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SENATE MEETING MINUTES January 22, 2021

The 621ST Meeting of the Senate of Saint Mary's University was held via Zoom on Friday, January 22, 2021, at 2:00 PM. Dr Takseva Chairperson, presided.

PRESENT: Dr Summerby-Murray, Dr Butler, Dr Francis, Dr VanderPlaat, Dr Sarty, Dr Austin, Dr Bannerjee, Dr Brosseau, Dr Collins, Dr De Fuentes Dr Grandy, Dr Grek-Martin, Dr Hanley, Dr Hart, Dr O'Brien, Dr Panasian, Dr Power, Dr Stinson, Dr Takseva, Dr Twohig, Mr Brophy, Ms Killam, Ms van den Hoogen, Mr de Chastelain, Ms Winters, Mr Zokari, Dr Smith, Ms Sergeant-Greenwood, Ms Thompson (Library) and Ms Bell, Secretary to the Office of Senate.

REGRETS: Dr Bhabra, Ms Nankani and Mr Tumusiime.

Meeting commenced at 2:02 P.M. with the territorial acknowledgement.

21056 **REPORT OF AGENDA COMMITTEE**
The Agenda Committee report was accepted.

21057 **PRESIDENT'S REPORT**
Posted as *Appendix A* for this meeting (10 min).

Intercultural Learning

- The Inter-Institutional Advisory Committee (part of the National Dialogues and Action for Inclusive Higher Education) met on January 15 to consider the first draft of the 'Scarborough Charter on Inclusive Education'. The hope is to have the Scarborough Charter in front of Senate in the coming months, most likely in March.
- The President's Standing Committee on the Prevention of Racism will continue to meet to discuss several key topics. The next meeting is scheduled for early February and will consider the Indigenous Education and Reconciliation Survey (update recently provided through Universities Canada) and the Scarborough Charter, as mentioned.
- The BlackNorth Initiative Education Committee will meet next on January 28. An update will be provided to the Senate following this meeting. We are continuing to consider ways to improve access and

pathways for both high school and post-secondary students of African descent.

- A ‘Decolonizing Education with Indigenous Traditional Knowledge’ session is scheduled for February 12th.
- Work is being done to re-energize the Atlantic Post-Secondary Committee on Indigenous Education (formerly the AAU Aboriginal Education Committee). A report will come to Senate in the future.

Institutional Sustainability

- On January 12, the provincial government announced a \$25million financial support package to Nova Scotia universities as a partial contribution to the significant loss of revenues due to the pandemic. Saint Mary’s received just under \$3 million.
- We will be rolling out the strategic planning process for the university in the weeks to come. We have initiated this process 6-8 months earlier than what was originally planned.

21058

VICE-PRESIDENT ACADEMIC AND RESEARCH REPORT

Posted as *Appendix B* for this meeting (10 min).

Key Discussion Points:

- There were increased enrolments over the holidays and student retention is also up.
- A presentation of the FCE winter registrations was given.
- **Academic Plan**
Work is underway to ensure all actions outlined in the plan are launched this term. Academic Plan updates will form a regular part of all future reports.
- **P/NC** - the link for the UofT CR/NCR model in Arts and Science (<https://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/current/academics/creditno-credit>) is an example of how it has been implemented elsewhere.
- **Helping Students Understand Course Expectations Early**
Senate has been actively discussing course syllabi and how to help faculty set them in a meaningful and helpful way for students. An interesting news item in the Chronicle of Higher Education is one example that takes this a step further at University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill. The newsletter link is <https://www.chronicle.com/newsletter/teaching/2021-01-07> (see the article on “A New Tool for Course Transparency”) and the UNC website for the tool is <https://curricula.unc.edu/faculty/class-features-tool/>. We may not yet be ready to implement a direct equivalent, but the philosophy behind it might warrant further discussion.
- **Brightspace and other software**
Saint Mary’s has signed a new agreement with D2L (Brightspace) that will expand the tools and functionality. Work is underway to get started on other software implementations relevant to faculty, staff, and students (e.g. advising support, workflow – meaning the ability to

eliminate paper forms and track progress through approvals and implementation).

We are also reviewing the responses to the faculty survey on computing needs to assess next steps. Further, we are working with EIT to improve the information presented on what software is already available, what it does, where you can find support, and where you can find more information and training.

