

SENATE MEETING MINUTES October 16, 2020

The 617th Meeting of the Senate of Saint Mary's University was held on Friday, October 16, 2020, at 2:00 PM, 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 Hanley, Dr Panasian, Dr Power, Dr Stinson, Dr Takseva, Dr Twohig, Mr Brophy, Ms Killam, Ms van den Hoogen, Mr de Chastelain, Mr Tumusiime, Mr Zokari, Ms Winters, Dr Smith, Ms Erin Sergeant-Greenwood, Mr Kay, and Ms Bell, Secretary to the Office of Senate.

REGRETS: Dr Brosseau, Dr Hart, Dr O'Brien, and Ms Nankani.

Meeting commenced at 2:03 P.M with the territorial acknowledgement.

21020 **REPORT OF AGENDA COMMITTEE**
The Senate Agenda was approved.

21021 **PRESIDENT'S REPORT** *Appendix A* (10 min)
Key Discussion Points:

This report is focused on government relations, international student recruitment and the national context.

- Planned phases of return to campus in various areas continue, when possible, while keeping the needs of faculty, students and staff top of mind, and following all Public Health Guidelines, working with both the provincial and federal governments.
- A new campus check-in procedure was initiated on September 29 for faculty, staff and students as part of its commitment to providing a safe environment and increasing activities on campus.
- **Discovery and Innovation in a Learning-centred environment**
 - The Homburg Centre for Health and Wellness re-opened on September 21, with new health protocols in place, and continues to roll out successfully
 - A blended approach, combining in-person and online offerings, was announced for the winter 2021 Term on September 21.
 - We had a successful Homecoming Week. The Fred Smithers Center of Support for Students with Disabilities celebrated 35 years since their opening.

- October 2 was the Sobey's Scholars Network Welcome Event welcoming and congratulating new and returning Sobey Scholarship student recipients including the inaugural cohort of the Sobey National Innovators and Sobey MBA Scholars.
- **Intercultural Learning**
 - The President's Standing Committee on the Prevention of Racism is meeting and working on the implementation of recommendations from the earlier ad hoc committee's report. Panel sessions are planned throughout the fall.
 - The National Dialogues for Action on Inclusive Higher Education and Communities conference was held October 1-2 out of the University of Toronto. Many from SMU participated in the National Dialogues activities.
 - The President's Standing Committee on the Prevention of Racism is requesting input from the Saint Mary's community by October 23, and will consider these reflections and further advice as it proceeds with its programming and recommendations for change.
 - The President participated in a meeting of the Black North Initiative Education Committee on October 9 where a review of the Committee mandate and terms of reference took place, and a discussion followed with respect to potential initiatives and the Committee work plan. Further meetings will take place in November and December
- **Institutional Sustainability**
 - Support continues for student in residence and other maintenance services.
 - Modelling continues of the impacts of the pandemic on University finances and long-term sustainability.
 - Work continues with federal and provincial governments to address challenges including relating to international students and the announcement that effective October 20, asymptomatic international students will be allowed to enter Canada.
- **External Relations and Communication**
 - A Town Hall with the President and EMG is scheduled for October to provide an update and answer questions. Further town halls will be scheduled for November 17, November 24 and December 10.
 - On October 9, it was announced that SMU had climbed into the top tier of the Maclean's rankings. SMU ranked fourth among primary undergraduate universities in Canada. This is a singularly impressive improvement in ranking. SMU is now ranked 33rd in the country when it comes to the national reputational ranking of all universities. This year, the Sobey School of Business ranks among Canada's top 15 business programs and is tied to 14th in the country with the highest reputation for business research in the Atlantic region.

