

# The University Senate Of Michigan Technological University

## Minutes of Meeting 305 13 January 1999

Synopsis: The Senate

- (1) passed a motion to have 14 instructional weeks in the semester, making possible a 14-week summer term.
  - (2) opened discussion to restore the K-Day holiday.
  - (3) agreed to have the Task Force consider as guidelines the concerns raised by Senators regarding the configuration of the academic calendar.
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### 1. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

President Seely called University Senate Meeting 305 to order at 5:35 p.m. on Wednesday, 13 January 1999, in Room B45 EERC.

Secretary Glime called roll. Absent were at-large Senator Tom Drummer and representatives from Civil and Environmental Engineering, Institute of Wood Research, Mining Engineering, Institute of Materials Processing, Keweenaw Research Center, Auxiliary Enterprises, and Research and Graduate School/University Relations/Administrative Offices. Liaisons in attendance were Ted Soldan (Staff Council), Brett Hamlin (GSC), and Anthony Moretti (USG).

### 2. RECOGNITION OF VISITORS

Guests included Fred Dobney (Provost), Marcia Goodrich (*Tech Topics*), Bill Kennedy (Director, Center for Teaching, Learning, and Faculty Development), Stephen Bowen (Vice Provost for Instruction), Shalini Rudak (Educational Opportunity), Ellen Horsch (Human Resources), Sharron Paris (OSRR), and Students Ryan Kucera (*Lode*), Beth Kampschor (*Daily Mining Gazette*), Kevin J. Walker (Black Student Association), Jahmon Taylor (BSA), Carlithea Abram (BSA), Christian Woods (BSA), Cory R. Dowdle (IFC K-Day Rep.), Marc Plotkin (IFC), Rebecca Enz (USG), Nancy Voit (USG), Missy Benson (USG), John DeVol (USG), Megin Agostinelli (USG), Sarah Carley (USG), Clayton Webber (USG), Michelle Ensign (USG), Marcus Gioe (USG), and Meghan Davis (USG).

### 3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Snyder MOVED and Williams seconded the motion to approve the agenda as presented. 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. OPEN MOTION ON PROPOSAL 8-99, SEMESTER CALENDAR

President Seely clarified the role of the Senate in the calendar issue. The Senate Constitution gives the Senate areas of responsibility and authority and areas where they can only recommend. The academic calendar is an area in which the Senate has responsibility and authority. However, any proposal passed by the Senate must still be approved by the President and Board of Control. In other words, either the Senate or the President can veto a calendar proposal. On the other hand, the President cannot take an independent proposal to the Board of Control without the approval of the Senate.

Seely reviewed the calendar decisions the Senate made last week. These included having 5 days for exams and elimination of the half-day holidays for Good Friday and for K-Day, with K-Day being put on Labor Day. The meeting closed with an open motion to have a 14-week semester.

Senator Chavis stated that she did not hear any mention of the Martin Luther King Day holiday. Seely responded that we could deal with that issue later, but that the current motion concerned the length of the semester.

Senator Barna stated that his constituents were divided about evenly on the issue of 14-week terms. Most schools on semesters seem to have started on 15 weeks and changed to 14.

Senator Tampas stated that there were 30 weeks when we had 15-week terms and that figure converts to 2 15-week terms. If the summer is added to this, there are more weeks available for instruction under this calendar.

Senator Suryanarayana stated that more of his constituents favored the 14-week term, but those objecting stated that the number of credits required had already been reduced from 132 to 128. If we change to 14 weeks, the graduation requirement is further reduced. On the other hand, the 14-week term would permit a full semester in the summer.

Senator Snyder stated that his department had no strong feelings regarding the 14-week term; the 14 weeks would permit students from other departments to make up credits lost during a co-op.

Senator Blanning stated that the University of Nebraska has 16-week semesters plus finals. The change to 14 weeks would favor few students at the expense of many students.

Suryanarayana stated that quarters are more easily made up; students would be more likely to go to summer school under semesters.

Senator Carr stated that most of his constituents don't want to lose instructional days. Some are strongly opposed to violating the boundary conditions. They have opposed only a 2-week break at Christmas.

Seely stated that the calendar had to be compressed to accommodate a full term in the summer. As one semester ends we would immediately start the next. There would be only one week between terms. The summer term would be 14 consecutive weeks with no breaks. The breathless pace of the term would be enhanced by reducing the term to 14 weeks.

