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SENATE MEETING MINUTES April 17, 2020

The 611th Meeting of the Senate of Saint Mary's University was held on Friday, April 17, 2020, at 2:00 PM, via Zoom. Dr Takseva, Chairperson presided.

PRESENT: Dr Summerby-Murray, Dr Butler, Dr Bhabra, Dr Francis, Dr MacDonald, Dr Sarty, 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 Stinson, Dr Takseva, Dr Twohig, Mr Brophy, Ms Killam, Ms van den Hoogen, Ms Navas, Mr de Chastelain, Ms Abigail Winters (incoming SMUSA VP Academic), Ms Klajman, Ms Nankani, Ms Witter, Dr Smith, Ms Sargeant-Greenwood, Ms Milton, Ms Brothers Scott, and Ms Bell, Secretary to the Office of Senate.

REGRETS: Dr Power

Meeting commenced at 2:02 P.M with the territorial acknowledgement.

20085

REPORT OF AGENDA COMMITTEE

The President has a scheduling conflict. He will join this meeting from 2:30 – 3 pm. We will address the President's report when he joins this meeting. There was an agenda addition request from Dr Kay to occur under new business from floor not involving notice of motion. The request is related to the May 21 QAM Assessment by MPHEC.

The Senate Agenda was approved as revised.

20086

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Key Discussion Points:

- The President had a conflicting meeting with Universities Canada between 1 and 2:30. Between 3 and 3:45 PM, he must attend an online meeting with Minister Navdeep Bains on behalf of Universities Canada. His brief for this meeting is to press the Minister on federal support for the impact of potential lost tuition revenues from international students, given expectations of continued travel restrictions, market challenges etc. Uncertainty also exists for our domestic enrolment – although early indications in applications remain hopeful. Domestic students are relying on summer employment to pay their tuition and their living expenses, which may now be negatively impacted. We have recently launched an emergency bursary fund for students: it is well subscribed but the demand is considerable. Thank you to many in this room who have contributed to this emergency bursary fund.

- The President thanked academic colleagues for their creativity, patience, thoughtfulness and their willingness to put the interests of students first. He also thanked students for their resilience and flexibility in responding to the conclusion to the winter teaching term.
- The President thanked Senate for their thoughtful work in considering options for a Pass/No Credit system, reflecting the stated needs of students. Ultimately, the approach taken by Senate stands out across Canada as the most thoughtful, the most respectful of the long-term needs of students and the most faithful to the academic integrity of the credentials offered by this university.
- The President acknowledged the efforts of those who maintain our services: food services, custodial, other teams in facilities management, security, those providing maintenance to research and teaching laboratories, staff supporting student health and counselling, and those providing continued high-quality information technology services – without which we could not have completed the term. He also acknowledged the considerable efforts of the Studio for Teaching and Learning for providing direct service to everyone during the move to online delivery – and from which we will continue to learn in the months ahead as we face what is likely to be a new reality in our learning and research environments.
- We have an opportunity, in these challenging times, to embrace the new creative and resourceful approaches for possible application in the future.
- The past month has been spent working with our Emergency Management Team, the Executive Management Group and others on a daily/ hourly, basis. We are very fortunate to have such a strong team, across all of our senior managers.
- During this time, there has been direct contact with CONSUP (the Nova Scotia university presidents), the Association of Atlantic Universities Executive and Council, the Canadian Bureau of International Education (CBIE) and especially Universities Canada.
- We have lobbied the federal government for changes in the study permit processes, for exemptions for international students (to ease the travel restrictions of those entering this country, and to allow international students to begin their studies online with Canadian universities and receive credit for that).
- In the past two weeks we have sought federal assistance for universities, in four areas: to backfill international student tuition revenues; to increase support for research; to make wage subsidies or other supports available; and to see universities as integral to economic recovery and therefore to be worthy recipients of recovery stimulus spending on infrastructure.
- The Government now views the impact of this crisis as closer to the Great Depression and the policy options are similar. The federal government is looking to universities as part of the economic recovery.
- The stay at home piece of enrolment will benefit universities. We do face significant challenges going forward. The transition will be integral in terms of how we are going to move forward. Senate will be integral in this transition. We will need to work together to create a plan to go forward.
- All of us need to be prepared for a seismic shift in our operations: financially, pedagogically and in terms of the operation of our campus.
- This is the time for us to think creatively about micro-credentials, new forms of academic evaluation, and new opportunities for research and inquiry. The academy has come through these sorts of times before – and the successful

universities have done so by embracing radical transformation and harnessing the dynamics of extraordinary circumstances.

