



UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

UNIVERSITY GOVERNANCE

General Faculties Council
GFC Executive Committee
Approved Open Session Minutes

Thursday, March 13, 2014
Room 3-07 South Academic Building
3:30 PM - 5:00 PM

ATTENDEES:

Voting Members:

Carl Amrhein	Chair (Delegate), President
Ed Blackburn	Member, Academic Staff, Member of GFC
Dustin Chelen	Member, Students' Union Vice-President (Academic)
Lisa Collins	Member, Vice-Provost and University Registrar
Kaori Kabata	Member, Academic Staff, Member of GFC
Jeffry Kochikuzhyil	Member, Undergraduate Student (Elected From and By GFC)
Colin More	Member, Graduate Students' Association Vice-President (Academic)
Norma Nocente	Member, Academic Staff, Member of GFC
Steve Patten	Member, Academic Staff, Member of GFC
Sean Robertson	Member, Academic Staff, Member of GFC
Wendy Rodgers	Member, Academic Staff, Member of GFC
Mirko van der Baan	Member, Academic Staff, Member of GFC
Jonathan White	Member, Academic Staff, Member of GFC
Olive Yonge	Member (Delegate), Provost and Vice-President (Academic)

Presenter(s):

Carl Amrhein	Provost and Vice-President (Academic)
Dustin Chelen	Vice-President (Academic), Students' Union

Staff:

Garry Bodnar, Director, General Faculties Council (GFC) Services and Secretary to GFC
Marion Haggarty-France, University Secretary
Andrea Patrick, Scribe

OPENING SESSION

1. Approval of the Agenda

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Presenter: Carl Amrhein, Provost and Vice-President (Academic) and Chair, GFC Executive Committee

Discussion:

The Chair reported that, given the nature of the discussion at the February 3, 2014 General Faculties Council (GFC) meeting surrounding the approval route with regard to proposed establishment of a Fall Term Reading Week (Green and Gold Week) and given the introduction of such a week has such far-reaching implications for the University of Alberta, as 'Approver' of changes to the UAPPOL Academic Schedule Procedure, he had decided he would seek the advice and formal endorsement of the proposal by

GFC members at the Council meeting of March 24, 2014. Dr Amrhein, therefore, proposed an amendment to the Agenda for today's meeting to include as an item for discussion the inclusion of the Fall Term Reading Week proposal on the Agenda for the GFC meeting of March 24, 2014.

The Chair also noted that Item 4: 'Discussion on General Faculties Council (GFC) Governance' would be removed from today's Agenda as members of the GFC Task Force had declined an invitation to attend the meeting. He distributed a memorandum authored by members of the GFC Task Force to the GFC Executive Committee which provided detail on work they had completed to date and the anticipated completion date of the Task Force's report.

Motion: Patten/Rodgers

THAT the GFC Executive Committee approve the Agenda, as amended.

CARRIED

2. Approval of the Open Session Minutes of March 5, 2014

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file

Presenter: Carl Amrhein, Provost and Vice-President (Academic) and Chair, GFC Executive Committee

Motion: Nocente/Robertson

THAT the GFC Executive Committee approve the Minutes of March 5, 2014.

CARRIED

3. Comments from the Chair

At this point in the meeting, Dr Amrhein stepped out of the chair, and Dr Yonge assumed the chair on his behalf, thereby allowing him to freely participate in the discussion of Agenda Item 5: 'Students' Union (SU) Discussion Paper on General Faculties Council (GFC)'. Dr Amrhein had no additional comments.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

4. Students' Union (SU) Discussion Paper on General Faculties Council (GFC)

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

Presenter: Dustin Chelen, Vice-President (Academic), Students' Union (SU)

Purpose of the Proposal: To stimulate thought and discussion among members of General Faculties Council (GFC) on the processes and structure underlying GFC, in advance of the presentation of President Samarasekera's audit of GFC. This discussion allows the Students' Union to continue to seek feedback on its Discussion Paper on the State of Academic Governance at the University of Alberta and for members of GFC to share their perspectives and ideas with both the SU and the President's Task Force.

Discussion:

Upon invitation from the Acting Chair, Mr Bodnar provided members with a brief overview regarding past reviews of GFC since its inception. He noted, in particular, that the last comprehensive review of GFC had been undertaken in the mid 2000s. He stated that, as a major push leading to the eventual decommissioning of the GFC Policy Manual, the Terms of Reference for all of GFC Standing Committees

were reviewed in detail throughout the period 2007 to early 2009, with GFC approving a series of revisions to these Terms during that time.