Provost Dobney stated that a traditional trimester system was not part of the faculty vote and is not an option. The trimester system implies that faculty can teach any two out of the three terms, and he will not approve that. We are instead considering two semesters plus a summer term.

Senator Gale stated that the faculty also did not vote on the boundary conditions. He did not think the conversion to semesters would have passed if the boundary conditions had been included in the proposal for faculty vote.

John DeVol (USG) read from a report dated June 1997. It stated that the faculty were trusted to do what was best for the education of the students. The report had been accepted by the Board of Control and included the boundary conditions. Drafting of that report had included input from faculty as well as other groups on campus. Subsequently, the calendar committee gave considerable discussion and consideration in drafting the best calendar they could to conform to those boundary conditions.

Seely presented the boundary conditions that had been approved by the Board of Control. These conditions included a requirement of 128 credits for graduation and maintenance of the traditional holidays of K-day, Homecoming, and Winter Carnival.

Marcus Gioe (USG) stated that losing one week each term would mean that students would be less prepared when they graduate. Regarding K-day, one RA told him that K-Day provides the best opportunity for residents to get to know each other.

Clayton Webber (USG) stated that students need a break from classes. He quoted Steve Tyrell as saying that he has lots of documentation on the importance of these breaks.

Senator Nordberg stated that the new calendar needed to be designed around the best pedagogical choices.

Barna stated that the current proposal regards a 14-week semester. It was an advisory body to the Senate that constructed the boundary conditions. We have never had a committee be binding on the Senate, and the Senate

did not vote on the boundary conditions.

Seely stated that Barna was correct that the Senate had never voted on the boundary conditions. The calendar committee had presented at least four possible calendar scenarios to the Senate. During these presentations, the Senators had always raised questions. Furthermore, the Senate had understood that the issue would come back after the committee's position on the calendar became clearer. It would be irresponsible for the Senate to throw out the recommendation of the calendar committee in a cavalier fashion. On the other hand, the Senate should consider the educational ramifications of the calendar before giving their approval.

Senator Shapton stated that the 14-week term is an issue of whether there should be an equal summer session. Under semesters, courses may be offered only fall or spring, making it difficult for students to make up courses missed during a co-op experience or for other reasons. We are constrained by a year with 52 weeks, diminished by holidays that reduce the available weeks for instruction and exams to 45 weeks. The boundary conditions never were presented to preclude a full summer term.

DeVol responded that the boundary conditions had been promised to the students by the Administration and the Board of Control. There will be huge ramifications if the students are upset. If this affects the way students choose a university, we could slip to a totally mediocre university. The semester calendar would probably mean there would not be a full summer term.

Cory Dowdle (IFC K-Day Rep.) stated that he came to MTU because of the "trimester" (apparently meaning 3 quarters), but now we are getting rid of that.

Bowen (Vice Provost for Instruction) asked why students needed to earn 16 credits in the summer and not 12 or some lesser number.

Shapton stated that co-op students would suffer if there is no opportunity to make up lost courses in the summer.

Snyder stated that other universities have two 7-week double speed terms in the summer.

Dobney asked how many faculty would be willing to teach for the full summer term. No one responded.

Blanning stated that 98 of the 98 students he polled said they would never take a full summer of courses.

Seely stated that most students must work in the summer. He asked about the economic implications of developing a full-length summer program.

Shapton stated that students do not plan to come in the summer. They usually get backed into it because they are unable to complete courses at the normal time.

Megin Agostinelli (USG) stated that a full summer term would be good, but if not everyone is willing to teach then, we still can't offer a full curriculum. It would penalize students in the normal year by cutting the instructional period.

Suryanarayana stated that it would be good to offer required courses in the summer. These could be offered in two 7-week terms. This would provide a larger pool of possibilities. It is hard to find faculty to teach in the summer and only a fraction of the academic year courses would be taught.

Kennedy (Director, Center for Teaching, Learning, and Faculty Development) stated that there doesn't seem to be a huge number of students here in the summer. Refinement of the calendar should be an ongoing process. Clipping two weeks off instruction each year amounts to 10 weeks lost during the five years that most students are here.

Senator Hackney stated that several faculty in his department thought that the vote for semesters was a vote for 15-week terms.

