

Item: Senate Minutes, January 2000

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DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY
APPROVED MINUTES
OF
SENATE MEETING

SENATE met in regular session on Monday, January 17, 2000, at 4:00 p.m. in University Hall, Macdonald Building.

Present with Mr. C. Stuttard in the chair:

Bell, Binkley, Bleasdale, Bradfield, Brett, Crocker, Cunningham, Farrell, Furrow, Galley, Giacomantonio, Girard, Gupta, Ipson, Jalilvand, Johnston, Kay-Raining Bird, Lee, Lohmann, MacAulay, B. MacDonald, MacInnis, Maloney, McAlister, McConnell, Pacey, Palermo, C. Powell, H. Powell, Rathwell, Ricketts, Russell, Sastri, Shepherd, Slonim, Tindall, Traves, Ugursal, Wainwright, Whyte.

Regrets: Barnes, Coffin, Connolly, El-Hawary, Emodi, Flagel, Flood, Kipouros, MacKenzie, Phillips, Scully, Shafai, White.

Invitees: E. McKee (V-P Student Services).

Mr. Stuttard welcomed Mr. Faulkner, a past member of Senate, who was assuming responsibility as the DFA's observer at Senate.

2000:01

Adoption of the Agenda.

Mr. Stuttard noted an item under Other Business concerning Academic Dates. With that addition, the agenda was adopted.

2000:02

Minutes of the Previous Meeting.

The minutes of the meeting of 13 December 1999 were adopted as circulated.

2000:03

Chair of Senate's Response to the BAC VI

Mr. Stuttard reminded members that the BAC XVI Report had not been discussed by Senate due to lack of time, but had been considered by SAPBC and had been presented to the Board of Governors by Mr. Mason. Mr. Stuttard had circulated to Senators an email containing the gist of his response to Mr. Mason's presentation at the Board, and he had suggested that Senators might wish to endorse the statement. Ten emails, four from Deans, had all expressed support for Mr. Stuttard's statement.

Mr. Whyte moved:

That Senate endorse the statement circulated by the Chair of Senate, Mr. Stuttard, in response to the BAC Report #16, and recommend that the statement be incorporated as a preface in the next BAC report.

The motion was **CARRIED** without dissent.

2000:04

Median Grades on Transcripts

In the absence of Mr. Scully, Mr. Traves reported that the Vice-President (Academic) and Provost and the Vice-President (Student Affairs) were continuing to work on the problem of putting median grades on transcripts, in consultation with several universities. Mr. Scully expected to have a report on this matter for the next meeting of Senate.

Mr. Galley reminded Senators that consideration of the motion on median grades had been deferred until November 1999 on the understanding that the lack of a median grade would not present a problem until January 2000 when students could be expected to request transcripts. Senate had clearly understood that it wished to have a solution by January. What temporary measures were in place to deal with the problem? Mr. Traves had understood that there could be no solution for this year's transcripts, and that May 2000, was the earliest we could expect to see median grades on transcripts. Mr. Traves added that research on practices across the country had indicated that roughly half the Universities published median grades and half did not. This suggested the absence of a median grade would not be fatal to students. However, Dalhousie believed median grades were required, and we were attempting to determine when and how they would be re-instituted.

Mr. Wainwright recalled that Deans and faculty members had volunteered to help with the process manually if necessary, so that students would continue to have median grades, whatever the problems with Banner. Senators had been told volunteers' hand calculations were unnecessary because the problem would be resolved. Whatever the practice at other Universities, Dalhousie had an established policy of recording median grades, and the Senate had forcefully reaffirmed its commitment to finding a solution for January 2000. In response to Mr. Brett's request for clarification concerning progress towards a solution, Mr. McKee indicated that the problem lay within the Banner software.

Mr. Bell noted that there were several ways of indicating a student's performance in relation to others in a class. Would rank in class be a possible measure? Mr. McKee stated that none of the alternatives could be implemented and so would not solve the problem of getting comparative information on the transcript. Ms. Bleasdale understood that since purchasing Banner we had already spent considerable money developing a Dalhousie transcript which could work with the suite. Was part of the problem the transcript we had created, or was the problem strictly that Banner could not make the necessary calculations? She received clarification that at present Banner was the problem.

