

MINUTES OF THE OPEN SESSION
OF THE MEETING OF SENATE

Held on Friday, February 19, 2021,
immediately following the meeting of the Closed Session
via Zoom Video Conferencing

PRESENT

Voting members: Graham Carr (*Chair*); Md Foysal Ahmed; Adewunmi Ajike; Ali Akgunduz; Shimon Amir; Nicholas Bailey; Leslie Barker; Matthew Barker; Guylaine Beaudry; Elizabeth Bloodgood; Catherine Bolton; Christopher Brett; Sally Cooke; Frank Crooks; Anne-Marie Croteau; Selvadurai Dayanandan; Mourad Debbabi; Alex De Visscher; Effrosyni Diamantoudi; Sri Divya Doppalapudi; Linda Dyer; Mary Esteve; Ariela Freedman; Annie Gérin; Vince Graziano; Fiona Harrison-Roberts; Safwan Hye; Debra Irabor; Hannah Jamet-Lange; Isaiah Joyner; Samantha Leger; Colin Long; Sarah Mazhero; Christopher Moore; Catherine Mulligan; Helena Osana; Virginia Penhune; Gilles Peslherbe; Duraichelvan Raju; Praneetha Reddy; Pascale Sicotte; Reza Soleymani; Robert Soroka; Ron Stern; Kelly Thompson; Guylaine Vaillancourt; Anne Whitelaw; Paula Wood-Adams; Radu Zmeureanu

Non-voting members: Paul Chesser; Stéphanie de Celles; Michael Di Grappa; Isabel Dunnigan; Nadia Hardy; Tom Hughes; Frederica Jacobs

Also attending: William Cheaib, Jason Ens, Sabrina Lavoie, Monica Mulrennan, Lisa Ostiguy, Lisa White

ABSENT

Voting members: Mehdi Farashahi; Elizabeth Fast; James Hanna; Alexander Stojda

Non-voting members: Philippe Beaugard; Denis Cossette; Candace Jacobs

1. Call to order

The meeting was called to order at 2:09 p.m.

1.1 Adoption of the Agenda

R-2021-1-3 *Upon motion duly moved and seconded, it was unanimously resolved that the Agenda of the Open Session be approved.*

1.2 Adoption of December 4, 2020 Minutes

R-2021-1-4 *Upon motion duly moved and seconded, it was unanimously resolved that the Minutes of the Open Session meeting of December 4, 2020.*

2. Business arising from the Minutes not included on the Agenda

There was no business arising from the Minutes not included on the Agenda.

3. President's remarks

The President conveyed the following to Senators:

- The death of Brian Gallery, a Loyola alumnus, philanthropist and pivotal figure in founding and sustaining the Irish Studies program.
- The appointment of Lisa White as the first Executive Director of the University's newly formed Equity Office, whose mission is to develop and implement the University's equity, diversity and inclusion action plan.
- Concordia was named a top Montreal employer for a sixth year in a row by the editors of Canada's Top 100 Employers.
- The undergraduate virtual Open House will take place this weekend.
- Earlier this week, a town hall was held, attended by over 350 faculty, researchers, staff and students, to seek community input regarding a proposal to create a School of Health at Concordia. The objective is to hold a series of consultations in the coming months and to bring the proposal for approval by Senate and the Board, in May and June, respectively.
- In response to the Minister of Higher Education's press conference a few weeks ago, Dr. Carr reiterated the University's previously announced approach that courses will continue to be delivered remotely this winter while more opportunities will be provided for students to come voluntarily to campus in small groups, respecting health and safety measures, for non-course specific activities. Similarly, online course delivery will continue in summer while opportunities of campus access will be further offered, depending on how the public health situation evolves.
- Dr. Carr spoke briefly about what does and should the future hold for how Concordia intends to perform its activities as a future-oriented university in

the post-pandemic context which, effectively, is about designing our new normal. Anne Whitelaw and Michael Di Grappa will co-preside this initiative, which will be comprised of a steering committee, a suite of working groups with broad representation across the community but also drawing on external expertise. We will be building on some of the lessons learned over the last several months through various surveys, consultations, town halls, together with a series of community consultations and a website where people can make suggestions and follow evolution of planning. The objective is to present a preliminary report and proposed action plan in September. Dr. Carr added that he was bringing the matter to the attention of Senate at this point so that Senate was aware at an early stage of how the University intended to proceed in the months ahead.

