

Minutes of 11 May 2009
Circulated 12 May 2009
Approved 1 June 2009
Reconsidered 15 June 2009

THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
Senate Advisory Committee on University Affairs
6048 Fleming Administration Building
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48109-1340
Phone: (734) 764-0303
Fax: (734) 764-6564

Internet Address: <http://www.umich.edu/~sacua/>
Approved Minutes: <http://www.umich.edu/~sacua/sacmin/sacuaminutes.html>

MINUTES OF THE SACUA MEETING OF 11 MAY 2009

Present: Fraser, Lehman, Navvab, Poe, Rothman, Stark, Thouless (chair), Tzeng; Carr, Schneider

Absent: Frost

Guests: T. Sullivan (provost), K. Gibbons (office of provost), J. Zhu (*Daily* reporter), M. J. Frank (UM News and Information), J. Merlin (Duderstadt center), L. Patterson (MAIS)

MATERIALS DISTRIBUTED

1. Proposed agenda
2. Draft minutes of 4 May 2009
3. Draft University Senate/Senate Assembly agenda
4. Memorandum to Infectious Hazards Planning Group from T. E. Schneider, dated 1 November 2006, regarding Faculty Senate Office Academic & Business Continuity Plan
5. Procedures for the University of Michigan Department of Public Safety Oversight Committee
6. Membership lists for the Advisory Board on Intercollegiate Athletics
7. Report to SACUA Re: Outages and premature closure of the teaching evaluation process Winter Term 2009
8. draft letter to DPS executive director

Chair Thouless convened the meeting at 3:15 P.M. The draft agenda was approved.

CONSIDERATION OF MINUTES

Consideration of the minutes of 4 May 2009 was postponed pending communication with executive director of DPS about the account of his meeting with SACUA. A motion to reconsider postponement was defeated by 2 votes to 5.

VISIT OF PROVOST

The provost and K. Gibbons arrived at 3:30 P.M. The provost introduced John Merlin, director of the Duderstadt center and executive producer of the digital media commons, as well as Laura Patterson, associate vice president for administration information systems.

Course Evaluations-

Mr. Merlin made an oral presentation that paralleled distributed item 7. He described the size and complexity of the CTools software environment, and stated that the system hardware was not able to support the peak loads that the system experienced.

Dr. Fraser asked about the status of the advisory committee for CTools. Mr. Merlin replied that the committee last met in December, and that many issues need further policy discussion. He said that he is in discussion with John King and others about how best to use the committee. He added that the next meeting will likely be in the fall of 2009.

Professor Stark asked why evaluations were integrated with CTools, thereby making a simple system complex and not robust. Mr. Merlin replied that there were concerns from faculty and students about the number of interfaces they have to deal with. He noted that CTools is an architecture on which many things could be hung while making sure the system is compliant with privacy and other issues. Ms. Patterson added that it seemed like the logical place to put it. Professor Stark asked whether a backup process had been considered. Mr. Merlin replied that if an independent but robust system were used, there would be a challenge in getting data back into the Wolverine Access system. Professor Stark suggested that delayed evaluation results would be better than none at all. Mr. Merlin said that the best backup plan would be to make the system robust enough to handle the load. Professor Stark replied that Merlin's plan that assumes that he can imagine every possible failure mode.

Ms. Patterson pointed out that CTools expanded rapidly from a research project to its present size but that it still has a legacy infrastructure that is undersized. She said that a business continuity plan clearly is needed. Professor Navvab asked if virtual servers will help in the future; Patterson said yes. Professor Navvab asked if CTools will become usable for exams. Mr. Merlin said that his working group is exploring ways to emulate all traditional learning management tools in an electronic environment. He added that Blackboard has emerged as the only viable competitor of CTools from the private sector.

Professor Rothman asked whether failures like the recent one have occurred with other systems. Ms. Patterson said yes, that there were problems with Wolverine Access in the beginning, and also with the financial management system through PeopleSoft. Payroll, however, did not experience failures owing to experience gained with the former systems. She added that Payroll has dual parallel data centers, and that there is a final backup plan to pay people in cash if necessary. There are no dual data systems for CTools. She said that as MAIS and CTools merge there be increased infrastructure available to CTools.

Professor Rothman pointed out that complex systems invariably fail, and therefore backup systems are essential. He asked why backups were unavailable. Mr. Merlin replied that finances were to blame. He said that the current economic climate is not favorable to budget

requests. Ms. Patterson added that by merging systems and eliminating redundancies, some money will be freed up.

Undergraduate Admissions-

The provost assured SACUA that enough acceptances have been secured to assure that there will be a robust freshman class this year

Influenza Planning-

The Infectious Disease Task Force is working on contingency planning for a potential influenza outbreak in the Fall.

Accreditation-

Six faculty working groups have been writing reports, and these are on schedule for completion by January 2010. The accreditation visit will be in March 2010.

Promotions-

There were 205 promotion cases. Of these, 5 were negative mandatories, meaning that the school or college voted no, but the cases came forward to the provost nonetheless. The provost remarked that there was nothing procedurally unusual in those cases.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

The meeting entered executive session with the provost and K. Gibbons at 4:22 P.M. Discussion topics included (1) three-year analysis of the university budget in light of the state structural deficit, and (2) cost containment measures suggested by the provost's prudence panel. The meeting resumed open session at 4:55 P.M.

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

MATTERS ARISING

Chief Health Officer Winfield will attend a future meeting of SACUA, but the date is not set. The Senate Office has developed a continuity plan in the event of an influenza outbreak (distributed item 4).

SUMMER SCHEDULES

Chair Thouless distributed schedule sheets for possible summer meetings of SACUA and asked members to report their availability.

DPS OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

Chair Thouless reported that a DPS Oversight Committee constituted by annual election of faculty members is required by state law. The committee must be an elected and independent body. The chair proposed examination of guidelines and revision if necessary. He said he was still at the information gathering stage and would bring the matter to SACUA's attention at a future meeting.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

The meeting entered executive session at 5:00 P.M. Discussion topics included (1) ABIA nominations, (2) Faculty Athletic Representative position, (3) additional questions for the executive director of DPS and approval of a transmittal letter. The meeting resumed open session at 5:40 P.M.

SENATE ASSEMBLY/UNIVERSITY SENATE

SACUA members approved the draft agenda for the University Senate/Senate Assembly meeting.

OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

The meeting adjourned at 5:41 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.
