

MINUTES
Faculty of Arts Council
Tuesday, January 28, 2020
4:30 – 6:00 pm
BAC 234

1. Call to Order

S. Maitzen, Chair, called the meeting to order at 4:32 pm, noting that quorum had been met.

Regrets: C. Alexander; S. Barratt; A. Biro; R. Brickner; G. Lee; C. Mutlu; E. Patterson; M. Ramsay; R. Seale; P. Stewardson

2. Approval of Agenda, as circulated

Moved: P. Doer

Seconded: C. Rose

Motion carried unanimously

3. Adoption of Minutes of November 26, 2019, as circulated

Moved: R. Cunningham

Seconded: H. Dahringer

Motion carried unanimously

4. Business Arising from Minutes

A query was raised about who chairs the Faculty of Arts By-Laws Committee, which has not met this year. It was established that the members of the committee are H. Dahringer, P. Rigg, and K. Vincent. K. Vincent was declared chair-designate in absentia, a decision he may wish to challenge when the committee meets.

5. New Business

a) Results of review of Campus Store conducted by Scott Roberts

The Chair recognized J. Whidden who spoke to this item in his capacity as a member of the council formed over ten years ago to address problems with the bookstore. He reported that an early achievement of this council was the reversal of the practice of storing books in a back room instead of on shelving accessible to the public. Since then little has changed at the bookstore although problems continue to exist. A review of the bookstore was carried out by S. Roberts who also produced the report currently under discussion. The report summarizes serious concerns about bookstore services—including that it is too corporate; that insufficient books are ordered to cover course needs; that the cut-off date for returns occurs before students have completed exams; that prices are too high—and it presents them as the concerns of a few. The report lists possible improvements—including changing the layout of the store and increasing the store's social media presence—and it suggests that the recent closure of the town's independent bookstore is an opportunity for the campus store to better serve the broader community. J. Whidden explained that it is clear that communication with faculty could be improved and noted that it is particularly troublesome that access to bookstore services is almost impossible for new faculty whose contracts do not begin until well after ordering deadlines have passed. He explained that Follett, the company that manages the store, is a large corporate entity whose head office must agree to any proposed changes at this campus store. The contract that governs this commercial arrangement is renewed every five years and renewal presents an opportunity for change.

J. Whidden then responded to questions and comments:

Q: Does Follett own the bookstore?

A: They supply the books and their guidelines shape policy in the store.

Q: What committee is involved here?

A: The Bookstore Council is composed of student, faculty, and administration representatives. It was set up to deal with concerns, though not much has changed.

Q: Have there been attempts to anticipate student demand for books by asking students as they register for courses to indicate whether they plan to purchase books through the bookstore?

A: J. Whidden will report this idea to the Bookstore Council.

C: The model of foregrounding sweaters and pushing books into the background is familiar from other campus bookstores. Bookstore employees and students are often caught in between. Some students cannot afford to purchase books.

C: Generally, booksellers are not responsible for unsold books as publishers buy them back. This model suggest that it should be possible for the store to stock enough books for all students.

C: The recent food services contract renewal was a genuinely competitive process. This experience suggests that pressure can be brought to bear on companies with which the university does business provided that faculty representatives are well prepared and insistent.

A: Yes, contract renewal is the only opportunity to change things. The Bookstore Council also includes Follett representatives. Faculty are urged to provide feedback to the bookstore council.

As discussion continued, It was recommended that it be determined precisely when the current contract is due to expire and that the Bookstore Council solicit feedback ahead of the renegotiation process. There is interest in seeing the current contract if it is available. The current model that requires students to bear the burden of systematic underordering. Perhaps this matter could be brought to Senate since it an academic concern. It may be an issue of particular concern to faculty in Arts who may order more books. The bookstore could play a role in inspiring a culture of learning on campus.

b) Development of Legal Studies Major

The Chair recognized E. Crandall who reported that she has been encouraged by the Dean to pursue her longstanding interest in developing Legal Studies at Acadia by exploring the possibility of establishing a Legal Studies Major. She will work with other faculty members to investigate what would be involved in growing the current Legal Studies Minor into a Major. She is aware of the importance of consultation in this process. She will undertake an audit of relevant courses already being offered and determine which additional courses would be required. She is pleased to receive offers of contributions as well as queries from interested faculty. She suggests that expanding the program to encompass law, justice, and society is important. Heads of departments will be approached for their feedback on courses that might form part of the program.

E. Crandall then responded to questions and comments:

Q: This sounds like an exciting program that could contribute to a rejuvenation of the Faculty of Arts and have possible benefits for various departments within the Faculty. Would it be an interdisciplinary program and might the English, WGST, Politics, and Sociology programs be useful allies?

A: Yes

Q: Is there a current Legal Studies a Minor?

A: Yes

Q: Might it be useful to consult with law schools about what kind of background they want students coming into their programs to have?

A: Yes

6. Report from Dean of Arts

The Chair recognized L. Robinson who gave a PowerPoint presentation (appended) and highlighted the following points. She took questions as she proceeded:

Updates & Information

- Re. Budget: It was announced at the budget townhall last week that the “pro forma” budget, which includes standard yearly increases but not additional program needs, has been submitted and there is a \$1M shortfall, so a search for savings is underway; the Deans and the Provost are working together collegially to determine what we can’t do without, but all is in flux and no hiring for next year can proceed yet

Q: Why is there appear to be such a large shortfall?

