

The University Senate of Michigan Technological University

Minutes of Meeting 280

17 September 1997

Synopsis: The Senate

- (1) heard a report on the academic calendar task force from Vice Provost for Instruction Bowen.
 - (2) discussed Senate priorities for the year.
 - (3) requests nominees for University committees.
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1. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

President Seely called Senate Meeting 280 to order at 5:35 p.m. on Wednesday, 17 September 1997, in Room U113 of the Minerals and Materials Engineering Building.

Secretary Glime called roll. Absent were at-large Senators David Reed and Christa Walck, and representatives from Biological Sciences and IWR. Civil and Environmental Engineering and Finance and Advancement have no senators or alternates. Recently elected representatives include Brian Timm (Army Alternate) and Steve Vanden Avond (Department of Education). Liaison in attendance was Ted Soldan (Staff Council).

2. RECOGNITION OF VISITORS

Guests included Marcia Goodrich (*Tech Topics*), Les Leifer (Chemistry), and Steve Bowen (Vice Provost for Instruction).

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Carstens MOVED and Lutzke seconded the motion to approve the agenda. The motion to approve PASSED on voice vote with no dissent. [Appendix A. NOTE: Only official Senate and Library archival copies of the minutes will contain a full complement of appendices.]

4. REPORT FROM SENATE PRESIDENT

President Seely announced that there are still Senate openings. He encouraged the Senators or Alternates of those departments to help insure that the department fills those positions.

The staff Senator/Alternate election will occur in the next few weeks.

Seely announced that the chairs and officers constitute the Executive Committee and invited them to meet with him when he has the first session with the President.

5. COMMITTEE BUSINESS/REPORTS

President Seely announced that the list of committee assignments had been updated that afternoon, but that some Senators had not been selected yet. Senator Barna reported that Chemical Engineering had selected Tony Rogers as Alternate.

Seely stated that the terms of Alternates had not been tracked before. Senator Leifer stated that the length of service as Senator/Alternate must start now [so that service prior to the 1997 revisions to the Constitution would not count]. Seely responded that it was his understanding that determination of ineligibility for re-election included prior years of service. Leifer disagreed.

Seely stated that we need to approve the committee list as it is now; we will come back with the complete slate when it is ready.

McKilligan MOVED and Sweany seconded the motion to approve the slate of committee membership as presented [**Appendix B**]. The motion PASSED on voice vote with no opposition.

Seely asked the interim chairs to convene a meeting before the next Senate meeting to select the chairs of the committees.

B. Task Force on the Academic Calendar -- Steve Bowen [Appendix C]

Vice Provost for Instruction Bowen reported that the President has appointed a task force on the academic calendar, chaired by Ken Rowe, past chair of the Board of Control, with Marty Lagina (Board of Control) as vice chair. A subcommittee of that task force (Calendar Issues Clarification Committee - CICC), chaired by Bowen, is preparing a proposal to be presented to the Board of Control.

The CICC has 13 members from the faculty, staff, and students.

Bowen reported that 171 academic calendars changed this fall. Only three of these went from semesters to quarters. Only 18% of the colleges and universities in the US are still on the quarter system.

All the studies on alternative calendars address four issues: benefits, cost, boundary conditions (it should not damage particular constituents), and what calendars to consider. However, there are no precise answers anywhere. Each school must go through its own process of considerations.

The committee considered the essential issues for MTU to include choice of a particular calendar scheme and the benefits of the change (any kind). He presented the ten most common points. The most commonly cited benefit is greater continuity, but there is no supporting evidence. For MTU, it would mean a revision of the curriculum, especially general education, and a revision of student advising. The most certain benefits are in meshing more easily with transfer student credits, co-ops, and exchange programs.

The proposal of the committee must be evaluated before 21 November when it will be presented to the Board of Control at its last meeting before the NCA visitation. The committee anticipates that NCA will view the change as good, provided the plan has provisions to avoid chaos.

The proposal will be available for comments by the MTU community through a calendar web site. The site is currently active to provide minutes and agenda for the committee. The address will be in Tech Topics. Open forums will be held the week of September 29.

