

SENATE MEETING MINUTES
May 10, 2024

The 653rd meeting of the Senate of Saint Mary's University was held on Friday, May 10, 2024, at 2:00 PM, in the CLARI Meeting Room.

PRESENT: Dr. Summerby-Murray, Dr. VanderPlaat, Dr. Veres, Dr. Sarty, Dr. Malton, Ms. van den Hoogen, Mr. Seneker, Dr. Hlongwane, Dr. Brosseau, Dr. Grek-Martin, Dr. Hare, Dr. Ylijoki, Dr. Kocum, Dr. Austin, Dr. Barclay, Dr. Grandy, Dr. Sanderson, Dr. Doucet, Dr. Dodge, Ms. Southwell, Mr. Chiunda, Mr. Hutchinson, Ms. Kalantri, Ms. Shannon Morrison, Secretary to Senate

GUESTS: Mr. Williams, Dr. Fridell, Dr. Gaon, Dr. De Feuntes, Ms. Sargeant-Greenwood

REGRETS: Dr. Ingraham, Dr. Stinson, Dr. Raymond, Mr. Brophy, Prof. Sewell, Dr. Samou, Ms. Gervase

The meeting was called to order at 2:00 p.m., Dr. Grandy chaired it, and a territorial acknowledgment was provided. Welcome to the student senators.

24091 **REPORT OF AGENDA COMMITTEE**

Adding item under Reports from Standing Committees. Update from Senate Executive.

Agenda Accepted.

24092 **BUDGET UPDATE** (30 minutes) Mr. Williams

Key Discussions:

- Budgeted \$7 million dollar deficit at the start of 2023-2024; preliminary results show improvements and are forecasted to close with a \$3.7 million dollar deficit.
- Salaries and benefits were projected to be around \$100 million; we are projected to be favorable by \$1.1 million.
- There is an expected overage of \$1.5 million in expenses. This is related to financial aid and travel.
- Revenue was up by \$2.3 million due to investment income related to Action for Health and Interfund transfers from philanthropy.
- Question: Have the layoffs improved the financial picture? Has there been consideration of the risks of the people laid off and how that will impact faculty teaching and research? Answer by President: This is for fiscal 24. The only changes that would impact this budget would be some components around the closing of the Language Centre.
- Question: How do the changes that are listed here lead us into FY25? Answer: Now that we know that we did not come in with a \$7 million deficit but rather are coming in with a \$3.7 million deficit, this helps us make headway. When this was presented at Senate in March, there were many unknowns. We did not have clarity on the

government grant or the international student cap. Going forward, we will have better certainty about revenue sources.

- Question: Do we have a forecasted deficit? Answered by the President: It will likely look similar to FY24.
- Question: Is there an intention to repopulate the money in the inter-fund transfer account? Answer: The primary focus is to return money to the general fund. We are currently discussing how to distribute money to individual departments. A portion of the money in the interfund transfer account is related to philanthropic gifts. Many are replenished within the endowment. Our fundraising and success help to offset with spending.
- Question: Are you looking into other areas to increase revenue? Answered by the President: The key to driving revenue is program innovation. Engineering is a great example, as are other programs and departments that are seeing growth. The Registrar is looking at other pathways to get students into programs. There are partnerships with students coming out of college. Those pathways have not been fully explored in the past, but they will help generate revenue for the university. We will also be looking at how our approach to residences can generate revenue for the long term and from facility rentals such as the Dauphinee Arena and the Homburg Fitness Centre.
- Question: Entrance scholarships seem to be dropping from \$7000 to \$3000, even based on your admission average. How might this impact our students? Answered by AVP Enrolment: The operating budget for scholarships has not changed; it is at the same level. Our budget is roughly 6.5 million dollars. We made over 1300 offers at \$3000 per student and offered an additional 35 offers at \$8000 per international student. These numbers are based on a third of tuition per student. By giving smaller amounts to students, we could give more students money. Added comment: Many awards are built through philanthropic gifts.

24093

SPRING GRADUATES

Key Discussion Points

- This Spring, there are 758 graduates. Of these, 26 receive more than one parchment, and 255 graduate with distinctions.

