MINUTES OF MEETING NUMBER 92
OF THE
SENATE OF MICHIGAN TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY

26 January 1977

(Senate Minute pages: 1244-1268)

Meeting No. 92 was called to order on Wednesday, January 26, 1977 at 7:05 p.m. in the Faculty Lounge by President P.A. Nelson.

The roll was called by the Secretary. Twenty-five members or alternates were present. Absent were Adams, R.D. (IWR), Booy, E. (G-GE), Davis, L.L. (AROTC), Evensen, H.A. (ME-EM), Hennessy, R.L. (AL), Nelson, C.W. (HU), Romig, J.A. (VP).

Acknowledgement of Visitors: The following visitors attended: Shonts, M. (Lode photographer); Thompson, C. (Graduate Student Council); Zaburunov, S. (Lode reporter).

The Minutes of Meeting No. 91 were adopted as distributed.

President's Report

President P. Nelson delivered the President's report (See Appendix A - Available by Request from the Senate Office).

At the conclusion of the President's report, President Nelson said that if anyone feels there should be an official Senate policy for notifying radio stations of what transpires at Senate meetings, it can be brought up during the New Business portion of the meeting.

One Senator asked President Nelson what exactly "on time" means in reference to publication of the Campus Directory. Nelson said he recalled that the Manager of Communication Services said November 1, 1977; Nelson said he believed that the Manager mentioned that there is a six week lead time on printing; thus, if the printer gets the computer listing the second week of September, the Directory can be in circulation November 1.

Meetings of the Academic Council. - No Report. (Vice President Sachs indicated that to his knowledge no meeting of the Academic Council has taken place since the last Senate Meeting).

Meeting of the Board of Control. - No Report. (There has been no meeting of the Board of Control since the last Senate meeting).

Committee Reports

A. Curricular Policy - No Report.

B. Instructional Policy

Senator Baillod, chairman, read a letter which the Instructional Policy Committee received from Bill Lucier about the academic calendar which said: "Charles Curmi of the Student Council visited me about 10 days ago in regard to the late dismissal prior to Christmas recess next year. I, too, have a concern with the calendar oversight. Since the calendar is an academic tool and days of instruction are a major concern to the Instructional Policy Committee, I would appreciate it greatly if your committee would address itself to the question. I, or any member of my staff, would be very pleased to assist you in any way that you so choose. Thank you for your consideration." Baillod indicated that the Committee is currently working on the problem.

After reading Mr. Lucier's letter to the Senate, Senator Baillod presented the Committee report. (See Appendix B - Available by Request from the Senate Office). At the conclusion, Baillod said he would accept comments any Senator had on ideas which the Committee is "still formulating positions on."

Hauge reported a unanimous motion in the Social Science Department that something ought to be done about the week before Christmas (1977).

Baillod said that the Committee recognizes the problem, but the question is, what is to be done? Hauge said that he thinks the general consensus is to drop Thursday and Friday classes the week before Christmas, 1977.

Hauge said that the Social Science Department supports Proposal 9-77. The Department has asked why 5-76 was passed by a 17-0 vote, and what was the rationale for support of 5-76. The Social Science Department also asked why the Instructional Policy Committee is opposed to 9-77.

Baillod said that the Committee is not opposed to 9-77. (See Appendix B of these Minutes - Available by Request from the Senate Office.)

Baillod explained why 5-76 was adopted by the Senate. He said that junior and senior level courses are generally, but not always, smaller sections, and juniors and seniors are generally, but perhaps, not always, "more mature and more experienced in psyching out what grades they have at any point (and) would not need the mid-term grade."
Pintar said that in its report the Committee did not emphasize enough the impact which the academic calendar has on courses with laboratories, such as those in the Department of Chemistry and Chemical Engineering. He said that most of the courses in his department, through the junior year, have a large number of students, larger number of sections, and "are impacted tremendously by the number of days, and number of times a particular laboratory section meets." He said that he realizes the difficulty which arises when the academic calendar is suddenly changed in the middle of a quarter. He said that he hopes that in the future the Committee will be meeting with those who establish the calendar, and take into account the impact of the calendar on the academic community and "try to come up with the best possible calendar in the future."

