

Minutes of University Council
2:30 p.m., Thursday, May 21, 2009
Neatby-Timlin Theatre

Attendance: See appendix A.

1. Opening remarks

The chair welcomed members of Council and particularly members of the new executive members of the USSU and GSA. She indicated that nominations for Council chair are in progress, closing later today, and announced that she has submitted her nomination papers to the secretary.

2. Adoption of the agenda

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

CARRIED

3. Minutes of the meeting of April 16, 2009

SURTEES/PROCTOR: That the minutes of the meeting of April 16, 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 commended Council members to his written report and made supplementary comments about the provincial tour which concluded in La Ronge last week. He stressed the ongoing importance of this tour and the opportunities it provides for the president to hear from community members, prospective students, and guidance counsellors about their expectations for the university. He reported that for the first time he brought students along and he intends to continue with this practice, since the students brought tremendous value to the tour and the discussions. He also mentioned that six Convocation ceremonies will be held next week and encouraged Council members to attend as members of the platform party.

A member asked the president whether he had considered the new direction that NSERC appears to be taking in terms of the challenges and opportunities it affords for our university. The president responded that he has asked for an analysis of the university's NSERC results compared with national results and that he anticipates a visit of representatives of NSERC very soon. He assured Council that this issue will be treated with the utmost seriousness.

Another member commented on the impact of the recent budgeting process on the academic units and particularly on the university's academic mission, and sought assurance that the budget measures that are in place are the right thing to do. The president noted that while the University of Saskatchewan is in a comparatively better situation than other universities across the country, it will not escape the kind of financial losses that are being experienced by others, and the university must anticipate and address them. The member followed up with a question about the president's perception of the university's legal and moral obligations to members of the defined contribution pension plans as well as to those in the defined benefit plans. In his response the president referenced the decision that was made when the plan was split, to pay the surplus out to plan members, and suggested that members of both plans will need to consider the extent to which acceptance of the surplus implied a corollary acceptance of risk.

6. Report of the provost

The provost began his report with reference to his recent memorandum outlining the 2009-10 budget, including a summary of the budget adjustments necessitated by the decline in the university's investment income. He noted that the board and the administration have identified a need for \$10M in permanent budget adjustments in order to address a very real pension deficit. He expressed cautious hope that if the current indicators of economic recovery prove reliable, it may not be necessary to identify any further reduction in future years. The provost alluded to the principles and criteria that were used in determining targets for budget reductions for individual units, and provided some advice about the kind of approaches—including prioritizing and strategic thinking—that should be considered as units plan to meet their targets. The administration of the university is offering support in various ways to assist units in making their budget adjustments. All units have been asked to develop and submit their plans by June 30. The provost then invited Vice President Richard Florizone to offer additional comments.

Dr. Florizone described the process of analysis and consultation which has led to the development of the budget for 2009-10, stressing that the institution has tried to take a realistic approach. Both vice presidents commented that the planning and priorities committee of council has been an important partner in developing the principles on which the budget measures were based. Dr. Fairbairn then invited Dr. Jay Kalra, Chair of the planning and priorities committee, to comment further.

Dr. Kalra referred members of Council to his committee's report which was included in the agenda materials, and enumerated the specific recommendations contained within it. He acknowledged the contribution of members of his committee and particularly members of the *ad hoc* budget subcommittee, as well as the assistance provided by the offices of the provost and vice president academic and of the vice president finance and resources.

A member rose to thank members of the administration for the transparency they have demonstrated in releasing the budget to the whole community. He expressed concern, though, that the budget measures require very fast and permanent budget cuts over a brief period of two years to address what might be a transitory budget cut. He acknowledged that the board of governors has the authority to make budget decisions, but expressed a concern that differential cuts imposed by the board on academic units inevitably have

academic consequences. Academic matters are the province of Council, and yet Council was not involved in the specific decisions. He suggested that the coordinating committee of Council might wish to consider what Council's appropriate involvement should be.

