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ACADIA
UNIVERSITY

Draft Minutes of the Senate Meeting of Monday June 15th, 2020.

A special meeting of the Senate of Acadia University occurred on Monday June 15th, 2020 beginning at 9:00 a.m. with Chair A. Kiefte presiding and 44 present, and two guests. 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 R. Seale, seconded by President Ricketts.

P. Abela asked for item 3) a) to be moved up on the agenda and after discussion the Chair agreed to move this up to 2) d) because the item was time sensitive. It was agreed that item two would be re-named 'Business' rather than 'Old Business'.

MOTION TO APPROVE THE AGENDA AS REVISED CARRIED.

The Chair announced that H. Chipman was attending as a guest of Senate and that B. Wilson was also attending as a guest. B. Wilson would become a Senator in July 2020.

The Chair noted that regrets had been received from J. Dyment, G. Wooden, and M. Penney.

2) Business Items

a) Election of Senate Lay Person for 2020-2023

Senate moved 'in camera' to discuss the election of Senate Lay Person.

After discussion Senate moved out of camera.

Motion that the nomination period for Senate Layperson be reopened to July 31st, 2020. Moved by L. Aylward and seconded by R. Seale.

D. Benoit asked whether the three current nominees would remain on the list.

The Chair agreed that this was the case.

MOTION CARRIED. THREE ABSTENTIONS.

- b) **Motion that the timetable principles and associated 49-slot timetable be adopted, for use beginning in the 2021-2022 academic year. Furthermore, the Timetable, Instruction Hours and Examinations Committee will undertake an annual survey of students and faculty to gather feedback on the timetable in the winter term 2021, and continue for at least 2022 and 2023, and will report the results of the survey to Senate annually.**

Motion that the timetable principles and associated 49-slot timetable be adopted, for use beginning in the 2021-2022 academic year. Furthermore, the Timetable, Instruction Hours and Examinations Committee will undertake an annual survey of students and faculty to gather feedback on the timetable in the winter term 2021, and continue for at least 2022 and 2023, and will report the results of the survey to Senate annually. Moved by M. Robertson and seconded by S. Currie.

H. Chipman thanked Senate for hearing the proposal at this extraordinary time and also acknowledged that many people had worked to bring this new timetable proposal to fruition. Heads, Directors, Deans, faculty and staff had all worked to achieve this.

H. Chipman stated that the goals of the change were to reduce conflicting slots, increase student choices, give more efficient use of classroom spaces and accommodate breaks to improve mental health and wellbeing. He noted that the motion included principles of the timetable and reporting of the outcomes which was done through the use of a survey.

H. Chipman noted that the timetable would move from 84 slots to 49, and 18 of these were specialized 90 minute slots which left only 31 slots for general use. He noted that conversations were held with unit heads during the winter and spring and feedback was received. It was felt that there were conflicts around the mid-day period but he stressed that the T.I.E. committee recommended use of all available slots to alleviate this.

H. Chipman noted that some units preferred 60 minute slots, some preferred 90 minute slots. He expected that if the timetable was adopted, the way in which some courses were offered might need adaptation. He stated that classroom availability should remain the same as at present.

H. Chipman suggested that most classes would be offered between 8:30 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. which was consistent with the Collective Agreement. The 5:30 – 6:30 p.m. slot could also be used if needed.

H. Chipman explained the flex slots (five and six) which were three 1.5 hour slots on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. An instructor could deliver a three credit hour course over those slots either by sixty minute or ninety minute offerings.

H. Chipman pointed out that there were gaps in the numbering because the first digit could be interpreted. Slots beginning with a '2' were ninety minute evening slots. Slots 50 – 67 were single ninety minute slots that could not be joined together to make a three hour slot time.

D. Benoit thanked the T.I.E. committee for the work they had carried out. He stated that in Science there was an overlap of required courses that needed to be taken during their first and second year in order to move onto the upper year classes. These courses were often offered in the mornings in order to allow students to take their required labs during the afternoons. He was concerned that the Registrar might move his large class to an afternoon slot because of a lack of classroom availability in the morning, which would not

allow students to take their labs. D. Benoit was concerned that there might not be sufficient classroom space to accommodate the new timetable.

M. Bishop commented that D. Currie had carried out analysis and each academic unit had also looked at their needs and determined that the new timetable would be plausible.

D. Seamone thanked the committee. She often taught in evening slots so that her students could get classes that did not conflict with labs in the afternoon. Athletes attended her classes straight from practice and she asked whether the earlier evening slots would work for them.