4. Academic update (US-2021-1-D1)

Noting that she had no additional comments to her written report, Dr. Whitelaw thanked everyone who contributed to the report.

CONSENT

5. Committee appointments (US-2021-1-D2)

R-2021-1-5 That the committee appointments be approved.

6. Academic Planning and Priorities Committee report (US-2021-1-D3)

7. Research Committee report (US-2021-1-D4)

8. Registrar's report on Fall 2020 graduation statistics (US-2021-1-D5)

These reports were provided for information.

9. Academic Programs Committee - Report and recommendations (US-2021-1-D6)

9.1 Undergraduate curriculum proposal - Faculty of Arts and Science - Liberal Arts College (US-2021-1-D7)

R-2021-1-6 That the undergraduate curriculum proposal in the Faculty of Arts and Science be approved.

9.2 Undergraduate curriculum proposal - Gina Cody School of Engineering and Computer Science - Department of Computer Science and Software Engineering (US-2021-1-D8)

R-2021-1-7 That the undergraduate curriculum proposal in the Gina Cody School of Engineering and Computer Science be approved.

9.3 Undergraduate curriculum proposal – Office of the Provost – Recognition of SKIL courses under the program title Humanities+ (US-2021-1-D9)

R-2021-1-8 *That the undergraduate curriculum proposal in the Office of the Provost be approved.*

9.4 Graduate curriculum proposals – Faculty of Arts and Science

9.4.1 Department of Economics (US-2021-1-D10)

9.4.2 Department of Philosophy (US-2021-1-D11)

R-2021-1-9 *That the graduate curriculum proposals in the Faculty of Arts and Science be approved.*

9.5 Graduate curriculum proposals – Gina Cody School of Engineering and Computer Science

9.5.1 MAsc and MCompSc programs (US-2021-1-D12)

9.5.2 Department of Computer Science and Software Engineering (US-2021-1-D13)

R-2021-1-10 *That the graduate curriculum proposals in the Gina Cody School of Engineering and Computer Science be approved.*

9.6 Graduate curriculum proposals – John Molson School of Business

9.6.1 MBA programs (US-2021-1-D14 and D15)

9.6.2 MSc in Management (US-2021-1-D16)

R-2021-1-11 *That the graduate curriculum proposals in the John Molson School of Business be approved.*

9.7 Graduate curriculum proposal – School of Graduate Studies - Graduate Certificate in University Teaching (UNIT) (US-2021-1-D17)

R-2021-1-12 *That the graduate curriculum proposal in the School of Graduate Studies be approved.*

REGULAR

10. Presentation on Sustainable Development Goals

During the course of a presentation given by William Cheaib, Monica Mulrennan, Jason Ens and Sabrina Lavoie, Senators were provided with an overview of Concordia's commitment to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Voluntary University Review (VUR) process.

Mr. Cheaib recalled that the SDGs were adopted by the United Nations in 2015 to provide a framework for sustainable development by setting 17 goals, while the purpose of a VUR is to determine the best way for the university to contribute to achieving the SDGs. Concordia's commitment to the SDGs came at the beginning of

the United Nation's *Decade of Action* to attain the goals; this commitment broadens the scope of the university's efforts, joining with governments, businesses, and civil society organizations to take urgently needed action over the next decade to put our societies on more sustainable trajectories.