21059

SMUSA PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Posted as *Appendix C* for this meeting (5 min).

Key Discussion Points:

- **Pass/No Credit Model and Grading Options.**

Many students feel that their first semester grades do not reflect their academic abilities. SMUSA still supports implementing a long-term alternative grading model discussed at the December 2020 Senate meeting and looks forward to progress on this front.

- **In-person Course Transition**

Students are looking forward to finally getting back on campus. This does come with concern about potential changes based on public health or internal guidelines. Students are looking for more guidance concerning under what circumstances in-person components would be suspended and how information will be communicated.

- **International Student Quarantine**

While funding was made available for international students having to isolate, the financial aspect still poses a considerable barrier for many. Many students won't be returning because of this cost and are worried about the impacts of this on their education and student permits.

Many students have stayed in their home country to wait for this policy to be reversed in Nova Scotia. It is our understanding that this will not happen soon. SMUSA encourages additional compensation for international students or a new plan to allow them to isolate in their own homes if it is safe to do so.

- **Scholarships**

Scholarships are essential to student success, but the current system Saint Mary's uses can be difficult for students to navigate. Students can miss out on potential scholarships and they may be deterred from applying. The current scholarship system needs to be updated and made more user friendly to help students access these more easily. In addition to a new system, more transparency around scholarship decisions should be communicated to allow students to understand better what they qualify for.

- **Campus Access**

Not all students are registered in classes with in-person elements. There is still a strong desire among students to access campus in some capacity. SMUSA encourages further opening of additional student study spaces when it is safe for student access to allow people to have study options outside of their own homes.

21060

QUESTION PERIOD (length at discretion of chair based on business volume)

Key Discussion Points:

- Question: MSVU launched a tuition waiver program specifically for former youth in care. Will we be doing the same? Answer: We feel the youth aid program will cover this financial issue.
- Question: There were processing delays in the service centre for late registrations. We need to get students into classes as soon as possible. **Action Item: Smith** will follow up on this.
- Question: Is it possible that the student list of awards and scholarships could be updated? The list on the website seems to be missing several named awards. Response: Sargeant Greenwood advised that SMU is working on a new solution to be able to provide the full list.
- Many of the named scholarships have certain conditions attached to them. It is a challenge to ensure the scholarships are being used by students that have legitimate need. The Scholarship Committee is working to resolve this situation. It would be nice if we could attune a portfolio in terms of what is available. Smith advised that an attempt to simplify the application process is underway. There are many awards for which applications are not received. We are searching student records for students that fit the criteria, and asking them to apply for the appropriate scholarships. Uptake of these awards has increased as a result.
- Question: How fast can we respond and how flexible are we in this regard concerning responding to the changing learning environment as COVID impacts change? Answer: Butler will take this back to the planning committee for discussion.
- The President advised that we are pushing the provincial government on international student quarantine. This is part of the federal jurisdiction as well. The government of Nova Scotia has entered into an agreement that we are approved as one of the preferred institutions and one of the conditions is that students must be housed in university approved accommodations. If students were in their own home, we could not resource the in-home checking of those individuals during their isolation period. We chose hotel and residence as a result.

21061

WINTER GRADUATION LIST

Documentation to be circulated at the meeting by the Registrar as *Appendix D*.

Key Discussion Points:

- 349 credentials are being granted to 333 graduates. There are 20 distinctions being awarded.
- The Virtual Graduation Ceremony is being held on Saturday, February 12 from 2-3 pm.
- There are five Beijing Normal University Zhuhai-Campus (BNUZ) students graduating during the winter convocation.

- Convocation is only a ceremony at which the parchments are handed out. It is the Senate vote that officially confers the students' degrees.
- This will be the first cohort of graduates for the International Master of Teaching English Program.

Moved by Killam, and seconded, **“to confer degrees and distinctions on those represented on the list (circulated as Appendix D) at the Winter Convocation”.** Motion carried.

Moved by Killam, and seconded, **“to enable the Registrar to add such graduates as may be identified subsequent to this meeting.”** Motion carried.

21062 **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

Minutes of the meeting of December 18, 2020, were *circulated* as *Appendix E*.

There being no objections or revisions, **the minutes of the meeting of December 18, 2020 are approved as circulated.**

21063 **BUSINESS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES**

.01 The 2020 Report on Positive Action to Improve the Employment of Women, Aboriginal Peoples, Visible minorities, and People with Disabilities at Saint Mary's University, *Appendix F*.

