

**THE UNIVERSITY SENATE OF  
MICHIGAN TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY**

Minutes of Meeting 285

7 January 1998

**Synopsis:** The Senate

- (1) approved Proposal 1-98, Student Academic Grievances.
- (2) elected Ted Soldan for another term as Vice President.
- (3) heard that Vice Provost Lee has appointed a Research Advisory Board.
- (4) heard that General Education will be the first priority in the Academic Calendar change.
- (5) heard that EE has withdrawn the proposal for a Bachelor's Degree in Computer Engineering and will hire a senior computer engineer who will lead the efforts to draft a new proposal.
- (6) applauded Senator Walck for her excellent work on the NCA self-study report.
- (7) heard a report from Les Leifer (chair of the Fringe Benefits Committee) on the effect of the May change in fringe benefits.

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**1. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL**

President Seely called Senate Meeting 285 to order at 5:35 p.m. on Wednesday, 7 January 1998, in Room U113 of the Minerals and Materials Building.

Secretary Glime called roll. Absent were representatives from Civil and Environmental Engineering, Computer Science, Electrical Engineering, and Academic Services-Engineering. Liaisons in attendance were Brett Surinak (USG) and Ted Soldan (Staff Council).

**2. RECOGNITION OF VISITORS**

Guests included Fred Dobney (Provost), Marcia Goodrich (*Tech Topics*), and Les Leifer (Chemistry).

**3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Carstens MOVED and Williams 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. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM MEETING 284**

Vice President Soldan asked what was meant, on page 7182, by the statement that a motion was seconded by general consensus. President Seely explained that it had been impossible to determine from the record who had seconded the motion.

Seely suggested that on page 7183, paragraph 3, "disillusions" should be "illusions."

Senator Leifer added that he had said other things too, and repeated his statement, "Presidents build buildings, but good presidents don't build buildings on the backs of faculty and staff," and stated that he didn't mind that being recorded. This should be added to paragraph 3, page 7183, following the sentence ending, "but they have cost us dearly."

Nesbitt MOVED and Williams seconded the motion to approve the minutes of meeting 284 as amended. The motion PASSED on voice vote with no dissent.

**5. OPEN MOTION ON PROPOSAL 1-98, STUDENT ACADEMIC GRIEVANCES [Appendix B]**

President Seely distributed an email communication from Dave Nelson (Mech. Eng.), who is on sabbatical leave, regarding Proposal 1-98. Nelson expressed concern that the policy states what kinds of actions are not grievable, but not those that ARE grievable. Furthermore, the policy does not state what remedies are available. He expressed concern that the proposal tends to establish an adversarial relationship between faculty and students, and urged the Senate to reject the proposal in its present form.

Senator Evensen stated that the procedure in proposal 1-98 was not intended as a legal document. It gives no new authority; it only outlines procedure for the existing policy.

Senator Suryanarayana repeated some of the concerns raised by Nelson, including questions of whether a student could challenge a grade because a different instructor was an easier grader. He questioned if there was a way to set some limits within the policy/procedure as to what would be grievable.

President Seely stated that the committee that drafted the proposal used existing university policies and procedures as a model, and in no case did these define specific cases. These policies have deliberate vagueness; it is impossible to identify all possible issues. The policy needs to leave questions open to debate regarding reasonableness.

Suryanarayana asked what happens if a student has a grievance and a faculty member says that an action is not grievable.

Seely stated that in this case the student goes to the supervisor, who says whether it is grievable.

Senator Nordberg reminded the Senate that students can already do this; this procedure only shows them how. At present, students can go to the Dean of Students with a grievance, and this seems to provide a more rational way of doing that.

Vice President Soldan stated that if 3000 students file a grievance, then the Senate can modify the policy/procedure. You put something out and see if it works and if it doesn't you modify it. Senator Leifer asked Soldan to hold that thought in mind for his presentation later.

