

Minutes of University Council
2:30 p.m., Thursday, September 17, 2009
Neatby-Timlin Theatre

Attendance: See appendix A.

1. Opening remarks

Dr. Card welcomed new and returning members of Council to the first meeting of the year.

2. Adoption of the agenda

URQUHART/KELLS: That the agenda be adopted as circulated.

CARRIED

3. Minutes of the meeting of June 18, 2009

It was noted that some corrections to pages 4 and 5 of the minutes were provided by a member who was unable to be in attendance, and were made available at the door.

KALRA/URQUHART: That the minutes of the meeting of June 18, 2009 be approved as amended.

CARRIED

4. Business arising from the minutes

No business was identified as arising from the minutes.

5. Report of the president

The president provided his perspective on recent commentaries in the press about a group of five research-intensive universities in the country—the University of British Columbia, University of Alberta, McGill University, Université de Montréal, and the University of Toronto--that appear to propose these five institutions be accorded a privileged position and status as Canada's research-intensive institutions. He noted that the response across the country has been largely negative, and pointed out that there are some public policy difficulties with their position, including the fact that education is a provincial and not a federal responsibility. The president then commended members of Council to his written report.

6. Report of the provost

The provost referred briefly to the items in his written report, drawing Council members' particular attention to the poster session planned for September 29 to highlight progress on the 20 commitments in the second integrated plan, and to the upcoming September 30 opening of the new learning commons.

Dr. Fairbairn also provided comments about the overall financial situation at the university which, he indicated, has not changed greatly since Council last met. He outlined the discussions that have taken place by the Board, the Planning and Priorities Committee, and the Provost's Committee on Integrated Planning, as well as the work that has been done in academic and administrative units to identify ways they can respond to the budget adjustments required of them. Acknowledging that the university is facing a reduction on the order of 3%, he pointed out that in the scheme of things and relative to other institutions—and contrary to some assertions by the press—the institution is not in a crisis situation. Nevertheless, the need to reduce the operating budget is real and is not something the university can ignore. He expressed satisfaction with the way the community has pulled together and exercised creativity in responding to the need for budget measures.

The provost then invited Vice-president Florizone to address Council on the institution's financial context. Dr Florizone reviewed where the university has come from and where it is today, and what impacts are still being felt. He provided information about pension projections, endowments and investments, noting that while investment markets have recovered, they are still well below their 2008 peak. He provided the latest figures on the solvency deficit and talked about the risk that potash prices pose for the university through its investment markets and also as they will affect the provincial grant. In summarizing, he expressed the view that the institution is on the right track with the \$10M reduction, is continuing to pursue a pension strategy, and will continue to top up endowments and trusts where these are strategically important. He indicated that the midyear update in November will give us a better sense of what the future will bring.

There were questions about the amount of money that has been put into pension funds to date, about the degree of exposure incurred by the university in its use of borrowing room, and about the position the provincial pension superintendent has taken on solvency relief. In responding to the last of these, Dr. Fairbairn provided further comments on the public policy developments around pensions.

7. Student societies reports

7.1 Report from the USSU

Warren Kirkland presented the report as president of the USSU. Mr. Kirkland commended members of Council to his written report and provided additional updates on five main initiatives of the USSU:

- An online central calendar for students. The USSU has been working closely with SED and PAWS on this initiative and hopes to see a roll-out some time soon.
- A joint initiative called the Saskatchewan Student Coalition which provides for a forum for the student unions at U of R and SIAST in matters of common interest.
- Addressing issues of open access in order to provide cost-effective academic materials and information to students.
- Child care on campus – more spaces are needed and a child care action plan is being developed.

- Place Riel construction – the project is going well; completion is still scheduled for late fall of 2010. The campus computer store will open in a new location in mid December.

7.2 Report from the GSA

GSA Vice-President Academic Devin Ens presented the report. He commended members to his written report, adding that Nick Fraser is in Regina meeting with the Minister of Advanced Education to discuss why graduate students have been excluded from the graduate retention plan. He reported particularly on the following initiatives:

- surveying and petitioning on matters such as transit and housing, and reopening the Arts Building as a 24-hour facility.
- planning for an interdisciplinary conference in May on topics such as the nature of public and private partnerships and research, open access, and other matters of interest to graduate students.

8. Pandemic readiness

Dr. Claire Card invited Dr. Jay Kalra, the chair of the planning and priorities committee, to chair the meeting at this point in order to allow her to present this item as chair of the coordinating committee.

