



**SENATE**  
**Approved Minutes of the Meeting held on**  
**Monday, December 14, 2020 at 3:00pm**  
**Via Microsoft Teams**

The Senate met in regular session on Monday, December 14, 2020 via Microsoft Teams

**Present:** K. Hewitt (Chair), A. Aiken, V. Allen, D. Anderson, F. Annan, M. Aston, R. Barker, P. Bennett, N. Bird, J. Blustein, D. Bourne-Tyson, K. Brooks, B. Davis, R. Devlin, C. Diallo, A. Doucette, P. Doyle-Bedwell, O. Dryden, N. Ezzedine, M. Farrimond, B. Foster, M. Fournier, L. Goldberg, J. Hall, B. Hansson, F. Harvey, G. Horne, V. Howard, M. Irwin, S. Jeffrey, Z. Jones, A. Kermanshahi-Pour, J.S. Kim, S. Kirk, M. Leonard, L. MacDonald, B. Merritt, L. Meynell, A. Mohan, C. Moore, F. Naghibi, B. Nassar, J. Newhook, M. Pacurar, L. Perez, L. Propper, T. Rajack-Talley, B. Rathgeber, A. Rau-Chaplin, H.S. Ro, K. Rosen, D. Saini, B. Schick, E. Seelemann, S. Seth, A. Siegel, D. Silvio, A. Sophocleous, S. Sparks, L. Spiteri, S. Stackhouse, M. Stinson, S. Stone, F. Taheri, P. Tyedmers, D. Tyers, M. A. Ulku, G. Warner, E. Welsh, D. Westwood, D. White, E. Wunker, I. Yakovenko, S. Yurgel

**Regrets:** T. Cyrus, D. Gray, I. Waldron, S. Wildeman

**Absent:** G. Adolphe- Nazaire, R. Agu, A. Cooper, T. Duck, Y. El Hiani, H. El Naggat, K. El Sankary, D. Grujic, A. Habib, W. Lahey, R. Orji, J. Phinney, C. Richardson, M. Sharaput, V. Turpin, S. Zahoor

**Guests:** Gitta Kulczycki, Mary-Ann Rowston, Bob Mann, Susan Brousseau, Judith Ng'ethe, Nakita Strowbridge, Joseph Behl (Student Minute Taker)

The Dalhousie University Senate acknowledges that this meeting is taking place in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq People.

**1. Approval of Agenda**

A Senator proposed an amendment to the agenda, to include an item under "Other Business" to discuss the process used during *in camera* sessions of Senate meetings.

The agenda was **approved** with this amendment.

**2. Consent Agenda**

**2.1 Approval of Draft Minutes of November 23, 2020 Senate Meeting**

Approved by **CONSENT**.

**2.2 Academic amnesty request for Indigenous Students re: Saulnierville Action**

**THAT Senate approve the following:**

**THAT all individuals involved in teaching delivery at Dalhousie allow each Indigenous student participating in solidarity, support, and advocacy efforts in Saulnierville, NS to do so without academic penalty at least once per course, with additional requests granted by individual instructors in consultation with the Faculty. Amnesty requests are also subject to the following:**

- **Students are to inform their professors in advance if they plan on missing an assessment or submitting an assessment late in order to attend the action(s).**
- **Make-up assessment(s) will be subject to approval at the Faculty level in consultation with individual instructors as appropriate.**
- **Due to the ongoing nature of the situation, amnesty will be granted to Indigenous students until April 30, 2021.**

Approved by **CONSENT**.

### **3. Matters Arising from November 23, 2020 Senate Meeting**

#### **3.1 Credit/No Credit Grade Working Group Recommendations**

Senator Pacurar presented this item, noting that part of the motion on the Credit/No Credit Working Group recommendations passed at the November 23, 2020 Senate meeting called for Senate to endorse a statement, written in consultation with the Dalhousie Student Union, encouraging consideration of the challenges faced by students who are taking multiple courses online when designing and delivering online courses for the Winter 2021 semester.

Senator Pacurar read out the prepared statement, which acknowledged the unique challenges faced by students in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and the adjustment to online learning, noting in particular the increased workload, stress, and other mental health challenges. The statement encouraged instructors to consider these challenges when creating and delivering online courses in the coming semester. Senator Hewitt informed the meeting that this statement would be circulated to Senators and an electronic vote undertaken.

### **4. Reports**

#### **4.1 Chair of Senate's Report**

Senator Hewitt presented the Chair of Senate's report, noting the many changes and adjustments that have had to be made, both on a personal level and on the work and learning front.

Senator Hewitt highlighted the approval of the Pass/ILL grading option for the 2020 Fall and 2021 Winter terms, covering close to 85% of students but also noting that a few full and partial waivers of this provision for Faculties have been approved, most of the latter supported by students within the relevant faculty. Senator Hewitt briefly noted several upcoming issues at the committee level, which would be addressed at the next Senate meeting in January, 2021, including revisiting the suspension of the SRI policy for the 2021 Winter term and discussing a retroactive Summer 2020 Term Pass/ILL grading option.