The provost responded by comparing the process used in setting the budget to the process of eliminating the structural deficit in the last planning cycle. He also commented that the approach being taken compares favourably with a process that simply makes across-the-board cuts of the same magnitude to every unit; these do not reflect where these units are in their history or their capacity at a moment in time to withstand budget adjustments. He invited Dr. Florizone to comment on the question of the transitoriness of the economic downturn. Dr. Florizone talked about what the university's recent scenario analysis exercise revealed about the ongoing impact of the global economic downturn on pensions and on endowments. He drew Council's attention to the fact that pension solvency was roughly in a \$100M deficit position at the end of 2008, and that the institution would be required to pay this shortfall back over a time frame in the order of ten years. He emphasized that there are no prudent scenarios that would show the problem solving itself because of a market recovery. It is his view, confirmed by the scenario analysis, that regardless of almost anything the markets may do, a shortfall on the order of \$100M will persist and will need to be solved over approximately 10 years.

A member wondered whether the university had considered imposing higher contributions to some of its pension plans in order to help fund the solvency problem. Dr. Florizone responded that the university would open to exploring all options—including regulatory solutions such as solvency exemptions, the potential for different ways of funding the plans up to the legislated contribution limits (which would need to be discussed with the unions), and revising actuarial assumptions. He agreed that the plans are in relatively different states of health.

Dr. Florizone clarified in response to a member's earlier question that what the board had approved at its March meeting was the broad outline of what budgetary measures were needed, and then at its May meeting the specific differential adjustments were presented to, and accepted by, the board.

6.1 Report on first-to-second-year retention in direct entry colleges

The provost then turned to the report on retention and invited Associate Vice President David Hannah to make comments on the report, which represents a 'final instalment' on the annual fall census day report. In presenting the report, Dr. Hannah noted that the outstanding issue is what benchmark should be used to determine whether our retention rates from first year are too high or too low; because of great variability in how retention is measured across institutions, it is difficult to derive comparative data.

There were questions about the follow-up the institution does with students who choose not to continue their studies, about the efforts the university is making to retain Aboriginal students, and about the number of students not retained who were not eligible to return. Dr. Hannah noted that retention is one of the 20 commitments that have been made under the second integrated plan. The commitment is being led by Tom Steele and Tonya Wirchenko and includes initiatives such as the expansion of the learning communities pilot.

7. Student society reports

7.1 Report from the University of Saskatchewan Students' Union

Warren Kirkland presented the report of the USSU as its new president. Mr. Kirkland introduced members of the executive committee, four of whom were in attendance. In reviewing his written report, he also called attention to the fact that the USSU offices have moved to the lower MUB from lower Place Riel, and invited Council members to drop by during the course of renovations.

7.2 Report from the Graduate Students' Association

Devin Ens, Vice President (Academic & Awards) of the Graduate Students' Association, introduced himself, and assured members of Council that the GSA executive plans to improve its attendance record at Council meetings. He noted that his executive too would be moving in the fall, into new quarters in the former chapel of the College of Emmanuel and St. Chad.

Members of Council welcomed both Warren and Devin and their executives to Council with rounds of applause.

8. Academic programs committee

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

8.1 Item for decision: Arts and Science: Bachelor of Arts and Science (B.A.Sc.) Four year and Honours, in the field of specialization of Environment and Society

HILL/PROCTOR: That Council approve the Bachelor of Arts and Science (B.A.Sc.) Four-year and the Bachelor of Arts and Science (B.A.Sc.) Honours programs in the field of specialization of Environment & Society.

CARRIED

A member of Council raised a concern that the abbreviation B.A.Sc. is also the abbreviation of the most commonly used degree across Canada in Engineering, the Bachelor of Applied Science. He asked whether this had been drawn to the attention of the academic programs committee when it approved this degree a year ago. The committee chair responded that this concern had not been raised. In response to a suggestion that the motion could be amended, the chair ruled that an amendment to the abbreviation of the degree would not be in order because the motion on the floor relates to the field of specialization only, and the name of the degree has already been approved by an earlier motion.

