

**The University Senate  
of Michigan Technological University**

Minutes of Meeting 468  
29 October 2008

**Synopsis:**

The Senate

- Heard a presentation from Ingrid Cheney on health benefits
- Approved a slate of three nominees for the Academic Tenure Committee
- Approved Proposal 1-09: A Proposal to Allow the Reuse of Some Michigan Tech Credits in the Pursuit of an Additional Master's Degree

**1. Call to order and roll call.** President Sloan called the University Senate Meeting 468 to order at 5:31 pm on Wednesday, October 29, 2008 in room B45 EERC. She asked the Senators and guests to stand for a moment of silence in respect of David Karnosky. Secretary Cooper called roll. Absent were representatives of Army/Air Force ROTC. Liaison Anna Pereira (GSC) was in attendance. Mechanical Engineering-Engineering Mechanics, Academic Services A and Auxiliaries and Cultural Enrichment currently have no elected representatives.

**2. Recognition of visitors.** Guests included Ingrid Cheney (Human Resources), Renee Hiller (Human Resources), Anita Quinn (Human Resources), Julie Edgar (Aetna Insurance), and Lesley Lovett-Doust (Provost).

**3. Approval of agenda.** Sloan said that approval of the minutes of meeting 466 would be added to the agenda. Miller **moved** approval of the amended agenda and Hamlin seconded. The motion to approve **passed** on a voice vote with no dissent.

**4. BLG Update on Benefits** presented by Ingrid Cheney (Human Resources). Cheney announced that there are ten more open forums on the new health benefits plans. The forums run about two hours because these are new plans, a PPO plan and a Health Savings Account (HSA) plan, and there is a lot to learn. They will present information on the different plans and on the charge to the Benefits Liaison Group (BLG), the new provider Aetna will do a presentation, and there will be time for questions. There is information online on the Human Resources web site:

<http://www.admin.mtu.edu/hro/TechSelect/index.shtml>

She also said faculty and staff should feel free to call and/or email the benefits office with any questions. She announced that this year enrollment for Tech Select is online only. Enrollment is open from November 3 through December 3. It is important for you to enroll online. The default benefit is HSA, with no flex spending account, and no dental/vision benefits for two years. She introduced Renee Hiller, the new assistant manager of benefits, who comes to Michigan Tech with nine years of benefit service. She also introduced Julie Edgar, the Aetna senior accountant.

Dewey asked if there was a financial analysis done by the BLG and whether that will be shared with the university. Cheney said she would think so and that some of that is shared at the open forums. She added that one of our charges for 2009 as well as 2008 was cost containment for health care. Right now we're looking at a \$16.2 million health care cost, gross, about \$14.9 million net. That's up from \$11 million net in 2006. Dewey asked if that is a systematic increase or a result of a small number of individuals that had very significant health problems. Cheney replied that was part of it, along with health care being very expensive, and a very rich benefits package. Anything you look at has gone up. We looked at the cost per contract, which in 2006 was \$8900; but now it is about \$11,400.

Klooster asked if there was a reason for dropping Blue Cross/Blue Shield (BC/BS), if the benefits office was not happy with them or if BC/BS was too expensive. Cheney replied that it was not a matter of expense, because Michigan Tech is self-insured, and all the provider does is process claims. She said that what the benefits office was looking for is more of a partner, and we felt that Aetna would truly be a partner.

Vable asked whether the reason for the changes in benefits was that the fringe rate for benefits was much higher than for other universities. Cheney said, no, they started with a charge last spring, or actually in 2007, to look at cost containment because the health care costs were escalating. We got the charge from the Compensation Strategy Task Force in about late summer of this year. Vable said that the matching funds of 2 + 2 was put in place because at retirement we will have no medical benefits from the university. Cheney replied that employees do have medical benefits from the university; anybody who retires from the university and is currently in TIAA-CREF will have retirement benefits, but they must pay a premium. That benefit is available to employees and their spouses until they die. The 2 + 2 is to help pay for the premium. Vable remarked that other universities cover the premium. Cheney replied that some do and some don't; some are dropping health benefits for retirees completely. Vable asked whether when it was said that fringe benefits at Michigan Tech were higher than other universities, were the post-retirement costs included. Cheney replied that you should ask Dave Reed, Dan Greenlee, or Deb Lassila what goes into that fringe rate. Sloan remarked that Dan Greenlee will be addressing the Senate in a few weeks.

Johnson asked when the password needed to access information on Aetna will be available. Cheney said there is a guest password, and it can be obtained by calling the benefits office. She asked Julie Edgar to comment; Julie said that effective January 1 employees will have their own password and will be able to access their own benefit information. Right now there is just generic information. Cheney added that there is information on the costs of specific drugs on the Aetna website.

Luck said that Vice President Reed in his presentation said that there would be a shift in fringe benefits but that would be compensated by increased salary, but Cheney had just said that the change in benefits plans is independent of Reed's proposal. He asked how much money Cheney would estimate will be saved by this Aetna plan. Cheney replied that the costs to the university may be higher than their estimate of \$16.2 million, and that they have to wait until employees choose their plans in order to calculate what savings will be experienced in 2009. Luck said, but what we can say with certainty is that our medical care costs have increased and our salaries have not increased. He said he saw a conflict between what VP Reed said and what Cheney is saying today. He asked how the university could calculate what to reimburse the individual. Cheney said they average it out. She said that we don't know how much we have spent until the end of the year.

