



OAKLAND UNIVERSITY SENATE

OAKLAND UNIVERSITY SENATE

Thursday, 16 January 1992
Fourth Meeting

MINUTES

Senators Present: Abiko, Appleton, Bennett, Benson, Braunstein, Briggs- Bunting, Chipman, Cowlshaw, Cramer, Dahlgren, DeCarlo, Downing, Eberwein, Eckart, Edgerton, Eisenhower, Fish, Frankie, Gamboa, Garcia, Goslin, Griggs, Grossman, Hartzer, Hormozi, Hovanesian, Jackson, Kevern, Mabee, McKay, Mittelstaedt, Otto, Peterson, Pierson, Pine, Richards, Schultz, Shepherd, Urice, Witt, Wood.

Senators Absent: Campbell, Gerulaitis, Gunsberg, Halsted, Hansen-Smith, Heintz, Hough, Kheir, Kim, Kleckner, Olson, Porter, Reddy, Rush, Russell, Stamps, Stano, Stevens, Wisz, Workman, Zenas.

Summary of Actions:

1. Minutes of 17 October 1991 and 5 December 1991 (Briggs-Bunting; Urice). Approved.
2. Report from the Committee on Human Relations on October survey of departmental plans and programs to encourage multicultural awareness (Garcia).
3. Report from the Academic and Career Advising Committee on its "Institutional Statement on Academic Advising" (Mabee). 4. Conversation with Interim President DeCarlo on university admission standards and committee to review athletics.

Mr. Dahlgren called the meeting to order at 3:13 p.m., reporting that Mr. Kleckner sent his regards from "the balmy state of Florida." The Senate's presiding officer will return to campus on Monday. Meanwhile, this body carried on its affairs by confirming the record of its past activities as recorded in the minutes of 17 October and 5 December (Moved, Ms. Briggs-Bunting; seconded, Mr. Urice). No discussion of minutes and no new business delayed the chair's acknowledgment of Senator Garcia to report for the Committee on Human Relations.

Apologizing for appearing without the appropriate senatorial white suit and string tie, Ms. Garcia prefaced her report by expressing delight about the wonderful activities being both carried out and admirably publicized this month in honor of Martin Luther King, Jr.. She then reminded her colleagues of last April's Senate action directing all academic units to develop programs to increase understanding of racial and cultural issues important to each discipline and to submit reports to her committee about their 1991-92 plans and programming. She regretted that some confusion about the roles of her committee and the Provost's Office had caused delayed circulation of the request memorandum and given some persons the impression that the Provost or the Senate asked for this information rather than the Committee on Human Relations. She called attention to a half-page ad in the 15 January issue

of The Oakland Post announcing available information about the plans reported by departments and schools (not, as the printed heading suggests, a general plan unveiled by her committee). This ad (graciously funded by the Provost's Office) is meant to whet appetites for further information by presenting a very general overview of committee findings and encouraging the community to want more. She professed herself well pleased with the results of this survey, describing some of the material that came in as "magnificent." Overall, she thought the reports served as sources of pride and stimulus. There are some wonderful programs on campus that other units might like to adopt. To make this information widely available, John Tower has done yeoman service for the committee by compiling a detailed summary of departmental activities in various areas. This document, approximately eight pages, will soon be printed for distribution to every academic unit and all appropriate student organizations. Ann Pogany, also a committee stalwart, is preparing ten bound copies of "the whole shooting match" for distribution to the Board, Congress, the Library, and presidential, provostial, and decanal offices. All members of the university community should have easy access to this material, which has been compiled for the purpose of facilitating communication. Also circulating to all departments will be an article by Senator Edgerton on "Engineering Education in Cultural Context," which she characterized as a really remarkable document addressing multicultural aspects of technical preparation. Although Ms. Garcia welcomed comments and questions, no discussion ensued. Ms. Briggs-Bunting, on behalf of the Senate Steering Committee, commended the Committee on Human Relations and its energetic chair for their accomplishments.

Before leaving this topic, Mr. Dahlgren called upon Mr. Appleton to report briefly on a proposal now advancing along the governance pike. Mr. Appleton indicated that the University Committee on Undergraduate Instruction, which he chairs, has developed a proposal to require that each undergraduate student take at least one course with a substantial multicultural instructional component. This proposal has been reviewed by the General Education Committee and is now under review by the Committee on Human Relations. It should reach the Senate shortly.

