

Oakland University Senate

Fourth Meeting
December 5, 1996

Minutes

Members present: Andrews, Blume, Bricker, Brieger, Briggs-Bunting, Cole, Connellan, Dahlgren, Dillon, Downing, Frankie, Gardner, Garfinkle, Gilroy, Hahn, Haskell, Hildebrand, Hovanesian, Kazarian, Lilliston, Long, Meehan, Meuser, Moore, Moran, Nesbary, Pettengill, Polis, Purcell, Reynolds, Rozek, Russi, Sahu, Schochetman, Schwartz, Sevilla, Talbert

Members absent: Abiko, Alber, Awbrey, Benson, Buffard-O'Shea, Christina, Fliedner, Gordon, Herold, Jarski, Keane, Kheir, Landsberg, Liboff, Mahamwal, Miller, Olson, Otto, Reddy, Rice, Riley, Speer, Tornopilsky, Tower, Wharton, Witt.

Mr. Connellan called the meeting to order at 3:10. The minutes of the November meeting were approved (moved Mr. Andrews, seconded Mr. Sevilla) with the following corrections: p. 5, paragraph 3, the vote on the amendment to the Library Committee's charge was recorded as 20 in favor; 19 against; Mr. Moran asked that his statement that the vast majority of the faculty voted against the amendment be inserted in place of the phrase a number of faculty were fussed; Mr. Sevilla asked that the phrase designating him as playing peacemaker be omitted leaving only his comment that it is a university senate on the record.

Turning to information items, Mr. Connellan reported that the legislators in Lansing are discussing the capital outlay bill and Oakland's request for a classroom building. He apprised the group that additional materials relating to the athletic proposal would be distributed later in the meeting and announced the addition of an agenda item regarding charter schools and an additional committee vacancy to be filled.

Beginning with old business, Mr. Brieger moved that the Senate take from the table the motion to revise the charge to the University Committee on Undergraduate Instruction. The motion to take from the table was approved following Mr. Dillon's second. Mr. Brieger then moved and Mr. Andrews seconded a motion to amend item 9 of the charge to read as follows:

9. To construct the list of courses designed to meet the university-wide ethnic diversity requirement from among those courses submitted for this purpose by the academic units, and to maintain and update this list.

Mr. Schwartz stated that the motion goes a long way to alleviating the concern over the word "monitor" but it still doesn't rule out the possible constraint on academic freedom implied by the phrase "update this list". He proposed that the way to deal with problem directly is to rule out the imposition of a political agenda and proposed the following amendment:

"Nothing in this provision is intended to authorize or permit UCUI or Oakland University to require courses or parts of courses to have a certain ideological framework or any other framework of interpretation as a condition for satisfying the ethnic diversity requirement."

Mr. Pettengill seconded the motion. Ms. Briggs-Bunting asked for clarification--would the proposed statement become part of 9; Mr. Schwartz replied yes. Mr. Follo, chair of UCUI, pointed out to the Senate that item 9 as originally written was simply an embodiment of the charge passed by the Senate itself in April 1992, the charge being :

Moved that all Oakland university students must acquaint themselves with American ethnic diversity by taking at least one course designated as exploring the implications of the discipline(s) for ethnic perspectives and interrelationships. Courses will acquire this designation through departmental application to a subcommittee of UCUI, demonstrating that at least the equivalent of three weeks of the course deal with these subjects. These courses may be in any rubric and may also be used to meet general education, major, minor, distribution, concentration, elective credit or other degree requirements. This requirement is to be implemented when UCUI has approved a sufficient number of courses to meet student need.

He emphasized that UCUI has only been carrying out the Senate's legislation. Mr. Garfinkle thought the Schwartz addition unobjectionable; in order to object to it one would want to have to require a certain ideological framework he stated. Mr. Sahu expressed the opinion that the amendment is too broad and could be used to object to just about anything. He thought that one should be careful about the wording. He too pointed out that the Senate voted in the diversity requirement that was put in place and opined that the Senate is now saying that it doesn't like what it did. Mr. Sevilla spoke against the addition, stating that it bespeaks a lack of trust in UCUI, that it implies that there is someone out there wanting to impose an ideological agenda.

Mr. Schwartz averred that the imposition of an ideological agenda is not an uncommon occurrence, that it happens at other universities. The addition he is proposing will give the faculty an atmosphere of autonomy and allow them to protest the imposition of an agenda on their course. He felt the language of the diversity requirement is very vague, that UCUI could change its interpretations over time and that would leave faculty in a position of guessing what UCUI would consider appropriate. He stated that this is not a revision of the ethnic diversity requirement, adding that whether or not the requirement is a good idea or not is another question, but that this amendment is directed specifically to the question of academic freedom.

