

DRAFT UNTIL APPROVED BY SENATE

Minutes of a Meeting of the Senate of Simon Fraser University held on
Monday, February 8, 2010 at 5:30 pm in Room 3210 WMC

Open Session

Present: Williams, Tony, Vice-Chair

Absent:

Bezglasnyy, Anton
Brennand, Tracy
Chapman, Glenn
Copeland, Lynn
Cormack, Lesley
Dow, Greg
Driver, Jon
Easton, Stephen
Fizzell, Maureen
Francis, June
Geisler, Cheryl
Gordon, Robert
Hannah, David
Harding, Kevin
Haunerland, Norbert (representing M. Pinto)
Krane, Bill
Laitsch, Dan
Lee, Shara
Leznoff, Daniel
MacGrotty, Alysia
Magnusson, Kris
Mathewes, Rolf (representing M. Plischke)
Moubarak, Cristel
Myers, Gordon
Nadison, Ada
Nesbit, Tom
Noble, Cameron
O'Neil, John
Parkhouse, Wade
Patel, Ravi
Paterson, David
Pavsek, Christopher
Percival, Colin
Percival, Paul
Peters, Joseph
Pierce, John
Rajapakse, Nimal
Ruben, Peter
Sahinalp, Cenk
Scott, Jamie
Shapiro, Daniel
Stevenson, Michael
Thompson, Steve
van der Wey, Dolores
Woodbury, Rob
Zelezny, Joseph

Beale, Alison
Chiu, Christina
Godson, Ali
Golnaraghi, Farid
Hiscocks, Graham
Janes, Craig
Joffres, Michel
Laba, Martin
Lewis, Cynthia
Li, Fiona
Louie, Brandt
McArthur, James
Russell, Robert
Tiffany, Evan
Wakkary, Ron
Warner, D'Arcy

In attendance:
Hinchliffe, Jo
Lougheed, Patrick
Shapiro, Lisa

Ross, Kate, Registrar & Senior Director Student Enrolment
Grant, Bobbie, Recording Secretary

Although M. Stevenson arrived just prior to the start of the meeting, the decision was made that the Vice-Chair of Senate, T. Williams, continue to chair the meeting.

1. Approval of the Agenda

The Agenda was approved as distributed.

2. Approval of the Minutes of the Open Session of January 11, 2010

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

The Chair reported that subsequent to Senate approving revisions to Policy R40.01, Research Centres and Institutes, at the December 2009 Senate meeting, the Board of Governors had approved an editorial clarification to Section 3.5.3 regarding reporting responsibilities of Directors.

5. Question Period

There were no questions in Question Period.

6. Reports of Committees

A) Senate Committee on University Priorities

i) Paper S.10-14 – External Review – Action Plan, Department of Philosophy

L. Shapiro, Chair of the Department of Philosophy, was in attendance in order to respond to questions..

Moved by J. Driver, seconded by K. Harding

“that Senate approve the recommendation from the Senate Committee on University Priorities to implement the Action Plan for the Department of Philosophy that resulted from its External Review”

Appreciation was expressed for the new format for external reviews, particularly the Action Plan, which was felt to be extremely valuable and provided a very good record. With regard to the specific report for the Department of Philosophy, a minor concern was raised regarding the comments about academic departmental undergraduate advisors not having ready access to student files. Senate was advised that there were two different kinds of advisors in Philosophy. The academic advisor specifically advised on course selection and course of study, while the departmental manager advised on the progress towards degree completion. The departmental manager has full access to student records and if the faculty advisor required additional information about a student, they would request that information from the departmental manager.

A more general comment was made that over the years access to student records by faculty members had become more restrictive, and suggestion was made to those responsible to consider how access is restricted and to be a little more understanding about the needs of academics to look at student records. It was noted by the Registrar that the Freedom of Information/Protection of Privacy staff had likely initially recommended the restrictions which are currently in place but they could always be reviewed.

Reference was made to the comments under staffing needs and concern was expressed about specific names being mentioned with respect to hiring recommendations. Suggestion was made that reports such as this should be more generic. Senate was advised that these were targeted spousal hires so they were specific to the person mentioned but it was agreed that even under those circumstances it would be better to be more generic. Senate was advised that this same issue had been discussed by SCAR several years ago and although SCAR had concerns, they did not feel they should edit a report from an external review committee. However, in future, SCAR could edit names if Senate so directed. It was pointed out by the Associate Vice-President Academic that when advice is provided to external reviewers in terms of providing their report, they could simply be instructed not to include specific names which would then alleviate this concern. The AVPA undertook to make sure that all of the external review teams for this year were so instructed.

With regard to the Philosophy report, the Chair of the Department was not particularly comfortable with revising the report but felt that the names should be redacted for the purposes of public display.

Question was called, and a vote taken.