Key Discussion Points:

- This is the annual report created in response to a clause in the Collective Agreement. Identified Gaps - FT Faculty and Professional Librarians (Table 5b) is the primary table of focus and looks at labour market expectations.
- This term, we are working on a diversity strategy to address equity deserving groups on campus and to become more proactive regarding the gaps that have been identified in these reports year over year.
- Question: Do we have enough data to see trends? Are we seeing any improvement? Answer: We have looked at the data anecdotally and there seems to be variations from year to year. Some areas are small enough that one hiring can make a big difference. We have not been able to ensure a strong applicant pool in some of these areas.
- If equity deserving candidates do not apply because of systemic barriers earlier in their degree programs, it is hard for the university to address these gaps. It would be informative to have an overview of what is happening in the PhD graduation rates of some of these groups.
- The President advised that the above issue is exactly the type of issue that is being addressed in the Scarborough Charter. The BlackNorth initiative are engaged on exactly this point.
- The VPAR advised that when we look at SMU, we need to look at what role we have in terms of providing the pipeline with students that could then take on those roles. It is the role of universities to serve the

broader community in this aspect. Question: What do we do about pathways through our own programs for equity deserving students?

- We need to renew a conversation around processes related to cluster hires. Question: What can we do to ensure a welcoming environment for representatives of equity deserving communities? We as a community need to partner with these communities to facilitate this process.
- Question: What is the status of the Equity and Diversity Policy? Answer: There is a draft that will go to Senior Management for review. A policy does not answer the issue but is necessary to support things at a foundational level.
- Targeted venues for advertising positions must be summarized in UAC documents going upward from Departments/Programs. Questions: Could faculty on Senate compile a list and share these with other Departments in relevant subjects/disciplines? Could the VPAR's Office compile those from past hires? Answer: We are developing a resource to point to those venues.

.02 Report covering LoPs that is bi-directional to facilitate an informed discussion in Senate (deferred from May 2020 – further deferred to Feb 2021).

Key Discussion Points:

- Deferred to Feb 2021.

21064

REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES

.01 Bylaws Committee, Notice of Motion, *Appendix G1*, Senate Bylaws, *Appendix G2*.

Key Discussion Points:

- Last year there was an initiative coming from the Board of Governors where Senate was asked to recommend revisions to the part of the SMU Act that directly applied to the Academic Senate. Last March the Senate approved the proposed revisions to the Act. Out of this process came a whole series of discussions, one of which was the diversity of the representation on Senate.
- One of the issues was the composition of the Senate and the definition of “Academic staff”.
- There are some revisions to Section One of the Senate Bylaws. “Academic staff” means the persons employed by the University to carry out teaching or research responsibilities or both, and such other employees of the University as may be given academic status by the by-laws, but does not include students employed as teaching or research assistants or otherwise; (SMU Act, 2(a), *Definitions*)
- The problem here is that the Bylaws of Saint Mary’s University (BoG) are completely silent on “such other employees,” so Professional Librarians remain excluded from membership in this University as Academic Staff.

- The Labour Relations Board of Nova Scotia acknowledged the academic status of Professional Librarians at SMU in 1989, when it granted the amalgamation of the Librarian and Faculty bargaining units of SMUFU.
- In 1970 Senate passed a motion approving that Professional Librarians have Academic Status. Motion was passed with one abstention. (Item 70100, *SMU Senate Minutes*)
- Question: Is the definition of professional librarians clear, specific and limited to those that are covered by the Collective Agreement? Answer: The definition of Professional Librarians is only those covered by the Collective Agreement.
- It was noted that the bylaw references to Professors Emeriti have some discrepancies. The sections that are affected are 1.3.2/1.4.6. Professors Emeriti are no longer employees of the University. Professors Emeriti are not covered under the SMUFU agreement. They are under either separate employment contracts or part-time faculty hires.
- Question: What is the intention there? Their role is different than full-time faculty and their involvement on the campus is considerably less. Answer: This section of the Bylaws is a legacy. It was already in the Bylaws. The committee discussed this and decided to leave the language in this section with the hope that Senate would advise the committee in this regard. The committee would be happy to remove this reference from the Senate Bylaws.
- Professors Emeriti have an honorific status with the university. These sections should be removed from the Bylaws.
- There are also challenges with members of the Senate that are on approved leave. There is an important difference between sabbatical and medical leave. The Committee kept this information in because they were not attempting to disrupt the current practice, which allows Senators on sabbatical leave to still serve on Senate if they are willing and able to do so.
- It was suggested that section 1.4.6 is a reasonable information piece. Professors Emeritus are not considered as Academic Staff. Section 1.4.6 should remain and section 1.3.2 should be removed. The mover accepted this as a friendly amendment.
- The proposed revisions are as follows:

1 ELECTION OR APPOINTMENT TO SENATE

The composition of Senate is set out in Section 13(1) of the Saint Mary's University Act, 1970 (the "Act"), and is to include, among others, student members and those members of Senate to be elected by academic staff (as defined in Section 2(a) of the Act).

1.1 Election Appointment of Students and Term of Office

~~Five students elected by the students (Act, 13, (1) f)~~

1.1.1 ~~The five~~ Student members of Senate shall be ~~elected~~ appointed according to the rules and procedures established by the Students' Association.

1.1.2 These rules and procedures shall be made known to Senate and are subject to Senate's approval. Proposed amendments that are approved by the Students' Association shall be submitted to Senate on an annual basis at the first meeting in September and shall also be subject to Senate's approval.

1.1.3 Any student who is registered in at least one full-credit course (or equivalent) shall be ~~entitled to participate in Senate Elections. i.e. to vote and stand for office.~~ eligible to serve on Senate.

1.1.4 Student members of Senate shall serve for a one-year term, commencing May 1st and concluding April 30th of the following calendar year.

1.2 Election of Academic Staff

~~Fifteen members elected by the academic staff (Act 13(1) g).~~

1.2.1 For the purposes of these Bylaws, and in accordance with Section 2(a) of the Act, "academic staff" shall be defined as including all full-time faculty members (including lecturer-stream faculty) and professional librarians employed by the University.

1.2.2 For the purposes of these Bylaws, and in accordance with Section 13(1) of the Act, "elected members" shall be defined as those members of Senate who have been elected by the academic staff.

1.3 Term in Office

1.3.1 ~~The elected members shall serve for a term, not exceeding three years, and shall be eligible for re-election or re-appointment.~~

1.3.2 ~~To ensure continuity of membership, as far as possible, one third of the elected or appointed members shall be replaced each year.~~

1.3.3 ~~Student members of Senate shall serve for a one year term commencing May 1st and concluding April 30th of the following calendar year.~~

1.4.1.3 Academic Staff: Eligibility to Vote

1.3.1 All academic staff employed by the University, including the Chairperson and other academic staff currently serving on Senate, are eligible to nominate and vote for the elected members of Senate.

1.3.2 ~~Professors emeriti shall be eligible to nominate and vote in Senate elections.~~

1.4.1 ~~In the nominations for and electiZAOs to the University Senate of fifteen members to be elected by academic staff, all members of academic staff as defined in the Saint Mary's University Act of July 1970, 2 (a) shall be eligible to vote.~~

1.4.2 ~~"Academic staff", for the purposes of nominations and voting for University~~

~~Senate members to be elected by academic staff, means the full-time faculty members employed by the University to carry out teaching or research responsibilities (or both), and such other employees of the University as may be given academic status by the By-Laws. This does not include part-time faculty or students employed as teaching or research assistants or otherwise."~~

~~1.4.3 All members of Senate, including the Chairperson but excluding student members (see 1.1), shall be eligible to vote.~~

~~1.4.4 Members of academic staff on approved leave of absence or on sabbatical shall not be included in the circulation of ballots prior to nominations and elections unless they specifically request such inclusion.~~

~~1.4.5 Professors emeriti and retired professors who fulfill the definition of 'academic staff' given above (1.4.2) shall be eligible to vote.~~

1.5.1.4 Academic Staff: Eligibility to Serve

~~1.5.1 The 'fifteen members' to be elected by academic staff shall be interpreted to mean full-time faculty members~~

1.4.1 All academic staff employed by the University are eligible to serve as elected members of Senate.

~~1.5.2~~1.4.2 Full-time faculty members Academic staff shall be eligible to serve on Senate after two years of full-time service. No qualifications as to rank are required. Two years' service is interpreted to have been completed in the spring of the members' academic staff member's second year at the University.

