

THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

SENATE ASSEMBLY

Minutes of Assembly Meeting, January 19, 1976

ATTENDANCE

Present: Professors Adams, Bishop, Bornstein, Browder, Christensen Rucknagel, Corpron, Cosand, Browne, DeKornfeld, Dernberger, Eisley, Gikas, Smith, Gray, Guinn, Harris, Hildebrandt, Hoffman, Horsley, Ilie, Jones, Kachaturoff, Kaplan, Kelsey, Kish, G., Kish, L., Lands, Leary, Lehmann, Olson, Lindberg, Livermore, Lytle, Millard, Nesbitt, Scott, Seger, Krahmalkov, Sherman, Sibley, Soucek, Stross, Taren, Terwilliger, Van der Voo, Votaw, Weeks, West, Williams, Hoch, Colburn, Johnson

Absent: Professors Baublis, Berki, Brown, Child, Cornell, Flynn, Edwards, Kessler, Lucchesi, Magrill, Mullen, Murphey, Proctor, Tubergen, Springer, Wilson

Guests: Vice-President Frank H. T. Rhodes, Dean William J. Johnson, School of Natural Resources, Professor Glen Berg, Civil Engineering, Dr. David Aminoff, Academic Affairs Committee
Craig J. Cummins (student), Dean Sussman, Rackham Grad School

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Johnson at 3:20 p.m.

APPROVAL OF
MINUTES

The minutes of the Assembly meeting of December 15, 1975 were approved.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Assembly was reminded that, as is customary, its meeting was being recorded for later replay over Station WUOM.

On recognition from the chair, Professor Kaplan urged the members of the Assembly to remain current on developments reported regularly in the newsletter sponsored jointly by the Michigan Conference of AAUP and the Association of Michigan Collegiate Faculties, directing their attention particularly to a recent issue on the subject of nationally standardized tests.

MAJOR COMMIT-
TEE REPORTS

Chairman Johnson was pleased to welcome Vice-President Rhodes for a discussion of two major reports, that of the Committee to Review the Rackham Graduate School (the so-called Ackley report) and the Committee on Environmental Resources, Planning and Design (the so-called Norman report), pointing out that, while no formal action was expected at this session, the occasion would serve an informational purpose and permit the raising of questions. Vice-President Rhodes, in turn, expressed appreciation for the opportunity to exchange thoughts on these matters of mutual interest, noting with satisfaction that others knowledgeable about the work of both were also present as resource persons.

In turning to the first of the reports, Mr. Rhodes expressed his thanks to Professor Ackley and the members of his committee for the diligence with which they had carried out their charge. Two developments had led to the committee's formation--the departure of Dean Stokes, posing decisions concerning his successor, and the prevailing sentiment across campus that the

time was right for a broad-scale review of the organization and operation of the Rackham Graduate School. The former situation had been resolved happily, he was pleased to emphasize, with the appointment of Dean Sussman. The review of Rackham's activities and functions were to be carried out by the Ackley committee, given a charge that included study of: (a) the administrative services being rendered; (b) the quality of the graduate programs; (c) interdisciplinary needs; (d) long-term planning with respect to graduate education; and (e) the thesis work of students. The charge was obviously a broad one, and the committee was to be commended for the care with which it had approached its task, Mr. Rhodes declared.

The recommendations were essentially three. Basically a revamped role was urged for Rackham, one less preoccupied with rules and more concerned with serving as effective advocate for graduate training and research. Such a role would involve major streamlining of the graduate school's organization and functioning; while it would continue to evaluate all graduate programs, its review would be primarily advisory, with final decisions left to the respective schools and colleges. A third major area of concern was student financial aid, a subject on which Vice-President English had issued a supplemental report.

Given its central significance, no effort had been spared in insuring widespread consideration of the work of the committee. Professor Ackley and his colleagues had met with faculty groups, the Office of Academic Affairs had kept boards, committees, administrators, and governing faculties fully informed, and the widespread response attested to the fact that the report of the committee had evoked notice. There was general agreement that the role of Rackham should be modified in accordance with the recommendations of the committee, though little sympathy for divesting the graduate school of its responsibility for the review of new graduate programs.

In this twofold reaction, the draft of Vice-President Rhodes' own recommendations concurred. He, too, found himself in agreement with the overall thrust of the Ackley report but felt it important to reserve to Rackham the responsibility for the approval of new graduate degree programs. Dean Sussman and Professor Ackley were, however, not of one mind in the matter, and Mr. Rhodes planned to take this situation into account in drafting a final report to be presented to the Regents (probably at their March meeting).

