

Minutes of 15 May 2006
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MINUTES OF THE SACUA MEETING OF 15 MAY 2006

Present: Combi, Frier, Giordani, MacAdam, Meerkov, Riles, Seabury, Smith (chair), Younker; Lehman, Leu, Schneider

Absent: none

Guests: F. Askari, J. Bernard, E. M. Gramlich, D. Potter, W. Nowinski, J. Zorn, J. Lee

MATERIALS DISTRIBUTED:

1. Draft Agenda
2. Draft minutes of the SACUA meeting of 8 May 2006
3. Hotline Planning Group, undated
4. Difficult Dialogues (<http://www.crlt.umich.edu/DD/about.html>)
5. New Ford Foundation Grants to promote academic freedom and constructive dialogue on college campuses. (<http://www.fordfound.org/news/more/dialogues/>)
6. Electronic mail message from D. Potter to E. M. Gramlich, dated 10 May 2006, regarding on-line evaluations
7. Electronic mail message from T. Schneider to E. M. Gramlich, dated 11 May 2006, regarding topics for Monday's SACUA meeting
8. Electronic mail message from T. Schneider to E. M. Gramlich, dated 12 May 2006, regarding more information on discussion topic
9. Electronic mail message from K. Riles to E. M. Gramlich, dated 10 May 2006, regarding AAAC Student Academic Success Study
10. [Report of the Task Force on the campus climate for transgender, bisexual, lesbian, and gay \(TBLG\) faculty, staff, and students, dated April 2004.](#)
11. Electronic mail message from T. Schneider to E. M. Gramlich, dated 13 May 2006, regarding another topic for Monday
12. Draft 2005-2006 Annual report to the Regents on faculty salary and composition committee on the economic status of the faculty (CESF), dated June 2006
13. Traditional Blue Cross Blue Shield/United (BCBS/United) plan eliminated for 2007, dated April 2007 (<http://www.umich.edu/~benefits/new/bcbsmunitdmsg.htm>)
14. Resolution to the U-M Board of Regents regarding Medicare B reimbursements for retirees

15. Memorandum to C. B. Smith from J. Bernard, dated 8 May 2006, regarding recommended syllabus language from the Council for Disability Concerns
16. SACUA/Senate Assembly Planning Schedule, updated 15 May 2006
17. [Memorandum to S. Forrest from M. N. Haan, dated 6 May 2006, regarding review and recommendations on burden of human subjects research regulation](#)
18. [Memorandum to S. Forrest and T. Sullivan from M. N. Haan, dated 6 May 2006, regarding recommendations for interdisciplinary research enhancement](#)
19. Report of the Task Force to review proposed revisions to rules governing the Senate Assembly, dated 30 April 2006
20. Extension of membership in the University Senate to clinical faculty and assistant librarians. Report of the Rules Committee dated 7 May 2006
21. Response to SACUA's inquiry, from the office of the provost, undated
22. Assessing the necessity of extending the maximum probationary period, by J. Lee and C. B. Smith, draft report dated 15 May 2006

Chair Smith convened the meeting at 2:05 P.M.; the draft agenda was approved.

CONSIDERATION OF MINUTES

The minutes of 8 May 2006 were corrected and approved pending response from the president regarding the account of her meeting with SACUA.

ANNOUNCEMENTS/UPDATES

Chair Smith announced:

1. For the remainder of the summer, SACUA meetings shall start at 2:30 P.M.
2. The provost's office provided distributed item 3, listing membership on the hotline planning group. The chair asked Mr. Schneider to contact the Office of the General Counsel in order to learn who was involved in planning the hotline from a policy sense.
3. The Ford Foundation study "Difficult Dialogues" is included as distributed item 4.
4. Reports from the Rules Committee and a task force (items 19 and 20) are distributed for review prior to the meeting next week.
5. A draft report on the tenure track probationary period (item 22) is distributed for review prior to discussion at the next meeting.

COMMITTEE LIAISON REPORTS

This item was postponed.

PREPARATION FOR VISIT OF PROVOST

SACUA members discussed the list and order of topics for discussion with the provost.

ONLINE STUDENT COURSE EVALUATIONS TASK FORCE

Professor Potter reviewed distributed item 6, which included a report from the SACUA on-line student evaluation task force. He recommended that the on-line evaluation working group in the provost's office meet with representatives from SACUA or other faculty governance groups. He suggested that SACUA discuss the report with the provost before it adopts a voted action item.

VISIT OF INTERIM PROVOST GRAMLICH

The interim provost and Ms. Gibbons arrived at 2:25 P.M.

