

MINUTES OF THE OPEN SESSION
OF THE MEETING OF SENATE

Held on Friday, November 14, 2008, at 2 p.m.
in the Norman D. Hébert, LLD Meeting Room
(Room EV 2.260) on the SGW Campus

PRESENT

Voting members: Prof. L. Blair; Prof. J. Chaikelson; Dr. L. Dandurand; Dean R. Drew; Prof. L. Dyer; Prof. B. Gamoy; Prof. J. Garrido; Mr. C. Goldfinch; Dr. D. Graham; Prof. A. Hamalian; Mr. S. Jack; Prof. M. Jamal; Ms. K. Kashfi; Prof. S. Lister; Dean J. Locke; Prof. W. Lynch; Prof. S. McSheffrey; Prof. N. Nixon; Mr. P.R. Osei; Ms. A. Peek; Prof. M. Peluso; Prof. M. Pugh; Prof. C. Ross; Dean S. Sharma; Prof. F. Shaver; Ms. M. Sheppard; Associate Dean T. Stathopoulos; Prof. P. Stoett; Prof. C. Trueman; Mr. M.F. Uddin; Ms. R. Wilcox; Dean C. Wild; Dr. J. Woodsworth

Non-voting members: Mr. G. Beasley; Dr. D. Boisvert (*Speaker*); Mr. M. Di Grappa; Mr. L. English; Me B. Freedman; Ms. L. Healey; Ms. E. Morey

ABSENT

Voting members: Mr. S. Bellemare; Mr. K. Diaz; Mr. R. Doucet; Prof. A. English

Non-voting members: Mr. A. McAusland

1. Call to order

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

2. Approval of the Agenda

R-2008-10-1 *Upon motion duly moved and seconded (Peluso, Stathopoulos), it was unanimously resolved that the Agenda be approved.*

3. Approval of the Minutes of the Open Session meeting of October 17, 2008

R-2008-10-2 *Upon motion duly moved and seconded (Garrido, Peluso), it was unanimously resolved that the Minutes of the Open Session meeting of October 17, 2008 be approved.*

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

There was no business arising from the Minutes.

5. Report and recommendations from the Academic Programs Committee (Document US-2008-10-D1)

5.1 Major undergraduate curriculum changes – Faculty of Arts and Science (Documents US-2008-10-D2 and D3)

R-2008-10-3 *Upon motion duly moved and seconded (Graham, Chaikelson), it was unanimously resolved that the major undergraduate curriculum changes in the Faculty of Arts and Science, set out in Documents US-2008-10-D2 and D3, be approved as recommended by the Academic Programs Committee in Document US-2008-10-D1.*

5.2 Major undergraduate curriculum changes – Faculty of Fine Arts (Documents US-2008-10-D3 and D4)

R-2008-10-4 *Upon motion duly moved and seconded (Wild, Blair), it was unanimously resolved that the major undergraduate curriculum changes in the Faculty of Fine Arts, set out in Documents US-2008-10-D4 and D5, be approved as recommended by the Academic Programs Committee in Document US-2008-10-D1.*

5.3 Minor undergraduate curriculum changes – Faculty of Fine Arts (Document US-2008-10-D6)

5.4 Minor undergraduate curriculum submission – Institute for Co-operative Education (Document US-2008-10-D7)

Dr. Boisvert indicated that minor curriculum changes are submitted for information purposes.

5.5 Major graduate curriculum changes – John Molson School of Business (Document US-2008-10-D8)

R-2008-10-5 *Upon motion duly moved and seconded (Stathopoulos, Sharma), it was unanimously resolved that the major graduate curriculum changes in the John Molson School of Business, set out in Document US-2008-10-D8, be approved as recommended by the Academic Programs Committee in Document US-2008-10-D1.*

5.6 Major graduate curriculum changes – Faculty of Arts and Science (Documents US-2008-10-D9 to D11)

Further to questions regarding the statement of language requirement for certain programs under the purview of the Department of Religion, Dean Locke clarified that the level of proficiency varies according to the field or tradition of study and the nature of material. The calendar will confirm the existence of a language requirement but not the specifics for each area. This will provide flexibility to the Department. Students will be alerted to the language requirement when applying, and their needs will be assessed on an individual basis.

