Senate Statutes and Bylaws Committee
MINUTES
October 16, 2001

Members present: Pam Barr, Murray Brown, Dan Franklin, Amy Lederberg, John Marshall, Roger Presley, Bill Waugh.
Members absent: Sadhna Diwan, Victor Flatt (on leave), Donna Ferguson, Leonard Teel.
Guests: John de Castro, Basil Mattingly.

The meeting was called to order by the chair, Murray Brown, at 2:05 p.m. The first item of business was the approval of the September minutes. The minutes were approved with no changes.

Dr. Brown introduced John de Castro, chair of the Senate Executive Committee, and asked that he address some of the issues this committee had been discussing at its last meeting. Dr. de Castro explained that the Committee of Chairs has been discussing issues that cross several committees’ charges: items like the calendar and Senate composition. This group would like proposals to come forward to the Executive Committee (and to the full Senate) as a package, with any language changes to the University Statutes and/or Senate Bylaws already notated. There have been cases where a proposal is approved by the Senate and then the language changes have to be sent forward separately at a later Senate meeting for formal approval. Dr. de Castro sees the Committee of Chairs as the leadership of the Senate; a discussion forum to look at issues and route them through the appropriate Senate committees.

Amy Lederberg stated some concerns regarding the Committee of Chairs and its role. There were concerns about agenda items being forwarded to the Statutes and Bylaws Committee by the Committee of Chairs rather than a standing Senate committee. There was discussion on when it would be best for the Statutes and Bylaws Committee to make language change recommendations: before a proposal reaches the Executive Committee or after. Some concern was expressed that if the S&B Committee provides language before a proposal reaches the Executive Committee, then it is assumed that the S&B Committee supports and endorses the proposal. The question arose: should S&B discuss the merits of a particular proposal or provide language only? Dr. de Castro proposes to try out this new process with the suggested changes to the Senate calendar and see if problems develop.

Dr. Lederberg expressed concern about the Committee of Chairs initiating proposals given the fact that it is not mentioned in the Senate Bylaws. Copies of the original resolution creating a Committee of Chairs, passed by the Senate in May 1991, were distributed to committee members. Dr. de Castro stated that the Committee of Chairs does not have a statutory role. Items discussed by that group will be passed along to the appropriate committee for further review and approval. He stated that anyone could initiate a proposal even without statutory authority. He doesn’t feel that the Bylaws need to be changed in this regard because the Committee of Chairs is not doing anything that is prohibited.

Basil Mattingly suggested that the Bylaws be changed to instruct committees that any proposal that includes language changes to the Statutes and/or Bylaws must be submitted to the Committee on Statutes and Bylaws first before moving forward to the Executive Committee and then on to the full Senate. Dr. de Castro said that might be a possible solution but he would like to experiment and see if this works. Discussion continued on the role of the Committee on Statutes and Bylaws in drafting proposals.

Discussion then turned to the proposed changes to the Senate calendar. Dr. de Castro explained why the Committee of Chairs is recommending these changes: changeover is difficult in the Spring as opposed to the Fall, student representatives haven’t been elected at the time of the new Senate, some committees need to meet in the summer, and other reasons. The changes couldn’t be made while under the quarter system but now can be made under the semester system because Fall semester starts in August rather than late September. This proposal would call for five Senate meetings: an organizational meeting in August, one in October, one in December, one in February, and the final one in late April. The Nominations Committee would prepare the Nominations Report for the organizational meeting in August. Discussion continued about this proposed calendar and its ramifications.

It was agreed that Dr. Lederberg would look through the University Statutes and Senate Bylaws and identify the
language that needs to be adjusted to accommodate the proposed changes to the Senate calendar. These changes will be forwarded to the committee assistant for distribution to the committee members and to Dr. de Castro for the Executive Committee’s review. The Executive Committee will provide the rationale for the changes and, once approved, send it to the full Senate for final approval.

Dr. de Castro asked that the S&B Committee begin to discuss the notion of electronic meetings. Dr. Brown asked the committee assistant to put that on the agenda for the November meeting. There was some preliminary discussion of this topic and how it is addressed in Robert’s Rules of Order. Basil Mattingly stated that an electronic forum takes away the persuasive aspect that a face-to-face meeting would allow, particularly in the case of a minority viewpoint. Some other issues that came up were the time factor of an electronic meeting versus a face-to-face meeting and the notion of official minutes of the meeting.

The next meeting of this committee is Thursday, November 15 at 2:00 p.m. in the Troy Moore library (room 939-GCB). Since there was no further business, the chair adjourned the meeting at 3:14 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Mary Nell Stone,
Committee Assistant