

Senate Meeting  
Rosaria Boardroom

June 19, 2007  
10:00 a.m.

### **Minutes of Meeting**

**Present:** K. Lauren (Chair), R. Bérard, I. Blum, B. Casey, P. Crouse, A. Davis, P. Glenister, P. Gouthro, C. Hill, N. Kayhani, B. King, R. MacKay, J. MacLeod, A. McCalla, G. McCarney, S. Mumm, J. Sawler, S. Seager, J. Sharpe, B. Taylor, P. Watts, M. Whalen, A. Whitewood, D. Woolcott, R. Zuk.

**Regrets:** A. Eaton, D. Bourne-Tyson, R. Fisher, S. Ganong, M. Lyon, G. MacDermott, H. Mallette, K. Manning, A. Daley, M. Raven, M. Ruck-Simmonds, L. Steele, R. West.

**Guests:** M. Forrest, R. Gechtman, J. Gordon.

Call to order by the Chair at 10:00 a.m.

K. Laurin welcomed all Senate members to the special meeting and introduced, as guests, three incoming Senate members.

1. Approval of Agenda

**Moved** by B. King, and seconded to approve the agenda as distributed. CARRIED

2. Draft Strategic Plan for Mount Saint Vincent University (distributed electronically on June 12, 2007)

K. Laurin opened the meeting with a description of the process and how the Steering Committee had arrived at the current draft. The most recent Steering Committee meeting was very productive and, from a suggestion that the existing draft was too lengthy, it was recommended that the document be given to a small group to review. With the Deans and P. Watts, D. Woolcott chaired this group who were given license to rewrite the document with clarity and focus.

D. Woolcott then reviewed the process with respect to Senate. The questions the Committee addressed were: Why MSVU exists? Why will we exist five years from now and what are the biggest hurdles that the University faces? They were also challenged to add inspiration to the document.

- The group identified the key issues, restructured the presentation of the draft plan, removed some details and added fundamentally important items.

- They reviewed and reworded the vision statement.
- The goals were reduced from five to four and presented as a single set.
- Chris Bart's diagram was simplified.
- Strategies were developed for each of the individual goals.
- Action plans were developed with additions where the group felt there were gaps.
- Groups and committees were identified to be responsible for each of the goals.
- Three strategic themes of interdisciplinary, internationalization and social justice have been incorporated into the overall strategy.
- A new introduction was written to streamline the document and to add inspiration.

K. Laurin thanked the group for their work and contribution. Each Senate member was offered the opportunity to voice an initial impression of the document, responding to content only; any grammatical or other comments were to be sent via email to [strategic.planning@msvu.ca](mailto:strategic.planning@msvu.ca).

All items were tested against the spirit of the Mount and in keeping with the Mission, Vision and Values and this was absolutely non negotiable.

There is clarity now where it had been missing and moves the plan forward. The introductory statement is very context specific—perhaps too specific—in regard to the plan's five year span.

The strategic themes should be maintained more explicitly.

The inclusion of a mentorship program is important and will be appreciated by the students, particularly graduate students. It's difficult to see how this document might be grounded in what a student might think and feel. There should be a tracking plan for the implementation phase instead of looking back to evaluate the success or failure of the initiative.

The present draft is a valid working document. As a university like the Mount has vulnerabilities, the document is timely in identifying a number of items and initiatives.

This document differentiates us clearly from our competitors and the Vision and Mission are easily understood by both our internal and external communities. Blueprint 2000 had enablers and this has not been integrated into the core business of being a university which would be beneficial. We must now think about implementation and defining areas of accountability and how to prioritize resources to move forward.

The Vision, Mission, and Values thesis seems to lack sufficient focus. The main concern is the ambiguity in the word "experience" which requires some definition. If we are to remove the reference to "a woman's university" from the Vision we may require a preamble that explains how we came to the decision as this distinction has saved the Mount in the past from amalgamation with other institutions.

This redraft provides a good framework and sets parameters but still requires specifics to flesh it out in a meaningful way. For example, there is no reference to academic freedom and, between goals and strategies, there needs to be a balance between the University as a whole and more specific areas.

There is a difference between goals and themes. Initially it looked like two lists and two action plans but the goals should take precedence. It may be possible in an addendum to clarify this.

The goals section was pleasantly surprising. The Mission, Vision and Values can be stronger if shortened while keeping the parts that are substantial such as points 2, 3, 4 from the Mission.

The focus on collaboration is positive and the new format much clearer. The “flexible learning approaches” phrase is too ambiguous. Learners determine the approach not instructors and we have no control as teachers over the learners’ approach. We control the program delivery and diverse ways of learning but not the learning approach.

The framework is a good start. Leaving women out of the vision statement is a concern. The decision making around what programs are viable seems to be rather top down. There must be a focus on both graduate and undergraduate students and there was no presentation about the needs of mature students.

This is a good version for strategies and action plans. A column could be added to address who would be monitoring the strategy. Many decisions are influenced by financial constraints so we need to address what we will do in these cases.

Some parts relating to goals and strategies are a little focused on a market based approach to our institution. But we need to show ourselves as serving a broader community. It is critical to define how the process will work and who participates. There should be more faculty involvements in many of these categories.

The document is much improved but the pursuit of knowledge and its transmission is not explicitly stated. “Women” should also be included in the values. There is a need to develop criteria for sustainable programs as some departments may have difficulty in meeting the current criteria.

This is a vast improvement. Previous drafts did not focus on the students and support for students as much as this one.

It was a valuable experience to be part of the process. The focus was on what would be best for the University and what will be transparent in the university community. Previous documents did not have the focus on the student that this one does.

The document has brought clarity, order and focus to the earlier draft and it should now go out to the community.

