



SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY  
ENGAGING THE WORLD

Minutes of a Meeting of the Senate of Simon Fraser University held on  
Monday, February 5, 2024 at 5:30 pm at the West Mall Complex (Room 3210)  
and via Zoom Video Conferencing

## Open Session

**Present:** Joy Johnson, Chair

Barlow, Leanne  
Bhalloo, Shafik  
Bird, Gwen  
Brennand, Tracy  
Brooks-Wilson, Angela  
Chapman, Glenn  
Collard, Mark  
Eftenaru, Cristina  
Egri, Carolyn  
Everton, Mike  
Faris, Reema  
Fisher, Brian  
Fiume, Eugene  
Fung, Aaron  
Gray, Bonnie  
Hall, Peter  
Herrenbrueck, Lucas  
Karaivanov, Alexander  
Kerr, Jeannie  
Kessler, Anke  
Krogman, Naomi  
Laitsch, Dan  
Leznoff, Daniel  
Liu, Connie  
Lysova, Alexandra  
Magnusson, Kris  
Manzer, Mussaab  
Martell, Matt  
Masri, Kamal  
McKenzie, Janis  
Muntean, Reese  
Myers, Gord  
Nelson, Todd  
Neustaedter, Carman  
O'Brien, Mary  
O'Neil, Dugan  
Pantophlet, Ralph  
Parmar, Abhishek  
Percival, Colin

Pratt, Elspeth  
Rassier, Dilson  
Schiphorst, Thecla  
Schmidt, Michèle  
Singh Walia, Harkirat  
Stockie, John  
Sutherland, Jill  
Szymczyk, Barbara  
Thornton, Allen  
Traversa, Marissa  
Tucker, Rochelle  
Weldon, Laurel  
Whitehurst, David  
Williams, Vance

**Absent:**

Abu-Samhan, Mishael  
Bubela, Tania  
Bullock, Cécile  
Denholm, Julia  
Dhesa, Priyanka  
D'Silva, Tyler  
Hodaly, Alexander  
Nahmiash, Amanda  
Parent, Michael  
Rincon, Laura  
Sawan, Amani  
Shinkar, Igor  
Vrooman, Tamara  
Vuong, Quang  
Williams, JF  
Zuluaga, Natalia

**In Attendance:**

Monk, Melanie

**1. Approval of the Agenda**

The agenda was approved as distributed.

**2. Approval of the Minutes of the Open Session of December 4, 2023**

The minutes of the open session on December 4, 2023 were approved as distributed.

**3. Approval of the Minutes of the Open Session of January 8, 2024**

The minutes of the open session on January 8, 2024 were approved as distributed.

**4. Business Arising from the Minutes**

There was no business arising from the minutes.

**5. Report of the Chair**

The Chair acknowledged that February is Black History Month, and this year, SFU has adopted the theme *Building Connections for Black Flourishing* in alignment with its commitment to the Scarborough Charter.

As per an announcement last week by Board of Governors Chair Angie Lamarsh, the Chair reported that she has been reappointed for another five-year term as SFU's president and vice-chancellor.

The Chair thanked Board and Senate members who attended the recent Board-Senate retreat. The session featured breakout exercises to discuss how Board and Senate should collaborate. Out of that discussion came some proposed rules for strengthening collegial governance, including:

- Operate for the greater good of the university.
- Seek to understand – consult, listen, trust each other.
- Drive to a decision – structured interactions, solid data, ask hard questions, challenge the status quo.
- Establish effective structures – engage early, improve communication.

Discussion also centered on ways for Board and Senate to connect around the approval process for the SFU Medical School. Given that both Board and Senate have separate roles to play regarding the approval process, and not wanting to duplicate or undermine these structures, the respective chair of each governance body is proposing that two members of the Senate Committee on University Priorities (SCUP) be designated to join the budget working group of the Board to engage in a discussion related to the medical school so that key concerns can be discussed prior to the approval process.

The Chair reported that the Board of Governors seeks to develop new terms of reference for itself. The Board currently has its terms of reference embedded in a policy, and as such, movement is afoot to remove the Board's terms of reference from a policy and have it determine its own procedures, much like Senate does. There is a requirement through Policy B. 10.00 for the community to be consulted, and given this, the repeal of policy B 10.02 (Terms of Reference for Board Standing Committees) will be coming out into the broader community in the future.

