

# The University Senate Of Michigan Technological University

## Minutes of Meeting 354

29 August 2001

### Synopsis: The Senate

- (1) approved meeting dates for the academic year.
  - (2) heard that Proposals 11-01, 17-01, 18-01, 19-01, 20-01, 21-01, and 22-01 were transmitted to the administration for approval.
  - (3) heard that President Tompkins approved Proposal 15-01.
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### 1. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

President Bob Keen called University Senate Meeting 354 to order at 5:35 p.m. on Wednesday, 29 August 2001, in Room B45 EERC.

Secretary Craig Waddell called roll. Absent were At-large Senators Tony Rogers and Dieter Adolphs and representatives from Biological Sciences, School of Business and Economics, Electrical and Computer Engineering, Mining and Materials Processing Engineering, Keweenaw Research Center, Auxiliary Enterprises, Research and Graduate School/University Relations/Administrative Offices, and Student Affairs and Educational Opportunity. Liaisons in attendance were Anup Bandivadekar (GSC), Dennis Taylor Jr. (USG), and Becky Christianson (Staff Council).

### 2. RECOGNITION OF VISITORS

Visitors included Kent Wray (Provost), Mike Morley (Corporate Services), Sam Coates (School of Technology), and Marcia Goodrich (*Tech Topics*).

### 3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA<

Keen presented the agenda and asked for amendments. There were no amendments or objections to the agenda as presented. [**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 MEETINGS 349, 350, 351, 352, and 353

Keen presented the minutes from meeting 349 and asked for corrections or additions. There were none, and the minutes were declared approved.

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## **5. 2001-2002 MEETING DATES [Appendix B]**

Keen presented a list of proposed meeting dates for the academic year and asked for objections. There were none. He then asked for a formal motion to approve the dates. Williams MOVED and Ftaclas seconded the motion to approve the 2001-2002 meeting dates as presented. Motion PASSED with no dissent.

## **6. PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

Proposals 11-01, Amendment to Requirements for Graduation; 17-01, Search Procedure for University President; 18-01, Search Procedure for University Administrators, 19-01, Search Procedure for College Deans; 20-01, Department of Biomedical Engineering; 21-01, Framework for Professional Master of Science Degrees: An Interdepartmental Professional Master of Science Degree with Specific Areas of Concentration; and 22-01, Alteration of Proposal 9-01, Amendments to Interim Conflict of Interest Procedures, were sent to the administration for approval. [Appendices C-I]

Proposal 15-01, Ph.D. Program in Engineering Physics, was approved by President Tompkins. [Appendix J] Keen noted that he had previously reported (at the May 14 meeting) that Proposals 11-01, 20-01, and 21-01 were also approved by Tompkins.

Keen reported that he met during the summer with Vice Provost Janners regarding improvements in the Academic Integrity policy. The Instructional Policy Committee will review the matter.

Keen met with Registrar Sharron Paris regarding late course adds. Current practice violates Board of Control policy. The Instructional Policy Committee will review the matter and make recommendations. The Finance Committee will review the recommendations prior to review by the senate.

Keen reported that he completed an AAUP/ACAD survey about university and faculty governance.

A new policy proposed by the administration regarding research faculty will be circulated to the senate for review. The policy should be implemented on October 1.

President Tompkins will meet informally with the senate on Thursday, October 25, in the Red Metal Room from 3-5 p.m.

Keen presented a table comparing enrollment figures from last year and this year. The table indicated a total enrollment of 5897 students last year and a total enrollment of 5704 students this year. Keen said that distance learning enrollments--which are not included in these totals--are up over the past year.

Keen reported that the Vice President for Research Search Committee will have four candidates on campus in the next few weeks.

Keen asked the senate to seek nominees for various University committees.

## **7. COMMITTEE BUSINESS/REPORTS**

### **A. Senate committee assignments**

Keen presented a preliminary list of senate committee assignments. Senators and alternates have an opportunity to request changes in assignments. The final list will be approved at the September 12 meeting.

A Senate Computing Committee will be proposed as an amendment to the senate bylaws prior to the next meeting. The proposed committee was requested by the University Computer Advisory Committee.

### **B. Executive Committee**

Keen reported that the committee met in June and appointed Larry Davis as an interim senate representative to the MTEPS ("Smart Zone") board.

The senate is seeking a slate of faculty nominees to present to President Tompkins. Tompkins will appoint a permanent replacement for Davis.

