

Oakland University Senate Minutes

March 21, 2019

Members present: *Aloi, AlSalman, Ball, Battle, Baxa, Berven, D., Berven, K., Bowe, Cheezum, Cheng, Clark, Corcoran, Craig, Daniel, Debnath, Didion, Doherty, Dulio, Eis, Estes, Fox, Garfinkle, Gooren, Havstad, Insko, Latcha, law-Sullivan, Lentini, Long, Lucarelli, Mazzeo, Megee, Meldrum, Mezwa, Mitchell, Navin, Parkash, Reger, Rigstad, Roth, Stone, Townsend, Wadsworth, Weiter, Welling*

Members absent: *Chamra, Chaudhry, Dereski, Edrisinha, Giverson, Giblin, Guessous, Hranchook, Ibrahim, Kleinschmidt, Knox, Lauer, Margerum-Leys, Meehan, Mitton, Tracy, Van Til, Wells*

Provost Lentini called the meeting to order at 3:10 P.M.

Summary of Information and Action Items

INFORMATION ITEMS

Program modifications approved by Graduate Council

- To the Post-master's Graduate Certificate in Nonprofit Organization and Management in the Department of Political Science changing the Post-master's Graduate Certificate to a Graduate Certificate in Nonprofit Organization and Management
- To the Master of Science in Software Engineering and Information Technology in the School of Engineering and Computer Science adding concentrations in software engineering and in information technology

Program modifications approved by UCUI

- To add a minor in Music Theory to the Bachelor of Music programs and the Bachelor of Arts in Music program in the School of Music, Theatre and Dance in the CAS.
- To the Bachelor of Business Administration in the School of Business Administration adding three electives in the Department of Communication and Journalism to meet the pre-core requirement in oral communication
- To the Nutrition minor in the Bachelor of Science in Health Sciences in the School of Health Sciences removing HS 3110, adding NTR 2600, dropping the number of required electives to 2 and changing the total credits to 21
- To the Integrative Holistic Health concentration in the Bachelor of Science in the School of Health Sciences changing the name to Holistic Health Concentration
- To the Integrative Holistic Health Minor in the School of Health Science changing the name to Holistic Health Minor and removing HS 3110 and adding AN 3220 and HS 4650 as electives
- To the Bachelor of Science in Applied Health Sciences in the School of Health Sciences removing STA 2220 as a program requirement and reducing the number of required credits to 124

To the Writing and Rhetoric Minor in the Bachelor of Arts in Writing and Rhetoric in the Department of Writing and Rhetoric in the CAS changing the name to Writing Minor

To the World Music Minor in the Bachelor of Arts in Music reducing the total number of credits, adding Applied Indian Raga as an additional instrument, MUA 2012 as an elective and replacing IS 4326 and 4995 and deleting DAN 1240, DAN 1375 and MUS 4325

To the Bachelor of Arts in Communication in the Department of Communication and Journalism in the CAS adding a Minor in Organizational Communication for nonmajors

Student Mental Health and Student Success

Oakland University Grading System

Provost's Updates

ACTION ITEMS

New Business

Motion from the General Education Committee to change the Gen Ed requirement from 40 credits

Motion approved from the Graduate Council to change the name of Graduate Education to Graduate School

Motion to create an ad hoc committee on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Procedural motion to staff Senate Committees

A. INFORMATION ITEMS

- Provost Lentini offered Senate members the opportunity to comment on the above program changes approved by Graduate Council and the UCUI.
- Ryan Fox (Student body president) brought up the national crisis of mental health issues that exist in today's world. He spoke about the impact that mental health issues have on many students. He said there are difficulties with outreach because students tend to downplay their needs and often do not know where to get help. He noted that there is still a stigma attached to mental health issues that make students reluctant to seek help. He said it is good that there is help available at the OU Counseling Center but noted that the wait times are long. He said that the Student congress wants to promote student success by addressing the mental health issues which he said are related to retention. He said the goal should be to increase student awareness of resources available on campus, and to improve retention. He suggested that there needs to be an increase in conversations between faculty and students to reduce the stigma and increase the chances that students who need help will seek it. He proposed that information should be included on syllabi about the Counseling Center, and he recommended adding wording on syllabi that would help students know where help was available if it is needed.
- Ms. Westergaard was present to provide an update on the new grading scale. She reminded Senators that the change to the grading scale was initiated at the request of the Student

