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Minutes of the Special Senate Meeting of Wednesday March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2022.

A meeting of the Senate of Acadia University occurred on Wednesday March 2<sup>nd</sup>, beginning at 4:00 p.m., with Chair A. Kiefte presiding and 48 Senators plus one guest. This was a Teams meeting due to the University pandemic operations.

**1) Approval of Agenda**

The Chair called the meeting to order, noting that there was quorum at present and thanked Senators for meeting virtually at short notice.

**Motion to approve the agenda. Moved by Michael Robertson and seconded by R. Seale.**

The Chair requested that item 5) Other Business would be added to the agenda in case there were further items that Senators needed to raise.

The Chair reminded Senators that the action of abstaining from a vote resulted in a vote not being counted when determining vote outcomes and ratios.

MOTION TO APPROVE AGENDA AS REVISED CARRIED.

**2) Motion that Senate approves the modified Calendar dates for the date range of March 3<sup>rd</sup> – May 8<sup>th</sup> for the 2021-2022 academic year:**

**Motion that Senate approves the modified Calendar dates for the date range of March 3<sup>rd</sup> – May 8<sup>th</sup> for the 2021-2022 academic year. Moved by V. Provencal and seconded by L. Robinson.**

The Chair introduced H. Chipman as a guest at Senate, from the T.I.E. committee.

H. Chipman explained that the T.I.E. committee had received extensive feedback from faculty and students regarding the resumption of the term. The document was proposing a three day extension of the teaching days which would give a nine week term, followed by a nine day examination period. The schedule for summer classes and Convocation would remain unchanged. H. Chipman acknowledged that certain programs with accreditation requirements could prove to be exceptional cases and he recommended that Senate allow those departments to implement ultimate schedules as necessary in order to meet the requirements.

H. Chipman also noted the recommendation that faculty consider offering alternative methods of evaluation in order to minimise disruption.

H. Chipman pointed out that students had major commitments after May 1<sup>st</sup> and were also requesting that Convocation dates remained unchanged.

H. Chipman also noted that the date to withdraw from courses had also been moved forward.

H. Dahringer asked whether per course faculty would be compensated for the additional three days of teaching.

H. Chipman stated that the T.I.E. committee had not discussed this. It was confirmed that teaching assignments go to April 30<sup>th</sup>.

The Chair suggested that H. Dahringer follow up with the faculty association regarding this matter if the term dates are modified by Senate.

H. Teismann provided comments from his department. A request had been made to move the withdraw date to the last day of classes. He was also concerned about the connection between classes ending and Residence move out dates.

H. Teismann asked whether there was a consideration to turn the examination period into class time and leave faculty to decide how they would carry out final assessments.

The Chair addressed the earlier point about Residence move out dates and noted that Residence Life and Student Services would be coordinating that side of things based on how Senate decided on the academic dates.

N. O'Driscoll was concerned about the extension of the examination period because in Earth and Environmental Science field schools were offered immediately following the end of the examination period. These field schools required accommodations and transportation bookings and started on April 24<sup>th</sup> which would have been the day following the last day of examinations in the original schedule.

K. Pinder did not feel that it would be beneficial to extend the term beyond the normal date and that there would be an emotional toll on both the students and faculty to do so.

K. Pinder pointed out that experiential learning had taken place during the last four weeks for students which also had value. K. Pinder echoed H. Dahringer's concerns about part time faculty.

D. Keefe thanked the T.I.E. committee for the substantial amount of work done to lay out the new proposed dates to conclude the term. He asked the Registrar whether it would be possible to approve the Spring Graduates at Senate with only a two day turn around for the Registrar's Office to have everything ready for Convocation and graduation lists drawn up.

M. Bishop agreed that this would be extremely tight but that as much work would be done in advance as possible. Reducing from five days to two days turnaround would be very challenging but he recognised the impact on the students and felt that every effort would be made to leave the Convocation date unchanged.

A. Quema noted that graduate students wanted to graduate in May but that the deadlines for thesis completion could be problematic. If the students had to wait until the Fall to graduate even though the thesis was completed earlier, they would be required to pay fees for the Fall term.

