

Item: Board of Governors Minutes, November 2008
Call Number: UA-1

Additional Notes:

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BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Minutes of the Meeting held on Monday, November 24, 2008 (Open Session) University Hall, Macdonald Building

MEMBERS PRESENT: William Black (Vice-Chair), Jay Abbass, Michelle Awad , Nancy Barkhouse, Elizabeth Beale, Level Chan, Robert Chisholm, Wadih Fares, Fred Fountain, Lloyd Fraser, Lynn Irving, Courtney Larkin, Nancy MacCready-Williams, Sunny Marche, Chris Smith, Stan Spavold, Bruce Towler, Tom Traves, Jim Wilson, Shannon Zimmerman, and Susan Brousseau (University Secretary)

REGRETS: Jamie Baillie, James Cowan, David Russell, Jim Spatz (Chair), Lawrence Stordy

NON-MEMBERS: Ken Burt, Martha Crago, Floyd Dykeman, David Mensink, Bonnie Neuman, Alan Shaver

1. Approval of the Agenda

Moved by B. Towler, seconded by S. Marche:

THAT the agenda be approved as circulated.

The motion CARRIED.

2. Approval of Minutes of the Meeting held on October 14, 2008.

Moved by W. Fares, seconded by L. Fraser:

THAT the minutes of the meeting held on October 14, 2008 be approved as circulated.

The motion CARRIED.

A. Shaver, Vice-President Academic and Provost, distributed documents addressing two items arising from the minutes of the last meeting: (a) the gender breakdown of Dalhousie's enrolments by Faculty; and (b) the geographic breakdown of registered incoming students in the undergraduate nursing program. He briefly reviewed the data provided in these documents. With respect to enrolment numbers generally, he reported that there is no significant change in the numbers he provided at the last meeting; the generally positive enrolment news seems to be holding with no large gains or declines. The next milestone in tracking enrolment is in mid-December.

3. Chair's Report

W. Black noted the appointment of a new Board member, Gail Tomblin Murphy, which will be approved today. Dr. Tomblin Murphy is a faculty representative, appointed on the recommendation of Senate. Mr. Black reminded members of the Board and Senate Holiday reception on Dec.16th at 6:00 p.m., and noted the change in the April Board date, which has been re-scheduled to Tuesday, April 14, 2008.

4. President's Report

Dr. Traves provided Board members with a brief update on the University's financial situation highlighting the current position, the anticipated impacts over the next number of months and the current pension situation. In terms of the current picture, he noted that the University is in a very solid position with \$170M in cash and short-term funds on hand and a \$500K surplus projected at this point for 2008-09. Enrolments are up and fuel prices are currently working in the University's favour, but the longer term picture in these areas is still uncertain. He also noted that the next pension valuation will not occur until June 30, 2010, which hopefully will allow time for some recovery in the market.

In terms of future anticipated circumstances, Dr. Traves noted that, under the Memorandum of Understanding with the provincial government, Dalhousie's government grant in 2009-10 will increase by \$4.7M above the University's anticipated operating cost increases. The following year the grant will be \$6M beyond our anticipated operating costs, and it is anticipated that it will likely increase by another \$6M in 2011-2012 as a result of the re-distribution of the funding envelope among universities. On the other hand, 2010-11 will be the first year of the removal of mandatory retirement and that will have a financial impact on individual Faculties as well as the University as a whole.

