

Minutes of a meeting of the Senate of Simon Fraser University held on Monday,
October 6, 1997 at 7:00 pm in Room 3210 WMC

Open Session

Present: Blaney, Jack, President *pro tem* and Chair

Barrow, Robin
Bawa, Parveen
Boland, Larry
Bowman, Marilyn
Chan, Albert
Cleveland, William
Dunsterville, Valerie
Emmott, Alan
Etherington, Lois
Gagan, David
Gillies, Mary Ann
Jones, Colin
Jones, John
Kanevsky, Lannie
Kirczenow, George
Lewis, Brian
Marteniuk, Ron
Mathewes, Rolf
Morris, Joy
Ogloff, James
Osborne, Judith
Overington, Jennifer
Parmar, Neelam
Percival, Paul
Peters, Joseph (representing B. Clayman)
Peterson, Louis
Pierce, John
Tam, Lawrence
Waterhouse, John
Winne, Phil
Wong, Tim
Wortis, Michael
Yagi, Ian
Yerbury, J. Colin

Absent:

Baert, Jessica
Beattie, Suzan
Berggren, J. Len
Blazenko, George
Coleman, Peter
D'Auria, John
Dobb, Ted
Giffen, Ken
Hassan, Nany
Howlett, Michael
Mauser, Gary
McInnes, Dina
Naef, Barbara
Nip, Harry
Reed, Clyde
Sanghera, Balwant
Segal, Joseph
Warsh, Michael
Whitbread, Katherine
Wickstrom, Norm

In attendance:

Alderson, Evan
Blackman, Roger

Watt, Alison, Director, Secretariat Services
Grant, Bobbie, Recording Secretary

1. Approval of the Agenda
The Agenda was approved as distributed.
2. Approval of the Minutes of the Open Session of July 7, 1997
The Minutes were approved as distributed.
Approval of the Minutes of the Open Session of September 15, 1997
The Minutes were approved as distributed.
3. Business Arising from the Minutes
There was no business arising from the Minutes.
4. Report of the Chair
There was no report from the Chair.
5. Reports of Committees

a) Senate Nominating Committee

i) Paper S.97-62 - Elections

Senate was advised that no further nominations were received with respect to Senate paper S.97-62. Results of elections are as follows:

Senate Committee on Honorary Degrees (SCHD)

One Senator (at-large) to replace Jack Blaney, effective immediately, for no specified term of office.

Candidates: A. Chan, G. Mauser, T. Wong

Elected:

Gary Mauser

Electoral Standing Committee (ESC)

One Senator (at-large) to replace Stan Shapiro, effective immediately, for no specified term of office.

Elected by acclamation:

Albert Chan

b) Senate Committee on Academic Planning

i) Paper S.97-63 - External Review - School of Engineering Science (For Information)

John Jones, Senator and Director of the School of Engineering Science was in attendance in order to respond to questions.

Senate was advised that changes affecting degree completion time and changes to increase student intake were already in progress, and other

revisions will be incorporated into the School's forthcoming five-year academic plan. SCAP was satisfied that the School was actively acting on recommendations in the report.

In response to an inquiry about the high attrition rate, Senate was advised that the high standards of a very selective admission process is an attraction to students in itself and many students who leave Engineering Science do so because they discover another discipline which they find more interesting. The actual number leaving the School and leaving the University is very small. Concern was expressed that a significant number of students leave because they can not maintain the required GPA of 3.0 and, considering the extremely high standard of admission, opinion was expressed that this implied that the demands on students in the program were too high in terms of the number of courses they are expected to take each semester. It was noted that the mean credit hours taken by students in Engineering Science is almost two times higher than the University average and the School was encouraged to lower the workload on students. It was pointed out that when a student's average falls below the 3.0 threshold they are put on probation within the program. This is not academic probation within the University and nothing goes on the transcript. An internal committee consults with the student to address the problem and the student is given every opportunity to rectify the situation before being asked to leave.