D. Keefe stated that it was not unusual for a student to go on to Graduate School before officially graduating from Acadia and that financial accommodations would also be made by Acadia in these situations.

The Chair noted that A. Redden was offering to have her staff assist with Convocation preparations related to graduate students who would be graduating this spring.

P. Arnold commented that for an accredited program that was facing re-accreditation this year, teaching time was being reduced from 12 weeks to nine weeks. He commented that students needed to have the content and asked whether the term could be extended. Students continuing to Dalhousie next year would find themselves at a disadvantage. P. Arnold preferred to assess the students during the remaining weeks rather than through formal examinations.

C. Mutlu asked whether the students had taken a position on this.

The Chair pointed out that two ASU members were present on the T.I.E. committee the previous day.

A. Redden reminded Senators that there was room for flexibility around the submission of graduate theses to the 29<sup>th</sup> April, 2022.

N. D'Amato had surveyed his students and the majority did not want the term to be extended. He mentioned that students were planning a rally that afternoon. Some students hoped to have the term re-done.

The Chair reported that she had also reached out to the ASU and she and the T.I.E. committee had been provided with feedback that the ASU had compiled.

G. Saleski, the new President of the ASU, noted that M. Cyr had attended the T.I.E. meeting and confirmed that she had been able to represent the students in that forum. The ASU had reached out through social media and had a list prepared of the top student concerns and priorities regarding the return to class plan. G. Saleski acknowledged that there were a range of different wants and needs and that for the most part students had plans following the end of April and would also have no where to live in Wolfville after that time. Co-op and internship placements would be starting and she felt that the T.I.E. committee recommendations reflected the wishes of the students.

G. Saleski agreed that moving the 'W' date to the end of term would be agreeable for students and ease additional anxiety. Although students were at Acadia for formal learning, they had also engaged in experiential learning during the faculty strike.

G. Saleski noted the proposed student walk out by Education students and stated that M. Cyr was speaking with the leader of the walkout and it was hoped that they could mediate this action.

G. Saleski stated that the students needed as much flexibility and accommodations as possible. There were pros and cons to extending the teaching term and dropping the examination period but they had not received much feedback from students on that option. However, students supported alternative methods of evaluation, since they had flights booked and places to move out of. Residence and Meal Hall would be closing on the 24<sup>th</sup> April but that was expected to change. The ASU was collecting feedback from students both on and off campus.

The Chair thanked G. Saleski and welcomed her to her first meeting of Senate.

J. Brady appreciated the earlier comments and noted that students and faculty were feeling stress and pressure. It would take time to get things moving smoothly. Her accredited program needed to demonstrate that students had covered and achieved various competencies and these needed to be reported to the accrediting body. Once those students went out into their practicums they would need to demonstrate the competencies. She noted that extra time would be needed to deliver those course materials.

V. Provencal found the proposals from the T.I.E. to be reasonable but wondered how the different arguments could be addressed. He asked whether accommodations could be provided at a program level to provide flexibility.

M. Bishop responded that the students had indicated why an extension of the term would be problematic. The alternative of using extended class time instead of examination time was an option.

P. Callaghan noted the challenge for accredited programs and suggested amending the wording of the motion. If some programs, but not all, extended classes into the examination period, this could be problematic for electives outside of the programs that could have formal examinations.

The Chair summarized points that had been made:

Extending the 'W' date to the last day of classes;  
Turning the examination period into class periods with testing during that time;  
Field Schools scheduled to start the day before exam dates would be ending;  
Accredited programs needing to modify their own schedules to ensure that enough hours of class time were available to complete program competencies.

N. D'Amato asked about possible reimbursement for students from the University.

President Ricketts pointed out that if the term could be finished by the end of April and Convocation dates remain unchanged, discussions would be carried

out during the next two weeks to determine appropriate compensation for students.

S. Duguay had received over 200 emails from students and the major concern expressed was that the term not extend into May. Students had graduate programs starting, international travel plans, work permits, and visas to be honoured.

J. Fowles agreed that it would be difficult to extend the class time but also offer an examination period at the same time. His program included a certification examination that was outside of class time and the examination period, but before the start of May.

