

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

SENATE ASSEMBLY

Minutes of Regular Meeting of 20 May 1985

ATTENDANCE

Present: Ascione, Bailey, Hudson, Beutler, Bissell, Brewer, Briggs, Burdi, Chudacoff, Cohen, Comminou, Cornell, Dahlke, Durrance, Easley, Eschman, Glover, Green, Gulari, Hanks, Howe, Jacobs, Hacker, Kusnerz, Larson, Lavoie, Lehmann, Lougee, Loup, Lusk, McCarus, McClamroch, Meyer, Moerman, Moran, Mosher, Nadelman, Payne, Pierce, Marc Ross, Muriel Ross, Rutledge, Sanders, Schteingart, Sears, Snyder, Stebbins, Taylor, Todor, Warschausky, Wiseman, Zweifler, Yocum

Absent: Boyd, Carnahan, Checkoway, King, English, Farley, Han, Herbert, Kahn, Leonard, Lewis, Lockwood, Lorey, Deshpande, Malvin, Margolis, Manis, Mermier, Miller, Oleinick, Olsen, Radine, Reed, Rizki, Schauer, Scheele, Southwick, Stapp, White, Zelenock

Professor Green convened the meeting at 3:15 p.m.

MINUTES

The minutes of April 15, 1985 were approved as written.

MATTERS ARISING

There were none.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

1. Five Senate Assembly members have been promoted from Associate Professor to Professor: Maria Comminou, Erdogan Gulari, Joanne Leonard, Daniel Moerman and Gerald Moran. The Assembly extended its congratulations.

2. The September 1985 Senate Assembly meeting has been re-scheduled from the 16th to the 23rd.

REPORT FROM THE RESEARCH POLICIES COMMITTEE

Professor William Williams, Chair, stated that the past year had been a "brush fire year." In the Fall of 1983 RPC had forwarded a resolution to the Assembly urging acceptance of the Monto Report on Indirect Costs. RPC had previously accepted four of the recommendations in that report and endorsed the fifth in principle but wanted to work further on it. This was planned for 1984-85. Instead, other matters intervened and required the committee's attention. These included the following:

1. Proposal to merge the positions of Vice President for Research and the Dean, Rackham School of Graduate Studies.

RPC jealously guards its right to be the faculty advisor to the Vice President for Research. After studying the proposal, the Committee recommended that the two positions not be merged.

2. Nuclear Free Zone for Ann Arbor.

This ballot proposal was voted upon during the November 1984 election. As part of its study of the proposal, RPC invited Professors Carl Cohen and David Bassett to discuss associated issues.

3. Research Incentives Task Force.

RPC wanted liaison to this group which was appointed by Vice President Frye and chaired by Associate Vice President Holbrook. Because the task force is considered an administrative group, the liaison was not established. Associate Vice President Holbrook has, however, met with RPC to discuss related topics.

4. Classified Research Proposals.

The committee considered two proposals submitted by Professor T. Birdsell. One was approved by a vote of 7-5. The vote on the other resulted in a 6-6 tie and by the rules of the committee constituted a rejection. According to procedure the proposal was forwarded to Vice President Sussman who approved the proposal and forwarded it to the Navy. The matter continues as an issue between RPC and the Vice President.

RPC recently rejected another proposal in context of the Regental policy prohibiting limitations on publications.

5. Vice President for Research Search Committee.

RPC complained to President Shapiro about the lack of representation on

the search committee and liaison with it. Subsequently, RPC was involved in interviewing several candidates.

6. Intellectual Properties Office.

RPC heard a report from James Dautremont indicating that the University currently has a relatively low income from royalties. Also, rules applying to book royalties do not apply to other royalties such as those from software programs.

Professor Williams will resign as chair effective June 1 to become Associate Dean, LSA. Professor George Carignan will then become Acting Chair.

In the ensuing discussion Professor Williams explained that Regental rules allow authors to retain book royalties but require sharing with the University up to 50% of the royalties earned from other creative efforts. In practice, though, cases seem to be handled on an individual basis.

