

SENATE MEETING MINUTES February 17, 2012

The 539th Meeting of the Senate of Saint Mary's University was held on Friday, February 17, 2012, at 2:30 PM, in the Secunda Marine Boardroom. Dr. D. Naulls, Chairperson, presided.

PRESENT: Dr. Gauthier, Dr. Dixon Dr. Enns, Dr. Fullerton, Dr. Smith, Dr. Vessey, Dr. Naulls, Dr. Austin, Dr. Barclay, Dr. Barr, Dr. Bjornson, Dr. Kimery, Dr. Pendse, Dr. Sewell, Dr. Stinson, Dr. Street, Dr. Sun, Dr. van Proosdij, Mr Gordon Michael, Mr. Gomez, Ms MacDonald, Ms. MacDougall, Mr. Al-Mansoob, and Ms. Bell, Secretary to the Office of Senate.

REGRETS: Dr. Dodds, Dr. Ivanoff, Dr. Russell, Mr. Hotchkiss, Ms. Marie DeYoung, and Ms Keyes

Meeting commenced at 2:34 P.M.

11050 REPORT OF THE AGENDA COMMITTEE

The report of the Agenda Committee was accepted.

11051 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

.01 Minutes of the meeting of January 20, 2012 were circulated as **Appendix A**.

The following amendments were noted:

- Dr. Sewell was in attendance at the meeting.

Moved by Smith, and seconded, **“that the minutes of the meeting of January 20, 2012 be approved as revised”**.

Motion carried unanimously.

11052 REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES

.01 Academic Planning Committee, documents circulated as **Appendix B**.

a) Academic Plan circulated as **Appendix B**

Key Discussion Points:

- Dr. Gauthier reviewed the process that was followed to produce the document before the Senate.
- The 2008-2011 Plan was well accepted and the consensus was that it just needed refreshing.

- It was felt by the academy that the plan should be at the strategic level.
- A concern about the last plan was that it lacked progress milestones.
- We were also asked to address future challenges in the plan. Those were identified as: Financial, Competition, Internationalization, Student Engagement and Retention, and Demand for Employable Qualifications.
- The plan identifies 6 areas of strength within SMU that the academy can address in the years to come. Senate was asked to endorse the proposed plans of action in the following areas:
 - Enhancing Student Learning through Excellence in Teaching.
 - Enhancing Student Success.
 - Linking Theory and Practice.
 - Promoting Research, Creative Activity and Graduate Studies.
 - Building Thematic Clusters of Teaching and Research.
 - Enhancing our International Diversity.
- The discussion around the proposed actions within the plan will not end with the approval of this Academic Plan. A consultative process regarding implementation will be undertaken once approval has been received. The Plan proposes:
 - the implementation of a committee to initiate this plan.
 - convening a cross-Faculty Task Force to investigate the current social concern for “learning outcomes” in the university setting, and make recommendations for developing a learning outcomes framework.
 - establishment of a Working Group on Linking Theory and Practice
- If approval is received, a proposal will be submitted to Senate at a future meeting to define what the committee should look like and to provide terms of reference.
- Question: The plan was not to be prescriptive but it is more than an aspirational document. The language used in places sounds somewhat prescriptive. It seems that the implementation and the plan are divorced from each other. The actions will in effect produce the aspirations. Internationalization is presented as an aspiration but there is no plan as to how to do this. How do you internationalize the curriculum in History or Philosophy for example? Does this have repercussions on our hiring practices? Answer: The document is intended to be aspirational. It is intended to provide a direction for moving forward. In the context of internationalization, the student body has certainly become international. The faculty will be looking at the international impact relative to the curriculum. In order to move forward, we must first have an agreement on the direction.
- Question: Concern was expressed in regard to the emphasis placed on outcome based learning and linking theory and practice. We need some language around linking theory and practice to help students recognize what they are learning. Answer: The issue of outcome based learning has been an active one throughout this whole process. There is clear recognition that faculty are already engaged in learning outcomes. The concern may be that this focus could lead to the exclusion of other learning outcomes. That is not the intention. We purposely were not too definitive in this area. We want to be able

to look at what makes sense within our academic programs and our future. A committee has been proposed to investigate this area and report back to Senate on their findings. Faculty will be involved in that process. The findings may indicate that one strategy may not be enough.

- Question: On page 17, in the last paragraph under plan implementation – “the convening of a cross-Faculty Task Force to investigate the current social concern for “learning outcomes” in the university setting.” Concern was expressed in regard to any external group defining learning outcomes. Concern was also expressed in regard to: “and make recommendations for developing a learning outcomes framework in support of high quality learning experiences for students”. This last part sounded prescriptive to some. What does social concern mean? Answer: The intent of this bullet point is for Senate to allow a group of people (a cross-faculty task force) to look at the thinking around learning outcomes. It is not the intent that a group outside of SMU should dictate what this would be. This is an internal discussion about what learning outcomes could be. The intent is to have a healthy and productive discussion about learning outcomes and to let the faculty define what those are. There are many outside pressures on the academy to consider this area of inquiry, but it is the academy that defines our programs. It was suggested that a revision of the language was needed in this section.
- It was suggested that outside bodies such as MPHEC are influencing universities to consider learning outcomes. It is a misunderstood area. It is not realistic to believe that someone outside of the institution is going to define what learning outcomes are for Saint Mary’s. Anyone who has recently been involved in the development of an MPHEC Program Proposal will know that MPHEC has a template that must be followed when submitting those proposals. One of the sections in that template requires that the program define the learning outcomes. MPHEC does not prescribe what those should be, but they ask that they be considered when a new program is being considered or when revising an existing one.
- The Dean, Sobey School of Business advised that they have a lot of experience with defining learning outcomes because of the accreditation process through ACCSB. ACCSB does not prescribe those outcomes. The point is to define them and then take action to improve what we are doing to ensure that the outcomes we have proposed are achieved. It is a collegial process that articulates what we want to do and how we assess it.
- Question: Will the Committee that is to be struck be a Senate Committee? Answer: At a future meeting of Senate, members will be presented with some options around how that committee would be struck, a proposed composition and terms of reference. The last section of the plan was included as an indication that there was full intent to move on to the implementation phase. One of the criticisms of the previous plan was that it called for status reports without the structure to action that requirement. During the process it was made clear the academy wanted a structure to be in place to assess progress at certain milestones and to action status reporting as we proceed with implementation.