C. Mutlu did not feel that it was worth adding three days only to the teaching term. He floated the alternative of extending the term into the end of the examination period but noted that this would have an impact on programs that only assessed students with a mid-term and a final examination.

J. Brady stated that three extra days would certainly make a difference and would be important for students in accredited programs.

H. Dahringer commented that if the term remained unchanged part-time faculty would not need to be compensated for extra teaching.

V. Provençal suggested that faculty should do what they could to accommodate the students in their classes. He also felt that faculty should be permitted to offer alternate schedules for their classes.

H. Teismann proposed an amendment to move the withdraw date to the last day of classes. He also noted that the idea of extending the class time into what would have been the examination period would provide a model that preferred instruction over assessment. He felt that this would be in keeping with the spirit of Acadia.

**Motion to amend to set course withdrawal date to the last day of classes. Moved by H. Teismann and seconded by D. Seamone.**

V. Provençal asked for the 'W' date to be extended to the end of the term.

The Chair stated that if this amendment did not pass another amendment could be made with that suggested withdrawal date.

J. Fowles asked whether this change was consistent with the previous year and the Chair confirmed that this was the case.

**AMENDMENT CARRIED. FIVE VOTES AGAINST AND TWO ABSTENTIONS.**

Discussion returned to the main motion and the 'W' date would now be April 13<sup>th</sup> instead of April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022.

P. Callaghan proposed an amendment to the main motion to allow for decisions to be made by programs with accreditation requirements. Not all challenges could be anticipated.

Amendment to the main motion to read:

**Motion that Senate approves the modified Calendar Dates for date range March 3<sup>rd</sup> to May 8<sup>th</sup> for the 2021-2022 academic year, while permitting alternative dates, established no later than March 11<sup>th</sup> by the program, for exceptional cases such as programs where additional criteria must be met for professional or accreditation requirements. Moved by P. Callaghan and seconded by J. Dymont.**

P. Callaghan noted that this approach would only be practical for fairly self-contained programs.

S. Currie asked whether these alternative dates would still be expected to fall within the original confines of the parameters provided by the T.I.E. committee.

H. Chipman noted that the T.I.E. committee had been careful to use 'exceptional cases' in order to indicate that this would not be undertaken lightly. There was an assumption that units would work within the Convocation date and other important dates. He expected that this would be a small number of programs.

P. Callaghan agreed that May 4<sup>th</sup> needed to be the final date for all marks to be submitted.

J. Brady was concerned that allowing departments to decide how the semester would unfold could set faculty up for student ire. She asked how reimbursement might play out for some students following an extended semester. J. Brady preferred to see an Institutional plan and timeline.

AMENDMENT TO THE MAIN MOTION CARRIED. FOUR VOTES AGAINST AND SIX ABSTENTIONS.

Discussion returned to the main motion.

G. Saleski pointed out that wrapping up the term on time was important to students but also noted that the possibility of instructional time replacing examination time could be an option that benefitted students. She asked how long classes would extend if this option was chosen and was concerned that faculty could provide additional instruction and also additional assessment.

G. Saleski asked about the study days prior to the examination period.

D. Benoit was concerned about the instructional time remaining and noted that students left Acadia with the knowledge that they had learned in class and that this was important. He was in favour of the Pass/Fail approach and additional instructional time for students.

D. Benoit had expected more than three extra days of teaching. He felt that in a student's career losing a couple of weeks of term was not especially damaging, but he noted that his program was accredited and stated that third year students in the program had only enjoyed one normal term during their university career to date.

The Chair stated that there had been no amendment to the examination period made to the main motion. Also, the concerns of Earth and Environmental Science regarding field school timing had not been addressed but the Chair asked the Registrar whether that unit could request consideration in exam scheduling to allow those involved with field school to not have exams in the last two days.

M. Bishop stated that a manual intervention could be applied to ensure that these students would not be adversely affected.

N. O'Driscoll commented that 35 students were involved in the Field Schools. He suggested that all examinations end by April 23<sup>rd</sup>, since the students took a good number of electives.

