

DRAFT UNTIL APPROVED BY SENATE

Minutes of a meeting of the Senate of Simon Fraser University held on
Monday, October 5, 1998 at 7:00 pm in Room 3210 West Mall Centre

Open Session

Present: Blaney, Jack, President and Chair

Akins, Kathleen
Baldwin, Paul (representing L. Copeland)
Barrow, Robin
Beattie, Suzan
Berggren, Len
Boland, Larry
Bowman, Marilyn
Burton, Lynn Elen
Chan, Albert
Clayman, Bruce
Coleman, Peter
D'Auria, John
Dhillon, Khushwant
Dunsterville, Valerie
Finley, David
Fletcher, James
Gagan, David
Giffen, Ken
Gillies, Mary Ann
Harris, Richard
Heaney, John
Jones, Colin
Jones, John
Kanevsky, Lannie
Kirczenow, George
Mathewes, Rolf
McInnes, Dina
Morris, Joy
Naef, Barbara
Osborne, Judith
Overington, Jennifer
Percival, Paul
Peterson, Louis
Peters, Joseph
Pierce, John
Reader, Jason
Russell, Maya
Sanghera, Balwant
Tam, Lawrence
Veerkamp, Mark
Waterhouse, John
Weeks, Daniel
Wortis, Michael
Zazkis, Rina

Absent:

Cheng, Winnie
Emerson, Joseph
Emmott, Alan
Lewis, Brian
Marteniuk, Ron
Mauser, Gary
Ogloff, James
Russell, Robert
Segal, Joseph
Warsh, Michael
Wickstrom, Norman

In attendance:

Forsyth, Ian

Heath, Ron, Dean of Student Services and Registrar
Watt, Alison, Director, Secretariat Services
Grant, Bobbie, Recording Secretary

The Chair welcomed new Senators, John Heaney, Faculty of Business Administration, and Daniel Weeks, Faculty of Applied Sciences to Senate.

1. Approval of the Agenda

The Agenda was approved as distributed.

2. Approval of the Minutes of the Open Session of September 14, 1998

Reference was made to page 9, last sentence of the second paragraph of Item 6. Request was made to change the words 'should be' to 'was' and to insert the word 'will' after Senate, resulting in the sentence reading as follows: 'Therefore, the break was declared not to exist and Senate will be given an opportunity at the next meeting to consider how a mid-semester break might be accommodated'.

Following this amendment, the Minutes were approved.

3. Business Arising from the Minutes

All business arising from the previous meeting has been brought forward as agenda items.

4. Report of the Chair

With the exception of the President's Agenda which appears as Item 6.iii on the Agenda, there was no report from the Chair.

5. REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

a) SENATE NOMINATING COMMITTEE

i) Paper S.98-75 - Elections

The following are the results of elections to the following Senate Committees:

Senate Committee on Honorary Degrees (SCHD)

One Senator (Arts) and one Senator (Business Administration) to replace William Cleveland and Lois Etherington from date of election to May 31, 1999.

Elected by acclamation:

Mary Ann Gillies (Arts)

Wm. John Heaney (Business Administration)

b) SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGENDA AND RULES

i) Paper S.98-76 - Semester Schedule and Calendar Committee

It was noted that S.98-76 was before Senate for information and will be discussed at the next meeting of SCAR and brought back to the November meeting of Senate.

ii) Paper S.98-77 - Information Policies

Ian Forsyth, University Archivist and Information and Privacy Coordinator, was in attendance in order to respond to questions.

It was noted that Policies I 10.01 through I 10.07 deal with the University's specific responsibilities under the FOI/POP legislation and were before Senate for information. Policies I 10.08 through I 10.10 deal with the collection and disclosure of instructor and course evaluations, the retention and disposal of student exams/assignments, and the posting of student grades and return of exams/assignments and were before Senate for advice.

Reference was made to Policy I 10.05 Collection of Personal Information and an inquiry was made about the legality of approaching a colleague for an informal opinion of a candidate during a faculty search procedure. It was pointed out that if there was no intention of recording anything in written form as part of the competition, prior written authorization from the candidate is not needed.

Clarification was requested with respect to the schedule of maximum fees. Senate was advised that the fee schedule is set by regulation and established fees that a public body such as a university can charge when answering a formal FOI request. The fees cover costs associated with researching, retrieving and reproducing records and preparing them for release. It was noted that informal access requests are not subject to fees and inquiry was made as to the difference. Senate was advised that if there is an existing procedure in place to provide the public with routine access to university records then no fees are involved. Under the FOI Act, the University is permitted to charge fees only if there is a formal request for university records that contain either personal or confidential information.

Referring to Policies 10.08-10.10, concern was expressed about the lack of faculty input during the drafting of these policies. It was pointed out that a faculty member was on the advisory committee and that the policies had been sent to SFUFA.