R-2008-10-6 *Upon motion duly moved and seconded (Stathopoulos, Locke), it was unanimously resolved that the major graduate curriculum changes in the Faculty of Arts and Science, set out in Documents US-2008-10-D9 to D11, be approved as recommended by the Academic Programs Committee in Document US-2008-10-D1.*

5.7 Minor graduate curriculum changes – Faculty of Fine Arts (Document US-2008-10-D12)

The Speaker noted that minor curriculum changes are submitted solely for information.

5.8 Recommendation concerning the University Writing Test (Documents US-2008-10-D13 to D14)

While there was a consensus among Senators that the University Writing Test (UWT) does not work, various concerns were expressed regarding its proposed discontinuance, summarized as follows:

- The discontinuance of the UWT may give the impression that the University is not looking after the writing skills of students and is abandoning their pedagogical needs;
- There is a serious lacuna in writing skills which needs to be addressed and this should be done in the first or second year of study, which would allow students to take remedial courses;
- The current system allows students to write the UWT at the end of their degrees and has become de facto an exit requirement;
- The proposal contains vague language and is not supported by any data;
- It is problematic that the requirement is being suspended without a precise timeline for establishing a replacement option;
- There is a worrisome disjuncture between students having acceptable GPAs and completing their degree requirements but failing to pass the UWT;
- If the UWT is discontinued, ENCS will be the only Faculty with a writing requirement;
- Other solutions should be considered until such time that a viable option has been put in place, such as blocking any student who has not passed the UWT to register for the next year or granting amnesty to those who do not pass and allow them to graduate;
- In lieu of finding a university-wide replacement for the UWT, perhaps the three other Faculties should consider having their own approach in evaluating writing skill requirements.

Dr. Woodsworth gave the background which led to the adoption of the UWT in 1984, noting that she was responsible for its implementation. At the time, it was a valid and reliable test which had come from Princeton. However, it was not meant to last forever and was designed to be taken in the first year to allow students to take remedial writing training if necessary. The President agreed that the time has come to eliminate the UWT and determine a more appropriate way to support today's students.

In response to the stated concerns, Provost Graham agreed that the report does not provide quantitative baseline data but noted that there had been extensive discussion at APC and its sub-committee. APC made a good faith attempt to look at all the facts and ultimately concluded that it could not support the continuance of the test. The Working Group on Teaching and Learning will be bringing recommendations for its replacement. He agreed that there is a disjuncture because the UWT was originally intended to ensure that students

possess the skills needed to progress throughout their program. The fact that it has become de facto an exit requirement demonstrates that it is not working.

The Provost pointed out that while blocking students from registering following failure to complete the UWT would be effective, it could potentially result in negative financial consequences, and he suggested that it was probably for this reason that previous administrations had been reluctant to enforce the requirement rigorously. He agreed that overall there is a societal problem because habits of acquiring some core skills, such as reading and writing, have changed over the years. Nonetheless, APC is highly conscious of the public message that discontinuing the UWT might send and is unanimous in emphasizing the importance for students of mastering the core skills.

Dr. Graham assured Senate that APC was mindful of the sensitivity and gravity of the issue. He urged Senators to see the matter as APC had done, as an issue that goes beyond the UWT and writing competence. There is a lot of work ahead but if all goes as planned, SCAPP could be reviewing the recommendations in January 2009 and Senate could be discussing them sometime in March 2009.