Congress, developed by a committee of faculty, staff and students, approved by the OU Senate, and was implemented in Fall 2018. She said that the transition was from a very unique grading scale to a standard and more traditional letter grading system. She observed that as Registrar she has been contacted by numerous faculty and students about the new scale. She said there have been misconceptions about the new system that need to be corrected which is why the new one-page document has been created to clarify the situation. She noted that right now there are numerous catalogs in play during this complex transitional time, and she stressed the importance of Senators sharing the information on the document with their departmental colleagues. She said students need to know the implications of the new grading system on their degree requirements. She pointed out that it may cause confusion for faculty members to use numbers from the 4.0 scale in their classes because they are no longer relevant. She said it would be better to use percentages and letters on the syllabi and in classes, and not to use the 0.0-4.0 standard at all, because this will enable the new grading system to be much more transparent and less confusing. Mr. Navin said that he thinks there are translation issues and if people think about the translation in the wrong way, they can get confused because it can seem as if the university may now be forcing faculty members to inflate their grades, since the lowest C grade is now a middle C grade. However, he said this was not the intent at all. He emphasized that grading is an aspect of academic freedom that is wielded by the faculty in the academic units and as it is delegated to individuals. But he said that the grades the students get are up to faculty but should speak the universal language of assessment which he said are helpful points but not entirely prescriptive. He suggested it would be good for academic units to work together to have a kind of common language of grading. Mr. Berven said that the problem that he has noticed is that most people when they give grades come up with a percentage, and they convert that percentage to a 4.0 grade scale. Now there is no indication how percentages are assigned to these particular letter grades and everybody is doing it differently, and so this is very confusing to the students. In addition, he said this is also confusing to the students who are used to a full numerical scale to see that now you go from a B+ to an A- and it is all the way from 3.3 to 3.7. He said that on a percentage scale, it does not look quite that large and he said he had mentioned this when it was initially proposed that it would be helpful if there was a corresponding more-or-less standard percentage assigned to each of these letter grades. He affirmed that it is certainly the case that every faculty member does their percentages any way they want but at least students would know that if they got an 80%, that corresponded to a particular letter grade, and not a 2.9 in one person's class and a 3.1 in another person's class. Ms. Westergaard said that she does think that is the heart of a lot of the confusion, but she said that an A in one person's class might be a different percentage in another class. She said it is important for faculty members to come up with a system for their syllabus that makes it very clear so they understand what the percentage is that they need to get for a certain letter grade. Mr. Navin said he thinks there are two kinds of equity questions—for example if there are different distributions of grades between instructors of different sections of the same class in the same academic unit so there are good reasons for the academic units to come up with a system so that there is equity within the academic unit. But he said he also thinks it is important to make sure there is a global equity, such that an A or a B here roughly translates to

other settings. He has heard, for example, that some faculty members are now saying that you have to get 100% to get an A, and he said of course that is one's right, but he thinks that it seems inconsistent with the way the A grade is used at most other universities. Mr. Fox said he wanted to represent the student point of view, and he has heard a lot of confusion for students in the higher end of the scale, relating to an area that used to exist between the 3.7 and the 4.0 but which does not seem to exist any longer. A lot of students do not feel like there is an area there for them anymore and so they feel like they are at a disadvantage. They used to work incredibly hard to get a 3.8 or a 3.9, but those grades no longer exist since there is a 4.0 and a 3.7. He said he guesses that the intended theory is that the 3.9 was supposed to round up to a 4.0 and a 3.8 would round down according to the theory that was billed to them and so he thinks that what is important and where most of the confusion exists is that students are still thinking in terms of the 3.0 system instead of in the letters, so now when students see an A they see it as something good, but when they see an A-, they see it as something awful which he is hearing specifically from students who are Pre-Meds and those who are going into grad school, who think that makes them less competitive if they are planning to apply to Medical School, for example. Ms. Hitt said that actually students who got 3.8 or 3.9 in the previous system were considered to have an A- and so they were being severely disadvantaged because a 3.7 is average for Pre-Med from what he has been told, so these students feel they existed better in a system where they could get a 3.8 or a 3.9. Ms. Hitt said that the thing to remember is that if they had a 3.8 or a 3.9 before it was actually turned into an A-, and then recalculated in the GPA so our students were being severely disadvantaged and so it was very important as a student success issue to go to the alpha scale like almost everyone else on the planet because that way our students are being treated equally as opposed to being disadvantaged. Mr. Fox said although there have been many meetings about this, the key is communication which he thinks needs to be improved so that students understand what is going on because a lot of students were not clear on what the new system is and they need more detailed explanations of why the system was changed because they are not present at this type of meeting. Ms. Hitt agreed and said that this was discussed and published in the Oakland Post but it does not mean all the students were here then. Ms. Westergaard said she would like to suggest that instead of putting the numerical 4.0 scale on the syllabus, there should only be percentages so it is clear what percentages or points equate to the letter grade which should make it more transparent and less confusing. Ms. Berven said that she studied the scales to understand what her grades before would mean now and she thinks she is continuing to grade students the way she did but it is just surprising that what she used to think of as a B+ is now lower and is a 3.3. She said a difficulty involves understanding the long distance between A- and B+. 3.5 feels more like a B+. A 3.0 in her mind has been close to a low B but now all of a sudden what she has thought of as a C+ is a B-, and she does not think it is easy to explain to students if there is no correlation between your own personal grading system and how it eventually gets translated into their grade point average. Ms. Hitt said that the new grading scale should not really be new. She said that people should start fresh, say that this is the alpha scale we are using, and figure out the percentages that this will equate to and not to try to do the conversion because it does tend to make people get more confused. Provost Lentini said that it sounded like some re-thinking

was required here. Mr. Navin offered a metaphor to conclude the conversation. He said that this is a new language and so the wrong way to think about this is that we are exchanging one set of numbers for another set of numbers because when you think that way although it is intuitive it leads us astray, and so we really need to think of this as learning a new language. Provost Lentini said it is obvious that more communication is needed and he hoped that since it has only been one semester since the new grading system has been in place, as we go forward everyone will get more used to it.

