



**SENATE**  
**Approved Minutes of the Meeting held on**  
**Monday, May 11, 2020 at 3:00 p.m.**  
**Via Microsoft Teams**

The Senate met in regular session on Monday, May 11, 2020.

**Present:** K. Hewitt (Chair), G. Adolphe-Nazaire, R. Agu, A. Aiken, V. Allen, D. Anderson, M. Aston, T. Balsler, J. Blustein, D. Bourne-Tyson, K. Brooks, C. Cameron, M. Campbell-Yeo, R. Chang, T. Cyrus, C. Diallo, A. Doucette, P. Doyle-Bedwell, O. Dryden, T. Duck, Y. El Hiani, H. El Nagggar, B. Foster, M. Fournier, L. Goldberg, D. Gray, D. Grujic, A. Habib, J. Hall, K. Harman, F. Harvey, S. Holmes, V. Howard, I. Joseph, D. Kelley, J.S. Kim, S. Kirk, W. Lahey, M. Leonard, L. Macdonald, B. Merritt, C. Moore, F. Naghibi, B. Nassar, J. Newhook, R. Orji, M. Pacurar, J. Penney, L. Perez, J. Phinney, B. Rathgeber, A. Rau-Chaplin, K. Rosen, D. Saini, G. Scherkoske, E. Seelemann, S. Seth, A. Siegel, D. Silvio, L. Spiteri, S. Stackhouse, M. Stinson, S. Stone, F. Taheri, P. Tyedmers, D. Tyers, I. Waldron, G. Warner, E. Welsh, D. Westwood, D. White, S. Wildeman, E. Wunker, I. Yakovenko, S. Yurgel

**Regrets:** S. Ponomarenko,

**Absent:** P. Allen, B. Davis, G. Horne, A. Kermanshahi-Pour, V. Nams, T. Rajack-Talley, C. Richardson,

**Guests:** Bob Mann (Manager, Discipline and Appeals), Susan Brousseau (Secretary of Senate), Ann Pyne (Administrative Coordinator, Senate), Joseph Behl (Student Minute Taker)

The Dalhousie University Senate acknowledges that this meeting is taking place in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq People.

**1. Approval of Agenda**

The agenda was **approved** as presented.

**2. Consent Agenda**

**2.1 Approval of Draft Minutes of March 9, 2020 Senate Meeting**

Approved by **CONSENT**.

**2.2 Approval of Draft Minutes of April 13, 2020 Senate Meeting**

Approved by **CONSENT**.

**3. Matters Arising from March 9 and April 13, 2020 Senate Meetings**

**3.1 Request for breakdown of employee numbers by category (March 9<sup>th</sup> meeting)**

Senator Hewitt advised that the breakdown of employee numbers by category, as requested during the March 9<sup>th</sup> meeting, is provided in the meeting package. There were no questions on the item.

**FOR APPROVAL:**

**4. Senate Planning and Governance Committee (SPGC)**

**4.1 SNC procedures to nominate members to Senate Standing Committees**

Senator Hewitt introduced this item, advising that the intent of the document is to formalize existing practices and to provide more clarity to the Senate Nominating Committee (SNC) when reviewing nomination submissions from senators. He added that the document has been reviewed by both the Legal Counsel Office and SNC, and was approved by SPGC at the February 10<sup>th</sup> meeting.

Moved by Senator Hewitt on behalf of the Senate Planning and Governance Committee:

**THAT Senate approve the Procedures for Nomination of Elected Voting Members to Senate Standing Committees as presented.**

The motion **CARRIED**.

**5. Senate Academic Programs and Research Committee (SAPRC)**

**5.1 Delegation of authority to Undergraduate Academic Programs Sub Committee (UAPSC):  
Minor Programs**

Senator Harman introduced the item, advising that SAPRC has been reviewing the committee's processes on a continuous basis. This includes the expectations of each subcommittee and the areas necessary to examine each body and the level of approval required. SAPRC has agreed to delegate to UAPSC the approval of minor programs (including the approval of new minors, major modifications to existing minors, and suspension and termination of existing minors). These items approved by UAPSC will be brought to SAPRC for information.

