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ACADIA
UNIVERSITY

Minutes of the Senate Meeting of Wednesday June 10th, 2020.

A special meeting of the Senate of Acadia University occurred on Wednesday June 10th, 2020 beginning at 9:00 a.m. with Chair A. Kiefte presiding and 43 present, and one guest. This was a virtual meeting of Senate as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and was conducted using Microsoft Teams.

- 1) **Approval of Agenda** **Motion to approve the agenda moved by D. Benoit, seconded by C. Shields.**

MOTION TO APPROVE THE AGENDA CARRIED.

- 2) **Approval of the Minutes of May 6th, 2020** **Motion to approve the Senate Minutes of May 6th, 2020. Moved by B. Anderson and seconded by D. Benoit.**

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

- 3) **Announcements**
a) **From the Chair**

The Chair noted regrets from S. Hayes. She stated that H. Chipman would attend at 10:00 a.m. for the discussion of Item 5 b) and also noted that K. Dye may attend from the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion committee for item 5 d) xv).

The Chair noted that this would normally be the last meeting of Senate until September but that in these circumstances it was possible that there could be additional meetings during the summer.

The Chair thanked retiring Senators for their service.

- b) **From the President**

President Ricketts described intentions for the Fall term which were to bring students back onto the campus and provide a blended mix of in-person and on-line learning. On-line options would be offered for those students that could not travel to Acadia. It was important to have as many students enrolled at Acadia as possible.

President Ricketts noted that the Town Hall meetings had been successful the previous week. He appreciated the uncertainty and unknowns that still existed, one of which was not knowing whether the government would step in to assist with financial shortfalls. A submission would be made to the Government during the following week and he noted that all Universities had suffered loss of revenue during the summer months and expected to lose more with the reductions in enrolment in the Fall.

President Ricketts stated that the second unknown was around occupational health and safety and stated that a working group existed between CONSUP and the Government, to review plans to get campuses back into operation and employees back to work on campus. This included guidelines for residences and meal halls. President Ricketts was sitting on a sub-committee that would work directly with Dr. Strang on this issue.

President Ricketts stated that the Prime Minister would be making a commencement speech to all 2020 post-secondary graduates during the morning and would speak about the tremendous efforts that were carried out to help students finish their studies during the early onset of COVID.

D. Seamone was concerned about a return to campus because little was known about the transmission of the virus, both for faculty and staff but also for students. She asked whether the BoG Task Force had considered the lack of knowledge and the possible risks. She also asked about student behaviour on campus.

President Ricketts responded that the Planning Task Force was looking at this and noted that a lot more was being learned about the virus all the time. He agreed that student behaviour would need to be tackled and that students would need to be educated about the importance of following protocols, and the consequences of not following protocols. The University would need to be prepared to take disciplinary action if these were not being followed. He expected that there would be occurrences of COVID.

D. Seamone appreciated the comments and stated that aerosolization of particles in the air were a concern, an example being the flushing of a toilet.

President Ricketts agreed that everyone was going to have to modify their behaviour in certain ways and take precautions. The University would be guided by Public Health Authorities and their guidance. He felt that the virus had been handled extremely well in Nova Scotia with virtually no community spread.

G. Whitehall referred to the idea of Government funding to support budget shortfalls for Universities. He felt that the existing model was somewhat broken with increasing student tuition and student debt, no stable funding for Universities, an economic model that was followed by universities which tended to have competitive effects. He asked what was being done nationally to promote a transformation to a fairer and more just university system compared to one which offered reduced accessibility for students and heavy debt loads.

President Ricketts pointed out that accessibility to university education had increased dramatically over the last 30 years. He noted that more traditional universities in the past were very elitist and much less accessible. He stated that there was no wish to return to this type of model which limited those students that were physically challenged or impacted by mental health issues, for example.

P. Abela asked whether there was guidance from the Health Authorities to determine at what age a person was deemed more at risk. He recognised that while many people had different health concerns, age was a common factor and he felt faculty needed to consider this when deciding whether to offer on-line only or a hybrid of in-person and on-line for their courses.

P. Abela asked about having a broad and proactive form of testing on campus during the Fall term. He felt that this would create a lot more confidence if testing could be done quickly.

President Ricketts agreed that testing was very important though he noted that an individual could test negative on one day and positive the next. He agreed that testing for screening as students arrived on campus was essential. He noted that those individuals over 60 years old were statistically more at risk than younger individuals but pointed out that young people had also reacted badly to the virus. He agreed to follow up with Dr. Strang.

