

MOUNT ALLISON UNIVERSITY

FACULTY COUNCIL MINUTES

Thursday, May 10, 2018, 10am  
Dunn 113 (Wu Centre)

**Members Present:** Robert Campbell (chair), Geoff Cruttwell (secretary), Chris Forstall, Stephen Law, James Devine, Diana Hamilton, Terrence Craig, Erik Edson, Fab Antonelli, Rosemary Polegato, Frank Strain, Craig Brett, Peter Brown, Janine Rogers, Michael Fox, Stephen Duffy, Jeff Ollerhead, Mark Hamilton, Dave Thomas, Lorelea Michaelis, Kim Meade, Genevieve Desmarais, Louise Wasytkw, Judith Holton, Andrew Nurse, Andrew Wilson, Sandy MacIver, Patricia Kelly Spurles, Amanda Cockshutt, Robert Ingles, Hannah Lane, Marc Truitt, Elizabeth Wells, Chris Parker, Kriste Johnston, Elizabeth Millar, Magi Beaton.

**Observers:** Noah Fry, Emma Miller.

**Regrets:** Lauren Beck, Vicki St. Pierre

**1. Appointment of temporary secretary**

Motion (E. Wells/M. Truitt): that Geoff Cruttwell be elected Secretary pro tem for this meeting.

Carried. R. Campbell thanked Lauren Beck for her work as secretary on faculty council over the past several years.

**2. Approval of the agenda**

Motion (M. Truitt/E. Wells): that the Agenda as circulated be approved. Carried.

**3. Approval of the minutes**

Motion (M. Truitt/A. Cockshutt): that the Minutes as circulated be approved. One correction was noted: the spelling of R. Howlett's name was incorrect in item 4.

Carried.

**4. October Graduation List**

Motion (E. Wells/C. Parker): that faculty council recommend to senate the approval of the names circulated on the May 2018 graduation list.

Carried.

**5. Withdrawal deadline (E. Wells)**

E. Wells spoke to the matter. Last year a temporary change was made to the academic calendar so that students could withdraw from courses any day up to the last day of classes (previously students could only withdraw in the first 8 weeks of class); the academic matters committee was looking for feedback on this change.

S. Law thought the change was bad. One of the stated reasons for the change was mental health for students. However, he found that the change negatively impacted the mental health of those students who stayed in a course which involved group work, with many groups losing members by withdrawal right at the end of the course. He also felt it led to students not confronting the work required to finish the course; they put off the decision until the last minute then dropped.

S. MacIver noted that while he was one of the original proponents of the change, he now believes it has an overall negative impact. He found a similar problem with group work in his course and in a new first-year course in Commerce (1011).

L. Michaelis noted a recent shift in student's attitudes. She found a higher incidence of students not submitting work, not attending class, and receiving poor grades than in previous years. She noted that it's hard to tell if this may be related to other factors, but since this was one of the major academic factors that had changed from previous years, it certainly seemed relevant.

A. Cockshutt agreed with L. Michaelis, noting that there seemed to be lower participation in class and higher DFW (D, F, Withdraw) rates than in previous years. Another problem in the sciences was students receiving a failing grade in a lab before the end of the term then choosing to withdraw from the course (failing a lab means they would have failed the course).

L. Wasytkw agreed that the change was negative; she found that 10% of students in her 3<sup>rd</sup> year course had been negatively impacted by the change. In one case, a student who would have received a B in an upper-year course chose to withdraw instead, meaning they would take the course again later, using additional faculty resources. She believes the change fosters a culture focused on achievement instead of learning.

P. Kelly-Spurles noted there was an issue where students couldn't withdraw from courses they would have wanted due to student loan issues.

A. Wilson would like to revisit the issue in September meetings. He has also found a new culture: students who would have dropped out in the past stay in the course only to take a W at the end. C. Forstall noted a similar problem, and H. Lane agreed that it felt like students were staying too long in courses they should drop earlier.

J. Devine noted that part of the logic for the change was to decrease the requests for late withdrawals that the Deans had to handle and asked whether the Deans had found this to be the case. A. Cockshutt and E. Wells believed it had decreased the overall number of requests, although there were still some after the last day of classes. A. Cockshutt noted, however, that if the deadline for withdrawals was reverted, it would be better to have mental health professionals rather than Deans handle such requests.

M. Hamilton noted that there were two issues here which should be separated: the issue of who gives permission for late withdrawals, and the issue of when withdrawals happen.

L. Michaelis noted that to alleviate stress around grades and evaluation, more needed to be changed than just the date of withdrawals; changing this one thing in an environment in which students are still being evaluated doesn't help.

K. Meade noted that given the level of concern around this issue, it will be important to do some data analysis related to the issues as soon as possible.

C. Forstall agreed. He also noted that students he talked to who withdraw late were grateful for the change. He also wondered how well advertised the change was. E. Wells noted that it was discussed in first-year orientation and emails had gone out to upper-year students, but these aren't always read.

S. Maclver noted that 4 of the 16 students in his upper-year course chose to withdraw late.

E. Wells said that she will take these comments back to the academic matters committee; they make strike a subcommittee to look at this issue.

#### **(6) Certificates (E. Wells)**

E. Wells noted that Sociology was planning to pilot a certificate in Diversity and Inclusivity. The academic matters committee was looking for feedback on other certificate programs here and whether this is a direction the university community is interested in pursuing. She noted that if certificate programs stay under 24 credits, they do not need approval by MPHEC.

