



GENERAL FACULTIES COUNCIL
Approved Minutes

Meeting #612

Thursday, January 13, 2022, 1:30 p.m.

By Zoom platform

Voting Members

E. McCauley, Chair	W. Bridel	I. Holloway	R. Pereyra	M. Tarailo-Graovac
Teri Balsler, Vice-Chair	I. Brodie	C. Hurrell	E. Perrault	T. Tombe
B. Adams	J. Brown	M. Husein	Q. Pittman	P. Toohey
A. Akbari	A. Burns	F. Jalilehvand	R. Plume	M. Van Hee
T. Akhtar	M. Cassis	N. Jarvis	T. Poffenroth	T. Vashchilko
O. Alp	R. Clements	J. Kortbeek	J. Poissant	A. Viczko
J. Anderson	A. Dambrowitz	R. Lauer	J. Priest	R. Walker
D. Ashby	S. Davidson	J-R. Leblanc	A. Qayyum	S. Weaver
G. Assefa	A. Dela Cruz	S. LeBlanc	M. Raivio	R. Weller
J. Ayala	J. Dewald	K.Y. Lee	L. Reid	P. Werthner
K. Baetz	V. Fast	M. MacKenzie	W. Rosehart	J. Winter
K. Baral	M. Fraser	E. Macphail	N. Schmidt	B. Wylant
S. Barker	D. Gereluk	M. McDonough	T. Shandro	R. Yates
M. Bauer	W. Ghali	J. Meddings	R. Sigurdson	M. Zhang
T. Beattie	J. Guo	A. Musgrove	D. Slater	M. Zytaruk
S. Benseler	M. Herring	L. Nowell	F. Smith	
J. Bergerson	C. Hogan	J. Pablo	D. Stewart	
C. Bousman	M. Hogan	A. Paquette	L. Stoffregen	

Guests

- R. Arsenault, Taylor Institute for Teaching and Learning & member of the USRI Working Group – present for Item 8
- W. Benoit, Faculty of Science & member of the USRI Working Group – present for Item 8
- A. Estefan, Co-Chair, USRI Working Group – present for Item 8
- N. Kenny, Taylor Institute for Teaching and Learning & member of the USRI Working Group – present for Item 8
- J. Lambert, Office of Institutional Analysis & member of the USRI Working Group – present for Item 8
- M. Smith, Vice-Provost & Associate Vice-President Research (Equity, Diversity and Inclusion) – present for Item 9
(and attends entire meeting as an Observer)
- R. Thompson, Associate Vice-President Research – present for Item 9 (and attends entire meeting as an Observer)
- J. Wiens, Faculty of Arts & member of the USRI Working Group – present for Item 8

Observers

- J. Alho, Associate Vice-President - Government and Community Engagement
- M. Hart, Vice-Provost & Associate Vice-President Research (Indigenous Engagement)
- J. Krygier, Faculty Association
- J. Lacasse, General Counsel
- C. McVie, Provost's Office
- A. Morris, Co-Interim Vice-President (Advancement)
- W. Therrien, President's Office

Secretary

L. Houle

Scribe

E. Sjogren

Staff

T. Hodzic
R. Kenny
C. Tutt

The Chair called the meeting to order at 1:33 p.m. and confirmed quorum.

1. Conflict of Interest Declaration

No conflicts were declared.

2. Inclusive Practice Moment

Susan Barker, Vice-Provost (Student Experience), presented a Territorial Acknowledgment and then highlighted the University's Inclusive Post-Secondary Education (IPSE) program, which provides university experiences to students with developmental disabilities. It was reported that the IPSE program embodies the University's values of inclusion and independence, that IPSE students attend convocation in a special hood and receive a certificate of completion, and that some IPSE students progress from non-credit courses to for-credit courses.

3. Remarks of the Chair

Ed McCauley, Chair, included the following in his remarks:

- Kristin Baetz, Dean of the Faculty of Science, Aziz Akbari, Management and Professional Staff representative, and Matthew Herring and Megan Raivio, Students' Union representatives, were welcomed on this occasion of their first General Faculties Council (GFC) meeting
- The impact of the Omicron variant of COVID-19 has led to adjustments to the delivery of the first part of the Winter 2022 term, and members of the University community were thanked for their flexibility
- The Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) has prepared an EDI Dashboard and Community Report, and these will help the University to make advancements in this area
- The Faculty of Kinesiology has been ranked as the top sports science school in North America in the Shanghai Ranking for the third straight year, and also rose to 10th from 11th in the world rankings. The Kinesiology leadership, faculty, staff, and students, who also contribute to the University's transdisciplinary initiatives in addition to disciplinary initiatives, were congratulated on this tremendous achievement.
- The search for a Chancellor for the University has launched, and the Senate will elect the new Chancellor in the spring
- Representatives of the University continue to engage with all levels of government. In the lead up to the provincial budget, representatives are communicating about the University's contributions to society and advocating for a reduction in post-secondary cuts and for infrastructure funding. Federally, the University is pursuing Canada First Research Excellence Fund (CFREF) and other funding, and is collaborating with other institutions to become a Prairies hub in biomanufacturing.