Senator Harman noted that this aligns with the existing practice of UAPSC having authority for the approval of certificates. She added that UAPSC is skilled at monitoring both minors and certificates, and would be able to bring any higher risk or more complex matters to SAPRC. SAPRC has already approved this delegation of authority, and it now requires approval by Senate.

Senator Howard added that the goal of this delegation is to approve the efficiency of approval processes, noting that minors and certificates are similar in being low-risk and having minimal impact on existing programs.

Moved by Senator Harman on behalf of the Senate Academic Programs and Research Committee:

**THAT Senate approve that the Senate Academic Programs and Research Committee (SAPRC) delegate approval of Minor programs (approval of new minors; major modifications to existing minors; suspension and termination of existing minors) to UAPSC.**

The motion **CARRIED**.

## 6. COVID-19 Grade options processes

Senator Hewitt briefly introduced the item, referring members to section 1.1(d) of the Senate constitution, which says: “As it relates to their academic activities, the Faculties of the University are committees of Senate, and they must act in a matter consistent with Senate regulations, policies, procedures, and guidelines.”

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Senate has provided Administration with the ability to respond rapidly through the ratification processes embedded in the constitution. As a result, for the Winter 2020 term, Senate has approved motions granting rapid action, and subsequent ratification, which means that the action is subject to approval/ratification by Senate. Actions must cease on items not ratified by Senate, while those that are approved can continue.

Senator Balser provided an overview of the motion, advising that the item has two parts. The first is to ratify the decision of the Provost with respect to the grade conversion element. The second recognizes that many people appreciated the student-centred approach to addressing the grading process and may want to consider something similar in future, hence the second part of the motion.

Moved by Senator Spiteri, seconded by Senator Howard:

**THAT Senate ratify the decision of the Provost allowing students to convert a letter grade to a Pass or ILL in the absence of consultation with their instructor for Winter 2020 courses.**

**THAT the Provost examine the need for a policy/procedure/guideline in respect to the future introduction of novel grading processes and definitions and report to Senate at its June 8, 2020 meeting.**

- In the discussion following the report, senators sought clarification on the following: Concerns related to the “Pass” grade and whether it is sufficient to satisfy prerequisites for some programs. Senator Balser clarified that the definition of “Pass” would be the same as in the memos that were previously circulated regarding grading options.
- Whether a new “Assistant Dean of Students” position is created in Faculties that do not currently have one. Senators Balser and Howard clarified that students can be referred to either the Assistant Dean of Students or an equivalent position where the authority to sign waivers resides.
- Whether these grade options would be available to students’ assessed penalties by the Senate Discipline Committee. Senator Howard advised that these would not apply; for students assigned failing grades because of academic integrity matters, the grades would stand. B. Mann added that students in these situations (assigned an “F” either by the Integrity Officer process or the SDC) could apply to have the grade converted to a “W”, as in normal circumstances. He added that if a student receives a disciplinary penalty within the context of a course (e.g. failure of an assignment, reduction of value on an assignment), they would still be able to withdraw from the course and receive a “W.” However, this would not be possible if a student is assigned an “F” directly for the entire course as a penalty. B. Mann further added that students who received a passing grade but had been assessed academic penalties would be able to change their grade to a “PASS,” but would not be able to escape other consequences such as notations on a transcript, or future consequences due to prior offences, just as in ordinary circumstances outside of the COVID-19 pandemic. Whether an instructor should have the opportunity to be consulted, if they

wish to be involved, before a student proceeds with this process (recognizing that this was put in place to prevent instructors from being overburdened).. Senators Balser and Howard confirmed that the aim was to avoid overburdening instructors. Additionally, since all of a student's grades must be finalized and submitted before the process can commence on May 1<sup>st</sup>, some contract faculty will have completed their contracts on April 30<sup>th</sup>. V. Howard noted that this element was intended to address the unique circumstances of this term.

