

Item: Senate Minutes, March 2000

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DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY

APPROVED MINUTES

OF

SENATE MEETING

SENATE met in regular session on Monday, March 13, 2000, at 4:00 p.m. in University Hall, Macdonald Building.

Present with Mr. Stuttard in the chair were the following:

Alexander, Barnes, Bell, Bleasdale, Brett, Carlson, Coffin, Crocker, Cunningham, El-Hawary, Farrell, Flagel, Furrow, Gupta, Ipson, Jalilvand, Johnston, Kay-Raining Bird, Kimmins, Lohmann, MacAulay, N. MacDonald, MacInnis, Maes, Maloney, McConnell, Palermo, Phillips, Poel, Ricketts, Russell, Sastri, Scully, Shafai, Slonim, Tindall, Traves, White.

Regrets: Binkley, Emodi, Galley, Kipouros, MacKenzie, McIntyre, H. Powell, Rathwell, Starnes, Treves, Wallace, Whyte.

2000:20.

Adoption of the Agenda.

The agenda was adopted as circulated.

2000:21.

Minutes of the Previous Meeting.

The minutes of the meeting of February 14, 2000, were amended to include Mr. Gray and Mr. Speers among the invitees; to substitute Mr. White for Mr. Whyte at item 2000:17, page 3, para 4; and to delete "of" after "transfer" from the motion under 2000:18. The minutes were then adopted.

2000:22.

Matters Arising

Mr. Scully hoped to be able to report to the next meeting of Senate concerning two matters arising from the previous meeting: Mr. Wainwright's question concerning the total costs relating to Banner and its implementation; and the means by which median grades would be made available to all students until a Banner solution to the problem of median grades was implemented, as requested in the amendment to the motion in item 2000:17.

Following up on Senate's March 22, 1999, approval of the Diploma in Nurse Practitioner Studies for Remote and Under-Serviced Communities, Mr. Stuttard noted that MPHEC had approved the programme, on the understanding that entering students be advised that at present within Nova Scotia there was no legal status for Nurse Practitioners.

2000:23.

Question Period

There were no questions.

2000:24.

University Budget Prospects

Mr. Stuttard invited the President to address the budget prospects for Dalhousie for the upcoming fiscal year. Mr. Traves spoke to his March 3, 2000, email message to the University community concerning the implications of the recent Federal budget for the Dalhousie budget, and highlighted the positive elements in the federal budget as they impacted on Dalhousie. Nova Scotia would receive approximately \$71 mil over a four-year period from the one-time \$2.5 bil Canada Health and Social Transfer. The federal government had underlined that this was not simply a health funding transfer, and potentially, some of this \$71 mil could be designated for post-secondary education. However, that was at the discretion of the provincial government.

Secondly, the Canada Foundation for Innovation had been renewed for a second five-year period, and had been given an additional \$900 mil. At present, Dalhousie's principal concern was with the provision of the required matching funds by the provincial government. The budget was formally silent on this issue, but the President had received numerous assurances from the federal government that a solution to the Atlantic provinces' problem in securing matching funds would be forth-coming. He was cautiously optimistic. Concerning the 21st Century Research Chairs, the number had been raised to 2000 from the 1200 originally indicated. The President had been advised that the rules and regulations, together with the distribution by institution, would probably be available within the week. Mr. Scully and the Deans had begun to discuss informally issues surrounding the allocation of the Chairs, but many questions would need to be worked out, such as whether they should be distributed internally or recruited externally and the mechanism for distribution. In general, members of the University had expressed some degree of interest in attempting to build on strength, while leaving open the opportunity to pursue new directions, as appropriate. The President and Vice-President would communicate the information to the whole University as soon as they had received it. Funding for the Chairs would be renewable, for Junior Chairs five years beyond the original five years, and for Senior Chairs, seven years beyond the original seven. In total, this could amount to \$6 to \$7 mil in support for academic activities in the long term.

The federal budget had also included an announcement of funding to create a Canadian Foundation for Climate and Atmospheric Sciences, with \$60 mil in funding over six years. As one of the five Canadian Universities with research strength in this area, Dalhousie stood to benefit from this investment, and Dalhousie researchers were already preparing a proposal. Also, Genome Canada would receive \$160 mil over a five-year period to support five genome science centres, one of which would be located in Atlantic Canada. Dalhousie had been working on a proposal with a number of Atlantic institutions which hoped to partner in a consortium based here.