Tampas asked, somewhat facetiously, if a student were to transfer from a school with only 14 weeks in the term to one with 15 weeks, should that student get less credit for each transfer course? He stated that with our location and weather we should be able to attract faculty and students for summer school on a national scale.

Dobney asked why it is so important to have 14 weeks in the summer. Most schools he is familiar with have only six; they adjust the number of hours of instruction per week accordingly.

Senator Williams stated that forcing two courses into one day in chemistry is very difficult.

Gioe stated that it is possible to do. Physical chemistry is currently taught in triple time; a one-year course is taught in 10 weeks. The academic calendar shouldn't be predicated on the summer calendar.

Snyder stated that if we have 15 weeks of classes, we have to be here before Labor Day. Therefore, students would lose more summer employment in both fall and spring.

Senator Gale stated that the proposed calendar is almost like our present quarter-system winter term. Some schools have classes on Labor Day.

Barna stated that with the 15-week fall term there is no potential for a fall term graduation ceremony.

Seely responded that we can't start earlier and have three equal terms.

Pennington stated that K-Day, Labor Day, and homecoming interrupt three instructional weeks in a row. We need to have these affect only one or two weeks.

Nordberg stated that we had discussed the work advantage or an early end date before making the decision to move to semesters; 15-week semesters are longer so they pose a disadvantage for work.

DeVol stated that the committee had discussed these issues for hours.

Blanning stated that information is increasing exponentially and it seems contrary to that trend to shorten the academic year.

Rebecca Enz (USG) stated that the boundary conditions had been used to sway both faculty and students to support the change to semesters.

Snyder stated that the discussion did not relate to how much we want to teach; faculty are not trying to reduce their teaching loads. The discussion relates to what benefits the students the most. The students never voted to change to semesters and the decisions are not their prerogative.

Nordberg stated that the 4-week term is a good opportunity to try new things and he suggested that we could return later to look at a change to a 14-week term.

Pennington stated that the Senate has the purview to present a calendar. The Administration has set the boundaries. If the Senate has an overwhelming reason for making a change, they should make the change, but he hasn't heard one. If we decide to have a 14-week calendar, we should take it back to the faculty. Holidays are disruptive. Homecoming could start a little later, perhaps 3 PM. We could accommodate Martin Luther King Day by coming back to school earlier.

Senator Sutter asked if we can't agree now, how could we agree in two years.

D. Reed called for the question and requested a secret ballot.

The motion to have 14 instructional weeks in the semester PASSED on secret ballot with 16 yes votes and 9 negative votes.

Barna MOVED and Carr seconded the motion to restore K-Day and Good Friday [half-day] holidays.

Snyder stated that we should decide on the starting date before deciding on holidays.

Seely presented the calendar showing 14-week terms starting before and after Labor Day.

Marc Plotkin (IFC) stated that K-Day is very important to the students. Students are made aware of clubs. Freshmen will have a harder time making the transition without this opportunity.

Brett Hamlin (GSC) asked if it wouldn't be better to have an entire day for K-Day [such as having K-Day on Labor Day].

Plotkin responded it wouldn't get the publicity if it occurred on Labor Day.

Dobney added that if there is bad weather on Labor Day you are sunk. We are not a religious institution, so it is strange to observe Good Friday.

D. Reed suggested that we table the motion on restoring holidays until we settle the starting date.

Barna withdrew the motion on holidays.

Blanning suggested that if we are removing religious holidays, then why not also eliminate the celebration of Christmas.

Suryanarayana suggested that we should think of it as a semester break instead of a Christmas break.

Barna MOVED and Williams seconded the motion to start the semester the week before Labor Day. The motion was modified to consider that defeat of the motion would mean we would start after Labor Day.

Gioe stated that the Senators had argued that they were opposed to starting before Labor Day as support for the 14-week term. Now they are trying to re-instate that early starting date. He reported that in the 24 hours since he put out a question to the students by email he had gotten 1412 responses. Of these 1238 had responded that the Senate is violating the boundary conditions on holidays and length of term.

Nordberg stated that it would be easier to accommodate fall commencement and Martin Luther King Day.

Shapton stated that if we start before Labor Day we will be starting earlier than other students but we can end earlier.

Seely stated that the proposed calendar is the same as that of the University of Michigan.

Senator Long stated that it creates problems for laboratories when a term starts in midweek.