Seely asked if the Senate wanted to take this back for the committee to address these issues or if it is ready to act on the proposal.

Soldan expressed concern that there seemed to have been a lack of student comments during our discussion of the proposal.

Surinak (USG) stated that it appeared to him that Proposal 1-98 took jurisdiction out of the hands of the Dean of Students.

Senator Snyder responded that the students should be happier with this arrangement. because faculty don't work for the Dean of Students. The supervisor can lean on the faculty, but the Dean of Students can't.

Seely noted that in several policies the initial decision making has been moved to the immediate supervisor.

Senator Walck pointed out that the Dean of Students still retains jurisdiction on issues of academic integrity and discrimination.

Suryanarayana was concerned whether a supervisor can force a faculty member to change a grade.

Snyder responded that only faculty can assign a grade.

Senator Nordberg responded that under this procedure the faculty member and supervisor can have a discussion regarding the student's concern.

Senator Williams stated that the message from Dave Nelson is a statement made in absentia and should be treated only as part of the discussion. [It did not require action.]

Suryanarayana suggested that the proposal should go back to committee to address the issues raised by Nelson.

Seely stated that if the motion to approve the proposal fails, then the proposal would go back to the committee. He ruled that voting units would be academic departments.

The motion to approve Proposal 1-98 PASSED on voice vote with one dissenting voice.

## **6. VICE PRESIDENT ELECTION**

President Seely reported that there were two nominations for Vice President: Ted Soldan and Dave Ouillette. He opened the floor for nominations. There were no nominations. Soldan was elected by secret ballots, 28:9.

## 7. REPORT FROM SENATE PRESIDENT

**Memos sent:** President Seely reported that Senate Proposal 16-97, Minors in Degree Programs, has been sent to the Provost for administrative approval. **[Appendix C]**

Comments regarding the proposal came from Bill Rose who indicated that some substantially different intentions motivated those who initiated the idea of a minor. The Senate has gone in different directions. Seely responded to him that the way to address his concerns was through the Academic Forum or other mechanisms that the provost routinely uses to secure input before he makes a final decision on the proposal. Rose never intended it as a universal proposal and no need for a home department was suggested.

**Memos received:** President Seely has received Senate Proposal 5-98, Master's Degree in Engineering, and has given it to the Curricular Policy Committee and Finance Committee for review. **[Appendices D and E]**

Vice Provost Sung Lee has responded to Seely's request asking what he has done in regard to the Senate's resolution last April on creating a Research Advisory Board. Lee reported that he has chosen to add three faculty members to the existing Research Advisory Council (deans and directors), one from the College of Engineering, one from Science and Arts, and one from Forestry. He has asked each dean to nominate three people from which he will choose one.

**Other communications:** Bresnan has not responded to Seely's request to discuss televising Senate meetings.

Seely had a telephone conversation with James Mitchell, Chair of the Board of Control. Mitchell accepted the suggestion that the Senate officers try and meet with him while he is on campus for Board meetings. This is already being done with the Student Government.

Seely will meet with Mitchell while he is in town next week to discuss University Senate Proposal 4-97, Recommendation to Change Administrative Procedures, concerning the language on the employment application. Mitchell hopes to resolve things by the May meeting; he has asked the administration to assemble information that supports a rationale for changing the wording.

Seely talked to the Provost regarding the Academic Calendar change. The first priority will be General Education, under the oversight of Vice Provost for Instruction Bowen. Each department has been asked to nominate individuals to a university committee; the Provost will select from the list. Those people will work through the summer and will receive compensation. There will also be representatives from appropriate Senate committees. The deadline for the general education proposal is August 1.

The budget process has been slowed down this year because of the NCA visit. The Provost will send out requests for initiatives and departmental budgets on 19 January. Deadline for submission of these requests is 20 February. The Senate will be kept informed of meetings and other matters in this effort.

