

Minutes of 18 November 2013 Senate Assembly Meeting
Circulated 19 November 2013
Re-circulated 9 December 2013
Approved 9 December 2013

THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
UNIVERSITY SENATE MEETING
SENATE ASSEMBLY MEETING
18 NOVEMBER 2013

Present: Adler, Baker, Bradley, Biteen, Cervetti, Custer, Danziger, Dolins, Fagerlin, Fiore, Fraser, Garcia, Grosh, Hayes, Holland, Hollingsworth, Johnson, Jones, Kirshner, Larsen, Lim, Lehman, Masten, Mitchell, Mondro, Muehlberger, Oey, Olsen, Poulsen, Raphael, Rothman, Schloss, Smith, Staller (Chair), Swain, von Buelow, Winful, Wright, Ziff

Requested Alternate, None Available: Adunbi (LSA), Cotera (LSA), DiPietro, (LSA), (Business), Swain (Medicine), Wong (Medicine), Young (Engineering)

Alternates: Wraight (Ro-UM Dearborn)

Absent: Atchade, Barolo, Bayraktar, Brown, Burrow, Campbell, Christman, Fenno, Friesen, Hershovitz, Jacobsen, Katapodi, Kee, Koopmann, Lu, Mansfield, Mora, Mutschler, Nevett, Nielsen, Odetola Pandey, Primus, Princen, Prygoski, Ryan, Sarma, Shah, Silveira, Szymanski, Thompson, Trandafirescu, Turnley

MATERIALS DISTRIBUTED

1. Agenda for Senate Assembly
2. Draft Minutes of the 21 October 2013 Senate Assembly meeting
3. Draft resolution for Senate Assembly consideration (Action of SACUA 111113-1)

Chair Staller convened the meeting of the Senate Assembly at 3:20 P.M. The proposed agenda was approved.

MINUTES

The draft minutes of 21 October 2013 were approved.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

1. The provost will host a town hall meeting about engaged and digital education from 2 to 3:30 P.M. on 22 November and will subsequently form task teams of interested faculty.
2. The Senate Assembly will meet on 9 December, at which time James Hilton and James Holloway will present an agenda item regarding engaged and digital education.
3. Applications are invited for the Roads Scholar community outreach program. The deadline is 30 November (<http://mrs.umich.edu>).

IT RATIONALIZATION

Chair Staller invited Professor Oey to lead a Committee of the Whole discussion of recent initiatives to consolidate IT services. Professor Oey described efforts underway in LSA preliminary to the campus-wide consolidation effort. The intention is that support for standard commercial software such as Microsoft Office are being centralized, but this also is having the unintended effect of jeopardizing support for specialized, discipline-specific software. Astronomy has lost their IT support person, with detrimental effect to research functionality. IT management personnel, including UM chief information officer (CIO) Laura Patterson, visited with Astronomy faculty and listened to faculty concerns. The CIO acknowledged that faculty needs are falling through the cracks. She expressed interest in meeting with Senate Assembly and is tentatively scheduled to attend the January meeting.

Professor Kirshner remarked that the performance arts are experiencing similar problems. He said that proximity of support staff is important. Professor Smith said that this was the first he had heard of the initiative. He said that the College of Pharmacy relies on a great deal of specialized software and currently requires the services of many IT people. Professor Adler said that her unit lost its IT person at Dearborn, and that the loss had occurred with no faculty input. Professor Poulson said that he and his colleagues in Earth and Environmental Sciences are very aware of the situation, and that it is a serious problem for them. Professor Grosh suggested that the Assembly needed to engage with the CIO. Dr. Fraser suggested that the Dearborn CIO be invited to the same meeting.

Professor Oey stated that support for high performance computing is going better, but deficiencies exist in desktop-scale applications. Professor Larsen said that consolidation efforts in Physics neglected teaching IT support. He said that his department is introducing a large new course Winter term and there is no IT support for it. He pointed out that the Board of Regents has instructed UM administration to cut millions of dollars in expenses, and that means personnel losses. He urged Assembly members to think about alternative solutions and not to simply bemoan the cuts. Professor Rothman said that he and colleagues at the University Library have been hearing about the IT initiatives for about one year. He said consolidation has already occurred in administrative units and that preparations for academic units are to follow. He said the consolidated personnel will become part of ITS.

Chair Staller closed Committee of the Whole discussion at 3:47 P.M. She said that both Ann Arbor and Dearborn CIOs would be invited to meet with Senate Assembly, and she asked members to consult with their constituents.