8.2 Item for decision: ESB: Aboriginal Business Administration Certificate (ABAC) and International Business Administration Certificate (IBAC)

HILL/PROCTOR: That Council approve the Aboriginal Business Administration Certificate and the International Business Administration Certificate.

CARRIED

8.3 Item for decision: Agriculture and Bioresources: replacement of the B.S.A Plant Science major and its themes with three majors in the fields of specialization of Crop Science, Horticulture Science, and Applied Plant Ecology, and with two minors in the fields of specialization of Applied Plant Ecology and Rangeland Resources and the termination of the major in Plant Science

HILL/PROCTOR: That Council approve the replacement of the Bachelor of Science in Agriculture (B.S.A.) Plant Science major and its themes with three majors in the fields of specialization of Crop Science, Horticulture Science and Applied Plant Ecology, two minors in the fields of specialization of Rangeland Resources and Applied Plant Ecology, and the termination of the major in Plant Science.

CARRIED

8.4 Items for information

The following items were received for information:

- Changes to proposal forms
- STM section numbers
- Programs under review

9. Academic support committee

Professor Lois Jaeck presented this item as chair of the academic programs committee.

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

JAECK/BUNT: That Council adopt the *Guidelines for Faculty and Students using Internet Social Networking in the Academic Context at the University of Saskatchewan*.

CARRIED

10. Planning and priorities committee

Professor Jay Kalra presented this item as chair of the planning and priorities committee.

The following items were received for information.

10.1 Report for information – 2009/10 Operating Budget and Budget Planning

10.2 Report for information – University Enrolment Action Plan

In commenting on this report, Professor Kalra reiterated some of the main themes of this report and the assumptions and goals articulated within it. He indicated that his committee supports the action plan and considers enrolment a high priority for the university over the coming months. Dr. Kalra encouraged Council members to be involved in assisting with the implementation of the plan, and invited questions and comments. Council members stressed the importance of encouraging Aboriginal enrolment and of finding ways to improve the retention of Aboriginal students. It was pointed out that the university should be a leader in Canada in this area.

10.3 Report for information – Implementation of the Second Integrated Plan

Dr. Kalra reported on his committee's receipt of the implementation plan the first year report on progress, and noted that this report is still in draft form and is intended to be an interactive, web-based document. He acknowledged the support and assistance of Pauline Melis, Assistant Provost, and her office in the development of the plan and of the report. He then invited the provost to make comments on the document. Dr. Fairbairn reflected on the work of the past year since the plan was adopted, and the progress that has been made in this first year. He pointed to a remarkable record of accomplishment, particularly notable because of the less than ideal financial context. He asserted that it is because the university has set aside a fund for academic priorities that it has been possible to invest in priorities despite the financial situation, citing this as an indication of the importance of having clear priorities.

10.4 Request for input – Draft University Achievement Record

Professor Kalra invited feedback from Council on proposed indicators for achievement in five broad areas. These were included in the agenda package in draft form and are being developed as part of the Quality and Accountability Commitment through a consultative process. Dr. Kala encouraged Council members to be actively engaged in development of this achievement record; he then invited Provost Fairbairn to comment further.

Dr. Fairbairn described the intent and development of the achievement record, explaining what this document is intended to accomplish and how it will be used. He described it as a vehicle for communicating with those who care about the university, both external and internal, about how the university is doing 'at a glance'. He outlined five key areas that describe the work of the university as a collective entity and that can be used to establish some benchmarks against which the university can compare itself against other similar institutions. The intent is to communicate the achievement record broadly and to update and publish it annually.

Dr. Fairbairn outlined several principles which the committee has tried to adhere to: these include simplicity (keeping the number of indicators small), boldness (not simply measuring what's easy to measure) and distinctiveness (to measure things that are distinctive about our university). He explained that choice of the term 'achievement

record' has been arrived at with some care. A revised version will be finalized by the end of June, with the first reporting using this framework in the fall of 2009.

