

MINUTES OF ACADEMIC COUNCIL MEETING

Wednesday, April 4, 2007

Members Present:			
Ex-Officio:	Faculty:	Students:	
K. Alnwick	P. Albanese	G. Hunt	G. Alivio
E. Aspevig	D. Androutsos	D. Johnston	L. Brown
L. Bishop	I. Baitz	J. Lassaline	R. Castelino
S. Doctor	J. P. Boudreau	R. Keeble	O. Falou
C. Cassidy	V. Chan	D. Lee	R. Gherman
G. R. Chang	P. Corson	D. Mason	T. Haug
M. Dewson	M. Dionne	A. Mitchell	T. Koulik
D. Doz	S. Edwards	J. Morgan	N. Loreto
Z. Fawaz	D. Elder	M. Panitch	S. Omer
U. George	C. Evans	S. Rosen	R. Rose
K. Jones	E. Evans	A. Singh	L. Yung
A. Kahan	C. Farrell	C. Stuart	
S. Levy	M. Greig	D. Sydor	
A. Shilton			Alumni:
P. Stenton			
A. Venetsanopoulos			
M. Yeates			
Regrets:	Absent:		
C. Baskin	A. Ashraf		
T. Dewan	B. McIlroy		
A. Ganuelas	A. Lyn		
S. Giles	J. Pierce		
L. Grayson	A. Warnick		
R. Hudyma			
C. Katsanis			
R. Ravindran			
P. Schneiderman			
A. Walker			

1. **President's Report** – In addition to the written submission, the President reported that he had attended the Dennis Mock awards recognizing student leaders earlier in the day and he applauded the work of the students. He did a short recap of the Ontario budget, indicating that advocacy for more capital funding will continue.
2. **Report of the Secretary of Academic Council** – No report.
3. **Good of the University** – E. Evans chaired. N. Loreto commented on the student Code of Non-Academic Conduct in relation to an issue that has recently occurred. On the Day of Student Action, students went to a press conference with the Minister of Training Colleges and Universities. T. Whitfield, who has been elected to Academic Council for next term, was told that he would be arrested if he was not a member of the press so he signed in as a member of the press. She stated that Section F1 of the Student Code of Non-Academic Conduct says that the Director of Student Services deals with these issues informally and he was told that he had to write a letter of apology. She believes that this policy needs to be reviewed and technical issues dealt with. She believes that the student should not have been charged. The President commented that any student can appeal to the Academic Council Appeals Committee and that he will discuss the policy review with his colleagues. If the issue had been raised earlier, he could have had more information. Z. Fawaz agreed that it is time to revisit the Student Code of Non-Academic Conduct. This will happen in the next few weeks or months, but there will be no change to what is happening in this case, and he considers what happened to be a serious offence. The means did not justify the end. The President asked that the particulars of the case not be discussed.

G. Alivio stated that there was a CESAR staff member and the CESAR President at the press conference as well, and that they received letters saying that they would be blocked from registering if they applied to Ryerson the next semester. She wonders why Student Services is monitoring these people, who said they were with Nightviews, the CE student paper.

R. Rose stated that N. Loreto received death threats when she made comments on white culture, based on items posted on Facebook, and that there was not much reaction from the university to these threats. She believes that this should be taken seriously. She commented on a situation in a journalism class, which she and N. Loreto are taking, when the editor of the Ryersonian and J. Rebick were invited to class to discuss a related Ryersonian article. It was a very uncomfortable situation. The Ryersonian quotes the President as saying that the university upholds diversity, is not racist, and is inclusive. She asked when the university will make a statement on these death threats, and what actions will be taken. The President responded that to even imagine that the university did not take this seriously was inconceivable. There was a high-level meeting on what should be done, and the assumption that nothing was done is incredibly wrong.

N. Loreto commented that the operating agreement for the Student Campus Centre has been signed after 2.5 years. She also stated that this will be her last meeting of Council and she invites all members to meet her at the Campus Centre after the next meeting in May.

T. Koulik commented that distance education courses fill up quickly over the summer and there is a need for more spaces. A. Shilton commented that the number of courses will grow by 45-50 per year. Resources are an issue, and she would like to hear additional courses are being requested.

G. Alivio announced that CESAR will be paying all part-time employees \$10/hour.

4. Minutes.

Motion: That Academic Council approve the minutes of the March 6, 2007 meeting.
N. Loreto moved, T. Koulik seconded

Minutes approved.

