

SENATE
Approved Minutes of the Meeting held on
Monday, October 23, 2023 at 3:00 p.m
Hybrid
Windsor Foundation Room (Room 170) CHEB & Remote Link via Microsoft Teams

The Senate met in regular session on Monday, October 23, 2023

Present

L. Spiteri (Chair), R. Affoo, T. Akay, O. Akinkugbe, O. Bankole, S. Berge, A. Bernard, S. Bishop, D. Black, J. Blustein, R. Chang, V. Chappe, S. Chitnis, I. Courtand, B. Davis, K. Dilcher, P. Doyle-Bedwell, O. Dryden, L. DuBois, H. El Naggar, R. Ezekiel, N. Ezzeddine, M. Farrimond, G. Gagnon, M. Goudreault, R. Goyal, D. Grantham, D. Gray, S. Harding, F. Harvey, G. Horne, D. Jakeman, M. Keinast, A. Kermanshahi-pour, N. Kiepek, S. Kirk, M. Knakriah, Y. Kotlyarova, C. Lake, M. Leonard, J. Li, Y. Liu, C. Macdonald, L. Macdonald, P. Marignani, S. McKibbon, C. McLarney, R. Meagher, B. Merritt, F. Naghibi, M. Pacurar, N. Patil, L. Phillmore, T. Rajack-Talley, T. Richard, K. Rosen, R. Sampangi, L. Sarson, S. Seth, M. Sharaput, D. Silvio, V. Simedoh, M. Smit, S. Stone, D. Tyers, M. Ulku, M. Vandenburg, P. Wani, D. Westwood, S. Wildeman, E. Yiridoeg

Regrets

A. Aiken, D. Anderson, E. Black, K. Brooks, S. Forbes, G. Ilie, W. Lahey, T. Perrot, A. Rau-Chaplin, R. Zaiotti

Absent

G. Adolphe-Nazaire, J. Andrews, C. Brown, D. Burnay, A. Doucette, C. D'Souza, Y. El Hiani, M. Fournier, V. Maselli, H. Niu, E. Oguntonna, R. Orji, Y. Pan, A. Rudnick

Guests

Samantha Adema (Indigenous Services Librarian, Dalhousie University Libraries), Barb Hamilton-Hinch (Assistant Vice Provost Equity and Inclusion), John Hope (General Counsel & University Secretary), Elanie MacInnis (Associate Dean Library Services and Head of MacRae Library, Dalhousie University Libraries), Sapna Natarajan (Student Minute Taker), Judith Ng'ethe (Associate Secretary of Senate), Suzanne Sheffield (Executive Director (Acting), Centre for Learning and Teaching), Nakita Strowbridge (Senate Coordinator)

The Dalhousie University Senate acknowledges that we are in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq People and pays respect to the Indigenous knowledges held by the Mi'kmaq People, and to the wisdom of their Elders past and present. The Mi'kmaq People signed Peace and Friendship Treaties with the Crown, and section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982 recognizes and affirms Aboriginal and Treaty rights. We are all Treaty people.

We recognize that African Nova Scotians are a distinct people whose histories, legacies and contributions have enriched that part of Mi'kma'ki known as Nova Scotia for over 400 years.

1. Approval of Agenda

The agenda was **approved** as presented.

2. Consent Agenda

2.1 Approval of Draft Minutes of September 25, 2023 Senate Meeting

THAT the draft minutes of the September 25, 2023 Senate meeting be approved as circulated.

Approved by **CONSENT**.

3. Matters Arising from September 25, 2023 Meeting

3.1 Full Proposal for Proposed Creation of College of Digital Transformation, Faculty of Management and Faculty of Computer Science

Senator Spiteri reported that the proposal for the creation of the College of Digital Transformation, under the Senate Policy for Academic Unit Consolidation, Renaming, Establishment, Termination and Transfer (AU-CRETT), considered by Senate at its September 25, 2023 meeting and recommended to the Board of Governors, was duly approved by the Board of Governors at its October 17, 2023 meeting.

4. Steps to Make Diversity and Inclusion a Reality

Senator Spiteri invited Senator Michael Vandenburg (in his capacity as Dean of Libraries), Elaine MacInnis (Associate Dean Library Services and Head of MacRae Library) and Samantha Adema (Indigenous Services Librarian) to give a presentation on University Libraries Indigenous services and initiatives.

The meeting was informed that a 2019 survey of a focus group of Indigenous students on their experience with Dal Libraries found that:

- There was a need for greater visibility of Indigenous resources within Dal Libraries;
- There was a lack of Indigenous culture being represented in Dal Libraries spaces;
- Dalhousie Libraries spaces should provide opportunities for Indigenous programming; and
- Indigenous students struggled with access to quiet spaces, access to laptops and finding locations for group work.

