Item: Senate Minutes, February 2000
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Additional Notes:

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D A L H O U S I E   U N I V E R S I T Y

APPROVED   **M I N U T E S**

O F

S E N A T E   M E E T I N G

SENATE met in regular session on Monday, February 14, 2000, at 4:00 p.m. in University Hall, Macdonald Building.

Present with Mr. Stuttard in the chair:

Bell, Benoit, Binkley, Bleasdale, Bradfield, Brett, Carlson, Crocker, Cunningham, El-Hawary, Farrell, Flagel, Flood, Furrow, Galley, Johnston, Kimmins, Kipouros, Lee, Lohmann, MacAulay, B. MacDonald, MacInnis, MacKenzie, Maloney, McIntyre, Pacey, H. Powell, Rathwell, Ricketts, Russell, Scully, Slonim, Starnes, Tindall, Traves, Ugursal, Vohra, Wainwright, Wallace, White, Whyte.

Regrets: Alexander, Coffin, Connolly, Emodi, Giacomantonio, Phillips, C. Powell, Sastri.

Invitees: Mr. B. Gray (NSAC), Ms. Virginia Lee, Mr. Brian Mason, Mr. A. Speers.

2000:13.
Adoption of the Agenda.

The agenda was adopted as circulated.

2000:14.
Minutes of the Previous Meeting.

At page seven, "The motion was CARRIED" was inserted at the end of item 2000:04; at page six, line four of item 2000:08, "been" was inserted before "given"; and Ms. McIntyre was added to those present. The minutes of the meeting of 26 January, 2000, were then adopted as amended.

2000:15.
Question Period

Vice-President Scully was happy to report that the Search Committee for the Vice-President (Research) would be announcing shortly its list of four finalists. Senators and other members of the Dalhousie community would have the opportunity to pose questions to each finalist at a series of public meetings.

Mr. Bradfield wondered whether the President or any member of the senior administration had addressed the students or offered any support for their public rally on February 2, 2000. Mr. Traves responded that he had been asked and had agreed to meet with the students whenever they wished, but there had been no follow-up on that communication.
2000:16.

Mr. Stuttard pointed out that all nominees for this Panel received the approval of the President and the DFA before they were brought to Senate. On behalf of the Nominating Committee, he moved:

> **That Senate approve the appointment of E. Grant MacDonald (Henson College) to the University Tenure and Promotions Panel for the term February 2000-June 30, 2002.**

The motion was **CARRIED.**

Mr. Wainwright noted that at present the Panel included only one representative from the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, and wondered whether additional names were forthcoming from that Faculty. Mr. Stuttard assured Senators that the Nominating Committee would have been working hard to fill all vacancies on the Panel, including two from the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. Mr. Scully noted the desirability of keeping the Panel fully staffed, and trusted the Nominating Committee would make this a priority.

2000:17.
Presentation on Banner

Mr. Stuttard welcomed Ms. Lee, Project Manager for Banner. At very short notice, Mr. Scully had agreed to substitute for Vice-President Mason who was unwell. Handouts prepared by Mr. Mason and Ms. Lee were available.

Mr. Scully led members through an historical summary of our implementation of Banner. He emphasized that staff had been seconded from a variety of existing activities to assist in implementing and adapting Banner to the Dalhousie environment. This had placed enormous pressure on a number of administrative offices, especially the Registrar's Office. Mr. Scully also reminded members that in systems implementation predictions concerning the amount of time and money needed were folly. He drew attention to the brief articles included in the handout which discussed the experiences in other jurisdictions, two from the Chronicle of Higher Education and one addressing the generic problems involved in this type of process across North America. The overheads set out the progress in replacing systems non-compliant with the year 2000. The Banner Implementation team for the Student Information System (SIS) had set itself the deadline of August 31, 2000 for turning over administration of the System to Administrative Computing and the Registrar's Office.

Among the matters on which the implementation team for SIS would be working was the median grade, about which Senators had expressed their concerns. Senators had received a memo from Mr. Scully which set out a realistic guarantee that the median grades would be available on student transcripts by the end of the year 2000, and perhaps sooner if all went well.

The balance of Mr. Scully's remarks addressed the variety of factors which had contributed to the slower than expected progress towards implementation: the inherent complexity of the System and the number of surprises which had confronted those working hands-on with the system; the Dalhousie and TUNS merger and the need to bring together the practices and the personnel of the two institutions; the generally high rate of staff turnover in the field of computing, as well as turnover in administration, including the need to

educate three Vice Presidents (Academic & Research) over the course of Banner's brief life at Dalhousie; organizational changes, such as the movement towards fee per class, the movement of class scheduling to the Registrar's Office, and the review of the representative roles of the Registrar's Office and the Office of the Dean of Graduate Studies. The demands of the year 2000 had also set inflexible deadlines and priorities in some areas of the project. Finally, some increases in and additions to the scope of the project had not been anticipated. As a result of these factors, we had fallen behind approximately a year in the implementation schedule. Mr. Scully invited questions.

