

# The University Senate Of Michigan Technological University

## Minutes of Meeting 310 24 March 1999

Synopsis: The Senate

- (1) Heard that the Administration and Board have approved Proposal 9-98, MS in Environmental Engineering Science.
  - (2) Heard that the Administration has approved and begun to implement Proposal 7-99, The Faculty Distinguished Service Award.
  - (3) Heard resignations from Senators Shapton, Suryanarayana, and Pickens in response to the Board's decision not to approve the 14-week semester.
  - (4) Approved Proposal 18-99, Amendment to Academic Distinction Policy, to raise honors distinctions to 3.50 to 3.69 for *cum laude*, 3.70 to 3.89 for *magna cum laude*, and 3.90 or higher for *summa cum laude*.
  - (5) Approved Proposal 21-99, Policy on Religious Observances.
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### 1. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

President Seely called University Senate Meeting 310 to order at 5:30 p.m. on Wednesday, 24 March 1999, in Room B45 EERC.

Secretary Glime called roll. Absent were at-large Senator David Reed, and representatives from Army/Air Force ROTC, Education, Humanities, Institute of Materials Processing, Keweenaw Research Center, Auxiliary Enterprises, Enrollment Management, and Research & Graduate Studies/Univ. Relations/Administrative Offices. Liaisons in attendance were Ted Soldan (Staff Council) and Anthony Moretti (USG).

### 2. RECOGNITION OF VISITORS

Guests included Fred Dobney (Provost), Shalini Rudak (Educational Opportunity), and Marcia Goodrich (*Tech Topics*).

### 3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Nordberg MOVED and Rypma 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. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM MEETING 309

Senator Barna requested clarification of the statement attributed to him on page 7906 "that the Finance Committee has estimated that the University could absorb half the costs of this [Environmental Science Engineering] program." This refers to the fact that the courses in the program are currently undersubscribed and that half the number of estimated new students would be absorbed by these "vacant seats."

Senator Sloan questioned the statement on page 7906 attributed to Provost Dobney "that the 600 students lost are the difference needed to make a balanced budget." She understood him to refer to the computer science program, not electrical engineering. This point will be clarified.

Ouellette MOVED and Shapton seconded the motion to approve the minutes of Meeting 309 as amended. The motion PASSED on voice vote with no dissent.

## **5. REPORT FROM SENATE PRESIDENT**

President Seely reported that three proposals had been forwarded to the Administration for approval: Proposal 9-98, MS in Environmental Engineering Science; Proposal 14-99, Proposal to Institute Double Majors; Proposal 1-97, Policy on Threatening or Violent Behavior. **[Appendices B-D]**

The Administration gave an immediate approval of Proposal 9-98, M. S. in Environmental Engineering Science, and the Board approved it at their 19 March meeting. The proposal will now go to the State Board of Academic Officers for approval. **[Appendix E]**

The Administration has approved Proposal 7-99, The Faculty Distinguished Service Award, and has requested the Senate to get a committee set up so that the first award can be made at the fall 1999 convocation. **[Appendix F]** This committee requires two members chosen by the Senate, two faculty members elected by the faculty, and one person selected by the Provost. The committee will identify the basic procedures and select the recipient. Procedures already in place for selection of research and teaching awards can provide a framework for the procedures. Senators should solicit nominees.

Seely stated that in discussions with Debbie Lassila he has learned that there is a lot of budget uncertainty. The spring quarter enrollment is higher than had been anticipated, causing a shortfall that is \$200,000 less than expected.

The Senate officers met with Board Chair Jim Mitchell on 19 March prior to the meeting of the Board of Control. They discussed the calendar and learned that the Board would approve the 15-week calendar, not the 14-week calendar supported by the Senate and the faculty referendum. The primary reason given by Mitchell was that the Board had decided contrary to the students both on changing to semesters and on raising tuition and they didn't want to give them a third no. Furthermore, Board members Marty Lagina and Ken Rowe had promised the students that the semester calendar would observe the boundary conditions laid out by the students. They felt that they had a responsibility to maintain that promise.

In his report to the Board, Seely stated that the calendar issues are part of a larger picture. The University HAS to revamp its programs and the faculty have that responsibility. The calendar is part of the recommendations the faculty are crafting to revamp the academic program.

Seely reported that Board member Ruth Reck was the only Board member to vote in favor of the 14-week calendar, stating that the Board should take the advice of the faculty.

The Board also considered that the calendar proposal includes a mandate to review the program after one year so they preferred to keep their promise to the students and see how it works.

Senator Blanning asked if the Good Friday holiday is in or out. Seely responded that the Good Friday holiday was not in either calendar. The Board had not raised any questions on that issue.

Senator Suryanarayana asked if the Board knew that the students refused to hold a referendum. Seely responded that he had discussed that in his letter to the Board and in the discussion held between the Board chair Jim Mitchell and the officers. In his letter he laid out the reasons USG gave for not holding the referendum.

