



SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY
ENGAGING THE WORLD

Minutes of a Meeting of the Senate of Simon Fraser University held on
Monday, January 11, 2021 at 5:30 pm via Zoom Video Conferencing

Open Session

Present: Joy Johnson, Chair

Andreoiu, Corina
Bartram, Lyn
Bird, Gwen
Brennand, Tracy
Bubela, Tania
Burley, David
Chapman, Glenn
Chenier, Elise
Coleman, Gordon
Daniel, Bryan
Dauvergne, Catherine
Denholm, Julia
Derksen, Jeff
Elle, Elizabeth
Everton, Mike
Favere-Marchesi, Michael
Fiume, Eugene
Gedajlovic, Eric
Gemino, Andrew
Gildersleve, Corbett
Gray, Bonnie
Gunn, Alexandra
Hall, Peter
Hendrigan, Holly
Hoffer, Andy
Kench, Paul
Krauth, Brian
Krogman, Naomi
Kumpulainen, Kristiina
Lam, Allan
Lam, Daniel
Laitsch, Dan
Leznoff, Daniel
Liosis, Gabe
Lord Ferguson, Sarah
Martell, Matt
Masri, Kamal
McTavish, Rob
Mirhady, David
Modi, Nafoni
Mohamed, Osob

Murphy, David
Myers, Gord
Nepomnaschy, Pablo
Neustaedter, Carman
O'Neil, Dugan
O'Neill, Susan
Pantophlet, Ralph
Parkhouse, Wade
Parmar, Abhishek
Percival, Colin
Pulkingham, Jane
Raza, Samad
Singh, Harry Preet
Singh, Tanishvir
Spector, Stephen
Stockie, John
Strauss, Kendra
Tingling, Peter
Weldon, Steve
Walsby, Charles
Wong, Alan
Zandvliet, David

Absent:

Collard, Mark
Hogg, Robert
Kim, Woo Soo
Luu, Susan
Shaw, Chris
Vrooman, Tamara

In Attendance:

Bhakthan, Manoj
Birmie, Steve
Chu, Gloria
Coley, David
Khan Hemani, Rummana
Pidgion, Michelle

The Chair acknowledged that SFU is privileged to be situated on the traditional territories of the Tsleil–Waututh, Squamish, Kwikwetlem, and Musqueam nations.

1. Approval of the Agenda

The agenda was approved as distributed.

2. Approval of the Minutes of the Special Meeting of Senate on November 26, 2020

The minutes of the Special Meeting of Senate on November 26, 2020 were approved as distributed.

3. The Minutes of the Open Session of December 7, 2020 will be considered for approval at the Senate meeting on February 1, 2021

4. Business Arising from the Minutes

- i) At the Special Meeting of Senate on November 26th, Senator Laitsch asked a question about faculty accessing support should they be adversely affected by approved date changes and requested that this process be reported back to Senate. Senate was informed that immediately following the Senate meeting a call out was sent to all department chairs and directors of schools to make them aware that the Office of the Vice-President, Academic would provide whatever support was necessary and to ask if there were specific types of support that would be required. It was noted that no responses or questions were received about the additional workload that was required due to date changes.

5. Report of the Chair

The Chair reported that SFU will be adding a new executive position, Vice-President, People Equity and Inclusion to bring faculty and staff relations functions into a single portfolio and help shape a unified strategy and thereby create a more equitable and inclusive university. A search committee is in the process of being formed, governed by policy GP 29, and the SFU community will be invited to provide feedback on the position description. Also, a series of conversations have been initiated with groups of faculty, staff and students across the University on issues of equity, diversity and inclusion.

Noting an incident that occurred at the Burnaby campus on December 11th in which an alumnus was arrested, the Chair reported that an external review of that incident has been launched and consideration is being given to the ways in which the University can begin discussing safety and security on campus.

The Chair reported that SFU has received a \$34 million gift from the Uggla Family, the largest in SFU's history, with the aim to support equity deserving students.

The Chair reported that SFU had nine researchers among the new and renewed Canada Research Chairs, with areas of research ranging from preventing Alzheimer's disease through data science to improving the user experience in digital assistance through artificial intelligence.

A question was asked about the new Vice-President, People, Equity and Inclusion position not including students in its purview and if another position would be created to address this. Senate was informed that work needs to be done with students relating to equity, diversity and inclusion, and that the Associate Vice-President, Students and International is developing initiatives related to EDI within the student services portfolio, however, at this time, focus is being placed on employees of the university.

i) Pathways Project Final Report (S.21-1)

Senate received the Pathways Project Final Report for information.

