



**Meeting of the Board of Regents
May 12, 2020
Minutes**

The spring meeting of the Board of Regents of Mount Allison University was held on Tuesday, May 12, 2020, beginning at 9 a.m. ADT via Webex.

The following Regents were present: Jean-Paul Boudreau, George Cooper (Chair), Jane Craighead, Sarah Crawford, Mark Fraser, Brent Hawkes, Paul Henry, Cheryl Hodder, Vett Lloyd, Lynn Loewen, Susan Mclsaac, Dan Nowlan, Everett Patterson, Jill Rafuse, Odette Snow, Brent Spencer, Phil Tibbo, Yana Titarenko, Lisa Yarmoshuk, Andrew Wilson, Peter Winters, and Sarah Young.

The following non-Regents attended: Brandon Blakeney and Jonathan Ferguson ((incoming student representatives); Jeff Ollerhead, Provost and Vice-President, Academic and Research; Kim Meade, Vice-President, International and Student Affairs; Robert Inglis, Vice-President, Finance and Administration; and Gloria Jollymore, Vice-President, University Advancement.

Call to Order

Mr. Cooper called the meeting to order.

He welcomed incoming students Brandon Blakney and Jonathan Ferguson to the meeting and acknowledged this was Everett Patterson and Yana Titarenko's last meeting and thanked them for their service.

Acknowledgement of Aboriginal custodianship

Mr. Cooper acknowledged the Aboriginal custodianship of the land on which the University is situated.

Mr. Cooper asked if there were any items on the consent agenda that Regents wished moved to the regular agenda.

Mr. Spencer asked that the Finance and Administration Committee report be moved to the regular agenda.

A) Consent Agenda

The agenda was approved as revised.

Included in the consent agenda were the minutes of the meeting of February 7 and reports from the following Board committees: Executive, Investment, Property and Facilities, Student Affairs, and University Advancement.

B) Regular Agenda

3. Report from President's Cabinet

Dr. Boudreau remarked that under normal circumstances today would have been the day after our Convocation ceremonies, but so much has changed in our world over the past couple of months.

Dr. Boudreau said that the focus has been on mitigation and planning around the COVID-19 pandemic. In times like this it calls for extraordinary engagement and commitment and remarked how his Cabinet colleagues have personified this; how our academic leaders, faculty, and students have stepped up in extraordinary ways to get us successfully through the winter semester; and acknowledged and thanked the unions on campus for their co-operation over these past weeks and months.

The spring/summer term is underway, with 35 courses being offered — 15 more than normal, and planning for the fall has begun. To support the planning process for the fall, 15 working groups have been formed to work with cabinet, council, and Board committees. The themes included are academic planning, infrastructure, communications, high school engagement, and health and well-being of our community.

Included in the material is a chronological listing of events/items of interest to provide a snapshot of where we've been over these past weeks.

It is important that we remain optimistic for the future, even though COVID-19 is a significant and massive disruptor. It is a difficult situation that is affecting our financial well-being in significant ways.

There will be fewer students coming to Mount Allison this year. We hope to capture as many of the returning students as possible. There will not be the same number of international students. There are significant issues around international borders and the New Brunswick borders with the remainder of Canada. These are unprecedented challenges. We must keep our focus on higher education and remind people of the value of an undergraduate degree.

Academic planning for the fall is being led by the provost in consultation with faculties. The plan is designed to create a hybrid model, offering both digital online courses as well as some in-class options/elements, while taking into consideration the public health parameters.

Communications is a focus with our community, donor community, and our special friends. The student affairs team is engaged in creative communication with students and potential students, with a focus on answering questions.

Government relations is a high priority — federally, provincially, and locally. The President noted that he has reached out to the Minister of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour concerning the borders and their importance to Mount Allison planning for the fall. Cabinet members are partaking in sector engagement with university partners in the region and beyond.

The process for the appointment of the next Provost and Vice-President Academic and Research was completed in April and this has been announced to the community. Dr. Jeff Hennessy will join Mount Allison on July 1.

The virtual Conferring of Degrees will be held on Monday, May 25. A committee was formed to focus on celebrating the Class of 2020 to ensure their experience, despite this unique situation, will be one that is positive and commensurate with the values we hold high at Mount Allison.

Fulsome discussions were had on the following matters:

- The closures of New Brunswick borders and the percentage of students from outside of New Brunswick;
- The delivery of courses in the fall and additional information on the hybrid model;
- Factors that will impact enrolment;
- New initiatives for incoming and returning students;
- To use this situation to create/leverage opportunities, creativity, and innovation, that support not just 2020-2021 but beyond; and
- The relationship between the University and the Town and the importance of community engagement.