The Chair thanked those who attended the Faculty and Staff Town Hall last week to hear an update on the budget from Vice-President, Finance, Martin Pochurko, and Vice-President, Academic, Dilson Rassier. The University is working closely with the provincial government to understand what the international visa cap will look like for SFU and to make sure letters get sent out to international students.

The Chair reported that work is ongoing to welcome the Royal Society to SFU in November for the 2024 Celebration of Excellence and Engagement. A planning committee has been struck, led by Dugan O'Neil, Vice-President, Research & International.

A question was asked about the committee looking at the medical school and if it would be an ad hoc committee or the Finance Committee of the Board. Senate was informed that there is a special working group of the Board consisting of the Chair of the Finance Committee, the Chancellor, and the Board Chair. They are also working closely with the Provost and the Vice-President, Finance to do a deep dive of the finances given the current budgetary challenges. As information becomes available around budgeting, members of the Board and Senate will be brought together.

**i) Strategic Research Plan Progress Report for Year 2023 and Year 2024 Goals  
(S.24-15)**

Senate received the Strategic Research Plan Progress Report for Year 2023 and Year 2024 Goals for information. Senator O'Neil provided a brief PowerPoint presentation, after which he took questions.

Noting current budgetary limitations, a question was asked regarding the process for prioritizing certain projects over others. Senate was informed that in terms of prioritization, six of the seven projects are continuations from last year, so their work is ongoing. However, there may be recommendations through these projects that current financial circumstances do not allow for. Also, given the hiring freeze, and the time cost involved from faculty and staff, there may not be capacity to take on additional tasks or work may have to be slowed down. It was noted that there are currently three projects that will not be started due to budget restraints. As to who makes decisions around prioritization, many decisions are made within the projects, but given that each project reports to the Vice-President, Research, ultimate responsibility rests there.

Noting that an update was provided on only one priority area, a question was asked about the remaining four priority areas. Senate was informed that the first project is about building a sense of internal community around each of the five priority areas in the Strategic Research Plan. It was stated that the goal for last year was to pick at least one and start building that internal community. That was done for Community-Centered Climate Innovation, but no attempt was made to do so for all five areas at the same time. Initial efforts have been made towards the second priority - supporting health and wellness of individuals, populations and communities, which is the priority that will be advanced this year. Work will continue on Community-Centered Climate Innovation, while adding the health-related strategic research plan priority.

Due to increasing costs and the need to rely on Undergraduate Student Research Awards (USRAs) to hire undergraduate research students, a question was asked whether the Research

Office is exploring ways of increasing support to faculty members so that they are encouraged to take on undergraduate students. Senate was informed that due to current financial restraints, the options are to potentially raise money through external fundraising or to decrease the number hired but increase the support for each.

## 6. Question Period

i) Senator Singh Walia submitted the following questions:

- a) *With the recent restrictions imposed by the federal government in terms of capping international students by 35% in aggregate but even bigger on the provincial level, up to 40–50% approx. for the BC province, how is SFU going to attract top talent with the sudden shortfall in international students, bringing in a different set of challenges, and how is SFU preparing for it?*

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

Senate was informed that SFU is waiting for its study permit cap to be communicated by the provincial government. As part of the strategy to address the budget challenges, Student Services has already been given clear instruction and provided some resources to emphasize the recruitment of international students. It was noted that a potential positive consequence is the possibility that the cap on private institutions will be different from those of public institutions, however, the impact of the timing of the federal announcement may discourage some international students from choosing to study in Canada.

- b) *Has the SCUS committee come up with a new pass/credit/no credit grading policy, as it is a standard practice in many universities and a permanent grading policy would help students without the need to bring temporary policies back again?*

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

Senate was informed that this issue is currently under consideration by the committee and as part of that process has consulted with faculties, advisors, students and other institutions.