M. Bishop stated that this was not possible. The exam schedule was normally ten days and had been reduced to nine days. Removing a further two days would not be doable because 18,000 exams were offered during the period complete with constraints limiting students to no more than two exams in a 24 hour period.

**Motion to extend the Senate meeting to 6:45 p.m. Moved by M. Adam and seconded by C. Mutlu.**

MOTION TO EXTEND THE MEETING APPROVED. TWO ABSTENTIONS.

Discussion returned to the main motion which now read: **Senate approves the modified Calendar Dates for date range March 3 to May 8 for the 2021-2022 academic year while permitting alternative dates, established no later than March 11<sup>th</sup> by the program, for exceptional cases for programs where additional criteria must be met for professional or accreditation requirements. Originally moved by V. Provencal and seconded by L. Robinson.**

MAIN MOTION APPROVED AS REVISED. UNANIMOUS.

C. Mutlu asked for a comment to be minuted. He asked that the Senior Administration confirm that contract faculty would be paid properly for the extra days of instruction.

There was no immediate response to the request for confirmation.

The Chair suggested that faculty members contact the faculty association about this matter if concerns arise following this meeting.

3) **Motion: Whereas the initial authorization of a mixed delivery model, such that Acadia courses would, at the discretion of faculty, occur in virtual, face-to-face/on campus, or blended format, using either synchronous or asynchronous delivery, was by way of a motion which carried in Senate in the meeting of June 15 2020\* (in favor of which motion the mover, Dale Keefe, expressed his confidence that ‘faculty had the students’ best interests in mind’), that Senate, therefore, reaffirm its endorsement of a mixed delivery model for the remainder of the 2021-2022 academic year. (Moved by Vernon Provencal, Seconded by Holger Teismann.)**

**Motion that whereas the initial authorization of a mixed delivery model, such that Acadia courses would, at the discretion of faculty, occur in virtual, face-to-face/on campus, or blended format, using either synchronous or asynchronous delivery, was by way of a motion which carried in Senate in the meeting of June 15 2020\* (in favor of which motion the mover, Dale Keefe, expressed his confidence that ‘faculty had the students’ best interests in mind’), that Senate, therefore, reaffirm its endorsement of a mixed delivery model for the remainder of the 2021-2022 academic year. Moved by Vernon Provencal and seconded by Holger Teismann.**

V. Provencal stated that there was a similar motion of Senate in June 2020 that established flexibility to the delivery of courses at the discretion of the faculty. He therefore felt that a motion of Senate would suffice to reinstate the policy. V. Provencal stated that if the motion passed, administrative directives would be expected to comply with the policy.

H. Teismann pointed out that all stakeholders were in favour of flexibility.

D. Looker asked why this motion was on the agenda when something similar had come to Senate in January.

The Chair noted that the motion that had passed at the January meeting of Senate had led to a policy that had been administered to last until February 22<sup>nd</sup>.

V. Provencal stated that the motion was not the same as the previous one in January. This was instead based on the previous motion of June 2020. This motion directed the administration to act according to the wishes of Senate.

D. Keefe pointed out that the June 15<sup>th</sup> 2020 motion came forward from the COVID Planning Task Force and requested that Senate endorse that model of teaching, rather than approve the model. There remained a question as to whether Senate had the authority to determine how courses were to be delivered. He reminded Senators that courses were approved by MPHEC and that they indicated how programs were to be delivered. These were approved for in-person delivery. D. Keefe agreed that during the pandemic MPHEC had made allowances for institutions to modify their normal program delivery modalities.

D. Keefe was not opposed to faculty offering courses in a virtual modality but he had received many concerns from students and welcomed their thoughts. Some students were receiving all of their courses online or in a virtual form which was not what they had paid for.

D. Keefe stated that students living in Residence had found that all of their courses went online in January which led them to question why they were paying for Residence accommodation.

D. Keefe pointed out that Nova Scotia was at a completely different phase of the pandemic. He also stated that when this had been discussed at the Task Force V. Provencal had stated that virtual and in-person was easy for faculty



because they had an office to go to from the classroom, whereas students could be in-person and immediately after that class need to find a space for a virtual class.