2 a) Finance and Administration Committee Report

The Chair of the Finance and Administration Committee, Brent Spencer, said it is important that the Board understand the financial challenges the University is facing.

Mr. Spencer advised that the administration, in March, in early recognition of the potential financial challenges, extended the University's line of credit from \$11 million to \$25 million.

Mr. Spencer commented on the major items within the table outlining the year-end projection results as of April 30, which showed that the year began with an approved deficit of \$809,000 and there is a projected deficit of \$390,000, at this time, but this could still change as there are still year-end adjustments to be made.

Mr. Spencer said, in addition, the following will impact finances going forward: the impact/volatility on the endowment fund and, in turn, the spending allocation and the things that it supports (i.e. financial aid). He also noted that the perception of the endowment fund can be misleading as there are restrictions on the use of funds and spending allocation; the defined pension plan is affected by market volatility and lower market values, therefore affecting the University contributions, resulting in increases; and the implications of a small first-year class and the resulting four-year issue.

Mr. Spencer said the University resources are finite and this will require a lot of difficult decisions to be made — prudent stewardship of the University funds and operations to mitigate, to the extent possible, the financial hardships. (i.e. reduce the deficit and keep cash flow in check). The decisions, while necessary in the short term, will be done with a longer-term perspective.

Mr. Spencer said that normally this would be the meeting where the Board considered approving the annual budget for the year ending April 30, 2021. However, given the

uncertainty and unknowns at this time, it was felt that it was prudent to defer the budget's approval. The Executive Committee upon the recommendation of the Finance and Administration Committee, has approved specified spending in the general operating, ancillary, and special purpose funds for the period May 1 through July 31, 2020, based on 2019-2021 budget levels, and an approval process for spending required as a result of COVID-19 is needed to mitigate the impact of COVID-19.

A fulsome discussion was had, and the following matters were touched upon:

- The long-term impact of decisions being made — not to adversely affect opportunities;
- Endowment funds and the question of potential flexibility of Board-restricted endowments;
- Long-term sustainability of the endowment fund;
- Potential use of long-term debt — vehicles available and capacity to do so;
- Flexibility/wiggle room — where would this come from when there is virtually no way to increase revenues, reduce expenses, and deal with the budgetary shortfall — what parameters are there to guide that discernment;
- Financial implications for the athletics department;
- Financial fragility of returning students; and
- Fund raising — the importance of the University to demonstrate stewardship of the University's finances to donors.

It was noted that these kinds of conversations need to be had in order to understand the landscape in which the University is dealing, the tools available, realities and restrictions, while exploring short-term, medium-term and long-term implications.

4. Report from the Board COVID-19 Advisory Committee

Mr. Cooper said the COVID-19 Advisory Committee has been duly constituted by the Executive Committee. An initial ad-hoc committee had been established on March 11 and had met daily for several weeks to provide support and act as a sounding board for the President and Cabinet. The Committee's terms of reference and membership was circulated with the material.

The administration organized and safely executed the wind-down of operations on campus, including the evacuation of 800 students in residence. In addition, the administration and faculty had to devise a way to complete the academic year — to be able to deliver the courses and provide students with the opportunity to finish their year. The Provost, faculty, and the Mount Allison Faculty Association worked co-operatively to achieve this.

In the latter part of April, management's focus switched from the immediate to what needs to be done to plan for the next 3-18 months. At that time the COVID-19 Advisory Committee was formally constituted. This is a proxy committee for the Board to ensure that the duty of stewardship, due diligence, and fiduciary duties are adequately managed.

Mr. Cooper said that he is committed to a regular program of communications to the Board.

The following issues were discussed.

- Working to strengthen the relationships with faculty through consultative exercises.

- The need for financial support for students to ensure they have access to financial aid to enable them to attend/return.
- The importance of communication with all groups within the University as we move forward.
- The role of student leadership in communication with students. The need to communicate matters of importance to students but also bring back communication so we understand what their needs are.
- To be careful what we promise as an institution — to ensure what we are proposing to do is doable and that we are all moving in the same direction.
- This is a critical opportunity for our community.

5. Other Business and Board Comments

Mr. Cooper opened the floor to comments at this time.

6. In Camera Session

The Board moved in camera.

Respectfully submitted,

Heather Bembridge
Assistant Secretary