

MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY OF NEWFOUNDLAND
SENATE

The special meeting of Senate was held on September 29, 2020, at 4:00 p.m. via Webex.

13. PRESENT

The President, Dr. M. Abrahams, Dr. N. Bose, Dr. R. Shea (for Mr. G. Blackwood), Dr. S. Carr, Dr. J. Keshen, Dr. D. Hardy Cox, Dr. A. Surprenant, Dr. G. Watson, Dr. S. Bugden, Dr. I Dostaler, Dr. T. Fridgen, Dr. A. Gaudine, Dr. K. Goodnough, Dr. H. Hair, Dr. K. Jacobsen, Dr. K. Korneski, Mr. T. Nault, Dr. M. Piercey-Normore, Dr. L. Rohr, Dr. J. Simpson, Dr. I. Sutherland, Mr. P. Brett, Mr. C. Couturier, Dr. G. Cox, Dr. R. Croll, Mr. D. Duda, Mr. E. Durnford, Dr. G. Galway, Dr. S. Ganz, Dr. G. George, Dr. M. Haghiri, Dr. E. Haven, Dr. R. Haynes, Dr. E. Kendall, Dr. J. Lokash, Dr. S. MacDonald, Dr. S. Matthews, Dr. S. McConnell, Dr. E. Merschrod, Dr. J. Munroe, Dr. G. Naterer, Dr. S. O'Neill, Dr. K. Parsons, Dr. D. Peters, Dr. K. Power, Dr. C. Purchase, Dr. C. Schiller, Ms. H. Skanes, Dr. J. Westcott, Dr. R. Whitaker, Mr. H. Basemah, Mr. D. Dunphy, Ms. J. Richards, Ms. K. McLaughlin, Mr. D. Semerad.

Secretary of the Senate Committee on Undergraduate Studies (Standing Invitation)

Shannon Sullivan

Dr. Mark Abrahams asked Senate for permission to have Dr. Aimee Surprenant, Associate Vice-President (Academic) and Dean, Graduate Studies, chair this special meeting of Senate.

It was moved by Dr. I. Sutherland, seconded by Dr. S. Matthews, and carried that Dr. Surprenant chair this special meeting of Senate.

Dr. A. Surprenant welcomed all Senators to this special meeting of Senate.

Land acknowledgement:

We respectfully acknowledge the territory in which we gather as the ancestral homelands of the Beothuk, and the island of Newfoundland as the ancestral homelands of the Mi'kmaq and Beothuk. We would also like to recognize the Inuit of Nunatsiavut and NunatuKavut and the Innu of Nitassinan, and their ancestors, as the original people of Labrador. We strive for respectful partnerships with all the peoples of this province as we search for collective healing and true reconciliation and honour this beautiful land together.

Dr. A. Surprenant noted that it would be appreciated if you please introduce yourself and your constituency when addressing Senate. Keep your microphone on

mute unless you are speaking. If you wish to speak on an item, please use the comment feature in WebEx to identify that you wish to speak. The chat feature should only be used to request to speak on a motion. Please do not engage in debate or other discussion in the chat. For motions of substance, we will use the WebEx feature. You will have approximately 30 seconds to vote on each motion. Senators who are calling in will not be able to vote. In the event of a close vote, Senators on the phone will be asked to verbally vote by roll call.

14. **APOLOGIES**

Dr. S. Knight, Dr. M. Steele, Dr. A. Adey.

REGULAR AGENDA

15. **Recommendations for Winter 2021 Semester**

The Chair invited Dr. Mark Abrahams, Provost and Vice-President (Academic) *pro tempore*, to present this item.

It was moved by Dr. M. Abrahams, with the amendment that the phrase “instruction of all courses” in the first sentence of recommendation 1 be changed to “instruction of most courses”, and seconded by Dr. L. Rohr to approve these recommendations.

Recommendations for Winter 2021 Semester

- 1) Memorial’s winter semester will continue with remote instruction of all courses at all campuses of Memorial University. The University’s priority is to ensure the health and safety of its students and employees. This means in-person on-campus courses will not resume before May 2021. Memorial will use its best efforts to minimize any impact on student progression in their program.
- 2) Other limited forms of re-opening of on-campus activity in the winter semester will occur in a gradual, measured and safe manner that adheres to the NL government’s [COVID-19 Alert Level System](#) and provincial health authorities.
- 3) Academic units may submit a proposal to the appropriate Vice-President at Grenfell Campus, St. John’s campus and the Marine Institute for review to permit students onto campus in the winter semester.
- 4) If approved by Senate and Vice-Presidents Council, these principles will be communicated to the Memorial community as soon as possible.
- 5) These principles are not applicable to the Faculty of Medicine, Faculty of Nursing, and School of Pharmacy, nor internships and co-operative education.