**Other business:** Seely convened a meeting of the principals and Senate Finance Committee the last week of classes to discuss Senate Proposal 13-97, B.S. in Computer Engineering. The result was that EE withdrew the existing proposal and will press a search for a senior computer engineer to be on board by the end of this academic year. That person will then lead the efforts to draft a new proposal, which should come back to the Senate next fall.

The Senate officers and the two relevant committees (Finance and Curricular Policy) will work to develop a statement that describes what proposals for new programs should look like. Once we have our ideas, we will pass them on to the administration. The Board of Control has requested that all proposals be roughly uniform, so this should be a useful exercise.

Seely reported that he is serving on the graduate education and research Task Force. Senator Williams is also on that committee. They will deal with defining the sort of report that should go to the board. They will also discuss issues involving industry.

Seely repeated his request to the committee chairs to move on items before them; there are a number of items backing up. Unfortunately, they are clumped in only two committees: Curricular Policy and Academic Policy.

The Senate Executive Committee will meet with the NCA chair on Tuesday, 13 January, at 8:30 a.m.

Senator Walck reported that the 9-member NCA review team will arrive Sunday and remain through Wednesday. The team can do whatever they want to gather data, so they could show up in a class or in a faculty office. They will meet with a large number of university committees. Senators need to encourage faculty and staff to attend the open forum 1:30 to 2:30 on Tuesday. There will be a debriefing forum on Wednesday at 10:30 a.m. in Ballroom B; this is open to everyone.

The members of the various goal committees are invited to a reception at the President's house 6:30 p.m. Sunday evening to meet the review team.

Senator Leifer asked what the potential results of the NCA review would be. Senator Walck responded that hopefully we would be re-accredited and that in the process we have evaluated the strategic plan and process and made recommendations.

President Seely stated that there have been very positive comments from the NCA Committee on the report and that it may be used as a model for other schools to follow. He thanked Walck for her efforts in heading the NCA review on campus. The Senate applauded her efforts.

Seely distributed a copy of his charge to the Ad Hoc Committee on Separation, which is named as Appendix N in the Minutes of Meeting 284. It asks the committee to consider two different types of reconfiguration: one like the 1991 lay off of 50 individuals for financial reasons and one faced by other schools in which programs are closed, but not necessarily for financial reasons.

## 8. OLD BUSINESS

Seely briefly reviewed the history of the revision of the Academic Freedom Policy. The current revision dates back to Proposal 17-94, which was passed by the Senate 13 December 1994. The Board wanted students to be included in the academic freedom statement, so it was revised and came back to the Senate as Proposal 30-95. More revisions came to the Senate in December 1996 as Jim Gale worked with the Provost on the proposal. There were two issues of concern to the Senate: statements that describe what faculty can or can't say in class, and whether the statement should be linked to tenure.

The Provost and Senate were unable to agree, so the Provost is offering the AAUP statement to replace the Senate Proposal.

Senator Snyder asked if the statement would include the interpretive comments from 1940 and 1970, and that the statement would be unacceptable if they were not.

Provost Dobney responded that he would accept that the interpretive comments be referenced in the statement.

Senator Walck requested that the Senate be provided with a copy of the interpretive comments, which Seely agreed to do.

Snyder pointed out that the AAUP policy still had no statement regarding students. Dobney responded that the Board is different now and that we probably don't need that.

Senator Leifer asked if there were any more recent revisions/interpretations than 1970. Senator Flynn displayed a copy of the 1995 AAUP guidelines and stated that none were in there.

Senator Barna stated that four of his constituents had informed him that they supported using the AAUP statement.

Secretary Glime reminded the Senate that previously they had raised concern over the use of the term "officer" and the statement that faculty "should at all times be accurate;" she suggested changing it to "should at all times *strive to* be active."

Snyder pointed out that the accuracy concern was addressed adequately in the interpretive comments.

Senator Walck asked if we can refer to the AAUP statement, or would we incorporate it into our handbook. If it is incorporated, we should change the use of the word "officer." Dobney responded that his intent was to replace the current wording with that of the AAUP and refer to the interpretive comments.