The CICC members include Steve Bowen (Vice Provost Instruc., chair), John DeVol (Pres. USG), Jeremy Hendges (*Lode* Editor), Brett Hamlin (Pres. GSC), Bill Bulleit (Civil & Env. Eng.), Bev Baartmans (Math.), Bill Kennedy (Dir. Center Teach. Learn. Fac. Dev.), Ed Fisher (Chem. Eng.), Sharron Paris (Enroll. Mgmt.), Marty Janners (Vice Provost), Bob Warrington (Dean Eng.), Ted Bornhorst (Geol. Eng. & Sci.), Bruce Seely (Soc. Sci.), Mark Plichta (Met. Mat. Eng.), Cliff Anderson (Inst. Analysis).

Senator Gale asked if there was any assessment of cost. Bowen responded that there would need to be one person responsible for the paperwork and the cost of consultants as well as the costs of lost opportunities. Additionally, there would be uncompensated time for rewriting courses, but institutional reform should be part of the continuing process anyway. MSU anticipated a loss in research revenue, but that didn't happen. MTU will budget tangible costs as line item costs.

Senator Green asked how many people had looked at changing their calendar and decided no. Bowen responded that 82% of the schools are on quarters now, so the number could not be large.

Senator Santeford asked what length of instructional period was being considered. Bowen responded that schools have used 14 and 15 weeks, but that most faculty seem to favor 15 weeks, giving a total instructional period the same as at present, but reducing the stopping and starting time.

Senator Suryanarayana asked if everyone would be required to go to semesters immediately as soon as the change is introduced into the curriculum. Bowen responded that some schools have retained both calendars while changing and that the topic is open to discussion.

Senator Nesbitt asked if schools had experienced any drop in enrollment during the change. Bowen responded that most students don't know what calendar the school has when they apply. President Seely added that the calendar is not mentioned in recruiting material and according to Joe Galetto, (Enrollment Management) it is not a factor in choice of schools.

Bowen stated that we need to make a commitment to improve the student experience. In particular, the general education program needs change. The semester calendar could help address the problem of students trivializing courses by dropping them for GPA management.

Senator Pegg stated the concern that student commitment could be trivial for 15 weeks instead of 10. Bowen responded that currently the student response to lack of commitment to a course is to drop the course. Pegg asked why it would not happen on semesters. Bowen responded that it would take them longer to recover.

Senator Vichich noted that under our current system, 60% of the term is over when students drop a course; most semester systems require drops by week 4 or 5. As a student he preferred semesters.

Seely asked the Senators to help their units be aware of the schedule of forums and meetings. He commented that the students on the committee now realized that the faculty were not attempting to screw the students and that this change was not done as a whim. We need the entire university community at the forums so that we can understand all the perspectives and concerns. Students will be notified of forums in the Lode.

C. Board of Control Relations Committee

Seely stated that the Board of Control met earlier than normal because they had met in early June in anticipation of having a budget, but the state appropriation had been delayed more than usual so they were meeting early this fall to approve the budget.

Jim Mitchell is the new chair of the Board. He opened the meeting with comments recognizing the inadequacy of the increase in compensation for employees. He stated to the Board that it is time for Cal Tech and MIT to step aside for MTU.

Seely presented the Senate statement on salary increases to the Board of Control. The Board asked if faculty realized that they had an increase in compensation. Seely assured them that faculty did but that faculty pay attention to salary whereas administrators pay attention to compensation.

Vice President Soldan added that Pennington had said that compensation was taken away and given back, so it was a wash.

Seely stated that the Board was interested in having the Senate take a more active part in setting tuition.

The Board has established two subcommittees: academic subcommittee, primarily to deal with the proposal for calendar change, and the finance subcommittee.

Mitchell noted that the Board has referred our proposal regarding the changing of the at-will language in the employment contracts to its new finance subcommittee.

D. Discussion of Senate Priorities

President Seely stated that we had carry-over issues from previous years.

Corollary issues to the calendar include a revision of the general education program. He has suggested to Vice Provost for Instruction Bowen that this, among other issues, should use the Senate committee structure to deal with the appropriate issues. He suggested that the Instructional Policy Committee might be the appropriate committee. Therefore the issues would come to one committee tier instead of two.

Among the proposals reaching the Senate last year, Proposal 1-97, Policy on Threatening and Violent Behavior has not been resolved because the Senate had difficulty in defining clearly its intentions.

