

Item: Senate Minutes, December 1990

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DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY

MINUTES

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SENATE MEETING

Senate met in regular session on Monday, 10 December 1990 at 4:00 p.m. in the Senate and Board Room.

Present with Ms. P. Lane in the chair were:

Angelopoulos, Archibald, Arklie, Barkow, Berard, Birdsall, Black, Brett, Burns, Carlson, R.F.Chandler, Clark, Clarke, Clovis, Cochrane, Corvin, Coulombe, Cummings, Curri, deBurger, Dykstra, Fingard, Fournier, Fox, Frick, Gass, Johnson, Kimmins, Laidlaw, Lough, Mason, McKee, McNeil, Mills, Murray, J.D. Myers, O'Shea, Pacey, Renner, Reporter, Retallack, Richards, Ritchie, Russell, Schellink, Roland-Mieszkowski, Shaw, Shires, Simpson, Singh, Smith, Stairs, Stewart, Stuttard, Sullivan, Tamlyn, Tindall, Walker, Wien, D. Williams, Wolf, K.S. Wood, Zakariasen.

Invitees: J. Bankier, B.D. Christie, H. Eberhardt, M.D. MacDonald, O. MacLennan.

Regrets: Casey, A.D. Cohen, Dickson, Gilroy, J. Gray, Gwyn, Haffey, Haley, Hawkins, D.W. Jones, J.V. Jones, Konok, Meinertzhagen, M.F. Murphy, Purdy, Surette, M.H. Tan, Wassersug, C.N. Williams, Writer.

At 4:05 p.m., members of Senate rose to observe a moment of silence in honour of the late Dr. Henry Hicks, former President of the University and Chair of Senate.

90:059.

Minutes of the Meeting of 9 November 1990

The minutes of the meeting of 9 November 1990 were approved upon motion (E. Angelopoulos/R. deBurger).

90:060.

Report of the President

Mr. Clark presented his regular report to Senate (appended), which included reference to reports to the Council of Nova Scotia University Presidents (CONSUP) from various committees involved in inter-university discussions of roles and planned capacities. The report also included announcements about a number of proposed new capital projects, the establishment of a committee to draft an institutional policy statement on racism and sexism, and the appointment of Mr. K. Zakariasen as Acting Dean in the Faculty of Health Professions.

Mr. Russell asked if the President had any comment on the recent decision of the Supreme Court of Canada in the matter of mandatory retirement. Mr. Clark declined to comment at this time, indicating his desire to examine the Court's judgement further and to consider it in conjunction with current provincial human rights legislation.

90:061.

#### Interim Report on Progress towards the Achievement of the University Mission Statement

Mr. Clark presented this report (previously circulated) of the Presidential Advisory Committee on the University Mission Statement (PACUMS). Current and planned activities related to each of the twelve elements in the Mission Statement were described.

Ms. Walker asked what was the membership of PACUMS. Mr. Clark said that the Committee was comprised of Vice-Presidents Stairs, Mason, and McKee, the Chair and Vice-Chair of Senate, Mr. B. Christie, Ms. J. Eastman, and himself.

90:062.

#### Public Relations Plan

Ms. Lane welcomed Ms. M. MacDonald, Director of Public Relations, and Vice-President (External) Eberhardt. Mr. Clark gave some background to the Public Relations Plan, which was being provided as the annual report of the University Public Relations Committee. Ms. MacDonald pointed out that several of the specific recommendations were already being implemented, including closer monitoring and evaluation of public relations activities.

Mr. Stuttard pointed out that several copies of the Plan, which had been circulated with the agenda, were missing their even-numbered pages. The Secretary assured members that a complete copy of the Plan would be sent out with the Senate mail-out for January 1991.

90:063.

#### Question Period

Mr. Singh asked if there were plans to strike a Presidential Search Committee. Ms. Lane replied that this matter was to come to the Steering Committee on 14 December.

Mr. Shaw asked the President if there was any truth in rumors that intercollegiate football was to be reintroduced at Dalhousie. Mr. Clark said that no one had spoken to him about the matter and pointed out that plans for improvements to Studley Field were based on the need to provide adequate facilities for current athletic activities.

