

Item: Senate Minutes, November 1998

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DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY

APPROVED MINUTES

OF

SENATE MEETING

Senate met in regular session on Monday, November 23, 1998, at 4:00 p.m. in University Hall, Macdonald Building.

Present with Mr. C. Stuttard in the chair were the following:

Abi Daoud, Barnes, Binkley, Bleasdale, Bradfield, Carlson, Clements, Coffin, Crocker, El-Hawary, Emodi, Fooladi, Furrow, Galley, Giacomantonio, Girard, Hyndman, Ipson, Johnston, Kimmins, Kipouros, Lalji, Lee, MacDonald, H. Lyttle (for MacInnis), Maloney, McIntyre, McNiven, Neumann, Pacey, H. Powell, Rathwell, Ruedy, Scully, Starnes, Thiessen, Tindall, Traves, Treves, Ugursal, Wainwright, Wallace, White.

Regrets: Bell, Bishop, Chiasson, Cunningham, Guppy, Maes, MacInnis, McConnell, Morrissey, Phillips, C. Powell, Rosson, Russell, Sastri, Shafai, Vohra, Woolf.

98:138.

Adoption of Agenda

The agenda was adopted as circulated, with the *in camera* session set as an order of the day for 5:30 pm.

98:139.

Minutes of Previous Meeting

L. Johnson was added to those who had been in attendance at the meeting; at item 98:136, page 7, last paragraph, lines 4 and 5, "the accumulated deficit, not" was deleted; and the minutes of the meeting of October 26, 1998, were then adopted as amended.

98:140.

The Traves-Scully Report on Discussions with the Dalhousie Community

The President brought this Report forward as a matter of information. The document had been circulated to members of Senate and to the rest of the University campus, and had been presented to the Board of Governors. It was the result of over three months of meetings the President and Vice-President Scully had held with hundreds of individuals across campus, in an attempt to identify issues of concern on campus, and to learn more about the specific impact of general concerns on different departments, Faculties, and groups within the University. The discussions had also encouraged presentation of ideas as to how Dalhousie might improve our way of doing things. The Report identified the major issues that were raised, but did not comment extensively on the merits or demerits of those issues, and instead sought to bring them before the University community as an inventory of the concerns of our colleagues. Where appropriate, the Report provided limited background information concerning how the issue was being approached, or might be approached. The five headings were a somewhat arbitrary categorization of the

recurring themes in discussions: the enhancement of academic excellence; support for the Dalhousie student experience; strengthening the Dalhousie community; improvement of our administrative capacity and efficiency; and promotion of external relations. Many of these issues would be quite familiar, and come as no surprise to members of Senate, though some might be surprised at what was not in the Report.

The President understood that other matters of concern were not directly addressed in the Report, and since the document had been circulated he had received three or four emails from individuals asking that their ideas be added to the Report. He had no objection to such additions, but reminded Senators that the Report was simply intended to be a snapshot of Dalhousie at a particular point in its history. The concerns raised appeared to be common to our sector of the economy; most Universities were struggling with these problems in one way or another. Perhaps Dalhousie could be comforted by that, and draw from the experience of its sister institutions. But there were no easy answers to the types of issues raised. These were tough issues which involved trade-offs between competing values in the academy.

In light of the President's characterization of the Report as a snapshot of Dalhousie at one time, Mr. Bradfield requested clarification as to the fate of the additional comments received by email. Was the President hoping to stimulate debate? Was the Report still in the water? Mr. Traves responded that the Report provided feedback on issues of common concern. Some issues had not resonated with others when raised during a particular discussion, and had not been raised in other discussions. Those had been treated as isolated issues of individual concern. Some issues would most appropriately be followed up by departments and Faculties; others were administrative concerns; and still others would be of concern to Senate.

On behalf of the Faculty of Medicine, Mr. Ruedy thanked the President and Vice-President for giving members of his Faculty the opportunity to raise issues. He believed that this was the first time since his arrival at Dalhousie that the Faculty of Medicine had felt part of the larger Dalhousie, and he urged the President and Vice-President to find a means of continuing this type of exchange.