D. Keefe asked what had now changed? He noted that the administration had taken these concerns seriously at that time.

D. Seamone believed that it was the prerogative of Senate to endorse and establish the teaching modalities. She noted that this had arisen as a result of the current position of the Administration that in-person classes would resume. D. Seamone repeated the concerns that she had voiced at the previous Senate meeting and noted that everyone's risk assessment had been elevated. D. Seamone did not feel that this approach took into account the differences between the various circumstances of faculty and students.

D. Seamone stated that her students had found that a virtual approach worked the best in her courses and pointed out that everyone needed to be open to different modalities.

K. Pinder had provided extensive comments at the last Senate meeting. She offered to forward these comments to the Provost.

K. Pinder discussed students, context, and planning. She agreed that students were all in their own unique positions. In her 1<sup>st</sup> year English class only six students had elected to attend in person in January. The remaining 24 students preferred to remain online using Teams. This was not working well and she noted that it would have been preferable to be completely on-line.

K. Pinder discussed the current context. In addition to the pandemic there was violence everywhere and people were both distraught and distressed. As a result, students and faculty needed to be in their own safe spaces.

K. Pinder spoke about planning and felt that Acadia did not plan in the way that other Nova Scotia institutions did in December when they looked at the context of Covid. Decisions had been rushed and the students were upset.

K. Pinder understood that students were upset that they were paying for Residence and studying online but also reminded Senators that Senate was the body that made academic decisions. She felt that consideration needed to be given to the strength of the academic model that could be offered to students if faculty were provided with flexibility for the remainder of the term.

P. Callaghan was concerned that the motion could start a slippery slope unless it was understood that it was only during the context of Covid. He shared the aspirations of many faculty to get back to in-person teaching but he noted that the one week attempted at the end of January demonstrated that at this time, it would not work.

C. Mutlu was in favour of the motion. He pointed out that faculty did not know how many cases of Covid were on campus and that this put everyone at risk. He wanted everyone to have the freedom to make their own risk assessment. C. Mutlu felt that there was confusion on campus as to how

special accommodations were made for faculty. He asked D. Keefe to create a clear policy and communicate this clearly to the Deans.

G. Salesky agreed that prior to the strike students had been concerned about going back to fully in-person classes. If a professor was unable to provide a hybrid option some students were feeling left out of their educational experience because they did not feel that they could attend classes in-person.

G. Saleski noted that this had prompted the ASU survey and in a three-day period 2000 students responded and indicated that flexibility was definitely a priority for them. She believed that this was still the case and felt that students wanted to be in a safe environment.

G. Salesky felt that flexibility for the professor tended to result in a better learning experience for the students. She felt that few if any students voiced concerns about studying 100% online.

H. Dahringer had students that asked to study online because of auto-immune challenges. She stated that Senate had the authority to determine, regulate, and control the educational policy of the Institution.

P. Doerr noted that the return to the classroom lasted only a few hours for him. Following his first classes he received an email from a student who had tested positive and had been speaking with him in person. He then had to communicate this news to the class. He would be supportive of the motion.

D. Keefe agreed that some clarity would be helpful for Senators. He stated that a formal request for accommodation went through Human Resources and had existed prior to Covid.

D. Keefe reiterated that faculty could choose to offer hybrid and noted that if faculty chose to teach completely online it would be possible to work with them. The process had not been described when he discussed this with the Deans and recognized that it created confusion in terms of the process around accommodation.

C. Mutlu asked what ‘working with individual members’ meant.

D. Keefe agreed to clarify this with the Deans.

V. Provencal asked that the following comments be minuted: “Online delivery is a special Covid exemption? Yet we had experts brought in to advise on best practice in virtual delivery – and I’m pretty sure on-line courses are ubiquitous. Course delivery is NOT the prerogative of Senate? Let’s debate that at the next meeting of Senate! I am humbled that my comments at the Task Force were found so memorable. My quoted comment was with respect to the proposal of an IMPOSED UNIVERSAL policy directing some to in-person, others to on-line, so there would be widespread difference. D. Keefe should be as mindful of my FINAL comment and recommendation that this would only work if individual faculty had the power of discretion, where we all agreed that the majority of faculty would prefer in-person or hybrid modes of delivery”.