Turning next to the report of the Committee on Environmental Resources, Planning and Design, Vice-President Rhodes took occasion to express appreciation to Professor Norman and his committee members for their thoughtful review and analysis of the problems characteristic of this area. Much of the Norman committee's background had resembled that of the Ackley committee. It, too, had been created at an opportune time when, on the one hand, a vacant deanship in the School of Natural Resources was awaiting an incumbent while, on the other, the School of Architecture and Design was being divided into a School of Art and a School of Architecture and Urban Planning. Concomitantly there was widespread interest in how efforts in the broad area of environmental concerns might most fruitfully be amalgamated. In

considering the general question, the committee was therefore charged with examining the organization and programmatic implications.

Vice-President Rhodes' own recommendations with respect to the Norman committee met the spirit of its report, he felt, if not its letter, departing from only one of its five recommendations, that involving the creation of a new assistant vice-presidency in the Office of Academic Affairs in connection with the proposed Council for Environmental Programs. Such a post, he noted, had budgetary and other implications. He not only shared the concern about the organization and functioning of the Council expressed in the minority report of Professor Berg but also felt that Associate Vice-President Davis, who is already actively involved in the coordination of other interdisciplinary programs, was in best position to play the appropriate role in connection with the Council. Hence, his draft report had so noted.

The stage having been set for discussion of the reports and Vice-President Rhodes' recommendations in connection therewith, Chairman Johnson invited comments from any of the resource persons who were present and might wish to speak on the subject. Professor Berg offered to respond to such questions as might be directed to him in subsequent discussion, while Professor Aminoff, of the Academic Affairs Committee, indicated that the latter had no substantive differences with the recommendations of Vice-President Rhodes. Speaking as a member of the Norman Committee, Dean Johnson, School of Natural Resources, expressed appreciation for the manner in which the committee had recognized both the complexity of environmental problems and the degree to which they cut across interdisciplinary interests. He saw the recommendations in question as fostering a climate conducive to progress in environmental studies and favored the manner in which interdisciplinary cooperation was being promoted.

With these supplementary observations as preface, Chairman Johnson invited discussion from the floor. The Long-Range Planning Committee, according to its chairman, Professor Kaplan, had responded favorably to the recommendations of Vice-President Rhodes with respect to the Ackley report, emphasizing, however, its desire to see Rackham maintain a major responsibility in approving new graduate programs. With respect to the Norman report other considerations were raised, Professors Jones, George Kish, and Taren, for example, inquiring about the extent to which new money, additional supportive services, and perhaps heavier faculty loads might be involved. On all three counts Mr. Rhodes provided reassurance. Additional funds were not necessary, and adequate supportive services could be mustered by available staff. The amount of faculty effort involved would, as always, be a product of discussions among people of shared interests in collaboration with their respective chairpersons and deans.

Professor Lands' concern with the need for appropriate role models with respect to cooperative enterprises and coordinated effort elicited replies on a number of levels. Responsibility for interdisciplinary programs is a shared affair, Mr. Rhodes observed, Rackham being concerned with the program's design, the Office of Academic Affairs with its capacity to operate, and schools and colleges with such faculty affairs as appointments, promotions, and career possibilities. Vice-President Davis saw the Office of

Academic Affairs as playing a fruitful liaison role, acting, on the one hand, as a medium for facilitating decisions at the school and college level concerning prospective interdisciplinary programs while, on the other, cooperating with Rackham with respect to the fiscal realities. Speaking to the latter, Dean Sussman indicated that Rackham does, indeed, engage in discussion with the respective deans early in the process as interdisciplinary programs are envisioned, seeking to assess the availability of resources and the nature of the joint contributions. Where clear financial support exists, the program goes forward; where resources are in doubt, developments proceed at a slower pace while potential is evaluated.

The supplementary report of Vice-President English on the subject of the Rackham Graduate School Student Financial Aid Program served as a basis for further discussion, particularly with respect to a section which, while granting that merit should continue as a criterion in the distribution of financial aid, recommended that one "should place somewhat greater reliance on financial need as a criterion for awards." In explication of this position Vice-President English pointed to the increasing concern with enabling women, members of minority groups, and older students to pursue graduate education. The question, as he saw it, was one of distributing funds equitably in the face of sometimes competing goals. The quality and diversity of our student body must be maintained, he agreed; what are needed are complementary goals of recognizing merit while also meeting our obligations to students who are qualified but could not attend without financial assistance. What would be helpful is a centralized information gathering system concerned with the needs of students. In commenting on the latter, Dean Sussman took pains to point out that the intention here was not one of removing final decisions from the province of the departments but rather of providing departments with a better information base for arriving at their decisions in these areas.

