

MINUTES

UIUC Faculty Senate Public Hearing on Proposed Merger of Theoretical and Applied Mechanics (TAM) and Mechanical and Industrial Engineering (MIE) Departments

Held by Senate Educational Policy Committee
Room 190 Engineering Sciences Building
December 7, 2005

1. The meeting was called to order at 3:37 pm by Professor Abbas Aminmansour, Chair of the Senate Educational Policy Committee.
2. Professor Aminmansour briefed the audience on goals of the hearing which were to hear remarks of the campus community with regard to the proposed merger of the TAM and MIE Departments. He stated that the merger proposal, sponsored by Dean Ilesanmi Adesida of the College of Engineering, has been cleared by the Provost's Office, and is now under consideration by Educational Policy Committee of the Senate. He outlined procedures that will be followed in coming months for review of and voting on the proposal.
3. The Dean of the College of Engineering, Professor Ilesanmi Adesida, summarized points of the merger proposal. He emphasized that current College strengths in mechanics would be maintained, as well as enhanced, through the MIE department which is proposed to be renamed to *Mechanical Science and Engineering (MechSE)*. As a point of information, the College Executive Committee voted to support the merger proposal by a vote of 14-1. As well, the College Administrative Committee voted to support the merger by a vote of 15-1. In addition, 65% of the College faculty voted in favor of the proposal with a vote of 184-95.
4. The Interim Head of the TAM Department, Professor Nancy Sottos, summarized reactions of the TAM faculty and students to the merger proposal. She emphasized the need to keep TAM as an independent department rather than merging with the MIE department. She advocated rebuilding of the present TAM department by replenishing lost faculty positions. She said that it is unlikely that a distinct mechanics program could be sustained in the new MechSE Department, and that the loss of TAM would hurt the reputation of the College. As a point of information, TAM faculty voted 8-0 to not support the proposal.
5. The Head of the Mechanical and Industrial Engineering Department, Professor Huseyin Sehitoglu, summarized reactions of the MIE departmental faculty with respect to the merger proposal. He mentioned that the leading mechanical engineering departments in the US, have significant percentages of faculty involved in mechanics, and that his department is no exception. He stressed that the College has a responsibility to make mechanics better, and that the importance of mechanics at Illinois should not be compromised. As a point of information, MIE faculty voted 34-1 to support the merger proposal.
6. Michael Stone, professor in the Physics, expressed a general concern that the merger proposal would further diminish the university's strength in mathematics.
7. Alan Bolind, graduate student in Nuclear, Plasma and Radiological Engineering, stated that an independent TAM department is doing well for the College, and recommended against the merger. He asked Dean Adesida how will resources be allocated in the event that the merger does not oc-

cur. He asked Professor Sehitoglu how separate departments would synergize mechanics research, again in the event that the merger does not take place.

8. Y. Huang, professor in Mechanical and Industrial Engineering, expressed his passion for mechanics, noted the esteem of present MIE faculty in mechanics, and offered his support of the merger proposal.
9. William Morgan, undergraduate TAM student, stated that the impact of the proposed merger would be significant with respect to undergraduate education in mechanics. He said that he would be remiss if the undergraduate program in TAM were to disappear.
10. Michael Turner, undergraduate student in Aerospace Engineering, stated that he has found TAM instructors to be very helpful, particularly with regard to tutoring outside of the classroom. He fears that this personal faculty-student interaction may diminish if the departments are merged.
11. Andrew Alleyne, Chair of the MIE Faculty Advisory Committee, expressed that his committee has spent an extraordinary amount of time to evaluate how the merger can be made to best serve students, faculty and alumni, and recommended his full support of the proposal.
12. Linus Trippe, undergraduate TAM student, expressed his fear with regard to changes in degree requirements that might result if the merger occurs. Professor Aminmansour pointed out that no changes in TAM curricula, degrees and degree requirements are included in this proposal. He added that any future such changes will have to be approved by the Senate regardless of whether the merger proposal is approved or not.
13. Daniel Widrevitz, undergraduate TAM student, stated the need to produce future mechanics faculty from a department devoted to pure mechanics.
14. Nigel Goldenfeld, professor in Physics, said that the College will be worse off if the merger goes through.
15. Robert Haber, professor in TAM, said the merger proposal process was flawed. He said that undue pressure and improper incentives were given by the Dean to encourage TAM faculty to transfer departments. He stated that the proposal has no clear rationale, and is not factual. Dean Adesida denied such allegations that he or the former Dean encouraged faculty to leave or transfer departments. Professor Sehitoglu said that there were no discussions of salary increases for the TAM faculty that transferred to MIE.
16. Petros Sofranis, professor in MIE who transferred from TAM, expressed reasons why he decided to transfer departments and read from his letter submitted to Dean Daniel. He stated that the College did not encourage him to transfer departments.
17. Scott Stewart, professor in MIE who transferred from TAM, expressed that TAM has been a department in crisis since he joined it in 1981. He further stated that without modernization of the program, as proposed with the merger, mechanics at Illinois will decline.
18. James Phillips, Associate Head of TAM and long-time faculty member of department, stressed emphatically that he is not in favor of the merger and recommended that the Education Policy Committee reject the merger proposal.
19. Dean Adesida, Nancy Sottos and Huseyin Sehitoglu gave their closing remarks reiterating their concerns for and against the merger.

20. Professor Aminmansour thanked all for attending and closed the meeting at 5:35pm.

Minutes prepared by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. Abrams", written in a cursive style.

Daniel P. Abrams, Secretary
College of Engineering Executive Committee