Mr. Slonim was surprised that no one from the Banner team was present to answer questions, given that

Banner-related issues came up at every meeting. We needed to have the experts here. Lack of information held up the resolution of such problems and the work of Senate. Like others, he considered five months a long time to wait and still be given no information. Ms. MacAulay was surprised that Mr. McKee seemed to be saying that very little had been done on the matter. She had been under the impression that we would be close to a solution at this point. Mr. McKee responded that no resources had yet been allocated towards finding a solution.

Ms. Bleasdale was concerned that resources did not appear to have been allocated to even looking for a solution to the problem, let alone implementing that solution. She suggested that Senate clarify its position and ask that resources be made available to hunt for a solution. Ms. Bleasdale moved:

That resources be allocated to exploring solutions to the problem of the median grade.

Ms. McIntyre noted that the last time we had been given an estimate of the cost of modifications to Banner it had been in the range of several \$100,000. She was concerned that we not suggest that any amount of resources be allocated to any one thing without a clearer sense of the costs and the options. Ms. Lohmann supported the need to put resources into identifying a solution. Mr. Ugursal asked the Vice-President (Student Services) to clarify his statement that resources had not been allocated to this problem. Were that the case, and Senate had been kept waiting for months, he found it astonishing. Ms. Binkley was concerned this was a breach of trust in the sense that in early discussions of Banner, transcripts, and related academic program issues, we had been told the new system could reproduce the basic and important features of the discarded ARIS software. If important features were not yet available in Banner, they should be made a budget priority. Implementation of new components of Banner should have second priority. She understood that aspects of the system had to be implemented in a specific order, but resources for their implementation should already be budgeted for.

Mr. Ricketts noted that we did not even have the name of the University on the transcript. Over the past three months, in submitting student transcripts for NSERC and SSHRC post graduate fellowships, his staff had to write onto the transcript by hand basic information such as the nature of the student's program. He was amazed to hear of the amounts being spent on the system, and noted that other Universities were able to produce satisfactory transcripts via Banner. So, why was Dalhousie having such problems? He was sympathetic to the motion, but the question of resources raised the problem of a variety of issues which were supposed to be but had not been addressed, simply to bring the transcript up to the standard of ARIS. The median grade might not be critical for Graduate Schools, but the mess of the transcripts was.

Mr. Traves thought Senate was getting exercised over some issues that were not germane or helpful. He was surprised that anyone did not know that software systems of the scale of the Banner project were enormously complicated, usually ran over cost, and rarely met deadlines. He reminded members that the University had attempted to build its own program, and when forced to abandon that had needed to buy what was available off the shelf, under pressure from the year 2000 problem. He also reminded members of their own experiences in buying software packages. If they wanted a system built to their specifications they should build it themselves; customizing an off-the-shelf package was very expensive. He had been told it was at least a two to three month project to put the median grade in place. He was not hostile to having a median grade, and all things being equal maybe Dalhousie should have one. But all things might not be equal. To solve the median grade problem would mean that other things could not be done. Budget priorities could not be decided in a vacuum. Someone had to make decisions concerning priorities and their budget implications, something that did not seem to concern Senators. He contended

that Senate had no power to allocate funds, but could only recommend allocations. Mr. Traves understood why Senators were becoming emotional about this issue, but he thought it was very unhelpful for Senate to talk about allocating money, and he moved:

That the motion be tabled.

He gathered that Senate considered the median grade an academic priority, and the request would be carefully considered. But trade-offs would be weighed. He did not think we needed a vote; he would take the information back. With respect to voting on a motion with budgetary implications he considered the point moot.

The motion was **CARRIED**.

Mr. Shephard thought it would be appropriate for someone from the Banner project to come to Senate to address issues related to time-lines. Mr. Traves assured Senators that those who understood how Banner worked and could answer these questions would be in attendance at the next meeting.

Mr. Ugursal could accept what the President had said, but it was two months too late. He did not understand why this Senate had not been told back in November that nothing was going to happen on this issue. That would have allowed Department Heads and Deans to undertake the necessary calculations for the median grades. Mr. Ugursal found the stalling unbecoming of a University.

