

MINUTES OF THE OPEN SESSION  
OF THE MEETING OF SENATE

Held on Friday, March 18, 2011, at 2 p.m.  
in the Norman D. Hébert, LL.D. Meeting Room  
(Room EV 2.260) on the SGW Campus

PRESENT

Voting members: Mr. H. Abdullahi; Mr. G. Beasley; Mr. N. Burke; Prof. J. Camlot; Dean G. Carr; Prof. J. Chaikelson; Mr. E. Chevrier; Mr. M. Coleby; Dr. L. Dandurand; Prof. M. Debbabi; Prof. D. Douglas; Dean R. Drew; Prof. L. Dyer; Mr. M. Freedman; Prof. J. Garfin; Dr. D. Graham; Mr. B. Hamideh; Prof. F. Khendek; Prof. G. Leonard; Dean B. Lewis; Dr. F. Lowy; Ms. H. Lucas; Prof. W. Lynch; Prof. M. Magnan; Prof. S. Mudur; Prof. B. Nelson; Prof. C. Nikolenyi; Prof. M. Paraschivoiu; Prof. M. Peluso; Prof. G. Rail; Prof. R. Reilly; Prof. C. Ross; Mr. A. Severyns; Prof. F. Shaver; Prof. W. Sims; Mr. R. Sonin; Prof. R. Staseson; Prof. P. Stoett; Mr. J. Suss; Prof. P. Thornton; Prof. J. Turnbull; Prof. H. Wasson; Dean C. Wild

Non-voting members: Mr. P. Beauregard; Dr. D. Boisvert (*Speaker*); Mr. R. Côté; Mr. B. Freedman; Ms. L. Healey; Mr. P. Kelley; Ms. D. McCaughey

ABSENT

Voting members: Mr. N. Alatawneh; Mr. G. Alexandar; Prof. A. Dutkewych; Mr. D. Gal; Prof. J. Garrido; Mr. C. McKinnon; Ms. R. Mehreen; Ms. T. Seminara; Dean S. Sharma

1. Call to order

The meeting was called to order at 2:01 p.m.

2. Approval of Agenda

R-2011-3-1 *Upon motion duly moved and seconded (Graham, Peluso), it was unanimously resolved that the Agenda of the Open Session be approved, with the removal of item 3 from the Consent section to the Regular section, and that item 4 be received for information by consent.*

CONSENT

4. Report of Senate Standing Committees

4.1 Academic Planning and Priorities

This committee has not met since the last Senate meeting.

4.2 Academic Programs

The report of the March meeting will be submitted at the next meeting.

4.3 Finance

The report of the March meeting will be submitted at the next meeting.

4.4 Library (Document US-2011-3-D1)

4.5 Research (Document US-2011-3-D2)

Those reports were submitted for information purposes.

REGULAR

3. Approval of the Minutes of the Open Session meeting of February 18, 2011

Prof. Shaver asked that the statement she made under item 13 with respect to the A&S Faculty Council adoption of a motion in support of the January 21 Senate motions be added to the Minutes.

Dean Carr noted some clarifications to the third and fifth bullet under item 7 on page 4 as well as the addition of two key points which were missing. He will provide the exact wording to Ms. Tessier.

Prof. Douglas asked that Dr. Lowy's statement that he had been designated by the Board to draft the mandate of the External Governance Review Committee be added to items 9 and 10.

Prof. Chaikelson provided some corrections to the wording of item 11.1.

*R-2011-3-2 Upon motion duly moved and seconded (Shaver, Chaikelson), it was unanimously resolved that the Minutes of the Open session meeting of February 18, 2011 be approved, subject to the aforementioned revisions.*

5. Business arising from the Minutes not included on the Agenda

In response to a query from Prof. Reilly with respect to the documentation requested by Prof. Peluso under item 4.2 of the Minutes regarding the total amount of the cost of departures and labor conflicts since 2000, Prof. Chaikelson, Chair of the Finance Committee, said that there was nothing to report at this time but that this had been

brought up with Mr. Kelley who is seeking a legal opinion about what can be disclosed to the Finance Committee and Senate.

Prof. Peluso clarified that she did not want the names of individuals but rather the figures with respect to the administrators and staff members who have been forced to leave since 2000, and the cost of settlement of labor disputes. Mr. Kelley responded that there are some confidentiality issues and different settlements to sort through which may take a while, but he will look at this and get back to the Finance Committee as soon as feasible.

