

Item: Senate Minutes, October 2008
Call Number: Senate fonds, UA-5

Additional Notes:

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DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY

APPROVED MINUTES OF SENATE MEETING

Senate met in regular session on Monday, October 27, 2008, at 4:00 p.m., in University Hall, Macdonald Building.

Present with Lloyd Fraser in the chair were: Barker, Barkhouse, Binkley, Boran, Butler, Campbell, Canning, Cochrane, Coffin, Cook, Cox, Croll, Fanning, Farina, Frank, K. Fraser, Gantar, Gassmann, Geldenhuys, Harman, Haslam, Helland, Jean Hughes, Jon Hughes, Johnston, Larkin, Leon, Leonard, Macy, Maes, McClure, McConnell, McLarney, Milson, Moukdad, Nowakowski, Pegg, Persaud, Ryan, Sadek, Schellinck, Scherkoske, Shaver, Shukla, Snow, Thornhill, Tindall, Traves, Tremblay, Ugursal, Webster.

Regrets: Adshade, Camfield, Couban, Crago, El-Masry, Karabanow, Kroeker, MacLaren, Plug, Robinson, Rutherford, Saunders, Shepherd, Singleton, Watters, Wheeler.

Absent: El-Hawary, Garduno, Ross, Scrimger, Smith.

Guests: MJ Adams, S. Brousseau, A. Power, L. Sherman

The Chair called the meeting to order and welcomed a new member of Senate from the Faculty of Science, Ms. Anne-Marie Ryan, Department of Earth Sciences. He invited Senators to partake in the refreshments, which he explained will continue to be a feature at Senate meetings.

2008:77

Adoption of Agenda

With the addition of further Senate Nominating Committee (SNC) nominations, contained in a memo from the SNC and distributed at today's meeting, the agenda was **ADOPTED**.

2008:78

Draft Minutes of September 22, 2008 Meeting of Senate

a) Approval

The minutes of the September 22, 2008 meeting were not available.

a) Matters Arising

Mr. Fraser will write to the University Computing and Information Services (UCIS) regarding plans for wireless as per the recommendation contained in the 2007 - 2008 Senate Computing and Information Technology and Planning Committee Annual Report. Mr. Fraser has written to the Dean of the Faculty of Engineering regarding the creation of a Faculty appeal process with a request to report back to the SSC by the end of December on their progress. Senator Ugursal's comments regarding the academic appeal within the Faculty of Engineering have been brought to the attention of the Senate Steering Committee and Legal Counsel and a response to Mr. Ugursal is pending.

2008:79

Campus Master Plan Presentation

Mr. Fraser explained that there was a brief introduction of the Campus Master Plan at the last Senate meeting and this is anticipated to be an ongoing process. Mr. Fraser welcomed Mr. Larry Sherman, Lead Project Manager for the Campus Plan, and Mary Jane Adams, Director of Planning, Facilities Management. Mr. Sherman reported that an important planning finding that they have gained from their meetings to date is that, as much as we would like to think of Dalhousie as one campus, functionally it really is three campuses. The demands within the various Faculties are, to a large measure, defined by geographic location. The various Health and Medical Faculties are located at Carleton and to a great extent the traditional university building and Faculties are located at Studley and will continue to be. Mr. Sherman presented three specific areas for discussion by Senators: young faculty housing, general teaching and learning spaces for students, and the future of the Sexton campus location.

In a discussion on graduate students and the association, it was noted that the graduate house is really not appropriate and needs to be replaced. Mr. Sherman noted that perhaps the broader question is what else do graduate students need that might be combined into one location. Mr. Traves clarified that the Graduate house is beyond repair and it is the University's intent to tear the building down and to make that space available to some other part of the University, as yet undetermined. The house across the street from that space on Le Marchant St. has been offered to the Graduate students and discussions are on-going.