H. Chipman agreed that they had consulted with Athletics and received feedback stating that they recognized that there were constraints. He did not get feedback indicating that the 6:30 p.m. start to the evening classes would be problematic.

M. Bishop stated that feedback had been received from the coaches. Some would have preferred a later start of 9:00 a.m. in order to do practices in the morning. Some were also concerned with classes on Friday afternoon which an earlier version of the timetable had shown, but these had now been removed from the timetable, which would allow teams to travel.

G. Gibson noted that Biology was not in favour of the proposed new timetable. She asked why the three-hour morning slot did not always start at 8:30 a.m. Biology had both morning and afternoon labs on Tues/Thurs and this timetable only allowed a 30 minute period to prepare a lab when one lab class had vacated and another was coming in.

H. Chipman agreed that the three-hour slots began at 8:30 a.m. on Monday and Friday, but at 9:30 a.m. on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. He noted that on those three days there were 1.5 hour slots starting at 9:30 and at 11:30 a.m. If the three hour slot was to start at 8:30 a.m. it would conflict with three slots during the morning. He agreed that possibly the Wednesday three-hour slot could be moved back to 8:30 a.m..

M. Bishop agreed that this could be considered.

C. Rushton thanked the committee for their work. She stated that the School of Music had noted that the description of the slots listed slots 1-7 as 3 x one hour slots.

H. Chipman agreed that the footnote was inaccurate but noted that an updated timetable had been circulated to Senate showing that timeslots 1, 2, 3, 4 and 7 were one-hour timeslots and 5 and 6 were flex slots.

M. Lukeman thanked the committee. He noted the middle of the day over-popularity of slots. He asked whether having fewer slots available between 10:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. the University would experience a bigger problem of overuse at those times.

H. Chipman did not think that there would be problems if faculty spread out the offerings of their courses to use all slots in the timetable.

MOTION CARRIED. ONE ABSTENTION.

The Chair thanked H. Chipman for his work as Chair of the T.I.E. committee and for attending Senate on a number of occasions this year, and also thanked M. Bishop for his work on this. This timetable would be implemented for the 2021-2022 academic year.

c) Academic Planning Committee Update

D. Keefe reported that the Academic Planning Committee had received feedback from Senators on the revised process that had been proposed to Senate earlier in the year. He noted that the committee was currently working on this feedback and intended to bring another version to Senate for broader consultation.

D. Keefe stated that the committee had met earlier in the month and that with so much going on for all academic units it had been decided that requests for tenure track positions for next year would not be expected until August 1st, 2020. The Academic Planning committee would still keep to the same deadlines in assessing applications.

L. Aylward was pleased to see an academic planning process and was in support of what was being done. She encouraged the committee and Senate to continue to plan and work together to get all of the resources that were needed to provide a strong, quality education at Acadia.

The Chair asked whether a communication would be sent to academic units and Deans to alert them to the extension date to the process.

D. Keefe agreed to do so.

d) Motion that Senate endorses a mixed delivery model for the 2020-2021 academic year. Acadia courses will, at the discretion of faculty, occur in virtual, face-to-face on campus, or blended format, using either synchronous or asynchronous delivery, subject to provincial regulations.

Motion that Senate endorses a mixed delivery model for the 2020-2021 academic year. Acadia courses will, at the discretion of faculty, occur in virtual, face-to-face on campus, or blended format, using either synchronous or asynchronous delivery, subject to provincial regulations. Moved by D. Keefe and seconded by A. Vibert.

D. Keefe pointed out that Town Hall meetings had been held and communications had been circulated to everyone on the preferred delivery model for the fall term. He noted that flexibility would be provided for faculty and students and that all of this would be done while following provincial regulations, making use of the latest information that was available.

D. Keefe noted that although Senate had already discussed this on two occasions, it was important to bring it forward for a vote prior to the model going on to the Board of Governors later in the week. He cautioned that this could change if the situation altered by September.

B. MacNeil was looking for assurance that student needs would be accommodated. If courses were taught face-to-face and a student could not get to campus, or if a course was virtual and a student was off campus with poor internet, the student would be disadvantaged. Some students might not be able to get the courses that they needed. He respected the academic freedom of faculty to design their courses.

