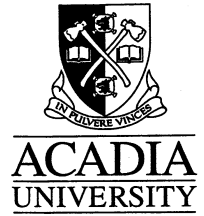


Office of the Senate Secretariat

Acadia University
Wolfville, Nova Scotia
Canada B0P 1X0

Telephone: (902) 585-1617
Facsimile: (902) 585-1078



Minutes of the special Senate Meeting of Tuesday November 5th, 2019.

A special meeting of the Senate of Acadia University occurred on Tuesday 5th November, 2019 beginning at 4:00 p.m. with Chair A. Kiefte presiding and 36 present. The meeting took place in BAC 239.

1) Approval of Agenda

The Chair called the meeting to order, noting that there was quorum at present.

Motion to approve the agenda. Moved by M. Robertson and seconded by G. Whitehall.

MOTION TO APPROVE THE AGENDA CARRIED.

2) Announcements:

a) From the Chair of Senate

The Chair announced regrets from D. Keefe, M. Adam, J. Banks, P. Stewardson, R. Seale, S. Currie, C. Landry, A. Vibert, Z. Goldsmith, N. Kirkpatrick and A. Robbins.

President Ricketts announced that Z. Whitman would soon be assuming the position of Coordinator of Indigenous Affairs & Student Advising.

Senators applauded warmly.

3) Continuing Business

a) Draft Strategic Plan discussion (*previously circulated*)

President Ricketts provided a brief update to Senators prior to the discussion. He noted that a presentation had been made to the Board of Governors and that a very good discussion had taken place and suggestions had been made. Members of the Board of Governors had been asked to forward their comments to the Task Force.

President Ricketts reported that the Board was looking for a less detailed Strategic Plan and preferred to reduce the number of goals and objectives. It was suggested that some of the detail be moved behind the scenes and become part of an operational plan.

President Ricketts stated that the Board also wished to strengthen some of the wording, especially in the area of the expected goals.

President Ricketts commented that the Board had approved broader consultation to the University community, and he offered to take questions and hear comments from Senators.

The discussion resumed based on the speakers' list started at the last Senate meeting.

G. Gibson agreed that the report was comprehensive and stated that retention was a very important point. She asked how retention fit into the 2025 Strategic Plan.

President Ricketts agreed that the University would like to improve retention and would strive to have student retention that was above the national average. He felt that the issue of retention was relevant with respect to concerns about student success, student health and wellness, particular courses and programs that could be offered for students, and the ability of faculty and staff to access the required data on retention.

S. Duguay pointed out that the Strategic Plan was void of strategies around retention at this point, but that they would be developed during the next two-year period.

President Ricketts agreed that it would take the term of the Strategic Plan to get student retention improved because this was an area that typically saw very small incremental improvements.

G. Wooden noted that a key objective in the Plan was refurbishment or renewal of the Vaughan Memorial Library. He also noted the objective to care for the well-being of Acadia faculty and staff. Having worked as a Librarian in the BAC and recently having read a report written by Ann Smith, he agreed that the air quality in the Library was inadequate, especially on the fourth floor in the summer months. G. Wooden asked how much of a priority was a new or refurbished Library building.

President Ricketts agreed that the Library was in need of attention, especially having recently seen the renovation of the library at Bishop's University. He noted that there were three capital projects currently being explored: A Centre for Student Success/SUB Renewal, the Beveridge Arts Centre, and the Vaughan Memorial Library.

President Ricketts noted that this project may become a reality if the federal Government decided to carry out another round of infrastructure funding. He also stated that conceptual drawings of the Vaughan Library were very impressive with plans to build up and outward. He noted that the University did not have capital funding from the Province to help fund these types of projects.

P. Callaghan noted that he had been very involved in the Task Force and highlighted the challenges associated with making the Plan a highly focussed document. He pointed out that it might be necessary to tailor the Plan document to certain audiences.

P. Callaghan felt that breadth was essential in the document but that by concentrating on certain areas of inspiration, many of the other aims and objectives would take care of themselves. He recommended not dwelling on the library but certainly continuing to put energy and effort into securing funding to make the project happen. P. Callaghan felt that there were specific roles for different people and groups on campus and that all involved would ensure success through their respective roles and responsibilities.