Mr. El-Hawary asked how flexible the system was in accepting new programs such as combined Masters and undergraduate degrees. Were there limitations on the number of levels Banner could employ for one program, on storage, or on the hardware's capacity to handle the potential expansion of the number of rules? Ms. Lee responded that the system could accommodate new concepts and rules, but rules had to be identified for each program on a case by case basis to ensure they did not contradict existing rules. Generalizations were difficult.

Mr. Wainwright wondered whether we knew or could find out how much the maxim "prediction is folly" had cost the University, and whether the vendor, SCT, had in the past or did now subscribe to this principle. Could Senate be furnished with costs related to Banner, including person hours and expenditures on efforts to deal with the gap between what we thought was going to happen and what had happened and would happen in the future? Mr. Scully would attempt to provide answers to Mr. Wainwright's question for the next meeting of Senate. Ms. Lee indicated the University's starting budget had been based on SCT's initial assessment of what the project would cost. However, many problems and needs had not been identified at the outset, and significant changes had not been anticipated. Mr. Scully noted that despite the original assessment of Banner as a product, and all the effort to ask the appropriate questions, questions which should have been asked had not been. That was inherent to the process of attempting to adapt a product to a particular environment, and was not a criticism. But a penalty had to be paid for not asking the appropriate questions at the appropriate time. Mr. Wainwright was concerned about the extent of vendor responsibility and wondered whether those working with Banner now believed that necessary information had not been offered. Mr. Scully was not implying any dereliction on the part of SCT in this. He noted the relevance of the dictum: *Caveat emptor.*

Mr. White asked whether the scheduling conflict a student had recently brought to his attention had been generated by the old or the new scheduling process. Ms. MacGillivray indicated that the schedule had been run on the new system, but she had identified no conflicts for students. The student might have signed into one of the classes after the data for scheduling examinations had been extracted from the Banner system. Or the professor might have scheduled an examination without going through the Registrar's Office. Mr. White knew the latter was not the case; whether or not the new system had generated the problem, the Registrar's Office had provided no help in resolving it. Ms. MacGillivray had not been informed of the student's request for assistance, but would look into it.

Mr. El-Hawary asked whether SCT had the type of user groups and newsletters offered by other such companies to assist the user community. Ms. Lee responded that SCT had a number of list-serves for technical and non-technical people. In addition the Canadian universities and colleges had their own list serve. That information could be provided. Mr. Slonim was concerned that we were already almost two years behind schedule in implementation, according to his calculations. How did we expect to catch up? Secondly, he understood that one of the problems was the shortage of knowledgeable individuals on the

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teams. Did the Banner project require more resources and more help? Mr. Slonim had offered his services in the past, and offered them again. He found it difficult to understand why Ms. Lee would not take advantage of those with experience who offered to help. Mr. Scully considered the project ten to twelve months behind schedule across the four systems. At this time the central group was reviewing the work plans through to the end of the implementation phase for each of the projects, and was assessing the resources necessary for any additions to the SIS system in particular, after implementation. Ms. Lee thanked Mr. Slonim once again for his offer. She had passed his offer on to the technical members of the implementation team, and depended on them to recommend the type of expertise and additional help required. University Computing and Information Services was providing support for the Banner Project. Functional as well as technical expertise would be required as the Project moved from the implementation to the operational phase.

Ms. Bleasdale was concerned that the Banner team might be afraid to be open with Senate about the amount of money the project was costing and would cost. If Senators understood in advance the financial constraints under which the project was operating, they could better appreciate the difficulties and the delays in finding solutions to problems. Mr. Scully was not afraid, but he could not anticipate future costs. Clearly the amount of money set aside for the project had been inadequate, but that was not to criticize those who had designed the budget. Other universities were running way over budget in implementing software suites; for example, the University of Alberta, which had gone with Peoplesoft, had already spent over $23 mil. Money was not the only issue. The implementation teams involved staff already engaged in operational activities, and consequently progress on Banner was impeded by the need for some team members to keep up with their responsibilities in the day to day functioning of the University.

