



OAKLAND UNIVERSITY SENATE

OAKLAND UNIVERSITY SENATE

Thursday, 20 April 1989
Ninth Meeting

MINUTES

Senators Present: Appleton, Beehler, Bhatt, Braun, Cass, Chipman, Christina, Coffey, Downing, J. Eberwein, R. Eberwein, Fish, Frankie, Fullmer, Grossman, Haskell, Hildebrand, Hough, Jackson, Karasch, Kleckner, Muir, Murphy, Olson, Pine, Sherman, L. Stamps, R. Stamps, Stern, Tracy, Williamson, Wilson, Witt.

Senators Absent: Abiko, Barthel, Brown, Burke, Cardimen, Champagne, Dahlgren, Eliezer, Garcia, Gerulaitis, Hartman, Herman, Horwitz, Ketchum, Larabell, Lauer, Lindell, Maschke, Miller, Millwood, Pettengill, Pillow, Reddy, Riley, Schimmelman, Sevilla, Theisen, Tripp, Wedekind.

Summary of Actions:

1. Motion to waive a second reading (Braun; Christina). Approved.
2. Motion to modify transfer admission policy (Pettengill; Hough). Approved.

Mr. Kleckner called the meeting to order at 3:14 p.m., noting that the Senate faced a single-item agenda that had been held over from the previous week's gathering. The matter at issue was an administrative request for authorization to modify transfer admission practices over the spring and summer months until the Admissions and Financial Aid Committee could study the matter and bring recommendations to the Senate. He mentioned that Mr. Appleton, who would have to abandon this session early in favor of a dental visit, was distributing a written report on his and Mr. Beardslee's findings about the comparative success rates of FTIACs and transfer students with varying levels of credits. In general, he found, transfers actually fare better at Oakland University than do their classmates who enter as freshmen. Because there were too few available copies of his report, others were summoned from the Provost's Office. In the meantime, Senate colleagues who were lucky enough to have the documents in hand took a few moments to study the report. After suitable time for perusal of this text, Mr. Kleckner proceeded to discuss the motion that had been presented at the 13 April meeting by Messrs. Pettengill and Hough:

MOVED that the Senate authorize the Provost to suspend the 1985 increase in the minimum number of credits required for admission of transfer students to Oakland University through the fall of 1989 if necessary to maintain the level of enrollments projected in the 1989-90 budget, and

That the Committee on Admissions and Financial Aid study the matter of transfer

admission standards and make a recommendation to the Senate in fall 1989.

When Mr. Williamson inquired why the report provided no breakdown of transfer data on the basis of grade point averages at other institutions, Mr. Beardslee explained that the GPA from a previous school has not proven a good predictor of performance here; there is too great a range of institutions (from the University of Michigan to Podunk) from which Oakland draws its transfers. Mr. Chipman, thinking back to the research done for the CUE report, agreed with much of what Mr. Appleton reported. CUE had also found great variance in the performance of transfer students admitted with fewer than 40 credits. He urged careful examination of full records and considerable caution on the part of admissions officers to ensure selection of candidates with the greatest chance of success. Mr. Appleton commented that he had never found any effective substitute for the exercise of judgment. Since rules wind up functioning differently as society changes, he advocated steady monitoring of the way a system of making decisions is working out rather than frequent appeals to the Senate to modify policies.

Mr. Christina then raised a question about a statement on the second page of Mr. Appleton's report: "Detailed inspection of the data suggests there is a reason to hesitate to admit young male community college students seeking entry to programs requiring a substantial math background." He wondered what the statement implied. Mr. Beardslee, in a response remarkable for its careful qualification, explained that study of variables in addition to credits completed showed a complex pattern that revealed that some young students (more often men than women) coming from some of the community colleges and intending to major in technical fields (often engineering but not limited to that subject) tend to encounter more difficulties than many other students. Mr. Chipman agreed on behalf of CUE, affirming "That's exactly what we saw." Having found this pattern a fairly consistent one, Mr. Beardslee thought admissions officers should be encouraged to think about it when processing applications. Still, he noted that some of these persons do succeed, so that individual judgment is needed on specific cases. He thought it unethical, perhaps even illegal, to write a specific warning about this demographic group into the university's admissions policy.

Mr. Stern expressed his concern that the proposal had reached the Senate in response to an immediate fiscal crisis. The temporary nature of the proposed solution bothered him, especially as his reading in alumni magazines from Oberlin and Johns Hopkins convinced him that Oakland cannot help being affected by the demographic changes that make it difficult for colleges across the country to recruit able students. Hoping to avoid being confronted with another stop-gap proposal next year, he urged that a long-term policy be developed that wouldn't be tied to completion of 40 transfer credits. That, said Mr. Kleckner, was the idea of instructing the Admissions and Financial Aid Committee to come forward with a revised policy statement on transfer admissions. Mr. Stern advised that body and the Admissions Office to pick up on Ms. Stamps's suggestion last week that Oakland introduce a waiting list that would allow it to maintain contact with students not immediately admitted upon application.

Mr. Christina declared himself in favor of the motion, although he took issue with the paragraph that denied any bearing of transfer credits on retention. His survey of the data revealed some difference, but Ms. Braun wondered whether it would prove statistically significant. Mr. Downing, who prefaced his remarks by thanking Messrs. Appleton and Beardslee for preparing this information on such short notice in order to crystallize the issue for the Senate, said that he read the material noted by Mr. Christina to pertain to three quite different groups. When Mr. Kleckner commented that we shall have to keep close tabs on

developments, Mr. Christina remarked that we should have been doing so all along. Mr. Downing agreed that Oakland should carefully reconsider its policy on the basis of the effect it has had on students.

