MINUTES OF MEETING NUMBER 132
OF THE
SENATE OF MICHIGAN TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY

2 November 1983

(Senate Minute pages: 2276-2291)

President Nelson called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m., November 2, 1983 in the Ballroom of the Memorial Union.

Roll: Twenty nine members/alternates were present. Absent were: Gary G. Gimmestad, Dennis A. Miller, and Philip N. Parks.

Recognition of Visitors: Dr. Charles R. Crowther of the Institutional Evaluation Committee

Minutes of Meeting No. 131:

Page 2263, Item 6: The procedure for selecting the Ombudsman was incorrectly reported. The correct procedure is that the Ombudsman Appointing Committee appoints the Ombudsman.

Page 2261, Item VII. A. The statements reported inaccurately reflect the actual status of the recommendations of the Ad Hoc General Education Committee. Vice President Whitten stated that he did not send the recommendations to the academic departments for implementation. He agreed to answer questions on the status of the recommendations during the New Business portion of the meeting.

Page 2260, Item I: Senators Hodek, Melton, and Hellawell stated that they arrived at the meeting after the roll call.

Page 2264: The date reported for the approval of 6-83 and Proposal 7-83 was wrong. The actual date was September 23, 1983.

President's Report: (Appendix A - Available by Request from the Senate Office)

President Nelson concluded his report by stating that over the years, many people have criticized the Senate for many things. One criticism is that the Senate fails to attract the most distinguished faculty members on campus. At present, our roster includes many senators who are not full professors. The implication of this is that the Senate does not represent the very best ideas and proposals available on campus. President Nelson took issue with this line of reasoning.

"We are a Senate, not an advisory council. Our members are elected by their departments to represent them. Our senators bring to this forum the best ideas their departments have to offer. Our Senate committees often have distinguished non-senators as members. Our committees also solicit input from a broad spectrum of sources both on and off campus. Judge us by the quality of our proposals. Judge us by the degree to which we represent our departments. Don't poke fun at us because we are young. The strength of the Senate rests on the effectiveness with which are senators solicit the views of our departments. If you want this Senate to be strong and to be effective in bringing about a much better university for the people of Michigan, come to our meetings with the views of your colleagues and with the resolutions of your departments."

Vice President's Report: (Available by Request from the Senate Office)

Committee Reports

A. Curricular Policy

Chairwoman Ottenstein reported that the committee plans to bring a proposal on Procedures for Making Significant Changes in the Academic Program to the Senate at the December 14 meeting. The Committee is also planning on reviewing the recommendations of the Ad Hoc General Education Committee. The Committee solicits input from anyone on campus regarding the recommendations.

B. Instructional Policy

Chairman Baltensperger reported that the Committee is investigating two issues:

1. Transfer Credit. Students are required to complete the last 36 credits of coursework in residence for a baccalaureate degree. There are two methods for exception at present. First, a student who has a GPA of 2.5 or better can transfer up to 9 credits with the approval of the department head and dean. Second, a student may appeal for an exemption to the Vice President of Academic Affairs. Approximately 200 students use the first method and 20 use the second method each year. The Committee is investigating whether the GPA standard in the first method should be lowered to 2.0. The Committee solicits input on this from the faculty.

2. Drop Policy. The Committee is investigating two related issues. The first is the conditions under which late drops are approved. Some faculty feel that the conditions may be too lax. The second is the length of the drop period. Perhaps six weeks is too long. The Committee solicits input on this from the faculty.
C. Institutional Evaluation. See New Business

D. Budget. (Appendix B - Available by Request from the Senate Office)

Old Business (Appendix A, Item 1 - Available by Request from the Senate Office)

New Business

A. Proposal 8-83, Departmental Governance

Two corrections were made on the background statement of the proposal on p. 2272. The title at the top should read “DEPARTMENTAL GOVERNANCE” and in line nine, the text should be “can be considered endpoints of a continuous spectrum.” One senator asked if the proposal meant that each department has to prepare a constitution.