Mr. Dahlgren then invited Senator Mabee to report for the Academic and Career Advising Committee on its "Institutional Statement on Academic Advising" that accompanied the Senate agenda. Ms. Mabee identified the committee members who worked on this project and then turned to Virginia Allen, Assistant Provost and Director of Academic Services, to provide perspective. Ms. Allen indicated that the Advising Steering Committee had felt a need to articulate philosophically what it is that advisers do in carrying out their daily tasks. In preparing this mission statement, they consulted previous documents on campus advising. They developed this document to give credence to what they do and clarify their role to the university community. Ms. Mabee then read the document aloud and welcomed questions.

Mr. Grossman responded by acknowledging that it seemed like a fine statement; nonetheless he expressed some concerns. He thought the statement spoke well for professional advisers but might be perceived as neglecting faculty advisers. He would like to see reference incorporated about who provides advising as well as who receives it. He also suggested adding a statement on the adviser's role in intervening for students or acting as intermediary on their behalf. Ms. Allen replied that the document's authors (several of them faculty members) had identified a number of advising goals they recognized as parts of the teaching/learning process. She questioned his point about intervention, saying she did not know of advisers (professional ones, anyway) who saw themselves as intermediaries between students and professors. She thought they regarded themselves more as advocates for the student. Mr. Downing then asked

what she meant by "advocacy," if it didn't involve serving as an intermediary. Mr. Grossman clarified what he intended by his wording: he was thinking about an adviser's response to a student's complaint about how a course is run or a policy conducted. He thought of advisers as go-betweens trying to improve conditions. Ms. Allen thought of advisers as advocates for students without necessarily taking the student's viewpoint. Often, their job is to try to explain to the student what a policy is (about grading, for instance). They interpret information.

Mr. Urice then redirected questioning to the issue of the Senate's role. He wondered whether senators would be asked to vote on this document? If it were being presented only for the community's information, he would think it a helpful statement. If the Senate must officially approve it, he would feel some hesitation. He thought it might require academic units to specify new qualifications when posting job descriptions for potential advisers. Mr. Dahlgren stated that the report was meant primarily for information, but he understood that the Steering Committee stood ready to offer a resolution of endorsement (not adoption). Mr. Urice asked what the difference was. Ms. Briggs-Bunting understood the intended resolution as meant to commend the sponsoring committee rather than offering formal assent. Ms. Otto, searching through her Steering Committee notes, admitted that she and her colleagues had misjudged Senate response to the day's two reports, anticipating prolonged discussion of the Committee on Human Relations statement and general quiet approval of the Academic and Career Advising Committee document. The Steering Committee wanted to recognize the latter committee for going beyond requirements to state for us what it is that they understand themselves to be doing. This is basically an internal advising document rather than something that calls for Senate action.

Returning to Mr. Grossman's concerns, Ms. Garcia asked for clarification about whether this is meant as a statement about professional academic advising or about both professional and faculty activity. Mr. Cowlshaw thought of it as describing a process that all of us are involved in, whether in advising offices, classrooms, or laboratories. It articulates what is entailed in the process of advising throughout the university. Mr. Grossman said he would like to see the statement revised to clarify its general application. Ms. Briggs-Bunting suggested that all the statement tries to do is to communicate to the Senate about how the university's academic advising is carried out under our committee structure. Mr. Chipman referred to the multitudinous role and mission statements around the university, remarking that most of them tend to detail how their missions are carried out. He suggested that the document's sponsors compare it with parallel statements. Mr. Dahlgren then drew discussion to a close by suggesting that the Steering Committee, informed by this interchange, consult with the Academic and Career Advising Committee or its chair and report back to the Senate. While they were editing the document, Mr. Grossman suggested striving for orthographic consistency with other university documents, most of which now spell advisor as adviser.

With two agenda items thus dispatched, Interim President DeCarlo rose to introduce an innovative category of new business: a conversation on university concerns that is intended to elicit thoughtful advice from the university community without necessarily resulting in formal Senate legislation. He began by reading a statement in which he expressed his appreciation for this opportunity to accelerate community response to some initiatives he had informed the Board recently that he intended to pursue with respect to admissions and athletics policies. To enhance Oakland University's academic and research missions, he recognized a crucial need to increase resources, and he declared that we are in the process of gaining those resources and making them available for academic programs. Currently, he is seeking scholarship funds to attract outstanding students while maintaining multicultural diversity. He also indicated that a

host of questions have arisen relating to Oakland's auxiliary enterprises, including athletics. These must be addressed now, and he hoped to appoint by February a committee with strong faculty representation to consider possible modifications in athletic policy.