With everyone seeming to have spoken his or her piece, Chairman Johnson expressed appreciation on behalf of the Assembly to the resource persons present and especially to Vice-President Rhodes, who assured the members of the Assembly that he would be pleased to hear from any of them in person or in writing concerning the matters under discussion.

GENETIC RESEARCH

As reported in previous minutes, the Assembly had expressed its concern over the implications of research in recombinant DNA, looking to Committee B for a thoughtful review and analysis of the ethical, legal, philosophical, and social considerations. Hence, as Assembly representative to the committee, Professor Livermore had been invited to present a progress report.

The committee had clearly been working assiduously in discharge of its broad responsibilities. Meeting regularly and frequently, its members had made active efforts to inform themselves on the issues, had taken careful account of comments from members of the Assembly and input from outside sources, and had sought consultation from persons knowledgeable about legal aspects as well as from scientists conversant with other approaches to research in the field of genetics. At the rate at which it had proceeded with its task, the committee expected to be in position to issue its report by March 15, an announcement that was met with satisfaction by the Assembly,

especially since it was evident from the topical outline presented that the report would represent a thoroughgoing analysis of the questions at issue.

Commenting on interim developments, Professor Livermore noted the imminent availability of guidelines formulated by the National Institutes of Health, with which research proposals would have to comply. A cardinal feature of these guidelines was to be the delineation of levels of security or containment governing research of various degrees of risk. Concern on this score was understandable, he observed, in view of the decision to use as the host organism in such research the bacterial strain *E. coli*, which is found in the intestines and throat of higher animals and humans. Accordingly, scientists had been working actively to develop a strain of this bacterium that could not survive outside very artificial laboratory conditions. In fact, development of a strain that had only one chance in 100,000,000 of living outside the laboratory had allowed considerably more rapid progress in the formulation of guidelines by NIH.

As is the case in some other areas of investigation, scientists differ on the degree of risk attached to various levels of research in recombinant DNA. The consensus reached at the earlier La Jolla conference had tended toward stringent controls, that is, had argued from the most cautious approach. In fact, there had actually been agreement that certain kinds of projects should not be undertaken under even the strictest of security measures. Whatever the case, with the issuance of the NIH guidelines, the review of grant proposals for research in recombinant DNA would now proceed.

Detailing the activities of his committee, Professor Livermore indicated that it had been found useful to distinguish between product questions and process questions. Among the former are the moral and ethical problems involved in the development of a technology which, in the wrong hands, possesses the capacity to inflict harm. There are basic and serious philosophical, social and political choices to be made. There is understandable concern, for example, about ecological imbalances that might ensue. By contrast, with regard to the research process itself, the committee tended to take comfort in the belief that the NIH guidelines would prove adequate in the situation.

The committee saw as separable the question of the generation of scientific knowledge and the issue of its subsequent implementation and use. Society has an acknowledged stake in the latter; the former, involving the freedom of inquiry, poses some thorny philosophical problems. He himself saw a need to face up to the latter nonetheless, Professor Livermore admitted. Emphasizing the fact that on this point he was asserting only his own view, doubtless a minority position, he suggested that with research of such unique character now on the scene, it might well behoove us to take the opportunity to test the limits of freedom of inquiry at this time.

Thanking Professor Livermore for his clear and informative report, Chairman Johnson recognized Professor Kaplan, who introduced the following resolution, which was seconded:

"Whereas recombinant DNA research possesses potential benefits but also hazards, and

Whereas many scientists have recognized these hazards and proposed a moratorium on various kinds of recombinant DNA research, so that there would be sufficient time for (a) a thorough and extended study of the advisability of conducting such research and, if it were to be conducted, (b) the formulation of guidelines for the protection of the researchers and mankind as a whole,

Therefore be it resolved that this body lends its support to the establishment of one or more forums, jointly sponsored by the Research Policies Committee, assisted by the University Values Year Program, having as their purpose the impartial implementation of a thorough discussion of the many issues raised by recombinant DNA research-- technical, ethical, legal, and other; having as their participants qualified persons from these various disciplines as well as interested non-experts; and inviting to such forums all interested members of the University and the community."

In the brief discussion that followed, Professor Livermore had occasion to reply to several additional factual questions. The spirit and purpose of the resolution went uncontested, and in the subsequent vote it carried unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:15 p.m.

Erasmus L. Hoch
Secretary