

**SENATE MEETING MINUTES  
March 17, 2023**

The 642<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the Senate of Saint Mary's University was held on Friday, March 17, 2023, at 2:00 PM, in CLARI, Atrium room 340. Dr Grandy, Chaired.

**PRESENT:** Dr Summerby-Murray, Dr Francis, Dr Ingraham, Dr Sarty, Dr Austin, Dr Barclay, Dr Brosseau, Dr Fan, Dr Grandy, Dr Hare, Dr Irving, Dr Kocum, Dr O'Brien, Dr Power, Dr Sanderson, Dr Stinson, Dr Ylijoki, Dr Al Zaman, Dr Zhyznomirska, Mr Peters, Ms Tyler, Ms Meyers, Ms Mihika, Ms Boudreau, Mr Wilson, and Ms Bell, Secretary of Senate.

**GUESTS:** Dr Kay, Ms Milton, Ms Sargeant-Greenwood, Ms Ulbrich, Ms Benoit

**REGRETS:** Dr VanderPlaat, Dr Bhabra, Mr Brophy, Ms van den Hoogen

The meeting was called to order at 2:03 pm. Dr Grandy chaired and provided a territorial acknowledgement.

**23075 2023-2024 UNIVERSITY BUDGET PRESENTATION**

Michel Ulbrich and M. Benoit (1 hour – 2 – 3 pm)

**Key Discussion Points:****Fiscal 2023 Forecasted Deficit**

- The expected 2023 operating deficit was \$1 million, but it is actually \$10.3 million for the year ended March 31, 2023.
- The current situation did not happen quickly but developed over time.
- We had one time COVID relief funding from the government, and in the 2021-2022 fiscal year \$9 million in one-time funding was used. We were able to close that year with a \$1 million deficit because of that funding.
- The University is looking to offset the 2022-2023 deficit by not doing discretionary transfers at year end.
- The forecasted operational budget for the fiscal year March 31, 2024, shows a potential operating deficit of between \$5 – 8 million.
- The deficits in 2023 and 2024 will significantly weaken the university's financial position. Without an action plan, the university will be unable to borrow money or pay its bills.

**Guiding Principles**

- Academic programs are at the heart of the University. Going forward the focus will be on student recruitment, success, and retention and to ensure long term institutional sustainability.

Ms Ulbrich presented the budget details.

### **Next Steps (6 – 12 months)**

- Flexibility is the key.
- Doing nothing is not an option.
- We will not be able to depend on a government buyout.

### **Plan:**

1. New Revenue Growth,
2. Focus on Recruitment and Retention,
3. Cost Extraction,
4. Salary Restructure,
5. Commercialization of assets for academic purposes.
  - Looking at other opportunities for restructuring non-academic structures to offset expenses.

The University may not be able to achieve all five items above, but will try to reach this goal.

### **Question & Answer Period**

- An objection was presented to the use of the phrase "ethnic groups" in relation to who would be using student living space and what they might do in it.
- Question: Why is the recruitment plan based on tuition increases when students are currently struggling to manage costs? Answer: All efforts are being made to identify different approaches to fund the increasing operational expenses.
- Question: What is a successful model from western Canada that inspires SMU planning? Answer: Ontario colleges and specifically the University of Ottawa have interesting working models. We could rent the land for a construction project. An independent developer would build a building to support our needs. We would get a portion of the revenue earned off that asset and be better able to meet the needs of students. We could negotiate a land lease of our facilities to a developer, who would then assume maintenance costs. We would also share in the revenue. The money generated out of non-academic assets would contribute to funding academic and research activities.
- Question: Who would control operations of the residences and what legislation would apply to them regarding the university's responsibility for accessibility issues? Answer: We have seen institutions with full control directed to the University that were not done well. The ones that were done collaboratively were better and more engaging. These developers are committed to accessibility, and we would govern collaboratively.
- Question: Will faculty be able to provide feedback in this regard?
- Members were advised that a consultant has been retained to act on our behalf. This individual has brokered these arrangements across the country, to act on our behalf. We will also work with the Property Committee of the Board to make a recommendation.
- Question: Which schools have successfully implemented this model? Answer: The University of Ottawa is doing this. They offered to share with us all of the planning and communications related to implementing their plan.
- Question: If the subscription is not high enough, how do we address that? Answer: The liability is with the developer.
- Question: Are the retention efforts focused on domestic or international students? Answer: This year, the new incoming students were not impacted

by the tuition model. Price sensitivity was not a concern for international students but stability of costs throughout a degree program was. We are also keeping in line with comparable tuition increases at other institutions.