5. Business Arising from the Minutes – The President asked E. Aspevig to present the report of the *ad hoc* committee asked to review the Good of the University session. E. Aspevig reported that there were two meetings of the committee. C. Cassidy was on the committee that created this session about 10 years ago. The period at the beginning had turned into a “question period” and it was felt that a Good of the University session, confined to 30 minutes and chaired by a Vice-Chair, would allow people to bring things forward for information and discussion. Topics would be identified for meaningful discussion of issues relevant to the academic life of the university. The *ad hoc* committee recommends that the session reflect the original concept for the session. Reviewing the number of people who have spoken over the last few years, the *ad hoc* committee recommends that the by-law allowing two comments per member should be upheld. Important information should be brought forward, and topics could be brought forward for discussion. There could be regular reports by standing committees (e.g. Learning and Teaching or SRC) that could generate discussion. For pressing issues, the first course of action should be to contact those with primary responsibility for the matter. This would allow issues to be resolved in an effective way. N. Loreto stated that there are members around the table with more knowledge of issues and who would therefore be more likely to speak at these sessions. By and large she agrees with the report. Students view the session as a time to get something done and they value the sessions. The President suggested that this be moved to the Composition and By-Laws Committee for its discussion.

6. Correspondence – There was no correspondence.

7. Reports of Actions and Recommendations of Departmental and Divisional Councils -
There were no comments on the items presented for information.

8. Reports of Committees – there were no reports.

9. New Business

9.1 Tripartite Curriculum Review

E. Aspevig presented the discussion paper. The final report will be brought to the May Council meeting for approval. If there are any further comments, or if any group would like a further discussion, they should email him.

Discussion: R. Gherman asked about transferring credits to other programs and universities. While this was not specifically on the topic of the TPC review, the Provost replied that each university is autonomous, and normally admission is done not on a course by course basis but on a program basis. Ryerson programs are designed to allow for transfer to graduate programs.

D. Mason asked what ASC would do if a program brings forward a proposal for a revised or new program based on a prerequisite structure instead of a lock-step program, or if there was a proposal to open up PR courses to any offered at the university. The response to the first question was that a pre-requisite structure could be accommodated by the TPC, but it might be difficult to schedule. The implications for implementation would need to be considered. In fact, Journalism had just had such a curriculum revision approved. On whether the range of courses could be opened up to students so they could take any course they could schedule, it was noted that ASC would need to investigate. There is a recommendation that there be a subcommittee of ASC to review the PR tables.

C. Stuart stated that she appreciates the TPC, and the report is well formed in offering gradual change, despite the fact that it is difficult for students to understand the category labeling of the courses. She supports D. Mason's proposal on establishing prerequisite structures. She is concerned with the requests to reduce PR tables as she believes this is driven by scheduling and not curriculum issues. Depending on the term, students may not be able to get courses and they need large numbers of them to choose from. If the PR elective tables are reduced there will be more course substitutions, thus increasing paper work. She also supports the increase in LS tables, but this increases one thing while decreasing another.

L. Brown commented that in Nutrition students come in with other degrees, and students get credit for PR courses, but not for LS courses. There are students who would prefer more transfer of LS courses. E. Aspevig replied that courses are to be judged by the role that they play rather than just the content. One of the things that the paper suggests is that the onus be shifted to justifying not giving a credit rather than justifying giving a credit. This will help address the issue. The broader community believes that an overly instrumental program should be avoided. Those who come from outside programs sometimes already come with substantial backgrounds.

R. Rose commented that she is an out-of-phase student as she took off two years. The courses she needed were no longer required, and she was not guaranteed a spot. She asked what out-of-phase students should do. E. Aspevig commented that this is what D. Mason was referring to when he asked about a prerequisite structure. K. Alnwick commented that our curriculum

is updated more frequently than other institutions. The phase-out curriculum needs to be created, and there are challenges. Student access is an issue that he is concerned about.

J.P. Boudreau agreed with the spirit of the report. He asked if there is a way to ensure that PR courses will be made available to students. He is intrigued about writing competency and wonders about how this can be addressed. E. Aspevig stated that ASC is concerned about the size of the PR tables, and students' ability to get these courses. The consultants' report stated that as the university changes there is less time for faculty to be involved in the process of teaching students how to write well. It is not reasonable that all of the need for instruction about writing be dealt with in the LS. There are real writing experts in English and Professional Communication who can be asked to advise on this problem.

