



SENATE
Approved Minutes of the Meeting held on
Monday, March 8, 2021 at 3:00pm
Via Microsoft Teams

The Senate met in regular session on Monday, March 8, 2021 via Microsoft Teams

Present: K. Hewitt (Chair), R. Agu, A. Aiken, D. Anderson, F. Annan, M. Aston, R. Barker, N. Bird, J. Blustein, D. Bourne-Tyson, K. Brooks, T. Cyrus, R. Devlin, A. Doucette, O. Dryden, H. El Naggar, K. El Sankary, N. Ezzeddine, M. Farrimond, B. Foster, M. Fournier, A. Habib, J. Hall, B. Hansson, F. Harvey, G. Horne, V. Howard, M. Irwin, S. Jeffrey, Z. Jones, J.S. Kim, M. Leonard, L. Macdonald, B. Merritt, L. Meynell, A. Mohan, C. Moore, F. Naghibi, B. Nassar, J. Newhook, R. Orji, M. Pacurar, L. Perez, J. Phinney, T. Rajack-Talley, B. Rathgeber, A. Rau-Cahplin, C. Richardson, Hyo-sun. Ro, K. Rosen, D. Saini, B. Schick, E. Seelemann, S. Seth, M. Sharaput, A. Siegel, D. Silvio, A. Sophocleous, L. Spiteri, S. Stackhouse, M. Stinson, F. Taheri, V. Turpin, P. Tyedmers, D. Tyers, M.A. Ulku, I. Waldon, G. Warner, E. Welsh, D. Westwood, D. White, E. Wunker, I. Yakovenko, S. Yurgel

Regrets: V. Allen, P. Bennett, S. Coughlan, P. Doyle-Bedwell, D. Gray, S. Kirk, L. Propper, S. Stone

Absent: A. Cooper, B. Davis, T. Duck, Y. El Hiani, L. Goldberg, A. Kermanshahi-Pour, W. Lahey, S. Sparks, S. Zahoor

Guests: Susan Brousseau, Heather Doyle (Director of Assessment & Special Projects, Student Affairs), Robert Hanf, Judith Ng'the, Adam Robertson (Registrar), Susan Spence, Nakita Strowbridge, Jasmine Walsh (Co-chair, University Accessibility Advisory/Steering Group), Claire Mercer (Student Note Taker)

The Dalhousie University Senate acknowledges that this meeting is taking place in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq People.

Senator Hewitt acknowledged International Women's Day and encouraged Senators to send words of appreciation to the impactful women in their lives.

1. Approval of Agenda

The agenda was **approved** as presented.

2. Consent Agenda

2.1. Approval of Draft Minutes of February 8, 2021 Senate Meeting

Approved by **CONSENT**.

3. Matters Arising from February 8, 2021 Senate Meeting

There were no matters arising.

4. Steps to Make Diversity and Inclusion a Reality

Senator Hewitt invited Jasmine Walsh, co-chair of the University Accessibility Advisory/Steering Group to present on the University's accessibility planning, as part of Senate's segment on considering steps taken or to be taken to make diversity and inclusion a reality at Dalhousie.

J. Walsh noted that the Nova Scotia Accessibility Act (2017), which set a goal of an accessible Nova Scotia by 2030, would have a significant impact on equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility (EDIA) at Dalhousie. Dalhousie would need to develop an accessibility plan by April, 2022 for implementation thereafter. The focus would be on Student Affairs, Human Resources, Human Rights and Equity Services (HRES) and Facilities Management.

J. Walsh elaborated that the subject areas of the Accessibility Plan 2022 included the following:

- Transportation
- Built environment
- Information and communications
- Education
- Goods and services
- Employment

J. Walsh explained that consultation with Senators would be an essential aspect of achieving these goals by April, 2022. Key stakeholder groups would continue to be identified. J. Walsh noted that a community survey would be sent out to all students the next week. A survey for faculty and staff was in the progress of being developed and would be circulated by mid-April or early May, 2021.

