



General Faculties Council
Approved Open Session Minutes

Monday, January 25, 2021
Zoom Virtual Meeting
2:00 PM - 4:00 PM

ATTENDEES:

Statutory Members:

Ex-Officio:

Bill Flanagan
Chris Andersen
Dale Askey
Barbara Billingsley
Stanford Blade
Greta Cummings
Neal Davies
Steven Dew
Walter Dixon
Joseph Doucet
Fraser Forbes
Todd Gilchrist
Robert Haennel
Brenda Hemmelgarn
Shanthi Johnson
Matina Kalcounis-Rueppell
Elan MacDonald
Maria Mayan
Brooke Milne
Pierre-Yves Mocuquais
Kerry Mummery
Melissa Padfield
Steve Patten
Andrew Sharman
Demetres Tryphonopoulos
Jennifer Tupper

Elected Faculty:

Jason Acker
W. Ted Allison
J Nelson Amaral
Nicholas Beier
Pamela Brett-MacLean
Robert Burrell
Heather Coleman
Piet Defraeye
Michael Dyck
Anastasia Elias
Mary Forhan
Bill Foster
Michael Frishkopf

Basil Hubbard
Christine Hughes
Peter Hurd
Nat Kav
Jessica Kolopenuk
Hollis Lai
Pierre Lemelin
Kathleen Lowrey
Susanne Luhmann
Derek MacKenzie
Pirkko Markula
Sean McMurtry
Al Meldrum
Sue-Ann Mok
Roger Moore
Sarah Moore
Sujata Persad
Frances Plane
Elena Posse de Chaves
Cheryl Poth
Christina Rinaldi
Dan Romanyk
Keith Rourke
Victoria Ruetalo
Carolyn Sale
Susan Sommerfeldt
Eleni Stroulia
Kisha Supernant
Amy Tse
Alan Underhill
Mani Vaidyanathan
Akiko Watanabe
Jonathan White
Lynne Wiltse

Students:

David Draper
Katie Kidd
Sachiketha Reddy

Appointed Members:

Ricardo Acuna
Joel Agarwal
Susan Babcock
Samar Barazesh

Paramita Chaudhuri Basu
Chris Beasley
Dhir Bid
Amlan Bose
Karl Buchanan
Daniela Carbajal
Ashley Cardinal
Meijun Chen
André Costopoulos
Talia Dixon
Shannon Erichsen
Jennifer Fang
Shawn Flynn
Makboolee Fyith
Simran Ghoman
Shivani Gupta
Jill Hall
Simran Kaur Dhillon
Zaryab Khan
Harnoor Kochar
David Konrad
Rahul Korde
Janice Kung
Devshri Lala
Sharonne Lee
Christopher Lupke
Habba Mahal
Angie Mandeville
Lucas Marques
Adekunle Mofolasayo
Abner Monteiro
Emily Motoska
Gaser Nagah
Ana Oliveira
Yusuf Oliya
Jacob Park
Nicole Patrie
David Ren
Tyler Saretzky
Sarah Severson
Catrina Shellenberg
Aadhavya Sivakumaran
Andrei Tabirca
Shahed Taghian

Dehaghani
Frederick Tappenden
Edward Tiet
Dilini Vethanayagam
Mansimran Virk
Marc Waddingham
Adan Wang
Adrian Wattamaniuk
Donna Wilson
Adrienne Wright
Ding Xu
Moin Yahya
Minn-Nyoung Yoon
Xinxin Zhang
Francine (Yuheng) Zhou

REGRETS:

Ananya Ananya Sarkar
Adarsh Badesha
Marwan Burhani
Yiming Chen
Nicole de Grano
Eric Einarson
Gary Eitzen
Christian Fotang
Purna Hariharan
Marianne Jacquet
Emily Kimani
Khandaker Akib Shahriar
Lee Smith
Kristof Van Assche
Yan Yuan

Staff:

Brad Hamdon, General
Counsel and University
Secretary
Kate Peters, GFC
Secretary
Heather Richholt, Scribe
University Governance:
Ann Hodgson
Edyta McLoughlin
Laura Riley

OPENING SESSION

1. Approval of the Agenda

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Presenter(s): Bill Flanagan, President and Vice-Chancellor, and Chair of GFC

Discussion:

The Chair read the following territorial acknowledgement:

The University of Alberta resides on Treaty 6 territory and the homeland of the Métis. This territory is a traditional gathering place for diverse Indigenous peoples whose histories, languages and cultures continue to influence our community. To acknowledge the territory is to recognize the longer history of these lands. The acknowledgement signifies our commitment to working in Good Relations with First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples as we engage in our institutional work, uplifting the whole people, for the University for Tomorrow.