The provincial government would probably bring down its budget in the first two weeks of April. At this point, the rumor mills were quiet, but in preparing for the final stages of its work, the Budget Advisory Committee was examining a number of possibilities. Were the University to receive the 3% increase promised as part of the third year of the previous government's funding commitments, we would be in reasonably good shape. No increase in funding would pose problems, but with

appropriate adjustments to areas such as tuition, we could come close to a balanced budget. Were we to face a budget cut substantially below the current level of funding, the President did not think Dalhousie could balance the budget, given the commitments such as those made through collective agreements, the largest portion of the Universities expenditures. Mr. Traves believed the Board of Governors would be open to considering a deficit budget; however, Board members would want to know how we proposed to deal with the deficit in subsequent years. In the absence of hard budget information, the President had avoided asking the Senate and the rest of the University to discuss the thorny issue of how we might deal with a provincial budget which necessitated cuts. Any such discussions would be difficult and divisive, and some interests within the University would inevitably feel threatened, perhaps justifiably. Once we had the figures from the province, we would have a year to consider what Dalhousie could and could not support.

In light of some favourable comments he had read in the Daily News, Mr. El-Hawary wondered if the President would like to address the response to his presentation to the Board of Trade. Mr. Traves noted that all the Presidents in the Nova Scotia post-secondary system had been making presentations to various community groups, and the general reception appeared to have been positive. Whether the lobbying would have much impact on the budget remained unclear; however, the important point was that we had a strong case to make, and needed to continue making it.

Mr. Faulkner asked whether the 21st Century Chairs would be tenure-track and probationary tenure-track appointments or some other form of appointment. Mr. Traves expected that the bulk of the appointments would be to the tenure-track stream, though this had not been formally determined. For personal or institutional reasons, some appointments might take the form of longer than normal term appointments. But the bias in the system would be towards the tenure-track stream, which meant Faculties allocated Chairs needed to be prepared to include them in their long-term complement policy and funding.

Of all the commentaries she had heard on the federal budget's response to the problems facing post-secondary education, Ms. Bleasdale believed that the President's was the most positive. Did the President wish to say anything negative about the budget and post-secondary education. Mr. Traves responded that he was not being partisan. He considered it important to recognize that many groups and individuals had put considerable effort into lobbying government, and those efforts needed to be acknowledged, even if they had not been entirely effective. However, in the area of transfer payments the budget was disappointing. The fewer than hoped for transfer payments raised concerns about the province's ability to sustain our post-secondary education system, given Nova Scotia's, and consequently Dalhousie's, heavy dependence on various types of federal-provincial transfers. We had now been advised by people representing the region at the federal level that the focus on transfer payments might be misdirected. When Ontario received \$500 mil and Nova Scotia only \$71 mil from the \$2.5 bil in transfer payments, Nova Scotia had to ask whether the current system was an effective method of transferring funds to the less prosperous regions. Together with the Atlantic Provinces' Economic Council, the University Presidents had agreed to look more closely at equalization payments.

Mr. Slonim requested an update on the issue of scholarships and current problems with the student loans programme. Mr. Traves noted that the federal budget had raised the amount of scholarship, fellowship and bursary income that students could receive tax-free. In combination with the rise in the basic personal exemption to \$8,000 within five years, this would mean many fewer students would need to pay tax on their scholarship income. On the student loan programme, Mr. Traves had just received a communication from the AUCC. The refusal of the country's national banks to participate

in the programme, as currently structured, would necessitate changes to the system after July 31, 2000. At that point, the federal government would step in as the holder of loans in place of the banks. Provinces participating in the system would continue to handle the front end of the loan process. A variety of "service bureaus" commonly used by financial institutions would handle the back end of the process, including such matters as communicating with borrowers, consolidation of loans, and administration of interest relief, all of which would be subject to the standards of the federal government. Mr. Traves believed a process for choosing these "service bureaus" would soon be in place. Continuing efforts were also being made to harmonize the federal and provincial student loan programmes, a goal which might be more easily achieved now that deliberations between the two levels of government would not be mediated by private lending institutions. Details as to how the federal government would handle the programme remained unclear. Nova Scotia had in place a scheme which would run through the summer, and recently the Minister of Education had announced that in the event no private bank would take on the provincial part of the program, the government would become the banker for loans. President Traves reassured senators that a programme was in place; after August 1st, a programme would continue; and substantial changes resulting in the money available for the coming school year were not foreseen.