### **C. Board of Control Relations Committee**

Keen reported that this committee did not meet this summer, but that, as chair of the committee, he attended a board meeting and reported on the results of the senate's faculty-staff survey on MTEPS. Board members appeared to concur with the survey results.

### **D. Benefits Liaison Group**

Keen said that the BLG met several times over the summer. He asked Senator Jim Pickens to give a brief report.

Pickens indicated that he, Keen, and [Senate Fringe Benefits Committee Chair] Tony Rogers served on the BLG last year. The principal objective of the BLG last year was to cut fringe-benefit costs associated with MTU's financial problems. Their recommendations will be on the agenda for the next senate meeting. The BLG met 5-6 times through the winter, spring, and summer.

As part of this effort, the BLG met with a health-delivery consultant 2-3 times over the summer. Their fees thus far have been covered by Blue Cross, Blue Shield. They have also met with representatives of Blue Cross, Blue Shield. Last week the BLG briefed President Tompkins and the vice presidents on their proposed revisions to the benefits package; they have not yet received a response to this briefing. Pending approval from the upper administration, Assistant Director for Benefits Ingrid Cheney will present BLG proposals at the next senate meeting.

Senator Don Beck asked whether faculty and staff had any input into the development of the BLG's proposals.

Pickens indicated that financial decisions--such as benefits--are the prerogatives of the administration, not of the senate and that senators were given the option of having a seat at the table only under condition of keeping BLG deliberations confidential.

Keen said that senators who serve on the BLG do not really represent the faculty; they serve as advisors and do the best they can. They could walk away from the table.

Beck said that senators serving on the BLG should have a better sense of what their constituents want, for example, by means of a faculty-staff survey.

Pickens said that there are really only two components to the fringe benefits package: retirement contributions and medical benefits. Collectively, these account for well over 90 percent of all benefits. Neither is a popular candidate for cuts.

Beck recommended a faculty-staff survey be conducted prior to the next round of BLG benefit-reduction discussions so that participants in these discussions would have this information before requirements of confidentiality were invoked.

Keen supported this suggestion and proposed referring it to the Fringe Benefits Committee.

Pickens said that the BLG has tried to expand the choices that employees have so that they will be better able to tailor a benefits package to their particular situations.

Senator Bruce Barna said that one way the senate could have input into the actions of the BLG would be through the selection of the representation on the committee. He asked Keen to explain how senate representation on the BLG is determined.

Keen said that he believes that senate representation on the BLG began with a discussion between former Senate President Bruce Seely and Director of Human Resources Ellen Horsch, who asked for input.

Senators on the BLG serve at the invitation of Horsch; it is not a representative committee.

Barna said that maybe it ought to be a representative committee.

Keen said that the senate could make that recommendation.

Beck said that the senate should not allow someone else to select its representatives on this committee.

Keen said that the senate could walk away from the table.

Beck said that the senate did not have to walk away, but it should demand to select its own representatives.

Senator Carl Vilmann asked whether Keen is expected to represent the senate on the BLG or only himself.

Keen said that he offers his best advice based on what he thinks the faculty would like.

Vilmann said that the senators who serve on the BLG represent themselves, not the senate; hence, the senate has no representation on the BLG.

Keen said that he was selected to serve on the committee, presumably, by a process analogous to that used by a reporter seeking public responses.

Pickens said that he was invited to serve on the BLG not because of his position as secretary of the senate but because he wrote a memo critical of a fringe-benefit-cost-recovery proposal.

Senator Christ Ftaclas said that people would accept cuts more readily if they participated in determining what these cuts would be; hence, at some point in the process, the discussion should be open. He said that once a representative takes a vow of silence, something fundamental has changed in the representative process. There are many such situations, and they should be more clearly defined and, wherever possible, made more open.

Senator Carol MacLennan said that the senate is struggling with a consultative process. The BLG has become something other than a true consultative process. We need a more open, representative means of making such important decisions. We need to be careful of creating the appearance of faculty input where there has been none.

Barna said that if Keen is not representing the senate, he should not serve on such a committee because everyone perceives that he is representing the senate.

Keen said that he was invited to serve on the BLG because of his position as president of the senate. He offers as best as he can the opinion that he believes the senate would want him to offer, but he is bound by the BLG's rule of confidentiality. He will resign from the BLG if that is the wish of the senate. Keen made an analogy between confidentiality on tenure committees and confidentiality on the BLG.

Barna asked Keen to clarify whether he represented himself or the Senate on the BLG.

Keen said that he represents his understanding of what the senate wants. It has never been made clear whether the senate president is automatically appointed to the BLG.

