

The minutes of the January 24, 1994 Senate Assembly meeting were approved on February 7, 1994.

THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
SENATE ASSEMBLY MEETING
MINUTES OF 24 JANUARY 1994

ATTENDANCE

Present: Awkward, Beam, Bike, Birge, Blair, Blinder, Brandle, Brewer, Brown, Chiego, Christiansen, Cowan, D'Alecy, DeCamp, Eklund, England, Ensminger, Frey, Gidley, Griffin, Gull, Irani, Kaplan, Katehi, Kennedy, Kunkel, V. Lee, Levine, Lomax, Loup, Lykes, Maloy, Marich, McNamara, Moore, Mukasa, Mutschler, Myers, Nairn, Nowak, Rodriguez, Rush, Saunders, Scheppele, Schteingart, Shirley, Simms, Sisson, Smith, Stein, Stensones, Tinkle, Whitehouse, Williams; MacAdam, Olson, Thorson, Cressman, Heskett.

Absent: Brusati, Bryant, Cameron, Canine, Coward, Driscoll, Eggertsen, Elta, Fox, Greene, Kelley, Lawson, Nostrant, Princen, Raymond, Silverstein, Tremper, Warner, Woo.

CONSIDERATION OF MINUTES OF DECEMBER 13, 1993

The minutes were corrected and approved.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

In response to a question on the effect of the motion on faculty salaries passed by Senate Assembly at the December meeting, Griffin responded that the motion was transmitted by the Assembly to Provost Whitaker at the time. Griffin added in further response to the question that there was no explicit definition provided for the term "equitable" used in the motion in relation to faculty increases.

Griffin reported that the Research Policies Committee was not ready to bring their recommendations to Senate Assembly and that the Academic Affairs Committee would have a document for consideration by the Assembly prior to the February 7 Senate Assembly meeting.

CHANGE IN TIMING OF THE ELECTION OF SACUA OFFICERS

Griffin placed the SACUA motion before Senate Assembly "This election shall take place at the final SACUA meeting in April" and substitute "This election shall take place near the end of January". The motion was seconded. Moore offered the amendment to add "or in February" to the original motion. The motion to amend was seconded. Senate Assembly approved the motion to amend and voted to approve the amended motion:

"This election shall take place near the end of January or in February".

TASK FORCE ON THE APPEAL OF TENURE DECISIONS

Jayne Thorson outlined the background and charge to the task force as part of a perceived need for a University-wide policy and process to review negative tenure decisions. The Task Force, chaired by Kate Barald (Medicine), is comprised of Elizabeth Douvan (Psychology and Women's Studies), Christopher Flint (English Language and Literature), Linda Katehi (Engineering), Ann Larimore (Geography and Women's Studies), Rosemary Sarri (Social Work), and Kent Syverud (Law).

In response to several questions from the Assembly concerning the focus of the task force (on process at the departmental or college level), Thorson noted that the charge to the committee was open ended enough that they could decide what to examine, but that

the initial assumption was to look at review subsequent to the negative departmental decision. There was a suggestion that Senate Assembly recommend to the task force a review of the entire process. Assembly members also noted other issues: several schools have no departments; the importance of soliciting input from the branch campuses; the possible need to consider promotion decisions.

FACULTY GOVERNANCE SUBCOMMITTEE OF SACUA

Brewer summarized the progress of the Faculty Governance Subcommittee, noting in particular the retreat scheduled for March 2 to include Senate Assembly members, Executive Committee members, and Senate Assembly committee chairs. Brewer outlined the functions of faculty governance noting things which currently worked well and functions which could be improved. Offering some examples of University decisions or outcomes without adequate faculty input, Brewer listed the dismantling of the Intellectual Properties Office, erosion of tenured faculty positions, faculty raises, parking, and the increase in lawsuits stemming from failure to follow procedures regarding faculty. Explaining a proposed restructuring plan designed to improve communication among faculty, Brewer reviewed the proposal for Restructuring Faculty Governance distributed to Assembly members. He emphasized that the purpose in improving faculty governance was not to harass the University administration but rather to strengthen the faculty voice in providing leadership for the campus. Loup reviewed plans for the second portion of the retreat which will include discussions on faculty reimbursement; undergraduate education and the increasing proportion of non-tenure-track faculty; and procedures and processes for faculty grievances. Brewer concluded by outlining the structure for the faculty retreat. After some discussion on an appropriate date for the retreat to allow the widest possible attendance by faculty, Senate Assembly voted to retain the scheduled date of March 2. Griffin invited Assembly members to send additional comments and thoughts to Brewer.