BENEFITS DISCUSSION AND FOLLOW-UP

ACTION OF SENATE ASSEMBLY 111813-1

Chair Staller invited Professor Masten to introduce a resolution that was adopted by SACUA and is being proposed for endorsement by the Senate Assembly (distributed item 3). Professor Masten said that the methods used by the consultant firm Aon Hewitt are proprietary, and that although Professor Muir made probing inquiries, they were to no avail; the methods and their validity remain completely opaque. He said that unknown weighting factors are applied in the consultant's analysis, but that some comparisons suggest that the UM at present is at both the mean and the median of its peer group. He said few peers contribute less than 10% toward

retirement. He suggested that benefit reductions might generate nominal savings, but that salary levels will have to adjust to attract good candidates.

Several members of the Assembly expressed support for the resolution, and asked that the question be called. Chair Staller asked members to signify their readiness to vote on the Active Motion. By show of hands the procedural vote passed unanimously.

Vote on the Active Motion:

Number approving- all

Number disapproving- zero

Abstentions of record- zero

Chair Staller declared that the motion had been adopted by unanimous vote.

TEACHING EVALUATIONS

At 3:58 P.M. Chair Staller introduced Professor Mika LaVaque-Manty, who currently chairs the Academic Affairs Advisory Committee (AAAC) and is also a member of the Learning Analytics task force charged with a teaching evaluation project. Professor LaVaque-Manty delivered prepared remarks accompanied by a PowerPoint presentation (see Appendix pdf). His introductory points included:

- response rates dropped when electronic evaluations were introduced
- a single metric is used campus-wide
- the comparison groups for quartile comparisons are not transparent
- results are currently not shared with students
- the question bank of 1100 potential questions is unwieldy

His presentation concluded at 4:30 P.M. and he invited questions from the audience.

Professor Garcia remarked that the E&E responses studied by LaVaque-Manty are student ratings or perceptions, not true evaluations of teaching. He suggested that Professor LaVaque-Manty needed to be more precise in his terminology in order to conform to accepted scholarship on the subject. He said that it is essential to decide first what data are needed to evaluate teaching, and to recognize that some of the necessary data may come from students and others may come from the faculty themselves or their peers. He added that the convention adopted by experts in the field is that at least 70% response rate is needed to have reliable data about student ratings. Professor LaVaque-Manty acknowledged some of the limitations expressed but added that he was trying to evaluate the current E&E instrument.

Professor Smith pointed out that the original purpose of the E&E questions was to help faculty improve their own teaching and that the information belonged to them. He suggested that the original purpose has been changed. Professor LaVaque-Manty replied that he does not speak for the administration, but that the Learning Analytics task force was charged to look into the matter.

Professor Bitten asked whether there were gender differences in the ratings. Professor LaVaque-Manty referred to comparison graphs in his PowerPoint presentation, but cautioned that there was no information in the data set about the gender or other status factors for the instructors.

Professor Winful asked whether participation in the E&E surveys should be a requirement for all students. Professor LaVaque-Manty replied that the question has come up, but he does not know the provost's position on the matter. He said that in the medical school ratings dropped when participation became mandatory. He added that he personally did not support mandatory participation.

Professor LaVaque-Manty acknowledged that there are idiosyncratic differences among units, and for that reason his task force had focused on just LSA and Engineering. Professor Garcia suggested that it is possible to spend a lot of time fine-tuning an instrument that has limited applicability and that it may be more profitable to direct the effort elsewhere.

Chair Staller pointed out that she has learned the ratings are being formatted into a grid form that is used in the office of the provost for tenure and promotion decisions.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

There was no unfinished business.

NEW BUSINESS

There was no new business.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:56 P.M.

Respectfully submitted

John T. Lehman
Senate Secretary

University of Michigan Bylaws of the Board of Regents, Sec. 4.01:

The University Senate

The senate is authorized to consider any subject pertaining to the interests of the university, and to make recommendations to the Board of Regents in regard thereto. Decisions of the University Senate with respect to matters within its jurisdiction shall constitute the binding action of the university faculties.

University of Michigan Bylaws of the Board of Regents, Sec. 4.04:

The Senate Assembly

The Senate Assembly shall serve as the legislative arm of the senate.

The assembly shall have power to consider and advise regarding all matters within the jurisdiction of the University Senate which affect the functioning of the university as an institution of higher learning, which concern its obligations to the state and to the community at large, and which relate to its internal organization insofar as such matters of internal organization involve general questions of educational policy.

Rules of the University Senate, the Senate Assembly and the Senate Advisory Committee on University Affairs: In all cases not covered by rules adopted by the Senate, the procedure in Robert's Rules of Order shall be followed.