

THE UNIVERSITY SENATE OF MICHIGAN TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY

Minutes of Meeting 378

4 December 2002

Synopsis: The Senate

1. heard a report from the Task Force on the 14-Week Calendar.
2. elected Peg Gale to the Presidential Commission for Diversity.
3. elected Faith Morrison to the Academic Integrity Committee.
4. elected Tim Scarlett and Jerry Taylor to the Distance Learning Implementation Committee.
5. approved Proposal 6-03, 2003-2004 Academic Calendar.
6. approved Proposal 7-03, Amendment of Proposal 24-02, Scholastic Standards Revisions and of Proposal 25-02, Prerequisite Policy.

President Bob Keen called University Senate Meeting 378 to order at 5:35 p.m. on Wednesday, 4 December 2002, in Room B45 EERC.

1. ROLL CALL OF SENATORS

Secretary Craig Waddell called roll. Absent were At-large Senator Strong and representatives from Army/Air Force ROTC, Electrical and Computer Engineering, Materials Science and Engineering, Mechanical Engineering-Engineering Mechanics, Physics, Social Sciences, Keweenaw Research Center, Academic Services-Engineering, and Finance and Advancement. Liaisons in attendance were Karl Haapala (GSC), Ike Micheau (USG), and Becky Christianson (Staff Council).

2. RECOGNITION OF VISITORS

Visitors included Terry Monson (Task Force on the 14-Week Calendar), Kent Wray (Provost), and Marcia Goodrich (*Tech Topics*).

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Keen presented the agenda for meeting 378 and asked for amendments. There were none. There were no 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 376 AND 377

Keen presented the minutes from meeting 376 and asked for corrections or amendments. There were none. Keen declared the minutes approved.

Keen presented the minutes from meeting 377 and asked for corrections or amendments. Waddell noted some formatting errors on page 9954. There were no further corrections and no objections to the minutes as corrected. Keen declared the minutes approved as corrected.

5. PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Keen said that the Search Committee for Vice Provost for Student Affairs and Dean of Students will meet at 5 p.m. on Wednesday, December 11, in the Dow Building to review the job description. Keen said that some students had requested that additional students be included on this committee; Provost Wray decided that there were already enough students on the committee.

Keen said that from the list of nominees forwarded by the senate (Bill Campbell, Terry Monson, and Linda Ott) President Tompkins had selected Terry Monson (SBE) as the faculty

representative to the Michigan Tech Enterprise SmartZone Board. Keen said that Monson would occasionally report to the senate on the activities of the MTEPS Board.

Keen said that in the faculty-wide election, Marty Jurgensen had been elected to the Faculty Review [grievance] Committee.

Senator Dave Hand has informed Keen that the practice of awarding "season days" (extra days off) will be reviewed by the Institutional Planning Committee rather than by the Research Policy Committee.

Senate Policy 4-00 on half-semester courses will expire soon. Some departments have requested half-semester courses for the 2003-2004 academic year. Keen said that he would consult with the authors of 4-00 to determine whether this policy was intended to prohibit half-semester courses after the 2002-2003 academic year.

Keen said that Michigan Tech's Benefits Liaison Group is featured in the December 6, 2002, *Chronicle of Higher Education* article "6 Creative Ways Colleges are Cutting Costs" (pp. A27-A28).

The senate still needs faculty nominees for the Tenure Committee and the Faculty Distinguished Service Award Committee.

6. COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. Task Force on the 14-Week Calendar

Task Force Reporter Terry Monson said that the task force met regularly throughout the fall 2002 semester and had finalized its recommendations. He said that the task force had considered the following seven concerns in its deliberations:

1. The desire for a full summer semester consisting of 14 weeks.
2. The need for sufficient time between fall semester finals and Christmas to process student grades.
3. The need for one week between spring and summer semesters and one week between summer and fall semesters to prepare residence halls for occupancy.
4. The need for one week prior to fall classes for student orientation [after residence halls for occupancy].
5. The need for longer break (4 weeks) between fall and spring semesters in order to prepare grant proposals.
6. The desire to retain a week-long Thanksgiving break and a week-long spring break.
7. General dissatisfaction with the timing of fall-semester graduation.