Mr. Ugursal understood from reading the correspondence from the Chair of the Board of Governors that this undertaking had been a response to a request for an independent review of the University signed by more than a thousand individuals. Did the Board see the Report as addressing the issues raised in that grassroots initiative? If not, how were they intending to respond to the request for an independent review?

Mr. Traves explained that the Board had postponed consideration of that issue until it had a better sense of the concerns on campus, given the general nature of the petition presented to it. The President had undertaken extensive consultation to secure a better sense of Dalhousie's concerns. But the Report did not speak specifically to the petition, because that was a matter for the Board to consider. The Board had taken this Report and additional information into consideration in dealing with the petition at its last meeting. Members could draw their own conclusions as to whether the Report addressed issues raised in the Petition by comparing the two documents.

Mr. Wainwright requested specifics concerning who had met with the President and Vice-President in the larger discussions groups and in the smaller meetings, and wondered on what basis individuals had been invited to the small discussion groups? Mr. Traves explained that he had asked the staff in his office to put together a series of twelve to fifteen meetings, each with four to eight individuals, to provide an opportunity to discuss matters in some detail with the President and Vice-President. His staff had attempted to create groups across disciplines, professorial ranks, and age cohorts, to get an admittedly

non-scientific cross-section of the University community. In addition, Mr. Traves and Mr. Scully had invited each Dean to arrange a meeting with some type of decision-making body within his/her Faculty. In the smaller Faculties such as Architecture and Law they had met with the assembled Faculty. For larger Faculties, they had met with individuals who were usually office-holders, but the Deans could provide a clearer sense of who had been invited to and represented at the Faculty meetings. The result had been an interdisciplinary mix in the small-group setting, where a broad range of experiences had been shared, and a more focussed expression of concerns in the Faculty meetings, though the latter had also raised issues of a general and inter-Faculty nature.

Mr. Traves added that he had found the experience helpful, and intended to continue this type of consultation on a regular basis, though at a less hectic pace. He emphasized that to some extent the meetings had been two-way exchanges of information in which members requested clarification concerning policies and procedures. In this respect, Mr. Traves had learned the value of constant communication and education about how the University worked, how budgets were made, and how decisions were made. We could not take for granted that even a long-standing member of the University community was well-informed about the way in which the institution functioned, and part of our task was to explain the University in creative ways which could capture members' interest and provide the opportunity for informed input into decision-making on a regular basis.

Mr. Wainwright asked whether any faculty had turned down an invitation to meet with the President and Vice-President, and if so whether they had indicated why. He also asked whether the President could make available a list of the groups and individuals with whom he had met. Mr. Traves would have to ask his secretary concerning the latter. Perhaps the Deans could reconstruct who had attended the meetings within Faculties. In terms of absolute numbers, they had met with roughly one-quarter of the individuals in the small groups and the remaining three-quarters in the larger Faculty groups. The President had been informed of scheduling conflicts in the case of some individuals; however, if anyone had turned down an invitation as a form of protest, from his/her perspective the protest had been lost, because the President had not been informed.

Mr. Ugursal congratulated the President and Vice-President on an excellent initiative, but he had questions concerning why and how it had been carried out. He thought the President agreed with him that the petition had initiated the process. However, if the process was a response to the petition, he did not believe an assessment of concerns at Dalhousie should have been conducted by the President, given the perception that the President was part of the problem. Mr. Traves noted that the petition had been addressed to the Board and not to the President. Secondly, he saw the consultation process and the ultimate Report as a more fundamental response to the problems demonstrated by the fact we had had a faculty strike. In his own mind, and before the petition was presented to the Board, the need for discussions with the University community had become clear. Without going into specifics, the petition appeared to raise concerns about more than the performance of the President, and might even be interpreted as raising concerns about the Faculty Association.