Mr Chelen was invited to introduce the Students' Union (SU) Discussion Paper. He began by thanking members for their consideration of it. He explained that, when the issue of how the University governs itself was brought up at the April 26, 2013 meeting of the GFC Executive Committee, he was inspired to investigate this matter further. While the GFC Task Force was established by the President to complete its own review, the SU wanted to further examine GFC's procedures and processes and how the academic governing body handled larger institutional issues. He noted that the SU attempted to gather feedback on these issues from GFC members and emphasized that the SU Discussion Paper was intended to stimulate a discussion surrounding the topic of academic governance at the University of Alberta and was meant to complement the work undertaken by the GFC Task Force.

During the extensive discussion that ensued, members expressed a number of comments and questions, including, but not limited to: clarification surrounding whether the discussion today would focus on the merits of the SU Discussion Paper or on whether the SU Discussion Paper was to be confirmed as an item for the GFC Agenda for March 24, 2014; whether the actual size of GFC is changeable; clarification regarding the contents and intent of the GFC Task Force report, since the report has not yet been released; that there is no way to judge whether the contents of the SU Discussion Paper are complementary to the GFC Task Force report, since it has not been released; clarification regarding the research process utilized by the SU while drafting their Discussion Paper; that the SU Discussion Paper is incomplete due to the lack of data within it and, as such, that it should not be brought forward to GFC in this state; that the research content is critical in a report such as this; an expression of support for GFC to review this document; clarification surrounding the purpose of the document in terms of future action from GFC; clarification regarding the scope of the consultation process undertaken by the SU in preparing the Discussion Paper; that the recommendations within the SU Discussion Paper create problematic jurisdictional issues in relation to the authority granted to the institution within the Alberta *Post-Secondary Learning Act (PSLA)* and, more specifically, the role of the Board of Governors vis-à-vis GFC; that GFC is the voice of the academy; a reminder of the bi-cameral system of shared governance at the institution and a note of caution against assigning all authority with regard to institutional academic governance to GFC alone, given the overarching role play by the Board of Governors; that the 'tones' of individual discussions held at GFC are separate from the actual functions of GFC; that there is no evidence behind the statement within the SU Discussion Paper that GFC is struggling to enact its own legislated responsibility and reflect on its own structure and procedure; that the current member composition of GFC represents a balanced voice; that the senior standing committees of GFC provide unique forums for enacting big ideas, in comparison to Faculty-based initiatives; and expressions of concern with a number of the statements within the SU Discussion Paper;

Discussion continued with members raising, amongst others, the following points: that even though GFC must self-govern, it would not be appropriate for GFC to discuss an incomplete report and that the SU Discussion Paper, in its current form, would not provide a quality discussion at GFC; concerns that some of the items within the SU Discussion Paper relate to administration and the manner in which University Governance performs its duties and responsibilities; that some of the concepts highlighted within the SU Discussion Paper are exceedingly high level in nature; that there is a considerable body of research and literature within Canada regarding the topic of academic governance and that there are certain recurring themes within this arena relating to reform, jurisdiction, and whether the role of academic senates is being diminished; that there needs to be a productive discussion surrounding these issues but, currently, there is no clear path to attaining that productivity; that a productive discussion requires a great deal of effort to ensuring the issues are framed appropriately; that GFC should be responsible for deciding what to do following any discussions on this topic; expressions of concern with taking this discussion to GFC at the present time; that, despite the issues surrounding timing and the expiration of GFC student members'

terms on GFC, the main priority and focus should be on how to conduct such a crucial and impactful discussion for the institution; support for removing the Discussion Paper from the March 24, 2014 GFC Agenda; that the SU Discussion Paper contains problematic issues related to both the accountability and responsibilities of GFC members; that certain past issues revisited within the SU Discussion Paper weigh it down; that the current discussion illustrates the need for this discussion to occur at GFC; and an expression of hope that the GFC Task Force report also undergoes similar discussion and scrutiny by members, upon its release.