GFC Secretary, Kate Peters, observed that there were significant challenges with the voting platform at the December 7 meeting of GFC and thanked members for their patience. She explained that a full review of the functionality of the eClicker tool had been performed and the Governance team was working to establish a back-up process for use in the event that there were issues with the tool in future meetings. Ms Peters also explained the process for determining the number of voters present to establish a majority as the GFC Meeting Procedural Rules established that "Motions shall normally be adopted on a simple majority of members present" rather than a majority of votes cast.

The Chair noted that he had received a request to change the order of the items on the agenda and he was happy to move the discussion on remote delivery and assessment to the first discussion item. He also noted that he had been informed that a member wished to add an item to the agenda, which would require a two-thirds majority to approve.

Some members expressed support of adding the discussion item to the agenda so that members could have a fulsome discussion about collegial governance in order to seek clarity around decision making and to better understand GFC's role.

Motion: Wattamaniuk/Vaidyanathan

Motion from the floor

THAT the agenda include a special discussion item on, "Collegial Governance at the University of Alberta in Light of December events at GFC and the Board".

CARRIED

Motion: Wattamaniuk/Vaidyanathan

THAT the General Faculties Council approve the agenda as amended.

CARRIED

2. Report from the President

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Presenter(s): Bill Flanagan, President and Vice-Chancellor, and Chair of GFC

Discussion:

The Chair announced that he had approved the decision to continue with remote delivery for the Spring/Summer term and that the COVID-19 decision tracker would be updated accordingly.

Andrew Sharman, Vice-President (Facilities and Operations) and executive lead of the university's COVID-19 response provided an update on current public health measures and the impact on the university including:

- working from home when possible;
- research on campus;
- federal government's travel restrictions;
- the AHS alternate care centre in the Butterdome for use if needed;
- vaccinations;
- expectations for Fall semester; and
- the university's priorities of health and safety, and student progression.

The Chair noted that Andrew Sharman had been reappointed by the Board for a second five-year term as Vice-President (Facilities and Operations) beginning July 1, 2021. He also welcomed Elan MacDonald, the new Vice-President (External Relations) as of January 1, 2021. The Chair noted the upcoming launch of the search for a new Vice-President (Research and Innovation).

Dr Jonathan White, Chair of the GFC Nominating Committee provided an update on the replenishment process for GFC Standing Committees and asked members to apply for current and upcoming vacancies.

The Chair spoke about the Board's December 11 approval of the plans for academic restructuring at the university and his decision to recuse himself from the discussion and voting at the Board as he was unable to support GFC's recommendation.

A member expressed the opinion that GFC had not been adequately informed of the Chair's position nor given the financial information needed to support it.

A motion to extend the meeting was made from the floor.

Motion: Coleman/Stroulia

Motion from the floor

THAT the meeting be extended to 5:00 p.m.

CARRIED

CONSENT AGENDA

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Consent Agenda Mover and Seconder: Dew/Padfield

3. A. Approval of the Open Session Minutes of November 23, 2020
B. Approval of the Open Session Minutes of December 7, 2020

THAT General Faculties Council approve the open session minutes of November 23, 2020.

CARRIED

THAT General Faculties Council approve the open session minutes of December 7, 2020.

CARRIED

4. New Members of GFC

TO APPOINT:

The following undergraduate student representative to serve on GFC for a term commencing January 25, 2021 and ending April 30, 2021:

Ashley Cardinal Faculty of Native Studies

CARRIED

TO RECEIVE:

The following statutory ex-officio member, to serve on GFC for a term of office beginning January 1, 2021 and extending for the duration of the appointment:

Elan MacDonald Vice-President (External Relations)

The following statutory faculty member to serve on GFC for a term of office beginning January 1, 2021 and ending June 30, 2021:

Moin Yahya Faculty of Law

CARRIED

DISCUSSION ITEMS

5. Remote Delivery and Assessment

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Presenter(s): Steven Dew, Provost and Vice-President (Academic); Wendy Rodgers, Deputy Provost; John Nychka, Vice-Provost (Learning Initiatives)

Discussion:

The Chair made a note of the important work students had undertaken to raise these issues and indicated that the Council on Student Affairs (COSA) had approved three motions concerning remote learning at their meeting of January 14. He explained that those motions would come to GFC Executive Committee on February 8 and then to GFC on February 22. He also noted that the GFC Committee on the Learning Environment would discuss remote learning and assessment at their meeting of February 3.

Dr Dew acknowledged the work of the International Students' Association and the Students' Union. He noted that the main issues were for students who were learning remotely in a different time zone or who had connectivity issues when synchronous participation was required, and that the university was committed to the development of better practices to support students and instructors with these challenges.

Dr Rodgers spoke about the unexpected and profound challenges on students and instructors related to the COVID-19 pandemic and the move to remote learning and assessment in March 2020. She emphasized the need for effective reporting of issues and robust response and solutions. She noted that she welcomed the opportunity to discuss these matters.