Institutional Evaluation Committee Chairwoman Beske-Diehl answered that it does. Senator Hodek said there would be little evaluation once the constitution was approved, that his department saw no need for this proposal, and that he believes departments should generate their own constitutions without Senate pressure. He also indicated that he felt departments should complete a self-study to deal with the issues underlying the proposal. President Stein stated that he was sympathetic with almost all of the proposal, but that there were still two shortcomings. First, there was no input from department chairmen or heads on the difficulties and opportunities that this proposal might present. Second, there should be an attempt to evaluate the three years of experience two departments on campus have had with the chairperson form of governance. How has this model performed in the areas of obtaining research support, filling faculty vacancies, attracting graduate students? These activities are crucial to the success of the department and none of these issues have been addressed. Even if the faculty are happy with this form of governance, if it hurts progress and performance of the University it is not an improvement. Chairwoman Beske-Diehl stated that the proposal did include an evaluation function in Section 1.D.2. She also stated that the departmental constitutions could be flexible and evolve because changes could be made with a two-thirds majority vote of the departmental faculty.

A motion to adopt Proposal 8-83 failed with only 11 senators voting yes. President Stein stated that the flavor and tone of this proposal was good except for the two shortcomings noted above and that he hoped that the proposal would be kept alive for improvement. A motion was made to refer Proposal 8-83 back to committee. The motion passed unanimously.

B. Election of Senator to Ombudsman Appointing Committee

President Nelson stated that Professor Richard Bayer, the University Ombudsman, is retiring on January 1, 1984. He will be replaced in accordance with proposal 1-69, Office of the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman is to be appointed by a three-person appointing committee made up as follows: one member appointed by the President of the University; one member elected by the Senate from among its members; and one member elected by the general faculty (said election to be carried out by the Executive Committee of the Senate).

President Nelson said we would now elect a senator for the committee. Six senators were nominated: Bradley Baltensperger, Charles Hein, Allan Johnson, William Predebon, Richard Schwartz, and Terrell Warrington. Senator Predebon was elected.

President Nelson also asked senators to nominate faculty members to run for the faculty position on the committee.

C. Teaching Effectiveness

President Nelson stated that many people on campus have the idea that teaching effectiveness is not a component of faculty evaluation for promotion, tenure, and salary. Many people believe that President Stein and Vice President Whitten do not care about teaching. He said it is very important that the University make it clear to the entire faculty that teaching is a very essential element of our work. One problem in the past has been that faculty did not care for mandatory student evaluations of teachers because the evaluations tended to be superficial. It is difficult to measure teaching effectiveness, yet it must be done in order to make teaching effectiveness a major component of faculty evaluation. There are universities that have developed respectable methods of evaluating teaching that don’t even make use of student evaluations.

A motion was made to create a special Ad Hoc committee to study teaching effectiveness. President Stein and Senate President Nelson will jointly select members. The charge to the committee is to define the many elements of effective teaching to include evaluating graduates and to develop a comprehensive program to evaluate it. The first goal of the committee is to promote teaching effectiveness in order to enhance the quality of MTU graduates. The second goal is to develop a strategy for Senate approval to require consideration of teaching effectiveness in faculty promotion, tenure, and salary decisions.

The motion passed unanimously.

D. General Education

President Nelson asked the Vice President of Academic Affairs, Dr. Whitten, to clarify the status of the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Committee on General Education. In particular, President Nelson wanted to know whether individual departments were free to reject the entire report. Dr. Whitten responded that a process is in progress whereby each
college and school is attempting to determine whether a consensus can be achieved at that level. Early in 1984, we will know whether a consensus situation exists at the University level. There is no compulsion for a department to adopt the whole thing, but there is the hope that a consensus will arise. To achieve a consensus, there may have to be some recommendations in the document.

President Nelson asked how the new General Education Committee referred to in the document would relate to the Senate and to the University Course Change Committee. Dr. Whitten responded that nothing has been done in that area yet. We will have to wait until we see what type of a consensus is achieved next year before we can determine what type of machinery is needed.

President Nelson asked whether this would be an area in which a Senate proposal would be useful. Dr. Whitten responded that it would be premature to impose some sort of structure on something that has not yet coagulated. The faculty of the departments are the people who define curriculum and, at the moment, that is the stage where this matter is at. The faculty are doing the curriculum work now at the department level and it would be wrong for the Administration or the Senate to impose a structure on them at this time. There may be a need for it at a later stage.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Paul A. Nelson  
Senate Secretary