D. Keefe did not want students to return to campus and then find that there was no on-campus delivery of courses. He noted that in meeting with Deans, Heads and Directors he had been pleased to see a combination of deliveries and he felt that faculty had the students' best interests in mind. Large classes with virtual delivery might also have smaller tutorials that would be in-person.

D. Keefe noted the challenge for a student with poor internet and stated that various approaches were being looked at; asynchronous offerings, recording content, posting content on Acorn etc.

P. Abela asked about testing and protocols and noted that a hybrid model was not the safest delivery for faculty to be offering. He felt that a high degree of safety could be achieved on campus by having the capacity on-campus to make testing very easy and have results available quickly. He felt that Acadia needed to go beyond the provincial guidelines and make testing seamless.

P. Abela asked what the protocols would be in September if someone on campus was identified as having COVID. He felt that this needed to be clearly spelled out now rather than waiting until 4000 students, staff and faculty were on campus. It would be good to know the details rather than rely on 'no news is good news'.

D. Keefe responded that people can only be tested in Berwick and that tests currently go to Halifax, but that Acadia would like to have a testing site so that individuals could get tested on-site. He noted that Safety and Security were currently working on proximity readers that would identify where people travelled on campus. Current ID cards show this detail and it would be possible to work with Public Health if there was an outbreak.

D. Keefe noted that access to buildings would be restricted. Employees that did not need to be on campus would be asked not to be on campus, and the number of individuals in any building at one time would also be controlled. He agreed that these protocols would be put in place well before September. Should there be a confirmed case, Public Health would step in and take over.

V. Provençal pointed out that in-class delivery was the normal mode of teaching so that the motion only needed to specify virtual delivery. He stated that if faculty were given the option to offer face-to-face and then fell ill and died, that Senate would share responsibility for the death. He would be voting against the motion as it was currently worded.

V. Provençal stated that he would vote for Senate to endorse a virtual delivery of classes and he felt that this was the only safe delivery model. He requested an amendment to the main motion.

Motion that Senate endorses a virtual delivery model for the 2020-2021 academic year. Moved by V. Provencal and seconded by D. Seamone.

President Ricketts noted that this amendment was completely contrary to the original motion and therefore would not be acceptable as an amendment. It would be necessary to vote the original motion down first.

V. Provencal agreed that it would be in order to vote on the main motion first. V. Provencal and D. Seamone withdrew the amendment.

B. MacNeil shared concerns that students were either not returning because they felt unsafe, or were not returning because of structural barriers, while on the other hand other students were uncomfortable returning to campus but had to do so because courses were being offered face-to-face and they needed to take the courses. He felt that this created dangerous behaviour and inhibiting students that did not want to engage in that behaviour.

L. Aylward stated that there had been a lot of discussion both at the Board level and at Senate and she spoke in favour of the motion. The mode of delivery would quickly be changed to virtual only if there was any danger of a COVID outbreak and she was confident that people would not be put in unnecessary danger. L. Aylward also noted that both the student survey and the staff and faculty survey had indicated a desire to be on campus. Faculty, staff and students had options to follow if they felt that it was not safe to be on campus and she recognized that a lot of careful work had gone into this approach.

D. Seamone felt that this proposal should be made for the winter semester at a time when more information would be available about COVID. She felt that virtual delivery would be the safest approach for the Fall term. She was also concerned about stigmatization, marginalization and disadvantages for some students; especially students at risk and those with caregiver responsibilities.

D. Seamone felt that the provincial health authority's current strategy was not merely a health strategy but was also an economic, social and political strategy. She believed that it was a mitigation strategy but not a prevention strategy. D. Seamone felt that Acadia should not shield students from the truth or hide it with claims that diminished the risks.

S. Currie noted that there were strong and varying opinions on the best way forward in such a challenging situation. She had been closely involved with the planning for the Fall and noted that wide consultation had taken place. S. Currie felt that this model offered the maximum flexibility for students, staff and faculty while keeping safety top of mind. She noted that safety of the community was the most important consideration and she stated that the return to campus plan would be available shortly and noted that a holistic approach was being taken.

S. Currie asked Senators to consider what was the best working situation and course of action for themselves. She asked Senators not to be alarmist but to be ready to pivot to off-campus if necessary.

P. Callaghan agreed and put faith in the public health guidelines. Faculty had complete discretion as to whether they preferred to teach in a virtual manner only. He noted that the plan was a response to the preferences indicated by the students.

P. Callaghan expected that any course that was required by a student to continue their studies would be available to them in more than one modality.

