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SENATE MEETING MINUTES March 20, 2020

The 610th Meeting of the Senate of Saint Mary's University was held on Friday, March 20, 2020, at 2:00 PM, in the Scotiabank Conference Theatre. Dr Takseva Chairperson, presided.

PRESENT: Dr Summerby-Murray, Dr Butler, Dr Bhabra, Dr Francis, Dr MacDonald, Dr Bannerjee, Dr Brosseau, Dr Collins, Dr De Fuentes, Dr Doucet, Dr Grandy, Dr Grek-Martin, Dr Hanley, Dr Khokhar, Dr McKee, Dr Panasian, Dr Power, Dr Stinson, Dr Takseva, Dr Twohig, Mr Brophy, Ms van den Hoogen, Ms Killam, Ms Navas, Mr de Chastelain, Ms Klajman, Ms Nankani, Ms Witter, Dr Smith, Ms Sargeant-Greenwood, Ms Morrison, Mr Rooney and Ms Bell, Secretary to the Office of Senate.

REGRETS: Dr Sarty

Meeting commenced at 2:04 P.M with the territorial acknowledgement.

20073 **REPORT OF AGENDA COMMITTEE**
The Senate Agenda was approved as posted.

20074 **UNIVERSITY BUDGET PRESENTATION** - D. Rooney and G. Morrison
The University Budget for 2020-2021 was presented. The Covid19 issue is outside of this budget.

Questions:

- Question: What about the new building? Answer: The full funding is not in place yet. This is a side project.
- Question: At what time will we have a decision on this? Answer: Additional funding is being pursued. There is no firm date at this time.
- Question: Will we hear about potential changes to this budget down the road because of Covid19? Answer: The Budget Advisory Committee will assume a larger role in the weeks and months ahead. This is a game changing situation for the university.
- A request was made to keep Senate informed of the changes in budget. Response: There are members of Senate that are appointed to the Budget Advisory Committee. They can bring information back to Senate.
- Members were advised that the Chair of the Board of Governors has been in contact and sends his good wishes to everyone for the best outcome in these challenging times.

20075 **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

Minutes of the meeting of February 14, 2020, were *circulated* as **Appendix A**.

There being no objections, **the minutes of the meeting of February 14, 2020 are approved as posted.**

20076

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Posted as **Appendix B** for this meeting.

Key Discussion Points:

- The Presidents of the universities are in daily contact with the government seeking funding for our sector related to the current challenges.
- CONSUP will meet virtually every morning at 9AM. The Medical Officer for Health, the Minister and the Premier will also participate.
- We are in daily contact with the Board Chair and Vice-Chair.
- Senators were asked to think about ways to promote resilience. As we persist, we will transform. We are changing with regard to remote delivery. Some changes that are being made administratively may be maintained.
- Thanks were expressed to the members of Senate for participating today and for having the academic interests of SMU at heart.
- Question: Could you provide more context on the rationale for the decision to close at 5 pm today? With the Senate meeting going to 4:30 pm today, concern was expressed that the faculty members participating in Senate will not have enough time to pack up completely by 5 pm. Answer: Our colleagues are taking the same steps. This decision was taken in consultation with the health authorities. In terms of access, the university will not provide access to faculty, staff, and students. Requests for access come up through the immediate manager. The protocol flows through the Dean to the EMG for approval.
- There is a small group of faculty that live in residence. Question: Are they allowed to stay and what internet facilities are available to them? Answer: Yes they are allowed to remain. The IT service has been increased to support the community during these conditions. Help resources have also been increased. We are confident that the technology and the available support will be adequate.
- Question: What about computer terminal access for students remaining on campus? Answer: We are working on this. Off campus students will not be accessing the campus at all.

20077

SMUSA PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Key Discussion Points:

- Thanks was expressed to all faculty and staff for responding to the March 20 deadline for communicating changes related to course syllabi.
- Faculty were asked to consider that there are a lot of stressors in students' lives at this time. They are being laid off from their places of work and they are worried about how they are going to pay for their rent and food. They are also concerned about the forward plan, and how they are going to continue in their degree program. This stress is considerable and added to that are the upcoming exams.
- SMUSA is providing support for students in many of these areas. Senators were advised that generally, students were pleased with the revisions to graduation.

- Question: What is the situation with the salaries of TAs? Answer: They are being paid until the end of their contract. The terms related to the salaries of RAs are based on who hired them.
- Payroll has advised that faculty and administration can submit forms on-line. They are also using email as the tracking signature. The process will be handled electronically.

20078

VICE-PRESIDENT ACADEMIC AND RESEARCH REPORT

COVID19 measures and actions, *Appendix Q*.

Key Discussion Points:

- A week ago today we got a call that indicated to us that the university would likely have to respond to this situation. People have recognized the extraordinary circumstances and have moved to do whatever it took to make things work.
- Senate Executive met twice this week to make necessary decisions as is their mandate. This may need to happen again throughout this period.
- There are some initiatives that must be kept operating.
- The activity on the website has increased exponentially. The Studio have created a website to assist faculty with the revisions going forward.
- Some of the regulations have been suspended to facilitate alternate ways to address completion of the winter term. There will probably be further changes. The last day to drop classes was moved out one week and it needs to be extended a further week.

