



**Senate Meeting**  
Skype for Business

September 18, 2020  
2 p.m.

## MINUTES

**Present:** M. Bluechardt (Chair), K. Allan, P. Barry Mercer, A. Benzaquén, G. Boulet, P. Cantelo, A. Card, G. Chan, D. Cox, P. Crouse, K. Darvesh, C. Dawson, D. Fisher, J. Fraser Arsenault, C. Hardy, T. Harriott, T. Harrison, E. Henderson, E. Hicks, N. Kayhani, K. Kienapple, L. MacCallum, J. McMullin, M. Nadeem, S. Perrott, D. Piccitto, M. Ralston, K. Ritchie, J. Roberts, T. Sawyer, C. Schneider, C. Slumkoski, J. Sutherland, A. Thurlow

**Observers:** S. Brigham, N. Buchanan, S. Davis, T. Findlay, K. Gallant, K. Healy, S. Huang, S. MacMillan, K. Smyth

*The meeting was called to order at 2:10 p.m. Observers were identified, welcomed and reminded that they may be granted speaking privileges but are not eligible to vote on motions. Procedures to be used during the meeting and while voting on motions were outlined.*

### 1. Indigenous Land Recognition

M. Bluechardt provided an acknowledgement that the Mount is built on traditional unceded Mi'kmaq territory and paid respect to the Indigenous peoples of the land on which Senate meets.

### 2. Approval of Agenda

**Moved** by A. Benzaquén, seconded by J. McMullin, to approve the agenda as circulated.  
CARRIED

### 3. Conduct Statement

M. Bluechardt read the Conduct at Senate Meetings statement. She reiterated the University's commitment to uphold the principles of free speech and respectful debate; differing perspectives and viewpoints are welcome.

### 4. Vice-President Administration Update (Budget Presentation for Information and Discussion)

M. Bluechardt spoke to the first ever Budget presentation and the University's commitment to Senate to provide the information. She acknowledged the difficulty of preparing a budget in the midst of a pandemic and expressed appreciation to M. Nadeem, his team, and the Budget

Committee for their work in developing the document. The budget will be presented to the Board of Governors for approval at its meeting September 24.

M. Nadeem spoke to the Budget process and the teamwork involved; he, too, recognized the Budget Committee for their commitment and hard work.

Throughout the presentation, he provided context and focus on three key areas: enrollment, residence and ancillary business, and investments in academic supports. Overall, the year is expected to end in a deficit position. Highlights from the three key areas of the budget include:

#### Enrollment

Overall, enrollment, seen as a good news story, is budgeted to be 2.1% higher (units) than 2019/20, in large part due to the impact of last year's increase in enrollment, the efforts of student recruitment and student experience teams, the students transitioning from bridging or language programs into academic programs and winter 2020 admits who are enrolling in fall 2020. These factors helped offset the decline in international student enrollment.

A brief overview of current enrollment numbers was provided. While overall enrollment is trending toward the optimistic scenario (one of the three scenarios presented in July), incoming class confirmations as of September 14 are being monitored closely for further impact on the winter term and for next year.

#### Residence and Ancillary

Residence and ancillary business, identified as the hardest hit area of the Mount's self-generated revenue, was discussed. The significant decrease in residence occupancy and the complete loss of conference business, including uncertain rebound times, were highlighted. A modified food plan offered to students in residences through to the end of the term to ensure food security throughout the pandemic was explained. It is expected that the return of conferences, much like the residences and food services, will depend on public health directives, travel restrictions, and the comfort level of attendees. A multi-year impact is expected.

#### Initiative and Positions Supported

A list of areas of investment included in the budget, including tenure track positions, librarian, lab instructors, faculty term positions, ongoing staff positions, and other term positions were reviewed and discussed.

M. Nadeem then spoke to the University's effort to align operations as best as possible with the evolving context and acknowledged the tough but necessary decisions that had to be made. He outlined mitigation strategies undertaken during, and impact on, the development of the budget to minimize the negative impact of the pandemic. With much of the academic

year still ahead, he noted that the budgeted numbers may change somewhat over the upcoming year. As well, strategies considered but not implemented were noted.

The dependence of the University budget on its three main sources of revenue (government funding, tuition revenue and ancillary fees) was explained; the limited flexibility the University would have to recoup a loss resulting from a negative impact on one of these revenues was noted.

The budget summary was projected, and 2019-20 budget and actuals were reviewed in comparison to the 2020-21 draft budget. Projected total revenue was compared with projected total expenses and differences explained. The impact of the pandemic on the University's historical ability to maintain a balanced budget and the commitment to the Board to return to a balanced budget within three years were noted.

The updated budget has been drafted with the information and knowledge available at the time; actuals at year end will likely differ from projections. The University will monitor enrollment and expenses and provide regular reporting to the Board.

M. Nadeem outlined the various considerations that play a part in the University's ability to return to a balanced budget within three years and spoke to the importance of each piece. The University is committed to investing in academic and student support to help ensure student experience and success, managing operating costs, and monitoring the endowments to ensure endowment spending can be maintained.