Mr. El-Hawary thanked the President and Vice-President for their efforts, and asked whether they could provide a road map indicating where Dalhousie might be heading on some of the issues raised. Mr. Traves responded that the Report was not drafted as an action plan or strategic plan. The issues identified would be dealt with by the appropriate bodies. For example, concerns about policies, procedures, and support mechanisms for our research mission would be forwarded to the Task Force working on those matters. Issues surrounding information technology would be dealt with by the Advisory Committee. Mr. Traves noted the SCITPC Report circulated with the agenda for today's meeting indicated these

problems were already under consideration. Personally, the President hoped to see substantial follow-up on these issues as well as those raised concerning the state of physical plant. In that area the Board was considering a follow-up study to achieve a long-term strategy for the University. On the Library, Mr. Traves trusted that once the new Librarian had settled into his job he would be producing a formal written report for presentation to Senate and other appropriate bodies. Other matters would be directly referred to Senate, and some to Committees.

Other issues were of more general nature, such as what to do about stress and burnout. That was a particularly difficult question on everyone's agenda, but it might fall between stools. The University needed to find a way and a forum for discussing this problem. He would be pursuing the matter with the Deans and Administrative Directors.

Mr. Crocker applauded the process of consultation, and was surprised to learn of some animosity towards it. The small group in which he had participated had enjoyed a free exchange of ideas. Ms. Treves had also found the small group meeting she had attended very helpful. After seventeen years at Dalhousie, this had been the first opportunity she had had to meet and discuss issues with faculty members from other disciplines. It had been particularly valuable to learn that members shared common concerns across Faculties.

Mr. Scully reported that in addition to participating in some of the meetings with the President he had been visiting departments on a solo basis and enjoyed learning about the variety of experiences at Dalhousie. This term he had visited fifteen departments; he hoped to squeeze in another dozen before Christmas, and complete the remainder next term. Much of what he had been hearing about Dalhousie was generic to universities across Canada, though he recognized Dalhousie's experience took on a specific form, shaped by history and by circumstance. He looked forward to continuing his immersion in our environment.

Mr. Bradfield inferred from earlier comments that the President was suggesting that the Report before Senate put the ADD Petition in a different light. To Mr. Bradfield the two documents appeared strikingly different, and the Report did not displace the Petition. He also noted that his experience in one of the meetings with the President suggested that the composition of the meeting, who spoke first, and what questions were raised first, shaped the dynamics of the meeting. Mr. Traves responded that the Report was not intended to replace the ADD document.

Mr. Stuttard thanked Mr. Traves and Mr. Scully for their presentation.

98:141.

Administration Presentation: Bryan Mason & Virginia Lee, BANNER Project Briefing

Mr. Mason appreciated the opportunity to address Senate on the Banner Project. Hard copies of his overheads were provided at the door. Both he and Virginia Lee would be happy to answer any questions which arose subsequent to the meeting, after members had had the opportunity to look at the Charts at their leisure. Mr. Mason would provide a brief overview of the project, addressing the reasons for undertaking it, its budget, and its scope. Virginia Lee would give a brief status report on the implementation process, focussing on the Student Information System (SIS), the first major component of the system which Dalhousie was installing.

Mr. Mason explained the nature of and problems presented by Dalhousie's current major administrative

computer systems, as set out in the first five of the charts circulated to Senators. He then reviewed the history of Dalhousie's Administrative Computing Plan, beginning in the early 1990s. Chart six outlined the objectives of the Plan developed and reported in 1992: the creation of a fully integrated and Y2K-compliant system through a mixture of buying new and building in-house components. Chart seven set out the plan for achieving these objectives, and chart eight revealed progress towards the University's goal as of 1993/94. As the latter chart indicated, Dalhousie had been approached by the University of New Brunswick to work in partnership to create a Student Information System, on the understanding that each University would commit itself to developing roughly half of the necessary modules. Subsequently and without consultation, UNB, which did not have the Y2K compliance problem, had changed the timetable for delivery of its share of the modules. This slowdown had put Dalhousie in jeopardy, and the joint project had to be abandoned.

Meanwhile, purchase and planning for other systems had continued. However, the Alumni Development System under development, and the TAPESTRY software system purchased for the Financial Information System, were both based on Ingres and as Ingres failed to capture the marketplace, concerns mounted about these two segments of the administrative computer system. Ingres would ultimately be abandoned once the last Ingres system had been replaced.