Mr. Brett sought assurances that in the selection process for the 21st Century Chairs the normal academic hiring criteria would not be set aside, and that the process would not become more politically based. The President assured him that the standards for the appointment process would be fundamentally unchanged, with the exception that if anything they would be more transparent and even more focused on academic excellence. Each university would be required to draw up a general research strategy to which the appointments would conform. In a yet undefined way we would be held accountable by an external committee of our peers for the quality of the appointments and the performance of the appointees. The process for allocating funding within the University had not yet been determined. His understanding was that the funding for Chairs would come to the University in a block, then the University would have an extended period within which to allocate the Chairs. Once we had made initial priorities as to field, he assumed the appointment processes would be similar, though not identical to conventional appointments processes. Clauses in the federal agreements might require slight modifications. Given the concern over the brain drain, which in part had motivated this initiative, the tier one and tier two immigration advertising rules might be waved to encourage hiring of immigrants and the return of scholars to Canada.

Ms. Macdonald noted the Faculty of Medicine's concern over the issue of student loans, particularly in light of the potential for tuition increases. Would the decision concerning tuition increases be made in sufficient time to allow students to decide whether to come here or go elsewhere? Would a tuition increase be general or selective? Mr. Traves responded that the figures in the provincial budget would be the crucial variable in deciding on tuition increase, provided the provincial budget came down in the first part of April. He reminded members of the University's multi-year budget plan which called for an increase in tuition fees of approximately 3.5% across the board, in addition to the increase necessitated to offset Dalhousie's move from a fee per course to a fee per class tuition fee. The impact on students would depend on the nature of the course in which they were enrolled. The University might have to reconsider that percentage, given the obvious relationship over the past ten years between the decrease in provincial grants and the increase in tuition fees. And Dalhousie currently had a differential fee policy. The President had met with students from the Medical School and had listened to their concerns about potential substantial tuition increases, as well as highly differentiated tuition increases. Neither would be the preferred course of action, but if the choice was necessarily between quality of programme and level of tuition fees, the students understood we would have to

consider the trade-off carefully.

2000:25.

Senate Review of the Faculty of Science

As an item of information, Mr. Stuttard drew members' attention to his March 7, 2000 communication concerning the status of the recommendations of the Senate Review of the Faculty of Science. He reminded senators of the stipulation in the guidelines for Senate's reviews of all Faculties that, within eighteen months of the Report being produced and heard by SAPBC, the Vice-President Academic & Provost would report back to SAPBC on the status of the recommendations in the original Report. The report to SAPBC was set out in SAPBC minute 99:073, enclosed with the Senate mailout. At its March 6, 2000 meeting, SAPBC had adopted a motion for Mr. Scully "to further clarify with the Faculty the status of the unresolved recommendations and to report back to SAPBC within six months."

Mr. Kimmins observed that it would have been useful to senators if the excerpt from SAPBC had been accompanied by the Report from Faculty Council to which the Minutes referred. Mr. Stuttard noted that any senators interested in seeing the Faculty Council Report could ask for a copy from the Senate Office. Mr. Kimmins spoke to the importance of Senate's review of Faculties, and noted that the response of the Faculty Council to the Recommendations was at least as important and perhaps more important than the minutes of SAPBC. He suggested that the Faculty response be routinely circulated to Senate. Mr. Stuttard noted that following that reasoning, senators might ask to have circulated the entire Report which contained the Recommendations so that the progression from Report to consideration by SAPBC was clear. In the interests of saving trees, the Senate Office attempted to minimize generation of material which senators could readily access upon request. Both the Response and the original Report were available in the Senate Office. They were not yet available in electronic form, though from now on that might be possible.

Mr. El-Hawary noted that there was not a meeting of minds between the two bodies in this process. Was it the official Senate process to ask the Vice-President Academic & Provost to resolve the issues in such circumstances? Mr. Stuttard indicated that this was the existing process. This might be the first Review in which there had been some disagreement or misunderstanding between the Review, the Response from the Faculty and SAPBC. Senate looked forward to Mr. Scully's clarification in the next six months.

2000:26.

Honorary Degree

The meeting move *in camera* for this item.

2000:27.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 5:20 p.m.