



SENATE
Approved Minutes of the Meeting held on
Monday, April 26, 2021 at 3:00pm
Via Microsoft Teams

The Senate met in regular session on Monday, April 26, 2021 via Microsoft Teams

Present: K. Hewitt, R. Agu, A. Aiken, V. Allen, D. Anderson, F. Annan, M. Aston, R. Barker, P. Bennett, J. Blustein, D. Bourne-Tyson, S. Coughlan, B. Davis, R. Devlin, A. Doucette, O. Dryden, H. El Naggar, N. Ezzeddine, M. Farrimond, B. Foster, M. Fournier, L. Goldberg, D. Gray, D. Grujic, A. Habib, J. Hall, B. Hansson, F. Harvey, G. Horne, V. Howard, S. Jeffrey, Z. Jones, J.S. Kim, S. Kirk, W. Lahey, M. Leonard, L. Macdonald, B. Merritt, A. Mohan, C. Moore, F. Naghibi, J. Newhook, R. Orji, M. Pacurar, L. Perez, J. Phinney, L. Propper, B. Rathgeber, C. Richardson, Hyo-Sung. Ro, K. Rosen, D. Saini, B. Schick, E. Seelemann, S. Seth, M. Sharaput, A. Siegel, D. Silvio, S. Sparks, L. Spiteri, S. Stackhouse, M. Stinson, F. Taheri, V. Turpin, D. Tyers, G. Warner, E. Welsh, D. Westwood, D. White, E. Wunker, I. Yakovenko

Regrets: G. Adolphe-Nazaire, T. Cyrus, A. Kermanshahi-Pour, L. Meynell, A. Rau-Chaplin, P. Tyedmers

Absent: N. Bird, K. Brooks, A. Cooper, P. Doyle-Bedwell, T. Duck, Y. El Hiani, K. El Sankary, M. Irwin, B. Nassar, T. Rajack-Talley, A. Sophocleous, S. Stone, M.A. Ulku, I. Waldron, S. Yurgel, S. Zahoor

Guests: Susan Brousseau, John Hope (Legal Council), Keisha Jefferies (School of Nursing), Jacob MacIsaac (Security), Laura Neals (Human Resources), Judith Ng'ethe, Anette Petersen, Leah Robertson, Nakita Strowbridge, Jasmine Walsh, Claire Mercer (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.

Senator Hewitt called on Senator Devlin to make the land acknowledgement statement. Senator Devlin presented briefly on the the Schulich School of Law's efforts to incorporate the perspective of underrepresented marginalized communities into curriculum and program delivery practices. Senator Devlin highlighted recent initiatives including a mandatory course on Aboriginal and Indigenous law developed for first year students and creation of the Centre for Indigenous Law and Governance.

1. Approval of Agenda

The agenda was **adopted** as presented.

2. Consent Agenda

2.1. Approval of Draft Minutes of April 12, 2021 Senate Meeting

Approved by **CONSENT**.

2.2. Appointment of Senate Representative to the Vice-President Global and Government Relations Review Committee

Approved by **CONSENT**.

3. Matters Arising from April 12, 2021 Senate Meeting

3.1. Proposed CCE Name Change

Senator Hewitt informed Senate that the proposed name change of the former College of Continuing Education was approved by the Board of Governors at its April 20, 2021 meeting. Senator Hewitt congratulated Senator Tyers and the new Faculty of Open Learning and Career Development on the accomplishment.

4. Steps to Make Diversity and Inclusion a Reality

Senator Hewitt invited Keisha Jefferies (PhD Candidate, School of Nursing) to speak on the access and retention of Black nursing students at Dalhousie, as part of the Steps to Make Diversity and Inclusion a Reality at Dalhousie series. K. Jefferies gave a presentation entitled *Pathway to Success: African Nova Scotians and Nursing* and outlined preliminary findings from research in this area, including benefit of the the ongoing Transition Year Program (TYP) in providing cohort and financial support; the reduction in the number of Black students admitted into the School of Nursing following the discontinuation of the School of Nursing (SON) Black Students' Program which provided early outreach, mentorship, confidence and capacity building; and barriers to graduate education experienced by first generation African Nova Scotians students, particularly mature students. K. Jeffries recommended reinstatement of the former Black Students' Program or creation of a similar program, embedded within an equitable anti-racist policy. This could be based on existing, proven frameworks like the Schulich School of Law Indigenous Blacks & Mi'kmaq (IB&M) Initiative embedded within the School of Nursing, a TYP-style program at the School of Nursing graduate level and formalized pathways from TYP to nursing.

