

SENATE MINUTES

NOVEMBER 13, 2001

A special meeting of Senate was held on Tuesday, November 13, 2001, at 4:00 p.m. in Room E5004.

25. PRESENT

The President, Dr. E. Simpson, Dr. C. Loomis, Dr. T. Daniels (for Professor A. Fowler), Dean W. Blake, Dean I. Bowmer, Mr. G. Collins, Mr. R. Ellis, Dr. T. Gordon, Dr. C. Higgs, Dean G. Kealey, Dean R. Lucas, Mr. L. O'Reilly, Dean R. Seshadri, Dean L. Walker, Ms. D. Whalen, Dr. R. Adamec, Dr. J. Ashton, Dr. G. Bassler, Dr. M. Brosnan, Dr. G. Clark, Dr. C. Couturier, Professor M. Coyne, Dr. J. deBruyn, Mr. C. Dennis, Mr. E. Durnford, Dr. J. Finney-Crawley, Dr. R. Gosine, Professor M. Hackett, Dr. G. Herzberg, Dr. M. Kara, Dr. D. Kimberley, Professor K. Knowles, Professor V. Kuester, Ms. K. Lippold, Dr. D. McKay, Dr. M. Mulligan, Dr. H. Pike, Ms. D. Rehner, Dr. V. Richardson, Dr. D. Rideout, Dr. C. Sharpe, Dr. M. Skipton, Dr. D. Thompson, Dr. D. Treslan, Dr. J. Usher, Professor D. Walsh, Dr. B. Watson, Ms. L. Moss, Ms. B. Kitchen, Mr. K. Wiseman, Mr. J. Clements, Mr. A. Kennedy, Mr. J. Baker, Ms. G. Bell, Ms. J. Mahoney, Ms. J. Morgan.

Dr. M. Collins Associate Vice-President (Academic) and Mr. Paul Chancey, Acting Director of the Centre for Institutional Analysis and Planning were in attendance by invitation.

26. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Acting Dean J. Black, Dean B. Burnaby, Dr. C. Orchard, Dr. J. Evans, Dr. J. McLean, Dr. D. Neville, Dr. M. Paul, Dr. G. Sabin, Dr. W. Schipper.

27. Enhancing Student Success at Memorial

Dr. Simpson introduced the topic for the special meeting by reminding Senators of our Educational Mission as outlined in Launch Forth and as given below:

- o Memorial University recognizes a special obligation to educate the citizens of Newfoundland and Labrador...

- o The university is dedicated to providing a superior learning environment through responsive and innovative teaching, supported by excellence in research and scholarship, creative activity and service to the community.

- o The university is responsive to Newfoundland and Labrador's unique geographical, cultural and economic milieu and to the diverse needs of the student population of the province.

Dr. Simpson noted that there are many factors which affect student performance at Memorial, e.g. life experience brought to Memorial by different students with different degrees of readiness for the rigours of university life which may cause struggle and sometimes failure. Easing the transition of students to university is one of the major action items identified in the Strategic Framework, Action 2.2 of which states as follows:

"Take steps to make the transition from high school to university more manageable for our students and to achieve a higher retention rate in undergraduate programmes. In each of the next five years, measures will be undertaken to improve integration of students into the Memorial community and to enhance the quality of their academic and social life with a view to increasing retention by 2% per year for each year of study from admission to graduation."

To facilitate discussion, Dr. Simpson indicated that Mr. Paul Chancey, Acting Director of the Centre for Institutional Analysis and Planning, and Dr. Michael Collins, Associate Vice-President (Academic), had been invited to make presentations and answer questions relating to the topic. Dr. Simpson suggested that the response and discussion by Senators will help shape the development of a university retention plan, and a success plan for students which will be brought back to Senate for consideration in the new year.

Mr. Chancey presented a summary of analyses conducted by CIAP over the past few years on student performance at Memorial. These

analyses included the graduation rates of Memorial students, a comparison of the graduation rates of the MacLean's group of comprehensive universities, the semester performance of new matriculants as well as the results of a first year student survey conducted by CIAP in Spring 2001 covering such topics as transition, preparedness, orientation, services and satisfaction.

Dr. Collins presented an overview of a retreat for Deans and Directors held recently, the objectives of which were:

- * To raise awareness regarding retention and time to graduation issues, the principles of effective retention, and best practices.

- * To get deans/directors considered views about long- and short-term strategic priorities for retention.

- * To use the information and insight provided by the retreat to facilitate the development of a retention plan for Memorial University.

Following the presentations Dr. Simpson invited comments from Senators, noting that because retention has so many dimensions our limited resources should be focused where they will do most good. In order to guide the discussion, he suggested that Senators might wish to focus on areas where student attrition is highest, the transition from high school to University. Some possible topics in this area might include more direct entry programmes with promotion requirements, cluster registration, problem courses and orientation to name a few.

A broad ranging discussion involving a large number of Senators then took place. The following is a list, illustrative but not exhaustive, of comments and suggestions made:

- * Some Senators suggested that further research is needed regarding orientation as a predictor of student performance, and as an example, there should be a breakdown of performance for those attending orientation and those not attending for both urban and rural students.

- * Much more attention must be paid to the competing demands placed on students who work to finance their education. In order to

succeed, this group of students will need better counseling and academic advice to achieve the proper balance between course load, work load and other elements of student life.

- * At the same time, if some students reduce their course load in order to work or for other reasons, there should be no reduction in the quality of our courses and programmes or our expectations of excellence.

- * It was suggested that the changes to the Common Core Mathematics Curriculum in the Atlantic provinces will reduce the time allowed for calculus readiness in high school, with the potential for even higher failure rates in first-year mathematics.

- * Noting the importance of family and friends in the adjustment of new students to university life, several speakers suggested that maintaining the Fall semester break is an important consideration.

- * Another theme which emerged was the need to promote a sense of community where students feel connected to faculty and staff and to each other. In this regard the results of the McConnell project entitled "The Scholarship of Learning" will be interesting.

Following the discussion, Dr. Simpson commented that the points raised by Senators reinforced the notion that retention having many aspects, is a complex issue. However, an attempt will be made to separate the issues and provide solutions for the consideration of Senate.

The President thanked all those who had prepared the materials for the presentation, and particularly Mr. Chancey, Dr. Collins and Dr. Simpson for having helped Senate focus on this very important issue. In closing the President noted the following:

- * The load that students carry in their first year at Memorial is not just measured in the terms of courses taken. Students also carry an adjustment load which may impact on their ability to carry a full course load.

- * Senate must return to this important subject in the Winter Semester in order to consider the follow-through on the various topics raised so that the matter gets addressed and examined in its

entirety. The President expressed a wish to hear, in particular, from students, and he asked them to bring their thoughts to the attention of Dr. Simpson. He also noted that feedback from alumni regarding their experiences would be useful.

NOTE: Copies of the slides shown during the presentation are appended to these Minutes.

28 ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 5:10 p.m.