

# THE UNIVERSITY SENATE OF MICHIGAN TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY

## Minutes of Meeting 379

15 January 2003

### **Synopsis:** The Senate

1. heard an update from Mary Durfee on the NCA Interim Accreditation Report.
2. approved Proposal 8-03, 14-Week Calendar.

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President Bob Keen called University Senate Meeting 379 to order at 5:35 p.m. on Wednesday, 15 January 2003, in Room B45 EERC.

### **1. ROLL CALL OF SENATORS**

Secretary Craig Waddell called roll. Absent were At-large Senator Beck and representatives from Army/Air Force ROTC, Electrical and Computer Engineering, Keweenaw Research Center, and Enrollment Management/OSRR. Liaisons in attendance were Karl Haapala (GSC), Ike Micheau (USG), and Becky Christianson (Staff Council).

### **2. RECOGNITION OF VISITORS**

Visitors included Kent Wray (Provost), Mary Durfee (Special Assistant to the Provost, Kevin Merzlak (*Michigan Tech LODE*), and Marcia Goodrich (*Tech Topics*).

### **3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Keen presented the agenda for meeting 379 and said that item 6.B. Elections Committee would be struck because there were no elections. He asked for additional amendments. There were none. There were no objections to the agenda as amended. [**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 378**

Keen presented the minutes from meeting 378 and asked for corrections or amendments. Senator Bill Gregg noted that a correction to his statement about pass-fail policy has already been inserted into the minutes on page 9978, column B. There were no corrections or amendments. Keen declared the minutes approved.

### **5. PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

Keen said that the senate had forwarded to the administration for approval Proposal 6-03, 2003-2004 Academic Calendar, and Proposal 7-03, Amendment of Proposal 24-02, Scholastic Standards Revisions and of Proposal 25-02, Prerequisite Policy. [**Appendices B and C**]

The administration has notified the senate that the Board of Control has approved Proposal 3-03, BS Degree in Computer Network and System Administration and Proposal 4-03, BS Degree in Computer Systems Science (effective fall 2003). [**Appendix D**]

Keen convened the Task Force on Career Opportunities for Professional Staff and delivered their charge. Within the next few months, the Senate should receive several proposals from this task force.

The Conflict of Interest Procedures are under review by Affirmative Action Officer Sherry Kauppi; these procedures will subsequently be reviewed by the university's attorney and then will be returned to the senate.

Provost Wray is reviewing the Tenure, Promotion, and Reappointment procedures. The university's attorney will also review the procedures before they are returned to the Senate.

Keen said that within the next week, he would establish and deliver the charge to the Ad Hoc Committee on Intellectual Property. He thanked Pauline Moore and Carol MacLennan for their work in establishing this committee.

## **6. COMMITTEE REPORTS**

### **A. North Central Association (NCA) Progress Report on General Education at Michigan Tech; Presented by Mary Durfee, Special Assistant to the Provost for General Education and Assessment**

Durfee said that the 1997 NCA Team Visit Report identified several strengths of Michigan Tech's General Education Program prior to the 2000-2001 transition from quarters to semester: MTU students scored better on quantitative and writing standardized tests than all other comparable universities. However, this report also identified several weaknesses in Michigan Tech's former General Education Program: the program lacked coherence, had an inadequate assessment process, and was poorly defined in various university publications.

Durfee said that those working on Michigan Tech's General Education Program hoped that the program would be enhanced through the conversion to semesters; that the new program would take advantage of and enhance Michigan Tech's strengths in interdisciplinary teaching, learning, and research; and that there would be broad participation in creating the new program.

Durfee said that the new program provides coherence through four core courses: UN1001 Perspectives on Inquiry, UN1002 World Cultures, UN2001 Revisions, and UN2002 Institutions. The program includes five distribution lists connected to World Cultures and Institutions; this should reduce the likelihood of waivers, many of which were required under the old program with the less-coherent thematic-clusters concept.

Durfee said that the new General Education Program has dramatically increased interdisciplinary teaching and learning and that the program has been well defined and presented in various university publications. She said that a reasonable administrative structure for the program has been created, transfer policies have been established, and a 10-year assessment plan has been devised.