The task force concluded that there are insufficient weeks in a year to satisfy all these concerns:

Three 14-week semesters = 42 weeks

Two 1 week final exam periods = 2 weeks

Spring break = 1 week

Thanksgiving break = 1 week

Spring-summer residence

halls maintenance = 1 week

Summer-fall residence

halls maintenance = 1 week

Fall Orientation = 1 week

Fall-spring Break = 4 weeks

Total = 53 weeks

Hence, the task force proposes the following:

Fall Semester

- In most years, begins the Tuesday after Labor Day.
- Shorter Thanksgiving break (Wednesday through Sunday)
- Ends on a Tuesday in early December with 1.4-2.4 weeks of instruction after Thanksgiving.
- Reading Day (to prepare for final exams) is the Wednesday following end of instruction.
- Final Exams split over two weeks: Thursday through Friday and Monday through Wednesday.
- Commencement to be held on the Saturday after the first two Final Exam days.
- A 26-day break between the last day of fall semester Final Exams and the first day of spring semester.

Spring Semester

- Begins mid-January.
- Spring Break after the 8th week of the semester.
- Ends on a Friday in late April.
- Final Exams the following week.
- Commencement on Saturday after Finals.
- 10-day break between the last day of spring semester Final Exams and the first day of summer semester.

Summer Semester

- Two 7-week sessions or one 14-week session.
- Ends mid-to-late August.

- Usually a two-week break between the end of summer semester and the beginning of fall semester.

USG Liaison Ike Micheau asked why the task force had proposed shortening Thanksgiving break rather than Christmas break.

Monson said that researchers needed more time over the Christmas break to work on research and grant proposals.

Senator Bruce Barna said that a four-week break also allowed time for staff in the Office of Student Records and Registration to both have a Christmas vacation and process grades.

Senator Dickie Selfe asked if the task force had considered the awkwardness of having only one week of instruction after Thanksgiving break.

Monson said that there would be about two weeks of instruction after Thanksgiving break.

Selfe said that the proposal indicated that there would be 1.4-2.4 weeks of instruction after Thanksgiving.

Monson said that this depended on which week in November Thanksgiving fell. He said that the fall semester had the most constraints and, hence, was the most difficult to schedule.

Selfe asked if fall classes would always start after Labor Day.

Monson said that if Labor Day falls on September 6 or 7, fall classes will start the week before Labor Day. This means that fall classes would start before Labor Day in only two of the next 10 years.

Barna said that the task force also considered a pre-Labor Day start with a full week of break at Thanksgiving. However, this would have interfered with a full, 14-week summer semester and would not have allowed time for maintenance and first-year orientation.

Monson said that this still would have led to a short period of instruction after Thanksgiving break.

Barna said that the seven concerns that Monson had described did not allow much flexibility; they pretty much defined the shape of the calendar.

Senator Dana Johnson said that students often don't attend classes for the few days prior to Thanksgiving break. She said that she hoped that this would be taken into consideration when the calendar is evaluated in two years.

Monson said that he has found that students often fail to attend classes for the week before Thanksgiving break. He said that under the quarter system, Michigan Tech had a short Thanksgiving break, and many students left campus before the break officially began. He said that this would probably also happen with the proposed calendar. Monson said that students had indicated that they would prefer a week-long spring break rather than a shorter Thanksgiving break.

Senator Dick Prince asked why the final-exam period was spread across two weeks.

Monson said that this was to ensure an adequate number of instructional days in the fall semester.

Senator Deb Bruch said that this was also to provide a weekend study break between final exams.

USG Liaison Ike Micheau asked if K-Day and Winter Carnival would be held at their traditional times.

Monson said that K-Day would be held on the Friday after Labor Day and that in most years, Winter Carnival would be held three-and-a-half weeks after the beginning of spring semester. He said that the task force had tried to avoid a conflicts between Winter Carnival and Presidents' Day because both weekends are busy weekends for local merchants.

Senator Bill Gregg said that during the 1999-2000 academic year, the Christmas break was extended from three weeks to four weeks in order to allow time for addressing any problems that might arise with the Year-2000 computer bug. He asked if the faculty has been polled on the question of whether or not to return to a three-week Christmas break.

Keen said that having an extended winter break was high on the list of researchers' desires.

Gregg asked where this information came from.

Monson said that he wasn't sure where it came from.

Senator Cindy Selfe said that this preference would certainly be held by faculty who had to travel to distant collections to do their research.

Senator Jim Pickens said that he had polled his constituents (School of Forest Resources and Environmental Science) on this question and received mixed responses. He said that he would also like to know what students would like; some students he has talked with have indicated that they would prefer getting into the job market a week earlier over having an extra week of Christmas vacation.

USG Liaison Ike Micheau said that he personally would rather have the extra week in the summer since it is difficult to get a job over the four-week Christmas break.

Senator Judy Fyneweever said that when the extended Christmas break was discussed in 1999, she had understood that the calendar would revert to the three-week break the following year.