Moved by Butler and seconded, **“that Senate approve the extension of the last date for withdrawal for the winter term to March 30, 2020.” Motion carried.**

- There may be more courses that can be transitioned to on-line courses. That consideration is underway and work is happening now.
- Butler has been in touch with the unions and that interaction has been very positive and collaborative.
- The recruitment team has had some challenges related to the travel restrictions. All efforts are being made to minimize this impact. Example: Remote language testing has been made available.
- Students are experiencing non-academic challenges such as the students that are unable to leave campus due to the closure of borders and flight restrictions. We are not following the practices of other universities and will not put these students out of residence. We are making every effort to help them.
- There have been communication challenges. Sometimes events move faster that communication can keep up with. We ask for patience through these situations.
- Faculty and staff were asked to be reflective in relation to the need to come onto campus. Everyone was advised that in extreme need, individuals would be allowed to come onto campus only once to complete critical tasks.
- Microsoft and Brightspace are ramping up services to support us.
- The excellent leadership of SMUSA was acknowledged.
- Thanks were expressed to Takseva for the work that she has been doing and the leadership she has provided through the past week.
- It might be helpful to hear about the parameters related to decisions for the summer terms. Answer: This will be communicated the in next week. The

Deans and Smith have been working on this. We may not be able to provide as much as we hoped, but the more that we can offer on-line the greater the benefit to the international students. There are opportunities to add more sections to courses that already exist. We have discussed how to increase the support within The Studio to facilitate this development.

- For students that are completing this term and looking at their options for continuing, we need to address their needs. The faster that we can address this the better.
- Members were advised that Athabasca has offered to help universities to make the transition by sharing their experience and approaches with other universities.
- Students were reticent to make decisions regarding returning home because they needed to know what was going to happen with convocation. They were worried that if they left the country, they might not be allowed to come back.
- Once we made the announcement about remote offerings, we had an uptake in enrolments. We will be able to allow new students to start remotely.
- Question: How are we going to handle the fall session? Answer: We have a significant number of students that start in January. It would be easy to bolster the sections that are offered in January. Particular regions like Africa and India start in January. We are hoping we can recover for September.
- Academic Standing – Students are unsure about what the new assessments would look like and how it would impact them. They are worried about performing well given the new assessment guidelines. Question: What communication will be sent about this? Answer: The communications will be going out today.
- A request was submitted for the Coordinators and Advisors to be advised before the communication goes out to students if possible.
- Question: Academic Integrity – Do we report that as usual? Will the AIOs be able to meet with students? Answer: Yes. We have moved to virtual meetings with students. We had an AI Workshop this morning to address this issue. The process will continue. We are expecting an uptake related to the on-line testing schemes. If faculty are using techniques that facilitate cheating, we will have more cases. We are increasing the resources to deal with cases. We have a second AIO in Business and are looking for a second AIO in Science. Arts seems to be in control.
- Question: Can we switch to a pass/fail evaluation? Answer: No, we are sticking to the letter grade for now.
- Question: Is there guidance and best practices related to final exams and take home exams on The Studio website? Answer: Yes. There are examples from institutions across the country.
- Question: What about the AE option? Answer: There may be a situation where the student has completed 75% of the work. If the instructor feels comfortable with their level of work, and the student is experiencing extraordinary circumstances, this could be applied in that individual case. Faculty need to be clear that they met the academic integrity target for the course.
- Question: Academic Regulation 8k is related to distance education courses. The courses we are talking about in the winter term are not covered by this because they were not started as distance courses. This will apply in the summer, but we will approach that issue next week. Consensus was that Smith's interpretation of the non-applicability of this regulation was correct.

- Question: Discussions with the unions – Will there be compensation for the extra work faculty will have to do? Answer: Courses do not need to be moved fully on-line. There are other options. Faculty can use tools like Virtual Classroom. If it requires the full structure of an on-line course, the situation will be assessed at that time. The unions realize this.
- Question: What about the SMUworks positions that were applied for? What is the status of these? Answer: All the positions exist. The supervisor will have to decide if the work can be done given the current situation. If we are back on campus at that time, the question is moot. If we are not, a decision will have to be made related to if the task can be done remotely. There will still be offers made with the caveat that, if we are open this will happen, and if we are not, an alternative approach may be taken.
- Some of the current courses are prerequisites for other courses. Some students are graduating and if all course materials have not been covered, those students will be negatively impacted from a career perspective. We need to keep academic integrity in mind.
- What is the status of NSERC RAs? Answer: There is no answer for this year. **Action Item: Butler** will investigate.
- Question: What can we do about waiving specific course requirements for the courses that have specific field requirements? Those field requirements must be taken for accreditation purposes. Answer: Deans can provide a valid waiver for this. It was suggested to send an inquiry to the accrediting bodies because everyone is dealing with this situation and a suggested solution should be available.
- Saint Mary's is working on the above and watching events as they unfold.

20079

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BUSINESS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

Student Discipline Committee, Draft Code of Student Conduct, *Appendix C1* – Notice of Motion, *Appendix C2* - Draft Code of Student Conduct

Key Discussion Points:

- Feedback was received from two or three people and was incorporated. We have reached out to Sewell and Grace for their feedback but received no response.
- It would not be good to leave Student Services without a working document at this time.
- Members were advised that the old code is currently active but outdated.

Moved by Stinson, and seconded, **“that Senate approves the Code of Student Conduct as presented in Appendix C2.” Motion carried.**

20080

NEW BUSINESS FROM

None

20081

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 4:30 P.M.

Barb Bell,
Secretary of Senate