Registration Brackets-

The interim provost declined to address the topic in depth. He said that the topic was within the purview of Lester Monts and that Dr. Monts would discuss his reservations with SACUA. Professors Riles and Giordani pointed out that there is strong support among both students and faculty for reform and there has been no satisfactory explanation forthcoming from Monts about the reasons for the delay on what seems on the surface to be a simple issue. The provost asked SACUA members to deal directly with Dr. Monts. He added that there was a separate issue about textbooks; some professors are not getting their textbook orders in early enough for students to arrange economical purchases.

Admissions Data Request-

The provost said that he met with AAAC and discussed the technical issues of performing the study proposed by AAAC. He said that he subsequently called Professor Mary Corcoran and that she said she would be delighted to become involved with the effort. He said that AAAC has his full encouragement and authorization to begin asking the registrar and admissions office for the data. He said that there may be some technical challenges, but he did not want to dissuade the committee from undertaking the study. He said he would be willing to make phone calls on behalf of the effort and also to pass along information to the new provost.

On-line Student Evaluation System-

Professor Potter said that SACUA's main concern is that both faculty and students should become involved in planning the evaluation process before it is implemented. The provost expressed agreement and said he would speak to provost-select Sullivan about the matter. He said that he recognized there were some differences between mean scores for paper and pencil versus the electronic system, but there are potential biases in both systems and he could not be sure which metric was more correct. He suggested that further experiments might be needed down the road, but that the on-line system seems more tamper-proof than the paper and pencil method. He stated further that teaching evaluations were discussed carefully in all promotion materials recently reviewed in the provost's office. Comparisons were used in a relativistic way. He suggested that everyone would catch on quickly to the nuances of a new system and that concerns may be exaggerated.

Professor Potter expressed concern that the on-line evaluation system could degenerate into a local version of rateyourprofessor.com strongly influenced by underperforming students who rarely attend lectures. Provost Gramlich said that in his experience absentee students would either start attending class or drop the course. Professor Potter suggested that there ought to be uniform practices across the university in the way evaluations are administered. The provost said that he agreed there should be some consistency. He suggested the best recourse would be to have consensus norms plus an appeals process for special cases.

Professor Giordani said it would make sense to seek a buy-in by the people who are involved, both faculty and students. Professor Meerkov asked the provost for his personal opinion about whether faculty and students should be involved in planning an evaluation system. The provost responded that he shared the views expressed by SACUA members, that

care should be exercised in how evaluation results are used, and that appropriate safeguards were warranted. Professor Meerkov suggested by way of example that if evaluations were conducted after final grades were assigned results will be different than if they are done before final grades. The provost said he agreed the evaluations should be done before grades are assigned. Professor Meerkov pointed out that this important issue, inter alia, has not been discussed in any of the materials distributed so far.

Professor Meerkov said that all members of the university should be extremely concerned about how we serve our community. He noted that some courses have low evaluations year after year without consequence. Provost Gramlich replied that he worried about such cases when he was dean of public policy. He added that the budget model now in place applies penalties if there is low enrollment.

Professor Smith observed that sometimes the stern, demanding professor teaches more valuable information than the well-liked ones. He said there has to be a distinction between good and popular. The provost agreed. He added that he believed that good teaching is a learnable skill, and that we ought to have a mechanism for making sure the faculty take teaching seriously. He said he did not know what to do if evaluations could not be used at all. Hopefully, he said, we will use them well.

Professor Frier explained that SACUA's feeling was that on-line evaluation is inevitable, and therefore SACUA is trying to make sure it is done properly. Provost Gramlich replied that he thought that various chairs do have a sense of who are the good teachers. He said there is a lot of narrative in the promotion letters about teaching, and that U-M departments take teaching a lot more seriously than may have been true 20 years ago.

Professor Riles asked the provost how he recommends that SACUA proceeds with Lester Monts so that faculty and students become involved in planning for on-line evaluations. The provost said that he would talk to the associate provost. Professor Meerkov said that hopefully Monts will relent and change his opinion. He recounted the ontogeny of student evaluations, noting it was a bottom-up initiative just like the AEC. He said that response rates would likely fall if expressed opinions are seen to have no effect.

U-Talk-

The provost reported that he was not involved in decisions to announce an anonymous reporting line that was greeted with much negative comment. Ms. Gibbons said that the CFO's area seemed to be primarily responsible for the telephone call-in plan. She said that distributed item 3 lists a new committee that was formed to address the problems resulting from announcement, then withdrawal, of the anonymous reporting line. She said that the group will meet only a few times to consider how to get additional input.

Response to TBLG Task Force Report-

Provost Gramlich provided distributed item 21, which he said was a formal response to allegations from the Task Force report. He explained that the item was created by Anthony Walesby and that it provides documentation of the technical and financial issues and how they are being addressed.

