

DRAFT UNTIL APPROVED BY SENATE

Minutes of a Meeting of the Senate of Simon Fraser University held on
Monday, January 5, 2004 at 7:00 pm in Room 3210 WMC

Open Session

Present: Stevenson, Michael
President and Chair of Senate

Atkins, Stella
Brennand, Tracy
Budd, James
Clayman, Bruce
Collinge, Joan (representing C. Yerbury)
Copeland, Lynn
da Silva, Gisele
D'Auria, John
Dickinson, John
Driver, Jon
Fung, Edward
Giacomantonio, Chris
Gregory, Titus
Gupta, Kamal
Haunerland, Norbert
Heaney, John
Hira, Andy
Honda, Barry
Horvath, Adam
Kaila, Pam
Kalanj, Tiffany
Lewis, Brian
Love, Ernie
McFetridge, Paul
Percival, Paul
Peters, Joseph
Pierce, John
Plischke, Michael
Rozell, Sara
Sears, Camilla
Scott, Jamie
Shaker, Paul
Smith, Don
Waterhouse, John
Weeks, Dan

Heath, Nick, Acting Registrar
Watt, Alison, Director, University Secretariat
Grant, Bobbie, Recording Secretary

Absent:

Apaak, Clement
Beynon, Peter
Dunsterville, Valerie
Fizzell, Maureen
Gill, Alison
Gordon, Robert
Grimmett, Peter
Higgins, Anne
Krane, Bill
Lemay, Joanne
Mauser, Gary
McArthur, James
Naef, Barbara
Thandi, Ranbir
Tombe, Trevor
Van Aalst, Jan
Wessel, Sylvia
Wong, Josephine
Wong, Milton
Woodbury, Rob
Yoo, Rick

In attendance:

Bell, KC
Blackman, Roger
Denham, Judy
Krebs, Dennis
Woodham, Amanda

1. Approval of the Agenda

The Agenda was approved as distributed.

2. Approval of the Minutes of the Open Session of December 1, 2003

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

Referring to the weather advisory regarding the possibility of a significant snowfall, Senate was advised that information about closure of the University would be distributed through the media and be announced on the University's web site and on the road conditions phone line.

Senate was advised that the Government had made changes to the University Act, the majority of which reflected minor legal housekeeping issues. However, some of the changes affected the membership of the Senate and the Board of Governors. Order-In-Council appointments on Senate have been eliminated. Current OIC appointments will continue until the expiry of their term but will not be replaced so Senate will gradually lose four members. In addition, it will no longer be a requirement for faculty and students to be 'full-time' in order to be elected to Senate and the Board of Governors, and Board members no longer need to be resident in British Columbia. There was also a slight change in wording with respect to the authorization required to run a deficit.

5. Question Period

No Pre-requisite checks following submission of final grades for Fall 2003 semester.

It was noted that the new student information system was not capable of automatically dropping students who have an incomplete prerequisite for a course for which they have enrolled before the release of grades for the prerequisite course, and it was now the student's responsibility to drop the course voluntarily if he/she does not meet prerequisite requirements. Recent experience in some departments has indicated that students are not dropping and N. Haunerland questioned what was being done to mitigate this problem.

Senate was advised that this issue was a known gap in the functionality of the new system that had been identified early, but that was not easily fixed because prerequisite checking was an on-line process that existed only at the time the enrolment request was made. There were plans to provide departments with reports identifying students in this situation early in the semester but the reports were not yet available. Various suggestions were made about how to manage this

situation including getting instructors to make announcements or sending a university-wide email about not continuing in courses if the students hadn't satisfactorily completed prerequisites.

The Chair reported that this issue had been discussed at length by Chairs and Directors and reported that it appeared to be a matter of great concern particularly within the Faculty of Science. As a result of those discussions, the Chair reiterated his understanding that reports identifying some of the problems would be available to departments. However, because of the various types of prerequisite structures, these reports would not identify all cases. It should be ascertained when that report would be available and information should be conveyed to instructors advising them that there is this problem in the new system and there may be students in their course that have not fulfilled the prerequisites. It was also the Chair's understanding that specialists attached to the SIMS team would be in contact with individual departments where this was a problem to review the extent of the problem, the nature of the special complicating factors that wouldn't be caught by the basic reports, and then a general report on what should be done would be prepared.

The Chair felt it was important that the basic reports be made available to instructors quickly and requested the Vice President Academic to convey the discussion and concerns of Senate to the Chief Information Officer. The Chair also indicated that this issue would be reported back to Senate.

4. Reports of Committees

- A) Undergraduate Curriculum Implementation Task Force
- i) Paper S.04-1 – Discussion Paper on the Implementation of University-wide Writing, Quantitative, and Breadth Requirements

The following members of the Committee were in attendance in order to respond to questions: Dennis Krebs (Chair), Roger Blackman, and KC Bell.

In order to permit wide-ranging discussion, the chair suggested that Senate move into a Committee of the Whole

Moved by P. Percival, seconded by D. Smith

“that Senate move into Committee of the Whole”

Question was called, and a vote taken.

