

MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY OF NEWFOUNDLAND SENATE

A special meeting of Senate was held on Tuesday, November 9, 1999, at 4:30 p.m. in Room E5004.

29. PRESENT

The President, Dr. E. Simpson, Dr. K. Keough, Dean I. Bowmer, Mr. G. Collins, Acting Dean C. Doyle, Dr. E. Dow, Ms. M. Chalker (for Mr. R. Ellis), Dr. C. Higgs, Dean G. Kealey, Acting Dean C. Leonard, Dr. C. Loomis, Dean R. Lucas, Dean T. Murphy, Dr. C. Orchard, Dean R. Seshadri, Dr. M. Volk, Professor H. Weir, Dr. A. Aboulazm, Dr. R. Adamec, Dr. J. Ashton, Professor P. Ayres, Dr. G. Bassler, Dr. J. Bear, Dr. G. Clark, Professor M. Coyne, Dr. D. Craig, Dr. J. de Bruyn, Mrs. C. Dutton, Dr. J. Evans, Dr. J. Finney-Crawley, Dr. S. Ghazala, Dr. D. Goldstein, Mr. D. Howse, Dr. H. Hulan, Dr. M. Kara, Dr. R. Klein, Professor K. Knowles, Professor V. Kuester, Dr. V. Maxwell, Dr. J. McLean, Dr. M. Mulligan, Dr. H. Pike, Dr. N. Rich, Dr. G. Sabin, Dr. C. Sharpe, Dr. D. Treslan, Dr. D. Tulett, Dr. R. Venkatesan, Professor D. Walsh, Dr. B. Watson, Mr. B. Whitelaw, Dr. P. Wilson, Ms. M. Mack, Mr. P. Barnes, Ms. L. Borden, Mr. K. Dunne, Mr. B. Harvey, Ms. N. Oldford, Ms. N. Pike, Mr. D. Tarrant, Ms. T. Pearce.

30. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Dean W. Blake, Ms. F. Delaney, Dr. M. Laryea, Dr. W. Locke, Dr. S. Saha, Dr. P. Sinclair, Mr. D. Newton.

31. The Future of the University Calendar

Dr. Simpson, Chair, Senate Committee on Academic Planning, began the meeting by reminding Senators that at the last special meeting of Senate held on March 9, 1999 it was suggested that the Committee on Academic Planning should strive to include budget and resource issues in its planning. Discussions have since been held between the Academic Planning Committee and the Advisory Committee on the University Budget and as a result terms of reference for a new committee will be forwarded to the Committee on Committees and then to Senate for consideration. If adopted by Senate the new committee will result in a considerably enhanced

role for the Senate in helping to shape academic programmes and the ways in which we find resources for the future.

Dr. Simpson then introduced the topic for today's meeting, "The Future of the University Calendar" by explaining that some of the strategies that emerged from the University Forum in May referred to (1) the development of plans for improving our image with the outside world and facilitating the exchange of information within the University, and (2) simplifying academic regulations throughout the University to make them more transparent.

He noted that in this regard many of the following questions might be explored:

Is the calendar viewed as a research tool to be consulted occasionally or is as a functional guide?

Is it possible to render the University's curriculum, policies and procedures in plain, accessible language?

Is it possible, or even desirable, for a University's rules to have standard meaning from unit to unit? For example, honours programmes in Arts and Science require more depth than general programmes whereas honours programmes in Business or Music require higher academic standing but not greater depth.

He suggested that it should be identified what the purpose of the calendar is. Reasonable hypotheses might include identifying it as:

- * a formal statement of the curriculum
- * the official statement of policies and procedures
- * a key promotional instrument
- * information to guidance counsellors
- * a handbook for students.

Can any publication reasonably expect to achieve all of these objectives?

In answer to a question from a Senator regarding whether Dr. Simpson has examined a calendar which is the ideal type, Dr. Simpson replied that he does not have a specific model in mind. He added that Memorial's calendar is similar to most calendars –

frustrating and hard to navigate. Dr. Simpson concluded his opening remarks by reminding Senators that if the calendar has grown unwieldy over the years, it is no one person's fault but perhaps the responsibility of all of us. He asked that during the discussion we have a little fun but treat the calendar lovingly.

A broad ranging discussion involving a large number of Senators then took place. Following is a list, illustrative but not exhaustive, of opinions expressed:

- o Many students have difficulty interpreting calendar regulations.
- o Students rarely use the calendar, and when they do, they become frustrated by it.
- o The purpose of the calendar is (i) a formal statement of the curriculum and (ii) the official statement of policies and procedures.
- o There are a number of policies and procedures such as the Student Complaints Procedures which should be included in the calendar.
- o A stripped down version of the calendar should be provided to Guidance Counsellors.
- o The section of the calendar which causes most confusion is the one dealing with Regulations. The second area of confusion is the section dealing with scholarships. The section dealing with Programmes does not need improvement. If there is to be a focus on areas which need improvement, then that focus should be on the section dealing with Regulations. The index is also in need of improvement so that students or advisers can find what they want quickly.
- o The calendar is too large. Divide it into subsets and look at the common elements in each subset. It should be readable and meet the concerns of users. A question and answer type document which would guide the user from one section to another would be useful.
- o The calendar could be divided into separate stand-alone parts, e.g. undergraduate, graduate, general regulations.
- o Memorial has 15,000 students who are registered for more than 100,000 registrations per year with 2,500 graduating students each year. The number of appeals received is relatively small considering that amount of activity. Re-writing the calendar would mean more appeals, not fewer.

- o There are knowledgeable people on campus who understand the calendar and are able to advise students. Caution against re-writing the calendar to get away from legalese.
- o The "Guide to First Year Courses" could be amended for high school guidance counsellors.
- o The legal language of the calendar is very important in litigation. To remove the legalese could leave the University open to legal action.
- o One issue concerning the production of the calendar is that of cost. If the calendar should be divided into subsets, and they are amended as frequently as is the calendar, then extra expense would be incurred. A possibility would be to produce a document similar to the current calendar which would be printed cheaply on newsprint and which can be amended readily at minimum cost.
- o Memorial is a large comprehensive university and as a result we have a large complicated calendar. It is wrong to state that we can simplify the calendar language and make fundamental programme changes at the same time. Diversity of programmes is not a bad thing. Memorial has always enjoyed a wide variety of programmes, with differing programme regulations. If one wants to find the regulations for an honours programme in Arts or Science for example, it is easy to do so.

Dr. Simpson closed the meeting by noting that the discussion has shown that changing the calendar is going to be a difficult task. As soon as an examination of the language begins it becomes necessary to look at academic import. It may be easier to correct certain parts of the calendar than the whole document. There is a desire to represent ourselves and our objectives clearly, both to ourselves and to the external world as we pursue the feasibility of simplifying not only the language of the calendar, but academic regulations themselves.

The President asked that the Senate Committee on Academic Planning take the comments from this meeting into consideration during their discussions and advise Senate of the outcome.

32. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 5:40 p.m.