Goals 2, 3, 5 and 6, dealing with communication and the improvement of communication within the University, are satisfactory. Some time ago the University conducted an evaluation after a communications audit and there should also be a mechanism to monitor this plan; how some of the goals can be completed and prioritized within the time frame will also be challenging.

The framework is positive but the time line and prioritizing of the goals may be problematic.

Addressing the feeling of being overwhelmed and overworked will only succeed if there are sufficient resources. The history of American women’s universities shows ebbs and flows in centrality and the concerns and application levels of students. We need to place the Mount within the general market but reflect the role of women, which may be a way to attract people to the university.

The overall result of this draft is impressive. Social Justice is mentioned but no follow up action is described. Goal 1, Strategy 1 focuses resources on distinctive programs but some programs may not be considered distinctive though they should be. Personalized attention in small class size is not mentioned as distinctiveness but is a strength at the Mount. A number of items have an action plan to develop and implement a plan so this is not a plan but a meta-plan. This may cause a problem with accountability. If there is a change of focus then that is something that should be mentioned in the strategy. The Faculty research experience under Goal 1 contains no corresponding specific action. Town Hall meetings (page 8, 3c) have been at times frustrating and not necessarily productive.

This document does move us ahead. I like the strategic goals but do share some reservations about the word “experience”. Goal 2 seems to create a circular definition.

This document should allow us to achieve our academic goals and aspirations to serve our students and our disciplines in the advancement of knowledge in the way we best know how. It provides a framework as a good starting point.

For a remarkable piece of work to be done in a short time the redrafting group is to be commended. There are some terms that are not easily defined and perhaps in an atmosphere of academic freedom and pursuit of knowledge should not be too closely defined. Terms such as “diversity”, “women’s perspectives” and “social justice” may be contested terms but as long as the broad goals can be endorsed the discussion can be kept open for a process of defining those terms.

K. Laurin then thanked the Senate for the feedback and for their general consensus in support of the document. Monitoring and accountability has come up in a number of comments. Time was spent on developing measures and specific targets. Accountability is ongoing and will be reported to the Board on a quarterly and annual basis.

The responsibility column shows who has the highest level of accountability but that person is responsible for delegating, supporting or initiating committees or groups of people who will then have responsibility for the particular action.

D. Woolcott commented that monitoring will be built in. There will be an implementation phase which would state the measures to be used to achieve the goals and targets. It is at the specific implementation phase that the targets and measures will be identified by the persons responsible to be coordinated and approved by an implementation team that would also be monitoring progress.

The Chair then opened the floor for a roundtable discussion of the Draft Strategic Plan.

Goal 1 Strategy 1 (high quality teaching, learning and research and programs) and action plan 1a require faculty involvement at every stage. The University serves a broad community and owes the community the provision of programs that may not always be popular but produce scholars in those areas. The definition of distinctiveness should be broadened. We must define what it means for a program to be sustainable and we must take care not to eliminate something that may have potential for success. What is sustainable depends very much upon university policy. In general there is a need for rationalization, an area that needs a lot of care and consideration.

Resources are important to review. We should make sure there is infrastructure put in place to support the initiatives in the plan.

Student support is a huge problem in the number of hours students have to work off campus and as a result have less hours for school work. We need to find creative ways to address this.

There are places in the Area of Responsibility in which three titles are used to refer to one person.

The ratio of students to professors on the Steering Committee is quite low. If we follow the same pattern in evaluating without engaging students in a real way we may miss the opinions of the core population, which could be a danger for the University. There needs to be student representation in the evaluation process and we must address creative ways to solicit student opinions.

We should reconsider some of the terminology that we are using and how the narrative serves to distinguish us from others.

We need to consider how best to consult with the student body about the strategic plan.

A senator questioned why students do not have access to the Intranet; perhaps providing access could be considered.

K. Laurin indicated that she will be meeting with Amber Daley to discuss this matter and determine the best way to provide information to the students.

A senator requested clarification on the process for editing the current draft and K. Laurin responded that comments made at this meeting will be consulted but the current document will not be changed until all feedback has been collected and given to the Steering Committee who will then review the feedback and make a decision on a new draft.

D. Woolcott will be sending a memo on behalf of CAPP to invite opinions from the community to be collected and sent to the committee in September.

#### Roundtable discussions:

In general the document seems well accepted and there may only be a need to build in comments made at this meeting. As to whether there would be enough time for the academic community to respond, D. Woolcott indicated that a three month period to formulate and collect feedback seems adequate.

With respect to creating narratives, it is important that people be able to see their own stories. The redrafting group struggled with this because they wanted to start with the present rather than dwell on the past.

There is a need for support for mature students as their numbers seem to be shrinking. Stress should be placed on the Mount as a woman's academic institution and academic freedom should be highlighted. There is not much content in the term "academic experience" and therefore such terms should be removed. The Values should be incorporated more with the Goals permitting more flexibility in what should appear on the first page.

As some of the areas of the action plan can radically change the University we need to ensure an inclusive process for implementation.

Some senators expressed concern regarding the September deadline for submissions to the committee as some departments will not be able to meet until just before the comments are to be submitted.

One segment of the community that may have been overlooked is the Alumnae; the planning process could provide an opportunity to reconnect with them. A similar issue may exist in reaching this community as with reaching the students in that we may be connecting with only those who are interested.

D. Woolcott informed the Senate that suggestions are needed for a title for the Strategic Plan.

A suggestion was made to produce a summary of the discussion to be circulated to the Senate and titled as Draft notes of the Discussion of Senate.

3. Items for Communication

There were no items to be communicated at this time.

4. Adjournment

Moved by B. King, seconded by M. Whalen, to adjourn at 11:45 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sherrie Vanderaa