Senator Saini thanked J. Walsh and Quinta Adams (co-chairs of University Accessibility Advisory/Steering Group) for taking on the mantle and former Senator Spence (former chair of the University Accessibility Advisory/Steering Group) for her contributions in this area.

5. Reports

5.1. Chair of Senate's Report

Senator Hewitt presented the Chair of Senate's report, advising Senators that the March 22, 2021 meeting would be a think tank session focusing on teaching evaluation, led by the Centre for Learning and Teaching (CLT).

Senator Hewitt also informed Senate that the first round of consultations on the draft Policy for Academic Unit Consolidation, Renaming, Establishment, Transfer and Termination (AU-CRETT) had been completed. The updated policy would be distributed to stakeholders for comment and presentation the Senate Planning and Governance Committee (SPGC), Senate and the Board.

Senator Hewitt noted that the draft Digital Strategy would be making another round of consultations to Senate standing committees. In addition, the question of default mode of standing committee meetings being *in camera* had been considered by two standing committees, and would be considered by SPGC at its March, 2021 meeting.

5.2. President's Report

Senator Saini presented the President's report, acknowledging the disproportionate burden of support the COVID-19 pandemic was having on women and expressing his gratitude to female faculty and staff for their resilience during this period.

Senator Saini noted the one year mark of Dalhousie's move to an online learning environment as a result of the pandemic. Senator Saini reflected upon the ways Dalhousie had been resilient, including:

- A phased return to campus accommodating both Nova Scotia health regulations and strong academics
- High application numbers for the 2021/2022 school year, particularly with domestic students
- Students continued to excel academically, with 135 Academic All-Canadian's and Dalhousie's 92nd Rhodes Scholar
- Dalhousie researchers contribution to the fight against COVID-19, locally and internationally
- The 2020 Times Higher Education World University Rankings, where Dalhousie had been ranked in the top 100 universities in impact rankings

Senator Saini informed Senate that the final stages of the strategic plan were underway and would soon be presented to Senate.

Senator Saini explained that an international strategy to capitalize on new opportunities was being developed, while honouring Dalhousie's local commitments. Senator Saini spoke of opportunity and prosperity for Dalhousie's growth following the pandemic.

5.3. Questions for Reports

There were no questions for reports.

FOR RATIFICATION

6. Deans' Waivers for Ratification

Senator Hewitt invited Senator Howard to present on Deans' Waivers for ratification. Senator Howard identified two waivers, one for changes in admission requirements coming from the Doctor of Pharmacy program in the Faculty of Health, and one for curriculum changes in the Bachelor of Commerce and the Masters of Business Administration (MBA) programs. Senator Howard advised that the changes for the Bachelor of Commerce pertained to the Co-op program and in the MBA in regard to one core course for the corporate residency.

Responding to a query regarding whether the Co-op course being waived would be replaced with an academic course and the implications of change, Senator Howard noted that waiver was an emergency accommodation as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and that it only applied to a small number of students. In the Fall, 2020 term, no students took the course, while this term, only three students were taking the course. In response to a query about the precedent that the Bachelor of Commerce waiver may set, Senator Howard clarified that the waiver would be withdrawn following the return to in-person learning.

Moved by Senator Blustein, seconded by Senator Merritt:

THAT Senate ratify the list of waivers, as presented, resulting from the authority delegated to Deans as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The motion **CARRIED**.

FOR DISCUSSION

7. Academic Accommodations

7.1. Student Assessment Data Fall 2020 and Winter 2021

Senator Hewitt explained that this item was in response to a question to Senate from Senator Seeleman, inquiring about what other academic accommodations could be implemented prior to May, 2021, to provide relief and support for students throughout the pandemic period and in the online learning environment.