- c) *Why has the SFU open undergraduate scholarship minimum GPA requirement increased to 3.90 CGPA effective Summer 2024 from 3.67 CGPA with a minimum term GPA of 3.50 in the last term of enrolment, which is not on par with other Canadian universities and has many negative impacts, like acting as a deterrent to attract future prospective talented students, not rewarding/incentivizing current students, being viewed as grade inflation by employers, and, in a broad sense, being seen as a falling academic standard of the university?*

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

Senate was informed that, as previously discussed at Senate, the funding for the Open Scholarship was reduced by about 50% with the other funds being allocated to support students

with financial need. The Senate Policy Committee on Scholarships, Awards and Bursaries (SPCSAB) considered various options on how to make changes to the Open Scholarship based on the budget assigned to this program. The Committee balanced the GPA requirement with ensuring that the scholarship would provide a meaningful amount of funding to students, and as such, approved the GPA requirement from 3.67 to 3.90. The Committee realizes that this change may be a deterrent to some students but it may also act to motivate other students to achieve the higher GPA, and reinforces SFU's reputation as an academically rigorous institution.

ii) Senator Myers submitted the following question:

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

*Over a year ago, in the October 2022 Senate we asked for the KPMG costing report on the proposed SFU medical school. We asked because it is obviously not possible for Senators to make a rational decision about the medical school without consideration of both the benefits and the costs of the medical school for the mission of the university.*

*We were told we would get the KPMG report. We still do not have it. Now we have been told that SCUP will be voting on the Notice of Intent (NOI) for the Medical School in a few days, Wednesday February 7th, 2024. Our current best educated guess, based on the similar Northern Ontario School of Medicine, is that the annual deficit of the SFU medical school would be as much as the annual academic expenditures of the Faculty of Health Science and the Faculty of Environment combined. When it is completely unnecessary, we should not be forced into making guesses in fulfilling our responsibility as Senators.*

*We ask that Senate be provided, without delay, the KPMG costing report so that Senators can make an informed vote on the NOI. Additional information on SFU adjusted costings is fine but not a substitute for the professional KPMG cost estimate. Their expertise and this report were paid for by the University to precisely enable rational, well-informed decision-making. There should be no need to hide this information.*

Dilson Rassier, Provost and Vice-President, Academic, and Kris Magnusson, Vice-Provost and Associate Vice-President, Learning and Teaching pro tem, responded to this question.

Senate was informed that the KPMG report will be provided to Senators tomorrow (February 6<sup>th</sup>). The report contains the preliminary costing approach taken, key inputs and assumptions and preliminary outputs. This report was the starting place for considering the key elements of developing a financial model. However, as the work unfolded, it became clear that many of the assumptions were not valid, because they did not take into account key factors such as program design (the program had not been designed yet), the impact of the mandate on resources, and the difference between existing medical programs with established infrastructure and the needs of a new program being built from scratch. Therefore, the report needs to be viewed as the starting place, but with the understanding that considerable work has taken place on the budget modeling over the past year.

Senate will recall that a draft business case was presented to the ministries (Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills and Ministry of Health) on May 31, 2023. Over the next 3 months, there were extensive consultations with and feedback from both ministries, resulting in the preparation of the revised business case on August 31, 2023.

SFU was, and remains, under a strict information embargo, but permission was obtained to share the broad plan (projected student numbers, growth plan, human resources needed, and areas of program focus) under conditions of non-disclosure agreements. The information was shared first with SCUP at the end of September, and then with the Board of Governors.

KPMG was retained for the primary purpose of developing and refining the budget model, and SFU worked closely with KPMG through the development of the May 31<sup>st</sup> submission, and then throughout the summer to revise the projections for the final August 31<sup>st</sup> submission. Though financial details cannot be shared, the planning framework and assumptions KPMG used in their analysis from the business case have been extracted and will be provided to Senators tomorrow. This will show some of the changes made from the May 2022 report to the final submission, and may provide some understanding of the rigor applied to the development of the financial model by KPMG.

SFU remains under an information embargo, and is therefore still not able to share the current financial proposal contained in the business case. The Treasury Board has completed its review, and it's expected to learn of the government's intention in the Throne Speech (expected the week of February 19<sup>th</sup>) followed by the release of the Provincial Budget (usually 2 or 3 days after the Throne Speech). There are 2 things to note as this process unfolds:

- First, the government can announce the provisions for establishing a medical school, but they have no authority to actually create (or impose) one. The decision to create a medical school at SFU will be the proper functions of Senate and of the Board of Governors, following due process.
- Second, the business case is not the same as a business plan. Whatever the announcement, SFU will then need to develop all of the implementation mechanisms (budget and staffing plans, etc.). The business case provides the framework for a budget allocation, and the budget allocation in turn provides the funding framework within which a specific operational plan can be developed. It is this plan that will be of most interest to Senate (for information) and the Board (for budget approvals). It should be noted that the President has stated that SFU will not proceed with a medical school unless the provincial budget allocation is sufficient to meet the needs.