The motion **CARRIED**.

#### **7. Ratification of Deans' decisions (subsequent to April 13, 2020 Senate meeting)**

Senator Hewitt introduced this item, which is related to the motion at the April 13<sup>th</sup> Senate meeting which called for the ratification of items that were delegated to deans. There is one such item which now requires ratification by Senate – the use of a HONS/PASS/FAIL grading system within the Schulich School of Law.

Senators Balser and Howard presented the motion. Senator Balser advised that the Faculty of Law routinely uses an HONS/PASS/FAIL system, so this is not a deviation from normal practice. This system was used for all classes during the Winter semester, in addition to the use it had in the past. Senator Howard added that the Faculty of Law's use of a different grading scale was noted in the list presented at the April 13<sup>th</sup> Senate meeting, but this item provides additional details.

Moved by Senator Spiteri, seconded by Senator Diallo:

**THAT Senate ratify the list of waivers, as presented, resulting from the authority delegated to Deans as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.**

In response to a query as to whether there is an expiry date given for these provisions, Senators Hewitt and Howard responded that the original motion from SPGC, ratified by Senate, provides an expiry date of August 31<sup>st</sup>; these are waivers under that motion.

The motion **CARRIED**.

#### **FOR DISCUSSION:**

#### **8. Fall Academic Plans**

Senator Balser provided an update on academic planning for the fall. She advised that the two main goals are to stabilize enrolment and to ensure academic continuity. For this reason, an academic plan and enrolment stabilization strategy has been developed. Six teams, led by various members of the Provost's office and Provost executive and involving faculty members and members of ADAC, among others, are working to make immediate, intermediate and longer-term plans for responding to COVID-19.

Senator Balser reported that, in terms of enrolment, the objective is to develop and implement an enrolment stabilization strategy to offset potential enrolment decline due to COVID-19. The approach will entail developing a deliberate and active recruitment strategy, building and maintaining a sense of community and continuity, providing regular and supportive messaging about plans for the fall, proposing and advertising financial and other incentives for enrolment, offering specific support for NS high school students, and considering specific supports for international, rural, and under-represented students with financial need.

Senator Balser then summarized the progress that has been made in this area so far, noting that the implementation of the recruitment strategy is in progress, the virtual community team has moved student supports to online, messaging about fall plans are in development (with the first message to go out later this week), a proposal for a COVID-19 Bursary is being finalized, and an academic program for NS high school students has been planned for launch in the summer term.

Senator Balser advised the main factors that the planning teams are considering with regard to enrolment stabilization are:

- Students' desire for an on-campus experience
- Student expectations and concerns regarding online delivery and pricing
- International student attitudes toward online delivery (value perception)
- The need for equity and continuity of experience and programming for place-bound students
- Incoming international students' ability to obtain visas/study permits
- The need for consistent, frequent communication

Senator Balser then discussed the main objective in terms of academic continuity, which is to work with deans and others on plans to ensure quality and equitable academic experience for the fall, taking into account the need for online delivery.

Senator Balser advised the approach now in progress with regard to academic continuity involves the following:

- Categorizing fall classes in terms of ease, readiness, ability, and likelihood of need to go online, as well as need for exceptions or alternatives
- Exploring ways to minimize development requirements and workload (e.g., reducing elective offerings)
- Developing online programming for delivery to place-bound students to ensure program continuity
- Supporting faculty members/instructors in instructional design for online delivery

She also noted the following key principles related to the planning approach for fall academic continuity:

1. Health and safety, provincial restrictions or requirements
2. Continuity of academic programming for students
3. Equity of access to learning

Several senators offered appreciation for the work to date given the significant challenges. In response to a query as to how Senate will continue to be kept informed regarding academic continuity challenges (for example, online academic course approvals, etc.), Senator Howard noted that this has been identified as a priority for the Academic Quality Team (one of the 6 teams involved in planning). The team is now undertaking a scan of Senate policies to better understand where Senate approval will be required and will be reporting back on this. Senator Hewitt noted that the frequencies of meetings of the Senate Chair and Officers with the Provost has increased. Senator Balser added that the E-learning Advisory Committee has also been engaged on this, including the development of an E-Learning Guide.