P. Callaghan noted that during the Task Force discussions they had heard a great deal of enthusiasm for the Institution.

P. Abela thanked the Task Force and President Ricketts, noting that a lot of hard work was needed to craft such a document. With respect to the issue of retention, P. Abela felt that it may not be best to reach for having the highest retention rates compared to other institutions but closer to average retention rates as Acadia could risk losing some of its important qualities along the way.

P. Abela noted that Acadia had a reputation for small classes and a good ratio of faculty to students. He pointed out that the direct access that students enjoyed with their professors needed to be celebrated and fostered.

P. Abela had been asked to bring two points from the ESST program, who would also be sending written feedback to President Ricketts. P. Abela stated that feedback and material that they had already provided to the Task Force had not been fully included in the Plan document and that they had expected Sustainable Development to be one of the imperative points. It was felt that Acadia already had a proven track record in this area and that a bold future vision was called for.

P. Abela had also been asked to point out that there were people in the wider community that might also be interested in providing feedback.

President Ricketts confirmed that at this stage the consultation draft of the Strategic Plan document was only being released to the internal community.

President Ricketts clarified that although imperatives had been discussed, these were not included in the Strategic Plan. These were things that the Task Force had identified as important.

A. Quema discussed the imperatives and stated that she had forwarded her written comments to President Ricketts.

A. Quema pointed out that one of the four pillars in the Plan was Transform, but that underneath that heading were three points about caring: for the students, for the employees, and for the Planet. This wording needed to be altered.

A. Quema discussed Guiding Values that were present in the 2006 Strategic Plan for Acadia. She noted that there were three values that were not mentioned in the proposed Strategic Plan:

- The primacy of scholarship
- A democratic and civil campus community
- Accountability in the use and allocation of Acadia resources

A. Quema asked that on Page 10 of the Plan, under Strategic Pillar I, the following words – *including gender and diversity* – be included in the key objective “*Ensure that Our Student Support Services are Responsive to the Increasing Diversity of our Student Community*”.

A. Quema asked that on Page 11 of the Plan, the following words – *promote and support* – be included in the key objective “*Make progress towards equity and diversity in Acadia’s workforce*”.

A. Quema asked about the following goal, under Pillar II Inspire: *Every Acadia undergraduate student will have at least one research experience upon graduation*. A. Quema felt that this could be a difficult thing to achieve and asked whether all

undergraduate students currently carried out research. She pointed out that this could take up a lot more time for faculty depending on the model.

A. Quema referred to Page 7 of the Plan document and the description of the various 'bodies' such as the Strategic Leadership Council, that would be responsible for the operational management and implementation of the Acadia 2025 Plan. She also noted that Senate would have a role to consider any academic changes or initiatives emerging from the implementation of Acadia 2025.

A. Quema asked how these groups would be able to implement the Plan without engaging the faculty.

M. Lukeman asked why there was no reference to Athletics in the Plan document and noted that this was an important part of the campus. M. Lukeman questioned whether this was a new strategy.

President Ricketts had felt that this was included in the Pillar I (Transform) area of Community Health and Wellness.

S. Duguay stated that K. Dickie had not brought forward specific strategic planning items for Athletics.

P. Callaghan believed that there had originally been information regarding Athletics and offered to check that nothing had been lost in this latest version of the Strategic Plan.

The President informed Senate that this year there were 122 Academic All Canadian student athletes at Acadia which was the highest number the Institution had ever had.

A. Redden agreed that the language around equity and diversity could be a lot stronger.

A. Redden asked about implementation of the Strategic Plan, where it would reside and how progress would be monitored.

President Ricketts stated that the Strategic Leadership Council and the President's Executive Council would oversee implementation of the Strategic Plan.

President Ricketts agreed that it would be essential to make sure that Heads, Directors, Deans and Managers were all engaged. He also noted that other potential strategic actions had been identified.

C. Mutlu asked whether the list of guiding values was in order of priority; noting that decolonization needed to be given the highest priority, or that the list needed to be alphabetical.

President Ricketts confirmed that no particular priority had been given to the list of guiding values and that they could be made alphabetical. He asked whether fewer guiding values should be listed.

President Ricketts noted that the 2006 Strategic Plan had a lengthy set of values but that perhaps the University should decide what the most strategic values for the next five years should be. He commented that with the respect

to the statement on equity and diversity it was difficult to know how much detail to include.

