November 4, 2005

MEMORANDUM

TO: Julie Harrison, Executive Secretary
Secretary for Academic Governance Office

FROM: Jeremy Hernandez, Chairperson
University Committee on Student Affairs (UCSA)

SUBJECT: UCSA Proposed Bylaw Amendments

In response to University Committee on Academic Governance (UCAG) request for clarification on the use of the term "selected" vs. "elected" in the proposed bylaw amendments, the following comments were made:

- UCSA feels that ASMSU should be given the responsibility to select or nominate student representatives on university-wide committees, even if those selected are not active in ASMSU. We feel this is the best option currently available to insure that the selection process is fair for all undergraduate students and provides for a centralized place to hear about open positions. Our ASMSU representatives also mentioned a rigorous screening process exists to fill any open positions.

- In regard to the use of the language "any and all", what is meant is that ASMSU would serve as a channel to elect or nominate student representatives to university-wide committees. UCSA feels this is important as the current appointment system is somewhat decentralized and may result in well-qualified students missing opportunities to be aware of any particular committee openings. By channeling this selection process through ASMSU, it provides for a more diverse pool of potential applicants.
March 27, 2005

TO:    Jon Sticklen, Chairperson  
       The Executive Committee of Academic Council

FROM:  Vinay Prasad, Chairperson  
       University Committee on Student Affairs;

SUBJECT: UCSA proposed change to the Academic Governance Bylaws

UCSA met on March 25th and passed a proposal to change the Academic Governance Bylaws. UCSA is aware that Bylaw changes must be approved upon by UCAG, and recommends to ECAC that the two proposals that passed resoundingly through UCSA be forwarded on to UCAG. While we would like UCAG to find an appropriate place for the bylaw changes, we hope that the language of the proposal still reflects its original intent. We also hope UCAG can act expeditiously on these bylaw changes, as they reflect a student-initiated change.

The proposal that passed UCSA is the following:

UCSA endorses that the Academic Governance Bylaws include the following provision:

All undergraduate representatives on University level academic governance, including, but not limited to Academic Council, Academic Council Standing Committees, the Executive Committee of Academic Council, any and all ad hoc committees, be selected by the student government, ASMSU.

Passed XXXX Failed __________  
Chairperson _VINAY PRASAD_  
Date _3-25-05_ __________

The second proposal that passed changed the words undergraduate to graduate and ASMSU to COGS to reflect the graduate student's desire for similar changes.

UCSA wishes to explain the rationale for this bylaw change.
1. The CHANGE really only applies to AD-HOC committees of University governance. ASMSU already has the power to select representatives for the executive council, standing committees, and Academic Council.

2. The reason for this change is that ASMSU is the legitimate student government. Any university governance committee that wishes to have a fair and just representation of student views would ask ASMSU to provide representatives. Simply selecting students from a faculty members class does not provide a just representation of student’s views, and does not preclude a students from complaining about lack of student representation. The university governance ad-hoc committees this year that did not go through ASMSU for student representatives are part of the motivation for this change. These committees undermine ASMSU’s role as the legitimate voice of the undergraduates of MSU. For any faculty/administrator that argues that ASMSU does not provide the breadth and depth of student voices, we feel that if this is a concern then it can be relayed to ASMSU, who will work to provide a balanced student panel. Simply circumventing ASMSU for this or any other concern does nothing to improve student involvement at MSU, but rather trivializes ASMSU’s role and further estranges students from university governance.

3. If it can be argued that parents who pull their students out of public schools, and send them to private ones, weaken the public school system even further, and are not working to correct the problem of failing schools, so too can it be viewed that ad-hoc committees which do not select students through ASMSU, but rather, circumvent ASMSU, alleging that student apathy has reduced the breadth of voices on ASMSU, are doing nothing more than further exacerbating the problem of student apathy at MSU.

4. A high level administrator recently pointed out that the summer is a perfectly legitimate time to conduct university governance in ad-hoc committees. Since at least 10,000 students attend the university in the summer, student participation should not be an issue. Such comments provide further justification for this bylaw change, as they suggest the attitude of “ANY STUDENT WILL DO.” Such an attitude is entirely unacceptable. With university governance ad-hoc committees playing a key role in decisions that will shape undergraduate education, it remains imperative that the students on those committees 1. be outgoing and unafraid to voice their concerns 2. have previous experience on a committee in general (on order to ensure #1) and 3. be aware of the context of the
committee's discussion. ASMSU alone has the ability and desire to make sure that the right student serves on the right committee.

In short, I feel strongly about this bylaw change, which was unanimously passed by the (mostly faculty meeting) of UCSA. I hope the bylaw change can be made promptly by UCAG. Finally, I assure you that this issue will be vigorously followed up by the new student leaders of ASMSU.

cc. Members, the Executive Committee of Academic Council

Jackie Wright, Secretary of Academic Governance

Julie Harrison, Assistant to the Secretary of Academic Governance