

Minutes of University Council
2:30 p.m., Thursday, March 19, 2009
Neatby-Timlin Theatre

Attendance: See appendix A.

1. Opening remarks

Condolences were expressed by Dr. David Campbell head of the Department of Anesthesia, to colleagues and family of Dr. Lynn McKinstry, who received her fellowship in anesthesia in 1980. Appointed acting associate dean in the College of Medicine for the years 1997-1999, Professor McKinstry became an associate dean in the college from 1999-2003. Most recently she practised as a clinician with the Royal University Hospital and as an associate professor with the Department of Anesthesia. Dr. McKinstry passed away February 3, 2009.

Brent Cotter, Dean, College of Law, delivered a memorial tribute for Professor Roger Carter, professor emeritus of law, 1963 – 1987. Professor Carter served as dean 1969-74 and was a guiding force behind the establishment of the Native Law Centre. Professor Carter retired from the college in 1987 and passed away February 10, 2009.

A memorial tribute was delivered by Dr. David Crossley of the Department of Philosophy for Dr. Rudy Krutzen, who taught in the department from 1963 until 2000 and was active in Council and many university and college committees. Dr. Krutzen retired in 2000 and passed away February 22, 2009.

Following a moment of silence, the chair called the meeting to order. She informed Council that as a result of the second call for nominations there will be an election for Council members beginning next week. She also commented briefly that yesterday's provincial budget had been a positive one for the university, and noted that the president and the provost would be speaking further at this meeting on its implications for the university.

2. Adoption of the agenda

REEVES/KALRA: That the agenda be adopted as circulated.

CARRIED

3. Minutes of the meeting of February 26, 2009

MacDONALD/HILL: That the minutes of the meeting of February 26, 2009 be approved as circulated.

CARRIED

4. Business arising from the minutes

No business was identified as arising from the minutes.

5. Report of the president

The president noted that this is the fourth year in a row in which the university, after extensive conversations with government officials, has been granted substantial support in line with the university's budget request. One of the reasons for this success has been the work of this council and its supporting committees in planning and presenting four-year budget regimes and setting academic priorities. He acknowledged and thanked Council for its contribution to another successful round of discussions with the province. He then invited Vice President Richard Florizone to speak further about the budget.

Dr. Florizone began his remarks by noting that while this is a 'good news' budget, the university will still have work to do to balance the books this year. With an operating increase of just over 7% based on an assumption of a probable tuition increase of approximately 3%, and an annual capital allowance of \$18.2M in grants and borrowing room, the budget allocation is very much in line with what was requested in the operations forecast. Moreover, the province has just announced a further \$9.8M for the InterVac project. Compared with other jurisdictions in North America, many of which have been taking substantial budget cuts, the University of Saskatchewan is very fortunate.

The vice president reiterated that there is still significant work to do because the global economic context has changed radically since the operations forecast was put together. The impact on the university includes a decline in income from investments, which in turn affects the operating budget, trusts and endowments, and pensions. The defined benefit pension plans are now facing a solvency deficit of around \$80M, which means that when the university files at the end of '09 it will have (under current regulations) a 5-year period in which to pay this amount back. There are various approaches that can be taken to mitigate this, including application for changes to provincial regulations governing pension solvency, the possibility of a market recovery, and negotiating changes to pension plan design. Nevertheless, the extent of the problem facing the university is likely to be in the order of \$10M.

Dr. Florizone noted that the next big milestone in the budgeting process is to bring forward a budget for 2009-10 in May, and he expects the next few weeks will see a great deal of discussion about how to identify the magnitude of the gap and what actions can be taken to close it. He echoed the president's thanks to Council for its involvement in planning, and stressed that the university's goal is to emerge in a comparatively stronger position from the current financial downturn, by taking advantage of opportunities that may present themselves, proceeding with implementing the strategic plan, actively pursuing stimulus opportunities, and being prudent about spending.

6. Report of the provost

Provost Brett Fairbairn continued to address the university's approach to financial and budgetary planning in his report, summarizing the university's approach for the short term, medium term and long term. In the short term, he said, the 2008-09 year will require a call on the university's operating reserves, but of course these can be tapped

only once. In the medium (2-3 year horizon), the university has put together four different scenarios. In all cases, revenues for 2009-10 will be down because of lower investment income than expected. The largest issue on the expenditure side is related to the pension deficit, which will pose a significant problem for the university and will inevitably require budget adjustments. The scenario analysis has told us we cannot conceptualize these as one-year problems; there will be ongoing effects on the budget. The provost stressed that he and the budget planning office will be looking for ideas from the university community about how to proceed. While the university's integrated planning process did wisely envision the creation of a resource allocation framework, the time frame in which key decisions must be made will not allow for that framework to be in place. Thus decisions will need to be made in an informed basis between now and May based on principles. As for the long term, the university is pursuing a number of strategies such as diversifying its revenue sources, pursuing the recruitment opportunities afforded by our province's relatively better position than the rest of the country, and taking advantage of capital stimulus programs. In order to emerge on a comparatively stronger basis, the university must continue to invest in its priorities, to address key risks, and to identify principles on which decisions can be made.

