



SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY  
ENGAGING THE WORLD

Minutes of a Meeting of the Senate of Simon Fraser University held on  
Monday, November 6, 2023 at 5:30 pm at the West Mall Complex (Room 3210)  
and via Zoom Video Conferencing

## Open Session

**Present:** Joy Johnson, Chair

Abu-Samhan, Mishael  
Barlow, Leanne  
Bhalloo, Shafik  
Bird, Gwen  
Brennand, Tracy  
Brooks-Wilson, Angela  
Bubela, Tania  
Chapman, Glenn  
Collard, Mark  
Denholm, Julia  
Dhesa, Priyanka  
Eftenaru, Cristina  
Everton, Mike  
Faris, Reema  
Fiume, Eugene  
Fung, Aaron  
Gemino, Andrew (for Ujwal Kayande)  
Gray, Bonnie  
Hall, Peter  
Hendrigan, Holly  
Herrenbrueck, Lucas  
Karaivanov, Alexander  
Kessler, Anke  
Kingsbury, Paul (for Naomi Krogman)  
Laitsch, Dan  
Liu, Connie  
Lysova, Alexandra  
Magnusson, Kris  
Martell, Matt  
Masri, Kamal  
McKenzie, Janis  
Muntean, Reese  
Myers, Gord  
Nahmiash, Amanda  
Nelson, Todd  
Neustaedter, Carman  
O'Brien, Mary  
Pantophlet, Ralph  
Parent, Michael  
Parmar, Abhishek

Percival, Colin  
Pratt, Elspeth  
Rassier, Dilson  
Rincon, Laura  
Sawan, Amani  
Schiphorst, Thecla  
Singh Walia, Harkirat  
Stockie, John  
Sutherland, Jill  
Szymczyk, Barbara  
Thornton, Allen  
Tucker, Rochelle  
Vuong, Quang  
Weldon, Laurel  
Whitehurst, David  
Williams, JF  
Williams, Vance

**Absent:**

D'Silva, Tyler  
Fisher, Brian  
Hodaly, Alexander  
Kayande, Ujwal  
Kerr, Jeannie  
Krogman, Naomi  
Leznoff, Daniel  
Manzer, Mussaab  
O'Neil, Dugan  
Shinkar, Igor  
Schmidt, Michèle  
Traversa, Marissa  
Vrooman, Tamara  
Zuluaga, Natalia

**In Attendance:**

David, Trevor  
Monk, Melanie

Kris Nordgren, Senate Secretary pro tem  
Steven Noel, Recording Secretary

**1. Approval of the Agenda**

The agenda was approved as distributed.

**2. Approval of the Minutes of the Open Session of September 11, 2023**

The minutes of the open session on September 11, 2023 were approved as distributed.

**3. Business Arising from the Minutes**

There was no business arising from the minutes.

**4. Report of the Chair**

The Chair reported that the dynamic in the Middle East is creating challenging dynamics at the university as well, and that the priority is to ensure that students, faculty and staff are aware of supports and can access what they need to be and feel safe. SFU has stood up an Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) to support the Executive in managing the institutional response. The EOC is actively monitoring the situation and members of the SFU team are working directly with anyone who is impacted. Campus Public Safety has been working closely with student groups and is regularly in discussion with the Jewish Student Association, the Multi-faith Center, and the Muslim Student Association.

Regarding comments made by an SFU alumnus and recipient of the Dean of Graduate Students Convocation Medal at a recent event in Vancouver, the Chair reported that SFU released a statement on this issue to state unequivocally that it does not agree with nor support these comments in any way, and this individual has no affiliation with SFU beyond being an alumnus. The University has also received many calls for the individual's medal to be rescinded. The revocation of an academic award can only occur under SFU's policy on Student Academic Integrity, if there was academic dishonesty or academic misconduct while an individual was a student.

The Chair thanked those who participated in fall Convocation.

The Chair reported that SFU was again ranked Canada's #1 comprehensive university by Maclean's 2024 University Rankings, for the 15<sup>th</sup> time in 16 years.

The Chair reported that SFU has reached a tentative agreement with SFUFA, and that the TSSU voted to ratify their collective agreement last week. The Chair recognized members of the Senate Committee on Undergraduate Studies for their work around implementing an alternate grading system for students this term, in response to labour dispute impacts on courses.

