

30 August 2006

Dear Member of Senate:

I advise you that a meeting of the Senate of Acadia University will occur **at 4:00 p.m., Monday, 11 September 2006** in Room 132 of the Beveridge Arts Centre. The AGENDA follows:

- 1) Minutes of the Meeting of 12 June 2006
- 2) Announcements and Communications
- 3) Business Arising from the Minutes
 - a) *ad hoc* Committee on Students With Disabilities That Affect Learning - Final Report (30 August 2006 Version) **(067-04-SLD) ***
 - b) 2005-2006 Annual Reports from Senate Committees **(056-58-REP)**
 - i) Research Ethics Board (As attached to May agenda.)
 - ii) Nominating (As attached to May agenda.)
 - iii) Honorary Degrees (As attached to May agenda.)
 - iv) Research & Graduate Studies (As attached to May agenda.)
 - v) Academic Program Review (As attached to June agenda.)
 - vi) Admissions & Academic Standing (Policy) (As attached to June agenda.)
 - vii) Admissions & Academic Standing (Appeals) (As attached to June agenda.)
 - viii) Board of Continuing Education (As attached to June agenda.)
 - ix) By-Laws (As attached to June agenda.)
 - x) Library (As attached to June agenda.)
 - xi) Faculty Development (As attached to June agenda.)
 - xii) Honours (As attached to June agenda.)
 - xiii) Curriculum (As attached to June agenda.)
 - xiv) Executive (As attached to June agenda.)
 - xv) Academic Integrity (As attached to June agenda.)
 - xvi) Academic Discipline Appeals (As attached to June agenda.)
 - xvii) Timetable, Instruction Hours, & Examination (As attached to June agenda.)

- 4) New Business
 - a) Campus Sustainability Assessment Framework in Acadia's Academic Programs **(067-01-SAG) ***
 - b) Registrar - Nominations for Senate Nominating Committee **(067-02-REG) ***
 - c) VP (Student Affairs) - Need Based Financial Assistance for Students **(067-03-VPS)**

- 5) Other Business

Yours sincerely,

Rosemary Jotcham
Registrar and Secretary of Senate

To: **Members of Senate**
From: ***ad hoc* Committee On Students With Disabilities That Affect Learning**
Date: **August 30, 2006**
Re: **Committee Report with Recommendations and Proposed Policy**

This Committee reported to Senate on June 12, 2006. There was considerable discussion of the report at that meeting, however, because of the loss of quorum at that meeting this item was automatically tabled. The report which follows incorporates the friendly amendment accepted at the June 12 meeting that is noted in the Senate minutes.

Background to this Committee

Based on discussions at Senate over the past year regarding services and accommodations for students with disabilities that affect learning, Senate created the *ad hoc* Committee on Students with Learning Disabilities to address these issues. The committee's mandate and membership are noted below.

Mandate:

- To examine current policies and practices regarding students with learning disabilities at Acadia with the view to making recommendations for improvement or modifications. In examining these policies and practices, the committee should consult Senate's Timetable, Instruction, and Examination Committee, the coordinator of Academic Support Programs, and the Equity Officer.
- To address Senate's concerns about issues of discrimination, learning accommodation, equity, and academic standards.
- To consult broadly with members of the University to take account of the fact that different schools and departments have different policies to address the issue of learning disabilities. (Minutes of Senate, 9 January 2006)

Membership

- Three Senators - one from each of
 - the Faculty of Arts – Tony Thomson
 - the Faculty of Professional Studies – Susan Markham-Starr
 - the Faculty of Pure and Applied Science – Svetlana Barkanova
- Two student representatives who participated in the panel on learning disabilities organized on 28 September 2005
 - Tara Loughnane
 - Megan Pearson
- One student Senator – Josh Gould
- One representative from the School of Education whose field of research includes learning disabilities – Deborah Day
- The Acadia University Dean of Students – Matt Calfin (Minutes of Senate, 13 February 2006)

Senate's Mandate Regarding this Issue

Senate has the responsibility:

- (b) to determine, regulate and control the educational policy of the University;

- (c) to determine the courses of study and standards of admission to the University, and continued membership therein, and qualifications for degrees and diplomas;
- (d) to conduct examinations and appoint examiners; (Bill No. 30, 1968, “An Act to Amend Chapter 134 of the Acts of 1891, An Act respecting Acadia University”)

At the December 2005 meeting of Senate, the Chair posed the following comments:

An important issue is to establish what the lines of authority are....Senate should articulate clearly for all faculty what their new obligations are in this regard; it should also establish the precedent that new obligations of this sort must be formally decided upon by Senate, and not by administrative fiat. To this end it would be useful to have a motion that is clear on both points....(Minutes of Senate, 12 December 2005)

Committee name

Senate *has* used the phrase “students with learning disabilities” in its discussions. The *ad hoc* committee is using the phrase “students with disabilities that affect learning.” We believe that this phrase better describes the situation.