4. Remarks of the Vice-Chair

Teri Balsler, Vice-Chair, included the following in her remarks:

- COVID-19 continues to impact the University, and everyone's flexibility and patience as we continue to try to move out of pandemic mode is appreciated. Administrators are in the process of deciding the go forward plan past January 31 and a message will be sent to the University community as soon as possible.

- Virtual workshops on transdisciplinary scholarly lines of inquiry and the results of the recent survey on institutional priorities were held in December, and the Provost's office has teams working to move the University forward in these matters
- Searches for a Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Dean of the Faculty of Kinesiology, Dean of the Cumming School of Medicine, and a Vice-Provost (Student Experience) are underway, and information on these is available on the Provost's website

5. Question Period

In response to a question, it was explained that proper process was followed in determining to proceed with the discussion of the Universal Student Ratings of Instruction (USRI) Working Group's report at today's GFC meeting. This is an important topic and the USRI Working Group is ready to gather the GFC's valuable feedback on this. The grievance relating to the use of the USRI results is considered to be separate from the GFC's role in improving the USRI instrument, and it was emphasised that the report is only being presented for discussion by the GFC at this time.

6. Safety Moment

Mike Van Hee, Interim Vice-President (Finance and Services) - Services, presented on the Environment, Health and Safety (EHS) Dashboard Project, including that the EHS dashboard of incident and injury data and training and inspection completion data was rolled out in 2021 and that this data has been reviewed with several Faculties.

7. Approval of the December 9, 2021 Meeting Minutes

Documentation for this item was circulated with the Agenda. One amendment to the Minutes was reported.

In response to questions, it was reported that:

- When an answer to a question is provided directly to a GFC member, outside of a GFC meeting, it is not appropriate to append the correspondence to the GFC Minutes
- The submission to the provincial government in the summer of 2021 regarding the University's partnerships in China was from the Chair of the Board of Governors in response to a request from the Minister of Advanced Education, and it is considered inappropriate for a copy of this correspondence to be provided to the GFC. Briefing notes and presentations relating to this matter were provided to the Research and Scholarship Committee and the GFC in September and October 2021, respectively.

Moved/Seconded

That the Minutes of the General Faculties Council meeting held on December 9, 2021 be approved, with the reported amendment.

Carried

Jennifer Winter and Kristin Baetz abstained.

8. Universal Student Ratings of Instruction (USRI) Working Group Recommendations Report

Documentation was circulated with the Agenda. Leslie Reid, Vice-Provost (Teaching and Learning) and Co-Chair of the USRI Working Group, and Andrew Estefan, Co-Chair of the USRI Working Group, presented this item.

Highlights:

- The proponents provided an overview of the history of the USRI at the University, reported that a review and overhaul of the whole student feedback system is needed at this time, and described that the renewed system will:
 - Include a new questionnaire designed to gather meaningful information about student learning experiences
 - Provide support to instructors in receiving this feedback as an opportunity to learn and improve
 - Adopt current best practices and draw from research in course evaluations, particularly with respect to bias
 - Have better integration with technology and reporting platforms
- The proponents reported that the USRI Working Group's key recommendations include that:
 - The questionnaire should focus on student learning experiences, and not seek a rating of the course or instructor
 - The questionnaire should be renamed from the USRI to a name that better reflects its purpose
 - A new centrally-managed standing committee should be formed to oversee the development of a new questionnaire and then its ongoing maintenance
 - The new questions should be modern, flexible and customizable to context
 - A modern and responsive technology platform should replace the old ClassClimate platform
 - Communication relating to the questionnaire should be improved, especially regarding the importance of student feedback and how it will be used
 - Resources and materials to support students, instructors, and academic leaders should be developed
 - EDI practices and expertise should be embedded into all aspects of the renewed student feedback system
 - The renewed student feedback system should include opportunities for Indigenous Ways of Knowing and Being and for Indigenous practices to be included
- In response to questions, it was reported that:
 - The University is not going to build a new questionnaire platform, but will select an existing, reputable, and customisable platform
 - Some of the questionnaire platforms have question banks with questions written by student survey experts
 - It will be possible to bundle the new questionnaire with a Faculty's questionnaire