In response to a question from Mr. Andrews at the meeting of 9 November (Sen.Mins. 90:051), Mr. Mason reported that the University's agreement with Maritime Marlin Travel Ltd. resulted in a benefit to the University between January 1989 and September 1990 of \$9,532.00, which had not yet been expended on teaching equipment.

90:064.

Nominations to Senate Committee on Committees

Mr. Berard, on behalf of the Steering Committee, nominated the following persons for places on the Senate Committee on Committees:

R.M. MacDonald (Dentistry) -1993  
B. Cotter (Law) -1993

Following the requisite calls for further nominations, the individuals named were declared elected.

90:065.

Nominations from Senate Committee on Committees

On behalf of the Senate Committee on Committees, Ms. Angelopoulos nominated the following individuals to the committees named.

SENATE ACADEMIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

**M. Cross (FASS) -1993**  
**D. Precious (Dentistry)- 1993**

SENATE COMMITTEE ON INSTRUCTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

**R. Rajaraman (Medicine)**

Following the requisite calls for further nominations, the individuals named were declared elected.

90:066.

#### 1991-92 Preliminary Budget

Ms. Lane agreed to entertain a motion (R. Smith/K. Zakariasen) to move this item, which was to have been brought up under "Other Business", to the floor for discussion. The motion carried without dissent.

Mr. Carlson reported that the Senate Financial Planning Committee had received the preliminary budget projections from the Financial Services too late for inclusion on the agenda for action.

Action, however, was not needed for some months, and it had been decided to present the Vice-President's report to Senate for information at this meeting.

Mr. Carlson reported that SFPC had discussed the report at a special meeting on 6 December 1990. It appeared that most items reflected projections of costs based on the previous year's budget or changes recommended by the Final Report of the Financial Strategy Committee. He noted that past history has suggested that the estimates were generally accurate. He called attention to the proposed base reduction of 1.67%, the lowest such base reduction in several years. Mr. Carlson suggested that questions could be raised at this meeting, at the next Senate meeting, or through any member of the Senate Financial Planning Committee.

In response to a question, Mr. Mason reported that the budget projections were designed to ensure that, in line with the FSC guidelines, 5% of investment income was to be reinvested to protect against inflation. Mr. Tindall asked why fund-raising costs are being met from the operating budget rather than from funds raised. Mr. Mason replied that the professional advice obtained by the University calls for such a policy, in part to assure potential donors that their contributions will go fully toward those activities which they designate.

90:067.

#### Report on Complement Reduction

Mr. Clark read a statement to Senate on faculty complement reduction (appended). The statement set an immediate target of 34 to 38 faculty positions to be reduced, announced that no further complement reductions were expected for 1992-93 or 1993-94, and confirmed that the system of "mortgaging" complement reductions would be continued "with a three-year time horizon".

Mr. Tindall asked why the proposed complement reduction seemed to be translated into the budget projections as a saving of only \$500,000. Mr. Clark replied that, in view of the "mortgaging" arrangement, the budget was reflecting the possibility that savings for the coming year might only translate into approximately ten positions at \$50,000 to 60,000 each.

Ms. Ritchie asked if the targets had been set for different Faculties. Mr. Clark said that he would be reporting those numbers to the Senate Academic Planning Committee presently.

90:068.

Annual Report of the Senate Library Committee

Mr. B. Archibald presented this report (previously circulated) on behalf of the Senate Library Committee. It was moved (B. Archibald/J. Walker):

**that Senate accept the Annual Report of the Senate Library Committee.**

The motion carried without dissent.

90:069.

Report of the Senate Advisory Committee on Affirmative Action in Education

Mr. Carlson explained that the Steering Committee had agreed to present this report (previously circulated) to Senate for information at this time. It was moved (R. Carlson/E. Renner)

**that the report be referred to Faculty Councils for discussion, with a request for a report back to Senate by mid-March 1991.**

Mr. Renner provided background to the report. He said he hoped that members of Senate would see the report as an "invitation to an adventure", which would be guided by three principles: accountability, tolerance of diversity, and access, support, and opportunity.