With respect to research costs, Professor Williams stated that it is not possible to document the proposition that research does not pay for itself but instead costs the University money. During the past year RPC focused more on the administrative attitude encapsulating this notion because of its potential adverse effects on the local research climate.

Professor Green noted that RPC's full agenda had precluded the group from addressing the items SACUA had delineated in the Fall 1984 Retreat. These would likely be reconsidered in Fall 1985 planning.

"SOME REFLECTIONS ON THE CLIMATE OF SCHOLARSHIP" BY BILL E. FRYE, VICE
PRESIDENT FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS AND PROVOST

Vice President and Provost Frye will address the Senate Assembly about budgetary matters at the June meeting and focused his remarks today on matters other than the budget which equally affect the life of the academic community. Mainly abstract, these matters, relating to the spirit of the institution and to the quality of the scholarly environment at the University; are of serious concern to him. Specifically, these are comity, conformity, and academic fragmentation.

In his understanding, comity refers to a form of social harmony, based on mutual respect, among members of a group who individually have significant diverse interests. The University fits the criteria of diverse interests and has been blessed over the years with an unusual share of a reciprocated sense of intrinsic worth, respect and trust. Yet there are conditions operating in both academia and on campus that can erode the spirit of comity and in the long run diminish the University compared to what it might otherwise be.

Disparities or perceived disparities include those related to intellectual work; operation of the "market place"; intellectual content, rigor and significance of the scholarly effort in different fields; and status or prestige of fields or individuals. Disparities in the scholarly community are sometimes inevitable and often legitimate. His concern is how the community looks at and deals with the difference and the conditions that generate them. If comity is of importance in the functioning of the University, then it must be treated as a quality having value when tough choices have to be made in response to a changing resource base and new intellectual directions. The environment of scholarship must, insofar as possible, be managed so that a sense of worth and of opportunity is preserved for all.

His second concern was the tendency toward excessive conformity and the conditions that create that tendency. One result is less opportunity than he would like for scholarship at the University to take a leap ahead. Several factors may contribute to discouraging academic risk-taking. Although excellent, the national system of awarding grants might have been different and better had it been structured in the form of institutional rather than individual grants. Such structure might have maximized institutional individuality and autonomy thus prompting institutions to be more venturesome. Rewards and incentives such as salary increases and promotions, if not wisely managed, can place a premium on caution. The lack of money, especially to support new ventures, is also a factor. Although the University funds some new initiatives, the percent is too low overall. Provincialism, or scholastic narrowmindedness, is, in his view, a serious problem. Too often scholars are constrained to look inward to ever finer detail rather than to seek the connectedness among things in ways that could enlarge the possibilities of work to its full potential. Finally, the pursuit of excellence may have become a canalizer of scholarly ideas and standards that leads to an undersirable degree of conformity and even banality in research.

Whatever its causes, and to whatever degree it is true, conformity may contribute to unfortunate tendencies at the University. These include:

1. A relative shortage of exciting, truly new and significant ideas.
2. Reluctance to cross academic boundaries in ways that might lead to remarkable new insights.
3. An inadequacy of large-scale synthesis from which new conceptual constructs might emerge.
4. A relatively weak sense of institutional character in the scholarly enterprise or of individuality among the faculty.

Academic fragmentation is a third area of concern where some environmental pressures push seemingly in the direction opposite from which the University

means to go. Since the University was founded there has been a linear increase in the number of faculty, courses, departments, degree programs, etc. representing the increasing number of areas of special knowledge encompassed by the University. His concern lies in the increase in sub-specialities and of organizational fragmentation that the current numbers represent. While particularization is probably inevitable, the issue is how to avert the accompanying tendency toward insularity of fields and sub-fields. The challenge is to assure that cross-disciplinary interaction, including that within departments, can occur readily and abundantly. It would be paradoxical if the inertia of organizations, the prejudices of special interests or the sheer mass of knowledge to be mastered were to prevent such opportunities from being grasped at Michigan. He advocated a "holistic" state of mind to bring the special interests into a larger perspective and help achieve the open mindedness that is the hallmark of the enlightened scholar.