Key Discussion Points:

- The FCE fall and winter registrations were presented to Senators.
- The winter term numbers are beginning to pick up and recruitment is very active for future terms.
- New IRCC regulations will make it possible for international students to come to Canada for the winter term, so long as the university is on a list of Designated Learning Institutions (DLIs) provided by each Province. As quickly as possible, we are working to ensure we can support students who choose to come, including through the December holiday closure.
- Fall & Winter Planning - The expressions of interest from faculty to run some level of in-person activity in winter term are manageable in terms of space. More on this at the November Senate meeting.
- Work is proceeding concerning extending Librarian access hours.
- Accessibility Advisory Committee Update – Butler and Morris worked together to initiate this group. A Terms of Reference are in place. A call for faculty representatives on this committee will soon be issued. Applications will be vetted by the Diversity & Inclusion Advisor to ensure confidentiality of disclosure.
- Academic Plan – This will be brought forward at either the November or December Senate meeting.
- Academic Integrity Foundation Course – To answer the question whether Librarians could deliver this as a non-credit course under the Collective Agreement (CA) with SMUFU, the answer is that there is a specific clause in the CA supporting and recognizing this sort of work as a core role of Professional Librarians at SMU.
- Question: Student IDs status? Answer: Killam reached out to other Registrars but has received little feedback. **Action Item: Killam** will follow-up. A suggestion was that the University invest in facial recognition software.
- Question: Will the Academic Plan address the Indigenous situation? Answer: It will address it in the context of the University as a whole. The Plan will mandate that an on-going structure be in place to support indigenization on campus.

21023

SMUSA PRESIDENT'S REPORT Appendix C (5 min)

Key Discussion Points:

- The volume of issues has not increased but the type of complaints has changed. There have been some positive responses related to the online learning.
- Course Expectations – Students are raising concerns about the increase in course workload/content, citing nearly double the amount of lecture time and assignments. More explicit expectations on lecture time and course content are needed, that are more in line with the tradition course delivery method.
- Assignment Clarity – Students have expressed frustration over the lack of clarity concerning assignment requirements and expectations.

- Course Content Timelines - Students have expressed frustration with the inconsistencies in course content timelines. Course content is being uploaded at the last minute which makes meeting timelines challenging.
- Course Feedback – SMUSA encourages faculty to actively integrate student feedback to improve online learning in the winter session.
- Communications - Students have expressed frustration with the delay in communication from faculty. Office hour availability is also an issue as it is related to students being able to schedule time with faculty.
- Affordability/Accessibility
 - Textbook Accessibility – Students who ordered textbooks in the first weeks of classes are still waiting for them. Earlier notice of the required textbooks is being requested. Students outside of Canada are experiencing additional issues with copyright restrictions.
- Advocacy – International Centre Update – SMUSA continues to consult with international students in this regard and will follow-up with the Senior Director of Student Affairs and Services, the VPAR and President. An external review of this centre is recommended. A report on students’ concerns is pending.
- A member advised that one of their students confirmed the timeline challenge/issue and in some cases, this creates an unfair situation for some students. As Senate, we need to give faculty clearer guidelines around timelines.
- Question: Is this an exception versus a rule? Answer: Even if this was an exception, we should still provide a guideline on this type of situation. As a university we can consider a communication in this regard. **Action Item: Takseva and de Chastelain** will work together to identify a recommendation for the next Senate meeting.
- SMU needs to set some clear expectations around timelines on responses (feedback on assignments) to student communications. It was noted that the Faculty Union Collective Agreement may have some impact. We need guidelines on communication & assessments so that everyone is on the same page and so faculty can support students.
- Students are still hesitant to bring forward issues. It was suggested that the course evaluation process might provide an opportunity to bring forward both positive and negative course issues.

21024

QUESTION PERIOD

Key Discussion Points:

- No questions.

21025

MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

.01 Minutes of previous meeting of September 18, 2020, *Appendix D*.

The following revisions were noted:

In the absence of any objections or corrections, the minutes of the meeting of September 18, 2020 are approved as posted.

21025

BUSINESS ARISING

.01 Discussion – 2019-2020 ICE Evaluation Reports

Key Discussion Points:

SAS advised the following:

- During the week of September 21, SAS initiated work on this and on October 9, sent emails to all faculty that instructed during the 2019-2020 academic year. The email contained a link to an individual OneDrive folder that held each instructors 2019-2020 Instructor Course Evaluation Reports.
- The ICE collected via Brightspace are stored in a database looked after by ITSS. This is the same database that the paper copies would be scanned into. So that data is already backed up and stored for years under the existing process.
- Question: Can we get stats on the response rated to evaluations?
Action Item: Bell will consult with the SAS Group to see if that is possible.
- Question: If we are running things on-line on an on-going basis is there a way to improve the response rates? Answer: Other institutions have used incentives and there are software programs that provide the functionality that automatically reminds students to participate in the evaluation process.
- The on-line distribution of reports was commended in terms of a sustainable practice.
- Question: Could questions be added related to on-line learning and/or synchronous/asynchronous practices. Senators were reminded of the Supplementary Questions section of the form that provided space for 12 additional questions of the faculty member's choosing.
- The suggestion was that one strategy with online evaluations, in synchronous courses, would be to allow time for the students to fill out the evaluation, similar to what is done in the hard copy classroom evaluation.
- **Action Item: Bell** to schedule a meeting of the Ad-Hoc ICE Review Committee to reinstate the work of this committee.