Dr. Fairbairn then invited questions and discussion from members of Council on this portion of his report.

Discussion focused on the need for the university to keep in mind that employees who opted for a defined contribution pension option have shouldered much of the pension risk; the role of the university in defining and developing tuition policy; and whether the university's relative lack of endowment funds can be seen as a blessing in disguise.

In response to a question, the president confirmed that the special request to the government for funding directed at developing the university's fundraising capacity was granted in the budget, as was the special request for student housing assistance.

The provost drew members' attention to his written report, noting that the scheduling of the poster event for the commitments proved impossible for April and will likely be deferred until September. He noted that one item confirmed after the written report was submitted is the appointment of Dr. David Hill as the new dean of the College of Pharmacy and Nutrition, beginning in August 2009. Dr. Hill has most recently been the head of the accreditation body for Canadian schools of pharmacy.

In closing, the provost encouraged members of Council to tour the new University Learning Centre/Library transformation project.

7. Student society reports

7.1 Report from the University of Saskatchewan Students' Union

Brea Lowenberger presented the report of the USSU as Vice President Academic. In addition to summarizing the items in her written report, she called attention to the presence of special guests from the Edwards School of Business student society. These

students are participating in the “five days for the homeless” campaign; Ms Lowenberger sought and received permission for them to circulate their donation boxes at the meeting.

7.2 Report from the Graduate Students’ Association

In the absence of a GSA member to present the report, Council members were commended to the written report on page 19 of the agenda.

8. Academic programs committee

Professor Gordon Hill presented this item as chair of the academic programs committee.

8.1 Request for decision: CGSR: termination of plant sciences specializations in the Master of Agriculture (M.Agr.) and Post Graduate Diploma (P.G.D.) programs

HILL/WURZER: That Council approve termination of the plant science specializations in the Master of Agriculture (M.Agr.) and Post Graduate Diploma (P.G.D.) programs, effective immediately.

CARRIED

8.2 Request for decision: ESB: termination of biotechnology management major in the Bachelor of Commerce (B.Comm) program

HILL/WURZER: That Council approve termination of the biotechnology management major in the Bachelor of Commerce (B.Comm.) program, effective immediately.

CARRIED

8.3 Request for decision: administrative revisions to the examination regulations

HILL/WURZER: That Council approve the administrative revisions to the University of Saskatchewan examination regulations as outlined on pages 37-90 of the agenda materials.

In response to a question, Associate Vice President for Student Services David Hannah confirmed that assistant and associate deans will be copied as a matter of procedure when the Registrar notifies instructors who have not met the deadlines for course submission.

A council member asked whether the committee had addressed the widespread practice (which is in violation of the regulations) of mid term examinations being held outside of regular class times, on evenings or weekends. Professor Hill responded that the amendments before Council are administrative and are not intended to introduce substantive changes to the regulations.

Another council member commented on the proliferation of grade comments. Assistant Registrar Russ Isinger noted that the definitions for these comments are printed on the reverse of the transcript.

There was further discussion of the change from “mid-year” to “mid-term” on p. 51 and a suggestion that rewording is necessary to clarify the intent of this change.

HILL/WURZER: To defer the motion until the next meeting, in order to allow the committee to address the concerns raised at this meeting.

CARRIED

9. Academic support committee

9.1 Request for input: *Guidelines for Faculty and Students using Internet Social Networking in an Academic Context at the University of Saskatchewan*

Professor Lois Jaeck presented this item as chair of the academic support committee. She described the work of the committee in assisting students and faculty to understand the potential risks, challenges and responsibilities inherent in using social networking in an academic context. She also described consultations that have taken place with students, colleagues, and the Teaching and Learning Centre. She then invited discussion about whether these guidelines will be helpful and how they might be made more useful.

Members of Council commended the committee on the development of these guidelines. Professor Jaeck invited any further comments to be addressed to her or to the committee’s secretary, Cathie Fornssler.

10. Bylaws committee

This report was presented by Professor Gordon Zello on behalf of Professor Linda Ferguson, chair of the committee.

10.1 Amendments to *Council Bylaw Part Two V. with respect to the membership of the international activities committee*

ZELLO/SURTEES: That the membership of the international activities committee be amended to reduce the number of *ex officio* voting members by two members as indicated on pp. 97-99 of the agenda materials.

CARRIED

11. Other business

No other business was raised.

12. Question period

There was a question about the visioning meeting the provincial government held in late February about post-secondary education, and the extent to which aboriginal groups were represented at that meeting. The President indicated that FNUC and SIIT were represented, along with the two universities, SIAST and the seven regional colleges. He noted that there had been significant reference to aboriginal education as part of the visioning session.

A Council member asked whether early retirement options were being looked at in the budgeting process; the president and provost welcomed the suggestion, indicating that all suggestions for ways to help the university meet its cost commitments would be considered.

13. Adjournment and next meeting

The meeting adjourned at 4:35 p.m. Next meeting is at 2:30 p.m., Thursday, April 16 in Neatby-Timlin Theatre.