



OAKLAND UNIVERSITY SENATE

OAKLAND UNIVERSITY SENATE

Thursday, 8 December 1983
Third Meeting
128, 129, 130 Oakland Center

MINUTES

Senators Present: Appleton, Boddy, Boulos, Briggs-Bunting, Burke, Bledsoe, Chapman-Moore, Chipman, Copenhaver, Coppola, Downing, Easterly, Eberwein, Edgerton, Eliezer, Evans, Evarts, Feeman, Frankie, Gerulaitis, Grossman, Hamilton, Hartman, Heubel, Horwitz, Hough, Howes, Ketchum, Kleckner, McCabe, McClory, Moore, Moorhouse, Pine, Russell, Scherer, Schimmelman, Schwartz, Shichi, Snider-Feldmesser, Splete, Strauss, Titus, Tomboulian, Tracy, Tripp, Williamson, Witt, Workman, Zorn.

Senators Absent: Bertocci, Chagnon-Royce, Champagne, Christina, Federlein, Hammerle, Lindell, Pino, Windeknecht.

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

1. Minutes of 13 October 1983: Moved, Mr. Hough; seconded, Ms. Bledsoe. Approved.
2. Election to fill a Steering Committee vacancy. Conducted by Mr. Brown for the Elections Committee. Mr. Edgerton elected.
3. Motion from the Committee on General Education to establish a new University-wide General Education program. Moved, Ms. Tripp; seconded, Ms. Gerulaitis. First Reading.
4. Motion from the Steering Committee to modify graduation requirements by rescinding the specification of eight credits of genuinely free electives. Moved, Ms. Boulos; seconded, Mr. Copenhaver.

Mr. Kleckner called the meeting to order at 3:14 p.m., inviting attention to the minutes of 13 October 1983 that had been mailed out shortly after that meeting. Upon the motion of Mr. Hough, seconded by Ms. Bledsoe, the minutes were approved without discussion, and the Senate settled in to work on a full agenda.

The first item of business was an election to fill a Steering Committee vacancy occasioned by the resignation of Mr. Windeknecht. In the absence of Mr. Witt, Mr. Brown officiated on behalf of the Elections Committee and was assisted by Ms. Scherer in the exacting task of counting ballots. Mr. Edgerton was elected and then alerted by Mr. Kleckner to reserve all Thursdays not already committed to the Senate.

On behalf of the Committee on General Education, Ms. Tripp (seconded by Ms. Gerulaitis) then proposed the following motion to establish a new University-wide General Education program:

MOVED that all undergraduate students be required to complete at least 32 credits in General Education with at least one course taken in each of eight field categories; and that the following stipulations apply:

- a. that the field categories be specified as:
 1. Arts
 2. Literature
 3. Language
 4. Western Civilization
 5. International Studies
 6. Social Science
 7. Mathematics, Logic, and Computer Science
 8. Natural Science and Technology;
- b. that each field category contain a limited number of courses, to be approved by the University Committee on General Education;
- c. that the 32 credits of General Education be considered a minimum credit requirement which academic units may increase for their own students;
- d. that this requirement be binding on all incoming students starting in the fall semester of 1985; except
- e. that students from Michigan community colleges who enroll there before the fall of 1984 and enroll at Oakland University before the fall of 1986 with more than 30 accepted transfer credits be allowed to choose to meet the earlier General Education requirement as presented in the 1984-85 Undergraduate Catalog.

Ms. Tripp called attention to her Committee's full [report](#) as a record of its work and decisions.

Eloquently introducing debate, Mr. Copenhaver hailed the Senate's deliberations on a matter of such significance as a proud moment in Oakland's history. He set General Education in a classical context of education for contemplation as well as for action, and he saluted the Committee for bringing forward a proposal so beneficial to our students ([remarks attached](#)). Mr. Pine likewise supported the proposal, noting its consistency with recent national reports on education that stress the importance of well educated, broadly trained teachers and conjecturing that such breadth of education is equally central to the formation of all other professionals. Mr. Horwitz, too, discovered harmony between the General Education program and professional training, intuiting Adam Smith's invisible hand at work in the new curriculum. Speaking for the Executive Committee of the School of Economics and Management, he whole-heartedly endorsed this proposal and indicated particular satisfaction with the inclusion of language and linguistics. His colleagues have determined not to take advantage of possible overlaps between General Education and major courses because they feel strong commitment to educational breadth, wishing only that the University's credit system allowed for a yet wider range of courses within the mandated curricular space. He particularly regretted the absence of computer literacy as a requirement for every student. Similar support came from spokespersons for other groups. Mr. McClory, speaking as a student and former group orientation leader, endorsed the philosophy of the proposal and took particular satisfaction in

the consistency of planning it allowed for all students. Ms. Chapman-Moore and Mr. Appleton both noted the helpfulness of this program in smoothing transfers between schools. The only demurral from the general chorus of praise came from Mr. Williamson, who saluted the Committee's work but nonetheless deduced from the listing of schools consulted for purposes of comparison that Oakland University seems to have slipped in image from the poor man's Oberlin to the commuter's Wright State.