As indicated in Charts nine through twelve, by 1995 and at the urging of NSCHE, the Metro Universities had undertaken a study which proposed creation of a common Management Information System (MIS) to tightly merge the non-academic administration of the Institutions, the key feature for any joint venture, according to the consultants' report. Dalhousie had been prepared to support the recommended tightly-knit structure; however, by 1996 the Metro Consortium had rejected the idea in favour of a looser arrangement, and the Consortium's goal had then become identification of a single management information system that all Metro institutions could adopt, but run separately. By the fall of 1996 a Consultants' Report commissioned by the Consortium had concluded that no suite of systems available could meet the needs of all seven Metro Universities, but that the Banner suite from SCT was the best available and was particularly well-suited for medium to large institutions. Dalhousie's user departments had agreed, and in December 1996 the Board of Governors had approved the purchase of Banner and had established a planning budget.

Installation of the Banner Student Information System (SIS) had been the top priority because of the Y2K problem. This had involved integration of the Edison SIS used at the former TUNS. Initially the project organization had called for a part-time project manager, the Director of Administrative Computing, who would manage implementation in addition to carrying his regular workload. In mid 1997, identification of the need for a full-time manager had led to the hiring of Ms. Virginia Lee to work (on a consulting basis) over the lifetime of the project. At the same time, outside experts in the area of major IT projects had reviewed our progress and had recommended the key changes in the project's structure, set out in Chart sixteen. In line with the consultants' recommendations, a Senior Administrative Officer, the Vice-President (Finance & Administration), had been appointed Project Sponsor, and the President and four Vice-Presidents had become the project's Executive Committee. The Policy Advisory Committees created for each area were more broadly representative of the University community, and hopefully would help to ensure that the solutions to any problems would be more sensitive to the needs of future users. In addition, more individuals had been seconded to the project on a full- and part-time basis.

Reviewing the project's budget, Mr. Mason noted that the original budget of \$2.25 m had been revised upwards by \$600,000, but he was confident the additional costs could be met from the existing 5% administrative levy on all full cost-recovery programs. By the end of this fiscal year, March 1999, we

would have approximately \$260,000 in that budget resource.

Ms. Lee spoke to the current status of the Banner project, highlighting the objectives of the project: the need to become Y2K compliant and the desire for shared information, better information, and greater access to that information. The constraints on the project were the imperatives of time, and the difficulties involved in creating and maintaining a team of individuals, many of whom had to be seconded to work on Banner. The general marketplace demand for individuals with any relevant technical expertise also constrained the University's ability to attract those with the necessary qualifications. A project of this size and complexity also involved many unknowns and considerable risk.

The project had to meet three major goals. It had to address all Y2K problems; it had to be able to provide those services necessary to the functioning of the University (core functionality); and as a minimum it should be able to maintain the status quo, fulfilling all the tasks expected of the current system. The project team was also taking every opportunity to enhance the system and increase integration. With these goals in mind, the project intended to deliver four systems. The SIS part of the suite alone included eighteen modules, each of which had hundreds and thousands of routines and edits necessary to the implementation of our University policies and procedures as a whole.

At present the project was on schedule. The admissions system had just been launched in October of this year, a major boost to the morale of all those working on the system. By January the team would be implementing the course catalogue, the faculty load, and location management. In February, scheduling would follow, and after that registration and student receivables by April. The intention was to "go live" with the SIS system for the Spring/Summer 1999 term. The lower volume in that term would serve as a trial run to work out any kinks in the system. In addition, the project team hoped to have Web for faculty, and advisors' Web for students up and running by June 1999.

The general project schedule for all modules was presented in Chart twenty-two, but Senators should remember that these dates were targets. Some of the dates were based on SCT's recommendations concerning the size and magnitude of each part of the project, and some of the projections were based on the teams' increasing experience in implementing the SIS. Charts twenty-four and twenty-five indicated the next set of critical milestones: class scheduling, student receivables, registration, and housing. Work on the Human Resource System had begun this month under project leader Elizabeth Lane who had been seconded to the project.