Mr. Sherman clarified that the references to student learning spaces do not only include classrooms and labs, but go much further. Classroom demands can be forecast based on the enrolment in various Faculties, but it is the more nebulous space, where students socialize and learn on their own outside the teaching schedule, that is more difficult to predict. The planning team is very interested in comments from Faculties concerning the need for that kind of space. Ms. Hughes said that she would speak very much in favor for that kind of space. In health fields, we need common space to enable students to meet with those in related professions. Dalhousie also needs a significant infusion of resources to upgrade virtual and simulated learning opportunities for our students. Mr. Sherman said he has not heard enough about the virtual and smart environments but will look into this. The Committee has begun to hear the importance of interactive space, particularly in relation to promoting interdisciplinary learning: there is a desire to find adequate, attractive welcoming space for this purpose. Workshops at Carleton Campus are planned where it is anticipated that these issues will be discussed further.

Ms. Binkley spoke of the need for close, affordable housing for young faculty and the lack of child care facilities, which is also a problem for many graduate students. In regard to Sexton Campus, she inquired if there was a way to establish businesses in a 'hub' area to generate income for facilities; similar to the Hub at the University of Alberta. Also, it seems to make sense to have at least a branch of the College of Continuing Education open on Sexton campus because this would enable the university to be more accessible to the business community. We could have lunchtime classes, for example, where we could offer an Introduction to English and have it geared to part-time students. With regard to child care, Mr. Sherman noted that the committee is looking for ways the University might be able to attract those services to the campus without having to actually run them.

Ms. Campbell felt it would be important to keep the historical presence at Sexton and inquired if there had been any discussion about expanding the range of activities on that campus. Mr. Sherman said the planning committee is still in the process of examining opportunities. Mr. Coffin spoke about student spaces and the need for 24 hour student space for all students. Mr. Hughes spoke to the poor facilities within the rink.

Mr. Fraser thanked Mr. Sherman and Ms. Adams and indicated that Senate would look forward to further reports. He encouraged Senators to provide additional input directly to the Planning Committee.

2008:80

Chair's Report

Mr. Fraser reported that at the Fall Convocations, Dalhousie awarded degrees and diplomas to 906 graduands (391 undergraduates and 515 graduate students). In October 2007 there were 872 graduands. He reported that Senate had received the 2007-2008 Annual Report for the Centre for African Studies. A also noted that a former Secretary of Senate, Dr. Miriam Stewart, had been elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada. Dr. Stewart was Secretary of Senate from 1983-89 when she was a faculty member in the School of Nursing. She is now at the University of Alberta. Mr. Fraser indicated that, on Senate's behalf, he would extend congratulations to Dr. Stewart.

Mr. Fraser also noted, with sadness, the death of Dr. Roland Smith, former Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. Ms. Binkley, current Dean of FASS, paid tribute to Dr. Smith. Mr. Fraser indicated that on behalf of Senate, he would extend condolences to Dr. Smith's family.

Mr. Fraser announced that the November 10th meeting of Senate would provide an opportunity for follow-up discussion on the Strategic Expenditures Framework that President Traves would be addressing later in the meeting. The next regular meeting of Senate will be on November 24th.

2008:81

Enrolment Report:

October 15, 2008 Dalhousie University Enrolment Report

Alan Shaver, Vice-President, Academic & Provost and Asa Kachan, Assistant Vice-President, Enrolment Management and Registrar were present to speak to the October 15, 2008 Enrolment Report. The Report indicates an increase of 177 students over the same date the previous year: undergraduate enrolment increased from 11,581

to 11,680 and graduate enrolment increased from 3624 to 3702. In planning this year's budget Dalhousie made a conservative enrolment projection that we would be down 150 students, so the enrolment increase is particularly good news.

Mr. Snow inquired into the increase of over 62% in the "Other Graduate" enrolment. Ms. Kachan explained that there has been a change in how post-doctoral fellows are recorded. We have approximately 65 post-doctoral fellows who are deemed to be at a point where they are more learning- than research-focused, so they are recorded as students.

