

S. 237

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

MEMORANDUM

K. Strand, Chairman

From K. R. Burstein

SENATE

Subject

Date September 29, 1969

The following are comments with respect to Senate Paper S-255 (revised) on retroactivity of admissions policies.

I should like to state that ^{the wisest} the wisest course of action is either
First,

- a. to rescind Senate's vote that there be no retroactivity.
- or b. to not pass any regulations granting retroactivity.

In any event, it would seem to be unwise of Senate to pass regulations with respect to retroactivity without first obtaining some data on the consequence of this action. Thus, it would seem to be essential to know how many students would have to be given retroactive degrees if retroactive transfer credit were awarded. It would also seem essential to know whether the granting of retroactive transfer credit would entail granting degrees to students who, on the basis of their performance here, have already been required to withdraw from the University.

Perhaps most important is the precedent which retroactivity would set. By making admissions policies retroactive, this University would be undermining all of its admissions policies, past, present and future, since all admissions policies or regulations would be subject to the retroactivity of future regulation or policy changes.

If Senate does opt for retroactivity, the proposals in paper S-255 would seem to require some modifications.

Section 2 calls for a list of transfer courses by January 1970. This list specifically includes general elective credit. Senate ruled in July, 1969 that general elective credit is to be determined by the Faculties of Arts, Science and Education. At a practical level, it would be virtually impossible for these faculties to generate a list of all courses acceptable for a degree by January, 1970. This seems particularly true since little in the way of discussion has transpired at the Departmental level as yet and it seems unlikely that Faculties would determine what courses were acceptable as general elective credit without some recommendation from the Departments.

Section 3 notes that the function of the Registrar's Office with respect to these lists will be a purely clerical one. This is as it should be with respect to retroactivity. This section goes on, however, to recommend that "All applications for accreditation in courses which do not appear in the published guide will be handled by the Senate Committee on Undergraduate Admissions and Standings." This recommendation is in need of a great deal of clarification.

First, the term "applications" has to be defined. Is an "application" the transcript of a transfer student applying to SFU? Is there some special

application necessary? The implication that application for transfer credit for courses not already evaluated is made to the Senate Committee on Admissions and Standings is in violation of the Ellis recommendations passed by Senate. These applications primarily involve decisions with respect to the awarding of transfer credit and not decisions with respect to retroactivity. Such decisions have been delegated by Senate to the Academic Board. In the absence of any indication from the Academic Board that they will perform this function, Senate has delegated this power to the Implementation Committee. This recommendation assigns this power to the Undergraduate Admissions and Standings Committee. Thus, passage of this recommendation would involve delegating the same power to two bodies.

In addition, decisions of this kind are completely outside of the terms of reference given to the Admissions Board (now the Undergraduate Admissions and Standings Committee) in the Ellis Report as passed by Senate.

In conclusion, it seems fairly clear that, if not for the sake of consistency, then for the sake of operating within University regulations, any new courses presented should be assessed with respect to transferability by the Academic Board ~~and not by the Undergraduate Admissions and Standings Committee~~, and not by the Undergraduate Admissions and Standings Committee.

Section 4 does not deal with retroactivity, but with appeals and is inappropriate for consideration, since there is an appeals mechanism in existence.

Section 3, 4, and 5 all seem to involve, implicitly or explicitly, "applications" for retroactive credit. Retroactivity involves the application of rules and regulations to cases, events, matters, etc., occurring prior to the passage of said regulations. There is no more need for one to "apply" for retroactive credit than there is a need for one to "apply" for the new admissions policies. That is, the retroactive application of the new admissions and transfer policies is a clerical task, not one which involves any decision-making. If Senate makes any of the transfer policies retroactive, the Registrar simply goes through the records and awards credit in accordance with the present regulations. Retroactivity has nothing to do with whether students wish or desire credit; retroactivity would involve the awarding of credit to all students who would be entitled to it if they enrolled at the present time.

On the detailed motions:

Motion A, paragraph 1:

It would seem that SFU would maintain its right, as do other Universities, to determine what courses are transferrable, rather than to award transfer credit because the registrar at another institution states that a course is equivalent to a transferrable one.

Similarly, in paragraph 2, this would seem to be a strange way of assessing courses, i.e., on the basis of letters from the transferring institution. What would not say that its courses were equivalent to ours? Moreover, technically, this part of the motion does not deal with retroactivity, but with all courses taken prior to the Summer of '68, i.e., it applies to new admissions in, say, '70 or '71 who have taken courses prior to the summer of '68 which have not yet been assessed by the Academic Board.

Paragraph 3 makes the first two paragraphs unnecessary if not meaningless, since it gives the power to ignore the requirements set forth in paragraphs

1 and 2. This paragraph also seems to confuse the granting of retroactive credit for courses which are transferrable under present regulations with the assessment of the transferability of courses. The latter function has already been assigned to the Academic Board and has nothing to do with retroactivity.

It should also be noted that both paragraphs 1 and 2 imply that, if another institution states that courses not presently evaluated or given are equivalent to courses which are presently evaluated or given, they will be transferred. This seems to assume that the transferability of a course is dependent upon, not the quality of a course, but whether it was discontinued.

In sum, if Senate decides in favor of retroactivity, the *only* action necessary is to decide what aspects of present admissions and transfer policies will be retroactive. Once this is done, all else is a clerical matter. No 'applications' are necessary and any decision to make current policies retroactive does not change the procedures whereby the current policies are implemented, i.e., new bodies are not needed to perform functions already assigned under the present regulations. The same body which, under the present regulations, will assess the transferability of courses presented by applicants in the coming year, regardless of whether such courses were discontinued or have not yet been evaluated, should judge these courses for students who have entered in the past. This is what retroactivity is. One does not set up a different procedure to judge the same courses dependent upon when the student applies. This is what retroactivity is not. In other words, it is very clear to me that virtually all of these recommendations are either out of order or irrelevant. The only recommendations which would be in order with respect to retroactivity are those dealing with what present policies would be retroactive and the date to which they would be made retroactive.

KRB/nc