Michelle Pidgeon, Associate Dean, Indigeneity – Faculty of Education, was in attendance to respond to questions.

Senate was informed that this report came together in response to the need to address indigenous pathways to and through SFU centered in an indigenous holistic framework that speaks about the interconnections of an individual to their family, nation and extended community. This project also aims to understand what indigenous student communities need and what local indigenous communities want from SFU and thinking about how the University can better work with indigenous communities to support their educational vision and needs.

6. Question Period

No questions were submitted.

7. Reports of Committees

A) Calendar Committee (CC)

i) Revision to Academic Dates 2020/2021 – Convocation and Summer 2021 (S.21-2)

Motion 1:

Moved by S. Spector, seconded by A. Parmar

“That Senate approve the revisions to the June 2021 Convocation ceremony, to be moved from June 8, 9, 10, and 11 to June 24, 25, 28, and 29.”

Gloria Chu, Director – Ceremonies and Events, was in attendance to respond to questions.

A question was called and a vote taken.

MOTION CARRIED

Motion 2:

Moved by S. Spector, seconded by J. Stockie

“That Senate approve the revisions to the Summer 2021 term, that the first day of classes for the Summer 2021 term be moved from Monday, May 17 to Wednesday May 12.”

A question was called and a vote taken.

MOTION CARRIED

B) Senate Committee on Undergraduate Studies (SCUS)

i) Program Changes (S.21-3)

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), and the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (English).

David Coley, Professor and Undergraduate Chair - Department of English, was in attendance to respond to questions.

ii) New Course Proposals (S.21-4)

Senate received information that the Senate Committee on Undergraduate Studies, acting under delegated authority, approved a new course proposal in Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (English), and the Faculty of Science (Physics).

David Coley, Professor and Undergraduate Chair - Department of English, was in attendance to respond to questions.

iii) Course Changes (S.21-5)

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 Computing Science, School of Mechatronic Systems Engineering), the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (English), and the Faculty of Science (Biological Sciences, Biomedical Physiology and Kinesiology, Chemistry, Earth Sciences, f Molecular Biology and Biochemistry, Statistics and Actuarial Sciences).

David Coley, Professor and Undergraduate Chair - Department of English, was in attendance to respond to questions.

A question was asked about the rationale for deleting 30 English courses while only adding 12 new courses. Senate was informed that fewer English courses will be offered, in part due to a lack of faculty members to teach them in regular rotation. The English Department wants to offer courses that best reflect its faculty and the courses students want to take and there has been movement away from narrowly conceived courses to those that are more broadly conceived. This broadening has allowed the department to focus on more topical issues taught within a variety of temporal and geographical modes.

C) Senate Graduate Studies Committee (SGSC)

i) Program Changes (S.21-6)

Senate received information that the Senate Graduate Studies Committee, acting under delegated authority, approved a program change in the Beedie School of Business.

ii) New Course Proposals (S.21-7)

Senate received information that the Senate Graduate Studies Committee, acting under delegated authority, approved new course proposals in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (International Studies), and the Beedie School of Business.

iii) Course Changes (S.21-8)

Senate received information that the Senate Graduate Studies Committee, acting under delegated authority, approved course changes in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (International Studies), the Beedie School of Business, and the Faculty of Environment (School of Resource and Environmental Management).

D) Senate Nominating Committee (SNC)**i) Senate Committee Elections (S.20-9)**

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

E) Senate Policy Committee on Scholarships, Awards and Bursaries (SPCSAB)**i) Annual Report 2019/2020 (S.21-10)**

Senate received the Senate Policy Committee on Scholarships, Awards and Bursaries (SPCSAB) Annual Report 2019/2020 for information.

Noting that the number and dollar amount of bursaries awarded to international undergraduate students exceeded the number and dollar amount awarded to domestic undergraduate students, a question was asked if consideration is being given to revisiting this practice. Senate was informed that one of the issues is that international students pay significantly higher tuition fees than domestic students, and that domestic students also have access to a wider range of financial resources. As such, a portion of the funding the University receives is designated to supporting international students.

Manoj Bhakthan, Director, Financial Aid and Awards, was in attendance to respond to questions.

8. Other Business**i) Pass/Fail Grading (S.21-11)**

Senate received Pass/Fail Grading for information.

ii) Pilot Undergraduate Grading Scheme Spring, Summer, and Fall 2021 terms (S.21-12)

Moved by W. Parkhouse, seconded by G. Liosis

“That Senate approve a pilot to implement a new, temporary undergraduate grading system of Pass/Credit/No Credit (P/CR/NC) for the Spring, Summer, and Fall 2021 terms, and directs the Senate Committee on Undergraduate Studies (SCUS) to develop an implementation plan as soon as possible.”