- Question: When we bring students back to SMU, has the university considered offering diverse delivery modes, allowing students to take courses the way they want to take them? This is a big chunk of revenue and if we can address this now, it will benefit the university. Answer: Engaging new communities of learners are also an opportunity at this time. International students are being allowed to take on-line courses without entering the country and this is providing an opportunity. This will be valuable going forward.
- Question: Will there be a financial crisis related to this situation? Based on the meetings you have had, is there hope for assistance for the universities? Answer: We are keeping the pressure on for exactly that outcome. We are confident there will be a package for the universities and colleges. There is the possibility of assistance from the Federal Government funneling back through the Provincial Government. We are asking for investment in virtual learning. Infrastructure is also a discussion item. There will be limits on this. In the next months, the government will own the economy. This is not an unprecedented situation.

. 20087

VICE-PRESIDENT ACADEMIC AND RESEARCH REPORT

.01 Search for the AVP enrolment management.

.02 Search for the Dean of Arts, and Dean of Science

Key Discussion Points:

- The shift of attention to issues raised by COVID-19 began back in early February when we addressed concerns around course delivery for the joint program at BNUZ in China. In many ways, this helped prepare us for what was to come.
- Thanks to everyone around campus that supported movement to virtual operations. SMU has managed very well through this, although not without some issues.
- The Deans, departments, and programs have rapidly re-organized the summer sessions. There has been tremendous support from full-time and part-time faculty in adjusting to a virtual environment. SMUFU and CUPE-3912 provided very helpful feedback. We are grateful for the spirit of collaboration in these times.
- There has also been significant participation by faculty in workshops delivered by the Studio. As an example, Wendy Carroll will be giving a workshop this Monday.
- Thanks specifically to the SAS, and for the enthusiastic support from faculty peers sharing their experience and expertise with their colleagues.
- SMUSA has advocated well, and thoughtfully, for students.
- There is a very strong commitment to distribute courses evenly over the two summer sessions. There has been a lot of effort to make critical courses available for students.
- Even with strong summer offerings, the number of students who will participate in classes remains uncertain. Discussions have already begun around fall 2020, and we are working with the Deans on how to address different scenarios in a consistent way, while still respecting the unique situations that will exist within each Faculty.
- It is impossible right now to determine how “open” the physical campus will be in the fall, and how readily students will be able to travel. We see that

same struggle playing out in universities around the world, particularly in the U.S. where many smaller institutions are closing – likely for good. Whatever new normal exists after COVID-19 passes, universities everywhere will not look the same as they did before.