Rackham Summer Research Funds for Students-

Professor Potter commented that changes in the application process for summer support within the Graduate School have created hardships and that many students are putting tremendous debt on personal credit cards as the new application process is developed. The provost responded that a new application process should be in place by 22 May. He added that Dean Weiss reports that the Graduate School has already funded every eligible request that was received before 2 May. For people who applied for funding after 2 May, it will take until 22 May for the new system to be in place. He said that special consideration will be given to students with hardships, but that the students should be asked why they did not make their applications until after 2 May.

On behalf of SACUA, Chair Smith expressed appreciation of the interim provost's forthright engagement with faculty governance, and wished him success in future endeavors. Provost Gramlich replied that he, too, appreciated his discussions with SACUA and other elements of faculty governance. He said that he would be present on campus for teaching and other academic duties in the future and that he would be happy to meet with SACUA members to discuss general observations about university administration and operations.

The provost commented that, having reviewed 168 tenure files, he recognized that there were from two to four cases where people were entitled to request an extension but they did not do so. He said that his impression was that in these cases additional flexibility would have been useful.

The guests left the meeting at 3:28 P.M. The meeting recessed briefly.

VISIT OF CESF CHAIR ASKARI

CESF chair Askari joined the meeting at 3:35 P.M. Professor Askari reviewed distributed item 12. He said that AAUP data reveal that salaries at the U-M are not competitive with those of our academic competitors, and that the CESF would report this to the Board of Regents. He said that there are marginal statistical differences in salaries of men and women in the Medical Center and Business School, but in no other unit. He invited feedback on the draft report, and general discussion followed. Particular attention was given to the implications of retroactively withdrawal of Medicare Part B reimbursement.

Professor Meerkov inquired whether the CESF had investigated the compensation disparity, if any, of U-M administration officers compared with those at academic peer institutions. Professor Askari said that CESF has not done that, but that it would be a good idea to do so if appropriate data could be obtained. Meerkov asked further about the status of the alleged unfunded liability for retiree health benefits. Professor Askari replied that the liability exists and is growing, but that the administration insists the expenses will be paid out of current revenues rather than by accumulating a pool of money for funding future costs. He said that in a sense, the current inadequacies could be argued to be the legacy of failures by past administrations to leave enough money to pay for these liabilities.

Professors Potter and Giordani left the meeting at 4 P.M.

Professor Riles asked whether there was any faculty input into the decisions regarding health care cost shifting. Professor Askari replied that there had been some input in the past, but most input was ignored and recent exchanges have become increasingly guarded on the part of the administration. Members decried the patchwork approach to increased co-premiums, co-payments, and withdrawn benefits as exposing the most vulnerable employees and retirees to unacceptable risks and burdens. SACUA members encouraged CESF to express these concerns to the Regents in the strongest possible terms.

Professor Askari left the meeting at 4:36 P.M. A brief recess was declared.

VISIT OF COUNCIL FOR DISABILITY CONCERNS CHAIR JACK BERNARD

General counsel J. Bernard joined the meeting at 4:35 P.M. He suggested that faculty governance adopt a model recommendation (distributed item 15) for inclusion in course syllabi that could be helpful to students with disabilities. SACUA members offered some constructive suggestions to improve the proposed language.

ACTION OF SACUA 051506-1 Professor M acA dam m oved thatSA CUA endorses the language of model recommendation with slight modification, and commends the model to Senate Assembly for further endorsement (Seabury seconded):

"If you think you need an accommodation for a disability, please let me know at your earliest convenience. Some aspects of this course, the assignments, the in-class activities, and the way I teach may be modified to facilitate your participation and progress. As soon as you make me aware of your needs, we can work with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) to help us determine appropriate accommodations. SSD (734-763-3000; <http://www.umich.edu/~sswd/>) typically, recommends accommodations through a Verified Individualized Services and Accommodations (VISA) form. I will treat any information you provide as private and confidential."

The motion was approved unanimously.

The guest left the meeting at 4:55 P.M.

OLD/NEW BUSINESS Chair Smith declared that at the first meeting of each month, the log of communications received in the Faculty Senate Office will be brought to the SACUA meeting for review by members. Mr. Lee distributed a draft report about the maximum probationary period (distributed item 22) for review and discussion at the next SACUA meeting.

Chair Smith asked whether SACUA approves purchase of an all in one printer/fax/scanner for the Faculty Senate Office. SACUA members gave unanimous consent.

The meeting adjourned at 5:15 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

John Lehman
Senate Secretary

University of Michigan Bylaws of the Board of Regents, Sec. 5.02:

Governing Bodies in Schools and Colleges

In each school, college, or degree granting division of the University, including those at the University of Michigan-Dearborn and at the University of Michigan-Flint, the governing faculty shall be in charge of the affairs of the school, college, or division, except as delegated to the executive committee, if any, and except that in the School of Graduate Studies the governing board shall be the executive board, and in the Medical School shall be the executive faculty.