

**The University Senate
of Michigan Technological University**

Minutes of Meeting 470
3 December 2008

Synopsis:

The Senate

- Heard a report from the Sabbatical Leave Committee
- Approved Proposal 2-09: "Revision of Senate Bylaws to Remove the Computer Committee from the List of Senate Standing Committees"
- Approved Proposal 20-08: "Amendment to Proposal 42-04: Evaluation Procedure"
- Approved Proposal 4-09 "Request for Open Enrollment Extension"

1. Call to order and roll call. President Sloan called the University Senate Meeting 470 to order at 5:31 pm on Wednesday, December 3, 2008 in room B45 EERC. Secretary Cooper called roll. Absent was Senator Koszykowski and representatives of Army/Air Force ROTC. Liaisons Anna Pereira (GSC) and Daniel Freeman (USG) were 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 Stan Vitton and Lesley Lovett-Doust (Provost).

3. Approval of agenda. President Sloan proposed to modify the agenda to include discussion of Proposal 4-09 "Request for Open Enrollment Extension" under item 8, New Business. Snyder **moved** approval of the agenda and B. Davis seconded. The motion to approve **passed** on a voice vote with no dissent.

4. Annual Report of Sabbatical Leave Committee, by Stan Vitton, Chair of the Sabbatical Leave Committee

Stan Vitton reported on the sabbatical leaves for academic year 2007-2008. Compared to the previous year in which there were 26 proposals with 25 faculty taking sabbatical, this past year there were only 14 proposals. Of those 14, 10 proposals needed no revision and were recommended, 2 were returned for revisions and then recommended, 1 was submitted after the deadline, and 1 was withdrawn and applied to the following year. The main reasons for asking for revisions are not following submission guidelines, not providing a report of a previous sabbatical, and not providing a letter of support from host institution.

Vable asked whether the report of the previous sabbatical must be submitted with proposal. Vitton said yes. Vable commented that one has to hang onto the report for seven years; Vitton answered that the reports are now available on the university website.

Fick asked whether if you don't supply a report your proposal is automatically denied. Vitton said the decision is up to the Provost, as the committee only makes recommendations, but the committee has never turned down a proposal for this reason.

The committee is recommending one change to expedite the process: adding a requirement for the signature of the college or school dean to the form completed by the applicant's department chair or immediate supervisor. As the dean must sign off eventually, it makes sense to do this in one step.

In 2006-2007, 15 faculty took one-semester sabbaticals and 11 faculty took two-semester sabbaticals; in 2007-2008, 10 faculty took one-semester sabbaticals and 4 took two-semester sabbaticals.

In both 2006-2007 and 2007-2008, roughly half of the sabbaticals included an international component, defined as spending a week or longer in an international context. In 2006-2007, 38 percent of sabbaticals were taken in locations in the United States, and 15 percent were taken locally, in Houghton. In 2007-2008, 7 percent of sabbaticals were taken in locations in the United States, and 43 percent were taken locally, in Houghton.

In summary, in 2007-2008 nine units submitted sabbatical requests; 11 units did not. All requests were approved. 70 percent of requests were for one semester; 50 percent involved international travel.

The chair of the committee is usually the most senior person and the position rotates, but for various reasons, Vitton will again chair the committee next year. If anyone has questions, they should contact him.

5. Approval of Minutes from Meeting 469. Cooper reviewed changes in the final draft of the minutes for senators who had inadvertently received an earlier draft of the minutes, and she noted two other changes that needed to be made in the minutes. Snyder **moved** approval of the emended minutes; Christianson seconded. The motion **passed** on a voice vote with no dissent.

6. President's Report.

President Mroz rejected Proposal 3-09 "Marriage Penalty and Single Parent Health Care Surcharge" but approved changing the health insurance rate for couples to twice the single rate and asked the Benefits Liaison Group to study the issue of different rates for single persons with dependent children versus those for couples with possible

implementation date of January 2010. Unofficially the Provost reported this afternoon that she has approved Proposal 1-09 "A Proposal to Allow the Reuse of Some of Michigan Tech Credits in the Pursuit of Multiple Graduate Degrees" subject to some minor edits.

Bob Keen and Steve Carr were elected by the faculty to the Committee on Academic Tenure, Promotion, and Reappointment and will serve terms beginning in January.

The Senate Executive Committee met in mid-November with President Mroz to discuss shared governance. Several positive ideas came out of this meeting, especially the idea that most Senate standing committees should have a designated staff person operating in that area to share communications and ideas. For example, the Curricular Policy and Instructional Policy committees already have ex officio members from Student Records and this has proved quite beneficial.