The meeting was informed of initiatives taken at the Killam library to address the concerns raised by the focus group, including creation of a location, the Ko'jua Okuom in the Killam Library, exclusively to cater to Indigenous programming. Workshops, film screenings, meetings, classes and other events had been held in the Ko'jua Okuom over the past year. Future programming would include beading and craft workshops, lectures on Indigenous topics and a Wikipedia Edit-a-thorn.

It was reported that various Killam Library special projects had recently been undertaken or were planned including, a handcrafted table by Jim and Cheryl Walsh placed in the Ko'jua Okuom; the Seven Sacred Teachings by Lorne Julien, which were murals that would be displayed on the exterior of the Killam Library to educate the Dalhousie community on Indigenous culture; and the Peaked Cap Project by Tayla Paul which would be a 9.5 feet high sculpture housing a bench for students to take leisure as needed. In addition, an exhibit on missing and murdered Indigenous girls created by Halifax West High School students would be on display until May 2024. Senators were also informed about work being undertaken with the National Indigenous Knowledge and Language Alliance (NIKLA) through the Respectful Terminology project and that would be applied to Dalhousie library catalogues.

5. Reports

5.1 Chair of Senate's Report

The Chair of Senate's report was submitted in writing with the Senate package and included updates on the Holistic Review of Cyclical Academic Quality Assurance and the Governance review. Senator Spiteri additionally highlighted items for Senate including the Senate Discipline Committee 2022-23 Annual Report that was circulated with the Senate meeting package for Senator's information.

5.2 Provost's Report

The Provost's report was submitted in writing with the Senate package and included updates on convocation ceremonies, Mi'kmaw History Month, and enrolment numbers. Senator Harvey highlighted the annual fall convocation ceremonies noting the inspiring installation speeches and convocation addresses. Senator Harvey also thanked and commended organizers of Dalhousie's 13th annual Mawio'mi. Senator Harvey also noted that a report regarding Settler Misappropriation of Indigenous Identity entitled *Understanding our Roots* had been released. The meeting was informed that a presentation on report would be given to Senate.

5.2 Questions for Reports

There were no questions for reports.

FOR APPROVAL

6. Senate Learning and Teaching Committee (SLTC)

6.1 Proposed Revisions to Student Rating of Course Content Aspects of the Student Feedback on Learning Experiences Policy

Senator Pacurar presented the proposed revisions to the Student Ratings of Course Content (SRCC) aspects of the Student Feedback on Learning Experiences Policy, as recommended by the Senate Learning and Teaching Committee (SLTC) at its October 4, 2023 meeting.

The meeting was reminded of the Dalhousie Student Union (DSU) led initiative to add a block of mandatory questions (the SRCC) to the Student Learning Experiences Questionnaire (SLEQ) to identify the levels of content that address equity and inclusion in Dalhousie course curriculums for educational and nonpunitive purposes, and that in April, 2021, Senate approved addition of the SRCC survey questions to the SLEQ as part of extensive revisions to the Student Feedback on Learning Experiences Policy. The meeting was also reminded that In November, 2021, following receipt of feedback from various quarters expressing concern regarding the addition of the SRCC to the SLEQ, a request was made and Senate approved that the SRCC questions be suspended for the 2021-22 academic year and that the suspension was extended for the 2022-23 academic year. The suspension was to allow for time to address procedural issues with the SRCC survey questions that had been observed during the Fall term 2021 SLEQ roll out, as well as pertinent observations made, and feedback received regarding a number of the SRCC survey questions.

The meeting was informed of the following rationale for the proposed SRCC revisions:

- SLEQ software restriction which limited survey questions responses to one "no answer" option per question;
- Ambiguity of the first SRCC survey question regarding "course materials";
- Grammatical inaccuracy in the second SRCC survey question;
- Retaining the focus of the SRCC survey questions on course content and not course delivery through removal of the third SRCC survey question;
- Clarifying the process for distribution of SRCC aggregate data as the SRCC Committee that was supposed to distribute them was undefined; and
- Ensuring the SRCC survey results were not shared beyond the instructor by having separate release of the SRCC survey results to the instructor.

Moved by Senator Pacurar on behalf of the Senate Learning and Teaching Committee:

THAT Senate approve the proposed revisions to the Student Feedback on Learning Experiences Policy with regard to the Student Ratings of Course Content, as presented.

In the ensuing discussion, it was proposed that the motion be amended by replacing the words “as presented” with the words “as amended” to reflect the following additional revisions proposed by Senators:

- Deletion of a grammatical error – the word “to” between the words “not” and “be” in the first sentence of the last paragraph of Section E in page 7 of the Student Feedback on Learning Experiences Policy;
- Reinsertion of a sentence that was proposed to be deleted in the last paragraph of Section E on page 7 relating to the distribution of anonymized data for SRCC quantitative questions; and
- Addition of a sentence in Section F.3.8.b on page 8 to clarify release of aggregate results for SRCC survey questions.