Dr Nychka indicated that the pedagogies required for remote learning were different than those for in person learning but that students and instructors alike were working to address challenges under less than ideal circumstances adding that it was critical that barriers were addressed.

Members and presenters expressed comments questions, responses, and comments, including but not limited to:

- disappointment that GFC had been spending so much time on procedural issues instead of focusing on important matters;
- frustration that no firm policy decisions had been made related to remote learning and assessment;
- concerns with the continued use of online proctoring for exams since it had been proven to be discriminatory;
- whether or not a student's time zone should be considered as a protected ground under the university's Discrimination, Harassment and Duty to Accommodate Policy;
- the opinion that participation grades were unfair given the challenges faced by students;
- the reflection that many students were struggling with mental health issues and not feeling supported by their instructors;
- the concern that many students were feeling that instructors were apathetic and lacking in compassion for their students;
- a request for "radical compassion" to meet student needs;
- observations that these were Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) issues since so many affected students were Indigenous, International, or students who parent;
- that mandated blanket solutions were needed to solve the problems;
- suggestions for mandatory professional development for instructors would help address these issues;
- an observation that, considering the power imbalance between instructors and students put the onus on the students who may be vulnerable;
- a reference to the collective agreement and the instructor's freedom to determine how to best teach and assess their students;
- that instructors should be given proper supports and encouraged to find creative solutions to issues;
- that privacy and copyright concerns were manageable and did not necessarily prevent the recording of lectures;
- that some graduate students were also working as instructors and facing pressure from both roles;
- the added challenges related to the budget cuts and the COVID-19 pandemic in general;
- that mental health and wellness were key issues that needed to be addressed;
- the opinion that insistence on synchronous delivery and assessment through participation grades for students who live in other time zones was inequitable;
- that the quality of education was a key concern and that these were systemic issues that needed to be addressed by the institution;
- an opinion that putting the onus on the students or the individual instructor to deal these issues was like insisting that the oppressed do the work of anti-racism;
- a request that "radical compassion" also be extended to the instructors who had been asked to pivot to remote learning in an emergency situation and were facing extreme workload increases at the same time as supports were being cut;
- an observation that even though this was the first time that GFC was having this conversation, the university had been working on these issues since March across all Faculties and support units;
- that the collective agreements were made in a non-pandemic time and that adjustments may need to be made in order to deal with the emergency situation;
- an acknowledgement that everyone in the community had been affected by the pandemic and the budget cuts and that the university needed to do more to support students;
- a request for understanding and patience from students as instructors face a change of unprecedented magnitude and are working as hard as they can;
- the problems with incomplete information and requests for accurate reporting of time zones, expectations, and student needs;
- that some courses may require proctored exams due to the nature of the material and the type of learning being assessed;
- an observation that student needs and preferences were complex and wide-ranging and that instructors were doing their best to be responsive within reasonable limits;

- a suggestion that a task force be established to work on these complex issues, find solutions, and report back to GFC;
- an appeal to ban online proctoring because it was discriminatory and should be addressed centrally through policy;
- a caution against allowing the discussion to devolve into a student versus instructor conflict and reinforcing that everyone needed to work together; and
- that teaching, learning, and assessment all had to change in order to be successful in the remote environment.

During the discussion, when the hour of adjournment was approaching, a motion to extend the meeting was made from the floor.

A motion to adjourn the meeting until February 8, 2021 was also made from the floor during the discussion. A member spoke in favor of the motion because this conversation and the conversation on Collegial Governance were both critical. A member suggested that GFC instead schedule a special meeting with the single item of a discussion on collegial governance. The motion was put to a vote and carried.

Toward the end of the discussion, a member attempted to propose motions from the floor related to remote teaching and assessment. The Chair explained that there were similar motions coming forward to GFC from the Council on Student Affairs (COSA) and that, in accordance with GFC Meeting Procedural Rule 2.5, it was too late in the meeting to debate new business since GFC had already been sitting for more than 3 hours.

At several points in the discussion members attempted to raise points of order because they felt that comments were disrespectful and not collegial. Each time the Chair reminded members that points of order were meant to address breaches of specific procedural rules and the discussion continued.

Dr Rodgers noted that she heard a lot of stress and distress coming from members throughout the discussion. She assured members that the Office of the Provost and the Office of the Dean of Students were working to address these urgent issues.

Dr Nychka pointed out that many instructors were working hard at how to be effective in the remote environment. He also noted that the GFC Committee on the Learning Environment would also be addressing remote learning in their meeting the following week.

Motion: Dixon/Konrad

Motion from the floor

THAT the meeting be extended until 6:00 p.m.

CARRIED

Motion: Lupke/Amaral

Motion from the floor

THAT General Faculties Council adjourn the meeting until February 8, 2021 at 2:00 p.m.

CARRIED

The meeting adjourned at 6:00 p.m. to resume on Monday, February 8, 2021, at 2:00 p.m.