L. Houck supported the motion and agreed that a large proportion of students had voiced their desire to be on-campus but that she had heard concerns from students who felt unable to return to campus and who wished to take all of their courses online. She wanted to see equal opportunity for all students.

M. Lukeman commented that a decision to offer a blended delivery model of courses was not an economic decision. In his department there was important hands on lab work that needed to be offered in a face-to-face manner.

D. Keefe responded to L. Houck and noted that academic units were making sure that students would get adequate offerings of all of their required courses. He had received email from students and stated that while not every course would have a virtual element to it, most of them would.

H. Teismann asked why Senate was being asked to 'endorse' rather than 'approve' the motion.

D. Keefe stated that this had been discussed at the Planning Task Force. He noted that one challenge was the question of where the authority lay with respect to how Acadia would operate in the Fall term. This plan needed to go to the Board of Governors and this was why the word 'endorse' had been used. The Board of Governors would give final approval to proceed.

President Ricketts addressed the question of Provincial pressure to open the campuses and stated that there had been no pressure to re-open Acadia. He also noted the flexibility that had been built into this approach for all students, whether they could travel to campus or not. President Ricketts felt that proposals coming from individual academic units showed a real effort to reach all students.

President Ricketts stated that this was recognized to be a temporary measure so that asking Senate to authorize something that was temporary made less sense than asking Senate to endorse this.

V. Provencal listed a number of concerns he continued to have with regard to safety of employees and students. He did not feel that his concerns were alarmist. He did not feel that choosing an option that students wanted was necessarily the safest approach and felt that the University should be more concerned for their safety. V. Provencal believed that these decisions were economically driven and questioned whether labs should be offered face-to-face. He questioned closing the University once a COVID outbreak occurred because at that point COVID would be on-campus. He stated that virtual modality was a safe approach to take.

D. Keefe responded that the University could not close down until COVID disappeared or a vaccine was in place. However, what the public health authority was now doing was stating that COVID was moving from a public health to an occupational health delivery. Protocols and parameters were being put in place for businesses to operate under and the expectation that this would be the situation for years to come.

D. Keefe stated that Acadia would abide by Public Health directives at all times, and decisions were very fluid, as was the situation.

A. Vibert pointed out that Public Health policy was developed in response to public health concerns and considerations. It was not developed in response to economic policies. She agreed that the provincial government might or might not enshrine particular public health policies.

A. Vibert stated that the quality of public health demonstrated in Nova Scotia during the last three months had been excellent. More testing in relation to per capita had been carried out than anywhere else in Canada and at a higher rate than recommended by the World Health Organisation. Nova Scotia had flattened the curve effectively and she felt that every confidence should be felt towards Nova Scotia Public Health and the decision-making in response to public health concerns. A. Vibert noted that there was plenty of evidence to support the Public Health guidelines and no evidence to suggest that this was not a strong policy for Nova Scotians. She expected that NS public schools would be functioning in the Fall.

A. Vibert also pointed out that there were public health considerations around isolation such as suicides and domestic violence. She noted that the flexibility of Acadia's approach would allow for pedagogical needs and also addressed student needs and program needs. A. Vibert noted that all of this had been taken into consideration when framing this motion.

P. Abela referred to the orientation package that would go out to Acadia students and felt it was important that Acadia demonstrate very clearly that it was supporting and saw as key to success, the fact that any student falling ill would go for testing. He felt that students needed to be encouraged to anticipate that any illness could be COVID and he stated that the default position should be that a student immediately requested testing and would be provided with the necessary supports to be able to do that.

President Ricketts agreed that he was keen on rigorous testing but noted that it was controlled by the Province. He hoped that a local site could be arranged and agreed that getting people to be tested as soon as they feel ill would be very critical.

President Ricketts hoped that Senate could vote on this item prior to 11:30 a.m., at which point he needed to leave the meeting.

The Chair agreed to limit debate to 11:25 a.m. so that there would be time for a vote to take place.

D. Benoit was concerned that faculty members could decide whether the courses that they were teaching were required to be taught face to face. He was concerned that the Fall was coming and that at any time the Public Health Officer could insist that all classes be only taught online. Students would then be in a situation whereby a faculty member had told them that they must come to campus if they wished to take the course, only to find that it was forced to switch to online and they were told to return home. D. Benoit felt that students should be allowed to take all courses online from the start should they choose to do so.

D. Benoit noted that this would still allow faculty members to offer classes face to face as long as they were able to pivot to online.