A few questions arose about the organization of the proposal, and more emerged about implementation. Mr. McClory wondered why logic should be grouped with mathematics and computer science and learned that the committee had rejected a possible linkage between logic and language in favor of developing separate language-cultural and symbolic-thinking categories. Formal logic, as Mr. Copenhaver pointed out (unlike informal logic), resembles mathematical reasoning in that it deals with problems of abstraction and symbolization and involves manipulation of symbols. Mr. Burke agreed that formal logic develops the same skills as mathematics and computer science.

Questions about caps on numbers of courses for various purposes were addressed to the Committee. Mr. McClory inquired whether any limit would be set to a school's prerogative of adding its own General Education requirements to University ones and learned from Mr. Kleckner that the only restricting factor would be the need to get Senate and Board approval for any increase in the total credits required to graduate. Ms. Tripp foresaw no enthusiasm among the Arts and Sciences faculty for reducing the College's current 40-credit General Education requirement, though Mr. Moeller thought that committees on instruction in schools with unusually heavy General Education demands might be sympathetic to problems of students transferring from other University units. Mr. Appleton emphasized the benefits, even to students moving from professional school into the College, of the high degree of uniformity this proposal would effect; at most, he observed, such students would have to take only one or two additional courses, forfeiting no work already taken for General Education. Mr. Russell probed the cap the Committee might impose on courses approved for any distribution category. He wondered on what basis the Committee might reject any proffered course that met its criteria and was assured by Mr. Moeller that such rejection would be improbable. Ms. Tripp indicated that "a limited number of courses" specifies no actual number but directs thinking to a limited group of appropriate courses rather than everything taught within a particular unit. The Committee on General Education would have the power to make such selections, based on its published criteria, and its overall intent that a course approved for this purpose should suffice even for a student who winds up taking only one course in an area. Mr. McClory urged the Committee to consider prerequisites in making its selections, lest a student be compelled to take a whole string of courses in order to achieve four General Education credits. Mr. Moorhouse hoped the professional schools would be represented on the Committee that makes such decisions and was reminded by Mr. Feeman that the current group is concentrated in the College by accidents of institutional reorganization; when the Committee was formed, Mr. Bricker served in the School of Human and Educational Services, and Mr. Daniels represented Performing Arts. According to Mr. Kleckner the Steering Committee envisages keeping the Committee intact this year and then putting it on the regular Senate committee rotation thereafter with faculty from all units invited to apply.

Mr. Horwitz asked clarification of section D3 of the report, inquiring whether the 32-credit requirement holds despite a transfer student's fulfillment of a particular distribution area with a three-credit course. It does. Students who transfer three-credit courses in all eight areas would have free choice of categories for the additional credits required. Mr. Tracy conjectured

that the 32 credits referred only to transfer credits, with quarter credits figured otherwise, and was assured by Mr. Kleckner that a different formula applies. Mr. Kleckner responded to Mr. Horwitz's concern about articulation agreements with community colleges that his office will review all such agreements and existing provisos. Surprisingly few students actually enter under terms of the MACRAO Agreement, however, as most transfer here short of an associate degree. Ms. Tripp pointed out that the Committee's report calls for flexible interpretation of transfer records. Mr. Edgerton then suggested the possibility of similar leeway within Oakland University and asked whether two or three-credit courses would be accepted by the Committee. Three credits, according to Mr. Moeller, would be the minimum. Mr. Moorhouse noted that the University now accepts CLEP scores from students who have done college-level work in high schools. His questions about the applicability of such equivalents led Mr. Kleckner to reaffirm the continuing validity of all prior Senate legislation and academic policy. Departments have been judging CLEP equivalencies for specific courses and will continue to do so. Mr. Howes thought that the report's call for flexibility in course transfers would apply to that situation also? a conjecture ratified by Ms. Tripp. Mr. Burke inquired why the word FTIAC appeared in the report to designate students who would enter the system in 1985 and was reminded that the actual legislation before the Senate includes all incoming students with the exception of clearly specified transfers. Mr. McClory hoped that the new system would be well publicized this academic year and next so that students who will still be here in 1985 and beyond can plan their programs accordingly, should they choose to follow the catalog in effect at the time of graduation.