Mr. DeCarlo expressed his belief that a university gains distinction through its faculty and its student body. Although Oakland already has a distinguished faculty and many excellent students, statistical reports on ACT scores and high school grade point averages of entering freshmen reveal that our student body looks little or no better than those at our sister institutions. These statistics dismayed him, particularly since a 3.0 gpa in 1992 means less than it did several decades ago in terms of average attainment. He wondered whether the university now spends its scholarship dollars in ways most likely to strengthen student academic achievement, noting that quite a bit of this investment is now directed to attract students to live in residence halls. Little scholarship aid exists to benefit commuter students, however capable. After discussing his observations with academic administrators and some faculty members, the interim president discovered widespread concern. He hoped to introduce a planned and phased approach to admissions and scholarships that would move Oakland gradually in the direction of the University of Michigan student profile rather than in the other direction. Among his suggestions were more careful screening of applicants, firm requirements for critical core courses for admission (with particular attention to preparation in mathematics and the sciences), gradual lifting of minimum gpa from 2.5 to 2.7, greater attention to ACT scores, and more scholarships targeted to attract the best candidates. He hoped high school students would be motivated to work harder for admission to Oakland and that the good students attracted by new scholarships would themselves attract other well qualified applicants.

With regard to athletics, the interim president reported that he wanted to establish a committee that would respond to prolonged absence of central planning about the function of our athletics program. He had heard lots of different ideas, all the way from elimination of all intercollegiate sport activity to establishment of a Division I football team playing in a stadium. For his part, he would prefer that the university's image ride on its academic and research programs.

Stressing that his thoughts were not etched in stone and that he truly wished the community's counsel, Mr. DeCarlo then opened the floor to questioning on either or both of these concerns. [For purposes of focus, the secretary reports conversation on each separately; although the actual sequence of comments and questions interspersed admissions with athletics.]

Mr. Fish inquired about Mr. DeCarlo's inferences from gpa data. Was he implying that the quality of our students is measured by average grades even though rigorous courses tend to result in lower grades than those regarded as academically less challenging? He suggested that the statistic might be meaningless. Mr. Rose, Director of Admissions, responded that the statistic referred to high school performance rather than achievement here. Ms. Briggs-Bunting then asked for specific information about students' statistical profiles. Mr. Chipman, however, felt more concern about how schools with similar entry standards go about the process of recruiting students. Mr. DeCarlo repeated that he hoped to upgrade the quality of our student body by lifting admission standards. He has heard concerns raised by many persons on campus about perceived deficiencies, and his own observations on materials from students that cross his desk tend to confirm those worries. Ms. Garcia, whose experience differs from his in that she finds academic preparation improving among students she teaches,

wondered whether emphasis on entering freshmen makes sense at an institution that draws most of its students from community colleges (her own academic point of entry). Mr. DeCarlo indicated that he would like to look into transfer admissions also. Mr. Kevern thought we should find out what our image is now, why candidates choose to come here or go elsewhere.

Mr. Bennett found this area of concern surprising, since attention seems to have been devoted lately to maintaining an adequate number of students -- especially in the residence halls. He wondered about the effect of elevated admissions standards on enrollment levels both during regular semesters and in spring/summer sessions. Mr. DeCarlo supposed we would have to work more aggressively to bring in the best students. He acknowledged that patterns of dormitory use needed attention but wondered whether housing represented the best short-term use of limited campus space. Convinced that Michigan institutions have little or no hope for new facilities paid for by the state over the next three to four years, he recommended looking at existing facilities to meet our looming space problems. Perhaps we could get by with fewer dormitory rooms for the next five years while we attempt to meet pressing classroom and office needs. This line of thinking prompted a query about current choices of on or off-campus housing. Has a survey been done of how many residence hall students live close enough to commute and, if so, why they choose to live on campus? Mr. Pierson pointed to transportation problems as a major factor, especially for minority students. Closing residence halls would effectively eliminate diversity in our student body. Mr. Peterson spoke for many of his fellow students in stressing financial pressures. Although many students wish to leave the parental roof and would prefer to live on campus, the university's housing costs prove prohibitive. Like many others, he has found it less expensive to share the rent for a nearby apartment, even though that necessitates getting and maintaining a car. He pointed out that student employment opportunities on-campus generally offer minimum wage so that they don't help students to afford residence hall lodging. He judged the choice of on or off-campus housing "a financial matter." When Mr. DeCarlo noted the university's problem with empty residence facilities and observed that we now pour \$180,000 a year into scholarships designed to entice students to live on campus, Mr. Peterson suggested that the university could fill more dormitory space if it helped students get better paying jobs.