8.1 Delegation of authority during a pandemic

Dr. Card commented on the experience of the H1N1 influenza in New Zealand and Australia and the fact that our students constitute a high-risk population. She summarized the discussion of this matter that took place at the Coordinating Committee.

CARD/FERGUSON: That in the event of a pandemic emergency, for the year 2009/10, Council delegates authority for academic matters significantly affected by the emergency to the provost or his delegates.

CARRIED
(the provost abstaining)

In discussion the following commitments were made:

- That the provost would report back to Council about any decision he has taken under this resolution.
- That a declaration of the emergency would be made using criteria set out by public health authorities and the university's approved policy on emergency measures and that there would be an explicit communication to the campus when an emergency is declared and when it is over.
- That recognition will be given to the fact that the University has teaching and learning activities in sites other than in Saskatoon.

8.2 Council business during a pandemic

A member asked that the word "important" be replaced in the proposed motion by the word "urgent"; it was agreed this could be considered a friendly amendment.

Another member asked whether this motion was necessary given the motion that was just approved under Item 8.1. Dr. Card indicated that the motion being proposed would provide for decisions such as new program approvals that would not be under the provost's purview in the preceding motion.

The secretary indicated that the bylaws committee would be drafting procedures to facilitate an electronic vote. A member suggested use of technologies such as wikis as something the bylaws committee might consider.

CARD/BUNT: That during the 2009/10 academic year, if Council is unable to meet or attain quorum because of emergency pandemic circumstances, Council may decide urgent matters by electronic means.

CARRIED

9. Academic programs committee

Professor Len Proctor presented this report as chair of the academic programs committee.

9.1 Report for information: Arts and Science; additional offering of special topics course SOC 398.3 *Social Inequality and Health*

This item was received for information.

10. Nominations committee

Professor Fran Walley presented this item as chair of the nominations committee.

10.1 Request for decision: nomination for vice-chair of council

The chair called for further nominations from the floor. There being none, the matter was put to a vote.

WALLEY/PROCTOR: That Council approve the nomination of John Rigby, Management and Marketing, as vice-chair of Council for a two year term, until June 30, 2011.

CARRIED

10.2 Request for decision: nomination for committees

The chair called for further nominations from the floor. There being none, the matter was put to a vote.

WALLEY/HAMILTON: That council approve the nomination of Lalita Bharadwaj, Nursing, to the research, scholarly and artistic work committee, for a three-year term to June 30, 2012, and

THAT Council approve the following nominations to the scholarships and awards Committee:

- Jit Sharma, College of Engineering
- Norm Zlotkin, College of Law
- Patti MacDougall, St. Thomas More College

for three year-terms to June 30, 2012; and

THAT Council approve the nomination of Allan Dolovich, Mechanical Engineering, to the teaching and learning committee, for a three year-term to June 30, 2012; and

THAT Council approve the nomination of Gillian Muir, Veterinary Biomedical Sciences, to the renewals and tenure appeal panel for a three year-term to June 30, 2012.

CARRIED

11. Scholarships and awards committee annual report

Dr. Ravi Chibbar as chair of the committee, presented the report for information. He expressed appreciation to Wendy Roe and the staff of the Scholarships and Awards office for their assistance, and to all members of the committee in 2008-09.

12. Senate round table report

The president presented this report for information on behalf of the senate round table.

13. Request for input on format for council agendas

Dr. Card presented this item as chair of the coordinating committee and invited comments from the floor as well as written submissions to the chair or secretary.

In discussion, most members expressed support for a reduction in the amount of printed material. The following suggestions and comments were made:

- If members of Council will simply be printing their agendas, then it doesn't make sense to make them available electronically. But perhaps members need only print the agenda, minutes and cover sheets for decision and information items; supporting documentation could then be put on a web site so that those who wish to look at the details can do so.
- It would be helpful to separate the supporting material from the agenda and cover sheets, creating two separate sections for all Council agendas (whether paper or electronic format)
- If the material is provided electronically, then each member can decide what they want to print. Members who are printing should consider printing 4 pages to a sheet.
- Faculty members don't have a budget to support printing out Council materials so paper copies should be available on request.

The chair indicated the coordinating committee will discuss this further and may institute a survey of members.

14. Other business

No other business was identified.

15. Question period

There were no further questions.

16. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 3:55 p.m. Next meeting is at 2:30 p.m., Thursday, October 15, 2009.