Barna said that that needs to be clarified because people will assume that the senate is represented.

Senator John Williams said that the problem is not whether or not the senate president represents the senate; the problem is the requirement of confidentiality, which is incompatible with the president's role as a representative of the faculty and staff. It is not analogous with the situation on a tenure committee

because on a tenure committee, one offers advice regarding a single person; whereas members of the BLG offer advice regarding all MTU employees. There are sound reasons for keeping the particulars of one individual's tenure case confidential, but there are not sound reasons for keeping the future of everyone's benefits packages confidential.

Keen asked whether--by this reasoning--Tony Rogers, the chair of the senate's Fringe Benefits Committee, should report to the BLG everything that is discussed in that committee.

Williams said that he should.

Ftaclas agreed with Williams's characterization of the tenure analogy. The role of confidentiality in the tenure process is to protect the rights of someone. In the case of the BLG, no one's rights are being protected.

Senator Sharon Haapala said that people accept change much more readily when they have participated. Her constituents want to participate.

Senator Bill Gregg asked why the Senate Fringe Benefits Committee doesn't provide the input that the administration needs, and why is there a confidentiality issue if what the administration wants is input from the senate and doesn't necessarily have to report back to the senate on their deliberations.

Keen said that this is the result of a long history of the relationship between the administration and the Fringe Benefits Committee. The administration found many of the recommendations of that committee unacceptable. The current chair of the Fringe Benefits Committee does serve on the BLG. The senate could recommend that senators on the BLG resign from the group, but this would leave the senate with no representation.

Ftaclas said that there is a conflict between the requirement of confidentiality and the members of the BLG representing the senate. He suggested accepting the requirement of confidentiality under the condition that when a conflict arises, senators who serve on the BLG represent the senate. The requirement of confidentiality is a symptom of paternalism. Faculty and staff should be treated as mature adults.

Keen said that that's been part of the problem. From the administration's point of view, some members of the Fringe Benefits Committee haven't always acted like mature adults.

Ftaclas said that the university is composed, by and large, of mature adults who can be constructively involved in an open deliberation about benefits.

Gregg said that administrators should value feedback--such as surveys--from faculty and staff regardless of the history of the Fringe Benefits Committee.

Keen said that this would be an appropriate task for the senate's Fringe Benefit Committee. Historically, the committee has focused on retirement benefits without ever surveying faculty and staff to find out if this is what the senate constituents want the committee to focus on.

Williams asked whether Provost Kent Wray would comment on the reasons for BLG confidentiality.

Provost Wray said that changes in benefits packages also affect healthcare providers. Since Michigan Tech is the largest employer in the area, the university strives to avoid creating alarm in the regional healthcare community by keeping preliminary discussions about proposed changes confidential.

Pickens said that the first public forum on the proposed changes will be at the next senate meeting.

Keen said that the local hospitals didn't consult with Michigan Tech about a 7 percent increase in their rates; they just did it. There is a bounty given to MTU employees who discover hospital mistakes that

cost MTU money. When this program was announced, the Human Resources office was criticized by some local healthcare providers for building distrust in the healthcare system. Yet a \$10,000 mistake was discovered within days of the establishment of this program.

Senator Steve Seidel said that this was an argument against confidentiality because openness benefited everyone, and the reaction of healthcare providers was misplaced.

Keen agreed.

Williams said that it might be beneficial to know the reactions of healthcare providers to various options under discussion.

Pickens said that there was much less input in 1991; the circle of participants is now broader, and some of the inequities that occurred in 1991 are being avoided. Each unit has submitted 5 percent reductions for this year and next year--this is traditionally all done behind a curtain.

MacLennan said this was not the case in her department--reduction options are constantly discussed.

Williams asked Pickens if he meant that because other people keep things secret, we should.

Pickens said that the point is that the alternative to accepting a mechanism that the administration is comfortable with is for the administration to make the decisions without any faculty-staff input.

Williams said that the alternative is not to have secrecy.

Vilman said that the senate should go on record that it is not represented on the BLG and that senators who serve on the BLG serve at will.

Barna said that in this case, the senate president would have to ask the senate for permission to serve on the committee.

Vilman disagreed and said that everything the senate president does doesn't have to represent the senate.

Barna said that it gives the appearance of representing the senate.

Vilman said that's why the senate should go on the record indicating that this is not the case.

Keen said that the senate would continue this discussion at a later date.

## **8. ADJOURNMENT**

Ftaclas MOVED and Pollins seconded the motion to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 6:43 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Craig Waddell  
Secretary of the University Senate