President Seely will prepare a proposal and distribute the interpretive comments.

Senator Shapton asked if we are considering only the academic freedom part or also the tenure statement on the same page. Dobney clarified that the only consideration for change was academic freedom.

## 9. COMMITTEE/BUSINESS REPORTS

Fringe Benefits Committee: Leifer (Chemistry) reported on health care benefits and indicated that using the increased retirement benefits to cover health care premiums would be inadequate. He provided the Senate with a table [Appendix F] of accumulated units based on 1-25 years of accumulation and a spread of 1-10%. The formula used to calculate the table is

$$F = A((1+r)^n - 1)/r$$

where n=number of years, r=spread (difference in percent between what your investment earns and what the health care inflation costs are), A=annuitization, and F=a fixed number (the money you need), is commonly used for benefits tables such as these. The F number used by the Provost is \$30,000. The spread is the % earned over the cost of living increase.

Leifer claimed that the existing program will be insufficient for anyone earning less than \$130,000 a year. Leifer stated that we have three choices that will guide the activities of the Fringe Benefits Committee: accept the fringe benefit document as it stands, postpone retirement, or modify the document.

Soldan commented that at retirement you pay 100% of the health insurance premium. Therefore medical inflation rather than the spread is a problem. Pennington argued that the spread is the real problem.

Leifer explained that the fund is not building after retirement; it is using the percent. Senator Pennington reminded him that the principal would continue to accrue interest, however.

Dobney asked Leifer if the figures presented were based on the 1% matching given this year, and reminded him that in the following year there would be 2% matching.

Pennington reminded Leifer that these figures were based on 1% matching.

Senator Barna stated that when people retire, they are likely to move their money to something more conservative, so the spread changes. People may be unwilling to take the risk to retire. Therefore, the university will have an older population.

President Seely stated that the MTU move to make retirees pay their own health care benefits parallels the movement in industry. He added that Human Resources is concerned about what the university gets in return for payment to medical units. There are three charges by physicians. For example, they will charge for an office call based on the number of symptoms named by the patient, but if the doctor identifies additional symptoms, there is no additional charge.

Leifer stated that he will meet with Ingrid Cheney of Human Resources next week. He wanted to know what the Senate wanted the Fringe Benefits Committee to do next, reminding Senators that they would need to be earning at least \$130,000 to make it on the 1+1 system that is in place. He stated that there would be problems even if there is a 2+2 matching TIAA/CREF benefit.

Pennington complimented Leifer on the development of the table, stating that it would be helpful to people in understanding how much money they would need to have available. However, he warned Leifer that this was misleading and would destroy his credibility with even his supporters because the scenario presented is unlikely. We need to see a scenario that is more likely, like a 2+2 plan. The contribution needs to beat the medical inflation. If someone retires in the next 10 years, they will have problems. Even under the 2+2 plan there will be big problems if someone retires soon.

Dobney's figures [based on reports by Alexander & Alexander and Mike Hendricks] show a need for faculty to contribute \$217 per year less than would be true for Leifer's figures, based on the 2+2 contribution. With the 2+2 plan, the "break even" salary would be about \$60,000.

Pennington added that members of the Board seem to have forgotten that the 1+1 and 2+2 are a replacement for the health care plan faculty and staff had previously. Even the 2+2 plan seems to be somewhat shy of the amount needed to cover future health plan costs. The Board seemed to ignore the loss of a salary increment at the same time.

Dobney stated that the Board of control knows very well what they have done and that they intended to eliminate the health care benefits. The 1+1 and 2+2 plans were intended as a way to continue providing a means for faculty to obtain those benefits. He added that we need to use Leifer's figures to determine what is needed for people to be able to retire with adequate health care funds.

Leifer responded that we need to determine what size pot will be needed and how to get it and what size ramp we should use each year to achieve it.