Senator Barna asked if the Board understood that the Senate believed that the majority of the students wanted a 14-week calendar. He was disappointed that the Board chose to override the faculty and Senate without that information.

Seely responded that Board Chair Jim Mitchell had stated that a student referendum would not have swayed him.

Barna countered that the argument that the Board decision is a response to the students is really spurious.

## **6. NEW BUSINESS**

### **A. Proposal 22-99, Marginal Cost/Revenue Information for Undergraduate and Graduate Programs [Appendix G]**

The proposal was introduced.

### **B. Proposal 23-99, Implementation of the Co-pay Increase for Retiree Health Benefits [Appendix H]**

The proposal was introduced. Seely stated that the Fringe Benefits Committee had requested that this be considered as an emergency proposal.

Senator Leifer presented the history of the proposal, which arose in response to Provost Dobney's budget presentation. Funding for implementation of Proposal 9-99 was not in that budget. The issue arose one and a half years ago when it became clear that the change to eliminate the university's share in paying retiree health premiums and to implement a 2+2 TIAA/CREF retirement plan would create a financial burden for most employees except those earning at least \$130,000 per year. The Fringe Benefits Committee felt that we need a program that links the increment in copay to the implementation of 9-99.

Leifer presented a scenario that assumed 10 retirees and that they are 65 years or older. This would cost a couple \$2500 per year in premiums at full copay. Under the current 20% they would pay only \$500. If retirement begins between 1 July 1999 and 30 June 2000 then at 30% copay they would have a premium of \$750. This means that MTU would get the difference between \$500 and \$750, or \$250. Therefore, all MTU would get is a total of \$2500 for the estimated 10 couples.

Barna MOVED and Suryanarayana seconded the motion to treat this as an emergency proposal.

Senator Ouellette asked why it was necessary to treat this as an emergency proposal.

Leifer responded that people need time to plan to retire and that the department needs time to hire replacements.

Senator Watwood stated that we are beating a dead horse.

Seely asked Barna if the cost impact estimated by the Fringe Benefits Committee seemed right.

Provost Dobney asked Leifer about the anticipated implementation; would the postponement of the ramp in copay continue in the following years after implementation?

Leifer responded that if there is an infusion payment in 1999-2000 the copay would be 30%; if there is no infusion, the copay would be 20%.

Senator Pickens stated that the example given of 10 retirees in the next year seemed like a low estimate.

Dobney stated that if the ramp is pushed by one year, then there is a 10% impact every year until the 100% copay is reached, i.e., for about 8 years.

Pickens asked if there was any discussion of funding for the infusion by the Board of Control.

Seely responded that the Board had discussed some possibilities for funding the proposal. In addition, Debbie Lassila had indicated that they (Provost's office) will continue pursuing a means to fund this program.

While the secret ballot on the emergency proposal was being counted, Senator Shapton asked to present his personal response to the Board's action on the calendar. When he had chaired the Senate several times under an earlier constitution (before the shared governance constitution), the Administration had made it clear that they didn't care what the Senate decided. Now we have a constitution that defines our governance system as shared governance. He is disappointed that some Administrators did not support the Senate. This represents a weakening of the Senate status. Therefore, he will resign, effective at the end of tonight's meeting.

Senator Pickens followed Shapton by stating that he has likewise told his constituents that he would resign his Senate position effective for the next academic year.

Senator Suryanarayana stated that he had made a similar decision and asked President Seely to read the letter of resignation that he had submitted to Seely earlier. In his letter, Suryanarayana expressed dismay at the recommendation of the Administration and the subsequent action of the Board regarding the calendar. The academic calendar is a faculty issue, but the Board gave greater weight to the USG. Senate membership is no longer meaningful. His decision is not a reflection on the actions taken by the Senate. He is resigning from the Senate effective 25 March.

Seely announced that the motion to treat Proposal 23-99 as an emergency proposal FAILED by secret ballot, 17:12. Therefore, action on this proposal must be postponed until the second meeting after this one.

## **7. OLD BUSINESS**

### **A. Proposal 13-99, Amendment to Grading System Policy [See minutes, page 7880, for a copy of this proposal.]**

The proposal was presented by Senator Drummer.

Sweany MOVED and Sloan seconded the motion to accept Proposal 13-99.

Senator Tampas asked who decides which courses are eligible to have the Q grade. Drummer responded that it is the department.

Glime MOVED and Tampas seconded the motion to strike the words "with programmed instruction" from the proposal so that it could apply to courses in other departments.

The motion to amend PASSED on voice vote with no dissension.

President Seely ruled that this change was not an editorial change.

Snyder MOVED and Richter seconded the motion to table action on Proposal 13-99 until two meetings later [to fulfill the 10-day requirement before a vote can be taken on a new proposal or amendment].

