

MOUNT ALLISON UNIVERSITY

Faculty Council Minutes

Monday, October 19, 2020

4 pm, on Teams

Members Present: J. Dryden (chair), G. Cruttwell (secretary), K. Bell, A. Beverley, C. Brett, G. Briand, B. Clayton, A. Cockshutt, K. Crosby, D. Douglas, J. Dryden, I. Ehrman, M. Farina, N. Farooqi, D. Fleming, D. Hamilton, K. Hele, J. Hennessy, C. Ionescu, K. Johnston, D. Keeping, H. Lane, R. Lapp, S. Law, M. Lee, M. Levesque, M. Litvak, C. Lovekin, C. MacDougall, V. Meli, E. Millar, K. Morse, R. Moser, J. Mullen, C. O'Neal, L. Pearse, R. Polegato, T. Reiffenstein, V. St. Pierre, E. Steuter, J. Tomes, L. Wasylikiw, A. Wilson

Observers: C. Burke, A. Fleming, L. Decker Hawthorne, A. Whiteaway

Regrets: P. Berry, B. Robertson

1. Land acknowledgment
2. Approval of the agenda.
 - One item was added to the agenda as item #5: a solidarity statement with the Mi'kmaq people regarding the current issues around fishing rights in Nova Scotia
3. Approval of the minutes of September 28 (attached).
 - The agenda was approved with one correction: Diane Keeping was present at the Sept. 28th meeting
4. Business arising.
 - The chair reminded everyone about the Teams channels that are available for "offline" discussion
 - In relation to the previous meeting's item on Indigenous faculty retention, it was noted that a plethora of requests for Indigenous positions have now been received at the Planning committee
5. The chair read the following statement: "As a community, Mount Allison University is mindful and aware that we are on the unceded lands of the Mi'kmaq people. We acknowledge, as well, that we are bound by Treaties of Peace and Friendship that have been, far too often, honoured in the breach or rejected outright by the state and Settler society. As a community, we call on the federal and provincial governments and all treaty people to respect the treaty rights and autonomy of the Mi'kmaw people. In our strongest possible terms, we condemn the rejection of these rights and the violence associated with it that we have recently seen in Nova Scotia and call on the federal and provincial government immediately take steps to ensure safety, justice, and the protection of Mi'kmaq lives and livelihood. At the same time, we understand that violence, marginalization, and the

suppression of Indigenous rights is not confined to Nova Scotia. We demand our own government to take steps to end violence against First Peoples and to recognize and protect treaty rights as part of the process of building a new relationship with between Canadians and First Peoples.

Faculty Council encourages Mount Allison faculty to respect the ways in which this violence and lawlessness may affect Indigenous students. We call on our community to not impose academic penalties for late work and to provide any needed wellness or academic support.”

6. Discussion of student concerns around academic programming, with presentation by MASU VP Academic Affairs, Charlie Burke. [*estimate: 25-30 minutes*]
 - Charlie Burke began by describing how she realizes that many of the concerns she presents may not be able to be addressed this term, but hopes that they will be taken into account when designing courses for the winter
 - There were four repeated concerns she has heard from students:
 - (1) Workload has increased, especially with many courses using many smaller assignments (rather than fewer larger assignments)
 - (2) Work is often spread across multiple platforms (Email, Moodle, Teams, etc.) and this can make it difficult to know what needs to be done when
 - (3) Some courses have switched back and forth between remote and in-person, making life difficult for students
 - (4) In first-year courses especially, many assigned questions have become “all or nothing” with no way to show work that has been done; thus students feel the grades they are getting for such questions do not always reflect their understanding of the material (for example, they may know how to do almost everything but then get 0 because of a small calculational error)
 - One response from a FC member was to note that things that may work well in one course (e.g., many small assignments) don’t always work well in aggregate, and so hearing this is very helpful
 - Another response was that in one course, students are the ones who have asked to go online, and this was the reason for switching
 - The provost noted that they are currently conducting a survey of students; while the survey is not yet complete, the results so far show some worrying trends, eg., 84% of students report a higher workload, only 40% have made connections with their instructors, 47% are enjoying their courses, 85% report more stress than previously
 - The chair noted that perhaps the November meeting would be a good place to co-ordinate issues across instructors
 - Ava Angelica Whiteaway, the science senator for MASU, reported some results of a survey she had taken of science students. One common trend was students finding it hard to focus on asynchronous courses; many would like to have at least one in-person contact a week for such courses. Another request was for the ability to print out and write midterms; related to this, students reported general exhaustion in terms of screen time. Students also reported finding it hard to separate leisure time and school time with everything happening in their place of residence. Another request was for a mixture of

small and large assignments, with students choosing their relative weighting. Many liked pre-recorded lectures. Many think that having structured and consistent assignment schedules is important. Finally, the idea of having 5 "flex days" per term (to be used as needed for submitting work late) was liked by many.

