

Item: Senate Minutes, February 2008

Call Number: Senate fonds, UA-5

Additional Notes:

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**DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY**

**DRAFT MINUTES  
OF  
SENATE MEETING**

Senate met in regular session on Monday, February 11, 2008 at 4:00 p.m., in University Hall, Macdonald Building.

Present with Mr. Lloyd A. Fraser in the chair were: Adshade, Binkley, Bodorik, Camfield, Campbell, Chowdhury, Cochrane, Cook, Croll, Fanning, Gault, Geldenhuys, Harman, Haslam, Kesselring, Kroeker, Leon, Maes, MacLaren, McLarney, Moukdad, Nowakowski, Pegg, Persaud, Plug, Richard, Roberts, Robinson, Sadek, Saunders, Schroeder, Shaver, Singleton, Slonim, Smith B., Spence Wach, Sutow, Taylor, Tindall, Tipping, Traves, Tschirhart, Watters.

Regrets: Breckenridge, Butler, Frank, Garduno, Grundy, Helland, Johnson, Jones, Pelzer, Ross, Schellinck, Shepherd, Thornhill, Voegeli, Wanzel, Willison.

Absent: Barker, El-Hawary, El-Masry, Gray, Johnston, McConnell, Precious, Rutherford, Scherkoske, Smith, J., Webster, Wheeler, Yeung.

Guests: Brousseau, Power.

The Chair welcomed two new Senators: Mr. Joseph Sadek, Faculty of Medicine, and Mr. Martin Willison, Faculty of Science.

**2008:12**

Adoption of Agenda

The agenda was **ADOPTED** with two additional items:

1. Following Question Period - Senate Nominating Committee Nominations.
2. Under Other Business – In Camera: Results of Honorary Degree Vote.

**2008:13**

Draft Minutes of January 14, 2008 Senate Meeting

a. Approval

The minutes were **approved** as circulated.

b. Matters Arising

Mr. Tindall had inquired if Dalhousie had two Vice-Presidents, Finance and Administration, and what duties Mr. Mason had for the year commencing July 1, 2007. The first part of the question was answered at the last meeting noting that Dalhousie University had only one Vice-President, Finance and Administration. Mr. Traves responded to Mr. Tindall's second question noting that Mr. Mason retired from the University in December 2006. Mr. Tindall said he would like to follow up on this as the University's website states that Mr. Mason is being paid as of July 2007. As it is University practice not to discuss individual matters in public Mr. Fraser stated that this matter would be reviewed to determine if the information is accurate.

**2008:14**

In Camera Voting – Honorary Degree Nominations, Fall 2008 and Spring 2009

An in camera vote of each honorary degree nomination was conducted by individual, secret ballot.

**2008:15**

Question Period

There were no questions.

**2008:16**

Senate Nominating Committee (SNC)

On behalf of the Senate Nominating Committee, Mr. Fraser **MOVED**:

**THAT Mr. Sachin Seth, Faculty of Dentistry, be nominated for the Senate Discipline Committee for the term February 11, 2008 to June 30, 2011.**

After the requisite three calls for further nominations, the nominee was declared elected to the Senate Discipline Committee.

**2008:17**

Senate Academic Priorities and Budget Committee: Modified Program Proposal – Master of Science (Kinesiology)

On behalf of the SAPBC, Mr. Fraser **MOVED**:

**THAT the Senate approve the modified program proposal for the Master of Science (Kinesiology).**

Dr. Dieter Pelzer, Associate Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies and Dr. David Westwood, Assistant Professor, Faculty of Health Professions presented the modified program proposal. Mr. Westwood stated that the modifications were as a result of a review of the Kinesiology (Graduate) program, Master of Science, in 2003. The report indicated that relative to comparator programs across the country, the course load for the Dalhousie University program was relatively high. The review recommended that the number of required credit hours in the program be reduced by six credit hours with the addition of a research seminar with mandatory attendance.

The motion **CARRIED**.

**2008:18**

Academic Integrity Officer Ratifications

Ms. Binkley **MOVED**, seconded by Mr. Haslam:

**THAT the Academic Integrity Officer agreed penalties, as listed in the Secretary of Senate's February 4, 2008 memo, be ratified.**

The motion **CARRIED**.