Senator Hewitt added that in relation to questions about CHEGG and other websites violating instructors' intellectual property, a letter has been drafted by Legal Counsel and Senate officers would be meeting with stakeholders.

Senator Hewitt led the meeting in congratulating Senator Waldron on receiving the 2020 Research Canada Leadership in Advocacy Award, which recognizes outstanding champions of health research and health innovation.

Senator Hewitt invited the Vice Chair, Academic Programs and the Vice Chair, Student Affairs to provide brief updates on the committees they chaired.

Senator Spiteri (Vice Chair, Academic Programs) provided an update on the proposed Bachelor of Arts (Major and Honours) in Black and African Diaspora Studies. Senator Spiteri informed the meeting that the Senate Academic Programs and Research Committee (SAPRC) recently approved the concept paper for the establishment of the interdisciplinary major/honours program. The concept paper was presented by Dr. Afua Cooper and Senators Barker and Harvey. Senator Spiteri added that the committee was aiming to meet to the Senate April 31, 2021 deadline for the final proposal.

Senator Pacurar (Vice Chair, Student Affairs) informed the meeting that the Senate Learning and Teaching Committee (SLTC) was engaged in discussions regarding equitable admissions. The committee had recently discussed the first version of a project charter regarding the development of an equitable admissions framework, presented by Adam Robertson, University Registrar.

#### **4.2 Provost's Report**

Senator Harvey presented the Provost's Report and noted the significant work carried out by Student Affairs in coordinating efforts such as student COVID-19 testing and quarantine arrangements. Senator Harvey also recognized the work conducted by Heather Doyle, Director of Student Assessment and Special Projects and Senator Turpin in their recent presentation to the Board of Governors that focused on student health, student experience and student engagement during the pandemic, as well as lessons learned from surveys run by Student Affairs and NSSE (National Survey of Student Engagement). Senator Harvey advised the meeting that many U15 and comparator institutions opted not to send responses to NSSE this year, but Dalhousie had, in order to collect data and gain an understanding of areas for improvement. The 2020 Fall term assessment cited concerns around workload, exam pressures, adequate study spaces, physical/mental health and time management issues, amongst others. Senator Harvey added that these lessons would be applied to designing a model for alternative pathways for student support, with the goal of creating a more holistic health and wellness platform.

Senator Harvey expounded on other recent areas of focus, including a commitment to enhance integrated communications through a student health and wellness website and more concise student messaging based on Dalhousie Student Union (DSU) feedback.

#### **4.3 Vice President Research & Innovation**

Senator Aiken presented the Research & Innovation report, advising that Dalhousie commenced the second phase of its Return to Research (R2R) plan in September, 2020, in step with the university's expanded Return to Campus plan. The second phase comprised a density-based model that allowed more research labs to open safely and for some on-campus research with human subjects to resume.

Senator Aiken also provided an overview of key figures relating to Dalhousie's research performance and funding and the overall strategic direction for research and innovation from 2018 to 2023. Senator Aiken gave an update on the "Dal Innovates" suite of programs, acknowledged several Dalhousie researchers who have been recognized recently for their excellence in research and highlighted several Key Performance Indicators relevant to research and innovation. Senator Aiken added that Dalhousie

was included in the *Times Higher Education* Impact Rankings at number 85 globally and also rose in the *Maclean's* rankings in both the Medical Doctoral category and overall.

#### **4.4 Questions for Reports**

In response to a senator's question about possible negative impacts of industry partnerships, including coercive practices, Senator Aiken noted that there were structures in place to ensure this did not occur, with industry partnerships being conducted through the Industry Liaison and Innovation Office. Senator Aiken added that Dalhousie was one of the few universities in Canada where intellectual property was wholly owned by the investigator, limiting the possibility of coercion.

Responding to a question regarding gendered impacts of COVID-19 on research productivity, Senator Aiken informed the meeting of advice recently adopted by the Tri-Agency, which was collecting data to investigate the impact on women and other equity-seeking groups, as well as establishing coverage for child car costs. Research & Innovation had also been working with the Women in Research Caucus to discuss ways to mitigate these issues, including establishment of a baby-sitting service for families.

In response to a query on the effect of campus restrictions on graduate student admissions. Senator Aiken advised that one of the priorities of the R2R plan was to bring graduate and senior undergraduate students back into the labs that were relevant to graduation, with the result that both applications and admissions for graduate students were up this year.

There were no other questions for reports.

#### **5. Question Period**

There were no questions.

#### **FOR DISCUSSION**

Senator Hewitt requested Senators to take a "think tank" approach to the remaining two agenda items and elaborated on an appropriate collaborative framework.