C. Mutlu returned to G. Whitehall's question about a broken system. He felt that there was a broken system in that every year there were discussions about the funding formula and the fact that it was not working. The fact that a possible 10% drop in student enrolment would create such a budget shortfall for the University was problematic and he felt that this could be a good time to lobby the Government collectively and reconsider the structure of the funding formula that was in place.

C. Mutlu commented that it took three days to get the result of testing for COVID when he was tested three weeks previously. He noted that the nearest testing sites were in Berwick and Halifax.

President Ricketts pointed out that while testing was important, it was just part of a suite of practices that needed to be in place. He hoped that Wolfville would get a testing centre since a large population of students were being brought into the community.

President Ricketts agreed that G. Whitehall had raised important points about the structure of university education and how it was funded, how it could be accessible, and how it addressed issues of equity. He felt that none of the University Presidents were using this moment to debate the funding formula in Nova Scotia, but that the debate could be held in the future. The urgency now was to keep all of the institutions stable for the next few years.

Anthony Pash was concerned that the decision had been made by the University to move forward with a hybrid model without this having been discussed at Senate.

President Ricketts was unsure whether Senate would have authority over pedagogical modality. He noted that a number of Senators sat on the Planning Task Force.

D. Keefe stated that it no longer took three days to be tested and that his family had received results in several hours a few days earlier. He expected that demand might make a difference. He stated that the Province had strict protocols regarding who could get tested and how they could get tested. A testing site close or on campus would be ideal. He noted that monitoring and assessment (self-assessment) could be carried out on the campus and that tracing and contact in the buildings would be pursued. He pointed out that as the campus opened up things would become more restrictive for everyone. Until now faculty and staff had been coming to campus when they needed to but this would be restricted and an electronic system would allow people to tap in and tap out of buildings, moving in a one-way direction. This would ensure that if a case was identified, the University would hand matters over to Public Health and would be able to show who was in the building and at what time. D. Keefe noted that employees would not be coming and going from buildings as they would have before. He agreed that while a good feature to have, testing was not the only answer to controlling the situation.

D. Seamone stated that she had expected that the issue of teaching modality for courses would come to Senate, following the discussion ten days earlier at Senate. She felt that Senate was the right forum for both this and other issues to be discussed and was expecting that there would have been another Senate meeting prior to this issue going to the BoG for approval. She had raised this at the Faculty of Arts Steering committee and there was agreement that another Senate meeting was expected because this item should not be sent to the BoG and then have Senate vote against it at a later date.

The Chair agreed that Senate had agreed to require a vote on the primary mode of delivery of courses on June 1st, 2020. She expected that Senate would be meeting again about this matter.

President Ricketts explained that the Board Executive would be meeting on Friday and that the full Board of Governors would meet on June 19th, 2020.

c) From the Provost and VPA

D. Keefe had submitted his announcements in writing.

P. Abela asked about the graphs on page 4 of the announcements which showed total offers and registrations. He asked about the large number of outstanding offers showing at present.

D. Keefe explained that this year offers had not been allowed to expire. Normally those numbers would be expunged from the system if a student had not accepted the offer by a certain date. He noted that also more offers had gone out this year partly as a result of what happened to the Grade 12 school year.

S. Duguay agreed that this was the case and noted that a purge was now going on in order to identify those students that were still interested. He noted that 89 students could still be interested in coming to Acadia.

D. Seamone asked about the results of the staff and faculty survey.

D. Keefe stated that preliminary results had been shown at the Town Hall meeting. A working group from the Task Force had been analysing the survey and he noted that there were close to 200 pages of comments. The working group hoped to have something available by the end of the week and the results would go out to the broader community.

President Ricketts pointed out that before COVID arrived, the University had been on track to have a very good year starting in September. He thanked the Recruitment and Enrolment team for their work and noted the disappointment that COVID had caused. Fortunately, the larger pool of student applications might help to shore up the final numbers in September.

d) From the ASU President

L. Houck reported that the ASU was in the midst of planning and developing programming for the Fall term and consulting with students to discuss their concerns. They had also been discussing Acadia diversity and inclusion with various student groups and the Black Students' Association.

