ARTS AND SCIENCE COUNCIL MEETING

MINUTES OF THE ARTS AND SCIENCE COUNCIL held on Wednesday, December 11, 2019 at 9:00 am
in the Governing Council Chamber, Simcoe Hall

Present

Melanie Woodin (Dean)               Andrew Dicks               John Marshall
Gillian Hamilton (Chair)             Nicholas Everett            Kamdin Mirsanaye
William Watson (Vice-Chair)          Max Friesen                Dae-Sik Moon
Keenan Krause (Vice-Chair)           Austin Gaghadar             Nathalie Moon
Lisa Feng (Secretary)                Daphne Goring              Keir Moulton
Thomas MacKay                        Sandra Grande                Martin Pickave
Martha Harris                        Franz Huber                 Scott Prudham
Kevin Mak                            Evan Kanter                 Jean-Olivier Richard
Maria Belais                         Sharon Kelly                John Robinson
Donald Ainslie                       Michael Kessler             Atsuko Sakaki
Josie Alaimo                         Young-June Kim             Jane Seto
Dwayne Benjamin                      Pamela Klassen               Thomas Socknat
Alana Boland                         KyoungroK Ko               S. Trimble
Jan Braun                            Peter Krieger               Marie-Anne Visoi
Antje Budde                          June Larkin                 Jeremy Webb
Samantha Chang                       Poppy Lockwood              Art Weis
Michelle Craig                       T. Ephraim Lytle            Ira Wells
Asher Cutter                         Sheela Manek                Ryan Woolfrey

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 9:09 am by the Chair.

1. Approval of Minutes of the November 20, 2019 Meeting of Council

The Chair called on a motion to approve the minutes, which was carried. There was no business arising from these minutes.

2. Report of the Dean

Dean Woodin noted that in her first six months in the role, she has been infused with optimism and energy as students, staff, faculty members and researchers continue to push the boundaries of the Arts and Science discipline. The Dean views her role as charting the Faculty on a course that would enable different stakeholders to thrive. She thanked the Arts & Science community for the valuable guidance and advice, and she also encouraged Council members to reach out if the Dean’s Office can assist in any way.

Dean Woodin acknowledged the transition of leadership in the Faculty Registrar’s Office. She introduced Ms. Lisa Feng, who is serving as Interim Faculty Registrar. The Faculty is using an external search firm to recruit the next Faculty Registrar. While this search is underway, it will be business as usual in both the Faculty Registrar’s Office and the Dean’s Office.
The Faculty’s academic planning process is ongoing, and work is in progress by the Academic Planning Advisory Committee. Since the Faculty would like to broadly consult with different stakeholders, each member will be given an opportunity to provide feedback online in late January or early February. Members were asked to stay tuned for in-person consultation opportunities and to advertise these to interested parties.

The Dean is committed to modifying existing policies and processes in order to improve the Arts & Science student experience. Moving forward, students will be able to write their deferred exams closer to the end of each final exam period. Previously, students who were permitted to defer a final exam would sometimes need to audit the subsequent offering of the same course in order to prepare for an exam that might test them on completely different material. This made it challenging for students not residing in Toronto. It sometimes led to students who were already experiencing acute conditions to push through their exams in order to avoid the deferred examination process. The Faculty Registrar’s Office will work with faculty members and departmental administrators during the implementation of this change.

The Faculty has witnessed the work of a wide variety of non-governance committees meant on matters with policy implications. In order to facilitate the review process of proposed changes to policies from these non-governance committees, the Faculty is looking to establish a special committee that would exist for a year for a trial run. This item will be presented in more detail later in the agenda of this meeting in the hope of getting preliminary feedback from members. The motion to create the Special Committee would be formally introduced at the next Council meeting.

Lastly, Dean Woodin thanked Council members for their commitment and contributions to the Faculty this past year. She wished everyone a relaxing holiday season.

A member inquired about the timeline implications of the revised deferred final examination process. Professor Alana Boland, Associate Dean, Teaching & Learning, responded that while guidelines have yet to be established, it’s expected that students writing the deferred exams under the revised process would be tested on material taken from the term when they were originally enrolled in their respective courses, but this would be determined by the instructor.

The Chair thanked Dean Woodin for her report.

3. (For Approval and Recommendation) New Program – Masters in Environment and Sustainability doctoral-stream degree (MES), School of the Environment – Dwayne Benjamin, Vice-Dean, Graduate Education

As this item contained a motion requiring a vote, the Chair sought and received confirmation from the Proctors that quorum was reached.

Professor Dwayne Benjamin, Vice-Dean, Graduate Education explained that the proposed creation of this doctoral-stream degree program responds to the need for solutions aimed to tackle challenges and opportunities with respect to environment and sustainability. Through research and teaching that is problem-focused and involves active engagement with non-academic partners in the co-production of knowledge, students in this program will develop critical thinking skills to gain a better understanding of environmental issues from multiple disciplinary perspectives. They will also be exposed to methodologies and tools that are relevant to environmental protection and sustainability solutions. The School of the Environment anticipates an initial intake of 10 to 15 students, building up to a steady state of 30 students within five years.

Be It Recommended
THAT the proposed new Masters in Environment and Sustainability doctoral-stream degree, as described in the attached proposal dated December 4, 2019, be approved effective the 2021-22 academic year.
The motion was moved and seconded.

A member sought confirmation of a thesis component in this program. Vice-Dean Benjamin confirmed that this program has a thesis requirement.

On the vote the motion was carried.