There is a decline in the number of students graduating from Atlantic Provinces high schools; this is being reflected in our enrolments over the last three years. Enrolment numbers from Nova Scotia High Schools: 2006 – 933; 2007- 877 and 2008 – 925. The numbers from New Brunswick are up slightly. There are more students enrolled from Ontario, Alberta, British Columbia and from Canadians living abroad.

Association of Atlantic Universities (AAU) 2008 – 2009 Preliminary Survey of Enrolments

Mr. Shaver reviewed the AAU 2008-2009 Preliminary Survey of Enrolments for all Atlantic universities. The positive results for Dalhousie are due to an enormous amount of work by a lot of people and it appears that we are doing many things well. He paid tribute to the recruiters, the admissions staff in the Registrar's Office, Communication and Marketing, the Deans, Department Chairs, and others engaged in the recruiting and admissions processes.

2008:82

President's Report and the President's Strategic Expenditures Framework, 2009 - 2011

Mr. Traves commented on the impact of the current economic situation on the University. Dalhousie continues to be in very good shape. Our enrolments are up, our revenues are very solid, and we are in a very positive financial position at the University—all of which is good news for weathering any difficult times. Historically, post secondary enrolment typically has increased in tough economic times. On the other hand, because a large proportion of our student body comes from outside the region, there is a significant risk that more students will attend local universities in order to save money.

In terms of the government grant, we are in the first year of a three year funding agreement with the province; this should result in an increase in funding to Dalhousie over the next two years. As part of this agreement, the province is adopting a funding formula which is more sensitive to enrolments. If Dalhousie continues to have strong enrolments, it should benefit accordingly.

At the moment, the University's fund raising has experienced a significant increase over last year but many people who have had significant investments are looking at a 20 – 30 % drop in their investments. It is anticipated that it will take longer to achieve the fund raising goals than we would otherwise have hoped.

The number one economy-related risk for the University relates to the pension fund. Dalhousie University has a defined benefit plan and the University is obligated to provide everybody with contracted pension outcomes. All pensions are totally secure and people will get the pension income that they anticipated. The challenge for the University arises if the pension plan finds itself under-funded in relation to long-term liabilities. In this case, the costs of the shortfall must be borne by the University. Dalhousie did an evaluation this past summer, which means that we have roughly two and a half years before we have to do the next evaluation. A formal report on the pension will be provided at the end of the fiscal year. In addition, a drop in interest rates would have a further negative impact on the interest income expected to flow from short-term investment of available cash.

Another factor that we will have to take into account—which does not result from the economy but rather is simply a coincidence of timing—will be the province's move, as early as July 1, 2009, to abolish mandatory retirement. That is expected to affect people who normally would retire on June 30, 2010; those people will now have a choice as to whether they wish to retire or to stay. The abolition of mandatory retirement is expected to have a negative impact on the University's operating budget at exactly the same time that we are having all these other problems. There are also some positives in the environment: for example, after several years of reporting that the budget had to be adjusted to deal with rising energy costs, it now looks as though these costs may be going down.

Finally, from the financial perspective, Dalhousie like other universities, operates through much of the year with a substantial cash balance. We get a large portion of our revenue in September, then spend it on salaries and other expenses over the course of the year. Dalhousie invests that money and takes in several million dollars a year in interest earnings, so it is not trivial in terms of its effect on us. A lowering of interest rates, therefore, would have a negative impact on that source of revenue. On balance, the University is in good shape at the moment and will manage through this process.

Mr. Snow wondered about retention strategies, and what new initiatives in that area we are looking at in moving forward. Mr. Traves responded that this is a component of our enrolment strategy and there is serious room for improvement. We have comparatively low retention rates, when we look at other institutions of a similar character and size to Dalhousie. Mr. Shaver and the Deans have been working on the issue. It is an important area, deserving Senate's attention. Mr. Fraser indicated that he and Mr. Shaver planned to schedule a Senate presentation and discussion on retention later in the year.