Moved by Mr. Seneker and seconded by Dr. Austin **“to confer degrees and distinctions on those represented on the list (circulated as Appendix A1) at the Spring 2024 Convocation.” Motion carried.**

Moved by Mr. Seneker and seconded by Ms. Southwell **“to enable the Registrar to add such graduates as may be identified subsequent to this meeting.” Motion carried.**

24094

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

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

Key Discussion Points:

- There are six convocations next week. Senators should take time to celebrate the student's accomplishments. Four Honorary Degrees will be conferred over the three days.
- The Arthur L Irving Centre for Entrepreneurship hosted the pitch competition and Minister's Awards for Entrepreneurship. A Saint Mary's team won the competition.
- The new Dean of Sobey School of Business has been announced and we need to thank Dr. Raymond for his leadership and work over the past year. The announcement for the Dean of Science will be made soon.
- The ACOA cabinet minister will bring Atlantic Canada back to the table regarding international study permits.
- There are challenges of encampments in Canada and Halifax. Working with Universities Canada for health and safety. A brief is prepared for if this comes up at Saint Mary's.

24095

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

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

Key Discussion Points:

- Would like to thank the students and faculty who were members of the Search Committees.
- A new Indigenous Student Advisor will start Monday, May 13th. The Battiste report was circulated to the SMU community earlier this week.
- The University Appointments and University Review Committee have been incredibly busy. Normally, in a year, 10-12 faculty members are up for a promotion; this year, we have 24.

24096

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

- Students have expressed concerns about delays in receiving their Academic Integrity Officers' decision letters. They are seeking assistance to ensure they graduate.
- Ms. Southwell met with the Academic Integrity Administrator to understand the process so students receive their decisions on time.

24097

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

- Question: The Interim VPAR's term ends at the end of August, and you are currently overseeing a process that will exceed that. Do you have a succession plan in place for this? Answer by Interim VPAR: The project is in the process of being passed on to the Deans.
- Question: The Community of Practice on the use of Artificial Intelligence in the classroom is a faculty-led initiative, and the final session was scheduled for May 3rd. What are the next steps? Answered by Interim VPAR: I suggest reaching out to Dr.

Enns as she leads the Community of Practice, which is researching how AI can help students and how to use the software in thoughtful ways.

- Question: What formula are you using to assess the ideal income-generating course for faculty? What is the student-to-faculty ratio? Answered by Interim VPAR: Not every program needs to be financially stable. As long as we have other programs that can make up for the cost of a program that does not break even, we will keep that specialty course as it is important to Saint Marys'. Not every program needs to be financially stable; it would be nice if they could break even. Follow-up answer by President: The ratio is between tuition and salary. It requires approximately 12 students to break even on a course. This is based on domestic student enrolments.

24098

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Minutes of the meeting of April 19, 2024, were circulated as **Appendix E**

- Update the prefix of Ms. Gervase's name

The minutes of the previous meeting have been approved, and the above revision has been made.

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

24099

BUSINESS ARISING

1. Board of Governors Response to Senate Motion April 19. 2024 (President)

Key Discussions:

- The points are taken from the University Strategic Plan, Priority 3— sustainability. Neither element (financial or environmental) specifically addresses academic programs.
- President: The Strategic Plan is at one level, with more in-depth plans, such as the Academic and Research plans, informing this strategy. In Phase 3A, several points are linked to academic programs and sustainability.
- Question: Has the Board been presented with the Strategic Plan? Answered by the President: This will be presented to the Board on May 31.
- Question: Who drafted the slides? Answer: The Executive Management Group.
- Question: They would like to request that the Registrar provide graphics and statistics on the enrollment numbers of students in specific courses/programs.
- Question: What is meant by the introduction of health checks? Answered by the President: That refers to enrolment and financial data that will be provided related to the health of the department.
- Question: How will departments be assisted with translating the data into good programs? Answered by Interim VPAR: We are working with EAB to verify data,

and they have a process through which the chairs and departments can check the health of the department.

- Comment: While departments will be provided with data as part of these health checks, there is still the question of how to respond to this data in innovative ways if there are concerns with enrolment. If the enrolment is down, what are we to do next? What are the best practices?" Interim VPAR answers: The Academic Program Development Office is in place to support the departments.
- In phases one and two, there is a description of what will happen on the institution's faculty side. Has something happened on the staff side? Answered by the President: The senior managers have been tasked to streamline their operations with the aim of a 5 million dollar reduction. There has been a non-renewal of software and technology, cutting back on events, a hiring freeze, salary reductions, and staff reductions based on the recommendations of the senior managers.

