Oakland University Senate

Fifth Meeting
January 20, 2000

Minutes

Members present: Benson, Braunstein, Brieger, Chapman, Dow, Downing, Early, Eberly, Eberwein, Esposito, Estes, Fink, Hildebrand, Long, McNair, Mitchell, D. Moore, K. Moore, Moran, Mosby, Pfeiffer, Polis, Riley, Rozek, Russell, Schochetman, Schwartz, Shablin, Sieloff, Stamps, Sudol, Wood

Members absent: Alber, Andrews, Blanks, Boddy, Buffard-O'Shea, Carter, Coppin, Didier, Emrich, Gardner, Garfinkle, Grossman, Herman, Liboff, Marks, Mayer, Mili, Nakao, Olson, Otto, Rusek, Sharma

Summary of actions.

1. Approval of the minutes of the December 9, 1999 Senate meeting (Sieloff, Eberwein) Approved.

2. Resolution to endorse and support the recommendation of the Campus Development and Environment Committee to designate areas of the campus as biological reserves (Wood, McNair) Approved.

3. Motion from the Graduate Council to recommend approval of a Ph.D. program in Biomedical Sciences. (Mr. Andrews, Mr. Downing) Second reading. Approved.

3a. Motion to amend the previous motion by adding the stipulation that a campus-wide discussion of graduate support take place. (Schwartz, Polis) Not approved.

4. Motion to amend the previously adopted amended Senate Constitution to change the membership to 50 elected faculty senators. (Riley, Moran) Approved following approval of a motion to waive the second reading (Russell, Sieloff)

5. Procedural motion from the Steering Committee to staff Senate standing committees. (Schwartz, Moran) Approved

Observing a rather sparse crowd in the room at the official starting time of 3:10, Mr. Esposito delayed a few minutes before calling the meeting to order at 3:15. The minutes of the December 9th meeting were approved without correction upon a motion by Ms. Sieloff and a second by Ms. Eberwein.

Campus Biological Reserve Areas

Mr. Esposito called attention to a memo from the Campus Development and Environment Committee which called for certain areas of campus to be designated as biological reserves. A map with those areas marked with cross-hatching was distributed to the Senate. He stated that the Senate Steering Committee was forwarding this memo to the Master Planning Task Force for their consideration as they work on developing an updated Master Plan. He added that the Senate will be informed of all recommendations of the Master Plan.

Ms. Wood then moved, seconded by Ms. McNair, that the Senate adopt the following resolution:

> Resolved that "The Oakland University Senate endorses and supports the recommendation of the Campus Development and Environment Committee that Oakland University designate two areas of the natural campus as biological reserves, and that these reserves should be left in their present state and excluded from future development."

Mr. Russell began the discussion by inquiring whether or not this proposal would affect the existing and planned trails. Ms. Wood responded that the paths would not be affected by this proposal. Ms. McNair spoke in favor of the resolution, citing the use of the natural campus areas by their lab school and deploring the disappearance of some of the hiking trails with the advent of the new golf course. An amendment was proposed to the resolution stating that "this motion does not waive any rights the Senate may have to be consulted on the use of any of the other areas on campus." This was accepted as a friendly amendment by Ms. Woods and McNair and the resolution was approved by the Senate.

As another information item Mr. Esposito spoke to rumors of a soccer stadium and stated that there is a potential donor but that this is still in the exploratory stages.

Ph.D. Program in the Biomedical Sciences

Turning to the single item of old business, a motion to recommend approval of a Ph.D. program in the biomedical sciences with a specialization in biological communication, Mr. Esposito commented that at the last meeting he said that he would meet with the program's proposers and would then prepare a statement concerning the funding of the program. He explained, however, that he needs more time to weigh the issues and, in particular, wants to consider the overall picture with regard to support for graduate programs and graduate students. Once he has had a chance to meet with representatives from all the graduate programs and discuss appropriate levels of support, he will report back to the Senate. However, he added, if the Senate wishes to vote on this program today it may do so, but he cautioned, he is not committed to supporting either the initial nor the revised budget that is part of today's agenda.