From as early as April 2023, SFU has expressed concern to ministry partners about the negative impacts of the information embargo and understands how this embargo has limited Senate (and the Board) in gaining an understanding of the programmatic and budgetary impacts of a proposed school of medicine.

A question was asked around how much time will be allocated between the release of information from the government and going to a vote. Senate was informed that establishing a

specific timeline is challenging given that it's unknown what information will be provided by the government. Work will need to proceed expeditiously to drive it towards a decision, which is why a select number of individuals from Senate and Board will be assigned to do a deep dive on behalf of their governance colleagues.

## 7. Reports of Committees

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

#### i) Proposed Policy R70.01 - SFU Excellence in Research Awards (S.24-16)

Moved by D. Rassier, seconded by A. Lysova

“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.

A comment was made that the Senate Policy Committee on Scholarships, Awards and Bursaries (SPCSAB) has jurisdiction in these matters, and as such, a line should be added to include a member of SPCSAB (selected by SPCSAB) on the committee making the recommendations on these awards to ensure Senate oversight. Senate was informed that the suggestion would be taken as a friendly amendment.

The question was called and a vote taken.

MOTION CARRIED

#### ii) Senate Review Committee Membership (S.24-17)

Senate received Senate Review Committee Membership for information.

### B) Senate Committee on Undergraduate Studies (SCUS)

#### i) Program Changes (S.24-18)

Senate received information that the Senate Committee on Undergraduate Studies, acting under delegated authority, approved program changes in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (School of Criminology, French, Global Humanities, Labour Studies Program, School of Public Policy, Psychology, Sociology and Anthropology, World Languages and Literatures), the Faculty of Education, and the Faculty of Environment (Geography).

#### ii) New Course Proposals (S.24-19)

Senate received information that the Senate Committee on Undergraduate Studies, acting under delegated authority, approved new course proposals in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (French, Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies, Labour Studies Program, Sociology and Anthropology), and the Faculty of Environment (School of Environmental Science).

#### iii) Course Changes (S.24-20)

Senate received information that the Senate Committee on Undergraduate Studies, acting under delegated authority, approved course changes in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (Economics, French, Gender, Sexuality and Women's Studies, Global Humanities, Psychology,

Sociology and Anthropology), the Beedie School of Business, and the Faculty of Environment (Geography).

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

**i) Graduate General Regulation 1.8.1 - Progress Evaluation (S.24-21)**

Moved by M. O'Brien, seconded by A. Parmar

“That Senate approve the revisions to Graduate General Regulation 1.8.1 Progress Evaluation.”

The question was called and a vote taken.

MOTION CARRIED

**ii) Program Changes (S.24-22)**

Senate received information that the Senate Graduate Studies Committee, acting under delegated authority, approved program changes in the Beedie School of Business, and the Faculty of Science (Earth Sciences).

**iii) New Course Proposals (S.24-23)**

Senate received information that the Senate Graduate Studies Committee, acting under delegated authority, approved new course proposals in the Beedie School of Business.

**iv) Course Changes (S.24-24)**

Senate received information that the Senate Graduate Studies Committee, acting under delegated authority, approved a course change in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (Political Science).

**v) Course Reinstatements (S.24-25)**

Senate received information that the Senate Graduate Studies Committee, acting under delegated authority, approved course reinstatements in the Faculty of Applied Sciences (School of Computing Science), Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (Psychology), the Faculty of Education, and the Faculty of Science (Physics).

**D) Senate Nominating Committee (SNC)**

**i) Senate Committee Elections (S.24-26 Revised)**

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

A question was asked regarding how long the election period runs from the call for nominations to being elected. Senate was informed that names of candidates to fill committee vacancies can be brought to any meeting of Senate, but that the main call for nominations goes out in between the spring and summer terms, to coincide with new terms of membership beginning on June 1<sup>st</sup>.

**E) Senate Policy Committee on Scholarships, Awards and Bursaries (SPCSAB)**

**i) Annual Report 2022/2023 (S.24-27)**

Senate received the Senate Policy Committee on Scholarships, Awards and Bursaries (SPCSAB) Annual Report 2022/2023 for information).



**8. Other Business**

**9. Information**

**i) Date of the next regular meeting – Monday, March 4, 2024**

Open session adjourned at 6:40 p.m.

Tom Nault  
Senate Secretary