A. Quema felt that there was a need to be explicit in the wording and pointed out that some of the values already had very specific wording.

C. Mutlu pointed out that some individuals frequently had to justify their presence on the campus because they had not traditionally been present.

D. Seamone commented that when a situation was occurring for the first time it was necessary to be more specific than once it became the norm. She asked whether indigenous staff and faculty were employed at the University.

President Ricketts confirmed that there were staff and faculty who had self-identified as indigenous. He noted that one of the recommendations of the President's Advisory Council was to increase the number of indigenous staff and faculty.

D. Seamone asked why this was not an objective and President Ricketts responded that it was an objective of the Strategic Plan but that the detail was rather buried.

D. Seamone suggested bringing it to the forefront.

B. Anderson commented that this was a very ambitious Strategic Plan and noted that it was important to create a Plan that could be successful. She noted that the Strategic Directions were also bulleted and asked whether an order of priority existed.

B. Anderson pointed out that it was difficult to step into the content pieces without knowing what was working, what should be dropped, and what would make a difference.

B. Anderson noted that there was more detail than would normally be included before everyone had been heard or given an opportunity to contribute.

P. Abela asked about Pillar IV – Build. He voiced concern about the objective to raise enrolment to 4000 students by 2025 and asked how this would be achieved. P. Abela pointed out that during the years of the Ontario double cohort, enrolment at Acadia reached 4000 students and noted that this had created significant challenges.

President Ricketts agreed that enrolment had in fact been higher than 4000 during that period and that because this brought an unplanned increase to Acadia there had been particular stresses on campus resources. As a result there were some unpleasant memories of the time. He noted that in this case there would be a measured and planned increase in student enrolment and that this would be linked to the need to develop programming to attract students into areas that were currently under-subscribed.

President Ricketts stated that areas such as IDST and a re-vitalising of the core programs could achieve this. He also noted that the creation of the position occupied by S. Duguay would position the University to attract more students in targeted ways.

P. Abela asked about classroom sizes and how the University would handle a 10% increase in these rooms and manage the students.

President Ricketts explained that it would be preferable to manage an increase in student numbers than it would be to return to the stress of low enrolment experienced in recent years. He noted that with only a 1% increase to the Government grant and a 3% increase to student fees the University could only maintain itself well if enrolment was increased.

G. Whitehall stated that he had spoken at the Board of Governors meeting and had discussed the goals, the vision, mission and guiding values. He did not feel that the current wording was sufficiently inspiring and asked that the vision be much bolder and bigger.

G. Whitehall stated that he had forwarded suggested language to the Board of Governors. He noted that the vision and mission were important because when individuals were losing their way they could return to these words for inspiration. It was important to have language to inspire everyone to work towards a common purpose.

G. Whitehall suggested that there should be language on the 'whole' faculty member and the 'whole' employee, in addition to the language on the 'whole' student. He recognised that although it was not possible to do a cost benefit analysis, it was important for the University to consider that.

L. Aylward stated that she had forwarded her comments to the Task Force.

A. Quema referred back to the knowledge extraction discussion at the previous Senate meeting and drew attention to the key objective "*Embrace Indigenous Traditional Knowledge and Ways of Knowing*" under Pillar II (Inspire). A. Quema stated that she was keen for the University to hire indigenous faculty to teach.

P. Callaghan stated that he was keen to have more indigenous students on campus. He also stated that Acadia offered a great deal to international students and he felt that the infrastructure was in place on campus. P. Callaghan also felt that 20% more students could be taking Open Acadia courses.

P. Callaghan pointed out that enlarging classes from 38 to 42 students would not be unmanageable.

As there were no other people currently on the speakers' list, the Chair stated that she would like to provide some comments. The Senate agreed that it was appropriate in the context of this special meeting.

A. Kiefte agreed with some of the previous speakers that it was important to name the specific goals or groups when highlighting equity and diversity.

A. Kiefte also noted that booking classroom space is currently a challenge even with the current number of students and courses, and that building more teaching spaces on campus or converting existing spaces should be a priority if increasing enrolment numbers.