MOTION CARRIED

Discussion began with an overview of the process by the Chair of the Task Force. Senate was advised that the heart of the recommendations passed by Senate in

principle were unchanged. However, the exact ways in which to achieve those goals have slightly changed. The Implementation Task Force feels strongly that students need to be prepared to take writing and quantitative courses and that quantitative courses ought to be defined broadly to include courses that were non-mathematical in nature. However, the earlier committee suggested that students be admitted to SFU in the current way and then students who did not receive high grades in English 12 or in the Math 11 or 12 would then have to take an English or a Math proficiency test as a prerequisite for entering the university level writing or quantitative course. The present committee felt that students ought to be screened prior to admission to identify those students who had not made satisfactory progress in English and recommends that all students applying to Simon Fraser, except those who obtain excellent grades in English 12 (or equivalent), be required to take a language proficiency test. The Learning Proficiency Index (LPI) has been identified as the most appropriate test, particularly since it is used by both UBC and UVic and most students already take it. With respect to the assessment of quantitative abilities, the Implementation Committee recommends that instructors of first year Q courses be encouraged to develop tests that assess the abilities necessary for their course and require their students to take those tests prior to or at the first course session. The main reason for the deviation from the previous committee's recommendation in this regard pertains to the special kind of quantitative courses envisioned for students in the Humanities. In addition, the Implementation Task Force recommends that only students who can be helped with writing or math be admitted and, in conjunction with this recommendation, is the creation of a Student Learning Centre and a foundational writing course.

The following points are a summary of the lengthy discussion.

- Reference was made to page 8 of the report with regard to the W course requirements. The original recommendation, which was approved in principle by Senate, required six credits of courses that fostered writing ability. The present recommendation specifies that at least one of the courses should be an upper division course. Opinion was expressed that this was a significant change from the original recommendation. In response, it was explained that the committee had two competing lines of thought. On one hand, it was felt that completing the writing requirement at the start of the student's program would benefit the student the most; on the other hand, it was felt that it would be more beneficial if the writing experience was done in conjunction with their major. Since two courses were required, the committee felt it was a reasonable solution to require one lower division and one upper division course.
- While in agreement that entry requirements with respect to quantitative and writing ability for university admission were essential for all disciplines, opinion was expressed that once students were admitted they should be allowed to choose their own breadth courses. It was pointed out that different Faculties have

different needs and what may be valuable in some Faculties may not be beneficial in others and having inflexible, overall requirements for all students in all faculties was believed to be a major flaw in the recommendations.

- Disappointment was expressed about recommendation three concerning quantitative proficiency which recommends that instructors be encouraged to develop tests to test specific knowledge. Opinion was expressed that this proposal went against the spirit of the original recommendation which suggested that SFU adopt minimum standards in three areas – writing, quantitative and breadth so that the University can guarantee that SFU students meet certain minimum standards, and encouraging faculty to develop quantitative proficiency tests will not guarantee minimum standards. Opinion was expressed that the original concept seems to have been abandoned and it was suggested that the committee reconsider this recommendation.
- Concern was expressed with respect to recommendation six which implied that the University would be responsible for providing remedial courses for students admitted under this category and clarification was sought as to why this recommendation was necessary in light of recommendation one which would require students to reach a certain level of proficiency prior to admission. Recommendation six was intended to help students who are admissible but have been identified as having marginal writing skills and the foundation course would ease their transition into the required writing course. Although course instructors would give some remedial assistance, the design of the course would teach students to write at a university level. It was the Committee's belief that the University should not be admitting students who require more remedial work than the University could provide and the University should not be in the business of providing a lot of remedial assistance.
- Referring to the recommendation concerning post-admission tests of quantitative proficiency, it was suggested that the tests should be pre-admission and that the arguments for having post-admission tests were unconvincing. It was also suggested that if standardized tests were not acceptable for Humanities then Humanities students could be exempt from the tests or tested in another way rather than making a change which affects everyone else.
- The level of writing skills of international students was raised as an issue by several Senators and it was suggested that more attention should be paid to this matter. It was suggested that international students be offered the option of an in-depth linguistic and cultural orientation preparation, such as the English Bridge Program, rather than simply requiring a particular level in an English proficiency test.