Durfee said that Michigan Tech's General Education Program includes 44 semester credit hours plus three co-curricular semester credits: the four core courses (13 hours); the distribution requirement (15 hours); the math/science requirement (16 hours); and the co-curriculars (3 hours of non-academic credit). The program also allows for the inclusion of a foreign language.

Durfee said that general education provides a basis for life-long learning and for participation in the range of roles adults fill, such as citizen, educator, worker, communicator, and world traveler. She said that general education underpins professional education and that complex people living in a complicated world need general education.

Durfee said that for World Cultures and Revisions, assessment is working quite well for both direct and indirect measures of the learning. She said that the loop between the annual assessment and improvement of the courses has already closed twice. She said that for Perspectives on Inquiry, program administrators have a good indirect assessment that triangulates well with external survey and internal information. They use this information to improve both faculty training and the course. Program administrators have assessed Institutions but are not satisfied with the assessment instruments and, hence, have developed a new plan.

Durfee said that this spring, focus groups would assess the coherence of the UN core-course sequence. She said that Appendix A of the Progress Report offers details of recent assessment

of the UN courses.

The math/sciences component of the General Education Program used evidence from departmental assessment efforts. Hence, there has been no separate effort to assess the math/sciences component of the program. Durfee said that there have been notable efforts in math to adjust GTA training; place students successfully; and learn the relationships between entering skills, courses, and future success. She said that chemistry is piloting a new studio lab and will assess learning outcomes. She said that the General Education Program needs more formal information-sharing and that Dean Max Seel and Dean Robert Warrington will propose one approach.

Durfee said that an assessment plan for the distribution requirements is being developed. Program administrators hope to develop a combination of assessments of the learning outcomes of individual courses and an assessment of the entire list of distribution courses.

All the colleges have said that they are willing to add questions about General Education to alumni surveys. Many departments already ask questions of their majors relative to General Education in exit interviews. Eventually, program administrators will need to coordinate this better, perhaps including asking the same General Education questions across all colleges and schools.

Durfee presented the following list of weaknesses of and threats to Michigan Tech's General Education Program:

1. Departments find it harder to let tenured/tenure-track faculty teach Perspectives on Inquiry than anticipated. Unfilled lines coupled at times with dramatic increases in undergraduate majors make the General Education component of teaching hard to fulfill. Still, the number of adjuncts has declined slightly since the start of the course three years ago.
2. While we do not spend that much money on General Education--and virtually all of what we do spend is returned to departments--continued cuts to programs threaten that funding. Perspectives on Inquiry does what we hoped it would do, but it constitutes the bulk of the cost of General Education.
3. Assessment of the distribution requirement will be extremely difficult, but we are not the only university facing this difficulty.
4. Advisors and students would strongly prefer that we have two distribution lists rather than five. We have asked NCA for advice on this.

Durfee said that considerable support for students in General Education courses is offered by the learning centers, the library, Student Affairs, and academic advising. She said that about 8-10% of the faculty teaching UN courses have presented conference papers, published, or written grant proposals on topics related to their UN teaching efforts.

Durfee said that last year, Michigan Tech participated in the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), which surveys first-year students and seniors. One of the sets of questions asked of students related to the concept of "collaborative learning." Students were asked if they contributed to class discussion, made a presentation, worked with others on a project inside and outside of class, etc. Michigan Tech's numbers for the first-year students were two standard deviations above the national average, which is better than the numbers for doctoral/research-intensive and national benchmarks. Durfee said that the NSSE results cannot be attributed wholly to the General Education Program and that the Fundamentals of Engineering Program also produced remarkable results.

Durfee called for questions.

Gregg asked if the General Education Program's commitment to life-long learning would best be met by fostering an appetite for reading.

Durfee said that one survey in *Perspectives on Inquiry* suggested that many Michigan Tech students read only textbooks.

Senator Cindy Selfe said that she believed that many first-year students have never read a novel.

Gregg asked if Durfee knew of any way to foster an appetite for reading.

Durfee said that the American Association of Colleges and Universities has a new report entitled *Greater Expectations*, which reviews progress in general education. The report concludes that the trend in discarding the concept of core courses has been a disservice to students' educations. She said most of the general-education conversations she has been involved in outside Michigan Tech have been focused on ethics and civic responsibilities in a diverse, global community. She said at the outset of his World Cultures class, Joe Hyman asked students if they had ever seen a sub-titled movie. Only 20% had. At the end of the class, 70% of students said that they would be interested in seeing more sub-titled movies. She said that writing skills are also stressed in national discussions about general education.