5. Reports:

5.1. Chair of Senate's Report

Senator Hewitt presented the Chair of Senate's report, highlighting upcoming issues to Senate including Senate's consideration of the draft Policy for Academic Unit Consolidation, Renaming, Establishment, Transfer and Termination (AU-CRETT), which has been updated following a second round of consultations; honorary degrees nominations; and the Sexualized Violence Policy biennial review.

Senator Hewitt noted material provided for Senator's information including a concept paper for a new program in Master of Fine Arts in Fiction at the King's School of Journalism, which had been received with a lot of interest at the Senate Academic Programs and Research Committee (SAPRC) meeting where it was approved. Information on a major modification to the Bachelor of Science in Health Promotion (BSChP) Program was also provided.

Senator Hewitt informed Senate that this was the last Senate meeting for the current student Senators. Senator Hewitt noted Student Senator contributions to Senate over the past year, including to the Pass/ILL grading option approved by Senate in the winter 2021 term.

5.2. Questions for Reports

There were no questions for reports.

FOR APPROVAL

6. Senate Learning and Teaching Committee (SLTC)

6.1. Code of Student Conduct Review

Senator Hewitt invited Senator Pacurar to present the Code of Student Conduct Review on behalf of SLTC. Senator Pacurar detailed the extensive process of the review and thanked the members of the task force and all those involved for their work. The proposal had been put forward for discussion by SLTC and Senate in February, 2021 and was further considered by SLTC on April 7, 2021 and recommended to Senate for approval. Senator Pacurar advised that the implementation plan was also recommended by SLTC to Senate for approval, subject to amendment to indicate the Senate as the policy sponsor.

Moved by Senator Pacurar on behalf of the Senate Learning and Teaching Committee:

THAT Senate approve the revised Code of Student Conduct and the implementation plan, as presented. The revised Code of Student Conduct, once approved, will be effective as of September 1, 2021.

The motion **CARRIED**.

6.2. Student Ratings of Instruction Policy Review and DSU Student Ratings of Course Content Proposal

Senator Pacurar presented the Student Ratings of Instruction Policy Review and the DSU Student Ratings of Course Content Proposal on behalf of SLTC. Senator Pacurar noted that the Student Ratings of Instruction Policy had not been reviewed since 2017 and detailed the consultation process of the review undertaken by the Centre for Learning and Teaching (CLT), including obtaining Senate feedback at the March 22, 2021 Senate Think Tank session. Senator Pacurar advised that SLTC considered the revised policy at its April 7, 2021 meeting and recommended that Senate approve the proposed revisions, including a change of the title of the policy to “Student Feedback on Learning Experiences Policy”. Senator Pacurar advised that SLTC had, in anticipation of approval by Senate of the revisions to the policy, also approved that a new task force to be created which would review the evaluation instrument used at Dalhousie.

Senator Pacurar informed the meeting that in addition to the CLT-proposed changes to the Student Ratings of Instruction Policy, the Dalhousie Student Union (DSU) had put forward a proposal regarding addition of questions to Student Ratings of Instruction (SRIs). These would comprise an additional block of mandatory SRI questions, which would be referred to as the Student Ratings of Course Content, to identify the levels of content that address equity and inclusion in Dalhousie course curriculums for educational and nonpunitive purposes. The proposal was considered by SLTC at its meeting of March 18, 2021 and recommended to Senate, with modifications, for approval.

Moved by Senator Pacurar on behalf of the Senate Learning and Teaching Committee:

THAT Senate:

- 1. Approve the proposed revisions to the Student Ratings of Instruction Policy, as presented.**
- 2. Approve the Student Ratings of Course Content as presented; and**
- 3. Approve that the recommended block of Student Ratings of Course Content survey questions be added to the Student Ratings of Instruction and integrated into the Student Ratings of Instruction Policy in time to collect data from the Fall 2021 term.**

Robust discussion on the item ensued on the use of student ratings of instruction and bias. A Senator pointed to literature that suggested that student evaluations of teaching lack valid relationships to learning outcomes.

A request to put an alternative motion forward was deemed out of order by the Senate Chair.

