

NIPISSING UNIVERSITY

MINUTES OF THE ACADEMIC SENATE MEETING

February 13, 2015

2:30 p.m. – Room F210

MEMBERS PRESENT:

M. DeGagné (Chair), H. d'Entremont, S. Rich, M. Tuncali, C. Richardson, J. Graham

A. Armenakyan, G. Brown, M. Litalien, K. McCullough

S. Arnocky, D. Borman, R. Breton, N. Colborne, J. Dech, R. Gendron, P. Nosko,
N. Kozuskanich, G. Phillips, S. Renshaw, M. Saari, S. Srigley, D. Walters

B. Bruner, S. Elliott-Johns, T. Horton, D. Jarvis, C. Ricci

O. Pokorny, L. Rossi

K. Chutko, S. Kataoka

R. Vernescu (Muskoka)

J. Zimbalatti

S. Feretycki

J. Andrews, C. Burke, I. Hall

ABSENT WITH REGRETS:

N. Black, R. Vanderlee

J. Barker

A. Ackerman, M. Owens, T. Vassilev

L. Ashworth, M-A Parr, J. Scott, T. Sibbald, A. Steele

A. Grierson (Brantford)

T. Palangio

ABSENT:

Y. Benoit, B. Fisher

The minutes of the Senate meeting of January 16, 2015 were adopted.

READING and DISPOSING OF COMMUNICATIONS

The following letter to Senate was read by Senator Srigley. Senators were reminded that all correspondence should be sent to the Senate Chair or Senate Secretary.

February 12, 2015

To the Senate of Nipissing University,

We all play a part in colonialism in Canada today. Many of us in this room are committed to becoming aware of how we benefit from, and contribute to, the systematic oppression of First Nations people in this country. We do this in order to work against the colonialism that lives on in our beloved nation.

Last week Nipissing University announced new faculty positions in Nursing, Physical Education, and Business. Twenty years from this day a nurse who was trained at Nipissing University will have an Anishinabe patient, twenty years from today a gym teacher who learned her trade in our classes will have an Anishinabe boy in her class, in twenty years an Ontario government bureaucrat who graduated from our business programme will sit on a committee negotiating northern Cree land claims.

The four years that our students, First Nations and settler, spend with us is our chance to shape how they will act as citizens for the rest of their lives. That is why the citizens of Ontario have given academic Senates sole legal authority over the academic planning of the public institutions that they support at great cost. During their university years those students can learn what settler Canadians owe to First Nations people. This learning will happen directly, in classes, in public lectures given by Parliamentarians, and in the presence of ceremonies at our shared events; and it will happen indirectly, through posters on the walls, common books and the faculty workshops that explain them, meeting First Nations leaders who enter our building, and in student conversations with their class cohort about the true history of our country.

If this university eliminates pre-Confederation First Nations history from its curriculum, our settler students will have no way to learn that their own accounts are not paid up, our First Nations students will not have the tools they need to claim their inheritance. Our students will not speak to their Anishinabe patients, students, and colleagues with gentleness born of the humility of historical understanding. The colonial project in Canada will gain momentum, and the Senate of Nipissing University will have looked away when the people of Ontario trusted them to act.

Respectfully, your colleague and your servant,

Catherine Murton Stoehr, PhD

QUESTION PERIOD

The first question was regarding the recent elimination of the LTA positions and the impact it will have on the number of courses to be offered.

The President indicated that the specific numbers would be addressed by the Provost.

Dr. DeGagné acknowledged the difficult week it has been for the entire University community. He reiterated the challenging times the University is facing but added that immediate action must be taken. He also recognized that some of these people have had over 20 years of service. Before the Christmas break, one-third of the administrative staff were let go; 22 LTA positions were eliminated this week and OPSEU cuts are forthcoming. Nipissing does not have the money to sustain operations and is currently trying to decrease and eventually eliminate the \$11M deficit. He invited anyone who is interested in exploring our finances to see him.

The President again emphasized that with these cuts, every effort is being made to have as little impact on the students as possible. Our cause is not helped when polarizing statements are being made to the media. Dr. DeGagné stated he has tremendous hope for Nipissing University. It offers a good product for students and is a great destination. He asked for Senate's help to make this an attractive institution for students to attend. He concluded his comments by reminding senators that we all have to work together and to suspend mistrust.

In response to the question regarding the hiring of new tenure-track positions, the Provost indicated that despite the current challenges, the University must still make strategic investments and work on accommodating high growth areas and accreditation requirements.

A question was asked on how well Senate was consulted regarding the recent cuts. The Provost indicated that the University was not changing programs or admission requirements. These were budgetary decisions.

Regarding concerns about pre-registration, the Provost explained that as in the past, this initiative is used to ascertain what courses students are interested in taking or are required to take. As with any small institution, we cannot continue to offer the breadth of courses as in the past. He also suggested that students be encouraged to look at other courses as viable options. The Registrar also made note that the purpose of pre-registration is to take the guesswork out of student interest. It also assists with faculty and course scheduling.

NUSU Executive questioned why there had not been a town hall meeting held for the students and would it be something that administration is amenable to. They expressed their concern that the only information they were receiving was from their professors. The President responded by noting that past practice has always been that students were communicated to through their NUSU Executive. However, he indicated he thought the idea was good and would be pleased to work with NUSU to hold a forum for students so they had the opportunity to ask questions.

Following a lengthy discussion regarding the amount of service and research record of the LTAs, the Provost reminded senators that the Collective Agreement is very specific about financial exigency. The University cannot reduce tenure or tenure track positions. The only way to cut these particular positions would be to invoke program redundancy, and this after there is a series of actions which must be followed. However, he added that because an LTA's job was eliminated does not preclude them from applying to any new tenure track positions.

The Provost also noted that good recruiting is essential whether it be done by student recruiters, LTAs or tenured faculty. Once students decide to come to Nipissing, it is the quality of our faculty that plays a significant role that keeps them here.

Responding to the query regarding questions from the Board of Governors, the President noted much time has been devoted to tracking the deficit. Some of the comments from external Board members, many of whom have legal and corporate backgrounds, is why this issue wasn't addressed sooner? The Board is advocating that Nipissing reduces its deficit as soon as possible.

A question was asked as to how to respond to prospective students and their parents about the restructuring cuts that are occurring. The President stated that the University community needs to start with the notion that many students and their parents have limited understanding about Nipissing and the specifics of its operations. Once these prospective students visit our campus, we often are able to convert many to registrants. They feel connected to our small community and the support they will receive both academically and socially. He emphasized that we can promote this institution and that he has faith in our faculty and the job they do.

Another question was regarding the status of the program prioritization initiative. It was questioned whether it would have been better to have waited for the results of this data collection exercise before the LTA cuts were made and if not, is there any point in continuing the process? The Provost responded by noting the difficult decisions had to be made as quickly as possible.

Waiting would not have changed the outcome. Program prioritization is also a useful tool to help look at areas for increasing revenue.

In response to the question if LTAs would be receiving a severance package, the Provost replied that there is no obligation to provide severance to LTAs.

A Senator, who is also a representative to the Board of Governors, asked for clarification regarding the ability of the faculty representatives to the Board to be able to report back to their colleagues. Specifically, the question was asked whether they were able to speak to the discussions that occurred at the open and closed sessions of Board meetings. The President answered that when they attend Board meetings in their elected role, they are still a faculty member and could speak to their co-workers about the open and closed sessions.

With the departure of several senators, quorum was lost and Senate was adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT

Senate was adjourned at 4:06 p.m.

.....
M. DeGagné (Chair)

.....
C. Jenkins (Senate Secretary)