L. Houck and B. MacNeil recently attended the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations Virtual Foundations conference, to hold Board elections across the country and discuss student advocacy goals for the year.

e) From the President of Divinity College

A. Robbins reported that the Acadia Divinity College building renovations were finally finished.

The Chair made one further announcement that the first Mi'kmaw Lay Person had been selected and that Nastasya Kennedy would be joining Senate on July 1st for a three-year term. The Chair noted that the four local Mi'kmaw communities would be represented over the next 12 years, but that Nastasya was from the Annapolis Valley First Nation.

President Ricketts thanked Senate for this initiative and thanked Z. Whitman for her work on the initiative. He noted that this was an important step for the University on its progress towards Truth and Reconciliation. Having more Mi'kmaw representation on campus had been a recommendation from the Decolonization committee.

4) Old Business:

- a) Motion that classes begin for the Fall term on September 28th, 2020 and that the Fall 2020 Academic Calendar be amended as attached:**

Motion that classes begin for the Fall term on September 28th, 2020 and that the Fall 2020 Academic Calendar be amended as attached. Moved by D. Keefe and seconded by L. Robinson.

D. Keefe noted that this item had already been discussed at length during the previous Senate meeting and he was aware of the concerns that had been

raised. He pointed out that in moving to a mixed delivery of courses, the University was bound to abide by the Provincial regulations and observe a two-week self-isolation period for students from outside of the Province. He explained the mechanics of this and stated that by keeping the same start date for the term, but delaying the start of classes, the University would be able to observe the self-isolation period and also bring students from inside the Province back to campus at a later date when classes were starting. Not all students would have somewhere to stay in Wolfville were they to come in mid-August.

D. Keefe noted that Grade 12 students effectively finished their studies in March 2020. He anticipated that the transition to University could prove more taxing for these students and anticipated that the three-week window of time would be used to focus on transition programming for some students, and also informing them of the new protocols that would be expected.

D. Keefe stated that this would also allow faculty an additional two or three weeks to prepare their courses. He noted that September 21st could also be considered. He was normally in favour of a Fall Break for students but felt that in these circumstances it would not be possible to have one. He also noted that travel would be restricted in the Fall term.

D. Keefe explained that most of the teaching hours could be achieved with the adjustments to the dates. He noted that Education would operate separately because they always followed a different schedule, but he did not recommend that exceptions be made for other programs because it would prove too confusing. He noted that a decision needed to be made so that this information could be sent out to students.

P. Callaghan appreciated the work done on this issue. He was in favour of the hybrid model and felt that his faculty would be ready to teach by September 21st, 2020. He felt that University 101 programming could be integrated into the early weeks of term, and felt it was unnecessary to delay until the 28th September.

C. Shields was in agreement.

K. Bleile pointed out that Psychology had four graduate students who would experience problems as a result of a delayed start because they could not get all of the requisite skills that they needed prior to starting their practicum placements later in the term.

D. Keefe agreed that there could be some flexibility around small graduate programs but that undergraduate programs needed a consistent start date for classes.

L. Hartman felt that the students needed a Fall break and expected that students would be travelling home for Thanksgiving and Remembrance Day if they were able to do so.

D. Keefe pointed out that it was expected that travel restrictions would still be in place for students travelling to areas outside of the region. Unless

something changed, they would be expected to self-isolate for two weeks upon return which would make travelling impractical. Students arriving in September would be in Wolfville until the term ended.

D. Keefe stated that a partial Fall break could be worked in around Remembrance Day which fell on a Wednesday. Either two days before or after could be added.

D. Seamone felt that there was an equity issue with there being no fall break and she was concerned for students who were at risk of becoming stigmatized, disadvantaged, or marginalized. Mental health issues were a concern and she was in favour of extending the Remembrance Day holiday week.

D. Seamone suggested that especially 2nd – 4th year classes be taught on-line and start on time. She expected that more time would be needed to teach on-line and cover the material. Faculty teaching experiential courses would need additional time to cover everything.

D. Seamone felt that students would want to receive the full term of teaching. Time was needed for reflection and losing two weeks could set the students up for failure.

V. Provencal spoke against the motion. He pointed out that members of his department were opposed to a delayed start because of the added pressure to cover material while teaching on-line. V. Provencal asked whether on-line courses could start during the self-isolation period with readings and other material. He did not feel that University 101 should override courses beginning at the normal date.

S. Duguay thanked Senators for the feedback and noted that there was no perfect scenario. He supported the idea of a two-week quarantine and noted that Acadia needed a strong start to the term. He felt that for many students undergoing self-isolation and taking five courses would be too much and would not be what they had been expecting for their university experience. He felt that the staff would do better if they had a two-week period to work with the students and noted that in order to develop programming they needed a date first, after which they could consider preparing students for technology and training them on technology that would be used in the Fall term. Education around COVID-19 would be a large part of the instruction as students grew familiar with the protocols. They also needed to know what to do should there be an outbreak.

