

**MINUTES OF THE OPEN SESSION
OF THE MEETING OF SENATE**

Held on Friday, March 15, 2019, at 2:00 p.m.
in the Norman D. Hébert, LLD Meeting Room
(Room EV 2.260) on the SGW Campus

PRESENT

Voting members: Alan Shepard (*Chair*); Amir Aghdam (*Acting for Paula Wood-Adams*); Ali Akgunduz; Sami Al-Hanbali; Reena Atanasiadis; Leslie Barker; Guylaine Beaudry; Rory Blaisdell; Mathilde Braems; Graham Carr; Mikaela Clark-Gardner; Sally Cooke; Anne-Marie Croteau; Ricardo Dal Farra; Christine DeWolf; Jill Didur; Rebecca Duclos; Mehdi Farashahi; Marcie Frank; Ariela Freedman; Vince Graziano; Christophe Guy; Rim Hamila; Sophie Hough-Martin; Jean-Gabriel Lacombe; Sarah Mazhero; David Morris; Eunbyul Park; Virginia Penhune; John Potvin; Martin Pugh; André Roy; Daniel Salée; Safa Sheikh; Ali Sherra; Robert Soroka; Ron Stern; Nafisa Tabassum Jamal; Christopher Trueman; Radu Zmeureanu

Non-voting members: Joanne Beaudoin; Philippe Beauregard; Denis Cossette; Roger Côté; Tom Hughes; Frederica Jacobs

ABSENT

Voting members: Sarah Abou-Bakr; Shaina Ali; Paul Allen; Amir Asif; Pascale Biron; Christophe Brett; Frank Crooks; Brigitte Jaumard; Zenobia Pais; Francesca Scala; Marc Steinberg; Rashmikaa Sethu Madhavan; Jean-Philippe Warren

Non-voting members: Paul Chesser; Isabel Dunnigan; Ilze Kraulis; Anne Whitelaw

1. Call to order

The meeting was called to order at 2:06 p.m.

1.1 Approval of Agenda

R-2019-2-1 *Upon motion duly moved and seconded, it was unanimously resolved that the Agenda of the Open Session be approved.*

1.2 Approval of the Minutes of the Open Session meeting of February 15, 2019

R-2019-2-2 *Upon motion duly moved and seconded, it was unanimously resolved that the Minutes of the Open Session meeting of February 15, 2019 be approved.*

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

There was no business arising from the Minutes not included on the Agenda.

3. President's remarks

Prof. Shepard's remarks are summarized as follows:

- Stéphanie de Celles has been appointed University Registrar, effective April 1. He thanked Ilze Kraulis who did a wonderful job as Interim University Registrar.
- An injunction has been granted to stop the process with respect to the Quebec government's proposed legislation regarding immigration reform, which could affect individuals already in Quebec with application files. He added that Concordia continues to offer free workshops to assist students whose file are currently being processed.
- No legislation on religious symbols has been tabled so far by the Quebec government.
- He thanked the volunteers for contributing to a successful Open House on February 16, which attracted more than 4,500 visitors.
- He congratulated the Men's and Women's basketball teams who went to the national finals and underlined the participation of JMSB and GCS teams in recent case competitions.
- He apprised Senate of some exceptional funding grants, including Chunjiang An who received a grant of \$4.38 million over four years from Fisheries and Oceans Canada and Nadia Bhuiyan in collaboration with École de Technologie supérieure on a NSERC Collaborative Research and Development grant valued at \$1.4 million.
- In the face of the tragic death of a student by suicide, he expressed appreciation for the way the members of the community rallied together to support one another during this difficult time and thanked Health Services, Counselling and Development Services, the Dean of Students, the Dean and Faculty of Fine Arts who provided support to students, faculty and staff.
- He expressed sorrow for the attacks in New Zealand, noting that the rise of racism should be deplored and spoken out against.

- The report on the climate review of the Department of English was released in its entirety on March 7, including 13 recommendations which will be addressed by the Standing Committee on Sexual Misconduct and Sexual Violence. A number of processes and procedures have been put in place to promote a safe and respectful environment. The outcome of the individual investigations cannot be disclosed or discussed by the University for reasons of confidentiality and privacy, including privacy legislation.