7. Old Business

a. **Proposal 2-09: "Revision of Senate Bylaws to Remove the Computer Committee from the List of Senate Standing Committees"** presented by the Computer Committee.

Miller **moved** approval of the proposal. There was no discussion, and the motion **passed** on a voice vote with no dissent.

b. **Proposal 20-08: "Amendment to Proposal 42-04: Evaluation Procedure"** presented by the Administrative Policy Committee.

Caneba **moved** approval of the proposal. There was no discussion, and the motion **passed** on a voice vote with no dissent.

8. New Business

Proposal 4-09 "Request for Open Enrollment Extension"

Senator Johnson, chair of the Fringe Benefits Committee, explained that over the past few weeks, there have been many questions and information provided in various venues about the new health benefits plans. There were a number of unresolved issues and a number of conflicts between information provided by Michigan Tech and Aetna. This proposal was drawn up by a member of the Fringe Benefits Committee and was sent to the benefits office. Today, she received a call from Human Resources saying they were going to respond to the proposal by sending out information through *Tech Today* and email to employees. This information was distributed to the members of the Senate in hard copy. The current deadline for enrollment in one of the plans remains December 5, and because the information is complicated, the committee is still suggesting that the deadline be extended. But extending beyond December 10 causes a problem because that is when Aetna must get the information in order to get new insurance cards out to people by the beginning of the year.

Chard, another member of the Fringe Benefits Committee said he had talked this problem over with his constituents who didn't find a serious problem with the conflicting information, that they were able to get their questions answered in the forums and by calling the benefits office, and that if this proposal would delay their getting their insurance cards, they saw that as a more serious problem. They felt the information they had received was adequate to make a decision.

Fick noted that the first statement on the information sheet from the benefits office that if you don't select a plan by January 5 your health care will default to the HSA must be incorrect as because of his age, he is ineligible for the HSA plan.

Johnson replied that that is one of the concerns that hasn't been addressed. There are a number of other reasons why people might be ineligible for the HSA plan.

Sloan commented that she found it interesting that in the second paragraph of the information, the benefits office recognizes that there are a number of employees who because of federal regulations reasons can't be part of an HSA, while in the first paragraph they say that if you don't select a plan, it will default to the HSA.

Christianson commented that this is the first time she has heard that if you have other forms of medical insurance you can't have an HSA. And I called Aetna today to ask a question, and the representative told me that we only have a PPO plan.

Snyder commented that it seems that this plan was created in such a hurry that the problems have not been worked out. So we have employees who will be 65 in January and at the forums they have been told that if they are eligible for Medicare, they cannot have an HSA.

Sloan explained that it's not a matter of whether you're eligible for Medicare but whether you're enrolled in Medicare.

Snyder agreed but said that at the forums, people were told that if they were eligible they could not have an HSA. The people in the benefits office who are administering the plans did not have adequate information to advise people.

Vable commented that he circulated the proposal to his constituents and many said that it would be good idea to extend the deadline because there was still confusion. He asked whether the Fringe Benefits Committee is withdrawing the proposal because of the problem with the December 10 deadline.

Johnson replied that the problem is only that if the deadline is extended to December 10, employees won't have insurance cards by January 1, 2009.

Sloan suggested that even if the employees can't get cards, the university could send letters to employees attesting that they have health insurance. The university is capable of getting letters out to faculty within a three-week period even if it is over the holidays.

Provost Lovett-Doust suggested that some data would be helpful, and reported that 1094 employees (88.5 percent) have completed forms; 31.5 percent of those who completed forms chose HSA; 57 percent chose PPO; and 11.5 percent opted out. So the number who have not yet chosen is relatively small, and Human Resources personnel are available and willing to answer all questions.

Sloan asked whether those who have completed forms cannot make changes. Lovett-Doust replied that changes can be made until midnight on December 5, and the choices made only hold for the coming year.

Klooster commented that she chose HSA and her spouse has other insurance, and she can't tell from this information whether she is eligible for an HSA. Lovett-Doust and Sloan recommended that she look into this question because things get really complicated with a spouse.

Chard commented that the Fringe Benefits Committee are already making plans with the benefits office to make the process cleaner next year.

Hamlin suggested that specific forms for different circumstances — single people, retirement age people, people with young kids — would be helpful. Kern suggested that forums be videotaped or podcasted so that everyone gets the same information. Johnson warned that the calculator on the Aetna website is not necessarily accurate for all people.

Onder asked what will happen to people who are not eligible for HSA who requested one. Sloan replied that it would be nice to have a definitive answer to this question from the administration, and that if people who are not eligible chose or are defaulted to the HSA they should be able to move to the PPO plan without penalty.