Mr. Singh asked why were Faculty Councils given until mid-March to deal with the report. Mr. Carlson said that Steering Committee had set that date to allow broad and open discussion of the report. Mr. Clark emphasized the importance of the report and called for its careful consideration. The question having been called, the motion carried.

90:070.

Report from the Senate Committee on Academic Appeals

The Secretary explained that the document which had appeared to be a report to Senate of the Senate Committee on Academic Appeals and had been circulated as such was, in fact, an internal report to the Committee given at the end of the term of the former chair, Mr. Kaiser.

The report had been forwarded to the Senate Office by the current chair, Mr. Thomas, and had been transmitted to Senate in error.

90:071.

#### Grade Inflation - Discussion Only

Mr. Carlson, as acting chair of the Senate Committee on Academic Administration, reported that the Committee had expressed the view that there was a need for general discussion of the matter of grade inflation generally at the University and of variations in grading practices across units. He noted that the Committee had also asked Faculty Councils to address this topic and whether the University needed a grading policy. A summary of Dalhousie grades for 1988-90 and a comparative study prepared at the University of Victoria of grades given at several universities across Canada had been distributed with the agenda. He noted several qualifications to the figures included in the report.

Mr. Tindall asked how the averages in the report were calculated. Mr. Carlson replied that they represented average grades for various units without reference to the total number of students in each unit. Mr. Kimmins also called into question the data for the report. Ms. Tamlyn said that the diversity in grading patterns could reflect norm-referenced or criterion-referenced grading philosophies. In response to a question, Mr. Carlson pointed out that some of the programs in the survey were undergraduate degree programs taken primarily by post-baccalaureate students.

Mr. Stairs said that while he accepted that the information in the report might need qualification he believed that grade inflation did exist and was a matter of concern. Mr. Stairs said that even he had begun to relax his grading standards and expressed his belief that he was not alone. He indicated that he did not believe there was a need for a formal grading policy at the University but there was a need for awareness of a problem and open discussion of it. Mr. Clark asked if it was appropriate for over 90% of students in some units to get grades of "A" or "B"? Ms. Ritchie asked if the marks of students in programs with a large percentage of "A" and "B" grades were consistent with their marks in other courses or programs. She asked further if some faculty members might have become reluctant to give lower marks as a result of their experience with student appeals.

Mr. Singh asked if consideration had been given to putting class rank on transcripts. Ms. Curri said that this could be done, but such a proposal had not met with Senate approval. Instead, median grade and class size information would now appear on transcripts in certain programs.

Mr. Retallack said that average grades could change by five to ten points per year. Mr. Sinclair-Faulkner said that the Academic Council at the University of Toronto had made an attempt to define a grading policy but had abandoned the effort; he added that attempts to address this question in the old Faculty of Arts and Science had also proven ineffective. He suggested we might find that Dalhousie faculty gave "A" grades because they should do. Ms.

Walker said that there was a growing belief that a grade of "C" meant that work was "unsatisfactory". Ms. Curri said that Dalhousie appeared to be making use of only three grade levels in most programs. Mr. Smith outlined some of the problems of discussing the issue in Senate.

Ms. Lane thanked the members of Senate who had contributed to the discussion of this matter.

90: 072.

#### Policy on Medical Certificates

Mr. McKee reported that the Senate Committee on Academic Administration had developed a revised policy on the use of medical certificates in response to student complaints about the current policy. As a result of consultation with the University Health Service, a new entry for the Calendar on this topic was drafted (previously circulated) and approved by SCAA. It was moved (E. McKee/R. deBurger)

**that Senate adopt the revised wording of the Calendar entry on "Special Examination, Test, or Assignment Arrangements".**

Mr. Carlson pointed out that the revisions remove the Registrar's Office from the process and require students to make arrangements with their instructors.

The question having been called, the motion carried without dissent.

90:073.

#### Completion of Grade-Point-Average Implementation Policy

Mr. Carlson reported that the Senate Committee on Academic Administration had been delegated by Senate to develop a plan to implement the new G.P.A. policy. It had done so in consultation with Faculty Councils and was distributing the information (appended) to members of Senate.

90:074.

#### Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 6:01 p.m. upon motion (J.Ritchie/R. Carlson).