S. Duguay explained the University 101 programming had not yet been developed. Once a start date was known he expected to be working with the Deans to develop ideal content. He agreed that September 21st, 2020 would still allow a two-week period to work with.

S. Duguay was in favour of either having two long weekends or additional days around Remembrance Day but was not in favour of a full week break with students remaining on campus and not able to travel.

S. Currie highlighted the importance of having the two weeks for self-isolation and also the importance of having time for first-year students to take a transition course to deal with the remote delivery model. They needed to do this before classes got started. Transition to university was a challenge for many first-year students. She noted that faculty members in Science were in favour of the 21st September start and she also agreed with the idea of short breaks rather than a one-week study break.

L. Robinson agreed that a transition course would be of benefit for first-year students and others and also felt that a two-week period of self-isolation would be needed. However, she noted that compression of Arts courses could prove stressful and challenging to students because of the nature of the learning.

L. Houck supported the idea of smaller breaks through the term.

A. Vibert noted that the Schools of Kinesiology and Music had concerns around accreditation requirements and the loss of contact time.

H. Teismann suggested options to move the term start forward instead of back. He expected that a second wave of COVID could occur in the late Fall and Winter and would overlap with seasonal flu.

H. Teismann noted that most students arriving would be from Nova Scotia while others came from outside of the Province but that not many would be coming from other countries. He felt that these students could take their courses on-line while in self-isolation so that not all students had to wait to start their classes and asked whether these options had been considered.

S. Duguay agreed that this had been considered. It was unknown yet whether international students would be able to come to Canada and Nova Scotia. If they were able to come, visas were often tied to start dates at universities, so it was important to leave the date of term at the usual start date. He also noted that his staff had been working very hard and that to ramp up in mid-August would be very challenging. S. Duguay mentioned that many students would not have leases that were available in mid-August.

D. Keefe added that while it might be better to have students on campus a little earlier, there was also the need to prepare campus and there were many concerns around the preparation that would be needed with the new requirements. D. Keefe stated again that he was open to the 21st September for a start date and also to adding break days around Remembrance Day. He noted that even upper level students would need to self-isolate and learn the new protocols.

D. Keefe pointed out that move in day would be quite different from previous years and would be carefully controlled.

The Chair asked D. Keefe if he would like to amend the motion. It was agreed that D. Keefe and L. Robinson would withdraw the original motion.

Motion that classes begin for the Fall term on September 21st, 2020 and that the Fall 2020 Academic Calendar be amended as attached with the

addition of two Fall break days on November 12th and 13th, 2020. Moved by D. Keefe and seconded by L. Robinson.

J. Banks was concerned that time needed to be spent with the students to avoid the confusion that happened in March when the term altered to virtual.

R. Murphy noted that leases in Wolfville generally started in May. He assumed that residences could open in August.

R. Murphy was concerned that Kinesiology was an accredited program with requirements that it would be difficult to fulfil. Providing days off during a week adversely affected the delivery of labs in Kinesiology.

R. Murphy noted that his faculty had requested an exemption to the late start date for classes and requested an amendment to the motion.

Amendment to the main motion:

Motion that classes begin for the Fall term on September 21st, 2020 and that the Fall 2020 Academic Calendar be amended as attached with the addition of two Fall break days on November 12th and 13th, 2020. The School of Kinesiology classes will begin on the original date of September 8th, 2020. Moved by R. Murphy and seconded by C. Shields.

D. Keefe spoke against the amendment and pointed out that the whole point of what was being proposed would be defeated by a number of exceptions coming into place. He pointed out that the B.Ed. was a post-baccalaurate program which operated on a different schedule always. To introduce exemptions for different programs defeated the rationale for coordinating when students arrived on campus and the attempt to self-isolate for two weeks.

D. Keefe stated that this would not be the first time that a term had to be shortened for one reason or another. Times were strange and other institutions would be looking at shorter terms. He noted that the number of teaching days varied considerably across institutions. D. Keefe stated that accreditation bodies were recognizing the challenges and offering to be flexible.

D. Keefe stated that if the amendment passed he would withdraw his original motion and return to a September 8th, 2020 start date.

P. Abela supported a start date of September 21st, 2020. He expected that the Planning Task Force would have contacted respective accreditation bodies with respect to issues around reduced teaching time.