Senate was informed that this motion stems from a discussion at the January 7th SCUS meeting where a majority of the meeting was dedicated to a discussion of how grading, standing, withdrawal, and continuance policies could be made more flexible to accommodate the challenges students are facing during the pandemic. It was also noted that this motion is the result of collaboration and compromise between student Senators, SCUS and the Registrar’s Office. This motion recommends a pilot grading system to be implemented for the 2021 year. In addition, SCUS intends to make other adjustments, as detailed in the material accompanying the

motion, with regard to academic standing, withdrawal, and continuance policies. These adjustments will create a comprehensive package of solutions to meet the very real needs of students during the pandemic, while balancing the academic concerns expressed by faculty members.

This item garnered considerable discussion, notably from student and faculty Senators, with most expressing support for the motion and appreciation that a compromise had been reached to bring this motion before Senate. Despite the general level of support, a number of questions and/or concerns were raised:

- How will faculty members be held accountable to ensuring that a quality experience is being offered to students given that biennial reviews have been paused for the next two years?
- If substantial changes are made to the Withdrawal Under Extenuating Circumstances policy, will Senate be made aware of the changes and will students have to withdraw from all their courses rather than being able to cherry-pick which courses to withdraw from?
- How will the ramifications of selective GPA inflation be handled with regard to scholarships?
- What classes can actually be selected for this grading scheme, and if it only applies to electives, how does one know if it's an elective given that a course could initially be selected as an elective but later become a program course depending on one's major or minor?
- Given that this motion also covers the Summer and Fall 2021 terms, and there is no way to know how accreditation bodies policies will be implemented for those terms, it may be advisable to allow certain programs to opt out of this proposed grading scheme.
- It is misleading to students to suggest that all CR grades will fulfill graduation requirements given that almost all engineering courses will not accept CR grades to meet prerequisite requirements. It was added that WQB requirements would also not be met by CR grades. As such, the language should be changed to say that CR grades may fulfill the total units required for degree completion.
- The Registrar and SCUS should consider whether the options available to students under the Withdrawal Under Extenuating Circumstances policy can be broadened.
- Given that many outside agencies and institutions place great credence on GPA numbers, an effective communication strategy needs to be formulated to inform the SFU community and external bodies of the application of the new grading scheme.
- Should this motion pass, it is important to ensure that adequate resources are in place to support students and academic advisors, so that students are able to make an informed decision and one that is in their best interest of their academic future.
- Should students who have been found to have committed an academic integrity offence be able to avail themselves of this grading scheme?

Citing concerns that the motion covers only elective courses rather than all courses, an amendment to the motion was proposed.

Motion:

Moved by O. Mohammed, seconded by A. Parmar

“That Senate amend the memo and therefore the full motion to make all courses available for Pass/Credit/No Credit (P/CR/NC) for the Spring, Summer, and Fall 2021 terms.”

A number of student Senators spoke in favour of the amendment, while a number of faculty Senators spoke against the amendment. Senate was informed that the proposed grading scheme intentionally targets electives and that individual programs may allow, on a restrictive basis, the utilization of a P/CR/NC grading system for certain program-specific requirements. A further reason the proposed grading scheme targets electives is to align with other institutions.

A point of order was raised to suggest that voting for the amendment should be done anonymously, thereby allowing Senators to vote their conscience without fear of repercussions. It was agreed that a poll be conducted to determine if voting for the proposed amendment will be conducted anonymously.

Motion:

Moved by S. Spector, seconded by L. Bartram

“That voting on the proposed amendment to the main motion be conducted anonymously.”

A question was called and a vote taken.

MOTION CARRIED

Having determined that voting on the amendment will be conducted anonymously, the Chair called the question on the amended motion.

A question was called and a vote taken.

AMENDMENT FAILED

It was suggested that voting on the main motion be conducted anonymously. It was agreed that a poll be conducted to determine if voting on the main motion will be conducted anonymously.

Motion:

Moved by C. Percival, seconded by S. Spector

“That voting on the main motion be conducted anomalously.”

A question was called and a vote taken.

MOTION CARRIED

Noting that the amendment to the main motion failed, and having determined that voting on the main motion will be conducted anonymously, the Chair called the question on the main motion.

A question was called and a vote taken.

MOTION CARRIED

9. Information

i) Date of the next regular meeting – Monday, February 1, 2021

Open session adjourned at 7:55 p.m.

Kathryn Verkerk
Senate Secretary pro tem