- The goal here is contingency planning and how SMU will respond to that.
- The landscape around Research and Scholarship is also a challenge. All universities are dealing with this. We have a group of field researchers that have been talking about going back into field research and how communities will feel about that. There have been 34 summer research awards to students.
- We have also been talking about what the physical return to campus would look like. As we look toward fall, the reality is that it will not be the same as it was before all of this started. Government has shown no indication of offsetting financial losses resulting from this situation. Universities are currently excluded from this level of assistance. We are moving forward, working out how we might do this ourselves.
- Because of these extraordinary times, other matters that had seemed important before Covid 19 have been put aside.
- The University Review Committee has completed all the tenure and promotion files that were open.
- The Dean of Arts interviews for the first-round interviews for the remaining five long-listed candidates has been rescheduled to the end of this month. We have an exceptionally strong applicant pool. The committee is considering options for candidates who will be short-listed after that round, relative to how we can engage the campus and key constituencies in the search.
- Unfortunately, we have no update on the following: AVP and Dean of Science searches, Ad-Hoc Committee on Education and the Committee set up.
- Question: What estimates are there of fall enrolment? Answer: We are discussing this now. We have an increase in domestic applications from the local region. The financial circumstances around this depression will be challenging. There is the possibility that travel restrictions will have an impact. If we are on campus, physical distancing may still be in place. This introduces concerns related to class size and classroom facilities. In addition, Saint Mary's has the largest percentage of international students in the region. In this regard, the government is considering approving courses taken on-line as counting for time of study for work terms for graduation. We need to ensure that we have adequate on-line offerings for those students. International students are also having issues gaining access to visas now.
- Question: Do we have a crisis management group? Answer: We have an emergency management team that has been meeting to manage the transition. The group is restructuring now to be able to deal with the go-forward situations. The restructured group will be a mix of the original group and the Academic Deans to manage the situation going into the fall.
- Question: Has there been any discussion related to enhancing the Brightspace platform? We are at the lowest level of their product offering. Can we consider upgrade our Brightspace license? Answer: That is under consideration. Brightspace was about to do an update to the platform and we are holding off on that so as not to disrupt the work that is going on. Some of the other technology updates have been continuing in the background.

- Question: Has there been any thought to reducing class and lab size for the category D courses in the fall? The labs will be a significant challenge related to the physical space in the labs. Answer: Some of those courses already have registrations from the returning students. We are considering how to manage this.
- Question: Do we have any plans for faculty that have field courses or trips as a part of their courses? Answer: Other universities are discussing this. The consensus is that we have to be definitive by July 1st. There is a 90-day clause in the collective agreement in this regard and we need to respect that agreement. Response: It would be beneficial for faculty to hear this. The Deans and the VPAR have been working on an update to faculty.
- Departments and programs have been receiving questions from international students about how to get back to Canada to continue their studies. Members were advised that Ysaac Rodriguez, in the International Student Services Office, has a pulse on the timing of what is happening internationally. The International Student Services Office has resources to advise students in this regard.
- Ms Miyuki Arai from the Studio has done extraordinary work with students that were stuck abroad. She helped them get home again.

20088

SMUSA PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Key Discussion Points:

- The new SMUSA team starts next week and consists of the following:
 - Bryn de Chastelain, President
 - Abigail Winters, VP Academic
 - Samantha Graham, VP External
 - Travis Evans, Director of Events
 - Salma Maisha, Director of Societies
 - Kevin Mullen, Director of Marketing and Communications
 - SMUSA Board of Director Senators will be appointed May 1st
- Student feedback on things that worked or didn't for them in terms of migrating Winter courses on-line:
 - Students feel that they learn better when faculty takes advantage of the online learning tools, like videos, or Brightspace virtual classroom tools, and other things that will keep them engaged during "class time".
 - The flexibility instructors provide students during the summer months will be crucial.
 - Some student-parents are dealing with childcare or family care issues that may affect their study abilities.
 - Office hours for faculty should be more formalized and there should be rules related to this service.
 - Some students are struggling with internet and computer access.
 - Final exams worth more than 40-50 % are problematic at this time due to the reduced feedback from instructors.
- SMUSA expressed their sincere thanks to Senate for their support and all the work that was done to support students through this difficult transition. Student feedback in this regard has been very positive.
- SMUSA is attempting to help students who are experiencing anxiety due to the changing delivery methods. This is happening to students without regard to their academic standing. We are directing them to the resources that are available to them on a case-by-case basis. Students are also turning to the faculty advising staff for help. That is putting a lot of pressure on those

resources. We need to clearly and immediately message students regarding all the ways students can access the full resources available to support them.