Moved by Senator Pacurar, seconded by Senator Seth

THAT the motion be amended by replacing the words “as presented” with the words “as amended” to reflect the additional proposed revisions to the Student Rating of Course Content Aspects of the Student Feedback on Learning Experiences Policy.

The motion to amend **CARRIED**.

In response to a query regarding how to manage controversies in literature texts which may be deemed offensive by students, the importance of informing students in advance about potentially controversial material and the reason for its use was emphasized.

In response to a further question, Senators were reminded that a task force was currently reviewing the SLEQ instrument.

Moved by Senator Pacurar on behalf of the Senate Learning and Teaching Committee:

THAT Senate approve the proposed revisions to the Student Feedback on Learning Experiences Policy with regard to the Student Ratings of Course Content, as amended.

The motion as amended **CARRIED**.

6.2 Proposed Requirement of Medical Notes for Final Exams/Use of Student Declarations of Absence for Final Exams and Final Pieces of Work

Senator Pacurar reminded the meeting that the requirement for medical notes and use of Student Declarations of Absence (SDAs) had been waived for the 2022-23 academic year and it was proposed that waiver of the requirement for medical notes and use of SDAs be continued for the 2023-24 academic year.

The meeting was informed that SLTC considered the proposal at its October 4, 2023 meeting and recommended it to Senate for approval. The rationale for the proposal was based on:

- Dalhousie’s messaging that all members of the Dalhousie community stay home when sick;
- The Nova Scotia government policy that doctors were not required to issue medical notes for absences less than five days;
- Obtaining a medical note in a timely manner being difficult for students;

- The proposal maintaining the academic integrity of course evaluation and assessments and honouring instructor discretion; and
- The Policy for the Scheduling of Courses/Examinations and the Academic Calendar Regulation Part C: Missed or Late Academic Requirements due to Student Absence both currently undergoing review.

It was clarified that the waiver of the requirement for medical notes and the use of SDAs, if approved, would provide flexibility. Instructors would not be prevented from requesting medical notes for final exams. They could still require them if they chose. However, it would allow instructors, if they so choose, to apply the SDA regulation instead therefore reducing the demand for medical notes because some instructors would choose not to require them. In addition, it would allow, for those who choose to do so, to use SDAs for final coursework, fieldwork, and skills assessment, as well as final exams. It was further clarified that it would apply for the whole academic year including Spring and Summer terms.

In response to a question regarding the scope of the proposal, it was confirmed that it would be applied per course and must be communicated to students in advance of the final exam.

Moved by Senator Pacurar on behalf of the Senate Learning and Teaching Committee:

THAT Senate:

- 1. Waive, for the 2023-24 academic year, including fall, winter, spring and summer examination period, the requirement for a medical certificate to verify a student's absence due to illness for requesting an alternate final examination time;**
- 2. Waive, for the 2023-24 academic year, including fall, winter, spring and summer examination period, the exclusion of final coursework, exams, fieldwork, and skill labs from the use of Student Declarations of Absence; and**
- 3. Allow, for the 2023-2024 academic year, including fall, winter, spring and summer examination period, course instructors the ability to accept either a medical certificate or a Student Declaration of Absence to verify a student's absence due to illness when requesting an alternate final examination time so long as what will be accepted is clearly communicated to students in advance of the final examination time.**

The motion **CARRIED**.

FOR DISCUSSION

7. Presentation - Transition & Engagement Framework and Campus Vibrancy Initiatives

Senator Ezekiel informed the meeting that Dalhousie underperformed when compared to U-15 peers, in terms of providing a sense of belonging to university students when compared nationwide. For the 2023-24 academic year, several initiatives had been prioritized to create a vibrant campus atmosphere to facilitate student connection and sense of belonging, while responding in a coordinated and effective manner to potential unsanctioned street gatherings. These included:

- Implementing a newly developed Transition & Engagement Framework;
- Shifting the residence philosophy and culture from focusing on compliance to focusing on community building and engagement, including launching an overhauled Residence Community Living Guide;

- Continued positive neighbour engagement, including supporting a community mural project at the intersection of Larch and Jennings Street;
- Launching of an HRM-Dalhousie Taskforce to coordinate planning and response to unsanctioned street gatherings;
- Enhancing first response capacity through the evolution of the Dalhousie Campus Medical Response Team (DMCRT) to a student-led university-affiliated service offering medical and mental health first aid in residence during weekends and at large-scale events; and
- Enhancing harm reduction efforts and collaborative contribution to a community of care through the launch of Dalhousie Care Hubs Initiative.

In response to a question regarding the date of Homecoming lining up with Thanksgiving, it was confirmed that this would be factored in for future Homecoming events.

8. Question Period

In response to concerns regarding the lack of safety and convenience associated with the new university-wide telephone system, it was confirmed that while this was outside the ambit of the Senate, the concerns expressed would be passed along to Dalhousie Information Technology Services.

9. Other Business

There was no other business.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 4:20 pm.