Definition of “Disability That Affects Learning”¹

A physical, sensory, cognitive or affective difference which affects learning and for which a student requires accommodation in order to acquire and represent learning.

Process

The Committee received the following input:

- Background material from the Senate discussions
- From the Faculty of Professional Studies – 4 written submissions
- From the Faculty of Arts – 2 written submissions
- From the Faculty of Pure and Applied Science – 3 written submissions
- From Senators – 2 written submissions
- From Senators who spoke at Senate about this issue – 2 written submissions
- In addition to the written responses, several verbal submissions were made to the members of the Committee
- From Committee members, in response to various submissions – 6 responses
- From Jill Davies, material regarding procedures at Acadia; statistics regarding accommodations at Acadia University; and policies at other institutions
- From John Smith, material from the Learning Disabilities Association of Nova Scotia; the Learning Disabilities Association of Canada; the Association on Higher Education and Disability; the Atlantic Postsecondary Learning Disabilities Network; and the Canadian Association of Disability Service Providers in Postsecondary Education; as well as his thoughts re: learning disabilities accommodation and the equity policy at Acadia University
- From the Timetable, Instruction Hours and Examination Committee, input at a meeting of the T.I.E. Committee

¹ See page 6 for more definitions

The Committee has individually and collectively processed this input. The Committee reported in May 2006 regarding the themes that have emerged from the input that we have received:

- The laws of the country regarding persons with disabilities
- Current best practices in the academic environment regarding students with disabilities that affect learning
- The assessment process, including confidence in the integrity of the process of assessing students with disabilities that affect learning
- Education of faculty and students about the process of assessments and accommodations
- Accountability regarding equity and fairness in assessment and accommodations

Based on the above noted mandates of the Committee and of Senate; the input from the consultation process; and the legislative and administrative systems within which we must operate; the following is the Committee's report.

***ad hoc* Committee's Report to Senate**

Several Acadia University documents guide Senate in its creation of policy. Firstly, the **mission** of the University includes the phrase "personalized and rigorous liberal education":

The mission of Acadia University is to provide a personalized and rigorous liberal education; promote a robust and respectful scholarly community; and inspire a diversity of students to become critical thinkers, lifelong learners, engaged citizens, and responsible global leaders.

Secondly, the **supporting objectives** note that students bring with them "demonstrated intellectual promise:"

1. To attract students of demonstrated intellectual promise whose qualities of mind and character will enable them to contribute to the community of scholarship and to take full advantage of the University's curriculum.

Thirdly, in the supporting objectives the University commits itself to not discriminating:

3. To ensure that the University will not discriminate on the basis of religion, race, gender, culture or other form of discrimination deemed unacceptable by the University community.

Fourthly, the University's **strategic plan** commits the university to several values, including "rigour and flexibility in learning" (p. 3). The plan also notes that the distinguishing features of an Acadia education include "personalized education for students as learners" (p. 4).

Thus, there are several themes that guide Senate in its creation of policy regarding all students, including those students with disabilities that affect learning. These themes are demonstrated intellectual promise, personalized education, rigorous education, and no discrimination. The report which follows is built on those themes and a set of principles that emerged from the consultation process.

The Committee believes that the University's procedures that are in place have developed, not as an attempt to circumvent Senate's authority and responsibility, and not as an administrative fiat, but rather as an attempt to create a positive and effective learning environment in the absence of policy. The procedures that have been developed are aimed at fulfilling the University's duty to do both what is right and what is required by law. By providing services that are in keeping with its mission and objectives, the University is doing what is right.

However, the University also has a legal duty to provide services for students with disabilities that affect learning. Direction in this legal duty comes firstly from the 1982 Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms which guarantees that people with disabilities will be protected from discrimination; and secondly from provincial Human Rights legislation. Because post secondary education is a provincial responsibility, there is clear direction that universities must provide services to students with disabilities that affect learning. To date, Acadia University has been providing services on an *ad hoc* basis which several other universities are providing in a much more systematic, policy driven approach. The recommendations and policy which follow will fill the policy gap at Acadia University.