D. Sydor commented on recommendation 15 regarding the number of small courses to be taught by professors. She asked what a small class is and how this will be funded. E. Aspevig responded that 30-45 might be considered small, but this depends on programs. We must not lose sight of the need to think about having small classes with professors. The issue is how to balance large and small classes.

Academic Council expressed support for the direction the report has taken.

9.2 Recommendations of the Joint Committee to review the Faculty Course Survey (FCS)

M. Dewson stated that there are a variety of reasons to review the FCS. The discussion at Academic Council is part of the consultation process. The document will not come to Council for approval as it is a matter of collective bargaining and will be approved by the RFA. However, he would like input from the community including students. M. Dionne commented that she also wanted to hear from Council, and that she has already met with the Learning and Teaching Committee and the RFA reps, and there will be town halls. All of the input will be noted and a final presentation made to the AGM of the RFA on May 3. Any further input is welcome by email.

J.P Boudreau thanked the committee for bringing the survey forward. He likes a lot of the content, the increased security, and the options allowing faculty to develop their own survey questions. On-line delivery will be a radical departure. He asked how students would respond and if this provides a fair evaluation. There needs to be a psychometric analysis of this. He asked what the question "Class meeting as scheduled and on time" actually assesses. As there are TAs and markers, there is an intertwining of the instructor and the TA which might be an issue.

N. Loreto commented that TAs want to be evaluated. She is pleased about the comment sections. This is a victory for students. The integrity of on-line systems is a question, based on the fact that the students can be identified. Moving to web-based rather than in-class, students who have a bone to pick will go online to do so. There might be faculty who get strange responses. She realizes that there was no student involvement because it was a

collective agreement issue. She thinks there might be a better way to ask the questions. There may be things that students want to ask about professors. The current form has a section for both the course and the faculty. This survey is about the faculty and there is nothing to indicate if there are complaints about the course.

J. Morgan commended those who were involved with this. He had sat on a previous committee. He commented on the elimination of question 10 (7) – the proposed questions seem to provide a basis for information and analysis but lack a conclusion. Perhaps there could be a summary question that gave an overall impression of the teacher and the course. There should also be a section on TAs. He noted that “course outline” should be replaced with “course handouts” instead. The question on “instructor available for consultation” is too open-ended and offers a subjective analysis from students. The current question is about office hours. This wording should be rethought.

A. Mitchell commented on the questions for studio courses and asked if this could be carefully considered. She recognizes that questions can be selected, but these questions assume that studios are skill-based. These should be reworked.

I. Baitz stated that this is good for tailored feedback, and the comments are appreciated. In GCM the current survey does not address whether it is a course survey or a faculty survey. Students are filling out a sheet on a specific professor, but they may have more than one in the course if a single course has one professor for lecture and another for lab. He asked if the survey could be done in class where students sit in front of computers. He also asked why is it a seven-day window, and if the survey can be redone after it is submitted.

T. Koulik commented that students who do not participate should not be able to see their grades, or that students should get a participation grade for doing the survey.

D. Lee applauds the committee’s work and is concerned about the technical reliability of Blackboard.

M. Dionne summed up by asking for specific suggestions from members. She thought this was going to be easier than it was, and the committee has been at it a long time. The range of opinion was great. Research raises questions about reliability of results. What everyone agrees on is that there is not as much wrong with instruments as with the use of the results. There was a consensus that teaching is a priority, and that is why the questions were chosen. The question about effectiveness is more summative than formative. The questions were designed to provide some feedback for the instructor which is basic to run a class. We would not be the first university to introduce online surveys, as it has been done over 10 years at large universities. What will likely happen is that there will be some initial diminution of online response rate. There are some suggestions for this. The survey could be done in class. M. Dewson stated that while everyone’s comments are taken seriously, there cannot be unanimity. Technically, there has been work with CCS and there have been trial runs. How the security operates will need to be communicated. Once the form has been submitted, the data is not tied to the individual student, and they only get one chance. One thing that is

inherently easy to do is to be more flexible with the optional questions. Town Halls will be widely publicized.

S. Levy stated that the proposed changes to the Ryerson Act have been put forward by the Government. When approved, Academic Council will be changed to a Senate and there will be an elected librarian.

10. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 7:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Diane R. Schulman, Ph.D.
Secretary of Academic Council