Recommendations for Winter 2021 Semester (cont'd)

- 6) The above recommendations are subject to change at a later date if deemed necessary based on provincial health directives.

Dr. Abrahams noted that the University has received a lot of feedback regarding remote learning. In the current health environment it does not seem possible to re-open campus fully. The University is trying to follow health guidelines and maintain safety, while fulfilling the University's mandate.

Dr. S. Matthews asked for more information regarding recommendation 3. How are the proposals evaluated? Is there a partial in-person option? Is there a description of the criteria used for evaluating proposals?

Dr. Abrahams noted that the Provost's Office has relied on the Deans to be the filters for these proposals, and to ascertain in the first instance the pedagogical nature of the proposals. The proposals should clearly articulate why the course needs to be taught on campus. Thus far the University has been conservative with its approach to granting the proposals, and the turn-around time for decisions has been quick, usually within 48 hours.

Dr. E. Merschrod asked that criteria for proposals be drafted by the Provost and presented to Senate for their consideration.

Dr. R. Whitaker agreed that clear guidance on how to write a proposal for on campus teaching will be helpful. Moreover, Dr. Whitaker wondered if a motion to bring these recommendations, along with clear criteria for Recommendation 3, back to Senate at its next meeting was necessary. Dr. Abrahams stated that drafting criteria for Senate to see was not a problem, but the motion should not be held up. Dr. Whitaker suggested amending recommendation 3 as follows:

“The proposals will be evaluated in accordance with criteria approved by Senate.”

The amendment was moved by Dr. S. Matthews and seconded by Dr. S. Ganz.

Dr. I. Sutherland stated that he understands the spirit of the amended recommendation but is uncomfortable with it from a perspective of timing. The School of Music is already having recruitment and retention issues, and they cannot wait another two weeks to make statements to students. Already, Dr. Sutherland continued, all other Music schools are ahead of Memorial with their recruitment plans, and if we cannot start proposals for on campus learning until Senate approves the criteria that will put us even further behind.

Dr. Abrahams noted that their goal is openness and transparency, so he is happy to bring criteria back to Senate for consideration and suggestions. However, Senate is

Recommendations for Winter 2021 Semester (cont'd)

not approving the proposals, and the University needs to act now. Halting the proposal approval process will not be helpful.

Ms. J. Richards stated that students need to know where courses will be taking place, remotely or on campus, as soon as possible.

Dr. S. Matthews suggested revising recommendation 3 so it won't apply to the School of Music.

Dr. S. Ganz mentioned that Grenfell Campus and other campuses are in different situations. For example, they have many small classes that require in-person learning, and many of their students feel they would rather take the Winter semester off if they cannot meet on campus.

Dr. G. Curtis said he sympathized with the School of Fine Arts. In Grenfell Campus it is possible to offer large studios that can accommodate social distancing. He also stated that he too would like to see criteria, and is in support of an amendment that excludes the School of Music.

Dr. E. Kendall suggested separating the motions, as in, voting down the amendment and making a second motion.

Dr. S. Matthews withdrew the first motion to amend recommendation 3 and suggested a new motion to amend the third recommendation as follows:

"The proposals will be evaluated in accordance with criteria approved by Senate. The Provost will have discretion with respect to proposals from the School of Music."

It was moved by Dr. E. Merschrod and seconded by Dr. S. Ganz. However, Dr. M. Abrahams, who had moved the original motion, did not feel it was a friendly amendment, so Dr. Merschrod withdrew the motion.

Dr. I Sutherland then stated that he supports the original motion as it is, but urges the University to take significant steps to return students to campus as soon as possible. He said that students need to return and noted in particular that marginalized groups of students depend on the support they receive from the University community. Moreover, he stated that he did not feel comfortable with the School of Music being singled out.

Dr. S. Matthews raised the point of equity among students. Remote instruction for all is not equity. There are profound differences within the student population. There are socio-economic differences, technology differences, and access to private space differences. Sameness is not a sign of equity.

Recommendations for Winter 2021 Semester (cont'd)

Mr. D. Dunphy reminded Senate of overarching public health concerns associated with isolation and remote learning. The pandemic comes with a flood of mental health concerns. Online learning is not always a good option for students, especially those with underlying mental health concerns or unstable living/family situations. It is not a realistic option for many to complete the academic year remotely. It is unsafe to spend so much time alone in front of a computer screen. Students, and people in general, require social interaction.