MOTION CARRIED

ii) Paper S.10-15 – External Review – Action Plan, School of Criminology

R. Gordon, Senator and Director, School of Criminology was in attendance in order to respond to questions.

Moved by J. Driver, seconded by A. Bezglasnyy

“that Senate approve the recommendation from the Senate Committee on University Priorities to implement the Action Plan for the School of Criminology that resulted from its External Review”

Surprise was expressed about comments from the external reviewers and the Dean of Arts and Social Sciences concerning the possibility of requiring only 120 credits rather than 132 credits for an Honours degree. R. Gordon advised Senate that the School of Criminology did not support this recommendation. Comments in the report noted that the issue was better dealt with at the university level, and inquiry was made as to whether there were any plans to explore this possibility. Although no specific details were available, the Vice-President Academic informed Senate that the University would be looking at a number of areas in order to bring some order of standardization within the University, and this may be an area for such a review.

Question was called, and a vote taken.

MOTION CARRIED

iii) Paper S.10-6 – Permanent Closure of Canadian Studies

L. Cormack, Senator and Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences was in attendance in order to respond to questions.

Moved by J. Driver, seconded by S. Easton

“that Senate approve and recommend to the Board of Governors the closing of Canadian Studies within the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, effective September 2010”

A. Bezglasnyy advised Senate that he wished it stated in the Minutes that a lot of students were feeling the impact of this decision.

Senate was advised that I. Angus, former Director of Canadian Studies, was in the audience and, with Senate’s permission, would be willing to respond to questions on this issue.

Inquiry was made as to why there was such an urgency to remove this program and why it couldn’t be left on the books with a notation that it was not currently being offered until such time that funding became available or the program could be revamped. Senate was advised that the FASS felt that it was unfair to students to leave something in the Calendar that can not be delivered and expectations were that the financial situation was not going to improve for the next several years. It was pointed out that there was nothing to prevent a revised program coming forward in the future.

It was noted that the rationale implied that the program was being cut essentially for monetary reasons, and opinion was expressed that the process followed with this program appeared to be backward. Rather than Senate first discussing the closure of the program and then issues of whether funding of the program should be removed, a decision to withdraw financial support was initially made followed by discussion about closure of the program.

Senate was reminded that Deans are responsible for managing the academic programs of their Faculties within the budget that is available. They have to consider the number of students registered in programs, the resources available to teach programs and, in times of financial difficulty, they have to make decisions about where they can reduce expenses in order to support other areas and program within the Faculty. The Dean of Arts and Social Sciences explained that before taking any steps to remove resources from programs, a task force which had been assembled developed a series of principles which included principles to protect programs with robust enrolments, significant numbers of majors, and were in areas of research strength. Canadian Studies had very few major and minor students, and most of the courses were taught by limited term appointments since there was not a large concentration of research faculty. Other departments were canvassed to see if they would be willing to contribute to Canadian Studies but none were forthcoming.

In response to a comment that the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences was continually being asked to do more with less and could absorb cuts better than other Faculties because of all the service courses they offer, Senate was advised that an analysis done last year indicated that service courses were spread fairly evenly across the University with most Faculties engaged in service teaching and that it was a misconception that the FASS was the main provider of service courses.

The Vice-President Academic reminded Senate that there was general agreement that cuts should be made strategically rather than across the board and that from time to time programs will be eliminated rather than allowing resources to decline across the board.

A proposed amendment by D. Leznoff that Senate direct the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences to consider the formation of a Certificate program was ruled out of order by the Chair. However, the Dean of Arts and Social Sciences was asked to take the suggestion under advisement.

Question was called, and a vote taken.

MOTION CARRIED

B) Senate Committee on Undergraduate Studies

i) Paper S.10-17 – Degree Standing – Removal of the designation of First Class Honours, and introduction of the designations ‘with merit’ and ‘with distinction’

J. Hinchliffe, Assistant Registrar and P. Lougheed, Associate Director, Strategic Enrolment Analysis were in attendance in order to respond to questions.

Moved by B. Krane, seconded by K. Harding

“that Senate approve the removal of the designation of First Class Honours, and the introduction of the designations “with merit” and “with distinction”, with requirements as outlined in Paper S.10-17 and attendant calendar changes, effective for students graduating from the Fall 2009 semester onward. These designations will be recognized for first degrees only”

Clarification was requested with respect to ‘first degree’. Second degree students already have a degree and must meet certain requirements to obtain a second degree. Since the requirements for second degrees vary considerably, decision was made to focus on first degrees only. Senate was assured that students who do ‘double degrees’ would get designations for both degrees because they were both first degrees at the same time.

It was noted that the motion coupled two disparate issues – the removal of first class honours and the introduction of two new designations. Disappointment was expressed with the rationale which did not clearly explain why the well known, well established, and well understood honours degree designation of first class was being removed.