~~1.5.3~~1.4.3 A faculty member A member of academic staff who will be going on an approved leave of absence which would prevent his/her their active participation in Senate is eligible to vote in the Spring election prior to his leave of absence, but not eligible to stand for election or continue to serve on Senate.

~~1.5.4~~1.4.4 A faculty member of academic staff going on an approved leave of absence at the time of an election and who is eligible to serve on Senate during their elected term on Senate must indicate in writing to the Secretary of Senate if they are unable to serve.

~~1.5.5~~1.4.5 Faculty Members of academic staff terminating their services at the University are not eligible for nomination to serve on Senate.

~~1.5.6~~1.4.6 Professors emeriti and retired professors who fulfill the definition of academic staff given above (1.4.2) shall **are** not be eligible for nomination to serve on Senate.

~~1.5.7 Full-time faculty members shall be such persons who are full-time members of academic staff who are members of the Assembly of Faculty.~~

1.5 Academic Staff: Term of Office

1.5.1 Senate members elected by academic staff shall serve for a three-year term and shall be eligible for re-election.

1.5.2 To ensure continuity of membership, as far as possible, one-third of the elected members shall be replaced each year.

Moved by Grek-Martin and seconded, "that Senate approves the revisions to Section 1 of the Senate Bylaws as submitted in Appendix G2 for this meeting and as revised by Senate." Motion carried.

21065

NEW BUSINESS FROM

a) Floor (not involving notice of motion)

- i. SMU surveying of students on a variety of outcomes - gathering & use of that student information and university oversight. (Agenda Committee)

Key Discussion Points:

- There was a concern about what happens to the information that is gathered. Perhaps someone from the Research Ethics Board could serve on a committee related to reviewing this area.
- We are in a phase where there is a lot of activity concerning surveys. The ethics of these types of activities have been discussed at previous meetings. There is a predictable level of harm inherent in this situation. We risk burdening students. The information could bleed into areas where it may not be helpful. There should be oversight.
- The oversight exists through Tracey MacDonald, Director of Institutional Data Analysis & Planning. Any survey that goes out to the community goes through her office for review. If there are issues, she consults with the appropriate individuals to resolve those issues. If we were to form a review committee, it would be outside of the REB, but their involvement would be beneficial.
- There are data governance rules. Those rules are overseen by the FOIPOP rules, and in specific our resident expert, the University Librarian. The issue is to get these surveys through one central body which is Institutional Data Analysis & Planning. We do that by controlling the distribution lists. Oversight and review are done at this level by Institutional Data Analysis & Planning.
- Question: What about university forms that request information from students (e.g., status as a visible minority) for institutional or research purposes and the oversight regarding the use of such information? Answer: This is not going to affect whether they are going to be accepted but it is used in relation to the need to understand what support services are needed on campus.
- Students have been told that the information collected can only be used for the purpose for which it has been collected. This is the same as the information collected on employment forms. It is meant to function the same way. It is not to be used for decision making.
- All information goes through a privacy impact assessment. We benefit frequently from data collected on student success that is reported by other institutions. In the case of SMU, anything that we do goes through the Research Ethics Board.
- This item is related to how the data comes out of the CRM platform. Work is being done to improve this platform.
- We should consider forming an oversight committee with some neutral parties serving on it, so that clear and well

considered thought is given to these issues. Neutral parties may include faculty reps, other members of the engaged research individuals or staff members across campus.

- Every employee of this university is bound by FOIPOP.
- ii. Does SMU have the ability to enforce pandemic rules above and beyond Public Health “minimum” guidelines? The concern surrounds enforcement of mask wearing. (Agenda Committee)

Key Discussion Points:

- This was a question that came up after a recent Town Hall. The question was related to when masks were and were not required to be worn.
- Question: Should this be in the Student Code of Conduct? Many other universities are making masks mandatory and that is very easy to do. Can this be enforced rather than encouraged?
Answer: We will refer this back to the Health and Safety group. We have the right to enforce further restrictions if they are necessary. We are in very close contact with Public Health in regard to these sorts of things. We can move beyond the Public Health minimums if it is best for the safety of the University Community.
- There have been indications related to having students not following the restrictions go through the Code of Student Conduct process. Question: Where would students go if they had problems? Answer: Complaints would be through the Chair or Dean’s office first. This would include the COVID protocols.

21066

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 3:52 P.M.

Barb Bell,
Secretary of Senate