Dr. D. Behm echoed Mr. Dunphy's concern, stating student physical and mental health is of great importance. In this province we have only a small number of active Covid-19 cases, and it seems like everything is under control. In this province the general public is allowed to go anywhere. Bars, restaurants, and shopping malls, for example, are all open for business, but MUN campus is closed. Some form of hybrid situation may work well. There should be more options than just shutting down campus.

Dr. G. Naterer supported the original motion, and he stated that in the Faculty of Engineering and Applied Science there is some in-person activity happening. He cautioned that the University needs to be able to pivot should another outbreak occur. The last time the University was reactive, but it is essential that we have plans to be more pro-active in the future.

The original motion, as stated with the amendment to the first sentence, was put to a vote and carried.

Following the vote, a second motion to amend the third recommendation was suggested, as follows:

"The proposals will be evaluated in accordance with criteria approved by Senate. The Provost will have discretion with respect to proposals submitted in the meantime."

It was moved by Dr. S. Matthews and seconded by Dr. R. Whitaker.

Dr. J. Keshen asked that Grenfell Campus be excluded from this amendment as they are making their own decisions through a committee with representation from all faculties.

Dr. R. Haynes wondered if there should be a deadline set for exemption proposals because students will need to know as soon as possible to help with registration decisions.

Recommendations for Winter 2021 Semester (cont'd)

Dr. I. Sutherland expressed dissatisfaction with the amendment. He stated that the proposals are quite labour-intensive and this amendment to wait for Senate's approval of the criteria seems to slow down the process.

Dr. M. Abrahams reminded senators that the purpose of reviewing these proposals is to weigh the pedagogical nature of the course against safety issues, so each proposal should include a contingency plan.

Ms. J. Richards stated that many students, especially first year students, are complaining that they are not getting enough from the remote learning situations. They feel that they are being left in the dark, and the quality of learning has gone down.

Dr. S. Matthews pointed out that timing implications should not worry senators, as the Provost is not encumbered to make decisions about proposals now. We are just bringing the criteria for proposals back to Senate for information.

Dr. T. Fridgen questioned how feasible it is to wait for Senate's input on the criteria when they do not meet again until October 13th, and then two weeks later students begin the registration process. Mr. T. Nault stated that the Provost has been asked to delay the start of registration by one week.

The motion to amend the third recommendation was put to a vote and carried.

16. Examination and Invigilation Guidelines for the Remote Learning Environment

The Chair invited Dr. Shannon Sullivan, Chair, Senate Committee on Undergraduate Studies, to present this item.

It was moved by Dr. G. George and seconded by Dr. T. Fridgen to approve this amendment.

At the September 10, 2020, meeting, the Senate Committee on Undergraduate Studies (SCUGS) reviewed this document, as requested by the University's Senate following its September 8, 2020 meeting, with special consideration given to the 12th bullet.

SCUGS was asked to consider changing the wording of this bullet, as some Senators felt that the phrase "Eating is not permitted" is too restrictive. After careful consideration members of SCUGS voted to revise the bullet in the following way:

- "Except where accommodations have previously been arranged with the course instructor, eating is not permitted, but a student is permitted to drink from a clear glass bottle."

Examination and Invigilation Guidelines for the Remote Learning Environment
(cont'd)

Senators raised the following points regarding 12th bullet of the Guidelines:

- Health reasons are not the only concern
- Students are busy with academics and job, and find it hard to get food in a timely manner
- The original rule regarding food was put in place, in part, to ensure exam security and preserve academic integrity
- It should not be the responsibility of the student to start the process for an accommodation

The motion to approve the amendment was put to a vote and failed.

Following the vote, Dr. S. Sullivan stated that this document should not be returned to SCUgS. That committee has already considered the issue and given their recommendation. It should now be left up to Senate to decide how they wish to proceed. They have to decide if they want to make another motion to edit the document or just leave the amendment out and move forward with the remaining pieces within the Guidelines.

17. Other Business

Dr. R. Haynes addressed Senate regarding decisions he had heard were made by the library to not purchase physical books this year in favour of online subscriptions. He was worried about the long-term effect this might have on the University's collections. He was also concerned about the lack of consultation with academic units regarding this decision. He was not aware that any consultation had taken place. As Senate is the largest academic decision-making committee of the University, Dr. Haynes felt they should be made aware of this potential issue and maybe should follow-up with the library to determine what decisions were actually made and how those decisions were finalized.

18. Motion to Adjourn

It was moved by Dr. I. Sutherland, seconded by Mr. D. Dunphy, and carried that the meeting be adjourned.

19. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 5:31 p.m.

CHAIR

SECRETARY