Some of the questions raised within the University community centred on the issues of access to the system, how individuals would secure information, and the means and methods for reporting. At the moment the project team could not provide definitive answers to many of these questions. The goal was to establish approved data definitions, a common understanding of what a term or element in a data base would mean. Also being discussed was the need for defined object views, or groups or sets of information about the student, about Human Resources, and about finance. These would facilitate viewing of the information. A common user interface for the database was also a goal, as was a standard set of "end-user" reporting tools to provide support.

Adequate training in accessing and using information would be a crucial part of the implementation of the system, and a training plan, headed by a dedicated coordinator, would coordinate the various types and levels of training required by the various user communities. The first phase would be to train the core functional staff; the second would involve training the administrators; the third phase would train the general University users. Chart twenty-eight indicated the type of equipment that would be needed to

access Banner. She hoped the PCs and MACs would be supplemented and augmented by a WEB interface.

Ms. Lee concluded by reminding members of the tight implementation schedule, and the dedicated team working towards meeting that schedule. Finally, she assured members that to the extent possible the project implementation would attempt to leave open the option of going back to change features if necessary.

Mr. Stuttard thanked Mr. Mason and Ms. Lee for their presentations and invited questions from the floor.

Mr. Wainwright was pleased to learn that the project managers and the team were not approaching Banner as if it were unsinkable. He wished to know more about the nature of the icebergs among which we were sailing, and whether we had enough lifeboats to deal with unforeseen problems. He had been surprised that neither presenter had mentioned the major problem Banner had faced last fall, and the role of Senate and a large number of faculty in helping to resolve that full-class vs. half-class controversy. In the context of that problem, he wished to know whether the Policy Advisory Committees were what he would call anticipatory committees, functioning to identify problems, and whether the current project structure would allow for adequate consultation with the University community concerning potential problems.

Mr. Mason explained that the Policy Advisory Committees (PAC) currently in place included those for the SIS and for the Room Reservation and Scheduling module, as well as an Integration Policy Advisory Committee (PAC) whose purpose was to ensure that all the modules were working together. The Personnel Payroll PAC would be established shortly, then the Alumni, and Financial Information System PACs. The risk factor was not whether or not the product would work; it had been on the market for a number of years, and came highly recommended by independent reviewers. It was presently functioning in hundreds of post-secondary institutions both in the United States and to a lesser extent in Canada. The risks related to the size of the undertaking and the resources available for its completion, and to the need to ensure that the rules within Banner reflected Dalhousie's peculiar needs. The "R"-term issue had not been mentioned partly because it had been resolved, and partly because the Policy Advisory Committees were intended to forestall development of a similar problem by ensuring wider consultation and discussion of potential issues.

Ms. Lee reiterated that risks were identified as we attempted to implement the system, and particularly when the project team tried to accommodate the suite to the unique needs of Dalhousie. Those cases in which accommodation had been problematic had been taken to the appropriate PAC for feedback, then through SCAA and on to Senate. The project team would continue to follow that process. Speaking to the integrity of Banner itself, Ms. Lee noted that McGill and St. Francis Xavier had joined those major Canadian institutions which had purchased the suite. Concerning the "R"-term issue, Dalhousie had developed a routine to handle that problem, and SCT was committed to addressing it as part of their development plan.

Mr. Mason added that the other area of risk involved the human resources for the project. We were heavily reliant on those individuals currently working with Banner, and we did not have back-up either in Administrative Computing or in the user departments such as the Registrar's Office. Consequently, if we lost key personnel we would be in a very difficult situation.

From his experience on the Board of Blue Cross, Mr. McNiven was impressed that Dalhousie had been

able to keep its costs for the new computer system at such a low level. Blue Cross had just spent \$27 m developing a system themselves rather than buying one. After four years it was falling into place, but the Company anticipated spending \$2 to \$3 m per year to tweak problems such as that of the Y2K. Mr. McNiven also noted that dealing with risks involved an on-going process of trade-offs between what one asked of a system and what that system was able to deliver.