- Page 15: “As well, we will continue to support the development of new areas of investigation led by our scholars, with particular emphasis on interdisciplinary endeavors. Concern was expressed in regard to the language in this section, in particular the expressed commitment to interdisciplinary and the commitment to build upon it. The last bullet under actions states: “Develop ways of assessing existing interdisciplinary programs to assure their continued vitality”, seems to imply something beyond the review process. Response: We have a Senate approved Program Review Process at Saint Mary’s. This bullet does not in any take away from that process. This is essentially a general statement about looking at what value is inherent in interdisciplinary inquiry in order to guide our progress.
- Question: Would an interdisciplinary focus detract from existing programs? Would there be any changes in how we make decisions on allocation of resources? Answer: We already have a budget process in place at all levels for that. We are not looking at changing that process.
- Question: The plan does not address one area of student support and that is in relation to mental health. Why is there no language on this in the document? This is a fundamental issue and is needed. The counseling services are currently stretched very tight. Answer: The AUCC identified that area as one of the most significant issues facing campuses today. Our budget committee is currently discussing how we can address this area more effectively. There will hopefully be more resources allocated in 2012-13 to assist in this area.
- It was noted that while student success is mentioned in subsection 2 “Enhancing Student Success”, there is not bullet point addressing student aid.
- Student Senators stated their support for the Academic Plan and advised that they appreciated being involved in the development process.

Moved by Gauthier, and seconded, **“that the Senate endorse the Academic Plan for Saint Mary’s University 2012-2017, Building a Community of Global Learners, and that it be approved as circulated”**. Motion carried.

b) Centre of Excellence in Accounting and Reporting for Co-operatives (CEARC) Self Study Report & Strategic Plan, circulated as *Appendix C, D & E*.

Key Discussion Points:

- Members were advised that in December of 2009, Senate approved revised Senate By-Laws Governing the Establishment, Reporting and Review of Institutes and Centres at Saint Mary’s University. This document included a review process and this is the result of the first Centre to go through this process. The process has worked exceptionally well. Three Centres were asked to go through this process. One of those Centres will be submitting a request to terminate and another in their review process identified the need to restructure.
- Question: Is the course release for the executive director’s involvement standard procedure? Answer: Yes.

- Question: The director's salary appears in the budget as \$10,000.00. Is that in addition to the course release? Answer: There is a course release and a stipend for the executive director as outlined on page 6.
- Members requested that in the future, the director attend at the Senate meeting where such documentation is to be considered in order to answer any questions that arise.
- If we approve this review, the Centre is given a mandate to continue operations for five-years. The policy states that should the need arise, the Academic Planning Committee may request a review of an institute or centre at any time and Senate will continue to receive the annual report from the Centres.
- Question: On page 4 it states that additional resources will be needed by the Centre. Does the university have a financial obligation to the Centre to keep it going? Answer: No. The Centre addresses this in the document and understands that funding will have to be outsourced.

Moved by Gauthier, and seconded, **“that the Senate approves the self-study report and strategic plan from CEARC”**. Motion carried.

Moved by Fullerton, and seconded, **“that Senate authorizes the Centre to continue with a review at the end of the next five-year period, 2016-2017”**. Motion carried.

- .02** Quality of Teaching Committee – proposal for name change circulated as **Appendix F**.
- No discussion

Moved by Sewell, and seconded, **“that the Senate approves the name change proposal from the Quality of Teaching Committee, to The Senate Committee on Learning and Teaching”**. Motion carried unanimously.

11054 **NEW BUSINESS FROM**

- Student Representative C. Hahn has stepped down. The new student representative, Abdullah Al-Mansoob introduced himself.
- Jared Perry has been elected the next Saint Mary's Student Association President. The elected Board of Directors include: Sylvia Abdel-Gawad, Rumbi Chimhanda, Michael Coady, Beth Cole, (Leo) Yijun Li and Alex MacLeod.

11055 **PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

- Gauthier conveyed Dodds sincere regrets.
- The Budget Committee has met numerous times since the government advised what the operating grant would be. A draft budget plan will be delivered in March.

11056 **QUESTION PERIOD**

- Question: A member advised that they understand the provincial government will make loans of 5 – 10 million dollars a year available

for universities who come forward with proposals for cost improvements. Are we doing this? Answer: The Nova Scotia Government announced a University Excellence and Innovation program which will invest to support universities in their efforts to remove costs and maintain quality within the system and to achieve sustainability by 2015. The fund totals \$25 million and will be available for the three-year life of the MOU. Universities can apply individually and in partnership to access the program. Decisions to grant support will be based on the strength of the business case to achieve ongoing reductions while maintaining quality. The strategic objective of the fund, through direct and leveraged investments, is to have in place by 2014-15 a range of projects that will, through their combined impacts, reduce the total annual cost structure of the university system by \$25 million on a sustainable basis. We are looking within our cost structures in an attempt to identify potential projects.

- Question: How do they define the equivalent in savings? Is it over a specific time period? Answer: It is a 3 year MOU and they would like to see a return within that period of time. They will definitely evaluate proposals based on that period but there will be some flexibility.

11057

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 3:50 p.m.