

DRAFT UNTIL APPROVED BY SENATE

Minutes of a Meeting of the Senate of Simon Fraser University held on
Monday, November 3, 2008 at 5:30 pm in Room 3210 WMC

Open Session

Present:

Stevenson, Michael, President and Chair of Senate

Brennand, Tracy
Chapman, Glenn
Collinge, Joan
Copeland, Lynn
Cormack, Lesley
de Castell, Suzanne
Dow, Greg
Driver, Jon
Easton, Stephen
Fergusson, Andrew
Fizzell, Maureen
Francis, June
Gençay, Ramo
Gibson, Eli
Gordon, Robert
Hannah, David
Harding, Kevin
Haunerland, Norbert (representing M. Pinto)
Janes, Craig
Joffres, Michel
Jones, John (representing C. Jones)
Krane, Bill
Laba, Martin
Letourneau, Michael
Leznoff, Daniel
Liljedahl, Peter
Mathewes, Rolf (representing M. Plischke)
O'Neil, John
Paling, Joseph
Parkhouse, Wade
Patel, Ravi
Pavsek, Christopher
Percival, Colin
Percival, Paul
Popadiuk, Natalee
Seal, Brent
Shapiro, Daniel
Thompson, Steve
Warner, D'Arcy
Williams, Tony

Absent:

Arsenault-Antolick, Haida
Bains, Aman
Bart, Brad
Bocking, Natalie
Golnaraghi, Farid
Hayes, Michael
Lee, Benjamin
Louie, Brandt
MacDonald, Camille
McArthur, James
Peters, Joseph
Russell, Robert
Shermer, Thomas
Tapia, Earl Von
Tiffany, Evan
Vaid, Bhuvinder
van Baarsen, Amanda
van der Wey, Dolores
Wakkary, Ron

Ross, Kate, Registrar & Senior Director Student Enrolment
Watt, Alison, Director, University Secretariat
Grant, Bobbie, Recording Secretary

1. Approval of the Agenda
The Agenda was approved as distributed.
2. Approval of the Minutes of the Open Session of October 6, 2008
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

i) Paper S.08-113 – President's Agenda 2008/2009 (For Information)

Reference was made to the data on page 8 concerning the percentage of faculty members holding research grants, with particular focus on the data for the Faculty of Health Sciences. Senate was advised that the data was reasonable given that the Faculty was relatively new and many of the faculty members were hired in stages over the past several years and would not be expected to be holders of grants at this point.

It was noted that the report had been prepared before the current global economic turmoil, and the Chair was asked whether any of the priorities in the report had now changed. The Chair indicated he was still fairly optimistic and committed to the broad outlines indicated in the agenda since the flow of funds from endowments into the operating budget is low. However, the rate of change and the degree to which SFU can invest in new things will be curtailed in the short run.

The Chair also expressed concern about the flow through effects on the general economy and the impact on government revenues with a corresponding shift in government priorities. The current budget exercise will respond to the existing situation rather than the impact of the financial crisis, and the University will have to assess closely the impact of cuts on students and the student experience which again has been poorly rated in recent student surveys.

5. Question Period

A question about University and departmental policy and which policy prevails should they be in conflict was submitted by A. Fergusson. Without referring to specific details as to what was at issue, the Chair indicated that all policies should be followed and conflicts should be brought to the attention of the appropriate university authority.

Reference was made to a case heard by the Senate Committee on Disciplinary Appeals (SCODA) but it was noted that in that case the apparent conflict between department and university policy was resolved by the overturning of the department ruling by SCODA. Senator Gordon reminded Senate that the discipline policies were currently under review and would likely be presented to Senate for consideration at the January 2009 meeting.

K. Harding also reported that some departments have different procedures for grade reconsiderations. In particular, even though University policy requires a consultation phase between the chair, instructor and the student, many departments omit this requirement.

Senate was advised that some of these inconsistencies were brought forward by the SFSS Ombudsperson at the end of his term. J. Paling suggested that inconsistencies should be forwarded either to Senate or to the relevant department.

6. Reports of Committees

A) Senate Committee on University Priorities

i) Paper S.08-114 – External Review – Faculty of Education

Moved by J. Driver, seconded by N. Popadiuk

“that Senate approve the recommendations from the Senate Committee on University Priorities concerning advice to the Faculty of Education and the Dean of Education on priority items resulting from the External Review”

S. de Castell, Acting Dean of Education was available to respond to questions.

Question was called, and a vote taken.

