

**THE UNIVERSITY SENATE OF
MICHIGAN TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY**

Minutes of Meeting 441
27 September 2006

Synopsis:

The Senate

- (1) Discussed Proposal 2-07, Amendment To Proposal 18-01: Search Procedures For University Administrators
 - (2) Heard a presentation by Jason Bergeron, Student Affairs Office, on an upcoming survey regarding perceptions about Greek organizations.
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1. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

President Sloan called the University Senate Meeting 441 to order at 5:30 pm on Wednesday, 27 September 2006, in Room B45 EERC.

Secretary Glime called roll. Absent were representatives from Computer Science and School of Technology. Liaisons in attendance were Cailee Pearson (USG), and Nick Nanninga (GSC). Academic Services C, Advancement, and Auxiliaries currently have no elected representatives.

2. RECOGNITION OF VISITORS

Guests included Jason Bergeron (Student Affairs), Randy Johnston (SBE), Dave Reed (Provost), and Tim Malette (Enrollment Management).

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

President Sloan requested that the agenda be altered to permit discussion of Proposal 2-07 first so that the Provost could be present. He had another commitment at 6 pm.

Waddell MOVED and Miller seconded the motion to approve the agenda as altered. 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. NEW BUSINESS

A. Proposal 2-07, Amendment to Proposal 18-01: Search Procedures for University Administrators.

Senator Sutter spoke to Proposal 2-07 **[Appendix B]**, stating that the Provost Search Committee was concerned that the public availability of letters of reference would affect the number of candidates and the types of letters sent by referees. The proposal is to eliminate that public availability.

Provost Reed added that having such access would affect the type of letter he would write, if he would be willing to write one at all.

Senator Wood asked who would read the letters if this proposal were to pass.

President Sloan responded that the search committee and administration would read the letters.

Wood responded that the proposal doesn't seem necessary.

Reed commented that in the absence of this proposal, letters would be likely to become more benign and uninformed than they are now.

Senator Waddell inquired what the common practice is at other universities.

Reed responded that only Florida requires open availability of such documents (Sunshine law). Universities elsewhere vary, but confidentiality up to the selection of finalists is the norm. Letters usually are never available.

Senator Janners asked if Proposal 18-02, that required accessibility of the letters, had been followed in any searches since its passage. She also pointed out that accessibility to the University community (faculty, staff, students), as is currently allowed by Proposal 18-02, is different from the Florida Sunshine Law that permits anyone outside the University to have access as well. Furthermore, those persons gaining access are not permitted to make copies.

Sutter responded that it had not been followed on the unsuccessful Provost search last year.

Janners commented that several of the titles used in the existing search policies no longer exist.

Senator Nitz stated that he would favor only a minor change to any existing policy that has been used successfully.

Senator Flynn asked if this policy on recommendation letters is there for other searches.

Senator Mattila stated that it is in the policy for the Dean of Engineering Search.

Sutter responded to Janners' comments, stating that the recommendation letters are an immediate problem for the Provost Search. Other things needing fixed, like updating titles, were not an imminent problem.

Senator Bruch, a member of the Administrative Policy Committee, stated that the committee had discussed this proposal. It is a proposal on cuts from the current policy. She was originally opposed to the proposal, feeling she had a right to see the references. However, the search committee is huge. We need to trust the committee. The public can see the vitae, but the letters should be confidential.

Senator Flaspohler asked what the pros are for keeping the open letter policy.

Senator Wood stated that this is an important position and it is not clear that we are losing candidates.

Bruch responded, saying that elsewhere in the policy it states "may not be made public in any way." That policy is not workable with the inclusion of open access to letters.

Senator Boersma asked what the impact of letters is on hiring decisions.

Sutter responded that letters often address the specific criteria for the position. Often that is the only way these criteria are addressed.

Wood added that letters are informative both by what is said and what is not said.

Flaspohler stated that anything that would increase forthrightness in the letters is a positive thing.

Waddell asked about the process – does the committee screen and make recommendations, with a summary of positive points, including those from the letters, and make the information public?

Sutter responded that the reasons for recommendations are not made public.

Waddell summarized that then only the CV and campus visit are public. Sutter verified that.

Senator Williams surmised that if the letters say bad things, then the candidates will probably not become semifinalists and the problem will solve itself.

Nitz pointed out that reference letters often make explicit comparisons with other candidates.

5. PRESENTATION ON GREEK FACULTY PERCEPTIONS SURVEY – Jason Bergeron, Student Affairs Office

Bergeron explained that surveys on the perceptions of others are used to help the Greek organizations to grow. Perceptions sometimes dictate reality. They talk about the perceptions and what can be done to change the negative ones or to fix problems that are real. They have never tapped the faculty for their perceptions.

In addition to the faculty survey, they will survey the non-Greek students. Bergeron distributed a letter [**Appendix C**] to the Senators, asking faculty to inform their constituents and to encourage them to complete the survey.

Williams asked why the request was not being sent by email and the survey done electronically.

Janners asked why the survey did not include the professional staff.

Bergeron stated that they have not been included, but that it is a good idea.

Bruch repeated the question of why the request would not go out by email.

Bergeron asked how that could be done. Several suggestions were offered – the alldepts list; going through human resources.

Pearson (USG liaison) offered to send out the request to students.

Vice President Polzien asked what would be done with the information.

Bergeron responded that the research would be used to redefine standards. If students in Greek organizations are doing poorly in class, they could up their standards.

Polzien responded that before the survey goes out, it needs to be cleared by the Research Compliance office because of the use of human subjects.

Pollins asked why the survey was not being sent to professional staff.

Bergeron responded that the survey asks questions specific to the targeted group. They have not yet developed one for the professional staff.

Polzien re-emphasized the need to talk to the Human Subjects Committee before the survey request goes out.

Williams commented that there are survey centers on campus.

Bergeron closed by stating that he would appreciate it if the Senators would help in getting the faculty to complete the survey.

6. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM MEETING 440

Flynn MOVED and Bruch seconded the motion to approve the minutes of Meeting 440 as presented. The motion PASSED on voice vote with no dissent.

7. PRESIDENT'S REPORT

President Sloan reported that all but two of the committee chairs have been elected, so the Executive Committee will meet next week. They will discuss the faculty referendum on the two tenure changes approved from last spring. She asked for other topics the Executive Committee should discuss, but there was no response.

Senator Helminen stated that if we don't change Proposal 18-01 (re: Proposal 7-06), it seems to conflict with item 7.2 regarding seeking additional references.

Sloan responded that most of these additional references are by phone.

8. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 6:10 pm.

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