4. Academic update (Document US-2019-2-D1)

As complimentary information to his written update, Dr. Carr observed that successful events such as the Open House constitute terrific opportunities for the University to showcase itself to the Montreal community. He also apprised Senators that the annual Hydro-Québec Science Fair will be held on the SGW Campus from March 25 to 27.

5. Standing Committee reports

5.1 Library (Document US-2019-2-D2)

There were no questions in relation to this report.

CONSENT

6. Academic Programs Committee: Report and recommendations (Document US-2019-2-D3)

6.1 Graduate curriculum proposals – Faculty of Arts and Science

6.1.1 Département d’Études françaises (Document US-2019-2-D4)

6.1.2 Department of Religions and Cultures (Document US-2019-2-D5)

R-2019-2-3 That the graduate curriculum proposals in the Faculty of Arts and Science, outlined in Documents US-2019-2-D4 and D5, be approved, as recommended by the Academic Programs Committee in Document US-2019-2-D3.

6.2 Graduate curriculum proposals – Gina Cody School of Engineering and Computer Science – Concordia Institute for Information Systems Engineering (Document US-2019-2-D6)

R-2019-2-4 That the graduate curriculum proposals in the Gina Cody School of Engineering and Computer Science, outlined in Document US-2019-2-D6, be approved, as recommended by the Academic Programs Committee in Document US-2019-2-D3.

6.3 Graduate curriculum proposals- Faculty of Fine Arts – Department of Art History (Documents US-2019-2-D7 and D8)

R-2019-2-5 That the graduate curriculum proposals in the Faculty of Fine Arts, outlined in Documents US-2019-2-D7 and D8, be approved, as recommended by the Academic Programs Committee in Document US-2019-2-D3.

REGULAR**7. Presentation on Indigenous Action Plan**

A presentation entitled “*The Indigenization-Decolonization of Universities: The Concordia University Action Plan*” was given by the Senior Director, Indigenous Directions, William Lindsay (Cree) together with Elizabeth Fast, Assistant Professor, Department of Applied Human Sciences. Mr. Lindsay, appointed to his position in earlier this year, conveyed his background and introduced Dr. Fast, who read the Territorial Acknowledgement.

Mr. Lindsay outlined the context in which institutional change is occurring in Canada’s universities and colleges through processes of decolonization, indigenization and reconciliation, including the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996), the Truth and Reconciliation Report (TRC) (2015) as well as other calls to actions such as the Universities Canada Principles on Indigenous Education (2015) and Resources Canada Universities on Reconciliation (2016).

Mr. Lindsay apprised Senators of a composite definition of indigenization and of decolonization and explained what is needed for a university to indigenize-decolonize, noting that Concordia is on the way to realizing those actionable items. He drew Senate’s attention to some of the current initiatives in the Indigenous Action Plan, the most important being the conversations occurring all over the place with respect to the issues outlined in the Plan.

He also spoke of what is needed going forward to indigenize the Faculties and other units and conveyed the six mandate areas of the Plan, which will focus on prioritization, planning and relationship-building to:

1. establish collaborative decision-making processes and encourage community participation;
2. recognize and integrate indigenous ways of knowing into curriculum and pedagogy;
3. enhance the cultural climate for indigenous peoples;
4. increase recruitment, admission, retention and graduation of Indigenous students;
5. increase recruitment and retention of Indigenous faculty and staff; and
6. establish, recruit, foster, strengthen and develop Indigenous research.

Mr. Lindsay made the point that indigenization is a process of social justice, which benefits Indigenous Peoples through education to improve lives and healing, and which benefits the University by becoming more reflective of the Canadian society as well as becoming a contributor to a process of reconciliation. He concluded by apprising Senate of some ongoing activities involving Concordia’s Indigenous community through the upcoming public launch as well as the steps that are being taken to engage French-speaking Indigenous students and their communities.

Pursuant to their presentation, Mr. Lindsay and Dr. Fast responded to questions of clarification. A copy of the presentation will be posted on the Senate website together with the documentation for today's meeting.

8. Presentation and proposal on Fall Reading Week (Document US-2019-2-D9)

Ms. Mazhero presented some statistics in connection with the mental health climate at the University, including the results of two surveys of universities across Canada which revealed that the great majority of respondents felt overwhelmed, exhausted and/or felt severe anxiety and that anxiety and suicide attempts are increasing among post-secondary students. She noted that anxiety and depression are the most common mental illnesses. The establishment of a Fall Reading Week would provide a reprieve from classes at a very work-intensive and stressful time of the academic year.