R. Murphy had been in contact with CCUPEKA and there had been discussions around flexibility in the current situation. He noted though that there were other issues for Kinesiology students, some of whom wanted to challenge the Registered Kinesiologist Designation in Ontario and others that wanted to take the Certified Exercise Physiology Certification. These all required lab time and experiences and he did not expect that they could cover

all the material this Fall. R. Murphy noted that Kinesiology students struggled to absorb all of the material in some of the first-year courses.

C. Rushton preferred to start classes on the normal date and noted that her School had voted unanimously not to delay the term start. The program was a skill building one and it took time to build the skills. The Music Therapy program was also accredited and she noted that it was hard to get enough practicum hours already, and the late start would make this worse.

D. Seamone pointed out that there could easily be an outbreak of COVID during the Fall term so that there could be further interruptions to the term. While she supported R. Murphy's arguments, she was not in favour of a piecemeal approach.

The Chair reminded Senators that they were currently discussing the amendment to the motion only.

C. Mutlu stated that by moving the start date of class to September 21st, 2020 and not having a one-week Study Break, the term would actually only be reduced by one week and two days. He spoke against the amendment because he felt that every student could handle eight fewer days of classes.

P. Callaghan suggested more general wording to the amendment. The Chair agreed to return to this after the vote on the current amendment.

L. Aylward commented that conversations should have happened before Senate to avoid the situation of academic planning taking place on the floor of Senate. She urged Senators to move the issue forward with the expectation that additional conversations would be held after the fact.

President Ricketts was not in favour of the amendment. He understood the concerns but pointed out that these challenges could be worked around and noted that over his career he had often heard faculty letting accreditation bodies know that there were changes they could not make in the timelines requested, and he had never seen an accreditation body discredit a program because they had had to take a different approach. Given that so many institutions were in the same situation he expected that workarounds would be put in place.

President Ricketts stated that Senate could certainly revisit this issue if there was really no way to satisfy accreditation bodies. He felt that the background work had been done but that Senate was trying to re-do the work. He also agreed that there was much more work to be done but that could not start until the date for a start to term had been finalised.

AMENDMENT TO THE MAIN MOTION FAILED. 10 ABSTENTIONS.

Motion to extend the Senate meeting to 12:30 p.m. Moved by C. Rushton and seconded by J. Richard.

Senate returned to discussion of the main motion.

M. Adam noted that a three hour meeting had taken place and that he needed to leave at 12:00 noon. This was an important issue and he did not want to miss the vote, noting that votes would matter. He asked that the question be called.

President Ricketts was in agreement and also needed to leave the meeting shortly.

D. Seamone suggested that Senate reconvene in an emergency meeting because it was too early to call the question.

The Chair stated that the earliest the Senate could meet would be the following Monday to observe the five-day notice that was required. She noted that a two-thirds majority would be required to extend the meeting.

MOTION TO EXTEND THE MEETING FAILED. ONE ABSTENTION.

The Chair stated that the question would not be called because there were several more Senators on the speakers list. She noted that Senate could meet on Monday June 15th, 2020 unless Senators wished to hold a meeting sooner than that date.

D. Seamone wished to meet on Friday June 12th, 2020.

Motion to suspend the required five-day notice and that Senate meet on Friday June 12th, 2020, from 9:00 – 12:00 noon. Moved by D. Seamone and seconded by L. Houck.

D. Keefe pointed out that his time was completely booked on Friday and that he would be unable to attend. D. Keefe stated that he was very disappointed with the inability of Senate to move forward despite a multi-hour meeting the previous week and this week.

V. Provencal favoured voting on the motion at this meeting.

The Chair noted that there were several Senators remaining on the speakers list.

V. Provencal suggested asking whether Senators were prepared to waive their right to speak.

D. Seamone and L. Houck agreed to withdraw their motion.

Senators were ready to vote on the main motion, worded as follows:

Motion that classes begin for the Fall term on September 21st, 2020 and that the Fall 2020 Academic Calendar be amended as attached with the addition of two Fall break days on November 12th and 13th, 2020.

MOTION CARRIED. TWO ABSTENTIONS.

The Chair stated that a meeting would be called for the following week to discuss the remainder of the outstanding agenda items.

Adjournment:

Motion to adjourn the meeting. Moved by M. Penney and seconded by D. Benoit.

ORIGINAL SIGNED

R. Hare, Recording Secretary