- There was some discussion about co-ordinating midterm dates; the Dean of science noted that this was already happening (and has been happening for a while) in Science.
- Several members thanked Charlie and Ava for the feedback and noted that we are listening and hope to change some things next term.
- The provost thanked faculty for listening to student concerns in this forum, and found it was something he hadn't seen before at other universities

7. New process for new program development (replacement for Policy #5901) (attached). [*estimate: 20 minutes*]

- The provost noted that this new process would only replace the "adding" part of policy 5901; the "deletion" part will also be looked at and perhaps separated out
- The current version is relatively old (2007) and needs updating; it is also not particularly inviting; the provost hopes the new process will be more inviting and friendly.
- The new process has been developed in consultation with the Program development officer and the Deans
- It involves an initial visioning stage (before discussion of curricular or resource issues) with feedback on the overall idea gathered first
- Details are then added, and then it goes on to the relevant bodies (eg., Planning, Academic Matters, Senate, MPHEC if necessary)
- It also makes the Academic development officer an integral part of the process
- The chair noted that a Teams channel will be made for discussion of this item
- There seemed to be general agreement that the new process looked good
- One comment in particular hoped that the Academic development officer position will continue, and is glad to see that big-picture thinking is being encouraged
- One question was for an estimate of how long the process would take; in response it was noted that it very much depends on the type and size of the proposal
- The program development officer noted that MPHEC has committed to speeding up their end of the process; this seems to have already been the case e.g., with the recent Women and Gender Studies proposal

8. Discussion of university support for UN Environment letter on climate change, with presentation by Barb Clayton and Divest MTA. [*estimate: 20-25 minutes*]

- Barb Clayton described how the goal was to get faculty council support for both the faculty petition from CAUT and more generally support for Divest MTA. The letter acknowledges a climate emergency and need for drastic societal shift to deal with it, and proposes important specific action

- Amelia Fleming, a member of Divest MTA, described Divests' recent activities, including meeting with administration last year. However, divestment did not happen as a result of this meeting, so now they are trying to get faculty support and assistance
- In response, it was noted that many years ago there was an environmental issues committee which tried to push for this kind of thing; however, action at the administrative or Universities Canada level seems scarce
- Barb noted that it seems as if there has been a recent shift of tone at the Board of Regents level at MTA, and they may be more receptive to this kind of thing now
- It was noted that this could be used to help with branding and differentiating the university, eg., by putting an emphasis on climate emergency curricula
- After discussion with the chair, it was decided to create a motion: "**To bring the divest letter to the board investment group with the support of faculty council**". The motion was moved by Barb Clayton and seconded by Krista Johnston. The motion passed with 25 for, 0 against, and 0 abstentions (38 voting members were in the meeting at the time).
- A second motion was then moved by Barb Clayton and seconded by Krista Johnston: "**Faculty Council expresses support for Divest MTA**". The motion passed with 20 for, 0 against, and 0 abstentions (34 voting members were in the meeting at the time).
- It was discussed that next steps would involve Divest bringing a motion to the Board investment group.

9. New Biopsychology Honours and Major programs (attached) [*estimate: 10-15 minutes*]

- Karen Crosby described how the Biology and Psychology departments had worked together to create these Honours and Major programs. Such a program did exist quite a while ago at MTA but was dissolved due to lack of biology faculty expertise in the area.
- She also noted that an elephant in the room was that existing biology and psychology programs are already full; however, they hope this program will cater to existing students
- The Dean of Science noted that this did indeed seem to be a program of interest to students, and Karen agreed, noting that students had expressed an interest via a survey they conducted

10. Adjournment.

- Occurred at 5:25