



MINUTES

Friday, December 11, 2020

Present: M. Ahmed, R. Ame, A. Araujo, G. Ashoughian, G. Brockett, P. Bryden, D. Buzza, M. Cantalini-Williams, K. Carter, J. Casey, K. Chahal, L. Chu, A. Clarke, J. Coolman, A. Dang, D. Deutschman, L. Eisler, J. Empey, A. Ferenc, C. Francis, S. Ghamat, B. Glencross, A. Goodrum, J. Hennebry, C. Hiebert, J. Holm, M. Hron, P. Jamalof, I. Joseph, Ma. Kelly, Mi. Kelly, G. Kim, V. Kitaev, H. LeBlanc, D. MacLatchy, D. Maoz, B. McKay, P. McLaren, L. McLeod, K. Menon, D. Monod, I. Musa, J. Newman, A. Ngo, S. Ramsay, M. Reesor, J. Schwieter, K. Shankardass, D. Smith, J. Smith, B. Vale, A. Vannelli, M. Wilson, M. Woodford, W. Wu, G. Yun.

Regrets: M.L. Byrne, S. Ensign, L. Hawton Kitamura, S. Isotupa, K. Lund, M. Straub, K. Yri.

Absent: D. Antonowicz, H. Beaudry, S. Cameron, S. Chamberlain, K. Dowler, M. McDonald, E. Mercier, K. Rice, M. Sweedler.

Secretariat: R. Barnes, A. Juhik, S. Kelly, A. Kornobis.

A. Introduction

1. Call to Order and Approval of the Agenda

D. MacLatchy welcomed everyone to the ad hoc Senate meeting, made an acknowledgement of the traditional territory on which our campuses are located, and made a reminder about voting at Senate meetings. Senators can vote in favour, in opposition or abstain from voting; however, abstentions do not count as a cast vote to determine the majority vote. A reminder to guests and resource staff: only senators may vote on motions when they come up in the polls.

G. Ashoughian made a recommendation that the agenda for the meeting be reordered to allow the discussion on a permanent option to come prior to the discussion on Winter 2021 term, which could be affected by a permanent option.

MOTION (G. Ashoughian/M. Kelly) that Senate approve the Senate agenda for Friday, December 11, 2020, as amended to move the motion in agenda item B.3. to directly after the second motion in agenda item B.2. CARRIED (3 opposed, 3 abstentions)

B. Discussion

2. Compassionate Grading for Fall 2020 and Winter 2021 Terms

D. MacLatchy provided a brief overview of the process, with student senators introducing the item, the motion being put forward, the floor being open for senators to discuss, followed by non-senators being able to share comments after all senators have had a chance to speak. J. Empey, J. Smith and B. Vale introduced the proposal, noting: what is immediately beneficial to students; how other university's policies were altered to work for Laurier; academic integrity requirements, academic rigor and



maintaining academic excellence at Laurier, while responding to students in a compassionate way during the pandemic; challenges more difficult for students than previously during the pandemic; fairness and long term impacts on graduate student choices; impact on GPA or award rankings; providing the option as available, not mandatory; and the importance of all students knowing what their options are going into the winter 2021 term.

Questions, concerns and comments were shared by senators about the proposal, including: spring 2020 term students did not have this option; workload will increase substantially for staff and faculty; not a perfect solution, but shows the university is compassionate; respect for student senators taking the lead on this; work thus far to help students negatively affected by the pandemic should already show that Laurier is a compassionate institution; the motions are inequitable and do not help all students; confusion is a change is introduced in mid-December, and speculation that similar changes could occur in future terms; grade conversion at this point in the term could demoralize faculty members; intent to prevent cheating and complaints on social media is not a good reason to make the decision; Laurentian passed a similar motion two days prior; the limit for number of times students could use the conversion to CR option; 0.5 credit seems a modest proposal, may not even help students who are really struggling; equity concerns around access and opportunity for dropping a class; and, pandemic disproportionately affecting some student groups.