**2008:19**

Next Steps: Making an Impact: The President's Strategic Focus, 2007-2010

An earlier discussion of the President's Strategic Focus took place at Senate on October 29, 2007, whereby the President undertook to take the comments that he had received and condense the document. The Strategic Focus is an institutional document and it is essentially Mr. Traves' agenda for the next number of years. There are many other agendas in the University, not only individual, but departmental agendas, faculty agendas, and school agendas and, of course, there are administrative units who also have a series of strategic plans and ambitions. Mr. Traves hopes the Strategic Focus will provide a framework that will give some shape and focus to the various initiatives.

In addition to the Strategic Focus, Appendix I, "Measuring Progress", speaks to the seven objectives listed in the document and provides a number of ways of beginning to assess our progress on these objectives. One such measure is Dalhousie University's participation in various surveys:

- *Canadian University Survey Consortium* is a largely national based survey of students, which Dal has participated in for approximately 15 years;
- *National Survey of Student Engagement* is a very active data-sharing exercise with the members of the G-13 Group; and

- Canadian Association of University Business Officers is a Vice-President, Finance and Administration group and other senior administrators who collect a lot of data.

Information has been gathered from a variety of sources to help create a series of targets. In areas where Dal is doing very well we would like to get to the head of the group and in areas where we are not doing so well, we would like to get up to the average or slightly ahead of the average. Mr. Traves then responded to questions.

Mr. Slonim inquired how a student would look at Dalhousie University over a number of years and if they felt that the education that we gave them fulfilled their needs in their daily lives. This comparison would be relevant as compared to a student who only recently graduated. Dalhousie University does not gather this data directly but does participate in a survey of graduates that is carried out by the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission; however, participation is modest and the sample size may be too small to be meaningful.

Mr. Tipping inquired if the strategic initiatives listed in the report are to be completed by 2010 and Mr. Traves stated that this is the intent and, in fact, half of them are already well underway if not completed.

## **2008:20**

### Student Survey Data Presentation

The student survey data document, presented by Mr. Traves, provides significant insight into how our students are doing at the University, how they engage with the institution, and what they think of the institution. By way of background, Dalhousie participates in *The Canadian University Survey Consortium*, a consortium of approximately 30 universities that presents groups of universities by size. Dalhousie is probably the smallest of the largest category, Group 3. Group 1 is primarily undergraduate universities, Group 2 are institutions that are essentially larger undergraduate institutions or those that have a mixture of a number of graduate programs. The surveys move through a cycle. One year they survey first year students, the next year they survey all students, and the next year they survey graduating students. This cycle runs every three years. The 2007 survey was of first-year students with a 49% response rate.

Mr. Traves stated that he had four questions that he would like to share with Senators.

1. What is the social background of our students? This is an issue that comes up in terms of public policy and access questions, so it is important to have some feel for who our students are.
2. Why do they choose to come to Dalhousie? He thinks this tells us something about who they think we are. There is a perception question here. There is obviously something about their motivation, but there is also something about their perception of us and how we stand independently of how we think we stand in the wider world.
3. How do they experience the university given their expectations stemming from their choice to come here? It is a complicated question because it is not just what they experience, but what their experience is, measured against their expectations.
4. How well do they do in some objective way, academically and socially, and how satisfied they are with their original decision to come here?

It seems to him that the questions create the opportunity for Dalhousie University to develop a host of things as they relate to: recruitment and branding type exercises, our marketing efforts to our own internal organization of our academic programs, our social and support services for students, and a form of measuring progress at the University. Mr. Traves hopes that, in presenting this information, it will spark some thoughts about where we need to improve our efforts and how we need to address student concerns about the Dalhousie experience.

Mr. Traves provided some general observations from the data as they relate to first year students. Dalhousie students are:

- relatively young;
- academically ambitious and academically gifted;
- less ethnically diverse than other universities;
- much more likely to come from outside Halifax and live in a university residence;
- come from more advantaged families, both economically and culturally;

- less likely to work part-time;
- more likely to enter the University after quite a successful high school career; and
- have ambitious expectations about their future academic success at Dalhousie.