Mr. Downing indicated that copies of his memo and the revised budget were available at the front of the room to anyone who did not get their copies before this meeting and noted that his memo addresses the concerns of the Senate committees and the Senate. Graduate student support has been lowered in the revised budget after consultation with ERD and with other institutions. He hoped that this revised stipend would establish a floor for all other graduate programs and urged the Senate to consider the quality of the proposal and the curriculum independent of the concerns over graduate stipends. Mr. Moudgil asked the Senate to act promptly since the Henry Ford Hospital support is contingent on OU's approval of the program; Henry Ford cannot commit their resources to a program that hasn't been approved and it is important to launch the program on time.

Ms. Hansen-Smith expressed concern about some of the budget changes and asked about the College of Arts and Sciences financial support for the program. Mr. Downing replied that the College absorbs the cost of recruiting faculty and provides assistance with lab and start-up costs; the funding for these activities comes from a variety of sources. Ms. Hansen-Smith expressed concern over the reductions in some of the budget items, adding that they are committed to mounting the best quality program and that a quality program is money-dependent. What happens, asked Mr. Polis, if the funding for graduate students is at the current level? Will you be able to recruit? We have been operating with the lower stipend, stated Mr. Moudgil and generally get local students. Mr. Moudgil felt, however, that OU needs to be more competitive at the Ph.D. level in order to attract quality students. He noted that faculty are not paid the same, so why should graduate students all get the same amount. Mr. Esposito wondered if Mr. Polis was suggesting that all stipends be equal. No, replied Mr. Polis, but there should be a rationale for any difference. In terms of the rationale, Mr. Downing responded, we looked at similar programs and the average stipend at other institutions. The $16,500 now in the budget is at the low end of the average range. Mr. Downing felt there is a problem in graduate support and this is a first step in addressing the issue. Ms. Sieloff wondered if we approve this motion today with a revised budget, will that budget be the final allocation or will the university administration actually determine the budget. The university administration will determine the budget, responded Mr. Esposito and approval of this motion and budget does not necessarily mean the university will support the program to the extent specified in the budget you have before you.

Ms. Papazian spoke in favor of the motion, stating that, as it went through the various stages of approval, it was highly supported. She stressed the quality of the program, its interdisciplinary nature and the way it utilizes the expertise of OU's faculty and staff as well as its contributions to community outreach. She suggested that if the Senate approves this program it will signify that the Senate values quality and also the sense that the Senate supports increases in graduate stipends. Mr. Schwartz thought the Senate should also express its dissatisfaction with current levels of graduate support and proposed an amendment to the motion:

> Moved that the Senate recommend this program with the stipulation that we have a campus-wide discussion on doctoral graduate support.

Following Mr. Polis's second, Ms. Early expressed concern over amending the motion, stating that graduate support should be handled as a separate issue, and Mr. Russell stated that he didn't think the amendment was needed since the Provost has already said that he will do this. Mr. Stamps expressed agreement with the concept but did not think an amendment was necessary. Mr. Schwartz argued that Senate approval of the program indicates that the Senate agrees that the level of support specified in the program is appropriate and he is concerned about funding of the other programs on campus. The Senate then voted against the amendment.

Mr. Downing answered yes to Mr. Russell's question asking if the new positions were part of the normal allocation process. And, in response to a query concerning the library resources, Ms. Papazian indicated that while increased library funding is desirable, the reality is that finding is limited, yet faculty and graduate students have managed to find the library resources needed to conduct their research. Mr. Moudgil concurred but indicated that improved access would be desirable.

Ms. Eberwein noted that the discussion today has focused on university resources and wondered about the support from Henry Ford that was highlighted at the last Senate meeting. She noted that various recent articles have indicated funding problems in research hospitals and expressed concern that the hospital will actually have the funds to assist with the program. How confident are we, she asked, that Henry Ford Hospital will contribute significantly to the costs of the program. Mr. Moudgil stated that many of the hospital faculty have research grants and have been steadily funded for a long time. Also many OU faculty support graduate students on their research grants, but since these students would be taking classes their first two years, they would not be supported on grant monies during that time. After two years it is expected that support for students will be picked up by research grants. Mr. Downing added that, based on their conversations with Henry Ford, they expect that research will continue to be a part of their mission.

