



SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY
ENGAGING THE WORLD

TO: Senate

FROM Joy Johnson
Chair – Senate Committee on Agenda and Rules

DATE: September 1, 2023

SUBJECT: Senate Review

The Senate Committee on Agenda and Rules (SCAR) has reviewed the Senate Review document and is forwarding it to Senate for information.

SFU Senate Review (Draft) Background

The Simon Fraser University Senate was last reviewed in 1999, with the final report delivered in 2000. Since then minor amendments have been made to Senate and its operations on an ad hoc basis responding to specific needs. In the preceding twenty years since the review a lot has changed at SFU, including enrolment increasing from approximately 14,000 FTE to over 23,500 FTE, a global pandemic, changes to the post-secondary environment both within BC, nationally and internationally, evolving concepts of good governance, commitment to address the calls to action in the Truth and Reconciliation report, and the commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion amongst others.

Purpose

An examination of the purpose, organization and effectiveness of Senate and its committees to ensure it is working effectively and efficiently and allowing for Senate to exercise its mandate under the BC Universities Act, section 37. This should include an examination of the responsibilities that Senate has delegated to its committees and how delegated responsibilities are handled by Senate, with a view to making structural recommendations that will improve Senate's effectiveness while ensuring Senate follows the University Act. Further, Senate should review the Universities strategic documents and identify issues it wishes to prioritize as promoting the interests of the university.

Terms of Reference

The Senate Review Committee (SRC) will be formed as an ad hoc committee of Senate. The review will examine the role of Senate at SFU, Senate structure and operations, and examine best practices in university governance that Senate might adopt as part of the review.

The SRC will review the research literature and consult widely with the SFU community, including current and former Senators, members of faculty, current and former academic administrators and others it deems relevant.

Each Senate Committee shall be asked to complete a self-study directed by the SRC. The committee self-study will focus on its terms of reference, membership, processes, interconnections with other Senate Committees and result in recommendations for change (as appropriate) to the SRC including the possibility of creation or deletion of, or merging with, other Senate committees. Further, each committee will articulate what activities it performs on behalf of Senate on a delegated basis, and any tasks that the committee has delegated and to whom they have been delegated.

The SRC can, at its discretion strike sub-committees to support the work of the SRC.

Questions to be considered in the review include (but are not limited) to the following:

- Are the current delineations of Senate responsibilities sufficiently clear?
 - Are the delineations between Senate and Board Activities followed effectively and consistently in practice?
- Does the current size and composition of Senate effectively support its function as the academic governance body of the campus?

- What is the appropriate term length (if any) for Senators.
 - Should Senators be able to sit on both Board and Senate?
- What actions could Senate take to encourage participation?
 - Are there barriers (conscious or unconscious) to participation on Senate?
 - How can Senate encourage participation by members of equity seeking groups?
- Do the Rules and Procedures of Senate effectively support Senate's academic governance function on behalf of the University?
- Do the Senate committees have appropriate mandates, terms of reference, sizes and compositions to enable them to contribute to Senate's role in the academic governance of the campus?
- Do Senate meetings include an appropriate mix of oversight and discussion of, and votes on, the work of committees?
- Does Senate engage in discussion of broader issues that allow it to fully realize its mandate for academic governance of the university?
- Does the hybrid format for meetings facilitate the kind of participation, debate and discussion necessary for good academic governance?
- Does the meeting time and format of Senate support personal/familial needs?
 - What is a reasonable workload to expect from members of Senate and how is that communicated and protected?
- What training and preparation is needed for new members of Senate?
- What ongoing professional development should be available to Senators and Senate Committees?

Membership

The SRC shall include the following eight members:

- 2 faculty Senators elected by Senate
- 2 faculty members appointed by SCAR (to ensure diverse perspectives are represented)
- 2 student Senators elected by Senate (one graduate, one undergraduate),
- 2 administrative Senators (Dean, AVP, VP) appointed by SCAR
- Secretary to Senate (non-voting)

The SRC will be supported by the Senate Office and General Counsel as required.

Time Frame

- Within two months of the SRC forming the SRC will provide a work plan to Senate for approval.
- The SRC will provide updates to Senate on a bi-monthly basis
- A final report with recommendations to the President and subsequently to SCAR will be completed within one year of an approved work plan.

- Final recommendations will be brought to Senate through SCAR for discussion, revision or amendment as needed, and final approval.