R. Campbell asked if a certificate was something a student could get independently, or if it needed to be part of a degree; C. Parker and E. Wells noted that both were being considered and they were looking for general feedback.

L. Michaelis noted that it was difficult to assess the idea without knowing precisely what it would look like. A. Cockshutt noted that the question of whether it is part of a degree or not is an important factor; she would prefer to only see it as part of a degree.

S. Maclver noted that Commerce was quite interested in the idea as both a recruiting tool and as a method for students to differentiate themselves in their upper years. M. Beaton noted that in Biology having a certificate in a specific area could help students get employed.

C. Forstall asked if the certificates were using existing courses; E. Wells noted that that was the plan since we didn't currently have resources to offer additional courses.

E. Wells concluded by noting that it seemed as if people weren't opposed to the idea but that it would need more specifics; she will return to Academic matters and bring back a more specific proposal.

#### **(7) Size and shape of degrees (E. Wells)**

E. Wells described how CS was proposing a new kind of academic program: "CS+X", which involves courses in both computer science and another discipline (right now plans just for Geography and Environment and Chemistry), but is not a full double major. The proposals raised two concerns from academic matters that they would like faculty council's input on. The first issue was that the proposed program had no minor, the second that it involved a very high number of credits (approximately 90).

G. Cruttwell spoke about the rationale for the proposed programs. They were developed from similar new programs at several universities in the US; those universities had found that many students wanted to take both Computing Sciences and another discipline but doing a double major was infeasible. As such, they created "CS+X" which consisted of

many courses for the major in both disciplines (but not all). The proposed programs would not need a minor as they already had courses from two disciplines; the program was also useful for students as it prescribed precisely which courses would fit best between the two disciplines.

A. Cockshutt felt that the number of credits in the proposed program was not too high as it was similar to the current number of credits to do a major and minor.

E. Wells noted that the committee liked the idea overall; C. Parker noted that a program like this would require a new category in the calendar (something like “Joint Major”).

C. Forestall liked the idea a lot. M. Fox noted that the idea had the support of the Geography and Environment department. J. Devine liked the idea but noted that logistics (in terms of course scheduling) may prove to be an issue.

J. Ollerhead noted in response that one of the benefits of this approach is that the relevant departments would be more aware of their responsibility to avoid scheduling conflicts, as opposed to now where it is impossible to know what double majors students would want to take and thus impossible to know what schedule conflicts to avoid.

A. Wilson noted that in religious studies they see a number of students doing double majors and wondered if this approach of a “Joint Major” could be more broadly applicable.

C. Parker noted in response that it could be, but any specific program would have to be developed by the relevant departments, agreed upon by senate, and then go on to MPHEC.

R. Polegato asked whether this agenda item was about size and shape of degrees generally or about this specific proposal; E. Wells responded that it was about the general shape but influenced by this specific proposal.

P. Kelly Spurles voiced support for the proposal, noting that it recognized important aspects of interdisciplinarity, and should be helpful for students.

E. Wells noted that she would take the comments back to the committee, but it looks like the specific proposals should move forward, possibly with the additional creation in the calendar of “Joint Major” degree category.

#### **(8) CRC Programme: Updates and Mount Allison Context (J. Ollerhead)**

J. Ollerhead wished to inform the committee about updates to CRCs (Canada Research Chairs) here at Mount Allison. He noted that Dr. (Doug) Campbell had been renewed as a Tier 1 chair, Dr. Finkel had resigned (freeing up a Tier 2 chair) and the recent reallocation exercise had kept Mt. Allison with the same total number of CRCs as previously. Thus, at the current time we have a vacant Tier 2 chair, and this can be in any area of the university. In addition, the government is emphasizing that the chairs be allocated in such a way as to emphasize equity and diversity.

At the current time, J. Ollerhead is planning to have a call for nominations in the summer, to decide on the candidate before the end of the summer, and to put in the application to the CRC program by the October deadline.

#### **(9) Report from the chair**

R. Campbell noted that in addition to the tenure-track hiring, there were several other hiring processes underway: an Indigenous advisor, a director of Computing Services, an Owens Art Gallery directory, and a Director of Experiential learning. He noted that this was

alumni weekend, and the Baccalaureate service was following the theme of Indigenous action, with Rev. Mark Macdonald speaking. There are many renovations currently underway in campus, and Gardiner is close to finished. This summer, as part of a new process, universities will be meeting individually with an NB legislative committee. Andrew Wilson will be receiving the Tucker teaching Award, and David Fleming the Pare award. Many graduating students have been reporting great news in terms of graduate school or jobs.

Finally, R. Campbell reflected briefly on the Indigenous action program, noting that new indigenous faculty hires were almost completed, and there may be further hires in this area. The Senate and board level will also be considering Indigenous representation. However, this is a seven-generation process, and will require continued effort and work.

**(10) Other business**

P. Kelly Spurles wished to express her appreciation for R. Campbell's and C. Verduyn's work at the university over the past 12 years. She commended their support for the community of Sackville, their generosity and philanthropy, their pride in Mount Allison students, and in the past few years, their support for Indigenous action. R. Campbell thanked her, and a round of applause followed.

**(11) Meeting adjourned** at 11:14am.