There was considerable support for the second half of the motion with respect to the introduction of the new degree designations for regular degrees but the majority of speakers felt that the first class distinction should be retained for honours degrees.

Many departments offer honours programs and concern was expressed about the lack of communication and consultation with those departments. Comment was made that removing the designation of first class honours would change things drastically and should not be done without due diligence. Since there was no reference in the document to grandfathering students currently in an honours program who would be expecting to receive the first class designation, concern was expressed that SFU might be open to legal action because the Calendar states that they are entitled to this descriptor.

Opinion was expressed that first class honours was not being removed; it was just being given a different label and in doing so increased its status because students needed a 4.0 to receive an honours degree with distinction. It was also pointed out that the designation was not as important to employers or to someone admitting students into a graduate program as the grade point average, and suggestion was made that it would be more useful to have the average for each class on transcripts.

Opinion was expressed that a good reason for retaining the first class designation was because it is well respected and widely recognized all over the world thus making it easier for students to transfer their credentials. This was especially important at this particular time since SFU is seeking accreditation in the United States.

It was noted that SFU alumni might be impacted by the removal of such a long standing, historical designation but it was suggested that if a notation appeared in the Calendar and on transcripts clearly defining the old and new designations, there would likely not be any problem.

Discussion ensued about whether the motion should be split or amended. It was pointed out that neither action would provide the opportunity for consultation and to consider the comments by Senate.

Moved by P. Percival, seconded by R. Gordon

“that the motion be referred back to the Senate Committee on Undergraduate Studies for further consideration”

Brief discussion ensued on the issue of referral. Senate was advised that since graduands within a Calendar year are all treated the same, if the motion was referred back, there would be no rush to bring it forward to Senate since it would likely come back as being effective for graduands in Fall 2010 onward.

Question was called, and a vote taken.

MOTION TO REFER CARRIED

- ii) Paper S.10-18 – Curriculum Revisions – Faculty of Applied Sciences (For Information): Computing Science, Engineering Science

Senate received information that the Senate Committee on Undergraduate Studies, acting under delegated authority, approved minor revisions to courses and programs in the Faculty of Applied Sciences.

- iii) Paper S.10-19 – Curriculum Revisions – Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (For Information): Asia-Canada Program, Explorations Program, First Nations Studies Program, French, History, Humanities, International Studies, Philosophy, Political Science, Psychology, World Literature, WQB Designations

Senate received information that the Senate Committee on Undergraduate Studies, acting under delegated authority, approved new courses, course deletions, WQB designations, and minor revisions to existing courses and programs in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences.

- iv) Paper S.10-20 – Curriculum Revisions – Faculty of Business Administration (For Information)

Senate received information that the Senate Committee on Undergraduate Studies, acting under delegated authority, approved a new course in the Faculty of Business Administration.

- v) Paper S.10-21 – Curriculum Revisions – Faculty of Communication, Art and Technology (For Information): Contemporary Arts

Senate received information that the Senate Committee on Undergraduate Studies, acting under delegated authority, approved changes to WQB requirements for Contemporary Arts students to harmonize with their new Faculty.

- vi) Paper S.10-22 – Curriculum Revisions – Faculty of Health Sciences (For Information)

Senate received information that the Senate Committee on Undergraduate Studies, acting under delegated authority, approved course deletions, temporary course withdrawals, and minor revisions to existing courses and program requirements in the Faculty of Health Sciences.

- vii) Paper S.10-23 – Curriculum Revisions – Faculty of Science (For Information): Biomedical Physiology and Kinesiology, Chemistry, Earth Sciences, General Science Program, Mathematics, Molecular Biology and Biochemistry, Physics

Senate received information that the Senate Committee on Undergraduate Studies, acting under delegated authority, new courses and minor revisions to courses and programs within the Faculty of Science.

C) Senate Graduate Studies Committee

- i) Paper S.10-24 – Curriculum Revisions – Faculty of Environment (For Information): Resource and Environmental Management

Senate received information that the Senate Graduate Studies Committee, acting under delegated authority, approved a change to the PhD requirements in the Department of Resource and Environmental Management.

D) Senate Nominating Committee

- i) Paper S.10-24 – Elections

Senate was advised that no nominations had been received and that vacancies will outstanding but will not be brought forward unless nominations are received by the Senate Nominating Committee which is still trying to fill vacant positions.

7. Other Business

- i) Paper S.10-26 – SFU Library Annual Report 2008-2009 (For Information)

L. Copeland, Senator and Dean of Library Services/University Librarian was in attendance in order to respond to question. Senate received the 2008-2009 SFU Library Annual Report for information.

8. Information

The date of the next regularly scheduled meeting of Senate is Monday, March 1, 2010

Open Session adjourned at 6:45 pm and Senate moved directly into Closed Session.

Kate Ross
Registrar and Secretary of Senate