Other matters pertaining to the character of the scholarly climate include promotion of scholarly integrity, maintenance of a reasonable balance among disciplines, and promotion of the spirit of graduate education and basic research to unify the professional schools and the disciplines. Problems such as these and the aforementioned can probably never be "solved" but the community can optimize its position. Excellence in scholarship, which includes both teaching and research, will be achieved by maintaining an environment that is supportive of the collective individualities of those with the ability, will and vision to be creative over a lifetime of scholarship.

He concluded by noting that his remarks express a personal viewpoint and should not be construed as true assertions in any factual sense. Views such as these need not be regarded as either "true" or "false" but as matters among which balance is to be sought. He hoped that Assembly members would find some of the points articulated worth reflecting upon.

Professor Briggs noted that communication is always a problem and asked the Vice President how he reviews "downward" communication and what signals he receives that such communication succeeds. Vice President Frye replied that the character of communication in the University is extraordinary. Faculty and students, who are the targeted audience, enter and leave the community discussion at will. This may be a healthy sign but is also the source of frustration. Committees have been especially helpful to him in fostering communication but communication is an area where one can never do too much. For example, we should do all we can to have significant, participatory agendas for faculty meetings. While it is difficult to effect discussion of value-related issues, these are his prime concerns and he would like the faculty to tackle them. He noted that the real solution is not the discussion but optimizing opportunity. For example, when we select new colleagues, we should choose those who have the broadest values because that is where the most important decisions are made.

Professor Bennett Cohen asked Vice President Frye to expand upon academic risk taking and how the University can contribute to it. Vice President Frye replied that his office could make money available to encourage risk taking without the promise of success at the outset. Although some such effort exists, he questions if it is enough. Also, in allocating resources, the University needs to be flexible enough to deal with the maverick and to allow intellectual argument which bears weight. Professor Muriel Ross concurred that money would have to be available for faculty to be involved in risk-taking research and observed that administrators also have an obligation to acquaint themselves with research already going on in their units. Vice President Frye noted that there is a community responsibility which includes the capability to demonstrate the worth of an idea and to accept judgment on it.

Professor Marc Ross observed that the University does encourage research especially through the tenure system. This should not be underestimated and should be protected. Vice President Frye replied that none of his remarks was intended to underestimate current University efforts and successes. The budget re-allocation, however, may have strained conventional structures.

Professor Comminou noted that by the time tenure is gained, conformity has set in; is there any way to change the system? Vice President observed that not all rewards any more come from within the University; many are now external. Internally, the community can raise its consciousness by reflecting about these matters. One role the faculty can fill is to scrutinize promotions and persuade the Vice President that the "unusual case" is truly exceptional.

Professor Payne asked about people "falling through the cracks" and how the Office of Academic Affairs monitors this. Vice President Frye explained that the personnel system operates extremely well in a system of layers with progressive vetoes. The system rarely reaches down from above to tell a department that it should promote someone. Responsibility for promotion rests with the faculty.

Professor Stebbins asked for further comments on what bold strokes might be possible to avert fragmentation. Vice President Frye replied that these would require amounts of money not likely to be available. Therefore, it will take recognition on the part of resource allocators of the choices to make. Many of these will be difficult and include choosing between established things and new things.

Professor McClamroch asked if there were areas where initiatives should be undertaken. Vice President Frye noted that there is probably a remarkable amount of such activity going on as Michigan is not a stagnant University. He hopes that the phenomenon of the survival of the fittest will bring these to the surface from the faculty.

Senate Assembly Minutes of 5/20/85
Page Seven

OLD BUSINESS

There was none.

NEW BUSINESS

There was none

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 4:34 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Patricia B. Yocum
Senate Secretary