Note: Please get agenda items for the November 5 Senate meeting to Ilege Bowers, English Department, by 5:00 p.m. Thursday, October 23.

ACADEMIC SENATE MINUTES
October 8, 1997

OVERVIEW:

Major topics presented/discussed: semester conversion (pp. 1-4); general education (p. 5).
Policy changes: none.

CALL TO ORDER:

Jim Morrison, chair of the Academic Senate, called the meeting to order at 4:06 p.m.

MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING:

Minutes of the 4 June 1997 meeting were approved as distributed.

SEMESTER CONVERSION PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION:

J. Morrison: Let me provide a brief historical overview. When YSU joined the state system thirty years ago, state institutions had a mandated common calendar. Thus, YSU converted from semesters to quarters to match the calendar at other state institutions. Not too many years later, the rules changed, and institutions were permitted to choose whichever calendar suited them best. Over the years, Miami University converted to semesters, Ohio University went to an early-term system, and additional institutions chose semesters as well.

In the meantime, various YSU Senate committees have studied the feasibility/desirability of returning to a semester system, but proposals to switch to semesters have been defeated at least twice in the Senate—even though surveys showed that faculty increasingly favored conversion, and students favored it as well, though by a smaller majority. The administration offered no clear message or support for semesters either time.

With the advent of a new administration, a new board, and a new environment, the issue has surfaced again. It's clear from University governance documents that the calendar is a prerogative of the administration. It's equally clear that development and approval of curriculum and programs are faculty prerogatives. Many consequences of the University calendar affect faculty: workload, calculation of sabbaticals and faculty-improvement leaves, etc. There are topics for collective bargaining. The Senate—composed of faculty, faculty administrators, administrators, and students—is the most appropriate body for considering the effect of the calendar on curriculum and programs. Though each group has its own responsibilities, the groups are intimately intertwined. Changes in one domain significantly affect other domains. Thus, the Senate Executive Committee invited President Cochran to present his views on semester conversion to the Senate.

President Cochran:

OVERVIEW: I appreciate the opportunity to elaborate on the process of changing the calendar from quarters to semesters. I want to share four or five points that seem most relevant. I hope you will become excited about what we can achieve and that you will support the overall process.

CONTEXT: Nationally, the debate is over. I can provide copies of the research I've looked at and that Jan Ellas's Semester Conversion Work Group has looked at. Almost 85% of all two- and four-year institutions combined and more than 90% of all four-year public institutions are on semesters. I see this as a substantive issue.

Jim Morrison has provided a good historical perspective on previous discussions about semesters at YSU. Let me add this: In 1996, Bill Jenkins and others noted that if we plan to change to semesters, it makes sense to make programmatic and calendar changes simultaneously. They reasoned that the new general education program will result in many new and revised courses; why should faculty members do all that work twice? Their reasoning was sound. However, it seemed clear to the provost and me in 1996 that while conversion was the right decision, the time was not right. It wasn't a question of whether to move to semesters; but when. The University was in the midst of considerable transition, and it seemed better to wait.

In the past, the administration had been silent on the issue. You can expect me to speak out on issues I believe in. I appreciate Jim Morrison's comments on the responsibilities for the academic reform process. We can't ignore that faculty are in charge of courses and curriculum. The quarter/semester calendar only provides the overall structure. What's really important is what happens within this structure. The provost sets the calendar, but the faculty have ownership over substantive issues such as curriculum and standards; course changes and approval; the sequence and scheduling of classes; and issues related to academic integrity.

CONCLUSIONS: Within this context, I have concluded that the semester system is in the best interest of our students and the University. We need to look at the collective good of the campus. I face a catch-22 dilemma. On the one hand, I, as much as anyone, encourage collegiality, openness, and discussion. On the other hand, it's not appropriate to ask you to debate the issue when I'm firmly convinced that we must make the change. I must provide strong leadership on what I have judged is in the best interest of the entire University.

The change won't be easy. However, the 2 ½-year time frame recommended by the Semester Conversion Work Group is about a year longer than most institutions take. The extra year will offer time to help students plan, to work out details, to deal with matters such as workload and cost, and to redesign the curriculum. This is an opportunity to review and reconceptualize our future, to seek the input of the 100 new faculty we've brought onboard.

These are some reasons I believe we must change to a semester system:

- Semesters provide time for more in-depth study and less fragmentation.
- Semesters are the norm; we are increasingly isolated as quarters.
- General education and specialized education—the two most significant parts of the educational process—can't be looked at independently. To convert one without seeing the intersection between the two would be a lost opportunity.
- The advantages for students are clear (and Cyndy Anderson will work with student leaders to keep them involved);
- Transferability between institutions;
- Flexible scheduling (such as one-night courses);
- Time for internships and cooperatives;
- Congruity between terms and textbooks geared to semesters;
- Opportunities for long-term payment plans.
- There are administrative advantages:
- The efficiency of two administrative periods instead of three;
- Faculty and staff members, as well as students, to be customer-service oriented.
- The state-funding process is changing.
- This is the last year we will receive funding based on fall enrollment. In the future, funding will be determined by the number of students enrolled for the entire year.
- We regularly lose enrollment with the start of each new term during the academic year. Thus, we will lose money if we stay on the quarter system.