21026

OUTSTANDING ITEMS FROM PREVIOUS AGENDAS

.01 Discussion on COVID testing on campus and academic implications for students and faculty.

Key Discussion Points:

- The President advised that the facility, that was established on campus, is operating through the NS Health authority. It operates through the system in place utilizing the 811 line and on-line system. It started as a community testing facility and then moved to focus on incoming out-of-province students. It has now reverted back to community testing.

.02 Concern related to the direction from the President on the balance of work/life and after-hours email. Was this a recommendation or policy?

Key Discussion Points:

- The concern is that the statement does not explicitly take into account some populations that are vulnerable, and may be disproportionately impacted with other responsibilities (elder/child care). Those groups must juggle schedules and work and are utilizing flex hours to address this challenging situation. Over half of caregivers have been reporting additional issues that are negatively impacting their work and home life balance.
- The motivation for making this statement was extremely positive. The intent was to ask people to be aware of the wellbeing of others within their chain of command. We felt it important to express the willingness of the University to understand these issues within our community. There are many other groups differentially impacted by the pandemic. We attempted to be all encompassing, and not to target any one group within our institution.
- It was recommended that the university address this at the Town Hall. **Action Item: Takseva** to provide the President with proposed language.

21027

REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES

a)

Academic Appeals

2019-2020 Annual report, *Appendix E*

Key Discussion Points:

- The Statement of Principles on Fairness was added to the annual report as appendix one and is a result of the work of members of the committee. The committee invited Ms Brothers-Scott to provide the group with a workshop on these issues. This is provided for the information and feedback of Senate.

In the absence of objections or revisions, the Academic Appeals Committee annual report was accepted into the record of Senate.

b)

Academic Discipline

2019-2020 Annual report, *Appendix F*

Key Discussion Points:

- The committee's terms of reference stipulate regular training is provided, and that has been done once a term.
- It was suggested that the report should include a status report on how the new Academic Integrity process is working. Response: The process has been going well. An online form is available and faculty members are hands off with this process. They appear to be responding well to the revised process. There were 170 reports and we have increased the number of AI Officers to seven to deal with the volume of incident reports. The fact that faculty have an appeal process available to them has been positively received.
- Students see this as an improvement and the support to assemble packages has been positively received.
- Ms Sabarots was thanked for her work in supporting these initiatives.

- The date of the July meeting is shown as 223 and should be 23.
Action Item: Bell to correct.

In the absence of objections or revisions, the Academic Discipline Committee annual report was accepted into the record of Senate as revised.

- c) Academic Discipline Appeals Board
2019-2020 Annual report, *Appendix G*

Key Discussion Points:

- Question: What are the criteria for an appeal? Answer: An appeal is launched if the proponent feels there is an identifiable situation where the conditions of Natural Justice or fairness have not been followed.
- Suggestion: In future, the conditions affecting decisions should be provided in the report.

In the absence of objections or revisions, the Academic Discipline Appeals Board annual report was accepted into the record of Senate.

- d) Academic Planning Committee
a) 2019-2020 Annual report, *Appendix H*.

Key Discussion Points:

- Questions: Are there specific detailed requirements for the creation of annual reports of committees and centres? Answer: This is a conversation that the APC has had. There is a requirement for a report with a guideline but no specific template has been created at this time. APC is looking at this.

In the absence of objections or revisions, the Academic Planning Committee annual report was accepted into the record of Senate.

- b) Centre of Excellence in Accounting and Reporting for Cooperatives(CEARC) 2019-2020 Annual Report, *Appendix I*.

Key Discussion Points:

- No discussion.