D. Keefe stated that if it was no longer safe to be on campus the Health and Safety protocols would trump everything else so that no classes would continue face to face at that point. The University could not guarantee that every course could be offered virtually but it would work to ensure that students could get the courses that they needed to progress to their upper years.

D. Keefe was pleased with the approaches that faculty were taking and was in favour of the flexibility that would be built into this.

G. Whitehall wanted to embolden the rider at the end of the motion and suggested new wording.

Motion to amend the main motion to state “subject to the highest interpretation of Provincial Health and Safety Regulations”. Moved by G. Whitehall and seconded by D. Seamone.

D. Keefe was open to adding this language to the motion without a vote being necessary. A. Vibert was also comfortable with the wording change.

A number of other choices of wording were offered. It was agreed that the motion would now read as follows:

Motion that Senate endorses a mixed delivery model for the 2020-2021 academic year. Acadia courses will, at the discretion of faculty, occur in virtual, face-to face/on-campus, or blended format, using either synchronous or asynchronous delivery, subject to the most rigorous interpretation of provincial health and safety regulations. Moved by Dale Keefe, seconded by Ann Vibert.

MOTION CARRIED AS AMENDED. ONE ABSTENTION.

President Ricketts left the Senate meeting.

e) **Annual Reports from
Senate Sub-Committees:**

- i) **Library Committee Report** The Senate Library Committee Report was received.
- ii) **Academic Integrity Committee Report** The Academic Integrity Committee Report was received.
- iii) **Scholarships, Prizes and Awards Report** The Scholarships, Prizes and Awards Committee report was received.
- iv) **Honours Committee Report** The Honours Committee Report was received.
- v) **Academic Planning Committee Report** The Academic Planning Committee Report was received.
- vi) **Admissions and Academic Planning (Policy) Committee Report** L. Aylward was interested to receive information on classroom conduct from the A&AS (Policy) Committee after the Equity Officer had consulted with the committee.
The A&AS (Policy) Committee report was received.
- vii) **Academic Program Review Committee Report** The Academic Program Review Committee Report was received.
- viii) **Board of Open Acadia Report** The Board of Open Acadia Report was received.
- ix) **Curriculum Committee (Policy) Report** P. Callaghan pointed out that the request to reinstate the numeric equivalents had been addressed by the Curriculum Committee (Policy) but had been passed on to the A&AS (Policy) committee.
The Curriculum Committee (Policy) Report was received.
- x) **Research Committee Report** The Senate Research Committee Report was received.
- xi) **Graduate Studies Committee Report** A. Redden thanked Senators and faculty members for serving as Chairs of Honours Thesis defences once again and during difficult circumstances.

The Senate Executive Committee Report was received.

xii) **Senate Executive Committee Report**

The Chair noted that this was part one of the report and that the committee would be conducting most of its work over the summer. She would report back to Senate in September.

xiii) **Admissions and Academic Standing (Appeals) Report**

The Admissions and Academic Standing (Appeals) Committee Report was received.

xiv) **Faculty Support Committee Report**

G. Whitehall asked about a committee at the Board of Governors level – the Academic Resources Committee – that had not met during the last 10 year period. He asked whether this committee should be reactivated.

D. Benoit offered to bring that information to J. Banks, the Chair of the Faculty Support committee.

D. Seamone asked whether the Faculty Support committee had been involved in the planning for the Fall since there would be increased academic needs to be addressed.

D. Benoit was unsure of the next meeting date but stated that the committee had been involved with promotion of some of the material relating to online events on campus. He noted that J. Banks sat on the committee dealing with Educational Technology. He noted that the committee had not met since March.

The Faculty Support Committee report was received.

xv) **Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee Report**

D. Seamone noted that there were regrets from K. Dye and she offered to take questions. There were none and the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Report was received.

D. Seamone pointed out that there would probably not be another Senate meeting in June and that several Senators were retiring from Senate.

The Chair agreed and thanked all of the Senators who were ending their terms on Senate. She particularly thanked B. Anderson who had served on Senate for a number of years and also thanked her for serving as the Deputy Chair of Senate during 2019-2020.

The Chair thanked M. Bishop and R. Hare for their work throughout the year and noted that the work had been particularly demanding during the last three months.

Motion to adjourn the Senate meeting. At 12:00 noon. Moved by B. Anderson and seconded by L. Aylward.

3) **Adjournment:**

ORIGINAL SIGNED

R. Hare, Recording Secretary