

**SENATE MEETING MINUTES**  
**December 13, 2024**

The 656<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Senate of Saint Mary's University was held on Friday, December 13, 2024, at 2:00 PM, in CLARI, Atrium 340. Dr Jason Grek-Martin chaired.

**PRESENT:** Dr. Summerby-Murray, Dr. VanderPlaat, Dr. Delorme, Dr. Ingraham, Dr. Veres, Dr. Sarty, Mr. Seneker, Mr. Brophy, Ms. van den Hoogen, Dr. Grandy, Dr. Sanderson, Dr. Stinson, Dr. Doucet, Prof. Sewell, Dr. Dodge, Dr. Austin, Dr. Grek-Martin, Dr. Hlongwane, Dr. Brosseau, Dr. Ylijoki, Dr. Kocum, Dr. Barclay, Mr. Chiunda, Ms. Southwell, Mr. Hutchinson, Ms. Gervase

**GUESTS:** Ms. Sargeant-Greenwood, Dr. Zhang, Dr. Weir, Dr. Smith,

**REGRETS:** Dr. Blaise-Samou, Dr. Hare, Ms. Kalantri

The meeting was called to order at 2:02 P.M., and Dr. Jason Grek-Martin provided a territorial acknowledgment

**25024            REPORT OF AGENDA COMMITTEE**

The agenda is accepted as posted.

**25025            PRESIDENT'S REPORT – Posted as *Appendix A* (10 min)**

The President referred to the report included with meeting materials and highlighted some initiatives and activities over the past month, categorized under the headings of the university's new Strategic Plan:

**Discovery and Learning with Purpose**

- Incredible work being done in research and recognition led by the Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies such as the Discovery Centre's Awards and the Royal Society of Canada.
- Two Saint Mary's University faculty members, Dr. Tony Charles and Dr. Margaret MacDonald were inducted into the Royal Society of Canada in November.

**Healthy and Successful Community**

- Saint Mary's hosted the Employee Recognition Awards that brought colleagues together, as well as the Annual Holiday Reception

**Sustainability**

- The new Strategic Plan has been approved by the Board and an implementation plan has been developed.
- Regarding finances, FY25 results are on target, with revenues for Fall tuition exceeding our conservative approach due to a slight increase in enrolment numbers. Currently, the university is on target to meet and potentially improve on the forecasted operating deficit of \$5.4 million.

- Continued work with the provincial government and recently made the formal request for the additional 2 per cent on the operating grant to be provided to the university under the bilateral agreement.
- The second round of interviews for the Provost/Vice-President, Academic, and Research has been conducted, and the university is in the final candidate stage.

#### **Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility**

- December 6<sup>th</sup> marked the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Ending Violence Against Women, and the university held an event for members of the university community.
- The Executive Management Group held a meeting with the co-chairs of the Black Inclusion Working Group, during which the co-chairs presented their recommendations on how to create a more inclusive environment for Black students at Saint Mary's.

#### **Community Relationships and Philanthropy**

- Numerous events are being held to reconnect with alumni, most recently in Saint John and New York, as well as efforts to strengthen donor relationships.
- Key priorities the university is advancing with the government include student housing and addressing challenges with IRCC.

**25026**

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

Posted as **Appendix B1** for this meeting. (5 mins)

The Interim Vice-President, Academic and Research referred to the report included with the meeting materials and highlighted the following:

- The Program Development Office has held interviews for a new Manager, Program Development, and is in the process of making an offer to the successful candidate.
- The Studio review is still underway.
- The Interim Vice President, Academic and Research encouraged Senators to read the full report as various departments across the university are doing many great initiatives and activities which are outlined in the report.

**25027**

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

The SMUSA President highlights key items from their monthly report, including:

- SMUSA is seeing more students reaching out for Academic Integrity support.
- SMUSA hosted a Wellness Week to help students unwind before going into examination week. The week was well received.

**25028**

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

- Question for President: Could you provide any updates on the recommendations from the Black Student Working Group? Answered by President Summerby-Murray: The recommendations were thoughtful and well-founded. The first step is to initiate discussions with the Standing Committee on Racism, and they will provide further feedback, which will be shared with the Deans and Presidential Cabinet. The recommendations related to curriculum will be communicated to Senate and the goal is to bring those recommendations to the Board in the upcoming months.
- A student questioned if the efforts for international recruitment would change due to the government's restriction on international student permits. The Registrar indicated that the strategy would change, but not in a way that would reduce efforts. The university will continue to provide support for international students, and the government will offer additional financial support and resources for student permits.
- A student questioned if the university is sustainable in supporting international students, particularly regarding budget implications. The Registrar acknowledged that the university's finances are limited. However, efforts have been made to work with specific international governments that offer scholarships to help offset the costs for international students.