With respect to the pension plan, Dr. Traves noted that there are plan structure issues that are problematic for the University and these were identified in the report of the Long Term Financial Planning Committee in 2007. These elements cannot be changed unilaterally; amendments must have the agreement of the employee groups and the University has begun communications around a number of these issues. A valuation undertaken as of June 30, 2007, showed the plan to be fully funded; however that situation has changed under current market conditions and there is now an estimated deficit of about \$150M. This is obviously of concern and the University is taking steps to address the situation. In 2007, the University created a pension stabilization fund which is funded currently at \$1M per year. The University will continue to build up this fund as circumstances permit but, assuming no changes in market conditions between now and June 30, 2010 (when another pension valuation must be done), and a 15 year re-funding period, the University could be required to make new pension contributions of approximately \$8-9M per year. This amount obviously will be lower if there is some bounce-back in the value of our pension assets in that period, or if the University can also draw on the pension stabilization fund as a source for some funding of these contributions. The senior administration will continue to monitor this issue closely and report back to the Board at regular intervals. Dalhousie, along with the other Nova Scotia universities, has also made submissions to the Nova Scotia Pension Review Panel for the purpose of seeking some changes to the current regulatory environment.

Discussion following this report included a question on the potential effect of the current market conditions on government funding. Dr. Traves responded that there has been no communication from the provincial government suggesting that it would alter its commitment to the universities. He also noted that only four of the universities among the ten in Nova Scotia have a defined benefit pension plan; most plans operate on a defined contribution basis.

5. Dalhousie Student Union President's Report

C. Larkin referred members to her written report and noted also the "Imagine" Report which came out of the DSU event focused on the master campus planning exercise. This report has been

delivered to the Project Manager for the Master Campus Plan project. She outlined the various ways in which students have had, and will continue to have, input into this process.

Ms. Larkin also noted the DSU Toy Drive which will take place in December and will benefit children at the IWK Hospital.

6. ITEMS FOR DECISION

6.1.1 Appointment of Senate Nominee to the Board

Moved by B. Towler, seconded by M. Awad:

THAT, based on the recommendation of the Governance Committee, the Board of Governors approve the appointment of Gail Tomblin Murphy to the Board of Governors of Dalhousie University for a term from October 27, 2008 to June 30, 2011, and to the Board Student Experience Committee for a term from October 27, 2008 to June 30, 2009.

The motion CARRIED.

6.1.2 Appointments to the Board of the Halifax Student Housing Society

Moved by B. Towler, seconded by E. Beale:

THAT based on the recommendation of the Governance Committee, the Board of Governors approve the appointment of Mr. Scott Anderson to replace Ms. Mary Jane Adams, and the appointment of Ms. Kim Mason to replace Mr. Mateo Yorke, as two of the Board's three representatives on the Board of Directors of the Halifax Student Housing Society, which operates Peter Green Hall.

The motion CARRIED.

6.1.3 Approval Mechanism under Contract Signing Authority Policy

B. Towler, Chair of the Governance Committee, outlined the background to this motion. In response to a question about the thresholds for Board approval of contracts, it was suggested that the Contract Signing Authority Policy approved by the Board last June be re-circulated to members.

Moved by B. Towler, seconded by M. Awad:

THAT the Board Operations Committee be responsible for reviewing and recommending to the Board of Governors all contracts which meet the criteria for Board of Governors approval under the Document Execution/Contract Signing Authority Policy approved by the Board, and that the Vice-President responsible for any such contract be responsible for presenting to the Operations Committee an appropriate executive summary of the contract outlining the key terms of the contract, the rationale for the University entering into the contract, the risks associated with the contract, the processes that have been followed in bringing the contract forward to the Board, and any other information that may assist the

Committee in carrying out its review. This process does not preclude review by other Board Committees where appropriate in the circumstances.

The motion CARRIED.

6.2.1 Facilities Renewal Budget 2009-10

E. Beale, Chair of the Operations Committee, outlined the process for approval of the preliminary facilities renewal budget for 2009-10.

Moved by E. Beale, seconded by N. MacCready-Williams:

THAT the Board of Governors, on the recommendation of the Operations Committee, approve the funding for the following list of proposed Facilities Renewal Projects greater than \$250k for 2009-10

1) Chemical Storage Facility	\$ 1,000k
2) New Academic Building	\$ 500k
3) Campus Master Plan (part 2 of 2)	\$ 400k
4) Medjuck Bldg Office Reno	\$ 250k
5) LSC Psychology East Entrance	\$ 300k
6) Dalplex Pool Unit Heat Recovery	\$ 350k
7) Tupper Link Roof Replacement	\$ 375k
8) Weldon Transformer replacement	\$ 650k
Contingency	\$ 1,100k

The motion CARRIED.