#### **6. Draft Policy for Academic Unit Consolidation, Renaming, Establishment, Transfer and Termination (AU-CRETT)**

Senator Hewitt, being the Chair of the AU-CRETT Taskforce, relinquished the chair to Senator Spiteri for this agenda item.

Senator Spiteri introduced this item, advising that small group breakout room discussions would take place to obtain feedback on the draft AU-CRETT policy, through answering the questions provided by the taskforce. Following the discussion, a representative from each group would summarize their group's response to the meeting as a whole. The responses would be forwarded to the AU-CRETT taskforce following the meeting.

Senator Hewitt briefly presented the AU-CRETT draft policy which emerged from the work of the AU-CRETT Taskforce, advising that input on the draft policy was being sought from various stakeholders, including Senate. Senator Hewitt advised that the purpose of the policy was to create a framework for guiding the organizational evolution of academic units at Dalhousie, to outline the process and information requirements of initiating AU-CRETT changes and to provide a set of policy/value

statements against which to assess proposals. Senator Hewitt summarized the core principles of the policy; to apply to all AU-CRETT proposals, to process proposals in a timely manner, that all parties will be heard, and that the most compelling arguments will be those based on Dalhousie's Mission, Vision, Strategic Areas, and Core Values (supported by administrative and operational arguments).

Senator Hewitt outlined the draft policy's two-step process for considering and approving applications for AU-CRETT changes, where a concept paper would first be approved by the Senate Planning and Governance Committee (SPGC) before a full proposal could be considered. Further, applications could be submitted by other parties, not just Faculty councils.

Senators split into several breakout groups to discuss the following questions:

- Is the Background and Purpose clear and easy to understand?
- Do you have any comments on the proposed two-step process – concept paper then full proposal?
- Do you have any feedback on the Definitions?
- Are there any gaps or omissions in the Policy Statements under D.?
- Anyone else we should be consulting?

Following discussion in breakout groups. Senators reconvened and a representative from each group summarized the main points emerging from discussions on background and purpose, the two-step process, definitions and policy statements.

Senator Spiteri requested each group representative to pass their notes on to the Secretariat, for onward transmission to the AU-CRETT Taskforce.

Senator Spiteri relinquished the chair back to Senator Hewitt, who confirmed that the input provided thus far will be discussed at the next meeting of the AU-CRETT Taskforce.

## **7. Senate Input to the BAC 2021/2022 Budget Process**

Senator Hewitt introduced this item, noting that Senate input on the BAC 2021/22 budget process was sought.

Senator Harvey informed the meeting that a series of questions had been prepared and circulated and Senate's feedback was welcomed through responding to these questions.

Senators moved into their breakout groups to discuss the following questions:

- Projected operating costs increase at a faster rate than government support, creating a gap. One way to address the gap is by adjusting expenditures. **How could expenditures be reduced or adjusted in the 2021-22 budget to address the gap?** It is important to note that the gap in 2021-22 could be larger than in past years as a result of lingering impacts of the pandemic.
- Acknowledging the challenges that are posed by regular tuition increases, we have an obligation to balance the budget, and increasing tuition is one of the few levers available to us to address annually rising costs. Along with tuition increases, the university has invested significantly in bursary support for students in need. **In addition to current supports, are there better ways we can support students for whom increased tuition represents a financial hardship?**
- There are important priorities that need to be protected or require investment, even in times of financial restraint. In recent years, the budget has allowed for increased funding to support strategic initiatives.

- **What priorities should Dalhousie seek to invest in, or protect in your view? What other priorities do you see for strategic initiatives as important?**
- Given Dalhousie's ongoing work on a new **Digital Strategy (digital infrastructure, online teaching and learning, digital research, operations, and processes, etc.)**, where do these initiatives fit in your thinking about priority areas for investment?
- Improving the state of **university infrastructure – both facilities and IT** – has been a focus for additional investment in recent years. **How should we think about this in the coming 2021-22 year?**
- Given the very compressed timeline facing us in the development of the next budget, **are there key areas of consultation we should prioritize?**

Senators returned from their respective breakout groups and a spokesperson from each group summarized their findings. Feedback covered reducing expenditures to address the budget gap, supports for student in light of increased tuition, priorities for strategic funds (SIF), digital strategy, University infrastructure and key consultation areas.

Senators also discussed the following:

- Retaining surpluses and maintaining reserve funds.
- Sources of increased operational costs - Senator Harvey noted that the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly affected the allocation of resources, in particular to student supports, teaching and learning and academic programming and that many of these changes would continue.
- Ongoing efforts to collaborate with the provincial government.
- Expected dates for the draft budget - Senator Harvey advised that the BAC had started a timeline for key decisions moving forward.
- Evaluating the success of investments in student supports.

## **8. Other Business**

The added item on *in camera* process of Senate meetings was not discussed due to lack of time.

## **9. Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 5:10 pm.