Mr. Bricker thought we are at a point in this nation's development where we all appreciate that there is a lack of clarity about rules of how to regulate the relationships between different ethnic groups; there are deep questions to be asked about the capacity of the conventional story about the melting pot to serve us well in the 21st century. He hopes these questions are being considered in the courses; he can imagine students being bothered by what they hear in class and parents being bothered and calling to complain about what is going on in these classes. It will help the administration, he continued, if the faculty took a stand that prohibits administrative scrutiny of the way in which a particular Oakland University faculty member is implementing the ethnic diversity requirement, a stand that prohibits the OU administration from evaluating a particular faculty member's theory of what constitutes appropriate roles for regulating the relationships between people of different cultures. It is not imprudent, he averred, to make it explicit. He doesn't have enough confidence in the robustness of the academic culture of this institution to handle in a reasonable way conflict over what constitutes a professional responsible way of implementing this requirement without this kind of explicit statement of the freedom of a faculty member to teach without regulation.

Ms. Gilroy emphasized that there is no attempt to impose any particular ideology, that UCUI

makes no attempt to infringe on academic freedom; the committee is only interested in assuring that 20% of the course deals with ethnic issues in America. When, in March 1992, the School of Business raised a question about whether their approach to teaching ethnic diversity in their marketing classes would meet this requirement, Mr. Appleton replied that UCUI would need look at the syllabus. To that end, the committee looks at the syllabus and counts the number of weeks and checks the number of topics that related to ethnic diversity. UCUI isn't looking at what is said about ethnic diversity in the classroom, but only how often it is mentioned. She reminded the group that UCUI is charged with guaranteeing consistent high quality undergraduate education. She stated that we now have this requirement that is becoming divisive, that was problematic when it was put in place and we are forcing students to comply with it. And now we are arguing over whether we trust each other and whether we want to have the requirement. With this amendment, she pointed out that an individual can put an ethnic diversity component in the syllabus and never mention it in class. Why, then, do we want to have the requirement in the catalog? If ethnic diversity is an important issue at OU we need to find a way to make sure we are serving our students well as they head into the 21st century. It is not just a political game we are playing, she commented, and there are students who are affected by our going back and forth on this issue.

Ms. Cole addressed the amendment from an ideological framework; having taught an ethnic diversity course several times, she commented that it is a tricky course to teach and she has encountered a lot of hostile responses from students. She felt the language of the amendment provides protective language. Mr. Moran argued that this kind of protection is necessary, that it addresses only the ideological dimension and does not say that ethnic diversity is not important or that it is not a goal of the institution. The amendment to add the Schwartz amendment to item 9 of the charge was approved.

Attention then turned to the amended amendment. Mr. Follo asked for guidance as to how a decision would be made, asking what would be the criteria for the list of ethnic diversity courses. Mr. Andrews replied that the decision process and criteria is outlined in the Senate legislation; that the proposed language in item 9 is an attempt to address the concerns over the use of the word "monitor". Mr. Follo pointed out that another part of UCUI's charge is to monitor catalog copy. One way of interpreting the change in the ethnic diversity charge, Mr. Downing noted, is that the emphasis is now on maintaining a list rather than monitoring a course. Mr. Garfinkle commented that there a world of difference with regard to academic freedom between monitoring catalog copy and monitoring a course. The amendment:

9. To construct the list of courses designed to meet the university-wide ethnic diversity requirement from among those courses submitted for this purpose by the academic units, and to maintain and update this list. Nothing in this provision is intended to authorize or permit UCUI or Oakland University to require courses or parts of courses to have a certain ideological framework or any other framework of interpretation as a condition for satisfying the ethnic diversity requirement."

was approved as was then the main motion to revise the charge to UCUI.

Turning next to second item of old business, the motion to recommend to the President and Board the approval of a M.A. in Biology, Mr. Dalhgren indicated Mr. Moudgil was present to answer any questions. Mr. Moudgil explained that the degree was intended to meet community needs, to provide an opportunity for high school and community college teachers to get a masters degree. The degree will supplement the existing M.S. program and will provide

research exposure but not have a major research component. And it will allow OU faculty to develop relationships with local schools. There being no further discussion, the motion was approved.

Ms. Reynolds moved and Mr. Andrews seconded a procedural motion to fill senate committee vacancies. The Senate approved the appointments of Dale Nesbary to the Senate Budget Review Committee, Richard Burke and Charles Marks to the Assessment Committee and Andrew Rusek to the Teaching and Learning Committee.