Responding to concerns expressed, Brad Wuetherick, Executive Director, Centre for Learning and Teaching, explained that significant analysis had been conducted on Dalhousie's data pertaining to SRIs. Multiple variables with dimensions of equity and course characteristics had been reviewed. B. Wuetherick advised that the three most significant variables that explained variance in data at Dalhousie were class size, class level and faculty. When looking at the equity dimensions within the data, the more significant variable was the age of faculty members.

B. Wuetherick identified three critical principles to understanding Dalhousie's data that were embedded into the draft revised policy. These were ensuring the student voice in expressing their learning experiences, the requirement of a contextual interpretation of the data and that this information needed to be part of a holistic policy of teaching, which would be brought to Senate at a later date.

At the request of a Senator, the motion was split to hold a separate vote on the proposed revisions to the Student Ratings of Instruction Policy.

Senate agreed to separate the vote on the motion and proceeded to vote on the motion minus part 1.

Moved by Senator Pacurar on behalf of the Senate Learning and Teaching Committee:

THAT Senate:

- 2. Approve the Student Ratings of Course Content as presented; and**
- 3. Approve that the recommended block of Student Ratings of Course Content survey questions be added to the Student Ratings of Instruction and integrated into the Student Ratings of Instruction Policy in time to collect data from the Fall 2021 term.**

The motion **CARRIED**.

Discussion continued on the proposed revisions to the Student Ratings of Instruction Policy. B. Wuetherick addressed the distinction between the scores received on question 8 (overall teaching effectiveness), versus the mean scores on the other seven questions. B. Wuetherick advised that for classes with over 50 students, no difference existed between the score of question 8 and the mean score of the first seven questions. However, there was variance between the mean of seven questions and the question 8 score in smaller classes. B. Wuetherick highlighted statistically significant concerns with bias in classes with less than 50 students - favouring older, Caucasian, male faculty members. The removal of an overall question like question 8 had been adopted by several other institutions across Canada. B. Wuetherick advised that the taskforce whose creation had been approved by SLTC would consider the continued relevance of the seven dimensions of teaching explored in the policy.

Moved by Senator Pacurar on behalf of the Senate Learning and Teaching Committee:

THAT Senate:

- 1. Approve the proposed revisions to the Student Ratings of Instruction Policy, as presented.**

The motion **CARRIED**.

Senator Hewitt assured the meeting that points raised on student ratings of instruction in the proposed motion deemed out of order would be forwarded to the SLTC as the committee responsible for recommending to Senate adoption of policies and procedures for student ratings of instruction or other forms of evaluation of faculty teaching.

FOR DISCUSSION

7. Question Period – In Camera status of Senate Standing Committee meetings

Senator Hewitt spoke to a question raised by Senator Westwood regarding the default mode of *in camera* during standing committee meetings. Senator Hewitt advised that the Senate Planning and Governance Committee (SPGC), the Senate Academic Programs and Research Committee (SAPRC) and the Senate Learning and Teaching Committee (SLTC) discussed this issue and supported continuation of standing committee meetings *in camera*. This was based on several factors, including:

- The minutes are available for Senators to view at any time upon request.
- A majority of the material discussed in the committee meetings was brought forward to Senate.
- Being *in camera* allowed for open and frank discussion.

Senator Hewitt noted that based on those conclusions, the standing committees would continue with the status quo of a default mode of *in camera*.

Discussion ensued with the following points being noted:

- Discussion of issues at the formative stage could result in negative feedback which would not reflect well on presenters.
- Committee members may be less willing to openly discuss their opinions on the proposals in early stages of consideration.
- Would this mean that the media could attend committee meetings?
- Students could not consult with other students on committee business – responding to a Senator's question on whether or not releasing the agenda in advance of the meeting had been considered, Senator Hewitt explained that a preview had been provided before subcommittee meetings in the past.
- A default mode of *in camera* was undemocratic and it was possible to go *in camera* on a per need basis.
- Certain subcommittees and groups deal specifically with personal matters, and this should be considered when addressing the issue.
- This was a constitutional issue and raised procedural concerns.

It was proposed that a motion be put forward on this issue.

Moved by Senator Sharaput, seconded by Senator Bennett

THAT Senate approve that the question of the default mode of Senate standing committees be referred back to the Senate Planning and Governance Committee and return to Senate by September, 2021.

The motion **CARRIED**.

8. Draft Digital Strategy

Discussion on the Digital Draft Strategy was deferred due to lack of time.

9. Other Business

There was no other business.

10. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 5:05 p.m.