Questions, concerns and comments were shared by non-senators about the proposal, including: sharing of a statement from WLUSU and a letter from WLUGSA; call for a compassionate grading framework; guidance for undergraduate students; stability during the pandemic; petition system is very stressful to navigate for students; uncalled for assumptions about student motivations; petition process creates additional work for students; funding and resources should be available to support faculty in supporting students; and, anecdotes about student situations, including shared computers and environments that make it more difficult to maintain the high grades they got in previous years. D. MacLatchy thanked the speakers for the respectful conversation.

MOTION (J. Empey/J. Smith) that for all undergraduate courses using letter grading for Fall 2020 term only, that Senate approves an option for students to convert up to 0.5 credits in the Fall 2020 term from the letter grade to a "credit" (CR) format without requiring a petition, and directs Enrolment Services to develop a process to facilitate the implementation of this option.

CARRIED (24 approved, 19 opposed, 9 abstentions)

MOTION (J. Empey/B. Vale) that for all graduate courses using letter grading for Fall 2020 term only, that Senate approves an option for students to convert up to 0.5 credits in the Fall 2020 term from the letter grade to a "credit" (CR) format without requiring a petition, and directs



Enrolment Services and the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies to develop a process to facilitate the implementation of this option.

CARRIED (25 approved, 21 opposed, 6 abstentions)

A concern was shared around the validity of voting using the online polls; the University Secretariat will consult the meeting transcripts directly after the meeting to confirm vote numbers. The remaining two motions in item B.2. were moved to after discussion of agenda item B.3.

3. Policy on Compassionate Grading

A. Vannelli proposed that the remaining two motions in item B.2. be brought to the Senate Academic Planning Committee in January for consideration, which would allow for fulsome discussion at the committee level. Senators provided comments and concerns about this motion, including: that delaying the conversation into next term does not provide students the tools they need right now to plan for Winter 2021; and, sending the motion to committee provides uncertainty.

MOTION (A. Vannelli/Mi. Kelly) that the two motions under agenda item B.2. to convert Winter 2021 term grades from letter grade to credit be referred to the Senate Academic Planning Committee for further consideration. CARRIED (27 approved, 21 opposed, 2 abstentions)

The remaining two motions regarding Winter 2021 CR Option under item B.2. were removed from the agenda for the December 11, 2020 meeting of Senate.

A. Vannelli noted that engagement with faculty and students would occur at a special meeting of Senate Academic Planning Committee, and a recommendation would come to Senate for the March 11, 2021 meeting with a permanent CR policy to be utilized going forward.

Questions, concerns and comments were shared, including: understanding the process; graduate student and TA experiences during the pandemic; support for a long term solution, but need for immediate relief and guarantee for students; Senate support for a policy coming forward after thorough discussion at committee level; desire for permanent solutions for students who are still going to be impacted next year, whether they are returning students or new students; a permanent policy as an opportunity for Laurier to make a difference for years to come, when students have to deal with an issue such as a death in their family, without having to go to stressful petition process; concern that a policy coming forward with recommendation from committee may still not pass Senate; and, consideration of proper governance.

MOTION (I. Joseph/A. Vannelli) that Senate refer to the Senate Academic Planning Committee the drafting of a permanent policy on a CR grade option, to take effect as of Winter Term 2021. CARRIED (40 approved, 7 opposed, 4 abstentions)



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4. Other Business

A concern was shared around the violation of Senate By-laws: meeting materials were not provided to senators 48 hours in advance of the meeting; senators were told that if they had to leave the meeting at the 11:00 a.m. scheduled end time, their votes on the motions would be counted, but Senate does not allow proxy voting or voting if individuals are not present at the time of the vote. Apologies were shared by D. MacLatchy about materials not being sent out in time, going overtime in the meeting, and the mixed messaging on voting procedures.

5. Adjournment

D. MacLatchy noted that the work done by the Senate committees will come forward to Senate with enough time for senators to review materials, and that reports to Senate between January and March 2021 will be provided to update senators on the process of these important motions.