- The anonymity of responses is important, and so a questionnaire would not be administered in classes with a population less than 8 students
- Efforts to increase questionnaire response rates can include reminder messages and increasing awareness of the value of the feedback. The USRI Working Group is gathering information on what other institutions are doing to increase response rates.
- Most institutions have moved to an online questionnaire rather than a paper questionnaire, for accessibility and sustainability reasons, and this will be considered for the University
- It is expected that it will take 2-3 years to reach implementation of the overhauled student feedback system
- Discussion included:
 - There is appetite at the University to provide and receive meaningful feedback on student experiences
 - It is important that the purpose of the questionnaire be made clear
 - Having a customisable questionnaire is desirable for a number of reasons, including because some disciplines may be seeking the effective evaluation of program-specific student experiences. Being able to have different questions for undergraduate and graduate students would also be useful.
 - The new questionnaire must be accessible to all, including students with disabilities, and providing the option to give oral feedback would be valuable
 - The questionnaire should give a student the opportunity to express what is going well in their course as well as what could be improved
 - The University is one of the last institutions to revamp its USRI and doing so should be a priority for the University
 - New ways of teaching could be developed in response to student feedback
 - Teaching assistantship is a formative role for graduate students, and they will benefit from student feedback as well
 - Students need to be taught how to give productive feedback
 - It was suggested that the USRI Working Group's recommendations refer to addressing bias rather than eliminating bias
 - The questionnaire feedback will be useful to instructors for self-improvement, but students may find aggregated data useful when choosing their classes. The presenters indicated that access to the data will be determined by the future standing committee.

9. Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) in the Research Portfolio - Dimensions Update

Malinda Smith, Vice-Provost and Associate Vice-President Research (Equity, Diversity and Inclusion), and Robert Thompson, Associate Vice-President Research, presented this item.

Highlights:

- The presenters reported that Dimensions is the leading program to advance EDI in the research ecosystem, building upon the Athena SWAN (Scientific Women's Academic Network) Charter and

the SEA (STEMM [Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics, and Medicine] Equity Achievement) Change initiative, which have similar goals to advance post-secondary EDI, and further reported that:

- Dimensions is fostering transformational change by recognizing institutions that are committed to working to remove barriers and inequities
 - Dimensions identifies five equity-deserving groups (Indigenous Peoples, LGBTQ2+ persons, persons with disabilities, visible minorities/racialized groups, and women) and assesses participating institutions on progress made in each of these areas
 - The University is one of 17 institutions piloting the Dimensions program
 - The Dimensions pilot involves development of the criteria to receive a Dimensions award, a thorough institutional self-assessment, and preparation of an institutional action plan towards having robust EDI practices
 - The University's Dimensions team includes senior administrators, a Dimensions Executive Committee, a Dimensions Steering Committee, and seven Equitable Pathways Working Groups (one for each of the five equity-deserving groups plus a Language of EDI working group and an EDI Data working group)
 - The deadline for the University to complete its self-assessment and form its action plan will be in the Summer or Fall of 2022. The University will progress to a cyclical ongoing process of identifying obstacles, self-reflection, and taking mitigating actions.
 - The University will consider all members of the University community (undergraduate and graduate students, postdoctoral scholars, non-academic staff, and academic staff) and all stages of career (admissions/recruitment, retention/promotion, recognition/awards and leadership)
 - Other related initiatives currently underway at the University include the development of the EDI Plan for Research and Teaching Awards, the Employment Equity Census and Student Census, the EDI Dashboard and Community Report, implementation of the Equitable and Inclusive Hiring principles in the GFC Academic Staff Criteria and Processes Handbook, and Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Week which will be held January 31 to February 4, 2022
- In response to questions, it was reported that:
 - The data in the EDI Dashboard is at the institutional level. Faculty data will be provided annually to each Dean once a system for privacy protection is developed.
 - High response rates to the Employment Equity Census and Student Census are hoped for, as this will provide significant data
 - It is possible that data gathering could expand to other groups, such as research study participants, in the future
 - The EDI Dashboard draws on additional available data, such as from the National Survey of Student Engagement, graduate student surveys, and research award recipient demographics
 - Discussion included:
 - If Faculty-level data cannot be included in the EDI Dashboard, a narrative description of the state of each of the equity-deserving groups could be valuable

- It appears that the hiring of persons from equity-deserving groups is improving, but retention may be a concern. It is important to hear of the experiences of people and ameliorate any problems.
- Some University systems need attention, so that preferred names are consistently used

10. Standing Reports

Documentation was circulated with the Agenda as 'In Package Only' for information:

- a) Report on the December 13, 2021 Academic Planning and Priorities Committee Meeting
- b) Report on the December 14, 2021 Teaching and Learning Committee Meeting
- c) Report on the December 16, 2021 Research and Scholarship Committee Meeting
- d) Report on the December 10, 2021 Board of Governors Meeting

11. Other Business

There was no other business.

12. Adjournment

The January 13, 2022 General Faculties Council meeting was adjourned by consensus.
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The meeting was adjourned at 3:32 p.m.

Lise Houle, Interim University Secretary