98:142.

Other Business

Prior to moving *in camera* for the order of the day, members agreed to consider an item of business raised by Ms. Furrow. Ms. Furrow requested that before Senate considered adopting the SCITPC document circulated with the agenda, the body presenting the document adjust the deadlines by which units had been asked to provide their responses. The time frame currently set out appeared unrealistic. Mr. Stuttard agreed to transmit that information to the Committee.

98:143.

IN CAMERA: Senate Academic Appeals Committee

The meeting moved *in camera* for this item.

98:144.

Report of the President

As a matter of information, Mr. Traves wished to comment on the recent published results of the Maclean's survey. From his perspective the general conclusions were a "methodological muddle", to which he did not attach enormous significance. On individual topics, however, the information generated could be interesting and useful. Specifically, Mr. Traves had been impressed by the comparative material on student bodies across Canada. Members would receive shortly a more detailed presentation by email covering seven measures of the excellence of Dalhousie's student community. Briefly, the entering academic average of Dalhousie's first year class was the fifth highest among all Canadian universities and the highest in Nova Scotia. Dalhousie students enjoyed the sixth best graduation rate in Canada and the best in Nova Scotia. The proportion of our entering class with a 75% average or better was eighth best in Canada and first in Nova Scotia. Dalhousie students ranked eighth in Canada in terms of national awards won per thousand students, and first in Nova Scotia. Dalhousie attracted the highest proportion of out-of-province students among the large research universities and the fourth highest total in Canada; this was an area in which all Nova Scotian universities did exceptionally well. Dalhousie supported excellence in its student body by allocating the sixth highest proportion of its operating budget to scholarships and bursaries of any Canadian university and the highest proportion among Nova Scotian universities. Among the large research-intensive universities, Dalhousie ranked fourth with respect to small class size in third and fourth year classes, behind Montreal, McGill, and Queen's. Our ranking for first and second year classes was thirteenth.

In sum, Dalhousie faculty had the pleasure of teaching extraordinarily bright students drawn from across Canada; and students had the opportunity to enrich their educational experience through their interaction with other talented students from diverse backgrounds.

Mr. Wainwright wished to return to an issue raised at the previous Senate meeting, but wanted to assure the President he did so for information and not in a hostile manner. He appreciated the President's

circulation to all Senators of the speech by Sir Graham Day to the meeting of Commonwealth Universities. Mr. Wainwright had double-checked with the Editor of University Affairs, Peggy Berkowitz, who had confirmed that in response to a question the Chancellor had referred to faculty members as inmates of an institution. In light of this confirmation, Mr. Wainwright remained genuinely curious about senior administrators' perceptions of the Chancellor and his role at Dalhousie. He understood that Sir Graham was not an administrative officer of the University; however, he was more than a ceremonial figure. He represented the University in important respects, and each year our students received their degrees from him. Had the President any further thoughts on the Chancellor's speech? Did the President wish to comment on the Chancellor's advocacy of a management structure for universities which drew an increasingly sharp distinction between those who managed the university and those who taught and did research?

When he had read the speech, the President had been surprised to find the Chancellor took a very strong position in defence of a number of issues which he would have expected faculty members to embrace, in particular the need to protect intellectual freedom and the importance of maintaining faculty as one of the central components of the university. The Chancellor had also noted that senior administrators remained accountable to their colleagues and community which had taken part in their appointment. The Chancellor went on to discuss the need to train individuals for university administration, and perhaps draw from trained personnel from outside the academy. Mr. Traves did not agree with the Chancellor on this final point; he believed the best academic administrators were drawn from within the university. With respect to the Chancellor's response to the question, the President had not been present for the exchange. The phrase attributed to Sir Graham was one with which we were all familiar, and some of us had probably used on occasion. But the Chancellor's off-the-cuff response was not felicitously phrased. The President did not believe it reflected the generally high opinion Sir Graham held of faculty members.

98:145.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 6 p.m.

Secretary

Chair