Mr. Croll noted that it wasn't many years ago that we all benefited from a pension contribution holiday that was split between the University and its employees. In retrospect, it appeared that members were forced to pay down the surplus because we were in a bubble economy and now we are being caught the other way around. He realized that there were benefits to both sides, but wondered if there was any thought being given to changing the evaluation process and making it longer-term, rather than being susceptible to these kinds of cycles in the economy. Mr. Traves stated that it is a complicated matter, partly because of the complicated mathematics of projecting the obligations of the pension plan and partly because of pension regulations and other factors. At that time, Dalhousie was under a legal obligation to spend down some of our surplus because organizations can keep only a certain amount of money in a surplus in a pension fund. Dalhousie has been given advice by our actuaries that if we were to change some of our pension arrangements, it would have a significant impact on the funding liabilities of the plan.

At this point, Mr. Traves addressed the Strategic Expenditures Framework which had been circulated. The document had been prepared prior to the economic downturn and presented to the University suggestions on general categories of expenditure for funds which had not been previously committed. Mr. Traves had broadly defined in terms of capital funding on the one hand, and a capital debt program that could be financed by this, which would allow a very substantial investment in the renewal of our facilities on campus and "program spending".

Mr. Coffin inquired about the suggestion that students might contribute toward Dalplex renovations, and the restrictions on raising tuition fees which were in place as a result of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the province. Mr. Traves assured Mr. Coffin that if Dalhousie did introduce a fee, it would only be done in accordance with the requirements under the MOU, including full consultation with students. Mr. Fraser reminded Senators that there will be an opportunity for further comments and reflection on the Strategic Expenditures Framework at the next meeting of Senate.

2008:83

Senate Nominating Committee: Senate Standing and University Committee Nominations

On the memo dated October 17, 2008, Mr. Fraser noted that Mr. Croll's nomination appeared in error. With that correction, Mr. Fraser, on behalf of the Senate Nominating Committee, **MOVED** that the following nominations to various Senate Standing and University Committees be approved:

THAT Carl Canning, Faculty of Dentistry, be appointed to the Senate Steering Committee (SSC) for the term October 27, 2008 to June 30, 2010;

THAT Philip Cox, Faculty of Computer Science, be appointed to the Senate Academic Priorities & Budget Committee (SAPBC) for the term October 27, 2008 to June 30, 2010;

THAT Robert Loney, Faculty of Dentistry, be appointed to the Senate Academic Appeals Committee (SAAC) for the term October 27, 2008 to June 30, 2011;

THAT Ron Bannerman, Faculty of Dentistry, be appointed to the Senate Committee on Academic Administration (SCAA) for the term October 27, 2008 to June 30, 2009;

THAT Blaine Cleghorn, Faculty of Dentistry; Grace Temani-Chipudhla, College of Continuing Education; and Christian Blouin, Faculty of Computer Science, be appointed to the Senate Computing & Information Technology Planning Committee (SCITPC) for the term October 27, 2008 to June 30, 2011;

THAT Cara Tax, Faculty of Dentistry, be appointed to the Senate Library Committee (SLC) for the term October 27, 2008 to June 30, 2009, and Melanie Farrimond, College of Continuing Education, for the term October 27, 2008 to June 30, 2010;

THAT Gail Tomblin Murphy, Faculty of Health Professions, be appointed to the Board of Governors for the term October 27, 2008 to June 30, 2011;

THAT Iraj Fooladi, Faculty of Management, be appointed to the Honorary Degrees Committee, for the term October 27, 2008 to June 30, 2011;

and from the SNC memo, circulated at today's meeting:

THAT Tammy Crowell, Faculty of Management, be appointed to the Employee Benefits Committee for the term October 27, 2008 to June 30, 2011;

THAT Barry D. Lesser, Faculty of Science, be appointed to the Senate Discipline Committee (SDC) for the term October 27, 2008 to January 31, 2009;

THAT Graham Reynolds, Faculty of Law, be appointed to the Senate Committee on Learning and Teaching (SCOLT) for the term January 1, 2009 to June 30, 2009;

The motion **CARRIED**.