Hamlin (GSC) stated that it is much easier to change over labs (prep) on the weekend instead of midweek.

Gioe stated that starting on Monday is also important for students, especially freshmen and sophomores, because of needing a ride from parents. An extra week of vacation at the beginning and end of summer is not an issue for jobs. Students get their jobs much earlier in the year and starting date is not important.

Barna stated that the motion is for the start of the fall term. Does that mean that the start of the spring term is automatically set?

Seely explained that it is set because of the amount of time needed for the summer term. An earlier fall start date means the spring has to end earlier.

Snyder pointed out that the 14-week calendar has 71 days for spring and only 68 for fall.

D. Reed stated that we could start winter term midweek or the second week of January.

Dobney stated that he favored beginning the spring term on the first Monday after 1 January except when that day falls on 2 January.

Bowen stated that we could structure the calendar to start all terms on a Monday and end exams on a Thursday or Friday so the syllabus would always work the same.

Seely stated that having 14 weeks after Labor Day is like the University of Michigan calendar.

A student pointed out the importance of the longer week-end [Labor Day] for students and parents to travel here and for students to get settled in their new quarters.

DeVol stated that students need time to move into their rooms.

Nordberg stated that if students are graduating fall term they will need time to pack to move before Christmas.

Secretary Glime questioned what would happen when Labor Day fell on 7 September.

Gioe stated that the Senate opened a can of worms when they decided on the 14-week term. Trying to make all their decisions in two weeks is foolhardy after the committee spent a year to work out the calendar. He urged the Senate to reconsider their decision.

Carr stated that if classes start before Labor Day it will cause Thanksgiving break to be the 13th week in at least some years.

DeVol stated that he agrees with Bowen; we can anchor the calendar on Monday and Friday beginning and ending days and revolve the calendar around Christmas [semester break].

Dobney stated that he agreed with Glime that we need to be concerned about the years that Labor Day falls on 7 September because we would be giving exams on Christmas Day.

Snyder stated that Labor Day will disrupt the calendar either way.

Nordberg reminded the Senate that the original proposal stated that exams would end between 15 and 22 December; this restriction could be applied to determine the starting date of the term.

Pennington stated that the proposal implies that sometimes classes would start before and sometimes after Labor Day.

Gale called for the question.

Barna stated that he was willing to withdraw his motion and fall back to the original wording of the proposal.

Shapton MOVED and Gale seconded the motion to restore K-Day. Nordberg asked if K-Day could be extended to a full day.

Snyder stated that it makes a difference which day of the week is specified for K-Day. Friday is the least disruptive.

Dobney suggested eliminating the Labor Day holiday.

DeVol stated that Labor Day is a chance for families to get together for the last holiday of the summer.

D. Reed asked where homecoming would fall in this calendar.

Glime asked why K-Day needed to be so early in the term. The break would be needed more later in the term. It is very disruptive to have it the second week of classes because freshmen, in particular, miss labs and lose their opportunity to get acquainted with classmates and form groups.

Dowdle (IFC) stated that we could plan for K-Day on a Friday of the third or fourth week of classes.

DeVol stated that it needs to be a Tuesday or Thursday. If it is held on Friday, many freshmen and sophomores wouldn't go because they go home on the weekend.

Pennington suggested that it would help if K-Day could be the same week as homecoming so that all the disruptions would be in the same week.

Snyder agreed with that suggestion.

DeVol argued that there could be snow the week of homecoming because it sometimes comes late. [Homecoming is dependent on the athletic schedule and must be negotiated with other schools.]

Seely stated that a piecemeal approach is not likely to help us come up with the best calendar.

Bowen stated that we probably can make a good calendar of 14 weeks but that it abandons the process that led to the calendar. He suggested that the Senate provide guidelines.

Seely and Senators summarized the concerns that the Senators had expressed regarding the calendar:

1. negative impact of half-day dismissal on multisection labs
2. Labor Day
3. 14-week semesters with a 14-week summer session
4. fall term commencement
5. MLK Day
6. availability of more instructional days in the calendar year
7. effect on tuition if only 14 weeks of classes
8. effect of disrupting each of weeks 2, 3, and 4.

## **5. ADJOURNMENT**

Sloan MOVED and Rypma seconded the motion to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m. with an open motion to restore the K-Day holiday.

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