In the absence of objections, the Senate accepts the CEARC 2019-2020 annual report as meeting the requirements of section 3.2 of the Senate Policy Governing the Establishment, Reporting and Review of Institutes and Centres of Saint Mary's University.

- c) Gorsebrook Research Institute (GRI) 2019-2020 Annual Report, *Appendix J*

Key Discussion Points:

- No discussion.

In the absence of objections, the Senate accepts the GRI 2019-2020 annual report as meeting the requirements of section 3.2 of the Senate Policy Governing the Establishment, Reporting and Review of Institutes and Centres of Saint Mary's University.

- d) Centre for Leadership Excellence (CLE) 2019-2020 Annual Report, *Appendix K*.

Key Discussion Points:

- No discussion.

In the absence of objections, the Senate accepts the CLE 2019-2020 annual report as meeting the requirements of section 3.2 of the Senate Policy Governing the Establishment, Reporting and Review of Institutes and Centres of Saint Mary's University.

- e) Centre for the Study of Sport & Health (CSSH) 2019-2020 Annual Report, *Appendix L*

Key Discussion Points:

- No discussion.

In the absence of objections, the Senate accepts the CSSH 2019-2020 annual report as meeting the requirements of section 3.2 of the Senate Policy Governing the Establishment, Reporting and Review of Institutes and Centres of Saint Mary's University.

- f) MPHEC Proposal for a Post-Baccalaureate Certificate Program in Applied Economics, *Appendix M1, and M2 (a-d)*

Key Discussion Points:

- This proposal was originally approved in a Senate meeting held on September 22, 2017. During the MPHEC Peer Review process, the proposal was pulled when it appeared that it may be rejected. We ran it in conjunction with the Master of Applied Economics. It is now revised and once again proceeding through the approval process.
- Question: In M2d – some courses are cross listed with undergraduate courses. What if there is a student that comes through the Commerce undergraduate program? Answer: They would not be appropriate for the program. These courses are NOT cross listed. They are collocated.

Moved by Butler and seconded, **“that the Senate approves the revised proposal for a Post-Baccalaureate Certificate Program in Applied Economics for resubmission to MPHEC.” Motion carried.**

- e) Election Committee
2019-2020 Annual report, *Appendix S*.

Key Discussion Points:

- Karen Grandy is listed twice and Marc Doucet should be included in the membership listing. **Action Item: Bell** to correct.

In the absence of objections, the Election Committee annual report was accepted as revised into the record of Senate.

- f) Executive Committee 2019-2020 Annual report, *Appendix N*.
Key Discussion Points:

- No discussion.

In the absence of objections or revisions, the Executive Committee annual report was accepted into the record of Senate.

- g) Learning and Teaching Committee 2019-2020 Annual report, *Appendix O*.

Key Discussion Points:

- No discussion.

In the absence of objections or revisions, the Learning and Teaching Committee annual report was accepted into the record of Senate.

- h) Library Committee 2019-2020 Annual report, *Appendix P*.
Key Discussion Points:

- No discussion.

In the absence of objections or revisions, the Library Committee annual report was accepted into the record of Senate.

- i) Literacy Strategy Committee 2019-2020 Annual report, *Appendix Q*.
Key Discussion Points:

- Question: Reference to the Writing Centre report – what is the relationship between the LSC and the Writing Centre? Answer: With the establishment of the Studio, the advisory committee has not yet been convened. When that committee meets in the next two weeks, that discussion will be undertaken.
- Suggestion: The committee should reconsider their mandate and perhaps consider joining the Learning and Teaching Committee.
Action Item: Takseva will meet with the committee to discuss this potential.

In the absence of objections or revisions, the Literacy Strategy Committee annual report was accepted into the record of Senate.

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FACULTY COUNCILS

None

21029

REPORTS FROM JOINT COMMITTEES

- a) Honorary Degrees 2019-2020 Annual Report, *Appendix R*.
Key Discussion Points:

- The committee is reviewing their terms of reference.

- The committee decided not to identify candidates for Honorary Degrees for the May and September Convocations, but will meet to discuss the potential for the January Convocation.
- There are recommendations pending for the consideration of this committee.

In the absence of objections or revisions, the Honorary Degrees Committee annual report was accepted into the record of Senate.