The committee identified several **principles** upon which the policy should be based. These principles include:

- doing what is right, not just what is legislated
- equity for students, staff and faculty
- responsibility of the students to identify themselves
- confidentiality and privacy regarding students' disabilities
- individuality of students' situations and accommodations
- obligations and rights of students, staff and faculty
- safety of the student and others
- distinguishing between modifications² and accommodations³
- creating an environment that has less possibility of harm

Policy

Acadia University recognizes that it has a legal obligation to ensure that students with disabilities that affect learning are not discriminated against. Acadia University recognizes that students with disabilities that affect learning have met the University's standards for entrance, and are entitled to support and appropriate accommodations that enable them to pursue their academic programs. In keeping with the need for "rigour and flexibility in learning" faculty and staff will mutually agree upon a strategy with input from the student that meets both the individual student's need for accommodations. Accommodations will be based on the recommendations in the current assessment of the student's disability. Accommodations must not conflict with the faculty member's requirements for academic rigour, autonomy in educational relationships, and flexibility in assessing student progress. No actions taken in such accommodations will contravene the University's Academic Integrity policy. No actions taken in such accommodations will advantage or disadvantage students with disabilities that affect learning in relation to their peers. This policy should not limit faculty members from exercising pedagogical judgement to support students with disabilities that affect learning.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are necessary actions to implement this policy. The recommendations come from the Committee's consultation and discussions. They include both actions which the University should take and ones that the University should not take. Those latter recommendations are often based on suggestions from those who provided input which

² See definition on page 6

³ See definition on page 6

reflects ideas circulating in the University, but which the Committee felt are not in keeping with the University's mission, objectives, and plan, or with the Committee's principles. Several of the recommendations reflect current practice which has not been supported by policy in the past.

1. That Acadia University recognize in policy that students with disabilities that affect learning must not be discriminated against based on their disability.
2. That students with disabilities that affect learning be supported by Acadia University with programs that are in keeping with the University's commitment to "rigour and flexibility in learning."
3. That the University include in the University Calendar and other relevant print and electronic publications the policies, procedures and programs for students with disabilities that affect learning.
4. That programs for students with disabilities that affect learning be accessed through the offices of the Academic Support Coordinator and the Disability Resource Facilitator acting with the Registrar and the First Year Advisor.
5. That students with disabilities that affect learning are expected to identify themselves to the office of the Academic Support Coordinator.
6. That, in keeping with past practice, the University be provided with current assessments of the student's disability. These assessments are to be done by a recognized external assessor in keeping with accepted professional standards.
7. That the assessments include recommendations that will provide a framework for accommodations for each student.
8. That the accommodations that can be provided by the University include but are not limited to: alternative locations for examinations; extended periods of time for examinations, tutors, note takers, scribes and assistive technology.
9. That all accommodations be undertaken in keeping with the University's Academic Integrity policy.
10. That professors will be contacted by the Academic Support Coordinator or the Registrar with the names of students in their courses who require accommodations in the learning environment (classes, laboratories, tests, examinations, etc.)
11. That students with disabilities that affect learning, in conjunction with the Academic Support Coordinator, will provide their professors with a narrative report that summarizes their disability and the accommodations that will enable them to complete their academic work. The office of the Academic Support Coordinator must verify this narrative report.
12. That the student's right to privacy must not be breached in discussing and providing for accommodations.
13. That professors honour the student's need for appropriate and available accommodations.
14. That professors be provided with appropriate staff and facility support in their efforts to provide appropriate accommodations.
15. That professors be provided with a range of options with regard to examination accommodations that recognize both individual professor's need for flexibility in creating and supervising examinations and the student's need for such accommodations.
16. That students with disabilities that affect learning should have ongoing access to advisors in their faculty of study. These faculty advisors would need effective and appropriate education to enable them to effectively assist these students.
17. That the right to an accommodation cannot be withdrawn based on a student's failure to take full advantage of learning opportunities presented.

18. That making an accommodation for a student must not produce undue hardship on the University.
19. That workshops be provided in each faculty, school or department to provide information to faculty and staff about the legal and logistical issues regarding students with disabilities that affect learning; to provide a forum for discussion about that unit's issues in providing accommodations; and to facilitate the development of strategies in that unit which ensure that appropriate accommodations are provided to students with disabilities that affect learning.
20. That students with disabilities that affect learning who have received accommodations should not have this noted on their transcripts
21. That a standing committee of Senate be established to monitor the situation of students with disabilities that affect learning and to conduct an annual review of the policy regarding students with disabilities that affect learning. This committee should include Senators and representatives from the offices of the Academic Support Coordinator, the Disability Resource Facilitator , and the Registrar.

