I. Preparatory: The meeting was called to order at 3:15 pm.

II. The minutes of November 22, 1994, November 29, 1994 and January 24, 1995 were approved as amended.

III. Communication(s) and Announcement(s)--None

IV. Reports

A. Academic Senate Chair: No report

B. President's Office: No report

C. Vice President for Academic Affairs Office: No report

D. Statewide Academic Senators: No report

E. President of CFA: No report

F. Staff Council: Staff whose work includes academic advising would like to have representatives on the committee that deals with student throughput. Staff council also is concerned about information signs on campus and is conducting a survey about what information is available, particularly within buildings.

G. ASI: No report

V. Consent Agenda: No items

VI. Business Items:

A. MSPU to approve the Resolution to Amend AS-396-92/CC "Formation of a Subcommittee of the Curriculum Committee"

B. Resolution on Interim Policy for Change of Grades: The Instruction Committee has submitted a recommendation for a permanent policy which the Senate will see at the next meeting. MSPU to table the Resolution on Interim Policy for Change of Grades.

C. Resolution on Proposal for a University Honors Program (first reading) This resolution was presented by John Harrington on behalf of a group of faculty who have been interested in starting an Honors program. If approved, the projected start up date is Fall 1997 at the earliest. Initially the program will include fifty students. Eventually up to 100 students will be admitted to the Honors Program each year. The maximum number of Honors program students at any one time will be a maximum of 200 students. The focus will be primarily on GE with perhaps some colloquia following but it will be different from what's already offered. A pool of those students who meet the Honors Program criteria and are interested in the program will be selected by a committee. (Students have to asked to be included in the program.) Projected costs involved will include funds for a half-time director, a half-time clerical assistant, and O&E funds.

Some anticipated benefits of an Honors program include an enriched, creative environment for faculty, i.e. a chance to share creative and research interests with some especially bright students. Some faculty are concerned that they're not necessarily serving the brightest students because they have to teach to the mid-group.

Honors programs benefit all students as they tend to be a place where ideas are tried out, a place for experimentation, a way to foster cooperation across disciplines. Honors programs also help with recruitment of especially bright students and underrepresented students who otherwise might choose a UC campus (Graphs presented illustrated that Cal Poly essentially competes with UC campuses for students.) An Honors program can bring different kinds of students to campus and this will benefit the student body as a whole.

The Curriculum Committee has decided to endorse this program because it embodies what we're all looking for. It provides some flexibility in the academic offerings for students and faculty. Also the smaller the size of the classes in the freshman year, the better the retention.
Honors Programs often bring in money because they are popular among donors. In the UC Honors programs are funded totally by endowments. To go after these and grant funds is definitely something they will be doing.

Some objections raised included the following points: Cal Poly is experiencing a budget crunch. How can the university afford this? Students don't like the idea because they see it as an elitist program.

An Honors program based on GE will cause problems for the College of Agriculture which schedules its courses around the GE schedule.

Concern was expressed that this will set a precedent for undeclared majors. (However, it was noted that the conceptual support for undeclared majors already is in the strategic plan.)

Eligibility criteria are too rigid. They may hurt students who come from schools with lots of advanced placement courses. What about a student who gets sick for a quarter? The program needs flexibility in terms of criteria and retention in the program.

The proposal calls for keeping a 3.0. Is that really "Honors?"

I am concerned that scores would screen out some who would like to be involved.

Could we require Honors Program students to declare a major by the end of year as at other schools?

Program GPA requirement had to be adhered to or they were dropped by the Honors Program.

Budget is a concern. Add to the guidelines section something like, "that the program be on a stable funding base".

Additional comments included:

This should be a faculty-run program, not administrative.

Students in Honors programs have to work harder and spend more time. This is a reason why many bright students don't choose to be involved.

Even Ivy League schools have an Honors College.

D. Resolution on Promoting Curricular Review (first reading): Comments included the following: If a department were cut, how would the faculty know that the reason for that cut was not made in violation of the agreement?

A timetable is needed. It will be difficult to go ahead with changes until there is one.

The resolution doesn't indicate the Senate's role if the deans make decisions that faculty don't like. i.e. Where is Senate consultation?

This is a practical way of dealing with a real problem. There will never be anything but a brokered GE program unless we have something like this in place. This is the only way to get some substantive change in the curriculum.

The second resolve should suggest a certain time e.g. at least 4 or 5 years.

VI. MSPU to Adjourn--4:40pm

Recorded by

Sam Lutrin, Secretary
Academic Senate