Other questions and discussion focused on student concerns regarding fall tuition fees and concerns over increased academic integrity issues in an online environment. With respect to the latter, Senator Balser noted that part of the plan will be supporting instructors in finding other means of assessment beyond final examinations. Senator Howard added that a week of programming around academic integrity (Academic Integrity Week) will be held in June, with planning meetings already taking place. Various

issues, including alternatives to online testing, will be discussed, and recommendations and best practices will be shared.

## **Reports**

### **9.1 Chair of Senate's Report**

*Note: The Chair of Senate's Report was presented after items 9.2, 9.3, and 9.4*

Senator Hewitt presented the Chair of Senate's report. He thanked all faculty, staff, and students for their rapid adaptation to the new situation. He added that it is important to understand how a pandemic such as this may exacerbate inequalities in society, and pay attention to how these can be addressed and overcome.

Senator Hewitt advised that Senate engagement with the strategic planning process will continue, noting that Senator Balsler will engage SPGC in its May 13<sup>th</sup> meeting to provide input on each self-study team's thought papers.

Senator Hewitt advised that he would like to provide an opportunity for deans and other senior leaders to offer kudos and commendations to their faculty at the end of meetings. Finally, he noted that an important upcoming discussion at SPGC will involve the establishment of an ad-hoc committee to develop policies, procedures, or guidelines for academic unit establishment, termination, consolidation, renaming, or transfer.

Senator Siegel provided a brief update from SLTC. She noted that the first call for campus-wide feedback for the Student Code of Conduct review has taken place. After responding to the feedback, the document went back to members to ensure that the input was captured correctly, leading to a second draft. The original plan was to then seek public input via town halls, which is not possible due to the pandemic. The document is currently being reviewed by Legal Counsel, and will then come back to SLTC. From there, a new public draft will be provided and further input will be sought.

### **9.2 President's Report**

Senator Saini presented the President's Report, firstly acknowledging the recent tragic events in the community and the grief and loss that many have experienced. . He thanked the university community for their excellent work in managing the university through this difficult time of COVID-19, noting that the community has come together in incredible ways, and that decisions have been challenging to make in this rapidly evolving environment. . This has meant that a normal consultation process f has not always been possible, but the collaborative work of many has been a strength. He noted the helpful consultation with others across Canada, including U15, CONSUP and Association of Atlantic Universities peers has allowed for lessons learned to be shared. , Senator Saini noted his particular regret that spring convocation ceremonies cannot proceed, but reported that the Registrar's Office and other units within the university are collaborating to make sure that there will be some kind of celebration for students.

Senator Saini acknowledged and thanked Anne McLellan for her work as Chancellor as her term comes to an end, and gave an advanced welcome to incoming Chancellor Scott Brison.

Senator Saini briefly discussed the outlook for the future, noting that the early phase of the crisis has now passed, and that in the coming weeks and months the community will be hearing more about the exit phase. He noted, however, that there is still much uncertainty and that Dalhousie must enter the next

few months with realistic understandings and expectations. Senator Saini noted that there will be financial impacts for Dalhousie, but added that the university was fortunate to be in good financial health going into the crisis. Work is now underway to understand and estimate the impact, the extent of which is largely unknown at present; the expectation is that there will be a fuller understanding of enrolment and other revenue and expenditure impacts by June. He noted that the post-secondary education sector overall will be challenged by the pandemic situation. Senator Saini concluded by noting that the cooperation and ingenuity of the university community will be especially important in finding the path forward.

### **9.3 Vice President, Research & Innovation's Report**

Senator Aiken presented a report on Dalhousie Research & Innovation's response to COVID-19 and future plans. She noted that action is being taken and that the highest priority remains the wellbeing of researchers, staff, students, and participants. On March 24<sup>th</sup>, all campus-based research operations were suspended. Also, all fieldwork operations were suspended as of April 15<sup>th</sup>. Exceptions were made for COVID-19 related research and other critical operations, maintenance, etc. All research that can be safely conducted remotely is being continued. All full-time and regular part-time grant-paid research staff who cannot work remotely had salaries continued until April 30<sup>th</sup>. Other HR options are also available for such staff. All administrative operations by R&I staff are being continued.