Ms. Sheikh conveyed the benefits of a Fall Reading Week for students as follows:

- It would give breathing room to students so that they can focus on themselves and their needs and allow them time to decide whether or not to drop a course, if the break is before the DISC deadline.
- It would allow students to visit with their family, since homesickness contributes to the anxiety felt by many first-year and international students.
- It would ease the anxiety felt by students going into midterm exams.

Fall Reading Week could also benefit faculty members, since it would allow them to catch up on marking, lesson planning and research, or taking the week to relax.

Three options were proposed to resolve the challenge of fulfilling the number of teaching days in the event that a Fall Reading Week would be implemented:

1. Begin the term a week earlier (before Labor Day);
2. Lengthen the term by a few days, by shortening the Winter break or the exam period; or
3. A combination of the two first options, depending on what date Labor Day falls on each year.

Several Canadian universities report having some form of multi-day break scheduled for the Fall term, resulting in students being less stressed while improving their academic performance compared to the previous year without a break.

The point was made that one of the most common requests voiced by students across all Faculties is that Concordia implement a Fall Reading Week, which would align with the University's commitment to support student wellbeing as well as one of the highlights of Concordia's Health and Wellness Review.

Input is therefore sought on a proposal that the University implement a Fall Reading Week by Fall 2020 or, as an alternative, to begin by adding two or more days following the Thanksgiving Weekend in the Fall 2020 term.

A discussion ensued, during which Senators commented on the proposal, the main points being summarized as follows:

- Students have often commented that they would appreciate having a break of a couple of days before the exam period to assimilate the material, and professors feel that they should not teach new material just before the exam period for that reason.
- Some institutions have a 12-week term, with the break being after the first six weeks, which is a nice way to structure courses. Concordia has a 13-week term which makes this less workable, unless starting before Labor Day which is not optimal given the cycle of universities in the Canadian context.
- Starting before Labor Day could also create difficulties for faculty members who have children not studying at the University. It could be problematic for students who would have to rent housing accommodations one month earlier and could also have an effect on pedagogy, since students might not come to class that week and only show up after Labor Day, which renders the first week of class useless.
- Has research been conducted into having an exam week, rather than a reading week, so that all midterms would be held during the same week? This is done at other universities.
- While there are benefits, there are many constituencies affected by such a change, some of whom have not been consulted. The benefits do not outweigh the negative impact.
- The proposal is premised largely on mental health issues, and there are other ways to deal with those.
- While not completely disagreeing with the Fall Reading Week, why not instead teach students how to succeed by building their resiliency skills and improve on their time management skills. This is not achieved by having a week off. This issue needs to be looked at holistically.
- Students already feel stressed during the exam period and therefore would not recommend anything that would compress the exam period.

During the course of the discussion, in response to some of the comments and questions, Ms. Mazhero and Ms. Sheikh reiterated that while several options were outlined, students overwhelmingly endorse the implementation of a full Fall Reading Week. Ms. Clark-Gardner specified that the research conducted across Canada indicates that having an exam week in lieu of a reading week is not common. With respect to the suggestion about time management and resiliency skills, the Student Success Centre provides those services. Adding a Fall Reading Week would be an additional factor to help alleviate the stress.

The President made the point that starting the term before Labor Day is a real issue that needs to be looked into. He thanked Ms. Mazhero and Ms. Sheikh for their presentation as well as those who participated in collating the research.

In the absence of the Deputy Provost, Ms. Tessier informed Senate that the latter has a working group which is looking in this matter. Prof. Shepard invited any Senator who is interested in participating in the working group to advise Ms. Tessier.

9. Question period

Ms. Hough-Martin read a statement conveying support of student Senators for the Quebec-wide student strike held today to protest the lack of concrete action taken to combat global climate change. She asked about Concordia's willingness to take a stand with its students to challenge the governments to adopt intervention policies as well as to divest from the fossil fuel industry.

Prof. Shepard responded that he was not in a position to answer on the spot but reiterated his pride that the University continues to be a leader in sustainability, having been named the most energy efficient University in the province for several years. He added that the University has taken a number of other steps towards achieving sustainability, including the signature of the UN declaration on climate change and the issuance of a sustainable bond.

10. Other business

There was no other business to bring before Senate.

11. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 3:30 p.m.



Danielle Tessier
Secretary of Senate