The motion to table PASSED on voice vote with no opposition.

### **B. Proposal 18-99, Amendment to Academic Distinction Policy [See minutes, page 7899, for a copy of this proposal.]**

The proposal was presented by Senator Drummer. The present levels result in 50% of the students graduating with distinction. The present scale is 3.0-3.49 *cum laude*, 3.50-3.74 *magna cum laude*, and 3.75 and above *summa cum laude*. The proposal is to raise these to 3.50 to 3.69 for *cum laude*, 3.70 to 3.89 for *magna cum laude*, and 3.90 or higher for *summa cum laude*. These standards would result in about 25% of the students being distinguished by these honors.

Drummer stated that the committee had considered using a percentage instead of fixed categories. However, last-minute grade changes could affect many people who did not have grade changes; furthermore, students would face a moving target in trying to achieve the honors status.

Sloan MOVED and Pickens seconded the motion to accept Proposal 18-99.

Senator Gale asked why the dividing line is not listed as <3.7 instead of 3.69. Drummer responded that the university rounds all GPA's to two decimal places, making these discrete figures.

Senators asked when the change would take effect. Dobney responded that the catalog is considered a contract, so that it could not take effect until students entered the university under a new catalog.

Senator Drummer added that the committee had anticipated that the first cohort of students to be affected would be those entering in fall of 2000 when we change to semesters and a new catalog is in effect.

Senator Tampas asked why we needed to change; if students work hard, they should be recognized.

Secretary Glime responded that there had been grade inflation nationwide and that Michigan Tech had not yet changed its distinction standards in response to those changes.

Moretti (USG) stated that students seem to agree that too many students are given degrees with distinction. They did not like the idea of using a percentage.

The motion to approve Proposal 18-99 PASSED on voice vote with no opposition.

### **C. Proposal 19-99, Extension of Insurance Benefits to All Employees [Appendix I]**

The proposal was presented by Senator Leifer.

Article 3.6 of the Board of Control Policy Manual affords special health care benefits to the President and all the people who report to that person. These people can go any place they want to go and get health care paid for. On the other hand, some employees have had problems going outside the area to a non-PPO provider. All employees should have the same access to care. If health problems are let go too long, they can incur more medical costs.

Barna MOVED and Richter seconded the motion to approve Proposal 19-99.

President Seely asked if the differences in health care access still exist since the University has changed to BCBS as their provider. The policy has not been amended since 1990; Wausau did have limitations on out-of-town use of medical facilities that no longer exist with BCBS.

Seely read an email message from Ingrid Cheney (Assistant Director for Benefits and Wellness) that indicated that when the policy was instituted the university did not have a wellness program; with the BCBS program, a person can go anywhere in the country.

Ellen Horsch (Director, Human Resources) had also indicated that there were problems with implementing the proposal for ALL employees, as stated in the proposal, due to Union contracts.

Leifer stated that the intent of the proposal is to cover the professional staff and faculty, not the unionized staff.

Seely added that Mayo Clinic is now covered in the BCBS PPO plan, but that it was not in the Wausau plan. The statement of who is covered by the proposal [i.e., non-union professional staff and faculty] should be made clear.

Vice President Soldan opposed the proposal, stating that it could work against faculty and staff if the Administration, who could easily afford coverage, were to relinquish any part of their coverage.

Provost Dobney responded, stating that he would gladly give up his physical examination; he had gotten one only because he thought it was required.

Senator Barna stated that there seem to be other unpublicized benefits to certain employees (such as administrators); for a period of time the University had paid into individual retirement the excess over the maximum allowed to social security. Since this benefits the highest paid employees, it benefitted the administrators. In addition to the health care equity, this proposal should also cover retirement; what faculty and staff get should be the same as what the Administration gets.

Leifer stated that Dobney claims costs are higher if we go away from the Houghton area for health care, but he (Leifer) feels that this assumption is not true. Furthermore, Dobney should be ashamed of what he said that was quoted in the *Mining Gazette*.

Dobney responded that he meant everything that was printed.

Leifer continued that Dobney had attributed part of our financial problems to the rising costs of health care. However, 125 new employees had been added, so that accounts for the cost increase.

Dobney countered that the cost went up \$1.6 million over a \$6 million base and that was more than the increase that would result from the increase in number of employees.

Senator Snyder argued that this proposal doesn't extend the benefits because now most of these are covered under the BCBS provider.

Senator Long asked if the Administrative benefits cover life insurance and extended medical care.

Provost Dobney stated that the long-term care is the same for both and that he gets \$250,000 in life insurance; i.e., coverage for these is the same as for faculty.

Senator Watwood stated that it is crazy to get into these kinds of arguments; where does it end? The Administration also gets higher salaries.

Leifer countered that higher salaries also result in higher benefits.