The Chair reported that the annual Board/Senate retreat, originally scheduled for November 24<sup>th</sup>, has been moved to January 25<sup>th</sup>.

The Chair reported that during the week of September 25<sup>th</sup>, faculties, departments and units from across SFU came together in recognition of the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. The Chair, in her role as President, joined the SFU Surrey community in Holland Park for an afternoon of drumming, storytelling and bannock, in partnership with the Surrey Urban Indigenous Leadership Committee. The Chair also opened a special event on Burnaby campus

featuring keynote speaker Phyllis Webstad, founder of Orange Shirt Day.

The Chair reported that right after the Senate meeting, she, in her role as President, is flying to East Africa to formalize partnerships with Aga Khan University (AKU) and the Nelson Mandela African Institution of Science and Technology. Dugan O'Neil, VPRI and Naomi Krogman, Dean - Faculty of Environment, will also be in attendance to explore further opportunities for research and collaboration.

Regarding the medical school, the Chair reported that at the end of October, she, in her role as President, and several SFU representatives, including deans and student representatives from the SFSS, GSS and First Nations, Metis and Inuit Student Association, went to Victoria to meet with members of government and talk about how SFU is making a difference for B.C. students and communities.

The Chair reported that the annual budget townhall was held last week. SFU faces a financial shortfall in the 2023/24 fiscal year, due to lower international enrollment and increased cost pressures. It's expected that these enrollment trends and the effects of inflation will continue, and SFU's budget will remain tight over the next few years.

Noting that the final draft of the Senate Review is on the agenda, the Chair reported that over the past year, the Board of Governors has been undergoing a governance review. Through this process, a number of areas for efficiencies and improvement have been identified, including a more collaborative working relationship with Senate. It is hoped that such a review of Senate will provide similar results.

#### **i) Report of the Provost**

The Provost reported that Dr. David Price has been announced as an acting dean for the medical school, Dr. Evan Adams has been named the new acting associate dean of Indigenous Health, and Dr. Maria Hubinette has been named as an associate dean for academic and faculty planning. Work is currently being done to review existing curriculum from medical schools from different universities, including Calgary, McMaster, and Toronto. Work has also begun on preparing the foundations for the accreditation of the medical school. The University has been in touch with government to guarantee continuous funding for the medical school over the next few years, and to advance the conversation on when more details will be able to be shared with Senate.

The Provost reported that SFU is facing a short fall of about \$12 million that primarily comes from lower enrollment of international students. Given the shortfall, operational budget cuts of about 2.2% have been implemented across the University. Also, effective immediately, a hiring freeze has been announced and is to be reevaluated at the end of the fiscal year.

### **5. Question Period**

i) Senator Myers submitted the following question:

*Our question is in regard to the growth in management positions (APSA).*

*In November 2021 we asked a question at Senate and then made a presentation to the Board of Governors, pointing out that in the previous 10 years, up to March 2021, both the total number of students (AFTE) and the total number of professors (tenure-track/researchers) had been flat. During the same 10-year period well over 500 new APSA management positions were created, a majority of those in central administration.*

*About a year later, in September 2022, we asked a similar question at Senate. We noted that, in the previous year, the university executive had seen fit to create over 90 new APSA positions with over 75 of those in central administration! We noted the university had been unable to create 75 new faculty lines with the same speed.*

*Here we are, again, one year later. The latest figures indicate that between April 2022 and April 2023 the university has created over 100 new APSA positions but only 11 net new faculty positions: over 9 times more managers than research and teaching faculty. Of those 100 positions, about 65 were in central administration.*

*We ask again; what is SFU's plan to rein in this explosive growth and achieve some balance across administrative and academic appointments in the pursuit of our important mission, of growth of knowledge and education of students?*

*Submitted by Gord Myers (FASS), Nilima Nigam (Science), Oliver Schulte (FAS), and Maite Taboada (FASS)*

Dilson Rassier, Provost and Vice-President, Academic, responded to this question.