A plan has been developed for resumption of research activities in consultation with other U15 and global universities, as well as with the President's Executive Committee, the Emergency Management Team, Facilities Management, Environmental Health and Safety, DRAC, and deans. The plan will be rolled out as part of the broader Dalhousie plan for returning to activity, and the research component will be fully automated on ROMEO.

Senator Aiken then summarized the key goals and principles for the resumption of research industries. The two main goals are to keep everyone involved in research while increasing research, and continuing to deliver the discovery and innovation that the world needs. The main principles are:

- Adhering to all public health directives
- Protecting the physical, mental and emotional health and safety of research workers, clinical patients, and human-research participants
- Protecting the careers of post-doctoral fellows and early career researchers
- Maintaining a priority focus on students
- Ensuring that the process for approving increased research activity is informed, fair, transparent, and considerate of the safety of research personnel
- Striving to allow as much research activity as possible while respecting the necessary limits required and understanding the potential of returning to stricter limits if necessary.

Senator Aiken went on to discuss important considerations in preparing for the next phase, including ensuring necessary ancillary services are staffed and operational, and implementation of an approved process for determining which research activities can resume/begin. She added that the full plan will be rolled out along with other academic, HR, and operations plans.

Senator Aiken provided a brief update on the work of the Dal Innovates team and related organizations, noting that the Creative Destruction Lab went fully online, and that CDL Global has also launched CDL Recovery, which is specifically focused on the pandemic, with contributors all over the world.

LAB2Market Health, which is part of the Federal government's future skills programming, has been launched virtually. ShiftKey labs has also recently launched a COVID-19 hackathon.

Senator Aiken concluded by congratulating faculty members and researchers who have been recognized for research excellence, including Dr. Mark Stradiotto from the Department of Chemistry, who was awarded an Arthur B. McDonald Chair, as well as the recipients of the Vice-President Research & Innovation Seed Fund and the Belong Research Fellowship Awards.

#### **9.4 Questions for Reports**

In relation to item 9.3, a senator noted concerns about graduate students in Science and Engineering affected by lab closures and inquired whether a timeline was in place for laboratories to be allowed a limited reopening. Senator Aiken responded that research funded by industry without available extensions are a priority, and noted that there will have to be health and safety measures put in place among other things. As an academic priority, research and possibly practical research labs can hopefully be reopened, as social distancing and other requirements can often be maintained in this setting. With regard to the timeline, Senator Aiken advised that this is being discussed with Senators Balsler, Saini, and others, but that research cannot be fully reopened before the province begins the reopening process, so it will be part of the broader plan.

Senators voted to extend the meeting by ten minutes.

Senator Balsler advised that the plan is to release an update memo by Friday to provide more clarity, followed by a phased reopening. Senator Saini added that the intention is to reopen as soon as possible, but the overriding priority and concern is health and safety issues.

A senator asked what, if any, representations Dalhousie is making to government regarding funding assistance, etc. in light of the pandemic. Senator Saini advised that Dalhousie's approach has been to work with the rest of the sector, particularly through CONSUP, U15, and Universities Canada. The approach is to make government aware of the university sectors needs and challenges. No specific asks have been made of government as yet, but the focus is on sensitizing government to the needs of the sector. Senator Saini added that the requests that will follow at some point will likely relate to assistance for students, the loss of international tuition revenues, and a stimulus package for the entire sector, among other things. He noted that universities are not only providers of education, but significant employers and it is important to remind government of this. The emphasis for now will be keeping the pressure on government while maintaining a good relationship at all levels.

#### **9. Question Period**

There were no additional questions.

#### **10. Other Business**

There was no other business.

#### **11. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 5:10 pm.