4. **(For Approval) Major Modification – Concentration in Quantum Computing, Master of Science in Applied Computing (MScAC), Department of Computer Science and Department of Physics – Dwayne Benjamin, Vice-Dean, Graduate Education**

This proposed concentration is offered jointly by the Department of Computer Science and the Department of Physics. It responds to increasing demand for trainees with expertise in both computer science and quantum physics. Students pursuing this program will be trained in areas including quantum information and quantum theory. They will also participate in industrial and scientific collaboration through an eight-month internship. This proposal was developed in consultation with the Office of the Vice-Provost, Academic Programs. This concentration would see a steady state intake of 15 students annually within five years.

**Be It Resolved**

THAT the proposed Concentration in Quantum Computing, Master of Science in Applied Computing (MScAC), Department of Computer Science, as described in the attached proposal dated November 25, 2019, be approved effective September 1, 2020.

The motion was moved and seconded. There was no discussion arising from the motion. On the vote the motion was carried.

5. **(For Consultation and Feedback) Special Committee of Arts & Science Council on Academic Policy – Thomas MacKay, Director, Faculty Governance & Curriculum Services**

Mr. Thomas MacKay, Director, Faculty Governance & Curriculum Services reiterated the Dean’s commitment to improve existing policies and processes in consideration of student mental health and the overall student experience. He provided an overview of the current structure of Council and its Standing Committees, with a focus on how delegation works and how discussions around policies arrive at Council.

While the Standing Committees of Council such as the Committee on Standing and the Committee on Admissions recommend policy and regulation changes specific to their portfolios, there is no formal governance committee to manage the broader and more holistic policy needs and development at the undergraduate level. The initial proposal drafted by the Faculty would see the creation of one Special Committee tasked with assessing and recommending to Council broad academic policy changes that do not fall in the purview of existing Standing Committees. With student mental health being a top priority at both the University and the Faculty of Arts & Science, the creation of the Special Committee would further enable long-overdue discussions of the various policy issues impacting student learning and student experience.

In terms of consultation, this proposal has already been raised at meetings of the Council of Chairs, Principals and Academic Directors (CPAD), Deans and Vice-Deans, and the Consultation & Communication Group of the Faculty. If this proposal is rectified by Council in February 2020, work of the Special Committee would start immediately and continue until June 2021 to allow for time for robust consultation of policy changes being brought forward.

A member asked about the process to follow if they are interested in providing input and getting involved in the work of this committee. Mr. MacKay suggested sharing their ideas with senior management so that these could be brought forward. These ideas would help the Special Committee consider the extent of additional research required
and the potential impact of proposed policy changes on different stakeholders. Dean Woodin also recommended students to share their thoughts with the Arts & Science Students' Union (ASSU) since the Dean's Office meets with ASSU monthly to solicit feedback.

A member noted that while there was mention of reviewing existing policies during the last curriculum renewal process, not much has materialized since then. The member suggested that the Special Committee could consider the idea of converting certain non-governance committees into Standing Committees of Council given the policy-related work in which these committees have already been engaged.

A few suggestions were raised regarding membership composition and selection. They included allowing the Dean of Students to be part of the administrative membership, as well as allowing members or Chairs of the First-Year Foundations Council and the Committee on Teaching & Learning to be part of the Special Committee as assessors.

A member suggested several items relating to tests and exams that could warrant a policy review in more detail:
- the formality of final exams given the existence of other course deliverables such as term tests
- the appropriateness of having final papers for humanities courses due on the last day of classes right before the final exam period and the penalty system imposed
- the adoption of term tests during the last week of the term as a workaround to the Faculty's final examination process
- the scheduling of term tests on Friday nights just before long weekends, and the inconsistent treatment faced by academic units around the scheduling of tests outside of regular classes

With respect to course deliverables and exams, a member commented that students should not be evaluated in a format that is not relevant to them. The member also suggested that when it comes time to decide if it would be appropriate to convert the Special Committee to a permanent Standing Committee, that it might be worth investigating if there's a structural problem with the existing governance mechanisms. Mr. Mackay responded that the case for action is predicated on the notion that the Faculty noticed a gap when needing to address Faculty-wide policies. The Faculty hopes that the recommendations generated by the Special Committee would be forwarded to the Agenda Committee and subsequently brought forward to Council.

A member inquired about the exclusion of student representation with respect to quorum for the Special Committee. Mr. MacKay replied that currently, there’s only one Standing Committee (Academic Appeals Board) that requires student representation to constitute quorum. He acknowledged that it was a fair point to take back as feedback. A follow-up question was raised regarding quorum for the Executive Committee. Mr. MacKay replied that it would be clearer to say three voting members.

A member would like to see a mechanism that would allow feedback from contract or sessional instructors to be taken into consideration given the different implications of policy changes. Mr. MacKay responded that the current definition of “Teaching Staff” encompasses members who hold different ranks with respect to academic appointments. Given the Faculty’s awareness of how policy changes could impact the student and teaching experience, the creation of the Special Committee depicts one of many consultative avenues for the Faculty to gain a better understanding of that experience.

A member asked if the membership composition of the Special Committee would take into consideration different disciplines with respect to faculty members and academic sectors. Mr. MacKay replied that instead of getting into something too refined, the key is about ensuring balance in diversity of opinion and constituencies. With that said, the Faculty has been giving the idea of balanced sectoral representation some considerable thought as there’s the desire to have that nuance from different academic lenses. Mr. MacKay reiterated the benefits of robust consultation at the proposal development stage.
6. **Other Business**

A member commented on the ongoing detainment of two Canadians in China. Since one of the two detainees is an alumnus of Arts & Science from the Department of English, the member encouraged Council to continue to monitor the situation and consider expressions of solidarity.

7. **Adjournment**

Meeting was adjourned at 9:56 am.

Minutes prepared by Kevin Mak, Governance and Curriculum Specialist, Faculty of Arts & Science