R-2008-10-7 Upon motion duly moved and seconded (Graham, Wild), it was resolved by a majority that the discontinuance of the administration of the University Writing Test and the suspension of the University Writing Test requirement retroactively to May 1, 2008, proposed in Documents US-2008-10-D13 to D14, be approved as recommended by the Academic Programs Committee in Document US-2008-10-D1.

6. Report of other Senate Standing Committees

6.1 Academic Planning and Priorities (Document US-2008-10-D15)

Senators had no questions regarding this report.

6.2 Finance

Dr. Chaikelson apprised Senators that the Committee had met the previous day, at which time Dr. William Sims had been appointed as its Chair. A written report will be provided for the next Senate meeting.

6.3 Library (Document US-2008-10-D16)

6.4 Research (Document US-2008-10-D17)

Senators had no questions regarding these reports.

7. Update of the Advisory Search Committee for a Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Science

Dr. Graham advised Senators that the search is progressing well. The consultant expects to provide the Search Committee a long list of 12 to 20 candidates in December.

8. Remarks from the President (Document US-2008-10-D18)

As additional information to her written remarks, the President reported on her recent visit to China, noting that her diary is posted on the President's website and includes comments on

substantive issues as well as touristic observations. At the same time she was in China, Dean Drew was there on an industrial aerospace mission and Dean Wild was attending a forum in Beijing. This demonstrates the great number of opportunities to form educational linkages with China. She spoke of the many collaborative study and research opportunities for Concordia students to go to China to study in English, to have immersion training in Mandarin or to participate in doctoral exchanges stemming from agreements with the China Scholarship Council. Upon invitation of the President, Deans Drew and Wild both conveyed the highlights of their visits to China.

Dr. Woodsworth updated Senate on the progress of the strategic planning process. She noted that the World Cafés, recently held on both campuses, were successful and created a substantial “buzz”. People were eager to participate and the concept of World Cafés is catching on. Concordia is getting outside exposure because of this innovative format.

9. Items for information

There were no items for information.

10. Question period

Mr. Osei was troubled by Concordia’s standing in the Maclean’s ranking and wondered what could be done. Dr. Woodsworth opined that this is a complicated issue. On the one hand, the methodology is not scientific. Apart from McGill, all Quebec universities tend to be in the bottom of their respective categories, mainly because of the funding situation of Quebec universities which places them at a disadvantage. On the other hand, the ranking cannot be ignored since it does cause concern to some students and alumni. However, the President is confident that the strategic plan will give us the ability to communicate our achievements and successes, thereby allowing Concordia to achieve the recognition which would result in a gradual improvement of its ranking.

In response to a query from Prof. Ross, Dr. Woodsworth indicated that she had wanted to wait before making a decision to fill the position of Dean of Graduate Studies. She has asked Dr. Dandurand to provide a reasoned recommendation and has taken same under advisement given the current strategic planning exercise. She intends on making her decision between now and early next semester.

Further to a question from Prof. Shaver regarding the amount of government funding received by Quebec universities versus those in other provinces, Dr. Graham noted that compared to the national average Quebec would be underfunded by approximately ½ billion dollars. However, the Minister disputes this figure. The Provost then requested speaking privileges for Mr. Bradley Tucker, Director of Institutional Planning. The latter indicated that according to the MELS calculation found in its recently published *Bulletin Statistique 37*, Quebec would be slightly overfunded per raw FTE compared with the rest of Canada. However, Mr. Tucker pointed out that serious methodological deficiencies in that report render untenable this conclusion, and it is clear that the problem of underfunding in Quebec has not been resolved.

11. Other business

Dr. Woodsworth encouraged Senators to participate in the November 17 Installation and Convocation ceremonies and also invited them to attend the JMSB gift announcement from Chancellor David O'Brien at 11:30 a.m. on November 18, on the 11th Floor of the EV Building.

12. Next meeting

The next meeting of Senate will be held on Friday, December 5, 2008, at 2 p.m.

13. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 3:45 p.m.

Danielle Tessier
Secretary of Senate