

Notice of Motion

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Submitted by
Senator Cawthon

That, with the exception of Motion F-1, there be no attempt
to implement the Ellis recommendations by the Fall of 1969.

- 1) Senate has approved a recommendation allowing the Academic Board to determine the transferability of course credit. Many of us voted on that issue with the assurance that Departments, which, I think, we all agreed were most competent to judge these matters, would be represented in this decision process. Thus, we were assured that sub-committees of the Academic Board, in each discipline, would make these decisions, or at least recommend them to the Academic Board. Thus, as presented to Senate, the Academic Board was a clearing house for recommendations made by people in the discipline of the courses involved.

The motion presented in Senate paper J-1 would seem to represent a departure from the spirit and intent of the motion passed by Senate. It asks that one person make these decisions or that a committee nominated by him do this. No formal provision is made for obtaining expertise from the disciplines involved. Moreover, although this is presented as an "interim" mechanism, we have no assurance that the Academic Board will ever assume the duties Senate has requested it assume. The Board has said it will look into the feasibility of it. I believe Dean Sullivan noted at the last meeting that the Board has not indicated that it will assume these responsibilities. Thus, this "interim" procedure which involves one person making decisions which vitally affect Departments has a good chance of becoming a permanent mechanism; one which is not in the spirit of the recommendation approved by Senate.

In addition, it would seem appropriate that the Departments affected by and interested in transfer credit have some voice in determining who will assign this credit. If the majority feel that one man is capable of mustering the information and energy necessary to make these hundreds of important decisions, than, at least, they should have a voice in naming this man. However, if interim procedures are necessary, it would seem a much better strategy to get a fairly large committee, such as the Academic Board sub-committees mentioned before. Such committees allow a difference of opinion to be heard, they allow the views of those outside of the University to be heard, they allow an opportunity for feedback on various proposals, and they minimize the probability of arbitrary decisions. It does not seem reasonable to ask Senate to set up a particular procedure, such as naming one man or allowing one person to name a committee simply because this is the easiest and fastest way to get something done. There are few things that can best be accomplished in the easiest and fastest way. In any event, the duties assigned are the responsibility of Senate and Senate should, at least, approve the nominees mentioned in paragraph 1 of paper J-2. It would certainly not seem inappropriate for Senate to know whom it is assigned this tremendous responsibility before it approves this procedure.

- 3) Paragraph 3 of motion J-1 calls for writing in "fine print."

First, this man or committee proposed in the motion is intended as an interim substitute for the Academic Board. It supposedly performs those functions recommended by Senate for the Academic Board. The writing in of "fine print" is not within the terms of reference assigned to the Academic Board by Senate.

Secondly, the writing in of "fine print," if it is necessary, should be done by persons intimately acquainted with the processing of admissions applications.

Thirdly, whatever, fine print changes are, and regardless of who makes them, these changes should be approved by Senate. They are part of admissions policies, if they are added to the policies recommended by Senate, and require Senate's approval. It would seem unnecessary to say that the addition of fine print to a policy can change completely both the meaning and the intent of a policy. In any event, it is the responsibility of Senate to approve admissions policies whether they are in bold print or fine print.

Fourthly, many of these recommendations passed only after we were told that many of the points related to implementation would be debated later. We have had some lengthy and intensive arguments about matters relating to the implementation of these recommendations, and have passed some of these policies only after having been told that decisions on the debated matters could be reached when implementation was discussed. Now it would seem that implementation is not going to be discussed, if motion J-1 is passed.

Fifthly, it is difficult to understand what is meant by "fine print." The UBC admissions policies and those of other Canadian universities are contained in just a few pages of their calendars. The Ellis recommendations seem to parallel the presentations in these calendars. What sorts of omissions are there that have to be filled in with fine print? The "crisis" about admissions policies was generated by students who complained about the absence of specifically stated policies, i.e., about the absence of fine print. Are we saying now that, after all our attempts to remedy this deficiency, after setting up a committee, after meeting time after time, after passing all these recommendations, that we still have not precisely specified our admissions policies and that we are tired now and would like someone else to fill them in? If there is a need to fill in "fine print" after all our attempts, then it would seem that either we do it or admit that we have failed.

Sixthly, the closing paragraph of motion J-1 is difficult to understand. It states that present policies will continue if they are not replaced by these recommendations, provided that there is no conflict between the present policy and the intent or principles of the Ellis recommendations.