- Suggestion was made that the University should have a regular writing centre that was discipline specific and also geared toward graduate students.
- Reference was made to the Centre for Writing Intensive Learning. It was suggested that expectations in terms of faculty requirements to create writing intensive courses were onerous and may be affecting the number of courses that could be offered under this initiative.
- Concern was expressed that there was no mention of additional TA support in the documentation, especially in relation to writing intensive courses. It was noted that the Committee has recommended that TAs be given additional support and that recommendation has already been implemented. It was also pointed out that the possibility of providing training to TAs to give writing intensive courses, and the development of graduate courses for teaching assistants in writing within their discipline were also being considered.
- Concern was expressed that the recommendations could be implemented without the creation of the student learning centre and it was suggested that one should not happen without the other. It was acknowledged that having both occur concurrently would significantly increase the costs and it was hoped that the extra funding needed would be sought and not be drawn from the current operating budget. Senate was advised that meetings had already taken place with the Vice President Advancement about raising funds for a student learning centre. Suggestion was made that consideration be given to how a student learning centre located on campus would be able to serve non-traditional students and students not taking courses at the Burnaby location.
- It was suggested that the proposed Task Force should have student representation.
- Opinion was expressed that there appeared to be an imbalance between Faculties as to modifications. Reference was made to the change concerning the requirements for the quantitative proficiency test as a result of objections raised by the Humanities but when concerns were expressed by the Faculty of Science with regard to the breadth requirements it was pointed out that no changes were possible because they were part of what Senate had approved. It was suggested that the Task Force should be prepared to revisit this issue and consider some flexibility within the requirements.

In response to an inquiry as to whether it was possible to make changes to the recommendations, Senate was advised that consultations were ongoing and that it was the intent of the Task Force to meet with all of the Faculty Curriculum Committees, have open forums, and meet with as many departments and programs as possible over the next couple of months. Recommendations would be revised in

light of these consultations and a revised document would then be distributed to the University community and to Senate to allow comment on the revised recommendations. Following that final consultation, the recommendations would come back to Senate for approval.

Moved by T. Gregory, seconded by C. Sears

“that Senate move out of Committee of the Whole”

Question was called, and a vote taken.

MOTION CARRIED

On behalf of Senate, the Chair thanked members of the Committee for their participation at Senate and for their ongoing work on this project.

B) Senate Committee on Undergraduate Studies

i) Paper S.04-2 – Curriculum Revisions – Faculty of Applied Sciences

Moved by J. Dickinson, seconded by B. Lewis

“that Senate approve the change to Grade 11 Admission Requirements in Kinesiology for British Columbia and Yukon applicants, as set forth in S.04-2, effective 2004-3”

Question was called, and a vote taken.

MOTION CARRIED

Senate received information that the Senate Committee on Undergraduate Studies, acting under delegated authority, deleted one course, approved four new courses, and approved minor revisions to existing courses and programs in Kinesiology and Communication.

ii) Paper S.04-3 – Curriculum Revisions – Faculty of Education

Senate received information that the Senate Committee on Undergraduate Studies, approved four new courses and minor revisions to existing courses and programs in the Faculty of Education.

iii) Paper S.04-4 – Curriculum Revisions – Faculty of Science

Senate received information that the Senate Committee on Undergraduate Studies, acting under delegated authority, approved six new courses and minor revisions to existing courses and programs in Biological Sciences, Mathematics, Molecular Biology and Biochemistry, Physics, Statistics/Actuarial Science.

C) Senate Committee on Continuing Studies

i) Paper S.04-5 – Criteria and Guidelines for the Establishment of Certificates for Successful Completion of Non-credit Courses

Moved by J. Collinge, seconded by J. Waterhouse

“that Senate approve the revisions to the Criteria and Guidelines for the Establishment of Certificates and Diplomas for Successful Completion of Programs of Non-Credit courses as set forth in S.04-5”

Question was called, and a vote taken.

MOTION CARRIED

ii) Paper S.04-6 – Annual Report 2001/2002 and 2002/2003 (For Information)

The Annual Report of Senate Committee on Continuing Studies for the years 2001/2002 and 2002/2003 was received by Senate for information.

iii) Paper S.04-7 – Report – Non-Credit Certificate for the Object Technology Program (For Information)

J. Denham and A. Woodham, Program Directors for Applied Science Programs in Continuing Studies were in attendance in order to respond to questions.

Senate received a report on the Non-Credit Certificate for the Object Technology Program for information. This report was submitted in compliance to Senate's request that a report on the academic and financial aspects of the program be provided to Senate following three years of operation.

D) Senate Graduate Studies Committee

i) Paper S.04-8 – Curriculum Revisions – Faculty of Applied Sciences

Senate received information that the Senate Graduate Studies Committee, acting under delegated authority, approved four new courses and minor revisions to existing courses and programs in Computing Science, Kinesiology, and Resource and Environmental Management.

ii) Paper S.04-9 – Curriculum Revisions – Faculty of Arts

Senate received information that the Senate Graduate Studies Committee, acting under delegated authority, approved four new courses and minor revisions to existing courses and programs in Criminology, Economics, and Psychology.

iii) Paper S.04-10 – Curriculum Revisions – Faculty of Science

Senate received information that the Senate Graduate Studies Committee, acting under delegated authority, approved four new courses and minor revisions to existing courses in Biological Sciences.

7. Other Business

There was no other business.

8. Information

The date of the next regularly scheduled meeting of Senate is Monday, February 2, 2004.

The Open Session adjourned at 8:35 pm and moved directly into Closed Session.

Alison Watt
Director, University Secretariat