Concerns were expressed about the response to the report from the School which clearly indicated that they felt that the review had been an unfair assessment. Reference was made to the School's comments which implied that the review committee may not have had complete or accurate information and had provided a critique rather than a balanced evaluation. It was suggested that such comments implied that there was a flaw in the way in which review committees are structured or a flaw in the way in which the review process works. Senate was assured that review teams were given very specific instructions and information, much of which was based on the self-study produced by the School/Department. In addition, the names of the assessors are chosen from a list of names provided by the School/Department. It is felt that the system is set up to ensure that the reviewers not only have full information about the School/Department before they begin their review but they may represent a similar philosophy of the School/Department itself. Senate was reminded that the School of Engineering Science is also subject to external accreditation by a professional accreditation body and a number of issues that were addressed by the review team were issues that they wanted to flag because they might also be issues for the national accreditation body. As an example of the type of error the School took exception to, J. Jones referred to the recommendation from the review team to reduce the required number of credit hours to 120. This would have placed the School below the minimum number of units required for accreditation and Senators were directed to further details on page 5 of the School's response. It was pointed

out however that according to the information on page 5, SFU's program could be reduced by 10% and still remain within the accreditation requirements. Senate was advised that the School felt that requiring the absolute minimum for accreditation was not in the best interest of the students.

Opinion was expressed that since the report and its interpretation seem to be contentious it might be appropriate to hold another review with a panel of assessors selected by an outside Engineering School. It was pointed out that while the review was critical, it served a good purpose in that it resulted in an extensive planning document for the School which included a complete restructuring of its undergraduate and graduate curriculum. It was felt that the result of the review has been positive and it was not necessary for the University to go through the expense and time of another review.

- c) Senate Committee on Academic Planning/Senate Committee on Undergraduate Studies
- i) Paper S.97-64 - Undergraduate Regulation Change - Duplication of Courses

Moved by D. Gagan, seconded by L. Boland

"that Senate approve, as set forth in S.97-64, the following additional limit on the duplication of courses:

Normally, a course may not be duplicated if the original grade is higher than C-".

Senate's attention was drawn to the revised wording of the motion which reflected the recommendation of SCAR to amend the wording from a C grade to a C- grade.

James Ogloff, Senator and current Chair of SCUS, and Roger Blackman, former Chair of SCUS, were in attendance in order to respond to questions.

Senate was advised that the change had been proposed as a result of a review of the regulation by SCUS in which it was revealed that many course duplications took place merely to boost GPA. SCUS felt this was a resource issue but primarily an equity issue. SCUS felt however that the inclusion of the word 'normally' as a default option would allow waiver of this regulation in appropriate cases.

Concern was expressed that students had not been informed nor consulted about the proposal and no student was present at the SCUS meeting which approved the recommendation. It was pointed out that student

representatives were present at some of the meetings at which this matter was discussed and students were present at the SCAP meeting when this item was considered.

Senate was advised that students were strongly opposed to this proposed change. They felt it was too restrictive and took away their academic freedom and choice. They also felt the change would likely result in more students dropping courses before final exams in order to save their GPA by being eligible to re-take the course in the future. It was pointed out that this would likely create more paper work for the administration and cost the University more than the proposed change in policy could save.

It was pointed out that students having difficulty in courses had other options such as withdrawal under extenuating circumstances and aegrotat grades. Senate was advised that SCUS had considered both options and felt them to be inappropriate alternatives to course duplication because retroactive withdrawal essentially rewrites the transcript and aegrotat grades should only be used in exceptional cases. According to figures from Analytical Studies, 1/3 of all students attempt at least one duplication. Based on this figure, it was suggested that a significant number of students would likely appeal this regulation resulting in a significant increase in costs and paperwork for the University.

Reference was made to SCUS's concern about equity and opinion was expressed that the creation of a regulation allowing waivers created an inequity between students who were aware of the appeal process and those who were not. It was also pointed out that the waiver procedure in itself was inequitable due to inconsistencies in application between different departments. It was noted that the Calendar is available to everyone and students have a responsibility to familiarize themselves with policies and regulations. Reference was made to SCUS's concern about the inequity of students using course duplications to gain access and remain in limited enrolment programs; it was suggested that it is unlikely that such students would be able to stay in a program by upgrading a few courses. Furthermore, some hold the view that limited enrolment programs were inequitable by their definition. Opinion was expressed that the proposed policy discriminates against better students since it allows a C- student who occasionally gets a D to upgrade by course duplication but prevents an A- student who occasionally gets a C to upgrade by the same procedure. In order to eliminate inequities completely, it was suggested that course duplications should be restricted all together but, since this was not the issue, it was suggested that there ought to be a procedure in place whereby a student who is taking a course as a duplicate is put at the end of the registration priority system so it would not be possible for that student to take the place of a student taking the course for the first time.