Mr. Crocker moved:

That the administration provide Senate with a realistic timetable on implementation of the median grade on transcripts, and that members of the Banner team with technical expertise attend the next meeting of Senate to discuss that timetable.

Mr. Traves did not think a motion was required. He had agreed to Mr. Shepherd's request and would ensure that Ms. Lee attended Senate to provide a full report on the current status of the entire project, whether or not the motion passed. Median grades were only one component of a much larger process. Ms. Lee would also address budgetary implications.

Speaking in support of the motion, Ms. Bleasdale noted that at almost all of its meetings Senate dealt with motions which had budgetary implications. We did not pass a program proposal without addressing its budgetary impact and necessary expenditures. The budget was clearly within Senate's purview. Ms. Bleasdale also believed that the President was underestimating his colleagues by characterizing the discussion as emotional. Senators had been approaching this issue logically and rationally. This was the fourth meeting at which they had requested information with which they could make an informed decision. In the context of the debate, she also asked Senators to please take the time to clarify what they considered academic priorities, and forward those priorities to the Committee which was working on the Student Information System part of Banner.

Ms. Binkley spoke in favour of giving Senate a detailed timetable which would enable Senators to put the issue of the median grade in perspective. Mr. Galley also supported the motion for a time-line. Six months ago we had asked to be provided in November 1999 with options and costs. We were saying it all

again six months later. He found it disheartening to hear the President say that we needed to figure out what the cost of our options were. It was now clear that median grades on transcripts was a firm Senate requirement. Mr. Powell spoke against the motion because the President had clearly indicated that next time we would be told all about Banner, both generally and specifically. Mr. Wainwright thought we had come to the point at which we had to realize that Banner was unable to deliver in a number of ways, and it might be months or years before the system was properly in place. Senate needed to recognize that in the short term, when issues such as median grades arose, we would have to find some way to act which did not depend on Banner.

Mr. McKee commented that transcripts now bore Dalhousie's name. Mr. Traves indicated that the issue came down to limited staff time and money, not whether we could do certain things. As he understood it, initial assurances by the Director of the Banner project had been given on the grounds that the problem could be fixed. In the meantime, a number of other challenges had arisen. The Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, for example, had suffered a significant enrolment loss this year, which should be very worrisome because of its budgetary implications for subsequent years. In that context, FASS, at least, ought to be concerned with the potential value of the Enrolment Management component of Banner. We did not know whether the Enrolment Management module, developed for the American university and college system, could be adapted to a Canadian university, but Mr. Scully was currently looking at a version of the module at Memorial University. Should Mr. Scully think the module worth the investment, we might have to decide it was the priority, not the median grade. Those were the types of trade-offs we needed to be able to make.

Mr. Stuttard offered his personal observation that the problem was one of information flow. This body had not been receiving adequate information concerning the priorities being set in the implementation of Banner.

The motion was CARRIED.

2000:05

SCITPC Annual Report

Mr. Stuttard informed Senators that Mr. Scully had provided a written answer to the question raised by Mr. Bradfield in November concerning the special allocation [for furniture] mentioned in the 1999 Report of the SCITPC. Mr. Stuttard read the communication and invited members to view it in the Senate Office.

At Mr. Ricketts' request, and hearing no objection, the Chair indicated that the meeting would move to item four.

2000:06

Proposed Executive Masters in Electronic Commerce

Mr. Stuttard presented the motion from the Senate Academic Priorities and Budget Committee:

That the proposed program, Executive Master of Electronic Commerce, be approved.

Mr. Ricketts was pleased to support this variation of the existing Master of Electronic Commerce. The Curriculum Committee and the Faculty Council of Graduate Studies had considered a number of issues

related to the program, in particular the maintenance of quality given the modified form of delivery. Their concerns had been satisfied and Faculty Council was delighted with this collaborative effort among the Faculties of Computer Science, Law and Management.

The motion was **CARRIED** without dissent.

2000:07

Proposed B.A. with Minor in Environmental Studies

Mr. Stuttard presented the motion from the Senate Academic Priorities and Budget Committee:

That the proposed program, B.A. with a minor in Environmental Studies, be approved.