- Students are concerned about the weighting of final exams. We need a regulation to cap what we can do or that could be done differently for different levels of courses.
- Student ability to contact their faculty members is an issue. We need to ensure that their faculty members remain accessible.
- We may also need to revisit the amount of work that is done early in the course versus at the back end of a course.
- Senate expressed appreciation to Ms Navas and her SMUSA team for their work during the year. Senate looks forward to working with the new team.
- Members were advised that the Learning and Teaching Committee is reviewing the Academic Implications of Disruptions of University Business (Policy 8-1008) and will be bringing forward recommendations related to teaching and learning. These will include the feedback from students during this period. A working document is being developed. This policy is general enough to allow us to respond in a flexible manner, especially in terms of the advancing technologies. This will be brought forward to the next Senate meeting. It would be good to facilitate some collaboration across campus in this regard before the May Senate meeting.

20089 **QUESTION PERIOD** (length at discretion of chair based on business volume)

Key Discussion Points:

- Deferred.

20090 **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

Minutes of the meeting of March 20, 2020, were *circulated* as **Appendix D**.

The following revisions were noted:

Moved by Butler, and seconded, **“that the minutes of the meeting of March 20, 2020 are approved as posted.” Motion carried.**

20091 **BUSINESS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES**

.01 Covid 19 issues, planning and actions.

Key Discussion Points:

- This item was addressed in the previous reports.
- Question: Concern was expressed regarding putting some courses on-line in September. Specific concern was expressed relative to a fourth year Criminology course. Students have access to 475 crime scene photos. The instructor expressed extreme reservation with regard to putting this type of content on-line. A legal waiver was necessary in order to offer this course. The concern is that some students might show a horrific crime scene photo that may cause another individual significant mental distress. To protect others, can this course be rescheduled to the winter term? Answer: This needs to be discussed at the faculty level. It will be discussed in the next couple of weeks.

20092 **OUTSTANDING ITEMS FROM PREVIOUS AGENDAS**

.01 Web Steering Committee Update (Sargeant-Greenwood) **Appendix E**

Key Discussion Points:

- Ms Sargeant-Greenwood expressed thanks to Senate for accepting a written report.

- The web team has been responding to the demands of Covid19. A lot of progress has been made in terms of templates and improved navigation for the website. More attention has been placed on research stories, and profiling success stories of instructors and students.
- Question: The search function on the website is not working all that well in terms of the common search terms. Has any work been done on this?
Answer: There has been work done on the website to remove archived material. Please let the team know of any issues. We can address issues in real time. There is a feedback button on each page to do this. **Action Item: Sargeant-Greenwood** will take this item back to the team.
- Question: Students have commented that they find relevant information easier to find. Students appreciate the work done to reorganize some of the website content.
- The next major project is to take all of student and residence life and put it into the same format.
- Question: At what point are we looking at upgrading program pages to this layout and graphic content? Answer: We are looking to those content owners to work with us in this regard. However, there have been resource limitations. **Action Item: Sargeant-Greenwood** will follow up the McKee on this.
- Question: When will the web profiles for faculty be to a point where the faculty members are happy with them? Answer: We are close to having this happen. The transfer of this information in an acceptable way to the website is an issue. The web team will need to enable this. We have considered moving content to the cloud, but having a technical partner to do this was the issue. The transition is happening now. Terminal 4 has been engaged to help with this work. We are hoping that this transition is weeks away. There will be an announcement and some workshops related to how faculty can make this happen. This should be available by the end of June. **Action Item: Sargeant-Greenwood** will provide an update for the minutes. Sargeant Greenwood confirmed this timeline post meeting, noting that work on the project would be continuing over the summer as it relates to workshops, training and engagement of faculty.

.02 Status - University to undertake a thorough review and revision of the following policies: Violence in the Workplace: Prevention and Response, Policy on Conflict Resolution and the Prevention and Resolution of Harassment and Discrimination, and Sexual Assault Policy and Procedure (from Nov 22, 2019).

Key Discussion Points:

- Due to the current challenges, this has been deferred to a more appropriate time.

.03 Subsequent to presentation of the 2019 Report on Positive Action, report on faculty retention and the related issues. (Butler and Brothers-Scott).