A. Kiefte encouraged the President's Executive Council and the Strategic Leadership Council to consider engaging a professional Evaluator at some critical points in this process. In a similar way to how an Equity Officer or

Occupational Health and Safety Officer works in an arms-length way in an organization such as Acadia, an Evaluation expert could consult with people across campus and assess various aspects of the implementation of the Strategic Plan at early and later stages in the process.

A. Kiefe discussed the goal of a research experience for every undergraduate student and asked Senators to consider different types of research experiences that may meet that goal in a meaningful way. Some students may engage in research by taking a seminar-based course that was offered with a very small class size, some students may complete a special project, some may complete an Honours thesis. Individual programs on campus could reflect on what options can be incorporated into their curricula such that all students have research opportunities that match their individual goals and the subject areas they are studying.

A. Kiefe asked whether those who wrote the plan had considered something akin to an “Executive Summary” that could be used to highlight aspects of the Strategic Plan. She felt that this may help to ensure that the meaningful details were not lost in the attempt to make things briefer.

President Ricketts felt that the idea of engaging an Evaluator was an interesting and potentially useful idea.

President Ricketts responded to the opinion about classroom space and stated that new teaching spaces or multi-purpose spaces could be created.

President Ricketts noted that the Board had requested clarity and brevity for the Strategic Plan and felt that part of the document could be moved into the background.

K. Bleile was pleased to hear of ideas to handle proposed enrolment growth. With regards to research opportunities she noted that all 2nd year psychology majors get research opportunities through the Research Design courses. She was concerned that too large of a jump in enrolment may make it impossible for these courses to be run as effectively. She also referred to the shortage of faculty available to supervise Honours students.

President Ricketts agreed that there were a variety of ways to look at a research experiences for students, some of which could be innovative and not requiring an Honours thesis to be completed. He felt it important that students be made aware of research opportunities that were available and why it was important to become involved in research.

A. Redden agreed that defining the ways that students engage in research was important.

A. Quema pointed out that research meant different things to different people and in different disciplines, and that she would be happy with the statement if it could be clarified.

President Ricketts felt that Acadia could also recognise the research elements that were already taking place in teaching at Acadia.

G. Gibson discussed the need to find a balance between enrolment growth and strengthening and maintaining the quality of the programs that Acadia currently offered.

M. Penney asked whether Acadia had thought about ways in which students could engage in publishable research within courses and labs, as was the case at some other institutions in the region.

D. Benoit discussed the current research experience within the Honours programs at Acadia, noting that at other institutions a student might do a three-year degree and then receive an Honours qualification by adding a fourth year without having any additional requirement to write a thesis. D. Benoit noted that Acadia provided more to the students in the form of either a 4th year capstone project and/or an Honours thesis. D. Benoit thought it likely that Acadia already offered a research experience to most students.

D. Benoit pointed out that some students in other institutions may not defend a thesis until their Ph.D. and felt that far more rigour was already expected at the Honours and Masters levels at Acadia. D. Benoit cautioned that making Acadia programs too rigorous could result in students choosing to leave.

The Chair asked the Dean of Research and Graduate Studies whether all Honours programs required a thesis or special project at Acadia.

P. Rigg commented that English did not and that instead a student could take additional courses with additional requirements.

President Ricketts agreed with D. Benoit that there were institutions where all students that elected to take the fourth year of study received an Honours degree. He pointed out that one of the reasons that Acadia students were sought after by graduate programs was because they knew that the students would have been exposed to rigorous research during their undergraduate degree.

P. Rigg stated that it was important not to undermine the course-based option taken by some English Honours students. One of the reasons a student may opt to take this route was that it provided broader coverage and prepared the student more appropriately based on the student's plans after graduation.

President Ricketts stated that capstone courses were another way to do research.

A. Quema commented that a course-based approach or a thesis-based approach was possible but that in her courses all students had benefited from gaining research skills by doing presentations. Small classes were needed in order to be able to do this each term. A. Quema noted that in small classes with presentations the students learn how to write effectively, how to speak, and how to be articulate.

J. Hooper stated that 4996 was called Honours Thesis in the Calendar and that this would appear right on the official transcript.

The Chair confirmed that there were no other comments or questions.

President Ricketts thanked Senators for the very good discussion and questions.

4) Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 5:50 p.m. Moved by D. Benoit.

ORIGINAL SIGNED

R. Hare, Recording Secretary