Mr. Kipouros thought the deadlines for implementation of all four systems optimistic, given that two projects lacked teams and Policy Advisory Committees, and the team leader was doing two other projects. Ms. Lee assured him that based on their past experience, the project team had doubled the time originally estimated by SCT for implementation of the Alumni Development System. The Financial System did not have an end date yet because staff were still determining how much of their resources would and could be invested in that project, as well as when it needed to be delivered.

Mr. Ugursal appreciated the pressure under which the Banner teams had been working, and thanked them for their efforts. The types of delays the project was experiencing were common within an industry in which deadlines were extraordinarily difficult to meet, and some of the criticism of the project appeared to have been unwarranted. Much of the criticism had been based on the mishandling of the full-year classes and the median grade; however, those problems appeared to have arisen from unintentional errors of judgement Mr. Ugursal also noted that the Banner team might only be able to take advantage of Mr. Slonim's offers of help were he able to commit his time on a continuing basis for a number of weeks.

Ms. Furrow asked whether we would be able to record mid-term grades for students in "R" (X + Y) classes by the end of this year. Ms. MacGillivray explained that at present the Registrar's Office could collect mid-term grades and put them on a grade statement, but the Banner transcript could not handle mid-term grades. Ms. Furrow suggested the project team and the Registrar's Office consider addressing this problem.

Ms. Bleasdale suggested that the meeting deal with the motion concerning median grades, and if that was adopted, go on to pass a motion to find a manual way of providing median grades, along the lines suggested by Mr. Wainwright at previous meetings.

Mr. Ricketts noted some historical revisionism in the presentation and discussion. Banner had never been presented as a "vanilla" product, but as a product that could accommodate the complexities of Dalhousie. The term vanilla had been used by Mr. Mason in reference to the decision in the first instance to replace ARIS and get the system up and running. Then we were to move on to the more advanced capabilities of Banner and deal with problems such as second entry graduate admission. In light of that, he was concerned that at page 11 the handout specified that when the implementation phase for SIS was completed on August 31, 2000, the production phase would become the responsibility of Administrative Computing and the Registrar's Office, and these would jointly be responsible for subsequent enhancements and upgrades. That concerned him, unless the Project Team intended to implement by August 31, 2000, the many changes which had been discussed so far.

Ms. Lee responded that the original plan had called for vanilla implementation of all four systems before turning to enhancements. But all the enhancements and upgrades could not be put off. The University would need to establish a mechanism to address enhancements on a continuing basis. At present the plan was for Administrative Computing to take over responsibility for upgrades and enhancements from a technical perspective; some type of committee would establish the priorities as to what items would be addressed and when. The Registrar's Office would coordinate the needs and activities of the users, but not the data facility. The team had gathered all requests to date. Whatever could not be accommodated by August 31, 2000, would remain on the list, and a mechanism would be established to review the list and ensure the fair allocation of resources to tasks.

Ms. Binkley asked where on the list the problem of full-year classes would be. A host of issues directly related to the problem of full-year classes in a term-based system were consuming the time of Vice-President Scully and of members of the Faculties of Science and Arts and Social Sciences in particular, and were necessitating ad hoc and cumbersome intervention. Ms. Lee recognised that the "x plus y" solution had been an interim solution, and the project team had been tasked to resolve the problem. The resolution would require a major redesign of the Banner system, but together with other universities such as McGill and Carleton, Dalhousie had been pressuring SCT to accommodate full-year classes. To date, SCT had committed financially to a Canadian Solution Centre which would address specific Canadian problems, and had dedicated technical resources to look at a possible solution.

Mr. Stuttard drew attention to Mr. Scully's memo on median grades, and asked that Senate turn to the motion which had been postponed since last July regarding suspending the requirement that median grades be included on transcripts. Mr. Scully reiterated that median grades might be available before December 2000, but would definitely be available for the end of the fall term. Approximately four months of staff time would be involved in this project.

In response to Ms. MacAulay's questions, Ms. Lee clarified that the median grade add-on was part of the implementation project and the aim was to have it completed by August 31, 2000. But the absolute guarantee was for December 2000. Ms. MacAulay wondered what would be done retroactively for the median grades that were missing for the entire year? Part of the add-on was intended to convert all median grades that were calculated in the ARIS system to make them available on the transcripts. Mr. Galley received assurances that this would include the entire period of twenty months in which we would have had Banner but not median grades.