- 6. Update on governance issues
- 10. Remarks from the President

Pursuant to Dr. Lowy's request, Senators were amenable to combining items 6 and 10. Dr. Lowy reported that during the last weeks the governance issues had taken precedence over the academic matters, and he would focus his report on the former. He noted that the announcement pertaining to the mandate and composition of the External Governance Review Committee ("EGRC") had resulted in no media attention to date. However, comments were received from two members of Steering Committee with respect to changes proposed by the Executive Committee to the mandate which had been reviewed by Steering Committee which he considered as minor. The announcement and mandate were sent to Senators this morning via email, copy of which is also distributed at the meeting.

He explained that the deadline had been brought back to 60 days from the 90 days which had been recommended by Steering Committee because while there is a pressing need to have a thorough examination on governance issues, there is a need to receive the report before the end of June and people go away for the summer. Moreover, the terms of a number of Board members expire at the end of June, and in the absence of a new nomination process, the existing framework will continue. It is unknown at this point whether or not Bill 38 will be accepted before the summer. The resignation of Board members will leave gaps to fill, and therefore he would like the new members to be appointed in accordance with the recommendations stemming from the EGRC. The target is set after the first meeting of the EGRC which will not be able to begin its work before the last week of March. It is expected that the EGRC will dedicate between 10 and 20 days within the period identified in the mandate.

Dr. Lowy emphasized that it was not the Executive Committee's intent to reduce the capacity of the EGRC members to do their work. He added that the controversy around the time is a reflection of a build-up of a lack of trust and goodwill of the Board's motives and points to the adversarial position between the Board and the academic community. Dr. Lowy recognized that the deadline to submit documents would be challenging for students in light of the CSU elections and the exam period and is prepared to allow for an extension.

Further to Dr. Lowy's report, comments were formulated by Senators as follows:

- While appreciating Dr. Lowy's sincerity, in light of the lack of trust it would have been essential to bring back those changes to Steering Committee. We should go out of our

way to ensure that one party is not going forward without checking with the other. Moving from 90 to 60 days is not minor, and now that we have gone public with the names of the members of the EGRC, one could feel abused or maltreated in that respect.

- Appreciation was expressed for the extension granted to students to submit their intent and their documents. It was pointed out that students are not included in items 2.3 and 2.4 of the mandate. Dr. Lowy replied that students are part of the mandate as there are student representatives on the Board. However, he emphasized that students are clients of the University.
- The entire student body feels neglected and therefore the EGRC should attend a CSU council meeting to take note of student concerns. Dr. Lowy indicated that it will be up to the EGRC to decide who it wishes to meet face-to-face.
- When asked if the revised timeframe has been communicated to the EGRC, Dr. Lowy noted that it had approved an approximate timeframe, adding that one member has another commitment and cannot go beyond the summer, underlining that 1/3 of the period within which they work has been reduced, not 1/3 of their time.
- The optics of the combined changes is not good and reinforces the need to work harder in this regard. The third motion passed at the January Senate meeting provides an alternative to the nomination process.
- A definition of "appropriate" as well as the benchmarks used should be provided. Item 2.1 should also include looking at eConcordia. Dr. Lowy agreed that the word "appropriate" is subjective. He had no doubt that eConcordia will come up in the discussions as one of several unresolved issues.
- Prefacing that the comment was not about the individual but the position, a concern was expressed that there might be interference in the process, in that the submissions could be funneled to the Board Chair since the Secretary of the EGRC is also the Secretary of the Board. Dr. Lowy conveyed his respect and trust in the Secretary and reassured Senators of her capability of delineating her responsibilities. Me Freedman added that the Secretary of the Board has the obligation to vet items with the Board Chair for Board matters, but that she does not report to the Board Chair in her capacity as Secretary of Senate or of the EGRC.
- There are issues of trust between the Board and Senate since two of the three motions were not forwarded to the entire Board. The Board does not take Senate seriously and there is a feeling of betrayal that this was not discussed in an open fashion.
- When asked if consideration has been given to responding to some issues in a timelier manner, Dr. Lowy replied that the timing was not right at the February meeting to tell Board members what to do, but he has begun to speak with them about the adversarial position.
- Not addressing Senate's concerns is the problem, and when asked if he is willing to speak about them at the next Board meeting, Dr. Lowy agreed.
- In response to a question, Dr. Lowy indicated that the meeting between Steering Committee and the Executive Committee of the Board to discuss how to deal with the two other Senate motions is in the midst of being scheduled.
- A reminder was given that the two sides are not equally to blame for the current governance crisis. Rather, it was triggered by the loss of two Presidents in a short period and a deceptive press release in December. Senate had no part in that and had no choice but to react. With respect to the external review, this was a Senate initiative, and a meeting of Senate should be convened once the report is ready, even if in June.