Mr. Traves reminded Senators that these are generalizations and one can think of several kinds of counter-individual examples, but we are talking about the results of a general survey. The critical question to ask next is, "Why Dalhousie?" Why do they come here as opposed to any of the 92 universities in the country? He thinks this information gives us some useful answers to that and these are important issues for us as we recruit students. Like most university students, the Dalhousie class is motivated by career goals, by professional ambitions and, relatively uniquely, by their desire to study in a university outside of their community of origin. That distinguishes them from the mass of Canadian university students, who typically go to the neighborhood school. We have many institutions in Canada which are huge, which recruit literally thousands of students, but the background of those students geographically is their neighborhood school. Students choose Dalhousie because of our academic reputation, our broad program mix, the size of the University (which they deem to be the right size), and Halifax, and because we offer scholarships or bursaries and access to on-campus residence rooms. These students state, when they tell us about their choice, that issues like school spirit and athletic programs are not important factors in their decisions. That is not to say they don't think of these things as important once they're here, but they don't seem to resonate as significant factors as to why they choose Dal over some other universities. So, in short, my summary of their motivations and choices is:

- Dalhousie students are academically and socially ambitious and they prefer the adventure of moving away from home;
- Dalhousie students have many academic options and they tend to apply to more universities than other students in the country; to consider more out-of-province options. They are uninterested in a community college option; and
- Dalhousie was typically their first choice.

Our challenge in this regard is to find students across the country who are thinking about going away to school, to get them to notice Dalhousie and, through out recruitment efforts, to make us their first choice. If we connect at that point, we probably will get them here. In making their choice they tell us that they relied on the web very heavily for information about this and other universities. They paid attention to the plentiful supply of university brochures that we distribute both centrally and through departments. A campus visit played a big role in their decision to attend and was one of the defining choice points for students. Interestingly, many of the ranking exercises that are pursued as commercial ventures by some of the major publications in the country play a relatively limited role in their decision. So it is important, from our point of view, to get them to notice the University, to get them to look at the kind of information that we have available largely on the web, especially those who are coming to us from a considerable distance and, if possible, to get them to come to the University to have a look at our environment. It is very significant that we have an Open House that attracts well over a thousand students. We must recognize that when they come here for Open House, one of the things that students are doing is looking over, not only are our academic programs, but the physical look and feel of the campus. This speaks to some of the priorities that we see expressed in our budget. We all would like to work in a campus environment that is attractive and efficient, but this matters not only to those of us who are here and working here, but it matters to students who are thinking about coming here.

On the whole, our students expressed strong satisfaction with their entry point into Dalhousie and their adjustment to their new environment and to our facilities and services. Typical first impressions by students have been that this is a good place and they feel good about being here and are adjusting very well to being here, both physically and in the living environment and also academically in the classroom. They actively avail themselves of Dalhousie assistance before registering and were extremely satisfied with the help they got. They were highly satisfied with their access to the courses they want, which we sometimes under-estimate in terms of how difficult many students find it at other universities to get the courses they want.

Our Dalhousie Student Union Orientation program, which is important in terms of their entering into the institution, attracted a little more than half of our class and this is a matter of concern that we need to focus on in the future. What is done is done well, but it is significant that we only get half of the students to participate. The process made them feel welcome and better informed about campus life, but it did not

address their concerns about academic expectations. On the other hand, academic expectations are perhaps best addressed as they emerge in the context of the flow of the academic year.

Once settled into the University (surveys are filled out toward the end of the academic year), students feel that they understood their course material and have met our academic demands. They registered concerns, however, with their mathematical skills and getting academic advice and these are areas on which we need to focus some attention. Socially, our students told us that they felt positively about being here, settling in, finding friends, adjusting to new living arrangements, and organizing their time efficiently to complete their academic work. About half of them participated in campus activities, which seemed on first glance to be rather low and disappointing, but this outcome is much better than at comparator universities. They are either busy off campus or they're working on their studies and do not have the kinds of interests that are addressed at the University. In general, our students were positive about campus facilities, such as the Library, computer facilities, classrooms, and importantly, about class sizes, but they were somewhat less satisfied with our buildings and grounds and study space. These are areas we know we need to improve and we have some plans around them. Positively rated are recreational facilities, bookstore, residence, and they complained somewhat about Food Services. Our professors were deemed to be good teachers, reasonably accessible outside the classroom and, to a lesser extent, encourage classroom discussion. This is an issue that faculty could focus on in terms of the extent to which they facilitate classroom discussion, but generally our faculty is well rated by our students.

