



OAKLAND UNIVERSITY SENATE

Oakland University Senate

4th Meeting
Thursday, December 10, 1970
3 p.m., 128-30 Oakland Center

AGENDA

Submitted by Frederick W. Obear, for the Steering Committee

A. Old Business

1. Motion from the Academic Policy Committee (Mr. Hildum) Second Reading, eligible for final vote

EACH SCHOOL OR COLLEGE IN THE UNIVERSITY MAY DETERMINE ITS OWN GENERAL EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS, PROVIDING THAT THE REQUIREMENTS INCLUDE TWO FRESHMAN EXPLORATORIES (OR EQUIVALENT BY COMPETENCY EXAMINATION OR TRANSFER CREDIT). THE UNIVERSITY REQUIREMENTS IN EFFECT FOR THE GRADUATING CLASS OF DECEMBER 1970 WILL REMAIN IN EFFECT FOR EACH SCHOOL OR COLLEGE UNTIL IT CHOOSES TO ENACT NEW REQUIREMENTS.

Comment by Mr. David C. Beardslee, Director, Office of Institutional Research:

There is currently before the Senate a proposal to turn over to the individual schools responsibility for general education requirements for their students. There is no reason to do this except to permit different schools at O.U. to have different general education requirements. I should like to call to the Senate's attention that this in effect places any student who changes his major from one school to another in the position of a transfer. As it is now, changes of major often involve a "price" paid by the student in extra courses, attendance at extra terms to straighten out his program, and so on. If to this is added the difficulty of meeting a new and different set of general education requirements, the consequence is to raise the price of mobility between major fields even further.

It is obviously impossible to discuss in detail the importance to students of the possibility of using the four years of college to explore academically, to find themselves intellectually, and to discover what they can be competent at. Every discussion of higher education concedes this; indeed, many feel that even the present arrangements demand of freshman just out of high school too much certainty as to where they are going. Hence changes which decrease the possibility of shifting from one program to another should be scrutinized carefully and thoughtfully.

The latest available data (Office of Institutional Research, Memo #10, Curriculum Traffic, 7/17/70) point out that about 60 of all students who enter O.U. from high school and who subsequently graduate have changed their major along the way. Retabulation of the data presented there shows that changes between schools account for between 1/4 and 1/2 of all changes of major, depending upon how the curricula are grouped into schools. (If Secondary Education and Elementary Education are grouped together into the School of Education, 1/2; if Secondary Education is grouped into Arts and Sciences, 1/4.) Thus the proposed Balkanization of requirements would involve 15 to 307, of graduating seniors who entered from high school. A smaller but non-negligible percentage of transfer entrants also would be involved. To give reality to these percentages, let me point out that we are talking of somewhere between 125 and 250 members of our current senior class, upon whom the proposal would impose either the necessity of staying in an unsatisfactory field or of taking extra work over and above that required in changing a major. I hope the Senate will consider whether the educational benefits of the proposal outweigh this student-paid cost.

B. New Business

No motions have been presented to the Steering Committee for first reading at the December meeting, so the Steering Committee has agreed to devote this portion of the agenda to open discussion of several matters:

1. Effects of the new grading system on University policy on academic probation and dismissal (Mr. James McKay, Chairman, Academic Standing and Honors Committee)

2. Interpretation of I grade and N grade policy (Mr. James Davis, Assistant Provost) Please see attached [memo](#)

3. Report of Steering Committee activities (Mr. Obear)

a. The Steering Committee has recommended to President O'Dowd that he accept and implement the report of the arbitration panel which recommended that another student election be held. Further, the Committee recommended that until such elections are held, no student activities funds should be released, and that no action should be taken which would imply recognition of the present membership. The Committee expressed willingness to recognize and work with any group which is elected in the new election.

b. The Steering Committee has made two recommendations to President O'Dowd regarding Senate procedures:

1. That only senators be invited to sit at the tables in the meeting room. Non-senators should be invited to sit in the space reserved for observers.

2. That non-senators who wish to present their views to the Senate be allowed at most one opportunity to speak on each agenda item.

c. Mr. Dan Pfeifer appeared before the Steering Committee and requested that the Committee rescind its establishment of the Student Conduct Committee as an ad hoc committee of the Senate. Mr. Pfeifer felt that this Committee should be affiliated with the University Congress or in the President's Office. In view, however, of the uncertainty which presently surrounds the

Congress, and the President's desire to transfer the Committee to the Senate's jurisdiction, the Steering Committee declined to rescind its action.

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attachments

December 7, 1970

To: All Faculty

Prom: James E. Davis for the Steering Committee

Subject: I and N Grades

In recent weeks the Steering Committee has been asked to consider various problems of interpretation of the regulations governing the assignment of M grades and I grades. The Committee has agreed to place time for discussion of these rules on the agenda for the Senate meeting of December 10. In the meantime, the Committee offers the following comments:

I (incomplete) Grade

A discrepancy apparently exists between our stated policies and our actual practices in the assignment of I grades. The Senate legislation adopted some years ago defines the I as a temporary grade given only when a student is unable to complete a course because of "severe hardship" after the 13th week of the term. In practice, however, 319 incompletes were assigned last winter, and if tradition holds, at least 100 of these will never be completed. The Steering Committee questions whether that many "severe hardships" really arose in the last two weeks of the term. The Committee has therefore asked me to insure that the policy be more carefully implemented when grades are reported this December.

1. All I grade reports must be accompanied by a petition (forms are available from the Registrar's Office). The petition must clearly indicate the nature of the "severe hardship" which justifies the I grade. The petitions must be included with the grade cards when they are returned to the Registrar. I grades without petitions will be changed to N grades.
2. If a student fails to complete an essential assignment or to appear for the final examination, and has not presented evidence of any hardship, the Committee recommends that the instructor assign an N grade. It will not appear on the transcript, and it can be changed later by petition if it develops that the student had a good excuse.

N Grade

Questions have frequently arisen this fall as to whether a faculty member is obligated to assign an N grade to a student who withdraws from a course near the end of the term. Many students seem to fear that faculty will "penalize" them by assigning them grades less than 2.0 which will become part of the permanent record, rather than the N grade which does not appear on the

transcript.

The Steering Committee finds that the Senate legislation adopted last spring on the grading system does not speak to this point. The final decision on the grade is to be made by the instructor. However, it does seem to the Committee that few, if any, problems will arise if prior to the final examination, the student notifies the instructor that he or she does not intend to complete the course and requests that an N be assigned. If, however, a student does complete all the course work and then is not satisfied with the grade received, the instructor is certainly under no obligation to change a low passing grade to an N. In any cases, the final decision is clearly the responsibility of the instructor.

Back to

OAKLAND UNIVERSITY

S E N A T E

Home Page