Senator Jacek Borysow said that he hoped that World Cultures students would be taken to an opera.

Durfee said that that depended upon what was offered at the Rozsa Center.

Senator Susan Martin said that World Cultures students would see *Porgy and Bess*.

Keen thanked Durfee for her report.

## **7. NEW BUSINESS**

### **Proposal 8-03, 14-Week Calendar (Appendix E)**

Keen said that although this was new business, the senate could vote on Proposal 8-03 since the proposal had been circulated well before the deadline for senators to receive information for their constituents' review.

Keen said that at the beginning of the fall 2002 semester, the Taskforce on a 14-Week Calendar was charged with developing a 14-week calendar. About the same time, a faculty referendum was held, which resulted in a 3-to-1 vote in favor of moving to a 14-week semester. However, the specifics of a 14-week semester had yet to be determined. Proposal 8-03 provides such specific details. The proposal is subject to senate approval. The proposed mechanism of proceeding is for the senate to debate the proposal, to amend it if necessary, to approve it, and then send it to the faculty for a referendum on the senate's actions. Without broad approval by the faculty, the proposal will probably not be approved by the Board of Control.

Keen said that the debate on this proposal would be carried out in a formal manner. He said that everyone who wanted to speak would have one opportunity to do so before the floor was opened for a round of rebuttals.

Senator Jim Pickens MOVED and Senator Dieter Adolphs seconded the motion to approve Proposal 8-03.

Senator Dana Johnson said that some faculty are concerned about classes offered on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday because under a 14-week semester, cancellation of classes on

Mondays and Fridays due to holidays would leave some classes with fewer than 13 weeks of contact hours.

Graduate Student Council Liaisons Karl Haapala said that the graduate students he polled were split 50-50 over the proposal and that some were concerned about the shortened Thanksgiving break. He submitted a report to the senate and summarized that report as follows:

- 15 graduate students were in support of a 14-week calendar.
- Two reporting departments were in favor of a 14-week calendar (no breakdown of votes).
- 15 graduate students were in favor of a 15-week calendar.
- One reporting department was in favor of a 15-week calendar (no breakdown of votes).
- 4 graduate students were neutral, but some had comments.
- One reporting department was neutral.

Of these:

- 5 commented that Thanksgiving Break should not be shortened.
- 2 felt it was appropriate to shorten Thanksgiving Break if necessary.

Keen reminded the senate that the issue at hand was the proposed 14-week calendar, not the choice between a 14-week and a 15-week calendar.

Senator Steve Seidel said that K-Day was on the second week of classes under the quarter system but that it's on the first week of classes in Proposal 8-03. One of his constituents suggested that K-Day be on a Saturday. He said that his constituents were also concerned about the impact on Monday-Wednesday-Friday classes. The date of Winter Carnival floats between several weeks, which makes it difficult to plan lab assignments. He suggested setting Winter Carnival for a fixed week in the semester.

Keen asked if Seidel was presenting this as a formal proposal.

Seidel said that he would like to hear from the rest of the senate before offering any formal proposals.

Johnson asked permission to make another comment.

Keen said that the proposed method of proceeding was for everyone who wanted to comment to have one opportunity to do so before opening the floor for rebuttals.

Johnson said that she had a whole list of comments but hadn't wanted to make them all at once.

Keen asked Johnson to read her whole list.

Johnson said that some of her constituents were concerned about K-Day being held during the first Friday of class, especially if Labor Day was on the first Monday of that week; hence, they suggested that K-Day be moved to the second or third week of the semester. Her constituents also felt that there should be a full week of break at Thanksgiving in order to allow students time to travel to and from their homes. Her constituents were also concerned that reduction from a 14-week to a 15-week semester might mean a reduction in salary or might be used as an argument for not providing raises. Finally, one of her constituents suggested extending class time by 10 minutes, which could provide 15-week's worth of contact hours in 14 weeks.

Senator Cindy Selfe said that she had received, by way of Department of Humanities Chair Bob Johnson, a copy of a memo from the College Council of the College of Sciences and Arts. In this memo, the Council proposes a summer session consisting of two six-week sessions rather

than the two seven-week sessions proposed in Proposal 8-03. In this way, the year does not need an additional week in order to accommodate a full-week break at Thanksgiving.