Dewey asked if there was any information on health benefits for retirees. Cheney said they had not yet sent out any information on that and that there will be separate open forums for retirees.

Dewey asked which of these two plans is more expensive for the university. Cheney replied that she really doesn't know, that it depends on the individual and their medical bills. Dewey said that earlier Cheney said that they had to wait for employees to sign up before they could see what the savings would be. Cheney replied it's a wait and see.

Gregg asked whether, in addition to the forums, benefits would put up a digest of the forums on the Employee Self Service (ESS) website. Cheney said that they can't put it on the ESS website but it is on the Human Resources website.

Hoy asked whether there will be a FAQ section on the website. Cheney said they are working on that right now. Hoy asked whether separate forums could focus on specific groups. Cheney said that would be nice to focus on one group at a time, but it is difficult to keep people from asking about different individual situations.

Snyder asked whether with Aetna, employees could go anywhere in the country that their doctor refers them to, as has been the case with BC/BS. Cheney said yes, and overseas too. L. Davis commented that switching providers won't change the coverage, as the provider is just the administrator. Cheney agreed.

Cheney said she can't promise there won't be glitches for the first two months. She said employees should call the benefits office if they have problems. She added that one of the enhancements to the vision plan is flexible use of dollars for contact lenses and /or glasses. She again encouraged employees to come to one of the forums to get answers to their questions.

Sloan commented that Cheney is retiring at the end of the year, she thanked her for her reports to the Senate over the past 20 years, and she wished her the best in her retirement.

**5. Approval of minutes.** Cooper asked for any corrections to the minutes for meeting 466. She said that the spelling of Anna Pereira's name would be corrected. Storer stated that MTU should be replaced with Michigan Tech. Storer **moved** approval of the amended minutes from meeting 466 and Hamlin seconded. The motion **passed** with no dissenting votes. Approval of the minutes for meeting 467 were tabled to the next meeting, as the draft minutes distributed to the Senators were missing a page.

## **6. President's report.**

President Sloan reported that the administration has not acted on

- 20-08: Amendment to Proposal 42-04: Evaluation Procedure for the President
- 22-08: Revised Procedures for the Establishment and Amendment of Charters

The Senate approved both these proposals on April 2. According to the Senate constitution, if the administration has not acted on these proposals by November 2, they will be deemed approved and would be passed on to the Board of Control for their approval.

("III. E-6. If, within three months (not including the time from the end of the Spring term of one academic year to the start of the Fall term of the next academic year) of transmittal to the University President, a proposal passed by the Senate is neither vetoed nor approved by the University President, the proposal will be deemed approved by the University President, and will be submitted by the Senate President to the Board of Control for its approval. Procedures for temporarily extending the three month period for particular proposals shall be contained in the Bylaws.")

**Streaming video** of Senate meetings will now be available on the Senate website. This will allow anyone with a web connection to watch Senate meetings whenever they want. Telecasts on Charter will continue.

The **Senate executive committee will meet with President Mroz** to discuss shared governance on Wednesday November 19<sup>th</sup>, at the request of the Senate executive committee.

## **7. Old business.**

### **a. Elections for University standing committees.**

Sloan noted that there are three nominees for the **Academic Tenure Committee**: (Bob Keen, Steve Carr, and Mark Johnson), and asked whether there were any other nominees. There were none. Sloan explained that the procedure is that the Senate has to approve a slate of nominees that is sent to tenured and tenure-track faculty, who vote for two members of the committee by mail ballots. Snyder **moved** to approve the slate of three nominees, and Hamlin seconded. The motion **passed** on a voice vote with no dissent.

Sloan announced that a nominee is still needed for the **Faculty Distinguished Service Award Committee**.

### **b. Proposal 1-09: A Proposal To Allow the Reuse of Some Michigan Tech Credits in the Pursuit of Multiple Graduate Degrees.**

Senator Gregg, speaking for the Curricular Policy Committee, recommended approval of Proposal 1-09. He said there was discussion about the title of the proposal at the last meeting, and that the Provost suggested a change. Gregg submitted an editorial amendment for a new title, replacing "the pursuit of multiple graduate degrees" with "an additional Master's Degree," which, he said, reflects what is in the actual policy. Hamlin seconded the amendment.

Cooper asked whether more than one additional master's degree is specifically ruled out, despite what was said at the last meeting. Gregg replied that the policy states only one additional master's degree, and that is a good policy as more than one additional degree might allow credits to be recounted many times, which is not allowable at the undergraduate level and shouldn't be at the graduate level. The motion **passed** on a voice vote with no dissent.

Gregg proposed another editorial amendment, that a sentence from the background of the proposal be moved to be the third sentence in the policy and be amended to read: "Research or practicum credits can not be applied to more than one degree." Johnson seconded the motion and it **passed** on a voice vote with no dissent.

There was no discussion on the motion to approve Proposal 1-09, and the motion **passed** on a voice vote with no dissent.

## **8. New business.** There was no new business.

**9. Adjournment.**

Sloan adjourned the meeting at 6:10pm.

Respectfully submitted by Marilyn Cooper  
Secretary of the University Senate