Council members offered a number of comments and suggestions. One member observed that the indicators under the category of teaching and learning—itsself an important category—are not particularly good ones, and suggested that better indicators would include things like data from surveys of students that are already being undertaken (such as NSSE), and data from course evaluations. Another member offered that the goal of demonstrating 'distinctiveness' might suggest a sixth category focusing on diversity within the student body and employees, research endeavours around the world, and our ability to recruit and retain aboriginal students. Another member asked what work had been done to ensure that the data would be comparable to the indicators being used by our comparator institutions. To this the provost responded that the drafting group had done extensive research to create a 'master register' of indicators being used across the country. There was also a question about why faculty recruitment and retention appears under the heading of research, scholarly and artistic work, and a comment that it might be helpful to use the word 'appropriate' to preface indicators such as retention rates, to signal that the goal for every indicator is not always a high score.

The provost thanked members of Council for their input and invited further comment by members and their colleagues.

11. Bylaws committee

11.1 Request for input – Student academic dishonesty regulations

Linda Ferguson presented this item as chair of the committee and invited input from Council members on the revisions being proposed to the academic dishonesty regulations.

Discussion focussed primarily on the informal procedure being proposed, and the desirability of there being any kind of record of informal decisions that might be held for future reference, perhaps within a department. Professor Ferguson reported that there had been extensive discussion of this point with the associate and assistant deans and also in the committee, and ultimately the committee felt it was important that the informal process should be treated as a 'teaching moment' and that the outcome should not be made available to anyone but the parties agreeing to the outcome. She said that the committee had, however, accepted the suggestion of a member of Council that a written record of what was agreed should be produced and kept by both the professor and student for their mutual protection and to avoid escalation of informal penalties. A suggestion was made that the process for assigning an informal penalty should include further constraints to limit the sanction imposed by an individual professor so that it could not affect more than "x" (perhaps 15 or 20) percent of the final grade. To this Dr. Ferguson pointed out that under what's being proposed, a student always has access to the formal process if he or she feels the penalty is unduly severe. Another Council member suggested that the meaning of 'paraphrasing' under the definition of academic dishonesty be clarified, since the current definition could be read to say that as long as a source is referenced it would be acceptable simply to reproduce a passage from that source and change a few words.

The committee chair indicated that her committee would welcome written submissions, and invited Council members to circulate the draft document to their colleagues.

12. Nominations committee

Professor Malcolm Reeves presented this item as chair of the nominations committee.

12.1 Item for decision: members on search committees for Dean of Edwards School of Business and for Dean of Veterinary Medicine

The chair called three times for additional nominations from the floor. There being none, she put the motion to a vote.

REEVES/SCHWIER: That Council approve the nomination of Dan Pennock, Associate Dean, College of Agriculture and Bioresources to replace Graham Scoles as the General Academic Assembly member on the Search Committee for Dean of Veterinary Medicine.

CARRIED

The chair called three times for additional nominations from the floor. There being none, she put the motion to a vote.

REEVES/SCHWIER: That Council approve the nomination of Kevin Schneider, Vice-Dean, College of Arts and Science, as the General Academic Assembly member on the Search Committee for Dean of the Edwards School of Business.

CARRIED

13. Research, scholarly and artistic work committee

13.1 Item for information – 2008/09 annual report

Dean Carol Rodgers presented this item for information and expressed thanks to Sandra Calver for her support of the committee over the past year.

14. International activities committee

Professor Phil Dwyer presented this item for information in the absence of Professor Rangacharyulu.

14.1 Item for information – 2008/09 annual report

This item was received for information.

15. Other business

No other business was raised by Council members.

16. Question period

There were no questions.

17. Next meeting – 2:30 p.m., Thursday, June 18, 2009