Senate was informed that the Provost Office agrees that there has been disproportionate growth in the creation of new APSA positions as compared to new faculty positions and that a strategic review is necessary to reverse this trend. For the past month, Senator Hall and the Vice-President, Finance, have initiated a deep analysis of where and why this growth is happening. This analysis will be used as a tool to understand where this growth is inappropriate and where there is duplication of work done centrally or in the faculties or administrative units. It was added that the recently announced hiring freeze does not apply to tenured professors, or teaching or research assistants. It is hoped that the analysis will be completed by the end of the fiscal year and that a plan can be put in place based on the findings.

ii) Senator Everton submitted the following question:

*At its June 2023 meeting, SPCSAB was presented with a motion to discontinue the Undergraduate Open Scholarship (UOS). I speak on behalf of faculty and students on SPCSAB when I say that we have yet to hear a satisfactory account of why this particular scholarship is being discontinued, which is one reason we voted down the motion. SPCSAB has four concerns about this move.*

- *We acknowledge that the UOS's annual budget of \$1,700,133 is considerable. We acknowledge as well that the University must allocate that funding in a responsible and effective way, and we understand that the University intends to redirect this money to*

*other, undersubscribed programs within the scholarships, bursaries, and awards budget. However, we question whether this money can have as outsized an impact anywhere else.*

- *The UOS is one of the earliest scholarships available to students based solely on academic performance at SFU. It is also automatic. Being “open,” it does not require students to apply and carry through with all the logistics of an application process, logistics that can disadvantage students unfamiliar with or intimidated by that process.*
- *While the monetary value of the UOS is modest (\$90-\$110/unit enrolled), every bit of funding helps students, particularly given the cost-of-living crisis in the Lower Mainland. In addition, it helps keep students who get good grades in their first and second years.*
- *Finally, we are concerned about optics. The UOS is a highly visible award, and SFU has a history of distributing it in a transparent and efficient way—something we should be proud of. If it is removed, students will certainly notice that other universities continue to offer similar funding and that SFU does not recognize its students’ academic success in the same way. Now, instead of doing it better, we won’t be doing it at all.*

*Why is this scholarship is being defunded?*

Dilson Rassier, Provost and Vice-President, Academic, responded to this question.

Senate was informed that the Undergraduate Open Scholarship will be reinstated, with one caveat: due to budget restraints, it is not yet known how much money will be available. Over the past number of years, the number has fluctuated between \$1.7 and \$2 million and it is unlikely that this funding level will be able to be maintained, at least for the next year or so.

A follow-up question was asked regarding why this particular scholarship was defunded, noting that if such as motion was raised once, it can be done so again. Senate was informed that such a motion was raised in the belief that the funds could be better put towards bursary funding, which has seen a steady rise in demand over the past few years.

iii) Senator Parmar submitted the following question:

*The TSSU strike has resulted in significant disruption of classes. Classes without TAs have had restructuring to evaluations, shifts of weights of final exams and various other effects on classes students could not anticipate while enrolling.*

*The following statement comes from the former SFSS Psychology Councilor – “The psychology department particularly relies on sessional instructors to teach courses due to a shortage of faculty members. Because Sis are part of the TSSU, they all stopped lectures the minute picketing started. With a high number of sessional instructors teaching, many students have not had classes for a long time. Not to mention that international student tuition fees are very high, so their inability to attend the classes they paid for is extremely unfair to them. .... An international student .... had 2/4 classes stopped for almost a month due to his Sis going on strike. This*

*situation is probably not uncommon, and students deserve to get their money back as they did not receive the services they paid for”*

*Classes that lost sessions leave instructors with only 3 options procedurally this semester. 1. Try to cram in lessons into shorter time than intended to make up for lost time. This meaning there is less depth in each lesson, less time to ask questions and overall, a lower quality of learning. 2. Advise student to self-study entire sections. This has many of the same issues as number one. 3. Cut content they originally planned to cover. This is directly taking away what they student thought they were getting when they paid their tuition fees.*

*This sentiment is what has resonated throughout all the consultation I have done with students. International students in particular, lost thousands of dollars of value out of their classes, especially if they had more than one class cancelled; they are disproportionately affected by the strike. Another issue with the strike is the changing of evaluation methods. Work that was to be marked by the TA either got converted into different work or postponed. With classes that changed evaluation methods, this often meant the finals of classes gaining significant increases to weight within the class. A large factor for many students, including myself, when choosing between sections of class or between classes themselves is the grading scheme. To have these changed mid semester is not fair to students.*