Addendum: Definitions

“**Learning Disabilities** refer to a number of disorders which may affect the acquisition, organization, retention, understanding or use of verbal or nonverbal information. These disorders affect learning in individuals who otherwise demonstrate at least average abilities essential for thinking and/or reasoning. As such, learning disabilities are distinct from global intellectual deficiency.” (Learning Disabilities Association of Canada)

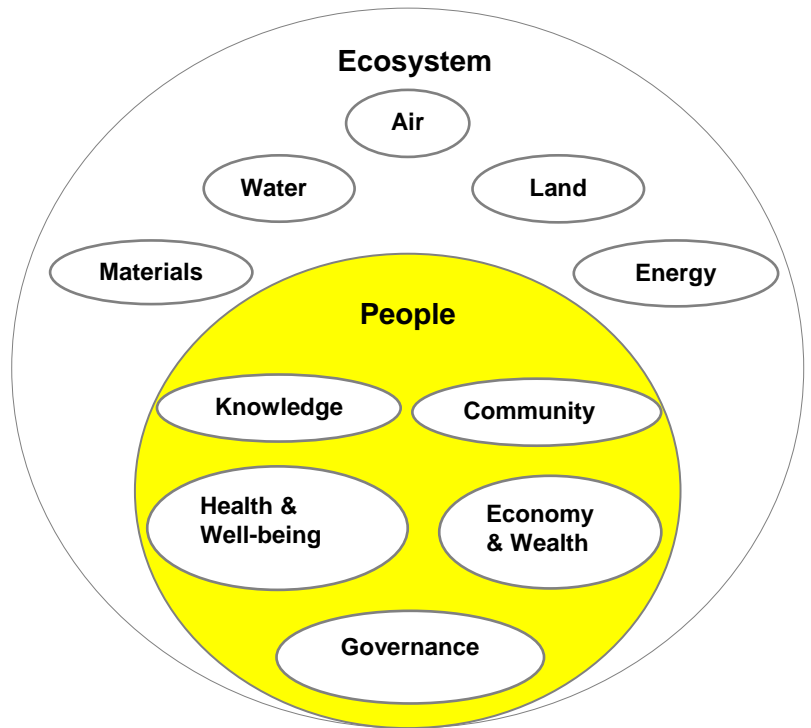
Disability That Affects Learning: A physical, sensory, cognitive or affective difference which affects learning and for which a student requires accommodation in order to acquire and represent learning. (D. Day, Committee member)

Accommodations: Adjustments are made to the mode of delivery of curriculum or to assessment to allow students to learn most effectively and to fully demonstrate what they know. The means of learning or assessment may vary but the underlying objective remains the same as for students who do not receive accommodation. In short, there is no change to standards. For example, a student might complete an oral exam with the same questions other students respond to in a written exam. No notation is provided on transcripts. (D. Day, Committee member)

Modifications: Additions or deletions are made to the nature of the curriculum or to assessment such that underlying objectives are different as compared with regular offerings in a course or programme. For example, a student might complete most elements of a course or programme but might be exempted from some components, or a highly skilled student might complete additional requirements. This results in a change to standards. Normally, notations are made to transcripts in the case of modifications. (D. Day, Committee member)

What is the Campus Sustainability Assessment Framework (CSAF)?

The Campus Sustainability Assessment Framework (CSAF) is a framework that consists of 2 subsystems; people and ecosystem. Each subsystem consists of 10 dimensions which are broken down into 169 total sustainability indicators. The framework emphasizes the interdependence and importance of human and ecological systems in sustainability and considers the ecological, social and economic definitions of sustainability in creating a sustainable campus.



The CSAF as an assessment tool

The CSAF indicators produce data that can be used to prepare a baseline sustainability assessment of Acadia, from which management plans and actions to move Acadia towards sustainability can be developed. There are support materials available, including:

- Toolkit for assessment [includes spreadsheets for data calculations and indicator tracking]
- Faculty guide for classroom use

The CSAF and Acadia's Academic Strategic Plan

Acadia's Academic Strategic Plan emphasizes sustainability and environmental education as an integral part of the Acadia experience. Using the CSAF as a tool for learning and assessment would help make experiential environmental education a reality at Acadia by:

- Actively engaging students in sustainability assessment and management.
- Providing solid data that can be applied to make Acadia a sustainable campus.
- Providing students with a holistic understanding of sustainability and opportunities to develop as responsible global citizens.
- Developing an environmental niche to recruit students and provide them with hands-on environmental experiences grounded in community involvement.

