

Minutes of the Senate Assembly Meeting of 17 February 1997  
Approved 17 March 1997

THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN  
SENATE ASSEMBLY MEETING  
MINUTES OF 17 FEBRUARY 1997

Chair Dunn convened the meeting at 3:20 P.M.

MATERIALS DISTRIBUTED

1. Senate Assembly Agenda
2. Draft minutes of the Senate Assembly meeting of 27 January 1997
3. Approved minutes of the Senate Assembly meeting of 9 December 1996
4. Approved minutes of the SACUA meeting of 13 January 1997
5. Announcement: Harold R. Johnson Diversity Service Award, undated
6. Announcement: Race and Academic Integrity, Seventh Annual Davis, Markert, Nickerson Lecture on Academic and Intellectual Freedom
7. Principles of Faculty Involvement in Institutional and Academic Unit Governance at the University of Michigan, dated 14 February 1997
8. Memorandum with attachments from C. Cook and J. Kulik to Senate Assembly, dated 14 February 1997

CONSIDERATION OF THE MINUTES OF 27 JANUARY 1997

The minutes of 27 January 1997 were approved with one correction.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Chair Dunn reminded Senate Assembly members once again that VCM is in full application this year, and that faculty are encouraged to communicate identifiable problems or concerns to the oversight committee, of which he is a member.

Chair Dunn announced that Professor Nicholas Rine will replace Professor Gross as chair of the Police Grievance committee.

Chair Dunn announced that additional nominations for election to SACUA are invited from the Senate Assembly at large.

Dunn said that a report from the Faculty Senate Committee on the Future of the University would be available on 28 February 1997, and would contain essays from 14 faculty members.

Dunn also reported that he and SACUA chair-elect D'Alecy had held discussions with the two new regents, and he said that the regents expressed strong support for the academic aspects of the university.

CHANGES IN THE UNIVERSITY RECORD

Chair Dunn introduced Ms. Julie Peterson at 3:30 P.M. Ms. Peterson described changes in the format and content of the University Record, which were scheduled to go into production after the mid-term recess. She highlighted the changes and distributed a mock-up version of the new design. She said that the new format would include more pictures, more white space on each page, wider spacing between printed characters, news briefing columns along the outer margins of inside pages, and reference links to the electronic version of the University Record.

Professor Curley asked if the web-site version of the University Record would contain more information than the printed version. Peterson replied that it would occasionally, but that the main way that content would be increased would be through links to other sites. Professor Steneck asked if the format changes meant that content would decrease. Ms. Rebecca Doyle, editor, said that the answer was not known yet. Professor Dunn asked if the Faculty Perspectives Page would remain at 1800 words. Doyle replied that she hoped it would remain unchanged from past practice.

Professor Gobetti asked if more paper would be used with the new format. Peterson replied that an improved quality of paper would be used, but that they hope not to use too much additional paper. She added that all paper used was recycled. Professor Burdi asked about advertisement revenues. Peterson replied that ad revenues cover two-thirds of printing and operation costs, excluding salaries.

Chair Dunn expressed thanks to Ms. Peterson and her staff on behalf of the Senate Assembly for the presentation.

#### CRLT STUDENT ASSESSMENT FORMS

Chair Dunn introduced Connie Cook, CRLT Director, and James Kulik, Office of Examinations and Evaluations, at 3:45 P.M. Dunn said that CRLT staff were not responsible for the controversial uses of student response questionnaires in various university units, and he asked Senate Assembly members to direct their remarks mainly to the mechanics of questionnaire construction. He noted that the Provost has now reminded everyone that faculty own their evaluation forms, and that ownership does not extend to the department or unit.

Director Cook read from remarks that described the history of Instructor-designed questionnaires. She said that the practice began about 1975, and had not been reviewed subsequently. She said that complaints had been received from the Provost, Deans, and many faculty. Cook said that her office began the revision process 3 years ago, starting with a literature review of the nearly 1500 articles available on the subject, followed by more than one year of consultation with UM committees and department chairs. Cook said that she received authorization from the Provost's office, and then worked for 2 additional years on the changes.

Cook summarized the main changes from past evaluations as follows:

1. Instructor ratings are now compared within units (school or college) rather than just university-wide. Within LSA and Engineering the comparisons are by division (e.g., Natural Science, Social Science, Humanities).
2. A clear distinction is now drawn between faculty and GSI evaluation.
3. The number of open-ended questions is increased from 2 to a maximum of 5.
4. A "not applicable" category has been added for responses.
5. The menu of possible question choices has been updated.

Cook said that in some units, faculty can still choose their own questions. She added that, unfortunately, the practice is most unusual. She said that in most cases, some questions are mandated to the extent that three-fourths of the faculty at the UM cannot choose most or any of their questions. Cook added that CRLT does not decide who sees the forms or how they are used.

At 4:05 P.M. James Kulik continued the CRLT presentation, supplemented with graphic displays. Kulik said that the strengths of ratings included evidence that they were rapid, inexpensive and objective methods, and that research supports their validity. He said that rating scores correlate well with higher exam scores by students, with positive student comments, with high alumni ratings, and with evaluation marks from classroom observers.

Professor Marich asked for more information about the practice of soliciting comments from alumni. Cook replied that the comments were based on 3 to 5 year retrospective recollections.

Professor Freese pointed out that students do not know that their comments are being used for decisions about merit pay and promotion decisions for the faculty. She said it would be more honest to inform them of the practice in print on the evaluation forms. Kulik replied that because the UM is decentralized, CRLT cannot control how the rating information is used in each unit. He pointed out that the Medical School and the Business School have developed their own evaluation systems and that CRLT sees nothing from those units. He said that CRLT wants instructors to feel a sense of ownership of their forms if they are using them. Kulik concluded his prepared remarks at 4:25 P.M.

Professor DeCamp reported that UM-Dearborn faculty do not use the CRLT system, but that in his experience there was nothing to stop a faculty member from commenting on the uses to which evaluation data were put. Director Cook replied that research showed that if faculty say that the ratings will affect their salary and promotion decisions, that the information will influence the ratings. Senate Secretary Lehman asked for clarification about the direction and magnitude of the rating changes demonstrated from such information. Cook replied that ratings increase, but she did not specify the magnitude.

Kulik pointed out that many units do not have written policy statements about the uses of the evaluation data. Professor Perakis suggested that the order of questions could

be important, and he recommended that the evaluations of overall performance evaluation be placed at the end of the questionnaire. Kulik replied that there was concern that doing so could lead the student to one extreme response or another by the nature of the antecedent questions.

Professor Lucente asked if the CRLT office had performed any research on how the results are used. Director Cook replied that she had received loads of phone calls from deans and associate deans, but that all of her information was anecdotal.

Chair Dunn thanked the CRLT staff on behalf of the Senate Assembly at 4:45 P.M.

#### OLD BUSINESS

Chair-elect D'Alecy informed the Assembly that active discussion of the faculty grievance document was underway with members of an administration committee, and that meetings were occurring regularly each Friday from 3 to 5 P.M.

#### NEW BUSINESS

D'Alecy announced that a draft document describing principles of faculty governance at the University of Michigan has been distributed (item 7), and he invited responses from the members. Chair Dunn added that the document represented an important statement of understanding of principles, and that it was important for faculty to provide their opinions.

The meeting adjourned at 4:50 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

John T. Lehman  
Senate Secretary