Bruch said that the student representative on the task force believed that student opinions were mixed on this question.

Monson said that with the proposed 14-week calendar, students would get out of classes a week earlier in the spring.

Gregg said that the senate had been presented with good reasons for and against an extra week of Christmas break, but we were still left with the question of what faculty and students really want. He suggested continuing with the proposed calendar and polling the faculty at a later date.

Bruch said that if the longer Christmas break was essential to research faculty, yet the decision as to whether or not to retain this longer break was made (or influenced) by majority vote, part of our faculty could lose an essential resource just for the convenience of the majority.

C. Selfe suggested that the senators poll their departments on this question.

Barna said that there was a strong preference in his department (Chemical Engineering) for the longer Christmas break, which allows more time for research and grant writing.

Keen said that the Task Force on the 14-Week Calendar was reporting in response to their charge to examine Proposal 11-99 and decide whether or not it needed to be amended. The proposal presented by the task force constitutes the amendment. This is being reported by the task force to the senate at this time as a proposal that will be before the senate and available for a vote at the next meeting. Keen said that senators should consult with their constituents and decide whether or not they will support this calendar. If the senate does not support this calendar, it will return to the task force, hopefully with some direction from the people who voted against it. Whatever is approved by the senate will be submitted as a referendum to the faculty at large so that the senate will have clear support in presenting the proposal to the Board of Control.

D. Selfe said that he had thought that the senate was trying to develop a 14-week schedule so that the debate could then be joined as to whether the faculty preferred a 14-week or a 15-week semester.

Keen said that this was not the charge delivered to the task force. He said that a debate on this question could be added to the senate's agenda, but that the faculty had already voted 3-to1 in favor of a 14-week semester.

Gregg suggested that the issue of a shorter Christmas break be addressed next year.

Keen said that that would be possible. He said that the last line in the task force's proposal directs the senate to review the calendar after two years.

Monson said that the proposed calendar would not become effective until the fall of 2004.

Three were no further comments. Keen thanked Monson.

B. Elections Committee

Keen said that the senate must elect a faculty representative from the School of Forest Resources and Environmental Science to serve on the Presidential Commission for Diversity. Keen said that Peg Gale had accepted a nomination to this position. He opened the floor for additional nominees. There were none. There were no objections to closing nominations.

Gale was elected by acclamation.

Keen said that the senate must elect a faculty member to serve on the Academic Integrity Committee. Keen said that Kathy Halvorsen and Faith Morrison had accepted nomination to this position. He opened the floor for additional nominations. There were none. There were no objections to closing nominations.

Faith Morrison was elected to the Academic Integrity Committee.

Keen said that the senate must elect two faculty members to serve on the Distance Learning Implementation Committee. Keen presented the following list of nominees: Gerry Caneba, Tim Scarlett, and Jerry Taylor. Keen opened the floor for additional nominations. There were none. There were no objections to closing nominations.

Scarlett and Taylor were elected to the Distance Learning Implementation Committee in a tie vote. Senator Erik Nordberg MOVED and C. Selfe seconded the motion to ask Scarlett and Taylor to decide by the flip of a coin which would serve for one year and which would serve for three years on this committee. The motion PASSED on a voice vote without objection.

7. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Proposal 6-03, 2003-2004 Academic Calendar [See minutes, page 9902, for a copy of this

proposal.]

Senator Cindy Selfe MOVED and Senator Dennis Lewandowski seconded the motion to approve Proposal 6-03.

Keen said that this was essentially a pro forma approval of a calendar that has already been heavily scheduled.

There was no discussion.

The motion to approve PASSED on a voice vote without objection.

8. NEW BUSINESS

Proposal 7-03, Amendment of Proposal 24-02, Scholastic Standards Revisions and of Proposal 25-02, Prerequisite Policy [Appendix B]

Keen asked Senator Bill Yarroch, chair of the Instructional Policy Committee, to comment on the proposal.

Yarroch said that the proposed amendments were among the last items of senate business last spring. He said that the proposed amendment of Proposal 24-02 was policy that would be included in the student handbook and the MTU course catalog, and the proposed amendment of Proposal 25-02 was administrative policy that paralleled the proposed amendment of Proposal 24-02.

Yarroch said that the proposals were originally intended to facilitate the retention of students. Toward this end, a series of changes were requested. Controversy this summer and fall led to a moratorium being placed on the statement about departments requiring a C or better in prerequisite courses ["Departments may also require C or better grades in some prerequisite courses. Students should check both the course number and the required grade to determine if they are qualified to move to the next course"]. This statement was not a mandate to departments to make that change; it was a statement in the student handbook and catalog to indicate to students that departments might require this, and it is consistent with statements have been in the catalog for years. This issue is before the senate now not necessarily to remove this statement but to discuss it.