Mr. Brett spoke to the need for Universities to offer programs in Environmental Science and Environmental Studies, and the Faculty of A&SS was taking steps to make that possible. This minor in Environmental Studies would help prepare students to meet the need and demand outside the University for expertise in this area, and would contribute to a well-informed public. The Faculty of Science already had a minor in Environmental Science, and Mr. Brett believed the Faculty of Management would be proposing its own version of such a program in the near future.

The motion was **CARRIED** without dissent.

2000:08

President's Report

Mr. Traves focused on continuing efforts to secure support for stable funding for the University over the next year. In the past two months he had been active preparing information on Dalhousie's budget, and lobbying provincially and federally. Lobbying had focused on a number of specific programs which had major implications for the University. During a recent visit, the provincial Minister of Education had been given a focused presentation from the Materials Science group. This was useful in clarifying the quality of work in this area and setting out the dire implications should the provincial government decide not to provide the matching funds for the group's C.F.I. proposal. Mr. Traves had also spoken at some length with the Minister of Education concerning the general budget of the University, drawing attention to the importance and special costs of graduate studies and research at Dalhousie.

The Minister had understood the needs of our University and of the post-secondary system in general, but could not offer any assurances about funding. The provincial budget would still be under consideration until the end of February at the earliest, when the federal budget would be revealed.

The President had also met with the Deputy Minister of Industry Canada from Ottawa. This was important because a joint presentation had been made by the provincial government, provincial agencies, representatives of the Halifax business community, and associated scientific research groups such as the National Research Council regarding two crucial projects going forward: 1) Information Technology; 2) a proposal for an Atlantic Canada Genome program which would be part of the Genome Canada project being considered by the Federal Government. Both projects would involve inter-Faculty cooperation at Dalhousie.

Significant was the range of groups and individuals from the community supporting Dalhousie's proposals. It was the first time that a community-based proposal had the University at the centre of economic and intellectual development. Progress was being made in building alliances with those groups whom we need to speak on our behalf regarding Dalhousie's importance to the community.

In the next few weeks the President expected to be speaking to a number of groups around the province, including the Chamber of Commerce in some of the smaller communities within the province, and would portray Dalhousie as a provincial University which served their students and the economic life of their communities. He would welcome support of others in building alliances in the various geographic, business and government communities.

2000:09

Academic Dates

Mr. Traves moved:

That the start date for the Winter Term of 2001 be January 3.

Ordinarily, Winter Term classes next year would start on January 2, 2001; however, the other metro Universities were commencing their terms on January 3. The motion was to give Dalhousie the same date.

Ms. McIntyre had just forwarded an email to Vice President Scully from Senator Nila Ipsom to the effect that the additional week at the beginning of term had made an enormous difference in preparedness for the Winter Term. Ms. McIntyre had been hoping to raise this issue at SCAA, and consequently would prefer to postpone a discussion of the starting date for the Winter Term 2001 until after SCAA had met. The idea of a longer break might be worth pursuing. Mr. Traves explained that the urgency behind the motion lay in the imminent printing of the Calendar which would have to indicate a start date for next year. The possibility of a delay could be dealt with later. But students needed to be able to plan around an early start date. Mr. Traves understood that Ms. Ipsom's suggestion had been received favourably in many quarters, but it had consequences in areas such as scheduling of classes and of examinations at the end of term. Ms. Binkley was concerned about the erosion of the thirteen-week term, which was a twelve-week term at best and meant many would not be able to cover necessary material. This was a particular problem for students not doing a full year class. Were we to opt for any changes to academic dates she would argue that the thirteen-week term be maintained. Mr. Slonim shared Ms. Binkley's concerns, and would not want to put our students at a disadvantage. In light of the present discussion, Ms. McIntyre suggested the motion be:

That Dalhousie publish that the start date for the Winter Term 2001 be January 3, 2001.

Mr. Galley received confirmation that the start date for the Fall Term was not being changed.

The motion was **CARRIED** without dissent.

2000:10

Voting on Honorary Degree Candidates (In Camera)

By secret ballot, eleven nominations for honorary degrees to be awarded at Convocations to be held this year, received approval.

2000:11

Vote of Thanks

Mr. Slonim moved:

That Senate express its appreciation to all who had worked so diligently to ensure Dalhousie's smooth transition into the year 2000.

The motion was **CARRIED**.

2000:12

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 5:35 p.m.

Secretary

Chair