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MEMORANDUM

ATTENTION Senate DATE March 22, 2021
FROM Kathryn Verkerk PAGES 2
Secretary, Senate Appeals Board
RE: Senate Appeals Board Annual Report for 2020

The Senate Appeal Board (SAB) hears appeals from students on matters involving the application of academic policies and requirements relating but not limited to:

- withdrawal under extenuating circumstances
- admission or re-admission to the University, where special circumstances are present

SAB meets at least once a month and occasionally more frequently when there is sufficient business to warrant a meeting. In 2020, SAB met 12 times reviewing a total of 34 student appeal cases.

In June 2014, the terms of reference for SAB were revised to address, in part, the marked increase in appeals over the previous 5-6 years. A time limit for appeal was introduced, and clearer guidelines regarding grounds for appeal and documentation requirements were implemented. These revisions to the terms of reference led to a reduced number of appeals in both 2015 and 2016. The number of appeals, however, increased again in 2017 primarily because of an unusual surge of requests for retroactive withdrawals under extenuating circumstances.

In 2018 and 2019, the number of appeals declined significantly. At the same time, a higher proportion of appeals were approved. These statistics are a direct result of further revisions to the SAB procedures, most notably more guidance for students from both the appeals coordinator and the Ombudsperson prior to submitting the application. These changes have led to fewer applications overall; fewer applications with insufficient evidence; and more applications with stronger documentation and, in some cases, more persuasive explanations that have led to approvals on compassionate grounds.

In 2020, when the university moved to online course delivery as a result of the pandemic, students were given extensions on the course withdrawal deadline and a pass/fail grading option for the Spring 2020 semester. As a result, the SAB received no applications for WE appeals for that semester. In 2020, one appeal was related to the Summer 2020 term, while 33 appeals were related to terms prior to Spring 2020. The total number of appeals for 2020 is similar to the previous two years.

Paul Garfinkel, Faculty Member, Chair

Kathryn Verkerk, Secretary, SAB

Dates of meetings in 2020:

January 23, February 27, March 26, April 30, May 28, July 2, July 30, August 27, September 24, October 22, November 19, and December 17.

Current SAB Membership:

Paul Garfinkel, Faculty Member, Chair
 Veselin Jungic, Faculty Member
 Cathy D'Andrea, Faculty Member
 Holly Hendrigan, Faculty Member
 Abdul Zahir, Graduate Student
 Alexandra Wesolek, Graduate Student (Alternate)
 Tina Edmundson, Recording Secretary

Kathryn Verkerk, Secretary
 Shauna Jones, Faculty Member (Alternate)
 Pooria Arab, Undergraduate Student
 Vacant, Undergraduate Student (Alternate)

Procedure:

Each appeal is initially screened to determine whether or not it meets the grounds for appeal as outlined in the terms of reference. All appeals are heard in-camera (written form only). In rare cases, if the SAB is unable to make a decision because of insufficient information, students may be asked to appear in person if they have indicated their willingness to do so on the application. The case then proceeds to an in-person hearing, at which time the student may present further evidence and answer questions. These hearings typically last 15 – 20 minutes.

Summary of Appeal Decisions 2020:

	Withdrawal Under Extenuating Circumstances	Appeals for Admission Re-admission	Total
Approved	28	0	28
Denied	5	0	5
Cancelled (no further action by student)	1	0	1
Did not hear (no grounds for appeal)	0	0	0
Tabled to the next year	0	0	0
Total Appeals:		0	34

Summary of Appeal Decisions, 2008-2019:

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Approved	27	22	30	39	31	45	53	35
Denied	4	15	19	16	26	18	24	21
Cancelled (no further action by student)	0	0	2	2	1	9	3	0
Did not hear (no grounds for appeal)	4	3	1	0	0	1	3	3
Tabled to the next year	6	0	1	2	0	6	5	0
	41	40	53	59	58	79	88	59

	2016	2017	2018	2019
Approved	33	57	32	31
Denied	17	13	6	3
Cancelled (no further action by student)		0	2	0
Did not hear (no grounds for appeal)	1	0	0	0
Tabled to the next year	0	2	0	1
	51	72	40	35