An objection was raised with regard to the suggestion in Policy 10.10 that exams and assignments had to be returned to students in individual envelopes and an example of the problems this created with large classes was given. It was suggested that it would have been better if procedures could have been centralized or the onus put on students to provide envelopes. It was pointed out that the examples in the policies were suggestions only and Senate's attention was drawn to the second last sentence of the policy which states that the specific confidentiality measures used are at the discretion of each instructor to permit flexible, pragmatic procedures that suit the circumstances of each case. Another suggestion was made that the University could ask students upon admission to sign a waiver so that their assignments could be handed back in the most practical manner. Students who choose not to waive their right of privacy as it relates to the return of assignments/exams might then be asked to pay an additional fee.

Brief discussion took place with respect to course evaluations. It was pointed out a number of different instructors could be involved with a specific course and if course evaluations were to be used to modify the course all of the instructors should see all of the comments. Therefore, the statement about handwritten comments being made available to the course instructor should be pluralized. The issue of allowing students to sign course evaluations if they so wished was raised and it was pointed out that students should be made aware of how the evaluation forms will be used and to whom they may be disclosed so that they can make an informed decision about whether to identify themselves or not.

Reference was made to Section 1.4 of Policy 10.09 wherein it was stated that students should be informed to retain their returned exams and assignments in case they wish to appeal a grade. A centralized mechanism should be developed for this procedure instead of having instructors inform students individually. Senate was advised that the grading policy was currently under revision and intentions are to incorporate this statement into the revised policy.

It was noted that the policies before Senate were designed to inform the University community of the Provincial FOI/POP legislation as it applies to universities but it would be up to Departments and Faculties to determine what mechanisms would have to be put in place to deal with the regulations. The examples outlined in the policies were examples only and mechanisms for handling specific issues were best resolved at the Department and Faculty level.

Inquiry was made about whether or not there was protection in place for faculty members if a student challenged the procedure used in a particular circumstance. Senate was advised that if disagreement arose over how a policy was applied, the person having the concern should speak to Ian Forsyth to see if the issue could be resolved informally.

It was reiterated that the policies reflected the Act as it applied to all universities and colleges in British Columbia and there was no latitude with respect to the implications of the legislation. The policies were similar to policies at other universities in British Columbia. However, there appeared to be some latitude with respect to their implementation and further discussion and debate would be useful in that area. This matter would be referred to SCAR and, in the interim, any questions about interpretation, should be referred to Ian Forsyth.

iii) Paper S.98-78 - Senate Meeting Time Survey (For Information)

A summary of the results of an email survey about the Senate meeting time were received by Senate for information. It was decided not to recommend any change to the time of Senate meetings at the present time.

iv) Paper S.98-79 - Senate Location

Moved by L. Boland, seconded by L. Peterson

"that the meetings of Senate continue to be held in Room 3210 in the West Mall Centre"

Question was called, and a vote taken.

MOTION CARRIED

6. OTHER BUSINESS

i) Paper S.98-80 - Advertising in the Calendar

Moved by J. D'Auria, seconded by M.A. Gillies

"that advertising not be allowed in the Calendar until the principle has been approved by Senate and the relevant procedures on how the advertising will be selected are discussed"

A suggestion to insert the word 'further' before 'advertising' was accepted as a friendly amendment, with the motion reading as follows:

"that further advertising not be allowed in the Calendar until the principle has been approved by Senate and the relevant procedures on how the advertising will be selected are discussed"

A suggestion was made that when a Calendar committee is set up, this question be referred to that committee to draft a recommendation for Senate consideration.

Question was called, and a vote taken.

MOTION CARRIED

ii) Paper S.98-81 - Mid-Semester Break

Moved by D. Gagan, seconded by M. Veerkamp

"that Simon Fraser University schedule a mid-semester break in the Spring semester 1999 on February 15 and 16, 1999"

R. Heath, Registrar, apologized to Senate for authorizing the mid-semester break without Senate's approval and explained the rationale behind his decision. He noted that the mid-semester break was initiated by the Student Society as a result of a referendum held in the Spring 1998 elections. Since the Spring semester 1999 had a full 13 weeks of instruction, and based on the practice established in other semesters where normally at least two days off in holidays occur, an assumption was made that it would be possible to deal with a two-day break in the Spring in similar fashion as time lost to holidays in Fall and Summer semesters. In cases where Easter might fall within the semester, it was clearly the

intent that the semester would then be extended so that the maximum time lost would be the two days.