**23076**      **REPORT OF AGENDA COMMITTEE**

The agenda was accepted as posted.

**23077**      **PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

Posted as **Appendix A** for this meeting (10 min).

**Key Discussion Points:**

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

Masking protocols remain mandatory in classrooms and labs and are encouraged in all other common areas.

**Discovery and Innovation in a Learning-Centered Environment**

- On March 8, the Provincial Government announced \$25 million in funding for SMU's Action for Health: a strategic partnership with the Province of Nova Scotia to transform healthcare. This investment focuses primarily on health data analytics and management and the development of new collaborative initiatives which support healthcare solutions in the province.
- The Research Expo on March 10 was well received.
- Participated in the Asia-Pacific Foundation-Universities Canada "Canada-in-Asia" conference in Singapore, Feb 21-23, speaking on a panel on international university collaborations, attending various sessions, and meeting with various members of universities and institutes.

**Intercultural Learning**

- Spoke on Feb 21 at the national launch of the Canadian Military, Veteran and Family Connected Campus Consortium.

**Institutional Sustainability**

- Both CUPE 3912 and SMUFU have ratified new collective agreements. NSGEU negotiations remain ongoing.

**23078**      **VICE-PRESIDENT ACADEMIC AND RESEARCH REPORT**

Posted as **Appendix B** for this meeting (10 min).

**Key Discussion Points:**

- The VPAR had a scheduling conflict but her report is posted.

**23079**      **SMUSA PRESIDENT'S REPORT** (Academic focus)

Listed as **Appendix C** but presented verbally only (5 min).

**Key Discussion Points:**

- During the storm closure on March 2<sup>nd</sup>, some in-person classes were changed to online, and some online courses proceeded. Some class times were also changed. This created confusion and challenges for students. SMUSA requests a ruling or regulation for class cancellations when storm conditions close the campus.
  - It was suggested that if/when campus needs to close unexpectedly, consideration should be given to the typical course and lab start/end times

(e.g., 4-5:15 might mean closure at 4:00). Messages regarding closure should explicitly mention that online courses are also cancelled.

- SMUSA Elections: Taking office on May 1 are President: Shiray Tam. Board of Directors: Tyler Hutchinson, Anushka Kalantari, Naima Hodge, and Shaneika Carter.
- The main concern about exams is students getting home safety after exams. We are looking at options for the next academic year.

23080

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

**Key Discussion Points:**

- Question: Will the expected funding be used for funding programs? Answer: Yes. One example is the Certificate in Health, Wellness and Sport in Society. Development of Major and Minor programs are being considered. The gift is split in two areas 1) 1.9 mil facility and 2) 1.2 mil programming. This is a gifted trust, and it will be spent down to zero. It will not be directed to permanent hiring but could be used to build up capacity. The funding allows for the hiring of a director (an academic doctor) that will oversee the development of other credentialing. Because it is a limited term agreement it is not a permanent hire.
- Question: The recent 5 pm weather closure was an anomaly. It should have been consistent with the class scheduled time. **Action Item: Peters** will follow up on this. **Action Item: Summerby-Murray** will ensure communication goes out that when the campus must be closed, all courses are cancelled. Website communication will also need to be addressed.
- Labs usually start at 2:30 and continue to 5:30. If campus is closing during that time frame, labs have to finish for safety reasons.