The motion to recommend to the President and Board approval of a program leading to a Ph.D. in the Biomedical Sciences with a concentration in Biological Communication was then voted upon and approved.

Amendment to the Senate Constitution

The first item of new business, a new motion to further amend the Senate Constitution to restrict the membership to faculty only, was moved by Mr. Riley, seconded by Mr. Moran. Mr. Esposito explained that this new amendment is the result of conversations with the Board of Trustees and that he thinks the Board will approve the amended Constitution if this change is made. Should this be approved, there will be an open hearing on the changes and the amended Constitution will be then sent to the faculty for a vote. If the faculty approve it, the Constitution will be on the Board's agenda in April and the new Senate would be implemented next fall.

Mr. Russell moved to waive the second reading, Ms. Sieloff seconded and the motion to waive was approved by the required 3/4 majority. Mr. Esposito thought the Board's rationale for eliminating the non-faculty representatives was for symmetry, there would be a Faculty Senate, an AP Assembly and a Student Congress. Mr. Russell stated that the sponsors of this amended Senate have indicated that they would invite the Provost, AP's and students to attend the Faculty Senate meetings, they just couldn't vote. Mr. Mitchell spoke against the change, arguing that such a move would be divisive and that he would not like to go back to his constituency with the report that the Senate does not want students and APs as members. Mr. Russell pointed out that it is the Board, not the Senate, that is saying faculty only; that the Senate would welcome student attendance at their meetings. Mr. Mitchell thought that blaming the Board was inappropriate since it is the Senate that is approving the change. He urged those who don't like the change to vote no, and argued that the Senate is more powerful as an inclusive body. Mr. Moran opined that there's a political process involved, that we won the battle regarding eliminating the preamble but now we have to give up on the membership. He added that the faculty who signed the petition that started this process clearly wanted a faculty-only senate.

Mr. Polis thought that a faculty-only Senate would lose some of the stature of the University Senate and that a faculty senate would be treated like any other group on campus. Mr. Moran countered that the proposed change stems from the fact that some faculty are not happy with the way they are treated now. Ms. Eberwein saw the change as a sad event. We had a body that represented the university community, she commented, and she is afraid that the new body will be perceived as merely the voice of one of the employee groups on campus. She also cautioned care in bringing any future Constitutional amendments to the Board since every time this happens, the powers of the Senate are diminished. The Senate then voted on the amendment and the motion passed with 15 votes in favor, 10 against and a number of abstentions.

The next motion, an uncontroversial motion to bring the University Committee on Assessment up to its full complement of members for the Winter term, was moved by Mr. Schwartz, seconded by Mr. Moran and approved without discussion or dissention.

Good and Welfare

Under the auspices of good and welfare, Ms. Moore stated that the faculty and staff enjoyed the late start of the winter semester this year and asked if this could become a tradition. Mr. Esposito indicated that it would be taken under consideration. Mr. Shablin pointed out that there were actually only an added three days off. Ms. Wood and Mr. Braunstein noted that having the extra time would be useful since many professional organizations meet the first week in January. A later start would also provide more time for student advising added Mr. Downing, as well as other beginning-of-the-semester activities.

In response to a query about the status of the CT bargaining, Mr. Esposito reported that the CTs are considering a replacement for the UAW and this will slow down the progress. Mr. Long added that any time a contract expires the employees have the right to switch unions and the employees have filed such a petition. There has been a pre-election hearing scheduled to determine what is to be done, that fact-finding was scheduled but right now everything is now on hold. Mr. Stamps said it was a sad thing that the university and the union could not come to terms. Mr. Esposito concurred.

And with no further items, the meeting was adjourned.

Submitted by
Linda L. Hildebrand
Secretary to the University Senate
2/15/00

Back to OAKLAND UNIVERSITY SENATE Home Page