A: Ongoing costs are not being met by government grants or tuition revenue. Costs go up by 3% each year and a 2% increase is produced from these sources. The provincial government and the Board of Governors both demand balanced budgets. The Provost has announced that he is establishing a \$500K contingency fund.

C: It is worth noting that historically such contingency funds have provided administrations with a means of accounting for funds they do not want to have to spend in other ways.

A: It is important to have money for emergencies. Everyone involved is working in good faith.

- Re. Program Review Updates: ESST process successfully concluded; reviews of History/Classics and Social and Political Thought are planned for April.
- Re. BAC Renos: The Chartwells-supported project to rejuvenate the space above the café is proceeding
- Re. Politics Statement on Classroom Conduct: Members of the Admissions and Academic Standing Committee (Policy) received this, engaged in discussions about rewording it, and believe it is essential to have such a statement in the University Calendar.
- Re. Informal BAC space audit: The Dean has undertaken a survey of the building because there is need for research space and office space. She feels that there is a need for policies governing space use in the BAC.
- Re. NSCC meeting in December: Acadia’s President, Provost, and Deans visited NSCC to meet with their VPA and Principals to discuss collaboration; they discussed the “Valley Initiative.” A similar meeting will take place in the future.

C: A recent experience with a student who came to Acadia from NSCC and found the transition difficult suggests that requiring NSCC students to take a course at Acadia before they begin full-time studies here might be a means of easing the transition.

A: The Dean noted this suggestion.

- Re. Experience Acadia 13 March 2020: The Dean met with Recruiting to discuss ideas for this event. This year attendees will meet with people on campus early in the day and register later in the day. The Dean hopes to offer a session in which faculty from various departments in the Arts present to the attendees on a shared topic.

Q: Who attends this event?

A: Students who plan to attend Acadia or are on the fence about where to study next year.

- Re. TIE Committee: New timetables are being considered. H. Chipman chairs this committee. The new timeslots would be in effect beginning in 2021-2022. More feedback will be solicited.

Potential Developments

- Legal Studies major: Planning is underway.
- Critical Health Studies major: The proposal writing process is moving “off-site.” S. Currie, Dean of Science, is spearheading the process and has convinced the Dean that it is best for someone from off campus with experience to put together the proposal.
- Food Studies major: Early conversations have begun.
- Indigenous stream BA/Bed: Meetings are taking place about developing an elementary teaching stream using the model of the existing BSc/BEEd.
- Meeting with NSCC: Acadia’s VPA and Deans will be in Halifax on February 10th to discuss potential articulation agreements and joint programs. The Dean recognises that what colleges and universities do is different and that such initiatives must be approached with care. Kentville is nearby, and complementary programs allowing students to complete both an NSCC diploma and an Acadia degree could work provided there is focus on ensuring student success.

Upcoming Events

- The President of SSHRC will visit campus on February 25th. A public presentation is tentatively planned for 10 am.
- Acadia will host the Annual Atlantic Undergraduate English Conference (AAUEC) February 28-29th.
- “The Face of Ekphrasis,” a student-curated gallery exhibit, launches February 7th at 6 pm. The Dean is Acting Director of Art Gallery while L. Dalton is on sabbatical.

Q: Might the AAUEC, with 80+ participants, provide an opportunity to attract students to Acadia?

A: The Dean will mention this to Recruiting.

7. Report from FAC representative to the BOG

The Chair recognized G. Whitehall, who reported there is a meeting of the Board’s Marketing and Enrolment Committee meeting this week. The Academic Support Committee has not met despite repeated enquiries; there appears to be resistance on the part of the Chair to calling a meeting.

8. Reports from FPAS and FPS representatives

The Chair announced that Greg Lee, the FPAS representative was unable to attend the meeting.

The Chair recognized John Colton, representative for the Faculty of Professional Studies, who noted that a new Director of the School of Education, Janet Dymont, has been appointed. J. Colton now serves as Head of Community Development. Heads and Directors in FPS received the Politics Statement on Classroom Conduct and have encouraged faculty to add it to their syllabi. They are, in turn, willing to share with the Dean of Arts and other interested groups a policy that addresses the struggles faced by student-parents. There was a discussion at the FPS Council about the proposed timetables. The main concern raised was the lack of 80-minute slots. There were also concerns about the impact of increased numbers of evening slots on varsity athletes and on faculty who commute from Halifax. Community engagement labs currently occur in these times, so this new proposal presents a particular challenge to that program. There was also a discussion at FPS Council about what appears to be an increase in mental health issues among students. There was particular concern that the language used to describe to support services on campus can alienate students who might benefit from these resources.

J. Colton then responded to comments and questions:

Q: Was a rationale provided for removal of the 12:00-1:20 pm teaching slot from the timetable?

A: Perhaps a sense that students need a mental health break and/or a shared mealtime.

Q: Is there data from FPS to support the impression about increased demand for mental health services by students?

A: At the Dean's suggestion, R. Casey responded with an account of a survey that she and her Sociology students conducted with 540 Acadia students. Students reported experiencing overwhelming amounts of stress. There was variation among departments. Exams were a major source of stress but there were also other factors. She is meeting with E. McGill of the Counselling Centre, who is aware of the problem but needs more information in order to better meet student needs. There is no data from the past but there is a sense of "almost urgency" in this moment.

A: The Dean noted that J. Sanford has provided money to develop the quantitative aspects of this research project.

9. Adjournment

Moved: R. Cunningham

Seconded: C. Rose

Motion carried unanimously

Meeting adjourned at 5:47 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Jessica Slights

Secretary to Faculty of Arts Council