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MEMORANDUM

ATTENTION Senate
FROM Peter Keller, Vice-President, Academic
and Provost and Joy Johnson, Vice-
President Research and International
RE: SFU as a signatory to the *Magna Charta Universitatum*

DATE February 14, 2019
PAGES 1/1

The University recently learned of the opportunity to become a signatory to the [*Magna Charta Universitatum*](#) (1988), a reference document from the University of Bologna affirming recognition and adherence to fundamental values of higher education, including academic freedom and integrity, institutional autonomy, advancement of learning, and safeguarding of student freedom.

The next signing ceremony of accepted signatory applicants will be held at McMaster University in Ontario, in October 2019. By becoming a signatory to the *Magna Charta*, SFU would join more than 880 higher education institutions from around the world that have formally expressed commitment to the *Magna Charta's* values of academic freedom, integrity and autonomy. Canadian signatories include U. Ottawa, U. Toronto, U. Waterloo, Western U., McMaster U., York U., Laurentian U., U. du Québec en Outaouais, and U. Laval. SFU would become the first university in Western Canada to join.

Information on the *Magna Charta Universitatum*, the organization responsible for maintaining the standards set out in the document, and the application process is attached.

Motion:

That Senate approve and recommend to the Board of Governors that Simon Fraser University proceed with the application to become a signatory to the *Magna Charta Universitatum*.

Background

The *Magna Charta Universitatum* was originally drafted and signed by more than 300 European higher education institutions in 1988, on the occasion of the 900th anniversary of the University of Bologna. The document expresses what are believed to be core university values of independent teaching and research in higher education, shared amongst universities regardless of geography or history. Since that time, signatory membership has expanded worldwide, signed by institutions that express commitment to the fundamental principles articulated in the document.

The Observatory Magna Charta Universitatum (<http://www.magna-charta.org/>), a charitable organization located at the University of Bologna, is the implementation and guardianship body of the *Magna Charta*. The Observatory maintains the [admissions policy](#) for signatories, monitors the status of institutional autonomy and academic freedom worldwide, and acts on behalf of signatory members, commissioning case studies, organizing conferences and workshops, carrying out research, and mediating between governments and university leadership.

The Observatory recognizes the need to modernize the original *Magna Charta* document, to better address the international representation of the signatories. The organization's [Future Vision](#) webpage states: "Of course the document is dated and geographically defined. Today we would write it in a different manner, in view of a global context and another day and age. MCO council decided, however, not to edit or rewrite the original document, but rather in the near future add an additional, shorter document to it that explicitly states that present and future signatories understand and underwrite the *Magna Charta* in its worldwide 21st century meaning and dimensions" (2018, para. 4). The Observatory's [Strategic Plan 2015-2020](#) includes the need to "[evaluate and communicate the values] in a modern way for a more diverse range of universities" (2018, para. 11), with a goal of at least 1000 signatories by 2020. Becoming a signatory provides SFU with the opportunity to bring a Canadian perspective and our own contemporary view of shared values in higher education to the table at the next meeting which will be held in Canada.

Application Process

Applications for membership are submitted to the Observatory Council, which oversees the applicant review and recommends applicants to the University of Bologna for signatory membership.

Applications for signatory membership require:

- a formal request letter from the President;
- documented proof of support for the application from Senate and the Board of Governors (certified minutes);
- statements of support from 3 universities, at least 2 of which must be from outside of Canada and already signatories to the *Magna Charta*;
- [an application form](#) providing institutional details, including information on academic freedom policies and procedures; student and academic staff involvement in governance; level of institutional autonomy; policies and procedures for academic integrity; and policies and standards that ensure quality of teaching, learning, and research.

Because we cannot meet the posted February 28, 2019 application deadline for the October 2019 signing ceremony, the Observatory Secretariat has recommended by email that we submit our application as soon as our documents are ready, in order to go before an extraordinary session of the Observatory Council to be held sometime in May-June.

To meet this extension deadline:

- Senate will need to consider and approve the application at its March 4 meeting;
- Board of Governors University Relations Committee will need to consider and approve at its March 13 meeting, upon Senate recommendation.

There are no financial implications to becoming a signatory, although the Observatory does seek voluntary donations from members to augment its other funding sources.

Applicants must commit to participate in Observatory work, including self-evaluation, surveys, conferences and workshops. Any concerns regarding adherence to the *Magna Charta's* principles require university member cooperation to address and respond, and the Observatory may remove a non-compliant university from the list of signatories amongst other possible sanctions.

MAGNA CHARTA UNIVERSITATUM

Preamble

The undersigned Rectors of European Universities, gathered in Bologna for the ninth centenary of the oldest University in Europe, four years before the definitive abolition of boundaries between the countries of the European Community; looking forward to far-reaching co-operation between all European nations and believing that people and States should become more than ever aware of the part that universities will be called upon to play in a changing and increasingly international society,

Consider

1. that at the approaching end of this millennium the future of mankind depends largely on cultural, scientific and technical development ; and that this is built up in centres of culture, knowledge and research as represented by true universities ;
2. that the universities' task of spreading knowledge among the younger generations implies that, in today's world, they must also serve society as a whole ; and that the cultural, social and economic future of society requires, in particular, a considerable investment in continuing education ;
3. that universities must give future generations education and training that will teach them, and through them others, to respect the great harmonies of their natural environment and of life itself.

The undersigned Rectors of European universities proclaim to all States and to the conscience of all nations the fundamental principles, which must, now and always, support the vocation of universities.

Fundamental principles

1. The university is an autonomous institution at the heart of societies differently organised because of geography and historical heritage; it produces, examines, appraises and hands down culture by research and teaching.
To meet the needs of the world around it, its research and teaching must be morally and intellectually independent of all political authority and economic power.
2. Teaching and research in universities must be inseparable if their tuition is not to lag behind changing needs, the demands of society, and advances in scientific knowledge.
3. Freedom in research and training is the fundamental principle of university life, and governments and universities, each as far as in them lies, must ensure respect for this fundamental requirement. Rejecting intolerance and always open to dialogue, a university is an ideal meeting-ground for teachers capable of imparting their knowledge and well equipped to develop it by research and innovation and for students entitled, able and willing to enrich their minds with that knowledge.
4. A university is the trustee of the European humanist tradition; its constant care is to attain universal knowledge; to fulfil its vocation it transcends geographical and political frontiers, and affirms the vital need for different cultures to know and influence each other.

The means

To attain these goals by following such principles calls for effective *means*, suitable to present conditions.

1. To preserve freedom in research and teaching, the instruments appropriate to realise that freedom must be made available to all members of the university community.
2. Recruitment of teachers, and regulation of their status, must obey the principle that research is inseparable from teaching.
3. Each university must – with due allowance for particular circumstances – ensure that its students' freedoms are safeguarded, and that they enjoy concessions in which they can acquire the culture and training which it is their purpose to possess.
4. Universities – particularly in Europe – regard the mutual exchange of information and documentation, and frequent joint projects for the advancement of learning, as essential to the steady progress of knowledge.

Therefore, as in the earliest years of their history, they encourage mobility among teachers and students; furthermore, they consider a general policy of equivalent status, titles, examinations (without prejudice to national diplomas) and award of scholarships essential to the fulfilment of their mission in the conditions prevailing today.

The undersigned Rectors, on behalf of their Universities, undertake to do everything in their power to encourage each State, as well as the supranational organisations concerned, to mould this policy sedulously on this Magna Charta, which expresses the universities' unanimous desire freely determined and declared.

Bologna, 18 September 1988