What happens then if there is an Ellis recommendation which cannot be implemented at the present time and the present policy conflicts with it? Indeed, is there not necessarily a conflict between all of the present policies and the Ellis recommendations (unless they are identical as present policy)? Are we saying that when there is a conflict we will have no policy? Are we saying that when we have a conflict the Ellis recommendation will be in effect even if it cannot be implemented?

Aside from the above reasons for seriously questioning the proposals in paper J-1 for implementing the Ellis recommendations at the present time, there seem to be good reasons for not attempting to implement the majority of these recommendations for the Fall of 1969 at all.

First, we approved the delegation of the responsibility for decisions about the transferability of credit to an external body with the understanding that we would receive, when implementation was discussed, an indication of whether and how the Academic Board would make these decisions. We have had none of this information. To implement this would be to implement the unknown.

Some of us have asked that, if the Academic Board agrees to make these decisions, and if the sub-committees consisting of members of all post-secondary representatives in the discipline agree to decide on transfer credit for specific courses, then it would seem reasonable to ask that the other colleges and universities sending representatives to these sub-committees and making decisions about the transferability of courses also be asked to bind themselves to these decisions. Why should SFU bind itself to a decision made by a committee in which it has one of many votes, if no other college or university represented on the committee is bound by the decision? Why would any of the colleges and universities not agree to be bound by the decisions which we are willing to bind ourselves to? In any event, we were told that we would have a chance to know and to discuss the exact procedures by which the policy we were passing was going to be implemented. What we are being asked to do now is to implement without knowing what we are implementing.

Secondly, It has been repeatedly stated that one of the main reasons for some of the recommendations presented to Senate is that some Departments seem to continually change their minds about the transfer credit associated with some of their courses. We have also been told that this indecisiveness is compounded because new chairmen and heads sometimes come in and again change these recommendations. Further we have been told that, because of these frequently changed decisions with respect to transfer credit, students attempting to transfer are given what turns out to be misinformation about the transferability of the courses they have taken. Indeed, the headlines in the newspapers said that, as a result of the recommendations we passed students would know precisely what courses they could take and get transfer credit for.

It seems paradoxical then that motion J-1 suggests immediate implementation. The students currently applying here have been counseled to enrol in courses and have enrolled and completed courses based upon present transfer regulations. What this proposal suggests is that we ignore the fact that they have been counseled and have enrolled in good faith and that we say to them, "forget what we told you; we are going to change all that even though you have now completed all your course work, even though you have already applied to us on the basis of what we told you and even though registration is only a matter of weeks away.

In addition it tells students, "you cannot even really have any faith in what your counselor is telling you now, or in what the rulings we now put out say because they are simply an interim procedure and the academic Board will soon come out with some more rulings which will probably be different."

It seems obvious that, when a mechanism is evolved for determining the transfer-

ability of courses, the junior and regional colleges will have to be informed of the final decisions on this matter some time before they go into effect so that students may be counseled to enrol in courses which are transferable. To simply implement without such lead time for counselors at other institutions would penalize all students counseled on the basis of previous transfer credit rulings. Some arrangement should also be made for having those students who enrolled in courses on the basis of previous transfer rulings get credit for these courses if it is to their benefit.

In any event, simply invoking new transfer policies without warning would seem to breed the very same sort of chaos that both the Registrar and Mr. Ellis seem to have objected to. Moreover, this would be worse, since we would be invoking an interim set which we are specifically saying will be replaced when the Academic Board assumes its function.

Thirdly, and perhaps most important, how could we possibly implement this or any other motion by September? It would be impossible to implement unless we said that every course was transferable. I don't know of any University in Canada or the United States which accepts, uncritically, every course taken at a junior or a regional college as a transfer course.

It therefore seems obvious that we cannot accept all courses for transfer credit. It seems equally obvious that the task of judging individual courses is a time-consuming one. If one checks with persons who, in their work in a Registrar's office, do this kind of work, one finds that this sort of decision involves comparing calendars, checking with Departments about texts, tests, labs, etc., checking on what other universities in the area do, etc. How could anyone do an intelligent and competent job with the hundreds and hundreds of courses which would be offered for transfer in years or months, let alone days?

In sum, it would seem impossible for any one man or any committee, regardless of the dedication or enthusiasm or competence of the persons involved, to carefully go thru all the courses which have to be assessed with respect to transfer of credit in time to start processing applications for fall admission.

At the very least, if Senate is going to approve an attempt to assess the transferability of hundreds of courses with a matter of days, it should have full knowledge of the procedure which is going to be used, and it should approve the decisions reached.