



SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY
ENGAGING THE WORLD

Minutes of a Special Meeting of the Senate of Simon Fraser University held on
Thursday, November 26, 2020 at 5:30 pm via Zoom Video Conferencing

Open Session

Present: Joy Johnson, Chair

Andreoiu, Corina
Bird, Gwen
Brennand, Tracy
Bubela, Tania
Burley, David
Chapman, Glenn
Chenier, Elise
Coleman, Gordon
Collard, Mark
Daniel, Bryan
Dauvergne, Catherine
Denholm, Julia
Derksen, Jeff
Elle, Elizabeth
Everton, Mike
Favere-Marchesi, Michael
Fiume, Eugene
Gedajlovic, Eric
Gemino, Andrew
Gildersleve, Corbett
Gray, Bonnie
Gunn, Alexandra
Hall, Peter
Hendrigan, Holly
Hoffer, Andy
Kench, Paul
Krogman, Naomi
Kumpulainen, Kristiina
Laitsch, Dan
Liosis, Gabe
Lord Ferguson, Sarah
Martell, Matt
Mohamed, Osob
Myers, Gord
Nepomnaschy, Pablo
O'Neil, Dugan
O'Neill, Susan
Pantophlet, Ralph
Parkhouse, Wade
Parmar, Abhishek

Percival, Colin
Pulkingham, Jane
Raza, Samad
Singh, Harry Preet
Spector, Stephen
Stockie, John
Strauss, Kendra
Tingling, Peter
Underhill, Owen
Walsby, Charles
Wong, Alan

Absent:

Bartram, Lyn
Hogg, Robert
Kim, Woo Soo
Krauth, Brian
Lam, Allan
Lam, Daniel
Leznoff, Daniel
Luu, Susan
Masri, Kamal
McTavish, Rob
Mirhady, David
Modi, Nafoni
Murphy, David
Nguyen, Candy
Shaw, Chris
Singh, Tanishvir
Vrooman, Tamara
Weldon, Steve
Zandvliet, David

In Attendance:

Birnie, Steve
Khan Hemani, Rummana
Nordgren, Kris

1. Approval of the Agenda

The agenda was approved as distributed.

2. Revision to Academic Dates 2020/2021 (S.20-128)

Rummana Khan Hemani – Vice-President, Students & International, Steve Birnie - Associate Registrar, Information, Records & Registration Services, and Kris Nordgren - Assistant Registrar, Senate & Academic Services, were in attendance to respond to questions.

Motion 1:

Moved by S. Spector, seconded by C. Andreoiu

“That Senate approve that the first day of classes for the Spring 2021 term be revised from Tuesday, January 5 to Monday, January 11 and that the first day of classes for the Summer 2021 term be revised from Monday, May 10 to Monday, May 17.”

A concern was raised, not with the motion itself, but with the late timing of the motion, which could negatively impact certain faculty and staff who have already set up the online components of their courses. It was argued that the extra time needed to change online course components to reflect the later starting date will hurt the ones it intends to help and this could have been avoided if this motion was proposed earlier in term rather than in late November. Senate was informed that although there are significant challenges with making the decision late in the term, it was felt that the majority of people would welcome this change, especially students who are feeling brunt out from online instruction. It was added that departments can work with the Provost Office to see if there are additional resources available to help facilitate the change.

Noting a concern over the length of the Spring 2021 term and the need to shift the start of the Summer 2021 term, a suggestion was made that the motion should be split into two separate motions, one covering the Spring 2021 term and one covering the Summer 2021 term. Senate was informed that the reason for considering both terms in one motion is the concern over having enough time between the end of the Spring 2021 term and the start of the Summer 2021 term. If only the start of the Spring term were moved, there would not be enough time to complete necessary end of term tasks and there was concern there would not be enough time for processing graduation heading towards convocation in June.

Noting that classes for the Spring 2021 term end on April 16th and exams begin on April 17th, a question was asked if any students would face the scenario of having classes end on one day and having an exam on the next. Senate was informed that the use of exam scheduling software ensured that no students or instructors would face such a scenario.

A question was asked as to which stakeholders were consulted in advance of this proposal. Senate was informed that consultation took place with the administrative individuals responsible for the execution of SFU’s academic plan. When issues regarding the calendar arise, they are addressed through faculty members on the Calendar Committee, largely in response to issues identified by the individuals who are responsible for the forward planning of the University.

A question was asked to clarify how faculty can access support in making the transition if they've been negatively impacted by these date changes. Senate was informed that consultation would occur with the faculties affected to determine what resources can be provided. A request was made to report back to Senate on this process.

Noting that many students are feeling burnt out from having to deal with online learning and would thus welcome extra time to recoup between terms, a comment of support was offered for the motion from a student perspective and from a representative of the Student Society.

A question was asked to confirm that the shifting of the calendar will also lead to the shifting of key academic dates such as drop dates for classes and the bursary enrolment date, and that these changes would be communicated across all relevant platforms. Senate was informed that key academic dates will be shifted based on these changes and that such changes will be widely communicated.

A question was called and a vote taken.

MOTION CARRIED

Motion 2:

Moved by S. Spector, seconded by A. Parmar

“That Senate approve the revised Spring 2021 calendar.”

A question was called and a vote taken.

MOTION CARRIED

Motion 3:

Moved by S. Spector, seconded by C. Percival

“That Senate approve that the number of teaching days in Summer 2021 term be reduced from 63 days to 61 days.”

A comment was made that the University should revisit the policy on the number of instructional days to enable flexibility, especially when facing exceptional circumstances. Senate was informed that Student Services has already been tasked with finding a way to provide that flexibility and will come back to Senate with a motion at a future meeting.

A question was asked as to how this motion would affect Intersession. Senate was informed that scheduling for the Summer term is underway, and preliminary planning indicates one day each would be lost from Intersession and Summer Session and two would be lost from the Summer term. It may be possible to adjust the exam dates for Intersession and Summer Session, thereby negating the need to shorten Intersession and Summer Session, however, this has not yet been finalized.

A question was asked if the shortening of teaching days would impact accreditation requirements for certain programs. Senate was informed that accreditation requirements should not be impacted given that accreditations typically focus on the completion of courses and on academic competencies rather than on the number of teaching days.

A question was called and a vote taken.

MOTION CARRIED

Motion 4:

Moved by S. Spector, seconded by B. Gray

“That Senate approve the revised Summer 2021 calendar.”

A question was called and a vote taken.

MOTION CARRIED

Open session adjourned at 6:16 p.m.

Kathryn Verkerk
Senate Secretary pro tem