What are the outcomes of our students, at least as measured in these kinds of forms? Considering this profile it is not a surprise that almost 90% were satisfied with their decision to attend Dalhousie and 84% told us that Dal had met or exceeded their expectations. We have a generally satisfied group towards the end of first year. He noted here that when you look at the results of students who are graduating, again reasonably positive, but there is a draw, so over time either we do less well, or they grow more cynical or harsher and this may need some attention.

Two other sources of data were discussed - The *National Survey of Student Engagement*, which is a North American survey, which is distinct from this survey, and the *University Student Consortium* which measures engagement and asks questions about 'what do you do'? How much time do you spend on a particular activity? It is a measure of engagement and it obviously is a huge pedagogical or educational assumption behind that question which is "more engagement a good thing?" It produces better learning, better outcomes, more lower attrition rates, so more engagement is good. It measures activity rather than relative satisfaction and essentially this survey casts down in a relatively positive light, as compared to our fellow members of the G-13 Group. We share this confidential information amongst ourselves to get a better feel and we can break down this information at a faculty level. It will become really valuable when the information can be broken down to a departmental level and then individual units will begin to have some opportunity to compare how they're doing against other universities. We do relatively well in this regard. We do well on student-faculty interaction and active and collaborative learning, but slightly less well in terms of providing enriching educational experiences and supportive campus environment. The enriching educational experiences and supportive campus environment may provide us with some clues about relatively high attrition rates at Dalhousie. In terms of moving from year one to year two we do not do nearly as well as we ought to. Mr. Traves stated that if he had to identify the single most important challenge at the University it would be improving the retention rate. We spend a lot of time, money and energy on recruiting students, but we are losing a lot of students and we need to significantly improve in this regard.

Mr. Fraser thanked Mr. Traves for an illuminating and interesting presentation; however, due to time constraints he invited Senators to note any questions and bring them back to the next meeting of Senate where we will have an opportunity for a fuller discussion.

**2008:21**

Chair's Report

Mr. Fraser reported that the Senate Steering Committee has confirmed the membership of the ad hoc Governance Committee: Mr. Peter Butler, Vice-Chair of Senate and Chair, Ms. Patricia McMullen, Science, Mr. Richard Kroeker, Architecture & Planning, Mr. David Precious, Dean of Dentistry, Ms. Carol Camfield, Medicine, Ms. Leslie McLaren, Acting President, NSAC, Mr. Lorn Sheehan, Management, Mr. Eric Snow, student representative. Mr. Fraser reminded Senators that the Senate Nominating Committee had a call for nominations for the position of Secretary of Senate which will run until the end of June and nominations will close today.

**2008:22**

President's Report

Mr. Traves reported that discussions with the provincial government about funding arrangements for the next three years in the form of some kind of Memorandum of Understanding should probably reach some conclusion by the end of the month. He noted two other items: first, at the next meeting of the Board of Governors, the Facilities Management department will come forward to outline an approach for a long-term campus plan. Secondly, a search committee for a new Vice-President, Research, has been progressing at the University as Dr. Breckenridge will retire at the end of June. The search process has been ongoing. In explaining the search process, Mr. Traves explained that the short list had been compiled, and the group of short listed candidates had noted that a public presentation was not a possibility. Candidates who already hold senior positions at other universities were reluctant to engage in these public exercises (making the group of candidates that Dalhousie University would like to consider further, not available to us if we insisted on that public process). These candidates therefore would have withdrawn from our process. The search committee thought about this carefully, and decided to restrict the search and they have recently reached an agreement with one of the candidates to join us as Vice-President. This decision will now go forward to the Board of Governors at its meeting on the 19<sup>th</sup> of February for approval. Due to the time constraints of the Senate meeting, and the numerous concerns raised by Senators in relation to the procedures for the Appointment of Senior Administrators, Mr. Fraser stated that this policy will be brought forward to the Senate Steering Committee for review in light of the current situation.

**2008:23**

Other Business

**In Camera** – Results of Balloting

The results of the ballot were read by the Chair.

**2008:24**

Adjournment

The meeting **ADJOURNED** at 6:15pm.