A motion to revise the membership of the Academic Computing Committee was proposed by Mr. Andrews, seconded by Mr. Dillon. Mr. Andrews explained that this was in response to a request from the ACC to broaden representation and to update the membership roster by removing no longer existing titles. Mr. Moran wondered if the student representative from the OU Programming Society was a regular seat; Mr. Connellan replied yes. Mr. Moran then asked if there were other senate committees that provided this privilege, Mr. Connellan answered no. A motion to waive the second reading was put forth by Mr. Andrews, seconded by Mr. Pettengill and approved. The motion to amend the committee membership as printed in the agenda was then approved.

A motion to revise the membership of the General Education Committee to include the Assistant Registrar for Records as an ex-officio non voting member was moved and seconded by Ms. Reynolds and Mr. Andrews, respectively. Ms. Reynolds explained that the Committee itself requested this change; that information from the Registrar was frequently needed. Ms. Gilroy proposed a friendly amendment to specify the Registrar, or designee, rather than the Assistant Registrar, to keep it in line with the wording in other membership lists. This change was accepted by the movers. Once again Mr. Andrews moved and Mr. Pettengill seconded a motion to waive the second reading. The Senate concurred and then voted in favor of the main motion.

Mr. Dillon then moved that the Senate recommend to the President and the Board that Oakland University apply to the NCAA to move to Div.I-AAA. Following Ms. Gilroy's second, Mr. Dillon commented that this is an issue that should be on the floor of the Senate. The Senate Budget Review Committee's report was distributed to the Senate membership; the report from Senate Planning will be available in January. Explaining that he had prepared typed remarks and then forgotten them, Mr. Bricker attempted to reprise his written statement. He praised the Athletic Committee for its efforts to bring this issue forward for discussion with the different constituencies of this institution. As a believer in shared governance, he feels the issue is now within that framework and that we are not sending ourselves off into Div.I without adequate reflection. Having read the reports, he noted that the committee members see the need to compromise between the public expectations of the institution and our own normative independence. A function of a university is to respectfully engage the society in disagreement, in debate, to probe and to challenge, he declared. When told that this society takes sports as a metaphor by which it can measure the vitality of a university, he says no, that's the wrong metaphor for a university. He stated reluctantly that this may be a reasonably good move for us but worries about the effect it will have on the academic fabric of the university. He concluded by applauding the creation of the advisory committee and expressed his hopes that we will be sensitive to the ramifications about what the society will learn about us through the way we engage in this endeavor. Mr. Pettengill asked if Oakland would be able to land a satisfactory membership in a conference if we go to I-AAA.

Mr. Mehl explained that he couldn't guarantee any conference membership but that there is considerable interest in us by several conferences. Conference membership is an interesting political process, he noted, and added that he and his staff are working very hard on this issue.

The last item of business was a late addition to the agenda and a copy of the motion was distributed to the group. Mr. Bricker moved that the Senate adopt the process specified in the motion for developing its recommendation to the President and the Board on public school academies. Mr. Brieger seconded the motion. Mr. Andrews remarked that in September Mr. Russi reported on the process used to charter the three schools last year and that he had invited the SPRC to come up with a proposal for improving the process. The motion on the floor is a modified version of the process developed by the SPRC. The process begins with the Charter School Committee and then moves through SBRC, SPRC, the Steering Committee and finally the Senate. Attempting to be responsive to concerns about Senate involvement, the Steering Committee wanted to bring this proposal forward so that the Senate would be aware of the proposed process, be able to discuss and perhaps approve it. Mr. Andrews added that in the new year a number of charter school applications will need action. The Planning Review Committee has considered the proposed process carefully, reported Ms. Piskulich, has consulted widely and hopes the Senate will find it satisfactory. Mr. Bricker expressed his satisfaction with the motion, stating that it is consistent with the concept of shared governance. Ms. Moore asked whether or not the SEHS Assembly would play a role, indicating that she would value their input and advice. Mr. Russi responded that he's not sure all charter schools would be connected with SEHS. Ms. Piskulich pointed out that the Charter School Committee includes representatives from SEHS as well as the Dean. Mr. Andrews added that when Ms. Otto met with SPRC, she indicated that there is interest in having broad faculty participation, including faculty outside of SEHS. Mr. Downing emphasized that this has been very much a cooperative exercise between SEHS and the College. Mr. Connellan reported that the Charter School Committee is meeting Friday, Dec. 12 and that they have 9 applications to consider. No further discussion was forthcoming.

The meeting adjourned at 4:00.

Submitted by
Linda L. Hildebrand
Secretary to the University Senate

Back to
OAKLAND UNIVERSITY
S E N A T E
Home Page