24100

OUTSTANDING ITEMS FROM PREVIOUS AGENDA

1. Presentation of the University Strategic Plan (President)

Key Discussions Points

- This is a high-level conceptual plan that sets up the institution's priorities. More focused plans include the Academic Plan, Research Plan, and Campus Master Plan.
- There are statements about our focus on teaching excellence and research and how these relate to the particular challenges we face.
- On page 23, it indicates that we recognize the current financial plan to ensure this model has room for change.
- Each priority has a strategic direction and a set of objectives. Embedded in each priority is a statement from this year's valedictorians.
- Priority 1: Discovery and Learning with Purpose
- Priority 2: Healthy and Successful Community – Faculty and staff experience and the student experience.
- Priority 3: Sustainability – This is broken into two sections: financial and environmental. We need to focus on our buildings, campus, and the footprint we leave as an organization.
- Priority 4: Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility
- Priority 5: Community Relationships and Philanthropy—We have an Incredible university strength. We have a strong base of donors and benefactors, and we need to cultivate and strengthen these relationships for student success and research.
- Question: Has the university considered online programs? Answered by the President: On April 1, 2020, we were fully online. In 2022, China announced that it would not recognize online courses taken from Canadian universities by

students who were living in China. This September, we will offer a fully online Master of Applied Psychology. There is a Master of Applied Health Services and other graduate programs that are fully online. Getting interest from students will be a challenging thing. We need to have programming that is unique to SMU, such as our Master of Management, Cooperatives and Credit Unions.

- Question: Would an international student need a study permit to study online?
Answer: I am unsure.
- Comment: I would like to request that we be provided with a detailed plan. How is Senate input going to be operationalized? Answer by the President: The more detailed plan will be the subject of workshops over the next couple of months and will ensure that the document comes to the Senate.

24101

REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES

1. Academic Planning

a). Proposed Department Merger – Global Development Studies and Political Science (Dr. Fridell & Dr. Gaon)

Key Discussion Points:

- This merger stems from the collaborative work of two departments over the past year. It stems from our desire to work with more faculty. We do not see immediate changes to the curriculum. The main goal is to bring this together as a single academic unit. Working together, we will have joint events, joint recruitment, joint student activities, and more faculty.
- Comment: I would like to applaud and congratulate both Dr. Gaon and Dr. Fridell for leading us in this merger. As we face the current financial uncertainty, this is a perfect example of a faculty-led initiative.
- Question: What does this mean on the administrative side? Answer: We will be called the Department of Political Science and Global Development. The Chair of Political Science will oversee the 10 faculty. The current secretary is in place to support both programs. The biggest challenge is that we are spread out all over campus.

Moved by Dr. VanderPlaat and seconded by Mr Seneker, **“that Senate approves the proposal from the Department of Global Development Studies and the Department of Political Science to merge to form a single academic unit.” Motion carried.**

2. Senate Committee on Learning and Teaching

a) Best Practices to Increase Student Participation in Instructor Course Evaluations (Dr. De Fuentes)

Key Discussion Points:

- Question: Would this entire document go to all faculty or just the portion that focuses on faculty best practices? Answer: This document would go to the Studio for Teaching and Learning to communicate with faculty.

- This would not be a requirement but a recommendation to the faculty to help increase the student responses on the Instructor Course Evaluations.
- **Question:** During the environmental scan, were there examples where it was a mandatory component of the course? Was it a requirement for course completion? Answer: They did not come across that.
- **Question:** How would this be implemented to support the recommendation to continue using paper? Answer: During consultations, it was mentioned that it would still be a good idea to have the paper option due to accessibility.
- Comment: The issue with the paper was the logistics and privacy issues of paper submissions.

Moved by Dr. Austin and seconded by Dr. Doucet **“that Senate accepts the work from the committee of the Best Institutional and Faculty Practices to Increase Student Participation in ICEs document as attached in appendix I2” Motion carried.**

- **Question:** What happens to the document now?
- Suggestion that a Senate committee create a policy on ICE and its procedures, and this document should be folded into the policy.
- Recommend that the Senate Committee on Learning and Teaching look into creating a policy on ICE or ways that other institutions are guiding this.

Add this discussion item to Business Arising on the September 2024 agenda.

Moved by Dr. Grek-Martin and seconded by Mr. Hutchinson, **“that Senate extends for 5 minutes.” Motion carried.**

3. Senate Executive Committee

Key Discussion Points:

- The Senate Executive has met twice since the last Senate meeting, once with the Board of Governors Executive Committee to ensure that Senate is being consulted and to open dialogue. The other meeting was to discuss some policies with which the Senate has raised concerns. We have made a request to the Board of Governors for revisions to the Safe Disclosure Policy. We are in the process of asking for some revisions to the Policy on Policies.

24102

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 4:40 p.m.