21030

NEW BUSINESS FROM

a. Floor (not involving notice of motion)

1. Winter term (202120) term start date **Key Discussion Points:**

Key Discussion Points:

- This item came from the recent Faculty Staff Update on Oct 8.
- The following concerns were states:
 - The university is closed until January 4.
 - There would be domino effect on subsequent terms unless we decrease the break, teaching days, or study days.
 - Other universities have reduced the break.
- Question: How many exams are taking place in the fall and winter terms? Are we able to shorten this timeline? Concern was expressed with starting any term when staff are not available to answer student's questions. Answer: We do not do exams on Sundays and we have an extra day for storm day potential. Potentially we could change the number of exams we have. If we shorten the term, we have to think about cutting the winter break as the more meaningful way to address this. There is an issue of support over the break, but we have an opportunity to do this. From the Service Centre perspective, the work has increased exponentially. The VP is looking at ways to address this situation in consideration of the CAs and other issues related to such an approach.
- We need to anticipate some of the questions students may have prior to the closure period and address those before the break.
- The sooner we have clear guidance on assessments, including final exams (and the various options), the sooner faculty can start thinking and planning. It would also be helpful for the Registrar's Office (for scheduling final exams).
- Faculty are concerned about the delay and wonder about the lag between the end of one and the beginning of another semester. Some guidelines to faculty and creativity in approach is needed relating to how faculty manage the semester to provide maximum flexibility for students to deal with pandemic impact issues.
- Students are expected to arrive before the Christmas Break. We are preparing for that now. Students are very likely going to be reticent to leave the Atlantic bubble because of concerns about getting back in and the isolation requirements.

- Student Services has been working on new student arrivals and it is looking like these students will be arriving earlier than in previous years. Student support services are being reviewed in this regard.
- Over Thanksgiving, students were encouraged to stay within the province. A similar request will likely be made for the Christmas break. A provincial survey will be sent out in the next few days to students around the province on this.

2. Parliamentary Procedure

- A majority in favour is 50% of the participating vote plus one.
- An abstention is not a vote. Do not take a decision to abstain lightly. If you are not for a situation, vote against it.
- There is a motion to defer – if something comes up that is important to address before proceeding with the issue at hand – a motion to defer the item to a specific time or date is appropriate.
- You can bring up a point of order if you see things are not following the established order of business.
- It was suggested that we could use the polling function in zoom.
- There is also a motion to refer (as to a committee).
- If you move to table a motion, it must be lifted from the table at the same meeting. A motion can only be tabled if there is something more pressing that must be dealt with before continuing with the tabled discussion.

3. University Committee on Racism

Key Discussion Points:

- Over the past few months, members of the Saint Mary's community have engaged in difficult but necessary conversations around anti-Black racism. The President's Standing Committee on the Prevention of Racism held two listening circles in the month of June. The first focused on students and the second circle focused on faculty and staff. These two events enabled students, faculty, and staff the opportunity to talk about their experience with racism on campus.
In addition, two panel discussions for students have been scheduled for early in the fall semester. The first panel discussion on Anti-Racism was included in Welcome Week activities. The second panel discussion on Challenging Implicit Bias and Micro-aggressions was held on October 7, 2020. Recently members of the committee as well as members of SMU faculty and staff joined other universities and colleges across Canada to engage in national dialogue to take action against anti-Black racism.

- The committee will organize the information that has been gathered from listening circles, panel discussions and national dialogue and review it together with recommendations that came from the 2018 Ad-Hoc Committee Report. The committee will then prioritize action items as necessary.
- Question: Are there any timeline in relation to the response to those recommendations? Answer: Several recommendations have already been implemented. Subsequent to participation in the National Dialogues and Action for Inclusive Higher Education and Communities, there was an email circulated today from the National Dialogues inter-institutional advisory committee seeking input from those that attended.
- Please send any comments concerning this issue to the committee chairperson, Ms Deborah Brothers-Scott at anti-racism@smu.ca. Submission will be kept in the strictest confidence.
- The following link to an article was provided: “Rising against racism” <https://www.caut.ca/bulletin/2020/10/rising-against-racism?fbclid=IwAR3ApXuIr0ZhD-AheeKsabzf0B57-ln2ltIy9wosUD9RJODYLAD4io1kz1M>

21031

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 4:19 P.M.

Barb Bell,
Secretary of Senate