

SENATE MEETING MINUTES
February 16, 2024

The 651st meeting of the Senate of Saint Mary's University was held on Friday, March 15, at 2:00 PM, in the CLARI Meeting Room.

PRESENT: Dr. Summerby-Murray, Dr. VanderPlaat, Dr. Veres, Dr. Ingraham, Dr. Sarty, Dr. Raymond, Mr. Brophy, Ms van den Hoogen, Mr. Seneker, Dr. Grek-Martin, Dr. Samou, Ms. Hodge, Dr. Hare, Dr. Ylijoki, Dr. Kocum, Dr. Austin, Dr. Barclay, Dr. Grandy, Dr. Sanderson, Dr. Stinson, Dr. Doucet, Dr. Dodge, Mr. Ganapathy, Ms. Tan, Ms. Barrett, Ms. Boudreau, Ms. Shannon Morrison, Secretary to Senate

GUESTS: Ms. Ulbrich, Mr Williams,

REGRETS: Dr. Hlongwane, Dr. Brosseau, Prof. Sewell

The meeting was called to order at 2:03 P.M., Dr. Grandy chaired, and a territorial acknowledgment was provided.

24071 **2024-2025 UNIVERSITY BUDGET PRESENTATION**

Michel Ulbrich and Todd Williams

Key Discussions:

Student Enrolment Update

- Compared to last year, February 2023, Saint Mary's University is down 52 students: 10 domestic and 42 international students.
- Winter Undergrad domestic revenue is \$1 million below budget and Winter Undergrad International is below \$500K. An interesting thing from this semester, we did not have the same significant pullback for add/drop. We think it could be from the registration deposit.

Fiscal 2024 – Year-to-date results

- We were approved to run on a 7-million-dollar deficit budget and expect to close out the year on a 6-million-dollar deficit budget. A significant change in this is this year's Winter enrolment tuition increase.
- We have a large amount of investment income to cover shortfalls. Much of this money is income we receive as one-time funding.
- There was an overspend of \$1.4 million in expense budget for student financial aid, which was offset by internal cost recoveries.
- Some funds are governed by contracts and pertain to research accounts, SMUFU travel funds, SMUSA, and benefits reserves. We need to look at growing the general funds.

Budget Proposal FY2025

- For the past few years, SMU has been building budgets assuming an enrolment rebound from COVID and a shift in student mix back to historic proportions. The

ten-year run rate indicates both student count and changes in student mix, which preceded COVID.

- **Questions to consider:** Has the enrolment decline ended? Have we plateaued? Is it expected that it will continue into FY2025? What are our pricing options on fees and tuition? What can we do with student financial aid?
- The faculty of Arts and Science has not been impacted as much, but the Sobey School of Business has due to the international student decline.
- Things we have considered for 2024/2025 – Increasing the domestic tuition rate by 2% (as per the government directive) and increasing the international tuition rates by 10% (The government set a 9% minimum). There will be a reduction of 150 first-year international students due to the Federal Cap announcement. Increasing the Science Tech fee an additional \$226K.
- **Question:** Can you clarify if the Federal Cap is on applications and not those admitted to the university? **Answered by President Summerby-Murray** – Yes, the Federal Government is reducing the current 1 million international students to 606,000 over a 2-year period. The allocation is based on applications and not on admissions and acceptances. Applications that we turn away are counted towards our allotted number. Enrolment Services is looking closely at the conversion rate of applications to admissions.
- **Steps taken to continue cost containment:** Closure of TLC, step and scale salary freeze with non-bargaining units, pause on SMUWORKS, and a formal hiring freeze. This has saved 2.1 million dollars thus far.
- The remaining money in the FY2025 budget of approximately 3.4 million after all necessary payments, salaries, benefits, contracts, and utilities will be directed to the VPARs Office. From there, we will determine our priorities in consultation with the functional leaders. This will happen on a quarterly basis. There will be a consultation with the Deans to give the VPAR their absolute priorities.

Question and Answer Period

- **Question:** How does the salary freeze impact the executives we are currently in the process of hiring? **Answered by President Summerby-Murray:** We have not negotiated any contracts yet.
- **Question:** You are probably aware of the SMUWORKS Program and how important it is for students to develop skills and for faculty to mentor students. Have there been any considerations to scale it down instead of pausing it completely so that students still have an opportunity to engage in the projects? **Answered by Dr. VanderPlaat:** We had to put a pause on it. In the meantime, we're putting together additional funding. The Dean of Science has created awards to fill the gap and is working with Advancement to grow the number of

awards over the years. **Comment:** what I am hearing is very optimistic. I think that faculty and students should be made aware of this.

- **Question:** The University occasionally issues non-disclosure agreements and there is no transparency on how much is spent on these. Has an analysis been done to cease or stop using non-disclosure agreements? How much money has been spent on non-disclosure agreements over the past 5 years? **Answered by President Summerby-Murray:** As far as 2009 I do not believe the university has signed any non-disclosures, so we are not spending any money on non-disclosures. Some severances have involved confidentiality statements and non-disparity statements, but they are not non-disclosures. I think what you may be talking about is non-disclosure agreements in cases of allegations of sexual harassment. We have not used any of those forms.

Moved and seconded, **“that Senate temporarily adjourns for a 5-minute recess.” Motion carried.**

24072

REPORT OF AGENDA COMMITTEE

The agenda was accepted as posted.