In his reading about management of institutions such as Dalhousie, and most businesses, Mr. Faulkner had been impressed by the principal that decisions concerning scheduling should be made centrally, and those concerning what was to be done should be handled by the units which would have to live with those

decisions. It seemed that to this point Dalhousie had wisely and perhaps luckily followed this principal, for example with the issues of the "x" and "y" classes and the median grade. But he was alarmed that one of the articles in the handout, "Cause and Effect", argued that with the move to an integrated system such as Banner substantive decisions about what was done should be taken centrally. He was worried that at some point some of our central administrators would decide that issues such as full-year classes should be resolved at the centre rather than in the units directly affected. That was too high a price to pay for an integrated system.

Mr. Traves suggested that since the retroactive problem would be dealt with in due course, SCAA or some other body might look at an interim solution to this problem. Ms. Bleasdale added that a committee could explore a variety of ways to maintain Senate's policy of providing median grades, but in a form other than on the transcripts. Mr. Wainwright remained concerned about the gap between "prediction is folly" and the offer of an absolute guarantee. Mr. Cunningham trusted that by now those who had been working on implementing the Student Information System were in a position to provide reliable guarantees. Ms. Lee assured Senators they could accept the guarantee. Resources had now been committed to the median grade add-on, and a preliminary design had been prepared.

Mr. Ugursal moved:

> **That the current University policy of recording on individual student transcripts the median grade of each class be suspended until December, 2000.**

Ms. MacAulay was happy Banner would be able to accommodate median grades, but she reminded Senators that they had felt strongly about the need for median grades, and that students would be directly affected by their absence on transcripts, particularly graduating students. Ms. Flood was concerned that an arrangement be made to provide median grades at the very least for those students requiring them for scholarships and applications to graduate schools.

Mr. Ugursal suggested that a list of classes and the associated median grade could be put on the Web. Mr. El-Hawary suggested that each Faculty could provide, over the signature of Associate Deans, letters setting out median grades, at least for scholarship purposes. Ms. Binkley pointed out that for the large Faculties such as Arts and Social Sciences and Science such interim arrangements would be an additional burden on already strained resources. Mr. Slonim suggested that standard letters with the necessary information could be generated and attached to the transcript. This was important to the students. Mr. Kimmins was surprised the Registrar's Office had not addressed this problem by now. Perhaps two people assigned for one week could handle the task. He wished Senate to ensure that resources were available by the end of February to ensure the provision of median grades in a University-certified statement separate from the transcript. Five terms without median grades was not acceptable.

Mr. Traves suggested the problem be referred to a group which had the competence to find a solution.

Ms. Bleasdale moved an amendment:

> **With the understanding that a group of those with the necessary competence and expertise would report to the next meeting of Senate as to the means by which median grades would be made available to all students until a Banner solution was implemented.**

Mr. Stuttard clarified that this motion would apply to classes taken in the five terms for which median

grades had not been and would not be available on transcripts. Ms. MacGillivray pointed out that median grades had not been converted when the University moved from ARIS to Banner. Mr. Galley had been under the impression that the median grades prior to Banner were still available within the ARIS system. Mr. Stuttard suggested such issues would be addressed by the group to which the problem was referred.

The amendment was **CARRIED.**

The amended motion was **CARRIED.**

Mr. Scully indicated that he would report to Senate no later than July 2000 on the status of the Banner project and median grades.

2000:18.
Proposed Undergraduate Program in Food Science and Technology

On behalf of the Senate Academic Priorities and Budget Committe, Mr. Stuttard moved:

> **That the proposed Undergraduate Program in Food Science and Technology be approved, with the condition that the Faculty of Engineering shall transfer to the Library a one-time amount of $13,000, half payable at the start of the Program and the balance payable at the start of the third year of the Program, and a base budget transfer in the amount of $1000 per year.**

Ms. McIntyre recognised that Food Science was different from nutrition, but she noted that the Faculty of Health Professions offered instruction in the area of nutrition. She wondered whether the faculty who would be teaching nutrition in this proposed program were qualified nutritionists and whether there was a means by which nutrition education could be combined in the interests of economy and perhaps to improve quality. Mr. Speers indicated that the program planned to use one of the nutrition classes taken by students in Health Professions and offered by the School of Nursing. He clarified that the program had been designed according to the criteria of the Institute of Food Technologists, which called for a half class in nutrition among other requirements.

Mr. Bruce Gray, the Acting Vice-Principal (Academic) of the Nova Scotia Agricultural College, noted that the College had a program which offered a minor in Food Science. The College had been asked to provide input into and to cooperate with the proposed program and they were happy to do so. He hoped that DalTech would take advantage of the opportunity for future cooperation, because combining the critical mass of each of the institutions would be the basis for an excellent program.

The motion was **CARRIED.**
2000:19.
Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 5:50 p.m.

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Secretary   Chair