25029

**MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The November 8, 2024 meeting minutes were circulated as **Appendix D**.

There being no other revisions or objections, the November 8, 2024, Senate meeting minutes are approved.

25030

**OUTSTANDING ITEMS FROM PREVIOUS AGENDA**

9.1 ICE Cross Faculty Committee Update:

Moved by Dr. VanderPlaat and seconded by Dr. Grandy, **“that Senate dissolves the ICE Cross Faculty Committee,” Motion carried.**

**Key Discussion:**

- This committee was formed to review the Instructor Course Evaluation questions. The committee did not get anywhere, so assigning this to another committee would be ideal.

Moved by Dr. Grandy and seconded by Dr. VanderPlaat, **“that Senate assigns the Senate Committee on Teaching and Learning the task of reviewing the Instructor Course Evaluation questions.” Motion carried.**

9.2 Student Conduct Committee Annual Report

Moved by Dr. VanderPlaat and seconded by Mr. Seneker,” **that Senate approve the Student Conduct Committees Annual Report.” Motion carried.**

25031

## **REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES**

### **10.1 Academic Planning**

#### 10.1 (a) Global Development Studies

Moved by Dr. VanderPlaat and seconded by Dr. Ingraham, “**that Senate approve the one-year follow-up report of the Global Development Studies Program as meeting the requirements of Section 5 of the Senate Policy on the Review of Programs at Saint Mary’s University.**” **Motion carried.**

#### **Key Discussion:**

- Question: Has the department noticed an improvement in enrolment? Answer: At this moment, it is too soon to tell; the department will monitor enrolment as the years go on.

#### 10.1 (b) Certificate in Forensic Science

Moved by Dr. VanderPlaat and seconded by Dr. Austin, “**that Senate approve the one-year follow-up report of the Certificate in Forensic Sciences as meeting the requirements of Section 5 of the Senate Policy on the Review of Programs at Saint Mary’s University.**” **Motion carried.**

#### **Key Discussion:**

- A question was raised how viable the Certificate in Forensic Sciences is long-term. It is considered viable in terms of student enrolment. However, the staffing component is less certain as two half-time faculty members currently support it. The program is facing challenges in finding qualified part-time instructors. The program is working on strengthening the relationship between the program and the local forensic community, including collaborating with the Medical Examiner Office.

#### 10.1 (c) Biology 3-Year Report

Moved by Dr. VanderPlaat and seconded by Mr. Seneker, “**that Senate approve the three-year follow-up report of the Biology Program as meeting the requirements of Section 5 of the Senate Policy on the Review of Programs at Saint Mary’s University.**” **Motion carried.**

#### 10.1 (d) Graduate Diploma in Health Data Analytics

Moved by Dr. VanderPlaat and seconded by Dr. Sarty, **“that Senate approve the MPHEC proposal for a Graduate Diploma in Health Data Analytics for submission to MPHEC.” Motion carried.**

**Key Discussion:**

- This proposal was put together with the efforts of faculty members from all three faculties.

10.1 (e) Centre for Excellence in Post-Secondary Student Success

Moved by Dr. VanderPlaat and seconded by Dr. Sarty, **“that Senate approve the proposal for a Centre for Excellence in Post-Secondary Student Success with an understanding that the university cannot guarantee financial contributions nor a course release for the Director (without the course release reimbursed through external funding)” Motion carried.**

**Key Discussion:**

- The Centre will provide an annual report to Senate, similar to the other Centres and Institutes at Saint Mary’s University.
- At this point, the Centre is not asking for additional costs other than a potential space on campus to meet. FGSR has indicated that they can manage this request.
- The group works with people worldwide and believes they can continue to build and secure the resources necessary for long-term sustainability.
- Question: What does Centre status provide for this group of researchers?  
Answer: Centre status is important for securing funding and partnering with other Centers. Currently, the researchers operate as individuals, but with Centre status, they could work more collaboratively as a group.
- Question: Is this an extension of Student Affairs and Services? Answer: It is more of a strategic enrolment approach involving multiple university areas, with Student Affairs and Services being one of the key components.

10.1 (f) Replacement of Six (6) Credit Courses

Moved by Mr. Seneker and seconded by Mr. Brophy, **“Senate approves the proposal to replace undergraduate six (6) credit multi-term offerings with a distinct Part I / Part II each of which is 3 credit, with the exception of the thesis, honors seminar, senior seminar, graduate seminar, and dissertation courses.” Motion dismissed.**

**Key Discussion:**

- Was consultation done with the departments that this will impact? Direct consultation was not conducted with the departments. However, there has been consultation with the Deans and Associate Deans.