Senator Bill Gregg asked if anyone knew how many U.S. universities had a 14-week rather than a 15-week semester.

Senator Carol MacLennan said that some of her constituents in the Department of Social Sciences were concerned that a 14-week summer semester would lock the university into a difficult schedule, with very short breaks between spring and summer and summer and fall. She said that a third semester (that is, a summer semester) could consist of two six-week units with class time equivalent to that offered by two seven-week units.

Senator Bahne Cornilsen said that one of his colleagues had calculated that over the course of an academic year, 8-9 classes would be lost in Monday-Wednesday-Friday classes, which would be more than two weeks of class. He asked what would happen after the senate's vote on this proposal.

Keen said that he assumed that if the senate approved the proposal, the proposal would be voted on in a faculty referendum. He said that the proposal would not be considered seriously by the Board of Control unless a majority of all faculty supported it. If the proposal is voted down, then the senate will probably return it to the taskforce with some direction as to what modifications the taskforce ought to make. Given that faculty voted 3-to-1 in favor of a 14-week semester, the senate is more or less obligated to develop an acceptable 14-week schedule.

Undergraduate Student Government Liaison Ike Micheau asked if students had been polled on Proposal 8-03 or if they would be polled after the senate's vote.

Keen said that the student representative from the Undergraduate Student Government on the taskforce had told him that the USG would not poll the students on this issue.

Senator Erik Nordberg said that there was an announcement in the *Michigan Tech Lode* this week about a student forum on this issue.

Keen said that a student forum is scheduled for January 24 on the question of 14- versus 15-week semesters.

Senator Bruce Barna asked if this was an appropriate time for members of the taskforce to respond.

Keen said that it was.

Barna said that students had requested a more conventional semester during the summer, as opposed to an accelerated semester.

C. Selfe asked what a conventional semester was.

Barna said that his understanding from students was that they would like a three-credit course in the summer to be structured much like a three-credit course during the regular academic year.

Keen said that in September, three members of the USG told him that their support for a 14-week semester was contingent on the creation of a full 14-week summer semester.

Senator Deb Bruch MOVED and Senator Cindy Selfe seconded the motion to amend Proposal 8-03 as follows:

Summer sessions will consist of a ~~fourteen-week~~ **twelve-week** term beginning Monday, ~~nine~~ **16** days after Spring Commencement.

Further summer semester guidelines:

- Courses may be offered for the full ~~fourteen~~ **twelve** weeks, or during two sequential ~~seven-week~~ **six-week** sessions.
- The ~~seven-week~~ **six-week** sessions normally shall have Final Exams on the Friday and Saturday of the ~~seventh~~ **sixth** week. Courses offered for the full ~~fourteen~~ **twelve** weeks shall have Final Exams scheduled simultaneously with those of the second ~~seven-week~~ **six-week** session.

Senator Jacek Borysow MOVED and Senator Adolphs seconded the motion to amend the proposed amendment with a 13-week summer semester.

Senator Bruch MOVED and Senator Bill Gregg seconded the motion to call the question. The motion PASSED on a voice vote with dissent.

The motion to amend the proposed amendment FAILED on a voice vote with some support.

Senator Bruch MOVED and Senator Bill Gregg seconded the motion to call the question. The motion PASSED on a voice vote with dissent.

The motion to amend the summer session FAILED on a voice vote with some support.

Senator C. Selfe MOVED and Senator Jim Pickens seconded the motion to call the question. The motion PASSED on a voice vote without dissent.

The motion to approve Proposal 8-03 PASSED on a voice vote without dissent.

Senator Pickens MOVED and Senator Bruce Pletka seconded the motion to have the Elections Committee conduct a referendum of the Senate faculty constituents on Proposal 8-03.

Pickens offered an amendment to his original motion to direct Senators to collect the referendum ballots.

The motion to amend the motion FAILED on a voice vote.

Senator C. Selfe MOVED and Senator Pletka seconded the motion to call the question. The motion

PASSED on a voice vote.

The motion to conduct a referendum PASSED on a voice vote without dissent.

## **8. ADJOURNMENT**

Senator Bruch MOVED and Senator Lee Oberto seconded the motion to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Craig Waddell  
Secretary of the University Senate