Key Discussion Points:

- The first draft of the Equity Policy is almost finalized. This will outline our commitment as a university and define how we will implement it. It will be available for broader collaboration next month. After a policy is in place, there will be a workforce analysis exercise. HR will also review the National Occupational Classification (NOC - system to classify jobs) codes to determine whether those are appropriately coded. Our current equity statement is re-envisioned and a draft is ready to go out next week for consultation to a small group of stakeholders. This should be available in

May. Forms to be used for internal purposes have been updated to expand them in terms of gender categories.

- The university will be looking to establish a diversity and equity sub-committee early in the fall.
- Question: Is there an update on the Presidential Standing Committee on Racism? Answer: We have not met. There was a delay waiting for the hiring of the African Nova Scotian and Black Student /Advisor and Community Liaison and then Covid19 happened.
- **Action Item: Bell** to forward this to next meeting agenda.

.04 Status – Ad Hoc Committee to review Faculty of Education.

Key Discussion Points:

- No update. Deferred to next meeting.

.05 Status - Accessibility Advisory Committee (University Committee) and Accessibility Plan.

Key Discussion Points:

- No Update. Deferred to next meeting.

20093 **REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES**

None

20094 **REPORTS OF AD-HOC COMMITTEES**

None.

20095 **REPORTS OF JOINT COMMITTEES**

None.

20096 **NEW BUSINESS FROM**

1. Floor (not involving notice of motion)

- i) Policies on Senior Administrative Appointments - The Board of Governors welcomes comments from Senate members. (M Butler) *Appendix F1* – Board Memo, *Appendix F2* - Appointment of Administrative Vice Presidents, and *Appendix F3* – Appointment of Academic Administrators Policy (M. Butler)

Key Discussion Points:

- The SMU approach to the appointments of senior administrators was never articulated. It was decided that it is more appropriate to imbed these in policy rather than the bylaws.
- Page 2, Section 3 Procedures, lists the steps for appointing Vice Presidents who are not Academic Administrators. Consultations with the faculty unions were undertaken in this regard.
- Comments and feedback from Senate related to this draft were invited.
- Question: Section 3 subsection 3.2 - What is the rationale related to allowing the President to decide if a selection committee should be struck? Answer: This is only adding clarity to the role. From a governance perspective, the administrative appointments are defined as the Vice-Presidents that are not related to the academic side of things. Based on the research at other institutions, this approach is common. Currently, there is a search committee underway for the position of VP Finance and Administration. There is a high level of

authority placed in the President for the appointment of these positions.

- Question: Under what circumstance would we not have such a committee? Answer: We foresee no situation where this would happen. There have been restructuring situations where this might happen.
- Question: In appendix F3 Appointment of Academic Administrators, section 4.9.7 – Concern was expressed that a meeting with the academic community is not included in the administrative appointments policy. Answer: Section 4.9.7 is guided by the collective agreement with SMUFU. Issues around community consultation are addressed there. In at least 40 other Canadian universities reviewed, there is little equivalent process for administrative appointments. Under the SMU Act, it is the Board responsibility to appoint or remove the senior administrators. Over time, it has been recognized that the Board is not going to exercise that role without consultation with the community. This is a recognition of the role that some of these positions play and their impact on the academic side of the community. They are key trusted advisor roles in the university and in any other organization; they would be unilaterally placed in the President. In this environment, we have generally had search committees to identify these appointments.
- Question: What percentage of institutions use a search committee versus another approach? Answer: In appendix F1, at the top of page two of the memo there are four points in this regard. There has been a MOU between the university and SMUFU on presidential candidates and this is respected in the draft policy. It is very common for policies for appointment of non-academic officers to be closed and not include the possibility of a search committee. We have tried to balance that approach.
- Question: Is there a policy outline for the appointment for Associate Academic VPs at SMU? Answer: No. When we looked at this, we were mindful of the definition in the CA. The definition in the policy mirrors the definition in the CA.
- Question: How are Associate VPs appointed? Answer: There has been no consistent or formal practice. There has been four appointments and all have been different. At this point, we are attempting to be consistent with the language in the Collective Agreement.
- Administrative VPs do have an impact on the academic side of the university. Without a collegial process, we run the risk of having an important decision making entity appointed, for whom there has been no collegial process leading to appoint to these positions.
- The hope is that the feedback given here is taken into consideration when finalizing these policies.

ii) Board Policy on Policymaking, Appendix G1 – Board Memo, Appendix G2 – Policy on Establishing University Policy (Ms Milton)

Key Discussion Points:

- Briefs and the policy were provided. This was drafted before the issue of Covid19. This has not gone before the Board yet. We are bring this to Senate for any comments or feedback.

