



Special Senate Meeting
Skype for Business

April 20, 2021
2 p.m.

MINUTES

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

Regrets: C. Cameron, K. Darvesh, D. Goree, T. Harrison

Observers: S. Daniels, S. Davis, K. Cantelo, K. Gallant, K. Healy, D. Norris, S. MacMillan, M. McGonnell, A. Rafuse, A. Stark, J. Turner

The meeting was called to order at 2:01 p.m. Observers were identified and welcomed. All observers were 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

R. Lumpkin 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 G. Boulet, seconded by C. Hardy, to approve the agenda as presented.
CARRIED

3. Administration Update

3.1. Vice-President Administration - Budget Presentation

M. Nadeem presented the 2021-2022 budget for information and discussion. He spoke to the following three items in detail:

1. Overview of the budget process
2. Context for 2021-22 fiscal planning
3. Key budget assumptions, investments, and risks

He reviewed the budget guiding principles, the membership of the University Budget Advisory Committee (UBAC), and the factors that make up the budget development context. A budget summary was presented and reviewed. He noted how this budget aligns and supports the new Strategic Plan. He then discussed the budget risks, the capital budget as well as a look ahead. He also mentioned the one-time government COVID-19 funding and the budget surplus.

4. Question Period

J. Roberts asked for additional detail regarding the financial aid allotment. S. Davis reported that 72% of student financial aid comes from our operating budget, 18% from the endowment fund, and 10% from donations.

C. Schneider asked a question regarding last year's deficit. M. Nadeem responded that we are not ending the year in a deficit and added that the COVID-19 funding is to be used specifically for COVID-19 impacts. The budget was balanced based on three factors: higher than estimated enrollment, the voluntary temporary lay-off program, and the utilities budget being better than expected.

K. Allan asked for the surplus amount and clarification about the deferred maintenance amount. M. Nadeem supplied the projected surplus amount and noted that it includes the \$1.45 million in COVID-19 funding received from the province. As for the dollar amount in deferred maintenance, M. Nadeem noted that this amount is what is needed, not what is on hand.

K. Allan commented that mental health funding is particularly important for students; she asked why additional counselling professionals have not been added and asked for the total counselling services budget. M. Nadeem responded that the mental health funding was allocated to the priority position of an intake worker to address the challenges surrounding appointments. P. Barry agreed that the intake worker position was a priority during this budget cycle, noting that this will allow students access to counselling within two to three days. She noted that other positions such as additional counsellors and a more diverse counselling team are still needed and will be addressed in upcoming budget cycles. P. Barry gave approximate budget numbers for both the counselling services department and the full-time intake worker position. K. Allan commented that she would be interested in knowing these exact amounts and how it compares to the market. She asked that additional funds be allocated for the hiring of additional counsellors this year.

Considering the significant surplus, C. Hardy asked what she should tell students when they ask why there is another 3% tuition increase coming this year.

M. Nadeem assured C. Hardy that tuition is a focus of discussion at both the Finance

Committee and the UBAC, and the hardship of an increase is not lost on senior administration. He noted that there are two aspects to this issue. One is related to fiscal management for a not-for-profit university, which includes using reserves as a mechanism for long-term risk mitigation, not to support the ongoing operations of the University. Secondly, because of static or declining government funding, the University cannot be operated sustainably without a tuition increase. He summarized by noting that his response to students would be that the tuition increase helps to ensure a sustainable high-quality education experience.

G. Boulet asked if funding has been allotted to support insufficient technological support for teaching and research. M. Nadeem noted that there is an allocation for funding for teaching and research supports; however, further discussion is needed to define priorities and develop a plan to address these gaps.

T. Findlay wondered why the three faculty representatives on the University Budget Advisory Committee are appointed by the Deans and not elected through the Senate nominations process. M. Nadeem noted that this has been the past practice; however, he is open to reconsidering this practice.

L. McCallum questioned how the Library fits into this budget. M. Nadeem responded that the Library budget is very much intact and part of the University budget.

J. Sutherland asked for an example for the use of the reserve funds. M. Nadeem shared the following examples: Funds have been set aside as an academic planning reserve (to align with the strategic plan) or to address a decrease in government funding or a decline in enrollment, noting that there is always a plan to replenish reserves.

N. Kayhani asked for examples of pandemic related issues to which the government pandemic funds will be allotted and if Senate will have a say in these items. M. Nadeem responded that the funds will be used to offset increased requirements for custodial services and cleaning and disinfecting supplies. The final decision on this allotment is through either Senior Administration or the Finance Committee in consultation with various departments such as the Director of Facilities, the Director of IT&S, the VP Academic and Provost, and the Deans.

K. Allan asked why the strategic reserve was not used to cover cuts to part-time faculty which restricted course offerings last year. M. Nadeem responded that ultimately the use of reserves is the Board of Governors' decision; however, this is only considered if the year ends in a deficit or if Administration has exhausted all other options to sustain the business operations.

Moved by K. Allan, seconded by E. Hicks, that the meeting be extended by 30 minutes. CARRIED

K. Allan followed up by asking about the bounds of Senate's authority on financial matters. M. Nadeem noted that it is his understanding that the Board has full authority when it comes to fiscal or budget matters. R. Lumpkin added that, in general, Senate is responsible for academic programs; the Board of Governors approves the budget. K. Allan commented that, in her opinion, cancelling courses would be something we ought not do.

K. Allan then asked if any funding will be added to the strategic reserve this year, and if so, how much. M. Nadeem responded that as part of the year-end financial statements approximately \$1.1 million will be added to the unrestricted strategic implementation reserve. K. Allan asked if some of this allotment could be used towards mental health funding and to offset a tuition increase and if adding to the reserve is required. He noted that ongoing cost commitments are part of the operating budget and not part of the reserve. He also added that allocation of funding to the reserve is a function of the accounting rules as well as the not-for-profit best practice.

Senators commented that the UBAC and all other campus committees should now be guided by EDIA principles. Some Senators agreed that the current principles and mechanisms of budgeting at the Mount do not necessarily reflect the aims and goals of students and faculty, noting that a balanced budget does not reflect a just budget. It was therefore recommended that the Mount reconsider how budgeting is done and what items/issues are prioritized as an institution going forward. (T. Findlay, L. MacCallum, N. Kayhani)

N. Kayhani asked for additional examples of pandemic related items, adding that, in her opinion, mental health and financial aid should be on that list. M. Nadeem responded that while those two items are not on the pandemic fund list, they are part of the operating budget, as identified earlier. He confirmed that the COVID-19 funding is meant to support ongoing operations from a health and safety perspective.

5. Adjournment

Moved by D. Fisher, seconded by G. Boulet, that the meeting be adjourned. CARRIED

The meeting was adjourned at 3:20 p.m.