Watwood stated that if we think our benefits are inadequate, we should argue for an increase. It is foolish to argue just because someone else gets more.

Seely asked Leifer what direction they have for the officers to argue to the Administration and Board.

Leifer asked why go for a physical?

Seely asked if the Fringe Benefits Committee is arguing to remove Article 3.6 from the Board of Control Policy Manual.

Leifer stated that employees need permission from a local PPO to go outside for health care.

Seely responded that this was no longer the case, provided the outside health care was provided by someone in the BCBS PPO program.

Leifer countered that all employees should be able to go to the same physicians as the administrators can choose.

Senator Suryanarayana stated that coverage should be independent of the provider.

Senator Nordberg stated that we need to ask the Board to remove Article 3.6.

Leifer stated that the committee is seeking equal KINDS of benefits, not equal dollars in benefits.

Snyder MOVED to table Proposal 19-99. There were numerous seconds to the motion.

Suryanarayana proposed a friendly amendment to the motion to table to state that it is tabled until the Fringe Benefits Committee revises the proposal. Snyder did not accept this friendly amendment.

The motion to table PASSED on voice vote with one opposing vote.

**D. Proposal 21-99, Policy on Religious Observances [See minutes, page 7919, for a copy of this proposal.]**

Haapala MOVED and Sweany seconded the motion to approve Proposal 21-99.

Senator Watwood asked what would happen if a student has a religion that he/she can't take a test on Friday, 26 March.

Seely responded that we need to work out those details in the procedure.

Senator Snyder stated that we could make a procedure that a student must identify expected religious holiday absences to the faculty on the first week of classes.

Seely stated that a student could petition a specific group/committee if a holiday is not on an approved list.

Senator Long stated that she would like to reinstate the half day holiday for Good Friday for staff who will lose it. The professional staff are losing four hours of paid holiday.

Seely responded by stating that the professional staff will keep the same holidays they have now; they will only lose it if they are teaching during the time that would have been a holiday.

Dobney added that professional staff are not docked for missing hours as long as they get their job done.

Senator Gale requested that reference to chairs/directors be changed to chairs/directors/deans to accommodate the schools. Seely agreed that this would be an editorial change.

Senator Drummer stated that he was concerned that this would mean more work for faculty.

Senator Pickens stated that he is concerned with the "reasonable limit" for the number of days someone could be excused.

Seely responded that MSU reports no substantial problems of abuse.

Senator Suryanarayana stated that it is possible to negotiate with USG, Senate, and the Unions to list the partial holidays and produce an official list.

The motion to approve Proposal 21-99 PASSED on voice vote with some opposition.

Provost Dobney expressed his surprise that some of the Senators are resigning because of the decision on the 14- vs. 15-week semesters. The mind set existed because of conditions set by the task force and the Senate should not have been surprised. Shared governance has not been perfect, but he hopes it will mature. President Tompkins feels that the secret ballot is not appropriate; his statement regarding the secret ballot vote was not meant as an attack on the Senate.

Senator Pickens stated that oversight of the educational programs is the most fundamental responsibility of the faculty. It became clear with this action that decisions were predetermined; if the Senate makes the "wrong choice" on other issues, their voice will again be ignored.

Senator Blanning asked if the staff vote was considered. If their vote is not important, we shouldn't have asked them to vote.

Pickens responded that the premise of adding the professional staff in the Constitution is that the staff would not decide academic issues.

Senator Nordberg stated that until one and a half years ago the Senate assumed they had control of calendar issues. However, the CICC took over that control.

Seely responded that during presentations on the calendar to the Senate the Senate understood that it still had that control. The Senate had consistently discussed having the same number of instructional days. Seely had originally argued for 14-week semesters, but had been convinced by Senate discussions that the Senate wanted 15 weeks, so he had withdrawn his support of the 14-week calendar in CICC discussions.

Nordberg stated that during the CICC presentations to the Senate Senator Suryanarayana had asked to see the calendars.

Seely added that Suryanarayana had also spoken in favor of the same number of instructional days as in the present calendar. Seely expressed extreme sorrow that senators felt they needed to resign. He felt this would have been a different issue if there had been a larger majority. Instead the issue was close. He told the Board that he did not believe this was a substantial loss of shared governance. A major problem had been the lack of widespread student input.

Barna stated that he understands that the Board has the ultimate authority. However, he disagrees with their stated reason. If they want to support the students, they can get the opinion of the students. He is not ready to say that it was close. The Board has violated the basic rights of the faculty. If an ad hoc committee is going to run around the Senate, then the Senate becomes ineffectual.

Senator Suryanarayana had specifically asked during CICC presentations if the presentations were for information or if the calendar will be as presented. He was told it was for information. In its decision, the Board was primarily concerned with the integrity of some of its members.

## **8. ADJOURNMENT**

Watwood MOVED to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 7:33 p.m.

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