate.

Senators, exhausted from the strain of prolonged deliberation, offered no private resolutions for the good of the order; and the Steering Committee, similarly over-burdened with preparing so formidable an agenda, failed to offer any information items. With the regular business of the session completed, therefore, Mr. Kleckner turned over the chair to President Champagne. The President confessed his perplexity with the Oakland grading system and the course of its evolution and admitted that he was happy to allow the Provost to chair the portion of the meeting allotted to this puzzling topic. He feared that inequities might be created simply by the failure of persons to understand the system and administer it justly, and he hoped that the new system would be more understandable even if we have to start all over. This problem struck him as only one example of things that might be simplified around here to the advantage of the budget and of University image. He concluded his commentary on grading by observing that "Quality isn't measured by these things but by what you turn out."

President Champagne's principal news for his Senate colleagues concerned his meeting that noon with Governor Milliken and several other university presidents. There was little specific information to be shared but some unpleasant vibrations. Fears of an additional budget cut within this academic year have not been put to rest, nor have anxieties about the move toward state centralization of higher education. He is deeply worried about a proposed state-wide Blue Ribbon Commission on Higher Education which would authorize some community leaders to survey the situation and make recommendations to the governor. Inevitably such a study would find duplication of offerings, but it might be deficient in ferreting out needless duplication from that which is essential. State monitoring of programs would be a likely recommendation of such a study.

Commenting on the Governor's remarks, the President noted little encouragement for college administrators with respect to the state economy. Even if projected improvements materialize in mid-1982, there would probably be a several year interval before universities would begin to feel the effects. Mr. Champagne was very impressed with the specificity of the Governor's knowledge about what is going on at various state universities and heartened by his awareness of responsible behavior by university administrations. He feels that we have a governor who is very concerned about our problems but cannot do much to help.

Whether we keep such a governor remains uncertain; Mr. Milliken reports that he will indicate by December 20 whether he intends to run again for his customary office. The meeting broke up on a sad note, with news of a wildcat tax-cut motion introduced that morning in the House. Should such a proposal pass, higher education must bear the brunt.

Recognizing that we are going to have to find our own answers to our problems, President Champagne thanked all those at Oakland University who are working hard on various committees to plan scenarios for the future so that we can choose the best course. On that note, the Senate adjourned at 5:04 p.m., responding to (or in some cases anticipating) the motion of Mr. Gerulaitis.

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

*Back to*

OAKLAND UNIVERSITY

**S E N A T E**

*Home Page*