Heather Doyle, Director of Assessment and Special Projects for Student Affairs, presented the Student Assessment for Fall 2020 and Winter 2021. H. Doyle explained that initial student feedback was collected on March 13, 2020. Another survey was circulated in fall, 2020 to analyze the differences from prior student experiences. This was followed by student assessments in winter, 2021. Dalhousie was among a very small number of universities that sought such feedback during the pandemic.

H. Doyle detailed the data from the fall, 2020 student assessment, with questions that focused on belonging. H. Doyle explained that the data received was disaggregated to analyze student experiences based on identities. In addition, students expressed concerns about lack of study spaces, particularly in Halifax. The Return To Campus (RTC) committee shifted their focus towards increasing the accessibility of study spaces for students on campus.

H. Doyle reported that the winter, 2021 assessment focused on student wellness, based on those results. This assessment exposed student concerns surrounding finances, amongst other issues. In response to this, Student Affairs focused on developing bursaries, scholarships and over \$300,000 in student employment.

H. Doyle noted that students main requests were for:

- Time management support
- Social interaction
- Flexibility
- More opportunity (and less rigidity) to access supports
- Better communication – informing students of available resources
- Understanding and support
- Financial assistance

7.2. Academic Accommodations and Support for Students: Responding to Student Feedback

Senator Howard presented on academic accommodations and support for students in response to student feedback. Senator Howard explained that her focus was supporting faculty members to best support student learning, noting that the majority of Dalhousie faculty had no online teaching experience prior to the pandemic.

Senator Howard explained that the pandemic had facilitated the development of new working partnerships between many bodies of Dalhousie. Collaboration had increased listening and responding to concerns. Senator Howard reported that over twenty new supportive initiatives had been developed since March, 2020. Faculty and student survey feedback significantly contributed to the development of these supports.

Following the presentation, H. Doyle and Senator Howard responded to questions on both presentations. H. Doyle confirmed that the fall, 2020 data was disaggregated by faculty and had been sent out to the Deans. H. Doyle also noted that other U15 universities chose not to survey their students in 2020.

In response to an inquiry about the inclusion of additional marginalized groups within surveys, such as LGBTQIA+ student groups, H. Doyle noted that the survey focused on ethnicity but future surveys would include other marginalized groups.

Responding to a query on navigating increasing accessibility of academics while maintaining each instructor's academic freedom, V. Howard noted that this was a fine balancing act and that instructors had freedom to set rules within their classes. However, instructors have been requested to show empathy and compassion to students during this pandemic period. A working group working on exam regulations may also consider setting of regulations for this.

8. DalOpen

Senator Tyers presented on the DalOpen concept under development, noting that DalOpen would be a new digital portal for non-traditional students to access courses. The courses would be run by the Faculties. Senator Tyers continued by detailing the six course models that Dalhousie anticipated using and other models that needed to be tested.

In response to a question about the cost and human resource aspects of DalOpen, Senator Tyers noted that pricing would remain similar to current course pricing and each Faculty would be responsible for staffing their DalOpen courses. DalOpen would focus on online accessibility and could potentially later shift to hybrid delivery.

The meeting noted the positive exposure opportunities of this initiative, particularly for those who would not typically have access to university. It was also noted that DalOpen could provide an entry point for a pathways approach to Dalhousie, without being geographically restrictive.

9. Equitable Admissions Charter

Adam Robertson, Registrar, presented on the framework for creation of an Equitable Admissions Charter for admissions and access at Dalhousie. The framework had been endorsed by the Senate Learning and Teaching Committee (SLTC) and a framework for review should be ready by June, 2021. A. Robertson shared the context of development of the framework, noting that several factors relating to admissions, if left unaddressed, would pose serious challenges for progress at Dalhousie. These were:

- A dated institutional ethos statement
- Limited clarity around target groups that should be included and understood
- Lacking institutional guidelines or best practices for the development or implementation of affirmative action policies and procedures

10. Question Period

There were no questions.

11. Other Business

There was no other business.

12. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 5:00 p.m.