Senator Bill Gregg MOVED and Senator Debra Bruch seconded the motion to approve Proposal 7-03.

USG Liaison Ike Micheau asked if this proposal would prohibit a department from requiring a C or better in a prerequisite course.

Yarroch said that he believed that nothing would prevent a department from setting such a standard. The proposed amendment would simply remove the statement from the student handbook and MTU catalog.

Senator Steve Seidel asked if a department could require a grade of A in a prerequisite course.

Yarroch said that he had found nothing that would prohibit this.

Gregg said that the MTU catalog has long said that an F is not a passing grade, and D, CD, and C are passing grades. The word *passing* means that you can continue on to the next course. Saying that a C or better is required in a prerequisite course reverses that: it defines D and CD as not passing.

C. Selfe said that *passing* might mean that a student had successfully completed the minimum requirements of a course without at the same time meaning that the student is adequately

prepared to go on to a more advanced course in the same area.

Senator Judy Fynewever said that in discussing this question last spring, the committee had felt that prerequisites should require a C or better only when mastery of the prerequisite was conceptually essential to success in the next course. Hence, for example, departments should not expect students in Perspective on Inquiry to get a C or better before going on to take World Cultures.

Senator Bahne Cornilsen said that he believed that if a course is taken Pass-Fail, the general criterion for a pass is a C or better.

Gregg said that the catalog doesn't specify this. Hence, a D or a CD could be a passing grade in a course taken Pass/Fail.

[Note: After the meeting, Gregg reported that although no mention of grading restrictions is made in the paragraph regarding the policy on Pass-Fail Option (MTU Catalog, page 128), the Grading System definitions do state "a grade of E is given for work equal to a letter grade of CD-F."]

Yarroch said that the university does not accept for transfer-credit courses in which students received a D.

Gregg asked if the university should have a policy specifically restricting C-or-better grade requirements to specific course sequences in order to prevent this policy from being applied to any courses and used as a tool of enrollment management.

C. Selfe said that the university already has such a policy, which allows academic departments to set their own academic standards by, for example, requiring a minimum GPA in the major and a minimum GPA overall.

Gregg said that this policy doesn't apply to individual courses.

Senator Scott Pollins said that enrollment in specific courses could already be restricted by permission of instructor or by permission of the department.

Fynewever said that the committee did not want to restrict the departments freedom to control academic quality.

Gregg asked if anyone saw any problems with requiring a C as a prerequisite.

Fynewever said that the committee thought that such a policy could be advantageous to departments in which degree programs were growing.

Seidel asked if any departments require a prerequisite course to be completed with a grade better than C.

Senator Dieter Adolphs said that C is not a passing grade for graduate students.

Yarroch said that this proposal does not apply to graduate students.

Seidel asked again if any departments require a prerequisite course to be completed with a grade better than C.

Pollins said that he didn't believe that the Banner system's prerequisite-checking capacity would allow for such detailed analysis.

Seidel said that such decisions should not be constrained by Banner.

Gregg asked why the senate was discussing this if there are no serious objections to requiring C as a prerequisite.

Yarroch said that this policy could exclude a large number of students from some programs.

Keen said that some departments had proposed requiring a grade of C or better in all prerequisite courses in their departments. This was seen by some as an enrollment-control strategy.

USG Liaison Ike Micheau asked if it wouldn't be a good idea to raise academic standards.

Gregg said that some students who get a CD in a prerequisite go on to get a B in the next course in the sequence. He said that the original intent of requiring a C or better in a prerequisite course was to improve student performance in the next course and, thereby, improve student retention. However, another intent has now surfaced, that being enrollment control. He asked if the senate wanted this policy to be used for enrollment control.

Bruch said that the proposal says that students "should" repeat prerequisites in which they received less than a C; it doesn't say that they must repeat such courses.

Keen said that the proposal says that departments "may require" the course to be repeated. Keen said that the problem arose when some departments proposed applying this policy across the board rather than considering its appropriateness on a case-by-case basis.

C. Selfe said that this should be left to the discretion of the individual departments, some of which are over enrolled.

Senator Dana Johnson said that the committee had been concerned that more and more departments would move from occasionally requiring a C or better to unvaryingly requiring a C or better, which would be a misinterpretation of the intent of this amendment; hence, the committee considered removing these sentences.

C. Selfe asked if removing these sentences from the student handbook and MTU catalog would prevent departments from requiring a C or better in prerequisite courses.