Ms. Briggs-Bunting pointed out that the university's many older students, especially women, would not be candidates for residence halls in any event. She inquired about terms of federal funding for those buildings, wondering whether the university has yet discharged its debts. Mr. Herman said that the smaller residence halls have been paid off, though we are still paying for Vandenberg and Hamlin. Mr. DeCarlo recognized the university's legal obligation to the state and its bond-holders. He stressed that he had no thoughts of shutting down all the residence halls but simply finding better uses for excess capacity. We have space for 2,000 residents but currently house only 1,100. Perhaps some facilities could be converted to meet more urgent needs. Mr. Liboff hoped there would be no threat to the married student apartments, which have worked out magnificently as inducements to graduate students. Mr. DeCarlo assured him that nobody had any thoughts of closing the apartments. He has been told that we could easily fill more of them, should construction money be located. He only wondered whether it might make sense to convert a small residence hall or part of a large one for other uses.

Mr. Chipman then recurred to the issue of admission standards. He judged it more fruitful to enforce requirements for an applicant's completion of a traditional college-preparatory program than to stress an arbitrary gpa, which could easily be elevated by selection of courses affording poorer preparation. Mr. Pierson reminded the Senate that a brochure developed by the state's chief academic officers had been widely distributed in Michigan schools to identify

the central elements of a college preparatory program. He mentioned that his office uses this material in its outreach activities for prospective students, especially those of African-American and Hispanic heritage. Remembering Chancellor Varner's earlier advice about minority recruitment, "If we can't find some qualified students, then let's get out there and qualify some," he mentioned his frustration when minority students who have benefited from Oakland's preparatory programs then get attracted by scholarships to

Ann Arbor and elsewhere. He reminded people that the original purpose of the Student Life Scholarships was to enrich student life everywhere on campus by attracting especially able students to residence halls. This discussion reminded the interim president of Oakland's unfortunate pattern of making commitments to prospective students on the basis of promises not backed by funding. He acknowledged that President O'Dowd's rationale for Student Life Scholarships to fill the residence halls may once have been wise (may, indeed, still be so), but he wanted to think about the best use of available scholarship funding. Mr. Liboff mentioned the recruitment advantages of well-run graduate programs, speculating that the ablest undergraduates might be attracted to a university known for its doctoral work.

Mr. Herman pointed out that residence halls pretty consistently attract 47-49% of freshmen entering directly from high school. Diminished population now reflects a demographic slump in numbers of 18-year-olds rather than diminished interest in campus living. The current economic downturn contributes to the problem, as it remains cheaper to live at home. Still, he stressed that Student Life Scholars fill most student leadership positions at the university. He doubted that most of these admirable young people would be here without that inducement. Mr. DeCarlo said he just wanted to pay attention to the problem of dormitory overcapacity at present. He would like to target more scholarship money to outstanding students and only asked that the community study the issues and arrive at an informed judgment. He saw no hope for a thaw soon in Lansing's bonding-cap freeze.

While agreeing with Mr. Herman's favorable report on the beneficial impact of Student Life Scholarships, Mr. Rose regretted his office's difficulties recruiting outstanding commuters. Many of Oakland's best prospects eventually choose Wayne State, which offers significant scholarship support and recognition. We need more than the ten scholarships now available for recruitment of commuting FTIACS. Mr. Peterson recognized that Oakland's image has been improving among the state's young people, but he reaffirmed the need for the university to help its students cope with the total costs of education. If we are not serious about such assistance, we will continue losing students to other colleges. When Mr. DeCarlo asked if he was suggesting a tuition cap, Mr. Peterson responded that he was not. He was concerned about overall costs, which for him include off-campus housing and the car he needs to get to work and classes. He works 45 hours a week while carrying 18 credits and knows other students with even heavier pressures. He wondered how anyone could be expected to maintain a distinguished gpa with such a schedule.