Moved by O'Brien and seconded, **"to adjourn the meeting for five minutes."**  
**Motion carried.**

23081

**MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

Minutes of the meeting of February 17, 2023, were *circulated* as **Appendix D.**

**Key Discussion Points:**

- Feedback on the transcription.
  - A member suggested that there was more recorded in the minutes than was said at the meeting. The phrase 'general accessibility' was used but it wasn't used during the meeting. Response: During the February Senate meeting the Agenda Committee Chair read the Committee report. That phrase is in the report designated as Appendix D.
  - Question: Was the University Accessibility Plan reviewed during the process of exploring this request? Answer: The chair confirmed the University Accessibility Plan was consulted prior to the drafting of the Agenda Committee's report on recording Senate meetings and providing verbatim transcriptions.
- Change 'general accessibility' requirement to meets "the current requirements".
- Members were advised that from a governance perspective, minutes are not a record of what was said, but a record of what was done (i.e. to record

decisions taken). It was suggested that Senate minutes focus less on trying to record conversations and more on the decisions reached.

There being no further revisions or objections, the minutes of the Senate meeting of February 17, 2023, were accepted as revised.

## **23082**      **BUSINESS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES**

1. Curriculum Committee – Education Courses – update (Dr VanderPlaat)

### **Discussion Points:**

- The Senate rejected the submission of new course proposals for EDUC 1101 & 1102. Senators were advised that these submissions have been withdrawn.
2. 2022 Report on Positive Action to Improve the Employment of Women, Aboriginal Peoples, Visible minorities, and People with Disabilities at Saint Mary’s University.
- ### **Discussion Points**
- Deferred to next meeting due to absence of the VPAR.

## **23083**      **REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES**

1. Accessibility Committee (Dr Brosseau),  
Notice of Motion, **Appendix E1**, Revision Form – Committee Terms of Reference, **Appendix E2**.

### **Discussion Points:**

- Suggestions:
  - The committee should define accessibility, and then more specifically what that would mean for individuals with disabilities. (See University Accessibility Plan)
  - The committee would benefit from people with lived experience, and individuals from equity seeking groups but the committee would be advised to seek legal consultation related to their inclusion.
  - Accessibility related work is not only the focus of the various campus committees. The Accessibility Committee should consider consultation with various committees, areas, or offices on campus addressing accessibility issues.
- Concern was expressed regarding possible duplication of effort collecting resources pertaining to accessibility. Answer: Any resources found that may be of interest would be reported as a way to bring innovative ideas to Senate.
- The committee needs to, be trained, speak with first voice, and seek related professional consultation.
- A summary of the concerns follows:

### **Major concerns:**

  - The revised wording does not mention the institutional Accessibility Plan
  - The composition of the committee lacks diversity, in particular from those with lived experience. (Seek legal advice on this).

### **Other concerns:**

  - Definition of accessibility and access not included (refer to University Plan).
  - Revised wording mentions “relevant university committees” – change this to committees and offices.
  - Committee members need a mechanism for training and legal advice.

- 5.2.6.3.3 – Other entities on campus are doing this. Should this activity be included in the TOR?
- Should the Diversity and Cultures office be represented on the membership?
- The jurisdiction of the various bodies focused on accessibility is unclear. There is still no policy on accommodations for students as these committees continue to figure out what they are doing.
- The policy development piece has been removed and replaced with advice only – should this be the case?

**Moved by Kocum and seconded “that Senate returns this submission requesting the Accessibility Committee to undertake consultation related to their TOR and include the suggested revisions”. Motion carried.**

**23084      REPORTS OF JOINT COMMITTEES**

1. Honorary Degrees Committee  
Recommendations, **Appendix F**

**“Be it resolved 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, as submitted in Appendix F and hereby makes such recommendation to the Board of Governors.” Resolution approved.**

**23085      NEW BUSINESS FROM**

- a) Floor (not involving notice of motion)
  1. Information request – the Northern Ireland program, **Appendices G1 & G2.**

**Key Discussion Points**

- The Northern Ireland project is not terminated.
- It is not an academic credit program and requires no prerequisite. It is an experiential program and is not connected to a credit course.
- The preferred situation is that this field program would count as a credit.
- A review of the relationship with Peaceful Schools International (agreement signed in 2012) is necessary because the situation is no longer arms-length with SMU. The leadership of the program is currently SMU employees. SMUSA is also connected through their Conflict Resolution Society.
- An academic champion is needed.
- The program cost \$10,000. SMU does not generally support non-academic field programming.
- Last term students in that course were told there would not be a program this year.
- An update on the review process for this program was requested. Further discussion deferred to the next meeting.

**23086      ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 4:30 P.M.