Financial benefits from the CSAF

The CSAF focuses on long-term lifecycle cost-benefit analysis. Long-term cost savings in areas provided by solutions such as increased energy efficiency can be effectively identified and developed to maximize benefits on the Acadia campus. The CSAF as an ongoing sustainability project could also be part of Acadia's financial campaign, as it has both practical and educational benefits that may be of interest to potential contributors.

The CSAF fits into the Wolfville Sustainability Initiative (WSI)

The Town of Wolfville is in the process of working towards sustainability through the Wolfville Sustainability Initiative (WSI). Acadia's prominence in Wolfville means that movement towards sustainability by the town must be accompanied by action within the university. Therefore, the CSAF would be of benefit to both the university and the town.

Implementing the CSAF at Acadia University: A Two Year Plan beginning in 2006

Establish a Multistakeholder Advisory committee to the President

This committee will facilitate the initial assessment by providing the necessary support and involvement of senior administration. This committee will be co-chaired by Neil Carruthers and a student leader, with representation from students, faculty and staff. During the course of the assessment, the committee will develop action plans to improve Acadia's sustainability. The main purpose of the multi-stakeholder group is to oversee the assessment by monitoring and guiding its progress. Because administrative support is vital to the success of the CSAF and future sustainability planning, it is important to create an advisory committee to drive such a large project.

Data collection and analysis

In the first academic year of the project, selected indicators would be evaluated in **classroom** projects. Assessment could also be completed as independent student projects. In the second year of assessment a special projects class would focus on evaluating remaining indicators and analyzing the data collected to produce a final report.

Create a Sustainability Coordinator position for ongoing monitoring and action

To be of maximum value to Acadia, the CSAF must be completed on a regular basis to assess progress and produce appropriate management and action plans. For this reason, it would be in Acadia's best interest to hire a Sustainability coordinator within the administration to oversee the ongoing process of making Acadia a sustainable campus.

Collaborative environmental projects work at Acadia

In the fall of 2004 the Introduction to Environmental Science class in collaboration with the Centre for Rural Sustainability completed a Greenhouse Gas Audit of Acadia and the Town of Wolfville. This project is an example of cooperation between Acadia and a community organization that provided students with applied learning opportunities and produced useable data. Successful environmental projects are also completed on an ongoing basis in many courses at Acadia and as independent student projects.

The CSAF at other Canadian universities: Successes and Opportunities

The CSAF has been undertaken by 29 Canadian universities, but has only been successfully completed by 6. By completing the CSAF, Acadia would become an environmental leader among Canadian universities. In the Atlantic provinces, UNB and UPEI have completed the assessment.

Why the CSAF?

The CSAF is a proven tool in sustainability assessment for Canadian universities with support materials to facilitate its implementation. With support from senior administrators and faculty, students can be provided with a better understanding of sustainability and its applications. Many Canadian universities have attempted the CSAF but few have completed it. Here Acadia has the opportunity to become an environmental leader in Canada by completing a collaborative, comprehensive sustainability assessment.

Supplementary Materials

Arthur Irving Academy for the Environment: CSAF

<http://academy.atlanticwebfitters.ca/Home/CSAF/tabid/117/Default.aspx>.

CSAF Faculty Guide

Concordia University: Concordia Sustainability Assessment 2003

Campus Sustainability Assessment Framework – Its fit with the Strategic Plan for Acadia University (Academic Core and the Wolfville Sustainability Initiative)

Available on Request:

Letter of support from the Town of Wolfville for the CSAF

The Campus Sustainability Assessment Framework: Thesis by Lindsey Cole

CSAF Toolkit

CSAF total skeleton of indicators

Senate

Motion for Senate Meeting of 11 September 2006:

That Senate support the CSAF through endorsing its integration where appropriate into the curriculum of Acadia University's academic programs.

30 August 2006

It is moved that the following nominations be accepted for vacancies on the Senate Nominating Committee:

Faculty of Pure & Applied Science Senator
Faculty of Arts Senator

Soren Bondrup-Nielsen
Herb Wylie

Respectfully Submitted

ORIGINAL SIGNED

Rosemary Jotcham, Registrar
Secretary to the Senate