This colloquy led Mr. Haskell to inquire what the current policy actually is. He wondered whether Oakland had been refusing admission to all transfer applicants with fewer than 40 credits. Mr. Kleckner responded that the university's concern has been with the student whose high school record would not support admission to Oakland University but who betakes himself to a community college. What is a minimum number of credits such a person could complete there that allows a record to emerge that would give evidence of promise here? When Mr. Haskell pressed his query to find out what would happen to a student who had been admissible right out of high school but who had attended a two-year college 9 for a while, the provost assured him that such a student is already admissible here according to the current policy. The question, according to Mr. Appleton, is how many community college credits make a reliable basis for judging the probability of success here. His review of data showed little difference in predictive value between 26 credits (minimum under the pre-1985 policy) and 40 credits (now required under the new policy for those whose high school records would not have made them welcome). Mr. Haskell would assume that Oakland's admissions officers would look at all evidence in any case, but Mr. Appleton pointed out that the new policy had prevented them from doing that. He trusted that they would now have the opportunity.

Mr. Chipman then turned attention to projected numbers of students, wondering how many additional students we might expect to pick up by modifying the policy as suggested and then following that question with another about estimated numbers of current students we may be losing for whatever reasons. Mr. Beardslee quoted Mr. Rose as estimating the possibility of admitting 100 or so additional transfer students by relaxing the current policy this summer. He found retention a more difficult subject to discuss briefly on the Senate floor because it involved so many variables. He had found work-load the most significant of these in predicting retention, with closeness to degree coming second. Current demographics, which reverse an earlier pattern that had Oakland enrolling more upperclassmen than freshmen and sophomores, also affect retention rates. In one sense, he pointed out, graduation itself can be perceived as a form of non-retention.

Ms. Sandoval, who attended the meeting with Mr. Headley as representatives of the Admissions Office, provided useful information on application of the 40-credit-hour issue. Currently, she reported, Oakland has turned away 52 applicants who were unaware of the rule. Communicating a revised policy to community college counselors should have additional effect, as they have been telling people that Oakland will not consider their applications short of 40 credits rather than suggesting that some may be eligible on the basis of their high school records. Word travels fast to our primary audience, she assured the Senate, and relaxation of the 1985 policy would be likely to result in admission of about 100 more students over the summer, followed by increased applications thereafter. This statement led Mr. Stern to suspect a contradiction of what the Senate had been told the previous week about what community college counselors were saying to their students. He had gotten the impression then that they were directing people elsewhere. Ms. Sandoval saw no conflict as she was talking specifically about those students who told counselors they wanted to transfer to Oakland University. These people had been advised that they would have to wait. Those who simply wanted to transfer to a four-year institution, however, might well have been counseled to apply elsewhere.

At this point, Ms. Braun and Mr. Christina took steps to call the question. This entailed requesting that the Senate vote to waive a second official reading of the motion. With much support and no discernible opposition, the move to proceed to a vote won approval. So did the actual motion, which passed by voice vote. Mr. Kleckner promised to direct this matter to the proper committee in the fall with instructions to develop for the Senate a flexible policy based on comprehensive judgment of a student's promise. Mr. Christina reminded people of the value of consistency. He didn't want the university looking foolish. Mr. Williamson urged that track records be maintained on those transfer students whose high school records had been insufficient. Both Messrs. Kleckner and Beardslee cautioned that it can be hard to assemble such data, as high school records do not appear on the Honeywell Multics student records file. Mr. Headley pointed out that students who have completed 40 transfer credits are not required to send along their high school records.

Ms. Stamps wondered whether any means existed to get in touch with those applicants whom the university has already rejected for not meeting the 40-credit rule. Since we can't afford a television advertising campaign like Wayne State's, she thought it useful to maintain contact with people who had expressed interest in joining us. Ms. Sandoval said it should be easy to reach all 52 affected persons and to communicate the university's reconsideration of its policy in a tactful manner. Ms. Muir thought this effort was likely to be more effective in the short term than efforts to communicate with community college counselors, since their institutions' own efforts to improve retention might make them reluctant disseminators of Oakland's news.

With no proposals brought forth for the good of the order, attention turned to the budget report that Mr. Kleckner had promised as an information item. This turned out to be a brief presentation, based on a telephone message that afternoon about developments in Lansing. Mr. Kleckner indicated that there was some indication that the House might ignore the governor's recommendations and add slightly to the base appropriation for universities (something that seldom happens in that branch of the legislature). If the Senate then adds some money, as it often does, Oakland's revenue may turn out to exceed its projections by a small amount. He remarked that we now have a benchmark to help in making internal budget decisions.

Ms. Stamps, noting an item in the latest issue of the Oakland Post that reported the university's plan to save a little money by discontinuing its practice of allowing students to use credit cards to make their payments, wondered whether any thought had been given to raising money by introducing new fees. Mr. Kleckner reported that some thought had been given to the matter. These would not be general fees, applicable to all students, because Lansing counts anything of that sort as an increase in tuition. Fees for specific groups might be acceptable, however. When Ms. Stamps asked whether any information could be leaked to students to help them anticipate new fees, Mr. Kleckner confessed that he had no specific information to leak. Mr. Stern then inquired about possible laboratory fees, and Mr. Kleckner said that those were under discussion. He recognized the real costs faced by some departments for expendable materials but pointed out that the current billing system makes it hard to track funds derived from specific fees to make sure that they go to the appropriate units. After fall 1990, he predicted, a new billing system would make it easier to implement such fees.

With business accomplished, Mr. Kleckner then thanked his fellow senators upon completion of their two-year term of office. He wished them a pleasant summer and looked forward to working with many of them on Senate business in the coming academic year. He then

proposed that the meeting be adjourned at 4:04 p.m., a proposal to which his colleagues readily acceded.

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

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