Moved by E. Beale, seconded by M. Awad:

THAT the Board of Governors, on the recommendation of the Operations Committee, approve spending of up to \$7.5M for Facilities Renewal in 2009-10 (which represents 75% of the 2008-09 Facilities Renewal Budget and which will be adjusted upon adoption of the 2009-10 Board approved budget as per the Facilities Renewal budget process approved by the Board in February 2007).

The motion CARRIED.

6.2.2 Investment Management of LSRI Fund

S. Spavold, Chair of the Investment Committee, introduced three motions relating to the investment management of the Federal Government's \$15 million contribution to the Life Science Research Institute (LSRI) Building project. It was agreed that the three motions would be presented and considered together.

Moved by S. Spavold, seconded by C. Smith:

THAT the Board of Governors' Investment Committee be appointed by the Board of Governors for the responsibility and oversight of the Life Sciences Research Institute Fund.

THAT the Investment Policy for the Life Science Research Institute Fund (attached) be approved by the Board of Governors.

THAT the Board of Governors approve the appointment of RBC Dominion Securities as investment advisor to the Life Science Research Institute Fund.

The motions CARRIED.

7. ITEMS FOR PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION

7.1 Report on Student Experience and University Reputation – Survey Data

A. Shaver presented the reports circulated in the Board packages which compile recent data from two major surveys: the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), and the Canadian University Survey Consortium (CUSC). With respect to the NSSE Survey, he noted that 47 Canadian universities (and 769 institutions across North America), took part in 2008; this was the second time for Dalhousie, which first participated in 2006. A total of 478,000 students responded to the survey. He noted that the NSSE is not a satisfaction survey but rather probes activities in which students are engaged through a variety of benchmarks.

Dr. Shaver explained the survey process and data, noting that institutions receive a score; the significant element is the university's score relative to other institutions rather than the absolute number. He reported that Dalhousie is doing well in comparison to the G13 universities, but that, compared to all of the NSSE results, Canadian schools lag in almost every area for first-year and senior students. He reported that the plan now for Dalhousie is to try to move closer to the NSSE average. Part of the strategy will be to examine the data on a Faculty-by-Faculty basis to see which are above and below the institutional average and to try to find incisive ways to improve student engagement in each Faculty. It was noted, however, that meeting the overall NSSE benchmarks is not realistic for Canadian universities at the moment given the huge funding gap between Canadian and American schools. At the same time, we need to look at what over institutions are doing more successfully than we are and learn from that so that we can continue to improve. Dalhousie has already identified particular areas on which it plans to focus in terms of both first-year (academic advising and social integration, for example), and more senior students (capstone course or experience and diversity).

T. Traves noted that Dalhousie has data exchange agreements with other institutions so that it is able to build a management information base that was not available in the past. He noted that the NSSE numbers are useful but, from the perspective of change management, the University needs to be able to drill down much deeper than the level of these aggregate numbers. A. Shaver added that research demonstrates that engaged students are more persistent, so this clearly goes to the issue of student retention. Dalhousie's strategy is a clear one of addressing retention through engagement.

Dr. Shaver also reported on the CUSC survey results, noting that Dalhousie has participated for the past 12-15 years. The survey utilized a paper instrument until this year, but it is now administered on-line. He noted that the profile of Dalhousie students provided by the data is interesting.