Keen said that it would not, but that it would eliminate the power of suggestion.

Senator Tony Rogers said that the prerequisite section of the proposal indicates that grades of D and CD should be repeated. He asked if this was a recommendation or a requirement.

Yarrow said that this was only a recommendation and that it has been in MTU's catalogs for years.

Keen said that this statement warns students that they may have difficulty attempting a higher-level course if they've received only a D or a CD in a prerequisite to that course.

Gregg said that he would prefer to see departments manage enrollment by considering the overall GPA or the departmental GPA rather than by considering grades in individual courses. He said that the C-or-better policy makes sense for closely related sequences, such as Calculus I and Calculus II, but not for less closely related sequences.

Senator Bruce Barna said that by definition a prerequisite is closely related to the next course in a sequence.

Gregg said that this is not true in all cases.

Cornilsen said that removing this sentence would not prevent departments from requiring a C or better in prerequisite courses. He asked if "should" meant "must"?

Keen said that it did not.

Gregg asked if the senate should add a statement indicating that the intention of this policy is to improve student performance in the next course, not to manage enrollment.

Keen said that the controversy began in part with a review of several departments that were instituting the C-or-better policy as a requirement. The review found that the net result would be approximately 1500 students repeating courses. Thus, department X could control course loads in the Department of Mathematical Sciences by requiring its own majors to retake math courses in which they received less than a C.

Johnson said that this would place a heavy burden on departments that already have full class sections.

USG Liaison Ike Micheau said that this policy would both raise academic standards and increase the university's income.

D. Selfe said that it wouldn't and increase the university's income if students left the university because of it.

Cornilsen said that faculty in his department (Chemistry) believed that a C or better was required in a prerequisite course.

Johnson said that students who continue to earn CDs and Ds will not remain at Michigan Tech in any case. Hence, it's better to give students the benefit of the doubt in any given course and let them go on to take the advanced course. They still have to complete all of the degree requirements. If the university required all students to retake prerequisites in which they've received less than a C, there won't be enough openings for new students. She supported the idea of leaving the decisions up to the departments but removing this sentence from the student handbook and MTU catalog in order to reduce the likelihood of misinterpretation and misapplication of the policy.

Cornilsen asked if any departments currently require all students to retake prerequisites in which they have received less than a C.

Keen said that some departments have proposed doing this.

Rogers said that the Banner system would not be able to enforce such a policy.

Keen said that Provost Wray had put a moratorium on departments being able to require all students to retake prerequisites in which they have received less than a C. The proposal currently before the senate would institutionalize that moratorium until the negative impacts of such a policy can be better understood and addressed.

Yarroch repeated that the statement that has been proposed to be deleted is simply information to students. It does not affect the ability of departments to require students to retake prerequisites in which they have received less than a C.

Keen said that until they saw Proposals 24-02 and 25-02, many departments had not realized that they could do this.

Gregg said that the senate still needs to determine what Michigan Tech's policy on retaking prerequisite courses is and what it should be. Whatever the senate decides, the departments will still be able to require students to retake prerequisites in which they have received less than a C.

Graduate Student Council Liaison Karl Haapala said that rather than deleting the third and fourth sentences in the PREREQUISITES section of Proposal 7-03, it might be preferable to delete sentences two and three. This would require students to check on any prerequisite-grade restrictions.

Seidel said that regardless of how the senate votes, 1500 students will still be required to retake prerequisites in which they have received less than a C.

Keen said that this would not be the case because the provost has denied the departments' requests to institute this policy.

Seidel asked if the senate's Instructional Policy Committee should consider the question of what "passing" means.

Keen said that this task could be assigned to the Instructional Policy Committee.

D. Selfe asked if this would take control of policy on minimum prerequisite grades out of the hands of the departments.

Keen said that that would depend on how the proposal was written.

Gregg said that this decision goes beyond simply what text will appear in the MTU catalog and in the student handbook. Whatever the senate passes becomes university policy once it is approved by the administration.

Nordberg asked what Proposal 24-02 was amending, policy or only the text that appears in the MTU catalog and the student handbook.

Yarroch said that Proposal 24-02 was amending the text that appears in the MTU catalog and the student handbook. Proposal 25-02, however, was completely new policy. The university previously had no policy whatsoever on how to manage prerequisites.

Discussion ended. The motion to approve Proposal 7-03 PASSED on a voice vote by academic departments with dissent.

9. ADJOURNMENT

Senator Dana Johnson MOVED and Senator Bruch seconded the motion to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 6:54 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Craig Waddell
Secretary of the University Senate