*Additionally, for courses that did stay with their original evaluation methods, timelines have shrunk. In some cases, this means shorter deadlines. In others, this means immense overlap. For example, over the period of 1 week I was working on 4 group projects/presentations, 1 research assignment, 1 regular assignment and 1 midterm for 3 classes. Even if students don't face congestion to this degree, this reduction of time between finals and midterms is causing anxiety and limiting students time spent on mental and physical wellness.*

*Overall, students feel that they did not get what they paid for.*

*Given the major disruption to classes, will SFU consider providing partial refunds to students for classes missed, lack of course help during the strike and unexpected changes to syllabi?*

Peter Hall, Vice-Provost and Associate Vice-President, Academic, responded to this question.

Senate was informed that tuition refunds are not being considered. Due to the ongoing labour disruption, SFU again found itself in a pandemic-like scenario, with disruptions unevenly affecting students across different campuses, programs and courses. As such, applying solutions in a one-size-fits-all manner proved unfeasible. It was noted that work was undertaken by the Senate Committee on Undergraduate Studies (SCUS), the Senate Graduate Studies Committee (SGSC), and the Registrar's Office on changes to grading policy, and on extending the withdrawal deadline to give students an option to withdraw once they do start to see feedback on their coursework.

iv) Senator Tucker submitted the following questions:

*Why is there no break between the end of classes and the beginning of exams? Why is the exam schedule front end loaded? Why is the gym not available for exams?*

Peter Hall, Vice-Provost and Associate Vice-President, Academic, responded to these questions.

Senate was informed that the gym is currently undergoing major renovations and will not be available until summer 2025, if not later. In terms of the lack of a gap, Senate previously approved, back in 2020, a change to the schedule in order to have the Day of Welcome after Labor Day. This, along with a limited number of available Mondays has led to not having a gap day. On the question of frontend loading, efforts have been made to have the biggest classes with the most grading scheduled first, thereby allowing time to recover should there be cancellations due to poor weather.

## 6. Reports of Committees

### A) Senate Committee on Agenda and Rules (SCAR)

#### i) Amended R20.01 Policy (S.23-121)

##### **Motion 1:**

Moved by D. Rassier, seconded A. Parmar

“That Senate approve the change to Policy R20.01 Procedures related to the definition of quorum - namely accepting the proposed change to SOP 302.004 section 5.4.1 (removal of definition), and recommend to the Board of Governors the approval of changes to Policy R20.01 Appendix A - namely the insertion of 2.5.7 - Definition of Quorum.”  
Trevor Davis, Executive Director – Research Operations, was in attendance to respond to questions.

The question was called and a vote taken.

MOTION CARRIED

##### **Motion 2:**

Moved by D. Rassier, seconded A. Parmar

“That Senate approve the Procedures for Policy R20.01 as revised, and recommend to the Board of Governors approval of Policy R20.01 and associated Appendix A as revised.”

Trevor Davis, Executive Director – Research Operations, was in attendance to respond to questions.

The question was called and a vote taken.

MOTION CARRIED

#### ii) Proposed Policy R70.01 - SFU Excellence in Research Awards (S.23-122)

Moved by D. Rassier, seconded by J. Stockie

“That Senate approve and recommend to the Board of Governors Proposed Policy R70.01 - SFU Excellence in Research Awards.”

Melanie Monk, Associate Director - Researcher Excellence & Recognition, was in attendance to respond to questions.

Senator Lysova asked the following questions:

- It appears that some emails containing the revisions of the policy, which were indicated as sent to certain individuals, were not received by them, and as a result, they were unable to provide further feedback. Specifically, this issue pertains to the Academic Freedom Group and Rachel Altman. I'm not sure what's happening, but if there's a communication breakdown, I believe it's important to address it.
- In Procedures 3.3. it states that *Each Award is valued at \$5,000 to the individual or team, awarded as a research grant to the faculty member*. Also, in Conditions of Award 3.2.1 it states that *The research prize must be used to support the Awardee's research activities*. Recipients of the SFU Excellence in Teaching Award are recognized with \$5,000, which they can choose to accept as a monetary award or as a research grant. How can we explain this difference between the two otherwise similar awards? Can we make these two awards consistent so that the recipients of SFU Research Excellence award also have a choice to accept the prize as a monetary award?
- The SFU Equity Compass is mentioned in the proposed policy three times (in 5.3.1.4, 3.15, and 3.19). It seems as if this document is being treated as a formal policy, yet it has not been vetted by Senate. Moreover, the administration could make changes to it without going through the procedures required for changes to actual policies. Therefore, it should not be referred to in policy documents.
- Under Appendix B - Advisory Committee Terms of Reference, Section 5. Roles and Responsibilities, 5.1.1.2 states *establishing benchmarks and implementing strategies to ensure that pool of nominees and awardees represent SFU's diversity of research and researchers*. How can such diversity be ensured, and what processes and data can be used for this purpose? 5.2.1.2 and 3.15 mention collecting and reporting aggregated diversity data on nominees and awardees and using the SFU Equity Compass framework: 5.2.1.2 - *collecting and reporting aggregated diversity data on nominees and awardees*; 3.15 - *The VPRI and the Advisory Committee are responsible for implementing strategies to ensure a diverse pool of Nominees, using the SFU Equity Compass framework to guide its work*. Not all candidates may be comfortable providing diversity-related data. Does this mean the committee should make assumptions about candidates' identities (race, ethnicity, gender, place of origin, etc.)?
- 5.3.1.4 refers to *adopting the definitions of equity, diversity, and inclusion and inclusive excellence from the SFU Equity Compass and forthcoming Glossary in the context of its work*. Is it appropriate to refer to a forthcoming Glossary that none of us has seen and that Senate has not approved?

A question was asked as to why these awards are to be administered by the Vice-President, Research and International (VPRI) rather than by the Senate Committee on University Honours.

Given the substantive nature of the questions, and with the VPRI not being in attendance to respond, a motion to withdraw was moved:

Motion:

Moved by D. Rassier, seconded by L. Weldon



“That item S.23-122 (Proposed Policy R70.01 - SFU Excellence in Research Awards) be withdrawn.”

The question was called and a vote taken.

MOTION CARRIED

**iii) Senate Review (S.23-123)**

Moved by D. Rassier, seconded by A. Parmar

“That Senate approve the final draft of the Senate Review document.”

The question was called and a vote taken.

MOTION CARRIED

**B) Senate Committee on Continuing Studies (SCCS)**

**i) Annual Report 2022/2023 (S.23-124)**

Senate received the Senate Committee on Continuing Studies (SCCS) Annual Report 2022/2023 for information.

**C) Senate Committee on Undergraduate Studies (SCUS)**

**i) SAT/ACT Admission Requirement Elimination (S.23-125)**

Moved by P. Hall, seconded by A. Fung

“That Senate approve, commencing Fall 2024, that the SAT/ACT admission requirement for undergraduate applicants studying at an American High School curriculum (i.e., US12) will be optional rather than required.

The question was called and a vote taken.

MOTION CARRIED

**ii) SEE High School Admissions Requirement Change (S.23-126)**

Moved by P. Hall, seconded by D. Rassier

“That Senate approve the supplementation application for the Sustainable Energy Engineering program (SEE) is optional for undergraduate high school admission.”

Due to concerns over the wording of the motion, a friendly amendment was suggested to have the motion read as follows:

“That Senate approve the supplemental application for the Sustainable Energy Engineering program (SEE) be optional for undergraduate high school admission.”

Noting that the intent of the supplemental application is to assist in borderline admissions decisions, a comment was made that it is unfair to use an optional application in such decisions given that students may legitimately choose not to submit one.

The question was called and a vote taken.

MOTION CARRIED

**iii) P-CR-NC Grading Basis for Fall 2023 (S.23-127)**

Senate received P-CR-NC Grading Basis for Fall 2023 for information.

A comment was made to note that when this grading basis is communicated out to students, it should be made clear that their choice may affect their eligibility for certain awards. Senate was informed that such wording was included in the communication out to students.

A question was asked as to how this grading basis will affect admission to the honour roll for Fall 2023. Senate was informed that in order to qualify for the honour roll, students must have completed at least 12 units which are counted towards the GPA.

A question was asked regarding if the Fall 2023 grading basis is only for elective courses. Senate was informed that the reason Pass/Credit/No Credit was put in place, rather than just a Pass/Fail, is that while normally a pass grade would be required for entry into a course, it became clear that some courses require an actual specific grade. Students are encouraged to refer to the FAQ section of the Fall 2023 Grading webpage and to speak to an academic advisor should they have question or concerns.