A. Quema stated that Senate had the academic authority and should be empowered to make recommendations and vote upon them. She had seen what was involved when an individual faculty member needed to apply for accommodation. They were required to make a case to Human Resources when they made an academic pedagogical decision for the wellbeing of themselves and for the students. She asked that the question be called and that Senate proceed to vote.

H. Dahringer agreed and believed that this was within the purview of Senate.

D Benoit was in support of faculty being left to decide how they teach for the remainder of the term. He was reviewing the MPHEC requirements and noted that Acadia programs were not set up or accredited for online delivery. He expected that this change would require a revisit to MPHEC. D. Benoit pointed out that MPHEC approval was required, but he felt that it would be acceptable for this term.

President Ricketts agreed that Acadia was an in person University and this method of delivery was detailed in the Collective Agreement and elsewhere. There were good arguments for flexibility to the end of the term but this needed to be carefully managed. He had received emails from both parents and students who were unhappy that all of their courses had changed to online delivery.

President Ricketts stated that the administration would manage this appropriately.

MOTION CARRIED. TWO ABSTENTIONS.

**Motion to extend the Senate meeting to 7:00 p.m. Moved by D. Seamone and seconded by V. Provencal.**

MOTION TO EXTEND THE MEETING CARRIED.

- 4) **Follow-up report request: January 2022 motion “Whereas other universities are supplying suitable masks to faculty and students to ensure the optimal resistance to the spread of Covid as an air-born disease, that the Provost administer the same policy at Acadia University.”**

**Follow-up report request: January 2022 motion “Whereas other universities are supplying suitable masks to faculty and students to ensure the optimal resistance to the spread of Covid as an air-born disease, that the Provost administer the same policy at Acadia University.”**

D. Keefe had spoken with the VP Finance and Administration about this after the last meeting since occupational health and safety was part of his portfolio. He agreed that some universities provided masks for students and employees but that some did not. It was felt that masks were common place and therefore not necessary to provide for the workplace environment.

V. Provencal stated that the main reason for the request came from the Task Force because faculty needed to administer a policy of safety in the classroom. He felt that D. Keefe had agreed that this could only be done successfully if all students were wearing the same masks provided by the University.

V. Provencal felt this would provide an optimal level of protection in the classroom. He asked what level of priority D. Keefe gave to this question following the Senate meeting, when the motion had passed.

H. Teismann read the motion out and asked why the VPA had not administered the policy that Senate had approved.

D. Keefe responded that this had been considered but noted the difficulty of requiring the same mask for all. This would not be mandated. He had also consulted with the Occupational Health Nurse and had decided against it.

D. Keefe also pointed out that he reported to the President.

The Chair informed Senators that she had communicated with the VPA and Provost and the President about the motions prior to the last meeting and following the meeting had reported vote percentages and outcomes for both motions along with questions and comments she had been asked to forward from Senators.

P. Callaghan asked whether that motion should have been on the floor of Senate. He did not feel it reasonable or doable to get everyone to wear the same mask.

The Chair reiterated that she had stated her reservations about the second motion coming to Senate back in January, as she felt that this item belonged in another forum.

President Ricketts had attended a meeting with L. Barrett and she had been specifically asked whether N95 masks should be required for educational environments and she had responded that these were not necessary. They were important in certain health environments. L. Barrett had stated that the best mask for anyone was the one that was most comfortable.

D. Seamone asked whether L. Barrett was aware that students were not socially distanced in the classroom setting.

President Ricketts stated that she was aware of the classroom environment.

## 5) Other Business

There was no other business.

C. Mutlu asked that the decisions from this meeting be circulated this evening.

The Chair indicated that she had contacted the Registrar prior to this meeting to confirm that they were both available after this meeting to ensure that a communication about the decisions could go out as soon as possible.

The Chair thanked all Senators for attending at short notice and remaining until the end of the meeting.

6) Adjournment

**Motion to adjourn. Moved by V. Provencal.**

Meeting adjourned at 7:02 p.m.

**ORIGINAL SIGNED**

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R. Hare, Recording Secretary