Provost's Updates

- Provost Lentini said that the final letter has been received from the Higher Learning Commission, and the good news was that of the 21 standards that must be met, Oakland University had met all 21. He said feedback was requested on two items but that they would not require a re-visit.
- He noted that faculty members need to get their textbook orders in early to the bookstore in order for students to save money since the bookstore needs enough time to get a good price from the publisher.
- He said that work is being done on a coordinated method for the Carnegie engagement application process.

B. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES of February 14, 2019

The minutes of the meeting of February 14, 2019 were approved.

C. OLD BUSINESS

The agenda item concerning the motion from the Graduate Council to approve a new Graduate English Proficiency Policy was removed from this agenda by acclaim.

D. NEW BUSINESS

1. Motion from the General Education Committee to change the General Education requirement from 40 credits

MOVED *that the Senate approve changing the General Education Requirement from a requirement to complete 40 credits across 10 knowledge areas to completing the General Education requirements, including a course of three or more credits in each of the knowledge areas* (Eis, Daniel)

Ms. Ostergaard was present from the General Education Committee to explain that students will still take 10 courses in Gen Ed, but the proposed change makes us competitive and is better for transfer students who can transfer in 3-credit courses to satisfy the requirement. This change will mean that transfer students will have more free electives and they may be able to pursue another minor or major.

Mr. Navin observed that if the university were to move from 4 credit courses to 3 credit courses then the Gen Ed requirement would be satisfied with 30 credits. Ms. Ostergaard concurred.

2. Motion from the Graduate Council to change the name of Graduate Education to Graduate School

MOVED *that the organization under which graduate study operates be named the Graduate School of Oakland University (Aloi, Rigstad)*

Mr. Cheng asked if this change is important for recruitment. Mr. Lentini replied that it is, and he noted that in the R2 category, this is the standard name and would be in line with other universities.

Mr. Cheng then noted that because this is important for recruitment and because registration is going on now, he moved to waive the second reading. (second Mr. Fox)

The motion to waive the second reading passed unanimously.

The original motion passed unanimously.

3. Motion from the Steering Committee to create an ad hoc committee on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

MOVED *that the Senate create an ad hoc committee on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in support of Strategic Plan Goal 4 (Cheezum, Daniel)*

Cynthia Miree Coppin was present to explain that this committee would begin their work in 2019/20, and would have a potential to become a standing committee of the Senate. She said that the committee would be charge with developing metrics for the implementation of Strategic Plan Goal 4, and she emphasized that this committee would be for the purpose of faculty-related items mentioned in this goal. Mr. Garfinkle asked how the committee would assist a department from the outside in a departmental search. Ms. Coppin indicated that the criteria for selection have to be stated up front, whether it is diversity-related criteria, subject matter and/or teaching related criteria, and as the committee works with the department it would be to assure that there is an equitable process. The committee would try to make sure that there was not unconscious bias and that every candidate was asked the same questions during the interview process, and that the diversity statement of values is also included. Mr. Rigstad suggested that Senators should let the Steering Committee know if they learn of anyone interested in being on the committee so they can be considered.

4. Procedural Motion to Staff Senate Committees

General Education

Tim Hodge (Winter 2019) replacing Ram Orzach (2016-2019) for a teaching conflict

Darrin Hanna (Winter 2019) replacing Laila Guessous (2016-2019) for her leave

Academic Conduct

Julian Rrushi (Winter 2019) replacing Brian Dean, SECS (2018-2020)

The procedural motion was approved.

E. GOOD AND WELFARE

Ms. Piskulich reminded Senators that the call has gone out for Senate Committees.

Mr. Dulio noted that Elissa Slotkine will be holding a Town Hall Meeting this evening in the Oakland Center.

Mr. Lentini reminded Senators that Founder's Day was coming up on April 17.

Ms. Reger announced that this year at the Googasian Luncheon Stephanie Lee will be honored.

Mr. Rigstad told Senators about the upcoming Burke Lecture in Philosophy on March 28 with Dr. Kwame Anthony Appiah from Harvard University at 7:30-9:30 in Banquet Rooms A and B. Dr. Appiah would be hosting a discussion on "The Lies that Bind".

Respectfully submitted,
Dikka Berven (secretary)