Concern was raised about the cancellation of classes that meet only once a week on either the Monday or Tuesday. Opinion expressed that this might not have been a problem if the announcement had been made prior to the scheduling of classes for the Spring semester when instructors could have planned accordingly for the cancellation. However, because the semester can not be extended in Spring 1999 due to the Easter break, instructors teaching classes which meet once a week on Monday or Tuesday would have to considerably reduce their classroom material in order to accommodate the break. While there was no objection to the principle of a mid-semester break, opinion was expressed that the classes must be made up by adding any cancelled classes to the end of the semester prior to the start of exams and therefore opposition was expressed against having a mid-semester break in Spring 1999 semester. It was suggested that the issue of a mid-semester break should be considered for future semesters when the cancelled class time could be made up and that this might be an issue for a Calendar committee to consider. It was noted that the issue of making up classes when Professors or TAs are ill is currently dealt with every semester and it is not unusual to make up one or two days of missed class time. Furthermore, since the Spring semester does not have any scheduled statutory holidays, a two day break would even out the semesters.

It was also noted that during this period students experience more stress than at other times of the year and a mid-semester break in the Spring would be beneficial. Senate was advised that the Student Society had collected 709 signatures on a petition from students this semester supporting a mid-semester break in Spring 1999. The wording of the petition was read and the process of collecting signatures was discussed. The referendum and the petition did not include reference to the cancellation of classes.

Opinion was expressed that the current proposal benefits some students and discriminates against others and the only fair solution would be to schedule a week long break so that all students benefit equally. A few Senators indicated they were opposed to the motion because of the lack of consultation and proper approval process, but were not opposed to the notion of a spring break in principle. This matter will be referred to the proposed Calendar Committee.

Question was called, and a vote taken.

MOTION DEFEATED

iii) Paper S.98-82 - President's Agenda

The Chair explained that the President's Agenda outlined his priorities for the next two years. He welcomed the advice and comment of Senate on this document. He stressed that SFU needed to retain its enterprising spirit and remain as open and consultative as possible. He also felt that times were going to be much more challenging in terms of public resources for the University and more time and resources would have to be spent working with the Government. Therefore, SFU will have one full-time person dealing with Government relations.

The report refers to and specifies priorities for two major constituent groups - faculty and students. Commitments to students include an increase to scholarships and bursaries, more assistance with respect to career transition and getting into employment, increased affordable student housing, and improvement to the quality of student residences. A top priority for faculty is renewing the faculty resource and recruiting the very best scholars. To this end a Task Force on Faculty Renewal and Recruitment has been established which will seek advice as to the best way to recruit and retain good faculty members. Other commitments to faculty include increasing the number of endowed professorships, and the improvement of equipment and infrastructure resources. To this end, the Presidents of the universities have struck three joint committees with the Ministry - on access, on faculty renewal, and on equipment and infrastructure to work closely with the Government in these areas.

In response to an inquiry about the optimal size for the University, the Chair expressed his opinion that a major consideration was the availability of money. However, he pointed out that public institutions are somewhat constrained by Government demands.

Referring to the statement about the importance of having an open and inclusive institution, the Chair was asked whether any consideration had been given to the inclusion of students on the Board of the Burnaby Mountain Community Corporation. The Chair indicated that the proposed organization for the Board of Directors as well as an Advisory Group would soon come to Senate for discussion. It was his belief that there should be some student and faculty representation on the Board but the final decision rested with the Board of Governors.

Brief discussion ensued with respect to the criteria used for setting up the Task Force on Faculty Renewal and Recruitment. Concern was expressed that not all Faculties were represented. The Chair expressed his belief that smaller committees were better able to get a task done successfully and indicated that the committee would consult widely across all Faculties in the University.

Reference was made to the statement about SFU's spirit of adventure and support for bold initiatives and inquiry was made as to what this meant in practical terms. The Chair responded that in terms of new program/course initiatives, the normal approval process through appropriate committees and Senate would apply, and faculty appointments would clearly have to be initiated by departments and faculties. However, it was his hope that procedures could be accelerated to some extent to encourage the incentive and energy needed to invest in new initiatives.

Reference was made to page 5 with regard to the statement about commitment to ensure that student residences are increased as part of the plans for developing the village community. Concern was expressed about the development of the project and inquiry was made as to what kind of student housing was envisioned and what would be done to ensure implementation. The Chair stressed his belief about the importance of increasing student housing in the development plans but he reiterated that the final decision rested with the Board of Governors.

Brief discussion ensued with respect to the process of faculty appointments. Opinion was expressed that in order to stay competitive and recruit the best candidates, the whole process had to be compressed, including the time required for final approval from the Board of Governors.

7. Information

Senate was advised that after twenty-five years of attending Senate meetings as Director of Media and Public Relations, Ken Mennell was moving to a new position to become the Director of Government Relations. On behalf of Senate, the Chair extended thanks to K. Mennell for his years of service to Senate and expressed congratulations on his new position.

The date of the next regularly scheduled meeting of Senate is Monday, November 2, 1998.

The Open Session adjourned at 8:30 pm. Following a brief recess, the Assembly moved into Closed Session.

Alison Watt
Director, Secretariat Services