In conclusion, he reiterated the Administration team's steadfast commitment to be fiscally prudent in decisions that ensure the University's long-term sustainability. He noted that the budget aligns with the soon-to-be approved strategic plan through its investment of a number of new positions identified within the plan. Senators were then invited to provide feedback on the presentation; highlights of feedback received are outlined below within Question Period.

## **5. Question Period**

### Academic and Student Support Investments

G. Boulet requested clarification on academic and student support investments with regard to the positions that were put on "pause" in the spring and questioned whether hiring for those positions would now proceed. The difference in the responsibility and process for administrative and academic hiring was explained; the Mount's commitment to hiring identified pre-COVID and currently within the 2020-21 budget was noted. The academic positions "paused" in April are those that, once the number of positions is determined by the two vice-presidents as sustainable, will be considered at CAPP for inclusion in the 2021-22 budget. At that time, CAPP will then be open to receiving requests for positions and consider these in addition to the requests carried over from the

current year. Once the current budget is approved, work will begin on planning for subsequent years' budgeting. At that time, information will be relayed back through the appropriate channels. (G. Boulet, M. Nadeem, J. McMullin)

#### Town Hall on Part-Time Faculty Budget

K. Allan questioned whether a town hall was held to specifically address part-time faculty cuts and other decisions made with regard to reductions and cuts and an increase in tuition. While a general town hall was held where the President and two vice-presidents provided updates and addressed questions and concerns, a town hall specific to part-time faculty cuts was not held. (K. Allan, D. Piccitto, M. Nadeem)

#### Enrollment and Scenarios

K. Allan questioned how the 2% increase in enrollment compares to the July projections, what projection was used to justify the cuts to part-time budgets and the course cancellations and the difference in spending for part-time budgets last year versus this year. Clarification was provided on the terminology (projections versus scenarios) and the use of three scenarios (optimistic, working, and risk adjusted) to develop the budget. While all three scenarios were presented to the Board of Governors, the working version/scenario was seen as the most probable outcome and used in decision making; this version was readjusted throughout the development of the budget as more information became available.

Senators were reminded that the decisions made regarding part-time faculty budgets and course cancellations were for the one term only. In response to a follow-up question about whether there will be risk for large-scale budget cuts or course cancellations in future semesters, it was explained that without knowing what the future holds with regard to the pandemic, it is not possible to make a commitment or give absolutes. However, Administration is committed to the ongoing sustainability of the University and to ensuring the best high-quality educational experience possible. The suggestion was later made that the University review its decision-making process to ensure that future decisions are more in line with ensuring students can access courses, class sizes are not large, and part-time faculty are less impacted. (K. Allan, M. Nadeem, J. McMullin)

Later in the meeting, clarification was provided on the decrease in the part-time faculty budget being related to the use of some of this budget to convert part-time contracts to full time. Not all of the savings noted in the budget were related to cuts to part-time faculty. As well, it was clarified that a large portion of the savings was attributed to the external education cohorts and the fact that during COVID faculty are not going to the various regions to deliver courses. This savings was passed back to students through a tuition reduction that equated to the savings achieved. (S. Davis)

### Larger Classes/Increased Course Caps/Faculty Support

E. Hicks acknowledged the importance of student experience, and noted that, given the larger class sizes, especially in some courses where concepts are difficult to grasp, more support for faculty through teaching assistance or part-time faculty is required. Though additional grading support is available, it was suggested that additional assistance as well as additional part-time faculty are needed to decrease class sizes. The waiving of caps on class size that led to enrollments in some classes being significantly above the cap was noted. Later in the meeting, the negative impact of larger class sizes and increased course caps (especially in a virtual setting) on student experience and retention was reiterated; it is hoped that the push to balance the budget within three years does not override quality education and the well-being of faculty and staff. The balance between managing Board expectations and operations through a pandemic was noted, and appreciation was expressed for the opportunity to receive Senate feedback. A brief discussion was also held on areas where there were higher numbers of increased course caps; faculty were encouraged to contact the TLCOL for help with strategies for managing online courses. (E. Hicks, J. McMullin, N. Kayhani, D. Piccitto, M. Nadeem, C. Dawson, K. Darvesh)

### EDIA/Black Student Advisor Support Positions

S. Brigham questioned whether the EDIA and Black Student Advisor Support positions would be included in this year's budget. It was clarified that both positions are within the current draft budget to be approved by the Board of Governors at its next meeting. The Black Student Advisor Support position, originally slated for an eight-month term, is expected to be an ongoing full-time, twelve-month position; last year this position was 14 hours per week. (S. Brigham, M. Nadeem)

During the discussion the following motion was made to extend the meeting:

**Moved** by S. Perrott, seconded by G. Boulet, that the meeting be extended to 3:30 p.m.  
CARRIED

## **6. Adjournment**

Participants were thanked for their feedback and discussion.

**Moved** by N. Kayhani, seconded by C. Dawson, that the meeting be adjourned. CARRIED

The meeting was adjourned at 3:28 p.m.