Proposal 13-97, BS in Computer Engineering, is ready for committee. Proposal 16-97, Minor Degrees likewise needs action.

Proposal 30-95, Policy on Academic Freedom has been revised several times without agreement between the Senate and the Provost. The Provost will probably return it to the Senate with the language directly from the AAUP.

The Senate needs to examine the university separation/retrenchment procedure, which has not been revised during the recent handbook revision.

The Provost wants to modify the weather advisory/closure policy and is ready to accept a recommendation to abolish the advisory. This recommendation needs to come first from the Academic Policy Committee.

Tenure and promotion changes moved very slowly last year and Seely recommends we continue to move slowly. There is a danger that if the issue of tenure goes to the Board they could open a much broader issue. For example, one Board member asked "how the hell do you fire people around here anyway?" We will continue to look at matters that need to be considered, but Seely recommends that we move slowly and cautiously.

The conflict of interest policy has not yet moved from interim to final policy because it has never been approved by the Board. We tried last year to get revisions that would satisfy the Board and its attorney. Changes Seely made to satisfy the Board evoked their changes back to the original wording. The Senate has voted three times to approve this policy but the Board has not found any of these satisfactory. However, we are acting quite satisfactorily with this policy as an interim measure.

Seely asked for other items for consideration.

Senator Leifer asked what had happened to the proposals from the Fringe Benefits Committee that had been passed by the Senate last year.

Senate Assistant Meyers produced a list of the status of the various proposals. Proposal 6-97, Recommendation to Change Retirement Medical Benefit Plan has been rejected by the Administration. On Proposal 8-97, Recommended Amendment to Proposed New TIAA/CREF Retiree Health Care Benefits the Administration concurred. There has been no administrative reaction to Proposal 11-97, Recommendation on Retirement Health Benefit Fund or to Proposal 12-97, Recommendation to Change the Eligibility Conditions of Section 6.3.1 of Faculty Handbook).

Senator Suryanarayana stated that there had been a retrenchment policy developed while Stein was President and that it would be worthwhile to see what had been done. Seely agreed and said that a committee would be reconstituted.

Suryanarayana asked what had happened regarding tenure at the University of Minnesota; is it still on? Leifer responded that it is. Seely stated that the University of Minnesota had received only a 2-year accreditation because of the uncertainty and tension surrounding the tenure issue. The Board had not been very responsive to the senate and AAUP recommendations. Leifer added that the union vote missed by only 26 votes and the Board backed off.

Senator Gale suggested that a member of the Finance Committee should be brought into the University budget process.

Senator Nordberg remarked that we need to work on the policy regarding threatening and violent behavior. His department had been told they couldn't get rid of a person who was causing problems in his department. Seely agreed that work needs to be done on this.

Seely stated that there was discussion last year on a proposal for a BS in Computer Engineering; most of the discussion had centered on finances. Therefore, he intends to submit such proposals to more than one committee when appropriate. The Senate Executive Committee will track how the various committees are progressing. The revised proposal for a B S in Computer Engineering will go to the Finance and Curricular Policy Committees.

Seely requested the help of the Senate and will welcome volunteers to serve on the University committees. Steve Seidel has volunteered to serve on the General Education Committee.

We have a new committee, the Conflict of Interest Committee, as required by the procedure. There are three cases of faculty with entrepreneurial activities that need to be approved by that committee. The Senate needs to elect three people for staggered terms and can wait no longer for Board approval of the policy.

Senator Pegg asked if all University members are eligible to be committee members and if they can vote on these committees.

Seely responded that University committees are open to all constituents. The votes are advisory and there is no distinction on who votes. Likewise, the ad hoc Senate committees can draw on the entire university community. However, only Senators and Alternates may vote in Senate standing committees.

The Faculty need to select an Ombudsperson because Larry Julien is stepping down. The selection committee consists of one member appointed by the President of the University, one member from the Senate and elected by the Senate, and one member elected by the Academic Faculty with the election conducted by the Senate. The choice of the appointing committee must be unanimous.

A list of committee needs will go to the Senators.

6. ADJOURNMENT

Santeford MOVED and Vichich seconded the motion to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 7:05 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted by Janice M. Glime
Secretary of the Senate