



OAKLAND UNIVERSITY SENATE

OAKLAND UNIVERSITY SENATE

Thursday, 19 May 1994
Ninth Meeting

MINUTES

Senators Present: Benson, Bhatt, Bricker, Capps, Downing, Eberwein, Frankie, Gerulaitis, Grossman, Hough, Hovanesian, Liboff, Mabee, Moore, Olson, Otto, Reddy, Reynolds, Rickstad, Rozek, Rush, Russi, Selahowski, Sevilla, Shepherd, Stevens, Taam.

Senators Absent: Abiko, Andrews, Ari, Bertocci, Braunstein, Briggs-Bunting, Buffard-O'Shea, Chipman, Christina, Cole, Dahlgren, Dunphy, Fish, Garcia, Hansen, Hildebrand, Hormozi, Khattree, Kheir, Marks, Mittelstaedt, Moran, Muir, Packard, Pine, Pipan, Polis, Rooney, Schmitz, Schwartz, Schott-Baer, Stano, Thomas, Urice, Wedekind, Zenas.

Summary of Actions

1. Minutes of 14 April 1994 (Gerulaitis; Stevens). Approved.
2. Continued discussion of proposed Strategic Plan.
3. Sense-of-the-Senate resolution from the Senate Steering Committee regarding process for action on the Strategic Plan (Hough; Downing). Approved.

Mr. Russi called the meeting to order at 3:14 p.m., wishing his colleagues a good afternoon and immediately directing attention to the minutes of 14 April 1994. With Ms. Gerulaitis moving approval and Mr. Stevens supporting her action, the Senate promptly accepted the minutes as distributed, thereby clearing the way for the principal business at hand.

Reminding senators that the purpose of this meeting was to continue reflection on the proposed Strategic Plan in a "conversational" rather than legislative mode, Mr. Russi welcomed statements of opinion and concern. Mr. Bricker launched that process by declaring his delight in being able to avail himself for the first time of the opportunity to "converse" on the Senate floor. That was exactly what he thought this body should be doing and what he had advocated in April. He applauded the decision to take time to discuss and explore issues before acting officially on the Strategic Plan. In general, he supported this document in its revised and improved form. Given his own prevailing interest in undergraduate education, however, he called particular attention to tactic 1.1 on p. 13, which he interpreted as a commitment to future strategic planning to consider whatever new programmatic initiatives might prove appropriate at the undergraduate level. Since no such detailed planning had yet been done with respect to baccalaureate education, he reminded his fellow senators that this tactic varied significantly from those proposed for graduate programs. A concern that he stressed was that the Strategic Plan identifies an abundance of processes for some sort of action, more of them than can realistically be undertaken at any one time. The probability looms, therefore, that many of the tactics mentioned will, in fact, be ignored. He advised giving thought to priorities among these

recommendations and even eliminating some. Noting hints in the document about possible budget reallocations to meet planning goals, he urged attention to the fact that the document reflects aspirations across the whole university. Those implementing recommendations must, therefore, take care not to withdraw resources from existing programs in ways that prevent faculty in those areas from meeting other process goals that are appropriately theirs. Mr. Capps concurred with these statements, mentioning the danger of having processes come into collision--especially if goals for graduate program development conflict with those for undergraduate programs. He supported the idea of clarifying priorities to ensure that the most important goals can be met.

Ms. Benson then noted that the plan assigns a tremendous amount of responsibility to the Vice President for Academic Affairs, wondering whether Mr. Russi's office would get increased staff as a consequence. Mr. Russi doubted the need, explaining that he expected to work with deans and Senate committees to develop a plan for implementation.

With no other conversational gambits opened by senators present, Ms. Rush identified herself as the Senate Steering Committee's designated reader for communications from absent colleagues. First came a global response from Ms. Briggs-Bunting. Since she had left campus before the Strategic Plan Steering Committee issued its "Final Report," she indicated that her concerns referred to the draft circulated in February and discussed in March open hearings. After congratulating the committee for managing to draw any sort of document out of such diverse task force reports, she then aligned herself with Ms. Eberwein's warning at one of those March hearings about the predictably negative effects of such disparity, particularly with respect to undergraduate education. Judging undergraduate programs to have been shortchanged in the plan to the advantage of graduate programs, some clearly designed for the benefit of small groups of faculty without concern for student interests or the overall good of sponsoring academic units, she declared that "the dollar figure alone for some of these proposals should make them immediately dismissible without further discussion." Questioning the plan's seeming assumption that current undergraduate programs are in good condition with no need for special support, Ms. Briggs-Bunting pointed out that undergraduate education at Oakland University has been injured by budgetary stasis and faculty departures. Faculty and staff are already overextended in trying to sustain these programs, with the result that academic quality is already threatened even before the university moves to redirect resources toward new graduate-level initiatives. The fact that "Oakland is struggling to decide what it wants to be when it grows up" cannot justify the luxury of a "mid-career switch," particularly not in the current climate for higher education. Instead, she urged the university to recognize its strengths (particularly its excellent classroom teaching, its undergraduate curricula, and its demographics), build upon those strengths, and market them aggressively. Looking toward the long-range benefit of alumni loyalty, she especially urged enhanced attention to the quality of student life. Her concluding advice concerned an area of promise not mentioned within the Strategic Plan: She encouraged Oakland University to court the Detroit College of Law, which would attract students, open opportunities for academic partnerships, and provide us at no cost with the advantages of another professional school.

Mr. Bertocci's comments, by contrast, focused on two specific items within the plan, both relating to faculty review criteria. His advice was that departments as well as CAPS, the FRPC, deans, and the Vice President for Academic Affairs be held responsible for ensuring that research and scholarship be assigned value in the faculty reward structure (process 5.1.3) and that community outreach efforts be similarly encouraged (process 6.4.1). Since departments play the key initiating role in salary merit allocations as well as in review and promotion

decisions, they should be expected to advance university goals.

When this conversation concluded, Mr. Hough (seconded by Mr. Downing) introduced a resolution from the Senate Steering Committee that reflected that body's and President Packard's thoughts about the continuing process for review of the Strategic Plan: RESOLVED that the Senate transmit the May 1994 Final Report of the Strategic Plan Steering Committee to President Packard, along with statements of Senate concern, suggesting that she communicate her concerns and judgments to the Senate Steering Committee, which will seek advice from the Senate Budget Review Committee and the Senate Planning Review Committee in preparation for Senate action on the Strategic Plan in the fall 1994 semester. Mr. Liboff asked for clarification of this language, asking if he was right in interpreting it to mean that more Senate discussion would follow in the fall. Mr. Hough assured him that was the case, indicating that the purpose of planning is to guard against surprises. This whole process will be carried out in successive stages. With the Senate now turning over its views on the proposed plan to President Packard, she has the opportunity to share this information with Board members over the summer, bringing back her and their responses to the Senate Steering Committee. The Steering Committee will then seek guidance from the Senate's Planning Review Committee and Budget Review Committee before bringing a recommendation to this body in the fall. When Mr. Liboff inquired whether the plan then presented might incorporate some changes, Mr. Hough indicated that it could--presumably unsurprising ones. Mr. Bricker, accurately supposing that the Steering Committee was attempting to avoid having this Strategic Plan short-circuited like the 1990 Strategic Guidelines, judged the resolution "tactically prudent." So advised, the Senate proceeded to approve the resolution by voice vote.

When nobody proposed anything more "for the good of the order," Mr. Russi wished all present a good summer and declared the meeting adjourned at 3:34 p.m.

Respectfully submitted

Jane D. Eberwein

Secretary to the University Senate ~

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