

Minutes of the Senate Assembly Meeting of 18 November 1996  
Approved 9 December 1996

THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN  
SENATE ASSEMBLY MEETING  
MINUTES OF 18 NOVEMBER 1996

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

MATERIALS DISTRIBUTED

1. Agenda for 18 November 1996
2. SACUA and Senate Assembly Skeletal Agendas, Fall 1996
3. Minutes of the Senate Assembly meeting of 20 May 1996
4. Draft minutes of the Senate Assembly meeting of 28 October 1996, including Appendix A (Speech to Senate Assembly by J. Bernard Machen)
5. Minutes of the Senate Assembly meeting of 30 September 1996
6. Minutes of the SACUA meeting of 14 October 1996
7. Minutes of the SACUA meeting of 21 October 1996

CONSIDERATION OF THE MINUTES OF 28 OCTOBER 1996

The minutes of 28 October 1996 were approved as submitted.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Chair Dunn announced that the meeting of the Senate Assembly in December would include selection of a nominating committee for SACUA membership. He said that the committee would consist of two retiring members from the Senate Assembly and two retiring members from SACUA. Professor Dunn asked that eligible members of the Senate Assembly who did not wish to stand for election contact the Senate Assembly office and announce their unavailability.

Chair Dunn also announced that the Ann Arbor chapter of the AAUP would sponsor a forum in two days which would examine the question of whether the search for a new university president should be open.

STATEMENT ON DIVERSITY

Chair Dunn declared that consideration of this issue would be postponed until the December meeting.

ADDRESS BY JAMES B. BOYER

Chair Dunn introduced J. B. Boyer, Professor of Curriculum and American Ethnic Studies, Kansas State University, who in turn delivered a talk entitled "Sensitivity to Racial and Cultural Differences on Campus".

Professor Boyer explained that he intended to provide a snapshot summary of the student population, with attention to proposed institutional accommodations in the future. Boyer then provided an introduction to demographic trends in the U.S. populations of Asians,

Mexican Americans, Indigenous Peoples, Hispanics, and African Americans. He explained that U.S. census data had heretofore excluded categories for people of biracial ancestry, which was no longer acceptable to those individuals.

Professor Boyer said that universities must become more accommodating than they have been previously to issues of ethnicity, divorce, disability, remarriage, economic stratum, and health. He explained that demographic trends signal a transition in student populations that will require changes in policies directed at the traditional student. He said that universities continue to be centers of re-analysis and replication of tradition, but where the political views of many students may change amidst the birth of new ideas and an atmosphere of reasoned dialog.

Boyer said that a quarter century ago, the Academy was consumed with equal access, and that the concern spawned the policy of affirmative action. He added that after more than 20 years of affirmative action, the practice amounted to counting heads and affirmative action became redefined as racial preference.

Boyer said that among some corporate entities diversity was important, but that at many universities there was opposition, and that among the problems that emerged were the roles of minority houses, centers for women's studies, the exploitation of minority athletes, and hate speech in lectures. Boyer explained that as a result of the experience, he and others were now asking questions about institutional racism. He said that the university must accommodate culturally different scholars through diversity training in an arena of racism, sexism, ageism, and elitism.

Boyer called for leadership in a climate of questionable systems. He said that society now stood on the threshold of the management of diversity, which would require major reconstruction of the university. Boyer said that unless an institution has a primary social agenda, that it is out of date. He called for re-examination of research topic selection, and for dialogs on cultural perspective.

Boyer asked the audience to contemplate their knowledge of ethnic personalities, and he declared his opinion that moral integrity can be taught to university students who have not been trained in traditional religions. He asked the members of the audience to examine the racial histories and gender histories of their own experience. He said that denial of the institutional problems was pathological, and that bigotry had no place in America. Boyer finished his remarks at 4:20 P.M.

Chair Dunn opened the floor for questions, and a speaker from the audience asked what Boyer meant by cultural differences. Boyer replied that the majority of people in the U.S. presently are whites of European descent, and that institutions have traditionally been constructed around the male members of that ethnic group. The questioner explained that he was of Jewish descent, and therefore different, but that many of his heritage had assimilated. Boyer said that the intelligencia had originally embraced the "melting pot" ideal for America, and had only within the last 25 years accepted the emergence of individuality.

Another speaker from the audience asked how it will become known when diversity is achieved. Boyer replied that the ideal will be evident when we see a new mosaic of culture and when Texaco scandals cease to emerge.

Professor Volakis commented that it was often difficult to accommodate new courses amid competing demands for curriculum reform. Boyer suggested that one solution might be to reduce the credit assigned to individual courses.

Professor Hinman asked whether institutions that are not presently diverse, specifically women's colleges, and traditionally black colleges, should embrace the gospel of diversity. Boyer replied that he believed they should do so. Professor Lucente asked whether accommodations should be extended to the cryptically disabled, including those afflicted with spinal injuries, Parkinson's Disease, and the like. Boyer responded that he believed that all people afflicted by infirmities that were not of their own making deserved accommodation. He concluded his remarks at 4:39 P.M. and thanked the Senate Assembly for the exchange.

#### OLD BUSINESS

No old business was presented.

#### NEW BUSINESS

No new business was presented.

The meeting adjourned at 4:40 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

John T. Lehman  
Senate Secretary