Senator Suryanarayana stated that he is not sure that the Board wanted to eliminate the health care plan; they wanted to delay some of the things. Dobney responded that Suryanarayana should talk to some of the Board members if he wants to hear some of their true feelings.

Barna stated that the health plan will be harder on the ones who are retiring sooner. Fifteen years would be better than the 10-year phase out plan; people cannot respond fast enough to save sufficient money. It penalizes people at lower incomes; the benefit changed from being equal for everyone to benefitting those at highest salaries the most, and that's not fair. He suggested taking the same total cost and spreading it equally.

Senator Nordberg agreed with Barna. \$60,000 [the amount needed under the 2+2 plan to break even] is nowhere near the average salary of most people who need the coverage the most.

Dobney asked why the figures generated by Leifer were so different from those generated by Mike Hendricks and Alexander & Alexander. He could see Leifer's chart, but he couldn't be sure the figures were correct. Dobney asked why Leifer disagreed with the figures obtained

by the consultants. The Board stated that it could not afford to continue the program we had. Dobney also felt that other statements being made were not entirely true, such as the statement that people who retire soon would be penalized. For example, if Les Leifer retires in June 1999, with the 1+1 plan, he would get the same thing that he had two years ago, plus he would have 3% more than if he retired last year. Leifer agreed that was correct, but that that still would not make it.

Leifer continued that he agrees with Suryanarayana, that it was the Administration who wanted to discontinue the health care plan. He stated that on 17 July 1992 the Board adopted a 20% copay plan. In 1994-95, Dobney asked that prefunding be eliminated; the Board did not want to eliminate it. They requested that the university study the effects of health care costs and prefunding for a year and agreed to a moratorium on prefunding. The health care task force recommended continuation of the prefunding at a lower level. In May of 1997, the Board approved the current plan, recommended by Dobney. Leifer interpreted these events to mean the Board did not want to eliminate health care. If the Senate votes that what we have is fine, the Fringe Benefits Committee won't continue to explore options. If the Senate feels the present plan is inadequate, the Committee will continue to study the issue.

Senator Reed stated that national Medicare changes are expected and each change in our own plan seems to get worse. Therefore, let's leave the plan alone for a few years.

Barna stated again that this plan penalizes people at the lower income levels and therefore we need to find a better plan.

Nordberg stated that the Board is asking the University to become much better on one hand, but that they undervalue their employees on the other. They have removed retiree health benefits.

Senator Long stated that she is not happy with the policy as it is; members of the lower income groups would like the policy re-worked.

Barna stated that we suffered a pay cut by removal of health benefits; he wants the Board to say they have removed our benefits [instead of behaving as if they have not].

Dobney stated that the younger faculty should benefit the most. This plan provides portability, guaranteed insurability, and for them, a long accrual time.

Senator Chavis stated that older faculty/staff with low salaries won't profit from this plan. These people are made to look like they are not important human beings on the campus any longer.

Dobney stated that the cost of prefunding would be \$1.5 million from the budget per year and will go up.

Nordberg stated that all faculty and staff want is security in the future; that's not asking a lot.

Senator Shapton stated that the Board thought that the cost of health care would break the University, but they thought that faculty and staff could afford it! Why not take the 2+2 and put it in the pot and give everyone health care?

Senator Walck stated that we need a more equitable distribution of what we are getting.

Leifer asked for a vote by the Senate.

Seely asked who the Finance or Fringe Benefits Committee should discuss this with - one of the Board subcommittees? Dobney responded that the members of those committees are only on campus for the Board meetings; the next one on campus after the NCA review is in March.

Seely suggested that the Fringe Benefits Committee work with the Provost, Human Resources, and other appropriate persons to discuss possibilities. The officers will work with the Fringe Benefits Committee and others to explore options.

## **8. ADJOURNMENT**

Carstens MOVED and Joyce seconded the motion to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 7:35 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted by Janice M. Glime  
Secretary of the University Senate