2008:84

Senate Steering Committee:

Presidential Review Committee

On behalf of the Senate Steering Committee, Mr. Fraser **MOVED:**

THAT Mr. Lloyd Fraser, Chair of Senate; Mr. Peter Butler, Vice-Chair of Senate; and Ms. Carolyn Watters, Dean of Graduate Studies, be elected to serve as the Senate representatives on the Presidential Review Committee.

The motion **CARRIED**.

Senate Nominating Committee Nominee: Faculty of Engineering

On behalf of the Senate Steering Committee, Mr. Fraser **MOVED:**

THAT Jason Gu, Faculty of Engineering, be nominated to the Senate Nominating Committee (SNC) for the term October 27, 2008 to August 31, 2011.

After the requisite three calls for further nominations, Mr. Gu was declared elected.

2008:85

Senate Academic Priorities and Budget Committee – Modified Program Proposal: Bachelor of Informatics

Mr. Christian Blouin, Faculty of Computer Science, had been invited to the discussion on the modified program proposal for the Bachelor of Informatics but unfortunately was not available.

On behalf of SAPBC, Mr. Fraser **MOVED:**

THAT the Senate approve the modified program proposal for the Bachelor of Informatics in the Faculty of Computer Science.

Ms. Binkley noted that the proposal appeared to respond to the needs of students interested in combining Informatics with another area, which might be with something in Arts and Social Sciences, or something in Science. Developing a separate major for each student and putting that through the whole process seemed to be unnecessarily cumbersome, so the intent appears to be to provide an option where the students would have a significant concentration in an area in another Faculty. The proposal indicates that the student's program must be approved through an appropriate process in the Faculty of Computer Science. Ms. Binkley asked if the subjects that are accepted as a second area of concentration are going to be the ones that currently are available as Computer Science Minors, since there needs to be agreement by the Faculty that is offering that second subject. No one was present who could adequately respond to the question.

Ms. Binkley **MOVED**, seconded by Mr. Leon:

THAT further consideration of the modified program proposal for the Bachelor of Informatics in the Faculty of Computer Science be postponed until a future meeting.

The motion **CARRIED**.

2008: 86

Academic Integrity Officer Ratifications:

Ratifications

Ms. Geldenhuys **MOVED**, seconded by Mr. Canning:

THAT the Academic Integrity Officer agreed penalties, as listed in the Secretary of Senate's September 15, 2008 memo, be ratified.

The motion **CARRIED**.

Revision of One Previous Ratification

Mr. Fraser explained that the situation arose because of the summer schedule, causing a delay in ratification. AIO recommendations do not become official until ratified, so it meant that the delay in ratifying extended the transcript notation beyond the date that had been agreed.

Ms. Geldenhuys **MOVED**, seconded by Ms. Binkley:

THAT Senate approve a change in the Academic Integrity Officer agreed penalty ratification that occurred on September 22, 2008 to correct the dates for the notation to appear on the student's transcript to "July 17, 2008 to July 16, 2009."

The motion **CARRIED**.

2008:87

Senate Website Demonstration

Given the time constraints, the Senate Website demonstration was deferred to a future meeting.

2008:88

Question Period

Mr. Ugursal asked a question about ratifications of decisions of the Senate Academic Appeals Committee and why they are confidential after they are ratified. Mr. Fraser explained that even though names are removed from the appeal documents provided to Senate, other details contained in the appeal decision nevertheless could lead to the identification of the individual(s) concerned. Making the appeal decision publicly available therefore could have significant personal and career impacts on the individual. Mr. Fraser also noted that Senate currently is reviewing the Terms of Reference for the Senate Academic Appeals Committee, in consultation with the University Legal Counsel. If members of Senate had suggestions for revisions to the committee's Terms of Reference, they should communicate them to him.

Mr. Cochrane inquired how many Bachelors' programs Dalhousie currently offers without a declared major. Mr. Fraser said that he would obtain this information for the next meeting of Senate.

2008:89

Other Business

There was no other business.

2008:90

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 6:00 p.m.