Other concerns involved designation of courses to fit distribution areas. Mr. Burke lamented the omission of the word philosophy from the report and noted that courses his department has been offering for General Education will have to be recast to conform to new descriptions. Mr. Heubel agreed on the desirability of defining Western Civilization more broadly to reduce emphasis on historical sequence. He maintained that political philosophy ought to fit into this area, and urged the Committee to allow students a broad range of choices within each category and to give departments incentive to develop authentically general courses. Ms. Tripp agreed that philosophy and similar options were intended by the Committee as Western Civilization.

Three additional competency categories were suggested. Mr. Edgerton wondered why computer literacy should not be required and hoped the University was moving toward that goal. Ms. Tripp cited the 36-credit limit and staffing limitations but thought the General Education Committee would be sympathetic to adding a computer requirement eventually. Mr. Kleckner commented on resource problems; as yet we lack sufficient computers and enough trained faculty, though many faculty are now developing such teaching strength. Mr. Moorhouse assumed that a computer literacy course might be approved for the mathematics, logic, and computer science category, an assumption not shared by Mr. Boddy, who thought such a course too shallow. He classified it within the technology or basic skills areas.

Mr. Hough confessed his uneasiness with the absence of ethics in the program and with the report's general reticence in mentioning philosophy and values. He was concerned about preparing students for the ethical questions they will surely face. Mr. Burke, speaking for the Commission on Ethics in the Curriculum, indicated that his group will report to the President by the end of the winter term and may well propose to the Senate next year a separate ethics requirement that would double up with existing courses rather than adding to General Education. He admitted doubts about how broadly one can define ethics while remaining honest.

Other senators expressed alarm about basic skills. Mr. Moorhouse called for attention to oral communication, either in General Education or as a component of Rhetoric. Mr. Moeller indicated that Rhetoric courses meet the Senate's writing proficiency requirement rather than speaking proficiency; his Committee had considered oral communication but omitted it from the proposal. Mr. Strauss worried about student problems with reading comprehension and note-taking, competencies treated in Study Skills courses now offered by Rhetoric, Communication, and Journalism but not actually required of any students. Mr. Kleckner noted a distinction between fundamental skills and true General Education, but Mr. Chipman assured the Senate that Mr. Strauss' concern would receive full attention from his Commission on Excellence. Mr. Williamson received similar comfort when he inquired about the University entrance requirements on which any General Education must build. Mr. Horwitz trusted that the Committee would reject remedial courses for inclusion in the program.

Mr. Williamson's wish that every student acquire knowledge of a physical as well as a biological science either in high school or college led Mr. Feeman to urge the faculty to collaborate in designing creative courses specifically for General Education. He thought the purpose of the program was to uncover minds rather than to cover particular bodies of material. Mr. Kleckner and members of the General Education Committee reiterated the hope that Senate action on this issue would stimulate imaginative course proposals throughout the University. Having discussed the report in sufficient detail for a first reading, the Senate turned its attention to the third item of new business.

Ms. Boulos, seconded by Mr. Copenhaver, then offered the following proposal to modify graduation requirements:

MOVED that the requirement that every student must present at least eight credits of genuinely free electives as a condition for graduation be repealed.

Mr. Kleckner explained the reasoning of the Steering Committee in recommending so drastic a break with tradition. He noted that the requirement has proven unenforceable for students? given the impossibility of discerning motivation behind choices, some of which barely preserve the illusion of freedom. The rule has functioned only slightly better as a constraint on official program requirements, but there are already several curricula that allow for fewer than eight elective credits. Should this General Education program be adopted without freeing curricular space by waiving the old requirement, several academic units will have to petition the Senate and Board for permission to increase the credits they require for graduation. The Steering Committee has asked the University Committee on Undergraduate Instruction for its judgment on this matter, and UCUI will advise the Senate next month. Mr. Moeller acknowledged that the General Education Committee had considered the free elective matter quite a bit, having learned from Mr. Beardslee that students tend to use such electives on courses close to the major if not prerequisite to it. He doubted that the regulation contributes strongly to curricular breadth. Mr. Heubel, a Senate stalwart since the early days of this requirement, professed nostalgia for a tradition that had provided excellent opportunities for the general education of the faculty, who will miss the intellectual invigoration of attempting to define "genuinely free."