We are substantially better and different than we were just a few years ago. I formed the Semester Conversion Work Group and shared the group's report (which I can provide to anyone who didn't receive a copy) to provide a "comfort level" with how we might go about planning and implementing the change. We can now begin to think more clearly about substantive outcomes we want to achieve. For example,

- From an institutional point of view, we can think about the most effective use of resources.
- Semesters will provide a "seamless framework," with classes available year 'round. Most of our students are here all year anyway. Shouldn't the curriculum offer them an opportunity to complete their education in three years if they want?
- Semesters will offer scheduling options and flexibility. Not every course works best in 5- or 10- or 15-week units. Semesters will provide long enough blocks to offer co-ops and internships throughout the academic year, including summer. The needs of students and what needs to be taught ought to be the determining factors in how courses are scheduled—not the calendar. If the faculty in a department decide a course out to be taught in a particular format for a particular length of time, they can work within the semester framework to schedule the course most effectively.

WHAT'S NEXT? I ask you to focus on how and why the change needs to take place. Understand what's being proposed, and get excited about the opportunities it affords. I've asked the provost, vice presidents, deans, directors, and chairs to talk with their colleagues about how the change will affect individual units. Discuss the matter openly, and express your own views. Semesters will give us an opportunity to achieve better continuity and consistency in the entire curriculum. The Semester Conversion Work Group proposed that we appoint a team of three people to guide the change. Based on what Hana Kilibarda did this summer, I believe students need to be represented in the group as well, so the steering body might be five or six instead of three. What we're asking will require a lot of work, but I think the advantages, the excitement, and the potential to create something new, to review and put things together in a comprehensive way, will help us leapfrog into the next century.

Question and Answer Period:
Rochelle Ruffer: I think the University has been moving in the right direction by encouraging faculty to do research through research professorships, etc. What will happen to such opportunities in the semester system? We would teach on a 4-4 schedule probably, and that's a heavy load, particularly with three preparations. For those who continually revise courses, research will be hard.

Cochran: The Work Group is working on such matters as workload. It will be a subject for the next collective-bargaining period. We need to think about how to deal with such substantive issues. 2 ½ years will give us time to think about these issues. We have to balance the advantages and disadvantages.

Ruffer: Will the summer session be longer?

Cochran: Yes, there should be a 15-week option. But that won't fit all courses or situations. We need to offer multiple options.

SENATE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:

J. Morrison noted that committee assignments are complete or nearly so (lists were available at the meeting and an update will be put online); please meet soon, get organized, and begin discussing the issues we face at once. For instance, the Academic Planning Committee needs to address the academic issues related to semester conversion. Morrison asked the Planning Committee for a preliminary report at the November Senate meeting, a full report in December. The Curriculum Committee needs to address curriculum matters.

FACULTY ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO THE CHANCELLOR: Duane Roth's FAC report is attached to the Senate minutes—see Appendix A.

CHARTER & BYLAWS COMMITTEE: No report.

ELECTIONS & BALLOTING COMMITTEE: Kathylynn Feld, acting committee chair, took nominations for chair of the Senate; the person receiving the 2nd highest number of votes will be vice chair. The term of office begins in January. Ballots will go out about October 13. Those nominated were Jim Morrison (Psychology) and David Ruggles. Brendan Minogue moved that nominations cease; the motion was seconded and carried.

Feld accepted nominations for new members of the Charter & Bylaws Committee (anyone eligible for Senate membership can be nominated). Kathleen Akpom, Bill Eichenberger, and Lowell Satre will remain on the committee. Those nominated were Lou Harris, Duane Rost, Nancy White, Sharon Shipton, and Dale Harrison. Someone moved that nominations cease; the motion was seconded and carried. Feld will verify that the nominees are willing to run.

ACADEMIC STANDARDS COMMITTEE: Charles Singler noted that the committee has met and he was elected chair. See the list of members and bring any issues to him or a member of the committee.

ACADEMIC PROGRAMS, CURRICULUM, ACADEMIC PLANNING, INTEGRATED TECHNOLOGIES COMMITTEES: No reports.

UNIVERSITY OUTREACH COMMITTEE: Duane Rost reported that the committee will meet Monday, October 13.
LIBRARY, ACADEMIC RESEARCH, STUDENT ACADEMIC AFFAIRS, STUDENT ACADEMIC GRIEVANCE COMMITTEES: No reports.

HONORS COMMITTEE: The committee will meet Wednesday, October 15.

ACADEMIC EVENTS COMMITTEE: No report.

GER TASK FORCE—AD HOC COMMITTEE: Bill Jenkins noted that the committee hopes to bring a recommendation to the Senate this fall. The committee had waited to see what would happen with semesters. Originally, the members designed the general education model for a quarter system; they have begun to adjust it for semesters. The recommendation will go first to Academic Standards; he hopes to have a recommendation for the whole Senate by December or January. The committee will send a report University-wide at the same time it goes to Academic Standards. Jenkins noted that the committee has worked hard and sought wide input. He believes the group has crafted a model that many will be able to support. He encouraged everyone, including student government, to voice any concerns before the report comes to Senate.

B. Minogue: Will the committee offer a semester or a quarter model?

Jenkins: Probably both.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS: None.

NEW BUSINESS: None.

ADJOURNMENT: The meeting adjourned at 5:08 p.m.