A motion was made and seconded, a vote was taken, and the Senate accepted the Committee report.

C. Institutional Evaluation - Vice President Sachs, chairman, gave the report. See Appendix C (Available by Request from the Senate Office.)

D. Elections Committee - No Report.

E. Roles of the Senate and Faculty Association - No Report. President P. Nelson has appointed Senator Erickson to be chairman of this Committee.

F. Smoking

At Senator Hauge's suggestion, President P. Nelson asked for a motion to dismiss the Smoking Committee, with thanks. A motion was made, seconded, a vote was taken, and the motion carried.


Old Business - None

New Business

1. Proposal 9-77, Amendment to Mid-Term Grade Policy

It was moved and seconded that Proposal 9-77 be adopted. President Nelson asked for discussion.

Baillod moved that Proposal 9-77 be referred to the Instructional Policy Committee for further study. The motion was seconded. President Nelson asked for discussion on the motion to refer the Proposal to the Committee.

Hauge asked if a deadline for Committee study of the Proposal could be set. President Nelson said that the motion could be amended, to include a deadline. Hauge asked Baillod what a reasonable deadline would be. Baillod said the next Senate meeting or the one following it. Hauge decided against suggesting amendment of the motion, "with the understanding that the Committee would proceed."

Miller asked why the mid-term grade policy is being brought up again.

Haut indicated that the Student Council found that a lot of students who were juniors and seniors or students in junior or senior level classes missed the mid-term grades. The Student Council voted a formal motion requesting Haut to present the issue to the Senate to be considered again "because they did want the mid-term grades back. They missed them."

One Senator asked what are the circumstances under which students do not know their mid-term grades?

One Senator said that he thinks some instructors do not have a set policy to inform students as to where they stand in the class. Making them give out mid-term grades would force them to indicate whether the students are above or below the line.

Hauge related two arguments of the Social Sciences Department in favor of mid-term grades: (1) The mid-term grade is a device for telling students whether they are enrolled in a particular class or not. (2) Why deny the instructors who want to give mid-term grades the opportunity to give mid-term grades?

A number of Senators pointed out that there is now a mechanism where the students receive a card letting him/her know all the courses he/she is enrolled in.

One Senator asked what are the circumstances under which students do not know their mid-term grades?

One Senator said that he does not see why a mid-term grade has to be officially recorded. He can give students a mid-term grade if he wants. He can tell students after every test exactly what their letter grade in the course is.

Sloan brought up some of the concerns in the Electrical Engineering Department. She said that it seems that some departments apparently have rather small enrollments in upper level classes and perhaps have sort of an intimate relationship where the students know where they stand. This does not happen to be the case in the EE department. In her own case, last quarter she had a class of about 40 where she gave two mid-term exams and had five failing grades on one and three failing grades on the other, and in both cases none of those students getting the failing grades came to
pick up the exams so that they would know that they had a failing grade. She said that there are mechanisms where she could let students know they were failing. She could have the department secretary write them a letter, she could try to call them personally on the phone, but she really missed the opportunity of the official mid-term grade where she could “sort of jog them” and at least assume they open their mail to let them know that she felt they were not doing well.

Another concern in the EE department is that there are a large number of transfer students. The argument is sometimes made that freshman and sophomores need the mid-term grades because they do not know how Tech is; the EE department thinks this argument may be valid for the transfer juniors. They do not know their first term how they are doing. The mid-term grade allows the instructors who are concerned a simple way to let the student know that he or she is not doing well. The instructor who does not want to do this can simply recycle the cards, and according to Bill Dix when he came to meet with the Instructional Policy Committee, he did not feel there would be any significant savings of time or paper if the mid-term grades are not issued, because at the time that the freshmen and sophomores get their mid-term report, the other students get something saying that they are enrolled in the courses, so that the extra information, the grades, apparently is negligible in terms of computer processing time.