With respect the timeframe, the EGRC members need time to digest the events, so that their results are not based solely on their past experiences.

- A comment was made about the need to have different individuals occupying the position of Secretary of the Board and Secretary of Senate to ensure that documents from Senate get forwarded to the Board. Dr. Lowy noted that this was administrative matter, and Me Freedman reiterated that irrespective of other positions occupied by the Secretary of the Board, she does not have the authority to forward documents to the Board without the authorization of the Board Chair.
- It was mentioned that the EGRC should be sent the Boston Group report, the Arthur report, the Groome report and the Cowan report, and that its report should list the individuals will have heard from or seen as well as the list of documents studied.
- A concern was expressed that providing the EGRC access to the deliberations of the Ad Hoc Governance Review Committee could lead to less than independent judgment. Dr. Lowy indicated that so far no material has been sent but that basic documents on the current governance structure, such as the Charter, By-Laws, etc., will be provided. Moreover, anyone who wishes to submit a document to the EGRC may do so.
- The deadline of April 15 poses a problem not only for students. It was also suggested that the EGRC meet with Steering Committee or Senate.
- A request was made that the President present the EGRC's report to Senate.

7. Recommendation regarding the name change of the General Studies Unit (Document US-2011-3-D3)

Prof. Stoett commended the Faculty on this innovative initiative. In reply to a question from Prof. Chaikelson, Dean Drew specified that this unit has been renamed a "centre" rather than a "department" because it provides services to the rest of the Faculty but offers no programs.

R-2011-3-3 *Upon motion duly moved and seconded (Drew, Lynch), it was unanimously resolved that, upon recommendation of the Faculty of Engineering and Computer Science, Senate recommend to the Board of Governors the approval of the name change of the General Studies Unit to the Centre for Engineering in Society, as outlined in Document US-2011-3-D3.*

8. Recommendation regarding University recognition of research units (Document US-2011-3-D4)

Dr. Dandurand apprised Senators of the background leading to the seven research units seeking Senate's approval for university-status recognition in accordance the *Policy on Research Units* (VPRGS-8). In response to questions about TAG, she indicated that the membership could be expanded to include FA faculty members, and that although two faculty members from ENCS were part of TAG, ENCS was not identified in the Faculty column because A&S and FA were the leaders of this initiative.

It was noted that the word "centre" is spelled two ways in the document and suggested that the Canadian spelling should be used in all cases.

R-2011-3-4 *Upon motion duly moved and seconded (Dandurand, Shaver), it was unanimously resolved that, upon recommendation of the Research Committee, Senate grant the university-recognized status to the research units outlined in Document US-2011-3-D4, in accordance with the Policy on Research Units (VPRGS-8).*

9. Discussion on draft academic plan (Document US-2011-3-D5)

The Speaker apprised Senators that the objective is to obtain Senate's feedback on the draft academic plan and invited Dr. Graham to make some preliminary comments. Dr. Graham noted that there is not a single element in the draft that has not been both praised and condemned; these contradictions reflect the diversity of interests and outlook and are perfectly normal. By in-large, positive comments were received on more research support and graduate funding, more support for teaching, objective four regarding experiential learning and objective five regarding better administration.

With respect to the concerns he heard, two are about process, two about focus and three are specific, as follows:

Top-down planning

Dr. Graham indicated that this is an open process with many opportunities for comments, consultation and feedback. It was considered more productive to have a preliminary draft to provoke comments rather than attempting to harmonize the work of 50 individual unit plans.

Undue haste

Departments feel as though they have not had enough time to respond adequately. However, the plan will come back to Senate no earlier than May and, if necessary, can be delayed further.

Managerialism

The plan focuses primarily on measurement. There is a lingering fear about the core indicators and how to measure progress.

Centralization

Concerns were expressed regarding the loss of departmental autonomy and a "one size fits all" model. Dr. Graham confirmed that this is not the intent.

Increased workload

Concerns were stated that we need to provide more resources to support actions cannot simply ask people to keep taking on more. This seems particularly true where program proposals and review are concerned and teaching written communication skills

Course evaluation

This is a major irritant and there seems to be a misperception that some kind of decision about an instrument has already been made. Dr. Graham noted that is absolutely not the case.

### Library

Dr. Graham noted that a budget announcement may provide an opening to do something in the area of an improved funding for collections development.