CONSIDERATION OF FLEXIBLE BENEFITS PROGRAM

David Anderson (Professor of Electrical and Computer Engineering, Co-Chair of the Flexible Benefits Advisory Committee) reported on the communication efforts of his task force to share information and elicit input from the University community, noting that presentations had been made to 6,000 faculty and staff. Senate Assembly identified a number of areas of concern to which Anderson responded. He summarized the impetus for the program, outlining the role of the Budget Priorities Committee and ACUB, and the prior role of the Staff Benefits Office and the University Administration. Anderson suggested possible administration interest in the program as an opportunity to provide flexibility for staff and to achieve some cost savings. Anderson and Provost Whitaker emphasized that the plan was not a fait accompli and that a decision would not be made until later in February until sufficient discussion had taken place on the campus. Senate Assembly members suggested that the lack of faculty interest in the review was because there was considerable satisfaction with the current plan and suspicion about the proposed plan. Anderson agreed that there were both these elements.

Roy Penchansky (Professor of Health Services Management and Policy) offered a view counter to Anderson's, suggesting that it was impossible for faculty to make recommendations on the plan without the details. He also suggested that faculty shouldn't start with the assumption that the current benefits plan was so good that it couldn't be improved. Penchansky reiterated the four main questions: 1. What gets contributed in

terms of flex dollars and how will this change over time? 2. What is the price over time? 3. What are the benefits and are they what we need? 4. Does the plan serve the community? He raised concerns over: the three year commitment and the possibility that this was, in effect, a sunset clause; manipulation of pricing; lack of a minimum life insurance coverage if people can take benefits out in cash. Penchansky also suggested that the plan included some needless, "junk" benefits, e.g., vision coverage, for benefits that were actually low cost on the market but would encourage people to select more costly and unnecessary goods or services. He recommended formation of a group to pursue the questions and noted that the current proposal was a great improvement over the previously suggested flexible benefits plan from several years ago.

Senate Assembly members offered some additional perspectives: Employees will be able to tell how much the University is collecting, but the University would be able to hide the actual pricing; portions of the plan labeled junk by one employee might be of value to another, that is the whole point of a flexible benefits plan; it might cost the University money to have staff changing their benefits package regularly; staff will be confronted with extremely complicated choices, so there may be a need to provide some consultation service to help in those choices. In response to several questions, Anderson confirmed that health and dental benefits would not be affected by salary level, although life insurance benefits would be affected by factors such as age, income, and wellness. Penchansky noted that estimates of the administrative costs attendant to the flex benefits plan have ranged from \$500,000 to \$1,000,000. Senate Assembly members voiced concerns over the possible impact from the reduction in sick leave time from 15 to 12 days for staff employees. Additional concerns included the possible impact of a demographic shift in the population pool (with a particular concern over the temptation for people to underinsure or opt out of life insurance leaving their families at risk.)

Provost Whitaker reiterated that no decision had been made to implement a plan, but that there was considerable staff interest in flexibility in compensation. He indicated a goal to let people act like adults and make adult choices. Assembly members suggested several solutions to the need for more information, including having Staff Benefits send out to individual staff members a listing of what each component would cost the individual based on current price estimates. There was a suggestion that SACUA should meet with the task force before a decision was made and Anderson responded that he would expect a recommendation to come from Senate Assembly. Griffin indicated that he expected Senate Assembly would have a motion to consider on February 7. Anderson concluded by saying that he felt much more comfortable on the current examination of flexible benefits and that differing viewpoints were not that far apart.

Griffin thanked Anderson and Penchansky for their presentation.

ADJOURNMENT

Senate Assembly adjourned at 5:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara MacAdam
Senate Secretary