Further, members discussed: an acknowledgement of the importance of constituency groups at GFC; that the student voice on GFC is important; clarification surrounding the impetus for drafting in the first place the SU Discussion Paper, with reference to issues that were raised by students at past GFC meetings (eg, issues regarding Lister Residences); the need to identify real issues of reform at GFC; that the GFC Task Force did elicit feedback from individual Faculties (and their GFC members) *via* an e-mail distributed to and through each Dean; that there is no disadvantage to taking the SU Discussion Paper to GFC for discussion; that the SU Discussion Paper is incomplete and that it does not provide a strong enough rationale for the problems outlined within it; that the SU Discussion Paper contains a disingenuous tone; that student participation at GFC appears to be robust; a suggestion for the SU Discussion Paper and the GFC Task Force's report to be included on the same GFC Agenda for discussion; a suggestion for the members of the GFC Task Force to consult with members of the SU; and, finally, clarification about the governance route for the GFC Task Force report.

A member proposed a Motion to remove the SU Discussion Paper on General Faculties Council (GFC) from the GFC Agenda of March 24, 2014.

Mr Chelen thanked members for their feedback and thoughtful commentary on the SU Discussion Paper and, in noting that his term as the SU's Vice-President (Academic) was about to expire, stated this project would be passed down to his successor in the role.

In response to the Acting Chair's summary of what she had heard during the preceding discussion, a member expressed his opinion that the Acting Chair should not summarize members' comments before the Committee's pending vote on a Motion.

A member called the Question.

Motion: Patten/White

(Opposed: Chelen and Kochikuzhyil)

THAT the GFC Executive Committee remove the Students' Union (SU) Discussion Paper on General Faculties Council (GFC) from the Agenda for the March 24, 2014 meeting of GFC.

CARRIED

5. Fall Term Reading Week (Green and Gold Week)

There were no documents.

Presenter: Carl Amrhein, Provost and Vice-President (Academic) and Chair, GFC Executive Committee

Purpose of the Proposal: For information/discussion.

Discussion:

Dr Amrhein asked members to consider including a formal vote of endorsement on the Student's Union's (SU's) Fall Term Reading Week (Green and Gold Week) proposal at the March 24, 2014 meeting of

General Faculties Council (GFC), despite his sole delegated authority over amendments to the UAPPOL Academic Schedule Procedure which would result in the establishment of this week. He cited examples of past votes of endorsement at GFC and briefly outlined some of the other options for consideration, including the revocation of his delegated authority on the issue. He stated that the University's Office of General Counsel has been working through some of the potential legal and procedural aspects of the details inherent in such a request.

Ms Haggarty-France explained that the *Post-Secondary Learning Act (PSLA)* gives GFC authority over the Academic Schedule and that GFC had delegated that authority to the GFC Executive Committee, which approves the annual Schedule in the Fall of each year. She noted that, in comparison, the GFC Executive Committee had delegated the authority over amendments to the Academic Schedule Procedure to the Provost and Vice-President (Academic).

During the discussion surrounding the Provost's request, members expressed a number of comments and questions, including, but not limited to: that due to the difficulties surrounding revocation of the existing delegation, a vote at GFC should be advisory in nature; that GFC members are already well prepared for such a discussion and possible vote, having considered the proposal and engaged in discussions on this matter on two previous occasions; and a query regarding possible consequences of a negative vote on the matter at GFC.

At this point in the meeting, Mr Petros Kusmu, SU President, who was in attendance at this meeting as an observer, was invited to the table to assist Mr Chelen in responding to members' questions and concerns regarding the SU's Fall Term Reading Week proposal and its inclusion on the upcoming GFC Agenda for formal action.

A member proposed a Motion to amend the GFC Agenda of March 24, 2014 to include a vote on the Fall Term Reading Week (Green and Gold Week) proposal.

During the brief discussion specifically centred on this Motion, members provided a number of comments and questions, including, but not limited to: support for a vote of endorsement at GFC; that it would be beneficial to hear the pros and cons associated with a Fall Term Reading Week explained at GFC; that a list of the pros and cons is, in fact, contained within the current proposal; and clarification on where this item, if included, would be situated on the Agenda for GFC's March 24 meeting.

Motion: Amrhein/Chelen

THAT the GFC Executive Committee amend the GFC Agenda of March 24, 2014 to include for formal consideration and vote the Students' Union's (SU's) Fall Term Reading Week (Green and Gold Week) proposal.

CARRIED

6. Question Period

Members congratulated Dr Jonathan White for his recent 3M National Fellowship.

INFORMATION REPORTS

7. Items Approved by the GFC Executive Committee by E-Mail Ballots

There were no items.

8. Information Items Forwarded to Committee Members Between Meetings

There were no items.

CLOSING SESSION

9. Adjournment

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 5:20 pm.

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