- Question: What is the motivation behind this? Answer: This is a new policy. The Board Governance Committee identified the absence of such a policy. The University Secretary was asked to propose an approach. A lot of research has been done in this regard to bringing consistency and quality assurance process to policy making at the university. This will be used on a go forward basis. Over time, existing policies will be reviewed and brought in line with these guidelines.
- Question: Takseva has questions-feedback related to item 5.1.3, 6.1, 6.2.2., 9.1.2 and 9.2.4. **Action Item: Takseva** to provide that directly to Milton.

iii) Summer Session Instructor Course Evaluations – 202030, 202040 and 202050 terms – Standard 3-week term with the same allowance for the ICE in the summer terms as in the 202020 term.

Key Discussion Points:

- Question: How will we approach the evaluations for the summer term? For the winter term, it was decided to be at the discretion of the instructor. Will we extend this approach? Answer: This is a Collective Agreement question. Butler and the Union have not yet discussed this. **Action Item: Butler** to engage SMUFU in this regard.
- A number of instructors feel that they were pressed to deliver on-line courses.
- Question: What is the context for the summer session? Will there be support to help instructors transition. Answer: No one could be forced to move their course on-line. If there were violations that came to the attention of the union, they were going to advise immediately. No issues have come forward. The circumstances for the summer term are different from in the winter term. There are discussions to come on the summer term.
- Question: Is it okay to give time in a class to do the evaluations on-line? Answer: Yes.
- Question: Has the university considered reducing the time in which the evaluations are done? Caution was also expressed concerning promotion of student participation or in giving an incentive to participate. **Action Item: Butler** will consult on this with the studio and SMUFU.
- Other universities have had on-line evaluations in place for 15 years. Concerns of low participation and quality of data were also expressed at the beginning of their processes. Over the years, these concerns were found to have little value. In the last couple of weeks, instructors should remind students that the evaluations are available.

iv) The Equity and Diversity Policy (M. Butler & Debbi Brothers Scott)

Key Discussion Points:

- See above.

Moved by McKee and seconded, ``to extend the Senate meeting by 15 minutes`. **Motion carried.**

v) Discussion - A formal protocol around e-discussions and voting.

Key Discussion Points:

- The Bylaws Committee brought this issue forward.
- The Bylaws Committee Chair advised there is nothing in the Bylaws that specifically enables e-discussions and voting. There is no rush to do this. The University Secretary reached out to other universities to get a sense of how they are approaching this and has provided some interesting approaches that could be utilized for SMU. The committee may have a recommended revision to the Senate Bylaws for May or the fall.
- Concern was expressed relative to the voting process that will have to be addressed between now and the time a formal process is identified.

vi) Protocols governing field research under our current conditions and related to graduate students working as research assistants (they are ineligible to apply for federal income assistance).

Key Discussion Points:

- Addressed above.

vii) Contingency plans for the fall semester.

Key Discussion Points:

- Addressed above.

20097

OTHER BUSINESS

- Senators were advised that MPHEC will be doing a virtual site visit for the Quality Assessment of Saint Mary's University on May 20 and 21. The Program Review Manager is assisting in coordinating this visit. The scheduled meeting slot for Senate members is 11:30 am – 12:30 pm on May 21. A call was issued for four volunteers to represent Senate. Volunteers were Takseva, Winter, Panasian, and Hanley.
- If the need arises, Senate Executive and/or the full Senate may need to meet between now and September. Senators were asked to be prepared and make every effort to attend if called upon.

20098

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 4:43 P.M.

Barb Bell,
Secretary of Senate