Senate Committee on Educational Policy  
Monday, November 7, 2005

Minutes

Present:  Abbas Aminmansour (Chair), Linda Beale, Loren Bode, Karen Carney (ex officio), Karen Chapman-Novakofski, Michele Crockett, Bo Fernhall (ex officio), Bettina M. Francis, Phillip Geil, Joseph Goldberg, Kristi Kuntz (ex officio designee), Faye Lesht (ex officio), Keith Marshall (ex officio designee), Amanda Palazzo, Lucy Rich, Leslie Struble, H. F. Williamson, Chet Zych (ex officio)

Absent:  Thomas Berfield, Stephen Boppart, Joe Danavi, Carol Malmgren (observer), Josh Rohrscheib, Kelly Tappenden, Jason Webber

Guests:  Ilesanmi Adesida, Interim Dean of Engineering; Keith Hjelmstad, Associate Dean, College of Engineering; Richard Holm, Assistant to the Dean, College of Engineering; Nancy Sottos, Interim Head, Theoretical and Applied Mechanics; Charles Tucker, Associate Head, Mechanical and Industrial Engineering

A regular meeting of the Senate Committee on Educational Policy convened at 1:15 p.m. in Room 232 of the English Building with Chair Abbas Aminmansour presiding.

I. Approval of the Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of October 24, 2005 were approved as written.

II. Remarks of the Chair

The Chair reported that the EPC had held a special meeting last Monday, October 31, to discuss President Joe White’s Strategic Plan in which Kristi Kuntz took notes and reported comments back to Interim Provost Delia. Anyone who has not yet seen the first draft of the Strategic Plan may contact the Senate Office.

Aminmansour mentioned that it has been traditional when reviewing proposals to contact the sponsoring department with any questions or requests for revisions. Recently an incident arose whereby administration in a particular college expressed concerns of being left out of the loop in the review process. Therefore, in the future he requested that we make sure to also copy the college on any proposal related correspondence.

A Public Hearing related to discussion of the merging of the Departments of Theoretical and Applied Mechanics and of Mechanical and Industrial Engineering in the College of Engineering (EP.06.16) has been scheduled for Wednesday, December 7 from 3:30 to 5:30 p.m. in room 190 Engineering Science Building. Aminmansour encouraged members to attend this hearing as he considers it a significant step in the proposal’s process; he also thought it important for all EPC members to attend this event.

III. New Business

EP.06.16, Proposal from the College of Engineering to merge the Departments of Theoretical and Applied Mechanics and of Mechanical and Industrial Engineering and Renaming the Combined Department the Department of Mechanical Science and Engineering  Chair Aminmansour announced that this meeting time had been set aside to meet briefly with key people involved in the process of merging two departments prior to the Public Hearing. Adesida gave a brief overview of the current process and reported that a recent vote of the entire Engineering faculty last Friday came in at 66 percent in favor of the merger and 34 percent against (65 percent of the faculty voted). He pointed out that he had become Interim Dean of the College of Engineering on June 1 replacing Dean David Daniel who had introduced the proposal. Adesida noted that the merger makes intellectual sense. He added that he sees the merger as realignment in the college and part of the Strategic Plan. Despite the fact that TAM (The Department of Theoretical and Applied Mechanics) is considered a leading department in the country, faculty numbers have diminished and extensive heated discussions have been taking place. There are twelve departments in the College of Engineering and he would like all of them to be in the top five; TAM is a top-notch department presently rated sixth in the country.

The Committee members held a discussion bringing up areas of concern in regard to the merger. In response to the report that six faculty members have already transferred to the Mechanical and Industrial Engineering Department, Sottos reported that the remaining faculty consist of one assistant professor, two associate professors, and six full professors. Tucker presented a summary of the Department of Mechanical and Industrial Engineering Department noting that Mechanics dates back to the time of Aristotle. TAM was once a core discipline but has come to possess a commonality with Mechanics; he no longer sees them as separate
entities and thinks merging together would provide a stronger presence for better recognition. There are presently fourteen TAM courses being taught; seven of these by TAM professors. Bode said he worried about the quality of instruction as he thought research professors provided better quality instruction. Adesida assured the committee that the College will do everything to maintain excellence.

Closed Session  Nancy Sottos shared concerns and answered questions of the Committee members to assist in the review process.

After the last of the guests had left the meeting, Aminmansour reiterated his stance that this is an enormously stressful process for some and asked the committee if there were any other individuals in this process that they might want to meet with; perhaps it would be advisable to ask those faculty members that have already moved to Mechanics as to their motivation. Struble suggested that committee members be assigned to meet individually with these faculty members. Francis asked if the process had possibly gone too far and it had become a no-win situation. Marshall asked that the Committee not believe that this merger is based totally on the ratings of the *US News & World Report* and pointed out that the MIE Department Head does see a kinship between the two departments. He asked that the members keep in mind that the Dean wants to place TAM in an area where it will thrive and that the merge is in the best interest of the College of Engineering. The Chair noted that there is still a lot more discussion on this issue.

IV. Subcommittees

Due to time constraints and lengthy discussion on Proposal EP.06.16, Proposal from the College of Engineering to merge two departments, the following items were not discussed.

Subcommittee A

EP.06.10, Proposal from the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences to revise and offer as an option Biomolecular Engineering under the BS Degree in Chemical Engineering

EP.06.13, Proposal from the College of ACES for curricular revision to the Bachelor of Science Curriculum with a major in Agricultural and Environmental Communications and Education

Subcommittee B

EP.04.40, Proposed Changes to the Code pertaining to “Institutional Credit” and “Transfer Credit”

EP.05.31, Proposal from the College of Business for Revision of the Curriculum for the Department of Business Administration

EP.06.11, Proposal from the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences for the addition of an Honors Option in the Integrative Biology Major

EP.06.14, Proposal from the College of Engineering to revise the undergraduate curriculum in Computer Engineering in the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering

Subcommittee C

EP.06.05, Proposal from the College of Engineering to revise and increase the hours of the B.S. Degree in Materials Science and Engineering

EP.06.06, Proposal from the College of Fine and Applied Arts to revise the Undergraduate Curriculum in Sculpture

EP.06.15, Proposal from the College of Engineering to revise the undergraduate curriculum in Electrical Engineering in the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering

V. Pending Items

Subcommittee A

EP.05.03, Proposal from the Colleges of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences; Applied Life Studies; Business; Education; and Engineering to establish a Leadership Minor

VI. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 3:00 p.m.