One Senator said, "It seems an awful lot of effort for an irresponsible few."

President Nelson asked for a vote on the motion to refer Proposal 9-77 to the Instructional Policy Committee. The motion was approved: 17 in favor, 4 opposed.

2. Proposal 10-77, Constitutional Amendment to Provide Senate Representation for the Graduate Student Council (Amendment VI to the Constitution)

It was moved and seconded that Proposal 10-77 be adopted.

President Nelson aid that there are a number of reasons why it might be desirable to have Graduate Student Council representation in the Senate. Graduate students are involved in the affairs of the University, and perhaps should be entitled to the same type of representation that the undergraduate students have through the Student Council. Graduate students are to some extent involved in the teaching process. Nelson said that he does not know whether it is common for graduate teaching assistants to be invited to faculty meetings and to participate in departmental affairs regarding curriculum and the academic area. Possibly there is no adequate representation for graduate teaching assistants and other graduate students through their respective departments; this is an additional reason why they perhaps should have some representation. He said that the President of the Graduate Student Council is at the meeting as a guest. Although Miss Thompson is not allowed under the rules to speak to the motion, she may answer questions that people address to the chair. Nelson asked for questions that people would like to address to the chair.

Sachs asked whether the graduate school faculty has formal representation on the Senate. The reply was, "No."

President Nelson reviewed the process by which an amendment to the Constitution is made. Proposal 10-77 must be passed at this meeting and at any subsequent meeting within six months by a two-thirds vote of the members present; then the Proposal must be approved by the Academic Faculty and the Board of Control.

President Nelson asked for a vote on Proposal 10-77, and it carried: 18 in favor, comprising the required 2/3 needed to pass it. Nelson indicated that 10-77 will be on the agenda, to be considered at the next meeting.

3. Proposal 11-77, To Change the Winter Quarter 1976-77 Academic Calendar

It was moved and seconded that Proposal 11-77 be adopted. President Nelson asked for discussion.

Sachs said that the last time a change in the calendar was considered the Biology Department spoke about the number of laboratory specimens that had to be ordered in advance and which were already scheduled into the calendar. Sachs asked what this change would do to their laboratory schedule.

Brown said that no one in the Biology Department has commented about this to him, and that he does not happen to have any courses in which he needs biology specimens this particular quarter, and that he could not make any comments.

Baillod reiterated some of the items from his report. He said that there is a practical difficulty of making this change for the Winter Carnival week. He also pointed out that many people have already planned out their course and laboratory schedules to accommodate the present calendar so that it may be that adopting this proposal would upset more laboratory schedules than it might help at this time.

Synder said that he was disturbed by information that was given the Senators at the last Senate meeting about Monday after New Year's. The Senate was told that everyone all over the state was going back to school on Monday which was not the case. The Senators were also informed at that time that they did not have to be concerned about changing the calendar because there would be plenty of time at the next Senate meeting to do this. He said, "I think that we should be able to look at these things far enough in advance to change them around, and I think that the proper time would have been to look at it last time but last time you insured that we had plenty of time to consider it at this meeting."

Baillod said that there is still time to change the Winter Quarter Calendar, the week of February 7-11, if the Senate wants to do it.
Baillod responded to Snyder's comment about the misinformation on January 3 which he supplied the Senate. He got the information orally from Bill Lucier, who said that all other state institutions in Michigan were in session on January 3. The correct information is that all state institutions operating on the early quarter system, Lake Superior State, Ferris, and Michigan Tech, were in session on January 3. There were no other state institutions in session January 3. Baillod said that he had meant to correct that aspect of the minutes, but said it was not really a correction to the minutes because he said it. However, subsequently, in making a study of the calendar he learned that it was only the early quarter institutions that were in session on that date. The late quarter and the semester institutions were on break.