MOTION CARRIED

B) Senate Committee on Undergraduate Studies

i) Paper S.08-115 – Annual Report (For Information)

The 2007/2008 Annual Report of the Senate Committee on Undergraduate Studies was received by Senate for information.

ii) Paper S.08-116 – Curriculum Revisions – Faculty of Applied Sciences (For Information)

Senate received information that the Senate Committee on Undergraduate Studies, acting under delegated authority, approved program changes and/or minor changes to existing courses in the General Studies program and the School of Computing Science.

iii) Paper S.08-117 – Curriculum Revisions – Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (For Information)

Senate received information that the Senate Committee on Undergraduate Studies, acting under delegated authority, approved changes to the language requirements in International Studies.

iv) Paper S.08-118 – Change to Calendar Wording for DE Grades (For Information)

A question about the intent of the change was posed. In particular, whether the DE notation could now only be used for medical or compassionate grounds, or were instructors still permitted to award a DE grade pending completion of work to be done. Senate was advised that the intent of the change was to clarify the use of the DE grade which has historically been used for medical/compassionate reasons. It was pointed out that it was common practice for instructors use the DE grade upon request by students to give them extra time to complete assigned work but it was mentioned that the appropriate grade in such an instance would be an N. However, it was pointed out that the current Calendar language permits instructors to use the DE notation to defer submitting a final mark pending completion of further work by the student.

The Chair of SCUS indicated that it was the Committee's intention to narrow the definition to medical or compassionate grounds because of the proliferation of DE grades being submitted and the high administrative costs of dealing with DE grades at the end of every semester. He reiterated that the appropriate grade in other circumstances would be an N, and that the DE subsequently converts to an F if no other grade is submitted. It was stressed that the N grade results in an automatic zero in the weighting system whereas the DE grade does not and many instructors use DE instead of an N so that students do not wind up in difficult situations.

Senate was advised that a change made by SCUS to the wording of the proposed Calendar entry needed to be noted on the Senate paper. In the first sentence, SCUS inserted the word 'normally' before the 24 hour description, i.e. "...from the student *normally* within 24 hours..." The Chair stated that the paper would reflect this editorial adjustment.

Brief discussion took place with respect to the change in wording from the 5th day of classes of the term immediately following to 21 days. Senate was advised that the length of time was approximately the same but the proposed wording makes the deadline much clearer.

An inquiry was made whether SCUS took into account the impact that this change would have on courses taught by the Centre for Online and Distance Education where papers frequently arrive late and DE grades are given until papers turn up and can be graded; and when instructors may need to defer final grades pending an investigation with respect to allegations of academic dishonesty.

It was suggested that SCUS should be asked to review this issue, consider the comments made by Senate, and consider the implications that a narrower definition would have. The Chair of SCUS felt that since the new language did not appear to provide the clarification SCUS intended, he had no objection to the Committee revisiting the issue. Therefore the proposed changes to the Calendar wording for DE grades were referred back to the Senate Committee on Undergraduate Studies for reconsideration.

C) Senate Nominating Committeei) Paper S.08-119 – Elections

Senate was advised that no further nominations had been received and that the names noted on the Senate paper were elected by acclamation. The outstanding vacancy would be carried forward.

N. Popadiuk, Chair of the Senate Nominating Committee (SNC) reported to Senate that since June 2008, the Committee has filled over 96 senate committee positions. On behalf of the Committee, she expressed thanks and appreciation to all Senators who have volunteered to serve on committees and to members of the Senate Nominating Committee who actively pursue nominations. She also wished to acknowledge and thank Alison Watt, Secretary to the committee, for her assistance in the committee's processes.

Since the SNC would like to conclude its work, if any Senator was aware of an undergraduate student who might be interested in serving as an Alternate on SUAAC (which is currently the last remaining vacancy), they were asked to forward the student's name to A. Watt.

7. Other Business

There was no other business.

8. Information

The date of the next regularly scheduled meeting of Senate is Monday, December 1, 2008.

The Open Session adjourned at 5:55 pm, and Senate moved directly into Closed Session.

Alison Watt
Director, University Secretariat