



# UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

## UNIVERSITY GOVERNANCE

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General Faculties Council  
Academic Planning Committee  
Approved Open Session Minutes

Wednesday, January 25, 2012  
3-15, UHALL  
2:00 PM – 4:00 PM

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### **ATTENDEES:**

#### Voting Members:

Carl Amrhein	Provost and Vice-President (Academic) and Chair, GFC Academic Planning Committee
Lorne Babiuk	Vice-President (Research)
Phyllis Clark	Vice-President (Finance and Administration)
Rory Tighe	President, Students' Union
Roy Coulthard	President, Graduate Students' Association
Deanna Williamson	Academic Staff Member, Member of GFC
Ernie Ingles	Academic Staff Member, Member of GFC
Joanna Harrington	Academic Staff Member, Member of GFC
Christina Rinaldi	Academic Staff Member, Member of GFC
Loren Kline	Academic Staff Member-at-large
Keith McKinnon	Academic Staff Member-at-large
Nathan Andrews	Graduate Student-at-large
Jessica Zvonkovic	Undergraduate Student-at-large

#### Non-Voting Members:

Gerry Kendal	Vice-Provost and University Registrar
Ed Blackburn	Member of the GFC Executive Committee
Bill Connor	Vice-Provost (Academic Programs and Instruction)

#### Presenter(s):

Carl Amrhein	Provost and Vice-President (Academic) and Chair, GFC Academic Planning Committee
Phyllis Clark	Vice-President (Finance and Administration)
Frank Robinson	Vice-Provost and Dean of Students
Rory Tighe	President, Students' Union (and Member, GFC Academic Planning Committee)

#### Staff:

Garry Bodnar	Coordinator, GFC Academic Planning Committee
Emily Paulsen	Scribe, GFC Academic Planning Committee

## **OPENING SESSION**

### 1. Approval of the Agenda

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Members agreed to the Agenda before them.

### 2. Approval of the Open Session Minutes of January 11, 2012

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Motion: Williamson/Harrington

THAT the GFC Academic Planning Committee approve the Minutes of January 11, 2012.
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**CARRIED**

### 3. Comments from the Chair

The Chair commented on a number of items of interest to members.

## **ACTION ITEMS**

### 4. Student Consultation Process Regarding Tuition, Residence and Mandatory Non-Instructional Fees (MNIF)

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

*Presenter(s):* Carl Amrhein, Provost and Vice-President (Academic) and Chair, GFC Academic Planning Committee; Phyllis Clark, Vice-President (Finance and Administration)

*Purpose of the Proposal:* To respond to a letter from the Students' Union requesting a set of principles regarding the introduction of any new Mandatory Non-Instructional Fees (MNIF); to respond to the request by the Minister of Advanced Education and Technology (AET) to provide information by February 1, 2012 on the consultation process with students regarding MNIF; to rescind the 'Church/Minsos' (ie, Board-approved) Motion of May 5, 2000 regarding MNIF; to approve a Motion that allows for a regular annual increase to MNIF of up to and including the Alberta Consumer Price Index (CPI) unless a greater increase is approved by the Board by separate Motion in a given year; and to receive for information the University's proposed consultation process with students regarding changes to tuition fees, residence fees, and mandatory non-instructional fees as reflected in the attached committee terms of reference.

*Discussion:*

Dr Amrhein provided background on the proposal, noting that when the Provincial Government dropped their yearly investment increase for the University from 6% to 0%, it created a large gap in the budget. He stated that the reason for the proposal before members (along with the accompanying proposed Terms of Reference for the three consultative groups noted therein) was to bring consistency to the consultation process with students regarding tuition and fee increases and ensure that the University's governance approval processes for tuition and fees are consistent with Provincial legislation and University policy and procedure. Dr Amrhein stated that there have been meetings with student groups on these issues since September, 2011, but there remained disagreement regarding the role student referenda would play in the

introduction of new student-related fees or increases to current fees. At this time, Dr Amrhein surrendered the chair to Dr Babiak in order to present the Administration's view of the proposal.