- Replacing a full-year course with Part 1 and Part 2 would allow students who cannot complete the full year to earn credit for their work. Students often withdraw in the second term and receive no credit for the work completed in the first term. This change would allow students to receive partial credit for the work they did complete and offer flexibility to take the course in another term.
- To implement this change, faculty members would need to be informed well in advance so they can update their course outlines, descriptions, and marking rubrics accordingly.

Secondary Motion moved by Dr. Grandy and seconded by Dr. Barclay, **“that Senate refers this item back to APC for consultation with the departments impacted by this change.” Motion carried.**

**Key Discussion:**

- There is concern about whether this decision is administrative or academic. It is not intended to interfere with academic teaching; it aims to support students in their academic journey.
- Department chairs have been consulted, and this change has been proposed following Program Reviews.
- Effective consultation does not require unanimous agreement, but it ensures that everyone can voice their concerns.
- The DFW rates for six-credit courses are significantly higher than for three-credit courses.

**10.2 Academic Regulations Committee**

10.2 (a) Graduate Academic Regulation 21

Moved by Dr. VanderPlaat and seconded by Mr. Seneker, **“that Senate approve the revisions to Graduate Academic Regulation 21 as submitted.” Motion carried.**

10.2 (b) Graduate Academic Regulation 8 b.

Moved by Dr. VanderPlaat and seconded by Mr. Seneker, **“that Senate approve the revisions to Graduate Academic Regulation 8.b. as submitted in Appendix N1.” Motion carried.**

10.2 (c) PNC Grade Option

Moved by Dr. VanderPlaat and seconded by Dr. Grandy, **“that Senate approve the revisions to Undergraduate Academic Regulations 5 and 12 to include the formal adoption of No Credit (NC) and Pass (P) grading options as per Appendix (O1) as supported by the Academic Regulations Committee to be entered into the 2025-26 Academic Calendar”. Motion carried.**

Key Discussion:

- The request is to put the PNC (Pass/No Credit) grading option into a formal regulation.
- The difference between an AE grade and a P is that an AE grade is used specifically for students who are unable to complete their final exam, where the faculty member cannot determine an exact letter grade. The student will receive credit for the course.
- Students have expressed concerns that limiting the P grade option to extenuating circumstances only reduces fairness and accessibility for students.
- Data shows more students are graduating with Dean's List recognition and distinctions. Keeping the PNC grading option as it currently stands allows students to maintain high GPAs.
- Does the institution know the long-term impact of P/NC grades on transcripts? Would it impact a student who is looking to continue further education (e.g. Law School)
- This term alone, Enrolment Services is processing 730 PNC grade options.
- Dalhousie is the only other institution that has kept a form of PNC, and Saint Mary's is following a similar model.
- With this process, we will allow the students to see their grades, and then they will have a month to make a decision.

### **10.3 Bylaws Committee**

#### 10.3 (a) Terms of Reference Proposed Revisions

Moved by Dr. Austin and seconded by Ms. van den Hoogen, “**that Senate approve the Bylaws Committee terms of reference revisions as presented in Appendix P.**” **Motion carried.**

### **10.4 Curriculum Committee**

#### 10.4 (a) Terms of Reference Proposed Revisions

Moved by Mr. Seneker and seconded by Dr. VanderPlaat, “**that Senate approve the Curriculum Committee terms of reference revisions as presented in appendix Q.**” **Motion carried.**

#### Key Discussion:

- The committee does not review the cost implications of course and program changes as this information is not brought to the Curriculum Committee. Cost considerations are addressed at the Dean's level and by the Academic Planning Committee.

#### 10.4 (b) 2025-2026 Curriculum Submissions

Moved by Mr. Seneker and seconded by Dr. VanderPlaat, “**that Senate approve the Curriculum submissions, as presented in Appendices T1, T2, T3 and T4 for insertion into the Academic Calendar for 2025-2026.**” **Motion carried.**

Key Discussion:

- Is there a concern about having a minor in Arts called Science and Technology? Should it be renamed to reflect the course description and what is being taught? A Senate member clarified that other institutions have an Arts Minor called Science and Technology.

**25032**

**NEW BUSINESS FROM**

Floor (not involving notice of motion)

**11.1** Report on Positive Action to Improve the Employment of Women, Aboriginal Peoples, Visible minorities, and People with Disabilities at Saint Mary's University

**Item deferred to January Senate meeting**

**25033**

**ADJOURNMENT**

Meeting adjourned at 4:30 p.m.