Hauge asked, "Am I given to understand that the alternate Senator from Chemistry is not supporting this Proposal in any shape or form?"

Pintar indicated that he would support the Proposal because Professor Allison, in consultation with Dr. Berry, pushed for the Proposal. He said, "I will vote for the Proposal but I have my own reservations about making changes in the academic calendar in the middle of the quarter. I don't think you can operate that way, but I will vote for the motion on behalf of our department."

President Nelson commented that he had spoken with both Dr. Berry and Dr. Dawson on this subject during the past several weeks. Dr. Berry told Nelson recently that if the change in the calendar were made next week, the only switch he could make would be in recitation sections, which would still be a benefit to him, but it would not help him on the laboratories because apparently he would need even more lead time to accomplish that.

Miller said that he supported the tenor of the Proposal, but that he does not support this particular Proposal at this time. He said that he thinks that it is imperative that next winter’s schedule be straightened out this spring, not next fall. He said that there are two more Senate meetings at which to straighten out next winter’s schedule.

One Senator asked how the academic schedule is made out, and does the Senate have any input?

Baillod said that it is his understanding that Bill Lucier works on the calendar and several other people see it. Art Weaver's ad hoc Calendar Committee had been involved. In the future, the calendars will come to the Instructional Policy Committee in the formative stages and the Senate will have an input.

One Senator responded to Baillod's comments. He said that he did not think that Art Weaver had been involved in the formulation of these last calendars. He said that he believed that some of the guidelines that his committee put in writing were used. He said that in the future obviously there should be more input. He said that attention should be paid to what priorities should be given to various guidelines.

President Nelson asked for a vote on Proposal 11-77 and it was defeated.

4. News media reports on Senate meetings

One Senator asked, "Does the Senate necessarily have a channel by which it communicates the actions of its meeting to news media? . . . Either the Senate has this kind of a channel or it does not. If it does, it should be used and should reflect the entire action of the meeting."

President Nelson said that in order to get the information from a given Senate meeting to the public as fast as possible, the Senate issues an abbreviated form of the minutes in Tech Topics the week following the meeting, focusing on important motions passed and announcements made. In the past the Senate has not attempted to issue any kind of a press release largely because one could not be put together the morning following the meeting and "if it isn't ready the following morning it's past history." Nelson asked for comments and suggestions.

Brown said that he understands that radio station WMPL called someone and asked him/her a few questions about the Senate meeting and he/she gave a somewhat off the cuff answer, not quite realizing perhaps that it might be quoted, etc. This kind of think can happen; a reporter from a newspaper or radio station could contact someone for an interview. If that person chose to reply, he/she might be more or less quoted in or out of context.

Sachs said, "I think under the open meeting laws there is nothing to prevent a member of the press from visiting our meetings. For us to issue any kind of news releases to the media would be in effect grandstanding and placing a President whom we advise on the spot and I wouldn't like to do that. I feel that if we have something to say, we say it to our President, and if the press wants to cover it that's their affair, but it would look like we are playing games with the public press and I don't think that's appropriate for the Senate."

Pintar asked, "Couldn't the President of the Senate make himself available for a telephone interview -- if nothing else, to clarify issues that go over the local media?"

President Nelson replied, "It could be done. However, there may be some problems in terms of the timing and there would also be some problems in trying to communicate a complicated issue in a sentence and I personally would prefer that that not be done. I would be glad to talk to anyone from the media. I have on occasions talked with the reporter from the Lode in my office, trying to clarify some of the things that happened at meetings which he attended, but I would hate to have an on-the-air interview for fear of, in the 2 minutes allowed, distorting issues myself."

One Senator pointed out that an interview might be taped and then edited.
Nelson responded, "That perhaps is worse."

The meeting was voted to adjourn at 9:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

E. Erickson
Secretary