Vice-President Clark spoke of the great amount of work and consultation that had gone into their proposal, culminating in the plan to form a third Budget Advisory Committee, M-BAC or the Mandatory Non-Instructional Fee Budget Advisory Committee. This committee would be responsible for consulting, reviewing, considering, and discussing any University proposal to establish a new MNIF or any proposal to increase existing MNIFs at a rate above the Alberta CPI. Ms Clark noted that the Administration and students had agreed upon many of the essential issues except for the process of deploying student referenda. She concluded her remarks by stating that the Minister of AET had requested from the University of Alberta (along with other Alberta post-secondary institutions) a formal policy for dealing with MNIFs; nothing can be changed or newly implemented, however, without rescinding the so-called 'Church/Mingos Motion' on MNIF approved by the Board back in 2000.

Dr Amrhein continued the presentation by stating that it is inappropriate and could be construed poor governance practice to tie the hands of future Boards of Governors which the 'Church/Mingos Motion' does. He noted that if a Board were to overrule or disregard in any way the formal decisions of the student body reached by referenda, it fractures its relationship with student groups. Instead of referenda, Dr Amrhein proposed a process in which carefully-balanced advisory committees would thoroughly discuss issues related to fees and like matters, while at the same time respecting the ultimate authority of the Board of Governors.

Mr Tighe responded by speaking in the first instance to the financial strain that students are under, which greatly contributes to high levels of stress. By means of a PowerPoint presentation, Mr Tighe noted that MNIF at the University of Alberta were higher than the Canadian average. He stated that the purpose of the MNIF were to add value to the student experience, and the implementation of the CoSSS (Common Student Space, Sustainability and Safety) Fee that feeds into general revenue was, in his view, an abuse of the MNIF's' purpose. Mr Tighe emphasized that there needed to be a new way to regulate new fees introduced at the University. While Mr Tighe supported the budget advisory committees proposed by the Administration, he stated that it was not enough--although he acknowledged that final authority should reside with the Board, he countered that it was important for the Board to feel uncomfortable going against the wishes of the students. He was willing to concede that referenda might not always fit within the timelines needed for approval of new fees or increases to existing fees but encouraged further discussion on how this might be accomplished. Mr Tighe referenced several referenda for fees that students had considered and passed, citing these as cases in which students were properly informed of added value that can come with the introduction of a new fee.

Mr Coulthard remarked that MNIF are not a reasonable resource for raising large amounts of money for the University. He agreed that MNIF are designed to be value-added fees, while the CoSSS Fee was used to cover services that already existed. He cited this as an anomaly within the history of the University. Mr Coulthard supported the original Motion (ie, the 'Church/Mingos Motion') and stated that he saw no reason to change it—he noted he did approve, however, of the creation of the three advisory committees proposed by Administration.

Ms Clark commented that there would be an annual review for MNIF since the Administration takes its accountability very seriously.

Dr Amrhein reinforced that MNIF are regulated with direct student involvement. He emphasized that the Board does everything possible to maintain the quality of the University—this involves, on occasion, making extremely difficult decisions. Dr Amrhein stated that, without the CoSSS Fee, there would have

been considerable downsizing at the University. He emphasized that the Board must be free to act in their capacity as governors to make decisions in the best interests of the University of Alberta.

Ms Clark provided comment on why the Board has to treat the University in a business-like way. The University is required by law to submit a balanced budget on a consolidated basis; in the *Post-Secondary Learning Act (PSLA)*, the Government has the ability to force an institution into receivership, which would mean that the Governors and the Administration of the affected institution are deemed not fiscally responsible.

A member spoke to the terminology being used in the discussion, noting the essential difference between "consultation" and "consent" as well as "referendum" and "plebiscite." The member also noted that, along with students, faculty and staff are institutional stakeholders and that in the Canadian parliamentary system of government, one legislature does not bind the next. Mr Tighe responded by saying that the intention is not to bind the Board of Governors in the future but to allow students' voices to be heard and have some influence.