**iv) Course Withdrawal Deadline Extension (S.23-138)**

Senate received Course Withdrawal Deadline Extension for information.

**v) Program Changes (S.23-128)**

Senate received information that the Senate Committee on Undergraduate Studies, acting under delegated authority, approved program changes in the Faculty of Applied Sciences (School of Computing Science, School of Sustainable Energy Engineering), the Beedie School of Business, and the Faculty of Science (Earth Sciences).

A question was asked for the rationale behind MATH 232 no longer being a requirement for the Computing Science Dual Degree Program Major. Senate was informed that an answer would be sought and brought back to Senate.

**vi) Program Changes (S.23-129)**

Senate received information that the Senate Committee on Undergraduate Studies, acting under delegated authority, approved program changes in the Faculty of Communication, Art and Technology (School of Interactive Arts and Technology).

**vii) New Course Proposals (S.23-130)**

Senate received information that the Senate Committee on Undergraduate Studies, acting under delegated authority, approved a new course proposal in the Faculty of Applied Sciences (School of Computing Science).

**viii) New Course Proposals (S.23-131)**

Senate received information that the Senate Committee on Undergraduate Studies, acting under delegated authority, approved new course proposals in the Faculty of Applied Sciences (School of Mechatronic Systems Engineering).

**ix) Course Changes (S.23-132)**

Senate received information that the Senate Committee on Undergraduate Studies, acting under delegated authority, approved course changes in the Faculty of Applied Sciences (School of Sustainable Energy Engineering), and the Beedie School of Business.

**x) Course Changes (S.23-133)**

Senate received information that the Senate Committee on Undergraduate Studies, acting under delegated authority, approved course changes in the Faculty of Applied Sciences (School of Engineering Science), the Faculty of Communication, Art and Technology (School of Interactive Arts and Technology), and the Faculty of Science (Chemistry).

**D) Senate Graduate Studies Committee (SGSC)**

**i) Minimum Funding Policy (S.23-134)**

Senate received Minimum Funding Policy for consultation.

Mary O'Brien, Dean of Graduate Studies, presented to Senate on Minimum Funding Policy, following which she answered questions.

A question was asked regarding those who hold research grant funding and if this policy could put them in a conflict of commitment given that the people responsible for maintaining the funding may also include the supervisor overseeing the student receiving the funding. Senate was informed that it is hoped that this policy will be a way to ensure reporting on student progress and if a student receives an unsatisfactory progress report, then at that point it can be reviewed and funding can be pulled if necessary. It was added that funding is a shared responsibility and should not fall onto the shoulders of a single individual.

A question was asked regarding if consideration was given to graduate students working outside of SFU. Senate was informed that it can be difficult tracking off-campus employment since there is no reporting requirement, but students will be offered TA assignments, and they will have the opportunity not to accept those. If they choose not to accept, funding will be reduced accordingly.

A question was asked about tying the funding policy to inflation. Senate was informed that the plan is to establish a minimum funding that level, with the intention of revisiting that level within three years. At that time, it may make sense to tie any funding increases with inflation.

A question was asked if the University would be better off with a lower number of graduate students that are better funded. Senate was informed that this is the type of question programs will have to ask themselves. Every program will receive a policy that they will be writing themselves about what their minimum funding level is. Graduate Studies is setting the floor for funding, but programs are able to establish higher floors if they so choose. Senators were encouraged to provide any additional feedback to Senator O'Brien, with the expectation that this item is to come back to Senate for approval in December.

**ii) Grading Practices and Deadlines for Fall 2023 (S.23-135)**

Senate received Grading Practices and Deadlines for Fall 2023 for information.

**iii) Withdrawal Deadline for Fall 2023 (S.23-136)**

Senate received Withdrawal Deadline for Fall 2023 for information.

**E) Senate Nominating Committee (SNC)**

**i) Senate Committee Elections (S.23-137)**

Senate received a summary of the nominations, positions elected by acclamation, positions requiring an online vote, and outstanding vacancies for Senate committees.

**7. Other Business**

**8. Information**

**i) Date of the next regular meeting – Monday, December 4, 2023**

Open session adjourned at 7:13 p.m.

Kris Nordgren  
Senate Secretary pro tem