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SPECIAL SENATE MEETING MINUTES October 26, 2020

The 618th Special meeting of the Senate of Saint Mary's University was held on Monday, October 26, 2020, at 9:00 AM, via Zoom. Dr Takseva, Chairperson presided.

PRESENT: Dr Summerby-Murray, Dr Butler, Dr Bhabra, Dr Francis, Dr VanderPlaat, Dr Sarty, Dr Austin, Dr Bannerjee, Dr Collins, Dr De Fuentes, Dr Grandy, Dr Grek-Martin, Dr O'Brien, Dr Panasian, Dr Stinson, Dr Takseva, Mr Brophy, Ms Killam, Ms van den Hoogen, Mr de Chastelain, Ms Abigail Winters, Ms Nankani, Mr Tumussime, Mr Zokan, Ms. Sargeant-Greenwood, Ms Milton, and Ms Bell, Secretary to the Office of Senate.

REGRETS: Dr Brosseau, Dr Hanley, Dr Hart, Dr Power, and Dr Twohig

Meeting commenced at 9:02 A.M with the territorial acknowledgement. Dr Takseva, Chair.

20132 **REPORT OF AGENDA COMMITTEE**
The Senate Agenda was approved.

20133 **NEW BUSINESS FROM**

1. Floor (not involving notice of motion)
Pursuant to Senate Bylaws 2.2.2 Senate is asked to consider the impact of the current conflict in Saulnierville, NS. We have students at SMU who wish to participate in support, solidarity and advocacy efforts in the unfolding situation in this community without academic penalty.

Senate has been asked to consider issuing a communication to faculty strongly requesting that all faculty teaching in the fall 2020 term provide accommodation to any student registered in courses in this fall term who may wish to participate in support, solidarity and advocacy efforts related to this unfolding dispute over the moderate livelihood fishery in Mi'kmaq lands. Accommodation should be through extended timelines for course component submissions, and/or providing those students with alternative times to write tests and examinations.

Key Discussion Points:

- Discussion revolved around how long this dispute was likely to continue. Senators supported extending the timeline for this accommodation to the end of the term.

- A Senator stated that they had an Indigenous student who was intimately affected by this conflict and that asked for accommodation during this difficult time for him and his family. That request was granted. This Senator welcomed this discussion in a broader context.
- Senate`s position should be one of support for student participation and to encourage colleagues to do so as well.
- Question: Cases come up from time to time involving activities that students are involved in, and that will require accommodation. Should we have a more general accommodation policy for these situations?
Answer: There is Senate policy 8-1008 on the Academic Implications of Disruptions of University Business. We also have a new policy 8-1021 Senate Policy on Academic Accommodations for Students where it states, ``Students are encouraged to seek an accommodation where they believe that they are experiencing a barrier to participation in an academic activity``.
- Question: Does Senate want to convey a strong message to the community about students participating in these types of activities that may take them away from academic studies from time to time? Response: There is room in existing regulations to deal with these types of situations.
- Concern was raised concerning stipulating Indigenous students in our motion. SMU should not specify a particular group of students in this statement. Senate should support ``any student`` that wishes to participate. Senate also does not want to encourage anyone to censor students on the other side of this issue. Senate may wish to articulate that Senate places their support solidly on the side of the moderate livelihood fishery.
- The moderate livelihood fishery dispute may extend to other regions of the province and therefore we should not specify a particular geographic location in our statement of support.
- Question: How will this be communicated down to the students? If a student does not feel that they have been adequately supported through this process, where do students direct their appeal? Answer: Accommodation decisions may be appealed by the student in accordance with the appeals process for Academic Appeals.
- Some of our Indigenous students are significantly affected by this dispute. We are all treaty people, and we should articulate a broadly based communication to all students.
- Question: What will be expected from students to justify this? Answer: Consensus was to take students at their word.
- Dalhousie required a 48-hour notice from the students requesting to participate in support, solidarity and advocacy efforts. Their statement said that accommodation was at the discretion of instructors and subject to other faculty regulations. The Dalhousie text was read by the Chair.
- Discussion established that students` decisions to participate in activities may be sudden and may not allow for 48-hour notice. Consensus was that SMU would not stipulate a 48-hour timeline.
- Subsequent discussion by Senate supported including the following statement in the Senate communication: ``***Students are expected to inform their instructors in advance if they plan to miss any part of course assessment or submit assignments late.***`` This statement will be included in the SMU communication to faculty and students.

- Question: What happens if the instructor does not offer accommodations?
Answer: The appeal process is available to students.
- Question: Is this communication to faculty being framed as a request?
The SMUFU representative was asked to respond. Answer:
Accommodations are always a problem. It is important that this is coming from Senate. The SMUFU will support the decision of Senate. This will be a case-by-case situation managed by the Associate Dean and Dean's Office. We need to make the message as clear as possible. From a union perspective, there is always work to be done convincing members about these decisions. The SMUFU will take a solidarity stance with the Senate on this issue.
- Senate will send a strong, clear recommendation.
- The academic regulations place constraints on many situations, but this decision is solidly within Senate's authority.
- The Chair advised that Drs Sarty and Hanley supported the motion in absentia.
- The following statement was proposed:
The Saint Mary's University Senate requests all faculty teaching in the Fall 2020 term provide accommodation to any student registered in courses this fall term who may wish to participate in support, solidarity, and advocacy efforts related to the unfolding dispute over the moderate livelihood fishery in Mi'kmaq lands. Accommodation should be provided through extended timelines for course component submissions, and/or providing those students with alternative times to write tests and examinations. Senate supports faculty members providing accommodation to students through until the end of the fall term.

Moved by De Fuentes and seconded, **“that the Senate approves issuing a strong recommendation that all faculty teaching in the fall 2020 term provide accommodation to any student registered in courses in this fall term who may wish to participate in support, solidarity and advocacy efforts related to the unfolding dispute over the moderate livelihood fishery in Mi'kmaq lands. Accommodation should be through extended timelines for course component submissions, and/or providing those students with alternative times to write tests and examinations.”** Motion carried.

20134

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 9:42 A.M.

Barb Bell,
Secretary of Senate