When no private resolutions were proffered for the good of the order, Mr. Kleckner informed his Senate colleagues of recent developments. The constitutional amendment dealing with the Graduate Council has been approved by a margin of 135 to 5 in a mailed referendum; the matter now goes to the Board. Establishment of that Council has motivated the Steering

Committee to reconsider the charges and membership of the APPC and UCUI in hopes of making UCUI more nearly parallel to the Graduate Council in its relation to the Senate. The affected committees are now reviewing a proposal that is expected to reach the Senate during the winter.

President Champagne was reported actively at work on plans for the Research and Technology Park and planning a presentation for the Oakland County Commission. Legislative fiscal allocations for next year remain problematic, given the post-recall numbness of legislators and their Inclination to rebate any tax surplus immediately to citizens in general before paying off debts to higher education.

Mr. Kleckner reminded all present of upcoming holiday festivities and extended a special invitation to the party in the Provost's Office at 3:30 p.m. on December 19. He hoped to see faculty there in the first flush of euphoria after turning in grades.

Mr. Chipman then concluded the meeting with a progress report from the Commission on University Excellence. He passed out copies of the President's charge to his group and called attention to a detailed printed report on their work that will be distributed to all next week. Responding to a widely-held misconception, he stressed that he and his colleagues are not sitting in a stadium watching Oakland University compete in a race but are down on the track to check conditions along our lane and either applaud clear stretches or complain about obstructions while making positive suggestions for lowering barriers.

The Commission has been meeting weekly and has identified three goals: to meet its May 1 reporting deadline; to conduct an open process?leaving a clear paper trail of its activities that may be traced in the Provost's Office and inviting all interested parties to observe its meetings; and to make the process an accurate one involving close scrutiny of primary sources to find out what actually happens here and extensive homework on activities elsewhere. Three subcommittees (Standards, Resources, and Review Mechanisms) have been appointed to facilitate the Commission's work. The group has now approved a basic set of studies and is sending out requests to various University functionaries and bodies to provide reports or conduct studies. This middle stage of the Commission's work belongs to the entire community. Mr. Chipman emphasized that the Commission's task offers a way of taking a fresh look at six major issues and that it is, indeed, a positive move rather than a reaction to external pressure. He views it as a check more on the studiers than the studied and hopes the University will get maximum benefit from this enterprise if all members make their strongest contribution. Thus exhorted to go forth in search of excellence, the Senate adjourned upon motion of Ms. Titus at precisely 5:00 p.m.

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

Attachment (Brian Copenhaver address)

Mr. Chairman, I believe that the occasion of beginning this discussion of general education in our Senate is a significant and a proud moment in the history of Oakland University, for as

Plato wrote in the Republic, 'our conversation is no trifling matter, but a conversation about the right way to conduct our lives.' Plato's contemporaries invented the idea of general education, which they called {Greek characters omitted} or 'comprehensive education'; they associated it with the common obligations of citizenship and humanity rather than the special requirements of any particular calling. Their conclusion that education can and must address the general concerns of a humane citizenry is what justified Aristotle's having included his discourse on education in his treatise on *Politics*. There, Aristotle argues that a comprehensive education ought to equip 'i its beneficiaries for theory as well as praxis, for the contemplative life, the life of the mind, as well as the active life:

'It is clear,' said Aristotle, 'that students ought to be instructed in ... useful things ... not only for their usefulness, but also because many other sorts of knowledge are acquired through them.... They may, (for example,) be taught drawing not to prevent their making mistakes in their purchases or in order that they may not be imposed upon in the buying or selling of articles, but perhaps rather because it makes them judges of the beauty of the human form. To be always seeking after the useful does not become free and exalted souls.'

Free souls in the commonwealth, exalted souls in the republic of learning, these are the ends of the ancient tradition of general education. I wish to thank and to congratulate Jack Moeller and his colleagues for their hard and thoughtful work on a proposal for general education which can advance that ancient and lively tradition in our university. The combination of the program they have proposed with the various disciplinary and major programs of the Schools and the College can help us better produce graduates who have become capable of critical thinking; who have learned to combine a zeal for informed judgment with a tolerance for ambiguity; who have developed moral and aesthetic sensibilities; who have mastered certain skills of literacy and numeracy, some as ancient as language itself, some as modern as computer languages; who can appreciate cultural differences and chronological perspectives; who have confronted the pragmatic features of modernity in its technological, commercial, medical, legal and political manifestations; and who have acquired levels of Information about the worlds of man and nature in past and present sufficient for responsible citizenship and for the enjoyment of civilized society.

The College of Arts and Sciences supports this proposal emphatically, with enthusiasm and with hope for the curricular progress it will permit us. I say this on my own behalf and on behalf of my colleagues in the College of Arts and Sciences with whom I have consulted broadly on this excellent proposal.

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