Motion: Amrhein/Rinaldi

Opposed: Tighe/Coulthard/Zvonkovic; Abstention: Andrews

THAT the GFC Academic Planning Committee recommend to the Board of Governors that the 'Church/Minsos' Board-approved Motion of May 5, 2000 regarding the Indexing of Mandatory Non-Instructional Fees be rescinded; and  
THAT the GFC Academic Planning Committee recommend that the Board of Governors approve the annual adjustment of all Mandatory Non-Instructional Fees (MNIF), as determined by Administration, up to and including the Annual Alberta Consumer Price Index and that the MNIF be reported for information to the GFC Academic Planning Committee, the Board Finance and Property Committee, and the Board of Governors on an annual basis.

**CARRIED**

At this point in the meeting, Dr Amrhein resumed the chair.

## **DISCUSSION ITEMS**

### 5. Green and Gold Week

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

*Presenter:* Rory Tighe, President, Students' Union (and Member, GFC Academic Planning Committee); Frank Robinson, Vice-Provost and Dean of Students

*Purpose of the Proposal:* To propose the creation of a Green and Gold Week during which academic-, career- and community-based programming takes place. To achieve this week, instructional days will not be scheduled in the week in which Remembrance Day falls.

#### *Discussion:*

Mr Tighe introduced the proposed Green and Gold Week to members by encouraging their open and honest comments. He emphasized that after receiving the results from the recent National College Health Assessment (NCHA) survey, it was clear that those issues related to student wellness and success needed to be discussed. He noted that Green and Gold Week was not intended as a 'fix-all' but as a progressive step in improving the student experience. Mr Tighe indicated that some staff had voiced doubt that students would participate in the co-curricular activities outlined in the proposal before members, but he

countered that students will do whatever they need to do in this week to relieve stress or to catch up on work. The break is planned to coincide with the Remembrance Day break at which time enough marks would be available to students that they could make informed decisions about their academic standing. In accordance with this, it was recommended that the Fall Term withdrawal deadline for courses be moved to the Monday following the break. Mr Tighe noted that mental health service use peaks at this time, and he encouraged the University of Alberta to be a leader in addressing these issues.

Dr Robinson noted that speakers at the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC) workshop on mental health held late last year (2011) referenced NCHA data from the University of Alberta, which signalled to him that there was a problem at this institution. He considered Green and Gold Week to be a proactive initiative to deal with problems affecting students in all years and in all Faculties. He noted there was a need to ensure the University did all it could to retain its students. Although there has been some criticism that the break comes too late in the Fall Term, Dr Robinson argued that the timing is right because, if it were earlier, the students would not have enough marks back to realize they needed some form of academic assistance.

Two members voiced support for the initiative but noted concern that change is difficult to execute and that professors will be reluctant to give up instructional days. One member also questioned whether there were plans to evaluate the impact of the week if and when it was implemented.

A member from the Faculty of Law noted that the Faculty had not been consulted and that this program would not fit well into the structure and academic programming of this unit. The member was concerned that the proposal encourages a 'one size fit all' approach that does not take into consideration the diversity of the University, including Faculties such as Medicine and Dentistry and Law which follow different calendars from those employed by Arts and Science. It was suggested that this break only be considered for students in the Faculties of Arts and Science.

A member stated that the week off would be detrimental to dental students since there are strict programming requirements for the number of clinical hours a dental student must fulfill. Beyond the scope of the dental program, the member voiced concern about the effectiveness of the break.

A member commented that Winter Term reading break was beneficial to students and staff but was concerned that a Fall Term Green and Gold Week would be too late of a wakeup call for students to make an impact. It was suggested that study skills and course management be provided to students earlier in the semester, a point on which several members agreed.

A member stated that graduate students use the existing Winter Term Reading Week effectively but expressed concern around how the Fall Term break's effectiveness would be evaluated.

Dr Amrhein indicated that there would be a discussion at the upcoming meeting of the GFC Executive Committee about whether this item would be appropriate for discussion at the March, 2012 meeting of General Faculties Council (GFC). Members suggested that this issue be taken, as well, to town hall-type meetings and to Faculty councils for discussion.

#### 6. Question Period

There were no questions.

### **INFORMATION REPORTS**

#### 7. Items Approved by the Committee by E-Mail Ballots

There were no items.

8. Information Items Forwarded to Committee Members Between Meetings

There were no items.

**CLOSING SESSION**

9. Adjournment

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 3:30 pm.