Reference was made to SCUS's concern about courses being duplicated merely to boost GPA. Opinion was expressed that this statement, in an academic environment, appeared to be in contradiction to a University's goal of teaching and transferring knowledge to students. It was felt that the proposed change would dissuade students from increasing their knowledge and skills rather than encouraging them to do better and gain a better understanding.

In response to an inquiry about regional comparisons with respect to course duplication procedures, Senate was advised that SCUS had canvassed, through the Registrar's Office, a number of universities across Canada and there appeared to be no consistency in the way duplicates are handled. Inquiry was made as to whether or not information was available with respect to what fraction of students retaking a course actually improved their grade, the reasons for retaking courses, success rates and so forth. Senate was advised that although this information was not available at the present time, SCUS did have detailed information available which could be provided to Senate.

Moved by D. Gagan, seconded by P. Percival

"that this matter be referred back to the Senate Committee on Undergraduate Studies for reconsideration. Reconsideration will include the arguments presented by Senate and, if a motion comes back to Senate, additional documentation will be provided and the concerns raised by Senate will be addressed more directly"

It was suggested that if the motion to refer is approved, SCUS also be directed to identify high enrolment courses in which a student repeating a course actually displaces someone as opposed to courses which have plenty of space. Suggestion was also made that SCUS consider the possibility of simply decreasing the number of duplications allowed from five to two.

The wisdom of referral was questioned since SCUS already had had considerable discussion based on the extensive information available to them which related to many of the issues raised by Senate. It was pointed out, however, that Senate was unaware of the information and the intent of the motion to refer was to ensure that some of the information was provided to Senate.

Question was called, and a vote taken.

MOTION TO REFER CARRIED

- ii) Paper S.97-65 - Undergraduate Curriculum Revisions - Mathematics and Statistics

Moved by D. Gagan, seconded by C. Jones

"that Senate approve and recommend approval to the Board of Governors, as set forth in S.97-65, the following changes in the Department of Mathematics and Statistics:

- i) Proposed B.Sc. Major and Honors Degree in Statistics
- ii) Proposed B.A. Major and Honors Degree in Statistics
- iii) Proposed Minor in Statistics through the Arts and Science Faculties"

Question was called, and a vote taken.

MOTION CARRIED

Senate received information that SCUS, acting under delegated authority, approved the following changes: i) change in prerequisite for STAT 403; ii) title change for STAT 330 and 350; iii) change in number, description, and prerequisite for STAT 440

- iii) Paper S.97-66 - Undergraduate Curriculum Revision - Chemistry (For Information)

Senate was advised that in accordance with the new rules for curriculum revision, request has been received, under the signature of five Senators, that the changes in Senate paper S.97-66 be provided in more detail and be brought forward for consideration at the next meeting of Senate. The item was therefore removed from the agenda and will be brought forward to the next meeting.

- iv) Paper S.97-67 - Revisions - B.Sc. Program at the University College of the Fraser Valley (For Information)

Senate received information that SCUS, acting under delegated authority, approved the following revisions to the B.Sc. Minors program offered at the University College of the Fraser Valley: new courses CHEM 231, 323, 411, 422, 451, 455.

- d) Senate Committee on Academic Planning/Senate Graduate Studies Committee
- i) Paper S.97-68 - Cohort Option for the Masters Degree under Special Arrangements

Moved by D. Gagan, seconded by J. Peters

"that Senate approve and recommend approval to the Board of Governors, as set forth in S.97-68, a cohort option for the Masters Degree under Special Arrangements"

Evan Alderson was in attendance in order to respond to questions.

Senate was advised that the intent of the proposal was to introduce masters level work to targeted audiences without having to design a permanent program which may not be warranted by the nature of the specific needs of the targeted group.

It was pointed out that nothing prevents an individual or a targeted group from individually doing such a program through the existing special arrangements procedures and inquiry was made as to why a cohort program of this kind was necessary. It was stressed that the use of the existing special arrangements procedures for a group of people resulted in significant resource issues, whereas the intent of having the cohort format is to acquire external funding. Senate was provided with details of a sample program which is being explored with interest being expressed by the Faculties of Arts, Business Administration and Applied Sciences, and interest with respect to external funding expressed by the Vancouver Foundation.