Further to Dr. Graham's comments, Senators provided varied feedback on the draft plan, summarized as follows:

- Several other documents are referred to in the plan, such as core indicators, competencies, teaching assessments, etc. Does the approval of the plan have an impact on any of those documents?
- What does accessibility refer to? An operational definition of accessibility should be included in the plan, and the discussion should be had about accessibility in relation to excellence.
- Accessibility has always meant, for some, a second chance or second opportunity for independent or mature students, which is part of the Concordia's history.
- The interplay between accessibility and excellence is important. The stated mission of the School of Extended Learning is accessibility and helping students to qualify for entry into programs. This is a win-win scenario and can allow Faculties to devote their resources to ensure excellence in their own disciplines.
- One strength of Concordia is its diversity, but there are different notions about who our students are, how prepared they are, how willing we are to bring in marginal students. The discussion on accessibility and retention should take place at the departmental level. The draft plan is a compendium of really cool ideas but departments should identify what works for them.
- The document is very detailed and supposed to apply to the University which is different than a business. The goals should be broader to allow our different units to find their own way to excel. The detail implies a fair amount of process. Objective four on experiential learning is very good, and we should consider having all students do a 3 or 4-month work term.
- Funding should be unconnected with preparing students for the job market. Excellence of the academy should not be sacrificed. Certain areas suffer and the focus should be on the academy and the traditional mission of the university.
- There is a dichotomy between accessibility and excellence. A criterion of program quality is the ability to move students through programs in a timely manner. Because many undergraduate students are working, even when they are doing well they might not be able to complete their studies in what is deemed as timely. As a representative of undergraduate students, it is quite troubling that almost all the funding is for graduate students. Experiential learning is essential and not too vocational.
- Historically, Concordia's mission was about providing an education to students who could not get admitted at other universities. The profile of mature students has changed and perhaps we need to look at that. Accessibility and excellence are polar opposites. If we aspire to be top tier, we have to change the way we deal with accessibility. Concordia's reputation has changed tremendously over the years and is now a first choice for the majority of undergraduate students who are from Montreal and choose Concordia for its many excellent programs.
- The plan focused on elite students and proposes to reward students who are already rewarded more than others.

- In order to make education more accessible and ensuring better performance, Faculties should have common rules with respect to independent students. It is very damaging when students are asked to leave the University for one year, especially international students.
- To be successful, the plan should not only be taken as fixed absolutes but as decentralized process capable of enabling all stakeholders particularly around the core of teaching excellence.
- Experiential learning is not deemed particularly relevant. It is not negative but does not reflect most members' interest. With respect to an early point about diversity, how will the Provost deal with elements which are both condemned and praised?
- Accessibility can be viewed differently. Some departments are housed in antiquated buildings which are not accessible. Where is the money being spent? In areas where some units are interested, unfortunately there is no money. The five objectives are all laudable, but there is disagreement with almost all of the proposed actions. This remains a top down process. It is hard to have buy-in on the part of units because they do not see themselves in the plan. There is a problem with the process. Who decides?

#### 11. Question period

In response to a question from Prof. Rail, Dr. Graham indicated that the \$11.5 million budget to implement the academic plan will come for foregone revenue as well as incremental revenue generated by taking on additional students or changing the mix of students.

In reference to the rationale of blended learning, Prof. Douglas wondered whether the shift of students to eConcordia would cause revenue loss from MELS. Dr. Graham responded that there is no revenue loss, as those students would continue to be fully funded under the teaching and research and administration envelopes but not under the building and grounds envelope.

Further to a query from Prof. Dyer's about when the planned refurbishment of the IITS computer labs in the Hall Building would be complete, Mr. Côté undertook to provide a written response.

#### 12. Items for information

Ms. Healey mentioned that the nomination deadline for the non-academic medals adjudicated by the Special Graduation Awards Committee is March 31, 2011, indicating that only one nomination had been received as of today. She noted that there are many deserving students and encouraged Senators to submit nominations.

Prof. Camlot announced a reading on April 8, at 7:30 p.m. in the De Sève Cinema, by Johanna Skibsrud, sponsored by the Department of English and the Faculty of A&S, to celebrate the fact that her first novel, *The Sentimentalists* was awarded the Scotia Giller Prize for fiction this past year. Ms. Skibsrud is a graduate of the Department of English's MA program, and her novel began as her MA creative writing thesis.

#### 13. Next meeting



The next meeting is scheduled to be held on Friday, April 15, 2011, at 2 p.m.

14. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 4:20 p.m.



Danielle Tessier  
Secretary of Senate