Discussion following Dr. Shaver's comments focused particularly on the usefulness of the data, but the importance of determining Dalhousie's targets and how they tie into the strategic plan if performance in various identified areas is to improve. It was suggested that setting quantifiable

targets would be of benefit. T. Traves, in response, noted that the University has determined some general targets. He reminded Board members of the document circulated last spring which provides the key strategic measures (a combination of comparators and absolute targets), that Dalhousie has set over a three-year period with respect to the seven objectives identified in the strategic plan. These measures were developed out of a variety of data sources including the NSSE and CUSC surveys. It was agreed that this report should be re-distributed to members. It was also noted during the discussion that the CUSC survey data highlights how fast the profile of Dalhousie's students is changing.

7.2 Dalhousie Student Experience – Current Plans

B. Neuman, Vice-President Student Services, gave a presentation on current plans to improve student experience at Dalhousie. She reviewed briefly the strategic model developed by her office and the progress on key strategic goals (including enrolment management, student experience, and campus life), and highlighted several new and planned initiatives, including the development of an induction ceremony and message that emphasizes statements about Dalhousie and traditions, and a new leadership and engagement initiative. Dr. Neuman also identified priorities going forward including improved communication and consultation with students, support and celebration of student leadership and service, and improvements to key campus life facilities.

Following the presentation, Dr. Neuman addressed questions concerning alumni involvement in initiatives to improve student engagement (particularly in the career and leadership areas), anticipated costs for the leadership centre, and the University's ability to measure progress on retention. On the latter point she noted that the University's Office of Institutional Analysis and Research does an analysis each fall, but the numbers for this year are not yet available. Student Board representatives expressed some concern about some of the initiatives included in the "Proposed Student Leadership and Engagement Initiative" document circulated in the Board package; some of those initiatives would seem to include areas in which the DSU is already working. They encouraged greater communication with the DSU to ensure that the University and the Student Union are aware of each other's initiatives.

The Chair suggested that a brief update be provided at the next meeting on the progress of dialogue between the University and the DSU around some of these issues.

7.3 Report of Board Student Experience Committee

R. Chisholm, Chair of the Board Student Experience Committee, reminded Board members of the special open meeting of the Committee last April to which all Board members were invited to talk specifically about spirit and tradition as a means of improving recruitment and retention. He noted that the proposed work plan that was to be developed out of discussions between the Office of the Vice-President Student Services, the DSU and others subsequent to that meeting is not yet ready to come to the Board. There was some disconnection between the various parties to be involved in that work and the Student Experience Committee will endeavour to play a role in getting those discussions back on track and ensuring that some strategies and actions around this issue come forward. Improved coordination between the University and the DSU is critical to progress in this area.

T. Traves noted that it will be important for the University to do some analysis in order to gain a deeper understanding of what we mean by student experience and tradition, as this can be a very complex issue. He pointed out that the CUSC survey reveals that half of all students across the

country do not participate in campus activities. We need to understand more about our students, who they are, what they want, how their needs are changing, and what we aspire to do as a result. If we don't do this work we risk pushing ahead with initiatives that do not have the desired impact in the long run.

8. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

8.1 Board Standing Committee Reports

B. Black referred members to the reports of a number of standing committees which were distributed in the agenda packages. He invited committee chairs to make comments or provide further updates if they wished. E. Beale, Chair of the Operations Committee, provided a brief overview of the recent work of that committee and updated members on the current status of the campus master planning exercise. S. Spavold, Chair of the Investment Committee, noted that the Committee had met the previous Friday and summarized some of its discussions around the recent market downturn. He noted that Dalhousie, like other organizations globally, is in a serious situation, but that it is 1-2% better off than its benchmarks due to the efforts to reduce risk through investment diversification strategies. He noted that the Committee and management will continue to look at Dalhousie's strategies and its mix of assets. He commended management on doing an excellent job of monitoring the University's performance. C. Smith, Chair of the Audit Committee, noted that this committee had also met the previous week and had raised the pension fund issue from the risk management perspective. The Committee has asked management to come to the next meeting with a comprehensive analysis of the impact of this issue across the university and the proposed action to address it.

IN CAMERA SESSION

The Board moved *in camera* for the remainder of the meeting.

Motion to Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 11:10 a.m.