Onder asked whether it is true that the individual is responsible for ascertaining whether they are eligible. Lovett-Doust suggested that Human Resources could check for employees who are 65 and requested an HSA account, but Sloan said Human Resources doesn't have the information they need to check accurately on this and that the penalties for not following the federal regulations can be extremely punitive to the individual. Lovett-Doust suggested that Human Resources could send an email to employees telling them that if they are eligible for any other medical insurance, they should contact Human Resources. Johnson commented that that information is already in the message to be sent out tomorrow. Sloan commented that it is unrealistic to assume that all employees can be successfully notified of this in a little over 48 hours, so that in the interests of protecting employees, the university has to assure them that they can change to a PPO plan if they have chosen the HSA incorrectly.

Vable suggested that the proposal be considered, and Boschetto-Sandoval noted that the date in the proposal by which the issues should be clarified is incorrect and should be Monday, December 8.

Christianson **moved** that the Senate consider the proposal as an emergency measure and Vable seconded the motion, which **passed** on a voice vote with no dissent.

Johnson **moved** passage of Proposal 4-09. Sloan asked whether anyone wanted to suggest amendments. Hamlin suggested an amendment that would change the date for clarifications to Friday at noon and changing the open enrollment deadline to Monday, December 8, at midnight. B. Davis seconded the amendment.

Lovett-Doust suggested that those who haven't yet made a decision be held to the earlier deadline, but those who want to change be given more time.

Hamlin asked for the rationale for this discrimination. Lovett-Doust said that she felt that there has been enough thorough information and helpful advice for people to make a decision, but that people who may need to change because of conflicts that have come to light might need an extension. Hamlin asked whether it is easier to convey two deadlines or one. Lovett-Doust said she does not want to encourage procrastination and that some people are very concerned about getting their insurance cards.

Luck asked who is going to judge that the questions have been answered adequately, and given that the correct answers seem to be impossible to determine, he said he didn't see the reasons for this new deadline.

Vable commented that one deadline is easier to convey and he supports the proposal as it stands.

Vogler suggested that the proposal include a notation that anyone who has enrolled in an HSA and is later found to be ineligible would be allowed to move to the PPO.

Caneba commented that after he was told at the forum that the individual was responsible he decided on the PPO plan, but he doesn't understand why the default is the HSA, as the PPO is similar to what we have now. Since we don't know exactly what the rules are, why isn't the default the PPO?

Sloan stated that the amendment is now up for a vote. Hoy asked whether the proposal implies that we can't ask questions of Human Resources after Friday at noon. Snyder said no. The amendment **passed** on a voice vote with no dissent.

Vogler proposed an amendment that anyone found to have chosen or been defaulted into the HSA plan who are later found to be ineligible can be moved to the PPO plan regardless of the deadline, and Johnson seconded the amendment.

Fick asked whether the proposals made by the Senate about the deadlines have any weight with the federal government. Johnson said that you'd have to return the money Tech contributed but that she doesn't know if there are any penalties. Sloan said that there may be penalties, but she isn't sure and commented that a greater concern is that you know what kind of insurance you have.

Snyder asked what the rationale is for the HSA plan being the default. Sloan said that her guess is that the HSA plan is a cheaper option for the institution.

Luck asked why wouldn't shifting people to a PPO plan if they are ineligible for an HSA plan be automatic? Gregg asked how many different conditions make one ineligible for an HSA. Johnson referred senators to the information on the handout from Human Resources. Vogler said that she would hope it would be assumed that you could shift to a policy you are eligible for, but that she would like to see it put in writing. Lovett-Doust asked whether the questions asked in the proposal are answered by the information sheet from Human Resources. Snyder said that it is not clear whether a spouse is considered a dependent in determining eligibility for an HSA.

Sloan called for a vote on the amendment, which **passed** on a voice vote with no dissent.

Johnson noted that the bottom part of the proposal would allow the MTU community to ask and receive clear answers to further questions.

Boschetto-Sandoval asked whether the last phrase in the proposal — “given the ability of the earlier deadlines to be met by all parties” — makes sense. Sloan suggested striking the last phrase. Johnson accepted the suggestion as editorial.

Pickens commented that he couldn't see that there is time for the process described in the first paragraph under “proposal” to occur now that the deadline has been changed to Monday, December 8. Sloan suggested striking the last sentence in that paragraph; Pickens suggested striking the whole first paragraph. Johnson agreed to the change.

Proposal 4-09 **passed** on a voice vote with one dissent.

9. Adjournment.

President Sloan adjourned the meeting at 6:43 pm.

Respectfully submitted
by Marilyn Cooper
Secretary of the University Senate