It was stressed that the cohort framework provides an opportunity to plan responsive programming which will be carefully vetted for resources by the Dean of Graduate Studies and carefully vetted academically by the Senate Graduate Studies Committee. Reference was made to the statement that the program should include as much as possible regularly offered SFU courses, and inquiry was made as to what will be done when courses required for the program do not exist. Explanation was provided that special arrangement numbers will be used in order to design any highly specialized special topics courses that are needed, and that there was no intent to introduce new Calendar courses without full Senate approval. Concern was expressed about quality and whether or not the proposal would result in the creation of a whole range of special topic programs that have not gone through the normal academic approval procedures. Senate's attention was drawn to page two of the documentation where it explicitly stated that the admission criteria, degree requirements, and any other special conditions for a proposed cohort program must be approved by the SGSC and may not be below the minimum admission and degree requirements of regular graduate programs. It was felt that the SGSC which is made up of all graduate chairs from across the University is a good point of delegation for this kind of issue.

Question was called, and a vote taken.

MOTION CARRIED

- ii) Paper S.97-69 - Graduate Curriculum Revisions - Engineering Science (For Information)

Senate received information that the SGSC, acting under delegated authority, approved the following revisions: i) New course - ENSC 858; ii) Description changes - ENSC 852, 861, 887; iii) Change in requirements for the M.Eng. Program; Change in requirements for Ph.D. Qualifying Examination.

iii) Paper S.97-70 - Graduate Curriculum Revisions - History (For Information)

Senate received information that the SGSC, acting under delegated authority, approved the following revisions: i) Deletion of HIST 800, 811, 812, 813; ii) New courses - HIST 893, 894, 895, 896, 870, 871; Change of title - HIST 826, 886, and 887.

iv) Paper S.97-71 - Graduate Curriculum Revisions - Political Science (For Information)

Senate received information that the SGSC, acting under delegated authority, approved the following revisions: new courses - POL 837, 894.

v) Paper S.97-72 - Graduate Curriculum Revisions - Psychology (For Information)

Senate received information that the SGSC, acting under delegated authority, approved a prerequisite change to PSYC 886.

vi) Paper S.97-73 - Graduate Curriculum Revisions - Sociology and Anthropology (for Information)

Senate received information that the SGSC, acting under delegated authority, approved a change in Calendar statement re registration in SA 840 and 841.

vii) Paper S.97-74 - Graduate Curriculum Revisions - Biological Sciences (For Information)

Senate received information that the SGSC, acting under delegated authority, approved the deletion of BISC 808, 810, 811, 814, and 861.

viii) Paper S.97-75 - Graduate Curriculum Revisions - Mathematics and Statistics (For Information)

Senate received information that the SGSC, acting under delegated authority, approved a change to the elective courses for the M.Sc. Program.

e) Senate Committee on Academic Planning/Senate Graduate Studies Committee/Senate Undergraduate Studies Committee

Moved by D. Gagan, seconded by A. Chan

"that Senate approve, as set forth in S.97-76, the proposed revised Terms of Reference of the following committees:

- i) Senate Committee on Undergraduate Studies
- ii) Senate Graduate Studies Committee
- iii) Senate Committee on Academic Planning"

Senate was advised that the proposed changes arise out of alterations made approximately one year ago in the Senate procedures dealing with curriculum matters and bring the terms of reference of all three committees into conformity with the revised procedures.

Question was called, and a vote taken.

MOTION CARRIED

6. Other Business

Opinion was expressed that policies such as the harassment policy and the policy on research ethics have an impact on academic programs and, since academic programs were the responsibility of Senate, concern was expressed that such policies were being implemented without Senate's approval. Specific reference was made to recent changes in the research ethics policy and inquiry was made as to why these revisions had not been brought forward to Senate for consideration/approval prior to implementation. Senate was advised that the inquiry would be referred to SCAR for consideration.

Concern was expressed about the design of the room in which meetings of Senate were held. It was felt that the amphitheatre format made it difficult to make eye contact and inquiry was made as to whether or not it was possible to go back to the previous arrangement (such as that used when Senate met in Klaus Rieckhoff Hall) whereby Senators sat around a table and were able to face each other. In response to an inquiry from the Chair as to the preference of Senate, there appeared to be a majority opinion that the previous arrangement/room was a better arrangement. It was pointed out however that one of the reasons Senate had been moved from Strand Hall was because the size of Senate had outgrown Klaus Rieckhoff Hall. The Chair advised that this item would be taken under the advisement by SCAR.

7. Information

The next regularly scheduled meeting of Senate will take place on Monday, November 3, 1997.

The Open Session adjourned at 8:15 pm and the Assembly moved directly into Closed Session.

Alison Watt
Director, Secretariat Services