Mr. Appleton found it delightful that presidential leadership is being concentrated on support for the academic enterprise. He considered the questions raised by Mr. DeCarlo to be serious ones that required equally serious study and noted that the Senate, fortunately, already has appropriate committees to study them. On the other hand, he worried about the accelerating impact of a seemingly small change in admissions requirements that would eliminate relatively few students in the first year but considerably more over the next three. So far as declining ACT scores among our freshmen, he explained them as reflections of a general statewide

decline. Convinced by his studies of student performance at Oakland that high school gpa serves poorly as an indicator of collegiate success, he agreed with Mr. Chipman that we can do more to improve the quality of our student body by scrutinizing actual courses taken in high school than by fiddling with minimum gpa. Another reason for recommending that strategy is that our admissions office can tighten up its enforcement of recommended course-work without making a formal announcement to our feeder schools that we might then have to modify in a few years if displeased with the result. He worried greatly about the consistency of what Oakland University says and would hate to be the person distributing an announcement three years from now that we have decided to return to a 2.5 minimum gpa after experimenting with a higher number. From his perspective, where we are really losing is in our failure to attract top achieving students. Mr. DeCarlo, reminding his colleagues that tuition dollars fail to cover educational expense and that there is a cost to the university for every student we take in, thought it time to begin the process of inquiring into these questions.

Ms. Briggs-Bunting changed the subject by asking about the proposal mentioned recently in *The Oakland Post* that Pryale House might soon be reconverted to a new use. Mr. Herman responded that some space in the larger residence hall is now used for offices and that rooms normally rented to two students have proven exceedingly marketable as singles; as a result, most rooms are now utilized. Thought has been given, however, to returning Pryale House to its original housing function and converting part of one of the larger residence halls for faculty and administrative offices. Mr. McKay, whose campus migrations had included several years as a faculty occupant of Vandenberg Hall, remembered that office space fondly, remarking particularly on the solid walls that allowed persons to accomplish their work without distractions.

There was less response to the interim president's questioning about the place of intercollegiate athletics at the university, but Mr. Braunstein set the tone by indicating that, although it comes as no surprise to him that these programs (like everything else) are underfunded, he takes great pride in the achievement of the Oakland scholar-athletes whom he has taught, especially members of our national championship women's swim team. He admired their ability to balance academic requirements with those of their sport. Mr. DeCarlo professed himself gratified to hear this judgment and hoped that such dispositions might characterize the entire athletic program. Mr. Edgerton referred to good statistical evidence of women athletes' success in engineering. Athletic competition impressed him as bringing academic benefits. Later, Mr. Bennett encouraged the university's leadership to look into the possible advantages of fielding a football team. Mr. Kevern concluded the discussion by pointing out that Oakland's athletes have the highest graduation rate of any student population. Mr. DeCarlo thanked senators for their responses to his inquiries and promised to return to this body for further counsel.

Following this animated conversation, Ms. Otto reported briefly on Steering Committee thoughts about subsequent interchanges. Responding to complaints that the Senate has not been providing adequate chances for the university community to deal with questions of serious interest, the Steering Committee has considered a number of topics that might be productively added to future agendas. Representative topics include Senate reorganization, budget in relation to tuition rates, residence halls, the Strategic Guidelines, and collaborative relations with external institutions. The goal is to deliberate on the university's direction at this transitional point in its history. She encouraged people to bring potential agenda items to the attention of Steering Committee members.

Ms. Briggs-Bunting then reported for the Presidential Search Committee on its progress in selecting "Mr. Champagne's successor and Mr. DeCarlo's relief." The search progresses well. Upwards of 115 candidates applied for the pool; from these the committee has chosen 8 semifinalists and will soon winnow the field to 3-5 finalists. These finalists will be brought to campus next month for the community to meet. Mr. Dahlgren asked if Ms. Briggs-Bunting would entertain motions. She agreed but admitted that rules of confidentiality would prevent her from answering most. When Ms. Garcia asked about the accuracy of the Post's statement that the Board hoped to name the new president in March, Ms. Briggs-Bunting affirmed that the Board's schedule (not the committee's) proposes that date. When asked to sketch a profile of the average candidate, she simply repeated her statement that man well qualified persons applied.

Two other senators on the Search Committee spoke on behalf of their subcommittees. Mr. Kevern, who heads the Logistics Subcommittee, reported that they have been developing a plan for who will get to meet finalists when they visit the campus. He thought the community (faculty members especially) would be pleased with their plan, if accepted by the full committee. Mr. Edgerton, responsible for the subcommittee that is now trying to figure out how members of the university community can best report their advice and judgments to the Search Committee, solicited ideas about how to handle such information. When Mr. McKay inquired whether the Search Committee is working at this point only from the applicant file or seeking additional information, Ms. Briggs-Bunting indicated that they still have to honor candidates' universal requests for confidentiality to the full extent of the law. Once finalists are identified, however, restrictions dissolve.

With no good and welfare items introduced after this barrage of reports, Ms. Briggs-Bunting responded to Mr. Dahlgren's suggestion that someone move for adjournment. The Senate closed its meeting at 5 p.m.

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

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