24073

PRESIDENT’S REPORT – Posted as *Appendix A* (10 min)

The President referred to the report included with meeting materials and highlighted the following:

Key Discussion Points:

- The annual Research Expo is currently underway. Senators are encouraged to stop by at the end of this meeting to see what our faculty colleagues and students are presenting.
- I provided the opening remarks at the EduNova BEST Conference hosted at Mount Saint Vincent University. This conference is for students who are transitioning from studies into employment.
- Our student-athletes have performed incredibly well at the Atlantic University Sport Championships and the University Sport Championships.
- We are in the final revisions to the strategic plan and plan to bring it forward to Senate in April.
- Continuing to work with the Provincial Government on allocations to the study permits for students planning to attend Saint Mary’s University.
- We have received funding from the Provincial Government to continue research on the prevention of sexual violence. This will go directly into those programs that support student life.
- The Vice President Academic and Research has been chairing the committees for the two active Dean searches, which are concluding.

24074

VICE-PRESIDENT ACADEMIC AND RESEARCH REPORT – Posted as Appendix B (5 mins)

Dr. Madine VanderPlaat referred to the report included with meeting materials and highlighted the following:

- The selection of the Dean of Sobey School of Business should be announced in the next few weeks, and interviews for the Dean of Science will commence in April.
- There is a meeting with faculty in April to discuss their concerns with the pause of SMUWorks and how we will move forward without this initiative for now.
- The Division of Engineering will be moving to 960 Tower Road.
- A Project Manager has been assigned to assist and support with the Digital Learning Strategy. A series of consultations with both faculty and students are currently in the planning stages.
- The first round of interviews for the Black Student Advisor has concluded, and a short list of candidates was created for the Indigenous Student Advisor.
- The Program Development Support and Innovation Office is expanding its horizon to help any major project at the university that may need instant support to engage in programming.

24075 **SMUSA PRESIDENT'S REPORT** – Listed as ***Appendix C*** (5 min)

- The students are upset that the SMUWORKS program has been paused.
- We are approaching the end of term. Many societies are planning and hosting end-of-year events. The attendance at these events has been exceptional, and our Commerce Society Dinner is sold out. We appreciate the support in making these events successful.
- SMUSA is hosting their Annual General Meeting and we invite all Senators to attend.

24076 **QUESTION PERIOD** (length at the discretion of chair based on business volume)

- **Question:** When is registration opening for Spring and Summer courses?
Answered by AVP Enrolment: I will follow up with that as I do not have an answer.
- **Comment:** In previous years it was suggested enrolment for Spring/Summer be opened after March break to keep students interested in applying.
- **Comment:** Some faculty have talked with their advisors, and having students register during midterms is difficult.

24077 **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

Minutes of the meeting of February 16, 2024, were circulated as ***Appendix D***

The minutes of February 16, 2024, are accepted as circulated.

24078 **REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES**

1. Elections Committee

a). Appointment and Review of Academic Administrators Policy

Key Discussions:

- This revision came up after the appointment of the two faculty members to the Search Committee for the Vice President, Academic and Research. SMUFU had expressed their concerns that if the Board of Governors wants faculty representation on this committee, it would be more effective to have the academic staff elect the two faculty members rather than Senate elect the two faculty members. This decision is not Senate's to make. This would be a recommendation from Senate for the Board of Governors to consider an update to their policy.

Moved by Dr. Austin and seconded by Dr. Stinson, **“that Senate recommends to the Board of Governors an amendment to the language in the Board of Governors Policy: Appointments and Review of Academic Administrators, Section 4. Procedures: Academic Administrators item 4.4. (b) as attached in Appendix F:” Two members of full-time academic staff to be elected by full-time academic staff.” Motion carried.**

Dr. Grandy relinquished the Chair responsibilities to Dr. Grek-Martin for this motion and discussion.

2. Executive Committee

a). Revisions to Senate Policy – Professor Emeritus 8-1001

Key Discussions:

- The Senate Executive Committee is bringing this forward to revise the process. The President will bring forward the recommendation directly to Senate, and not to the Senate Executive Committee.
- A proposed change to the title. Going from Professor Emeritus to Faculty Emeritus.
- This policy outlines that receiving a Faculty Emeritus status is an honor of the university.

Moved by Dr. Grandy and seconded by Dr. Stinson, **“that Senate approves the revisions to the Senate Policy – Professor Emeritus (8-1001)” Motion carried.**

b). Revisions to Senate Policy – Dean Emeritus 8-1002

Key Discussions:

- Amendments are similar to the Faculty Emeritus policy. Updated the language to read, retirement from the university.

Moved by Dr. Grandy and seconded by Dr. Austin, **“that Senate approves the revisions to the Senate Policy – Dean Emeritus (8-1002)” Motion carried.**

24079

REPORTS FROM JOINT COMMITTEES

Honorary Degree Committee

a). Honorary Degree Recommendation M

Key Discussion Points:

- Ms James has tremendous leadership with women's hockey. Inducted to the Canada Sports Hall of Fame and a leader in diversity excellence.

Moved by Dr. Summerby-Murray and seconded by Dr. Stinson, **“that Senate accepts the recommendation of the Honorary Degrees Committee that the Board of Governors should award the degree of Doctor of Civil Law, Honoris Causa, to Angela James and hereby makes such recommendation to the Board of Governors” Motion carried.**

b). Honorary Degree Recommendation N

Key Discussion Points:

- Mr. Murphy has a Bachelor of Commerce Degree from Saint Mary's University and has spent most of his career as the Speaker of Nova Scotia. He is an advocate and champion for persons with physical disability.
- Mr Murphy is no longer working in a government position.

Moved by Dr. Summerby-Murray and seconded by Dr. Barclay, **“that Senate accepts the recommendation of the Honorary Degrees Committee that the Board of Governors should award the degree of Doctor of Civil Law, Honoris Causa, to Kevin Murphy and hereby makes such recommendation to the Board of Governors” Motion carried.**

24080

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 4:05 p.m.