Dr. Mulrennan noted that the SDGs serve to remind us that economies and societies are embedded within, rather than separate from, the biosphere. They help deepen our understanding of interconnections within and across these domains while highlighting the critical role of partnerships in advancing sustainable thinking and action.

The SDGs help researchers find and forge new connections, fostering collaborative transdisciplinary research inside our institution as well as with researchers but also practitioners, policymakers, and organizations beyond Concordia. This growing prominence of SDGs as a framework for collaborative impact-oriented research is reflected in the increased attention the SDGs are beginning to receive from research funding agencies.

The SDGs also help us benchmark and chart our progress, providing common objectives, targets and language around which to partner and collaborate and provide a framework for the Times Higher Education University Impact Ranking, one where Concordia has done well. Concordia is well positioned to engage the SDGs and to contribute to the urgent, integrated and transformative actions needed to shift the world onto a more sustainable, just and resilient path.

Dr. Ens explained that a voluntary review is a focused form of self-assessment that helps us understand how we can connect and contribute to the SDGs. Doing a VUR echoes work done by countries and cities to do rigorous self-assessment with respect to the SDGs. Corporations have also begun to report on their performance in relation to the SDGs as part of their ESG (environmental, social, and governance) commitments. Recently some universities, such as Carnegie Mellon University and the University of Toronto, have begun to do VURs or equivalent exercises.

University reviews differ from national or local reviews in that universities do not hold primary accountability for performance on the SDGs. VURs are efforts to think about how universities can align with, contribute to, and help catalyze efforts to achieve the SDGs, even if primary accountability is held elsewhere. Dr. Ens outlined the highlights of the sustainability assessment undertaken in 2015 and the preliminary report on SDG-related activity produced in December 2020. In sum, a VUR is an exercise focused on taking stock and goal setting in relation to the 17 SDGs.

Mr. Cheaib made the point that the University's commitment to the SDGs aligns tightly and naturally with its nine strategic directions, in particular, *Get our hands dirty*, *Mix it up*, *Embrace the city*, *embrace the world*, and *Go beyond*. They fit with many of our research priorities, provide useful objectives around which to build

meaningful partnerships and collaborations and underscore and reinforce many of the University's current efforts and initiatives.

Ms. Lavoie conveyed how the five-year Concordia Sustainability Action Plan, launched last November, aligns perfectly with the SDGs initiatives. Many connections can be made between the Action Plan's objectives and the SDGs, in particular around food and hunger, sustainable education, clean energy, sustainable production and consumption and climate action. The Sustainable Action Plan thus provides a solid foundation for Concordia's broader efforts around the SDGs. She noted the plan to re-engage students groups that are heavily involved in sustainability efforts in our SDG effort, underlining their valuable participation in the sustainability efforts.

Mr. Ens summarized the VUR process, which consists of documenting current activities, identifying gaps and opportunities, articulating goals and objectives and identifying priority actions and partnerships. Analysis will include a gap analysis to help us understand what we are already doing to advance the SDGs. A report will be widely circulated and brought back to Senate for discussion, which will contain our SDG-based self-assessment as well as recommended goals, objectives, and priority actions.

Mr. Cheaib concluded the presentation by apprising Senators of the composition of the Steering Committee, Student Advisory Committee, VUR Planning Team and of the individuals identified as Key Liaisons.

11. Presentation on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Plan

During the course of a presentation given by Lisa Ostiguy and Lisa White, Senate was updated on the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) working group recommendations and the EDI office.

Dr. Ostiguy spoke of a three-phase process (consultations, recommendations, and implementation). During Phase 1, from January to June 2019, the Advisory Group on EDI, composed of a cross-section of students, faculty and staff selected on a voluntary call, consulted the University community about the processes and existing practices, needs and suggestions related to EDI. Those consultations included hosting open IDEAS cafés, collecting "sense of belonging" stories from students in a conversation pod, testing staff and faculty's level of agreement with EDI statements as well as a scan of EDI practices in North American universities, call for online submissions and interviews with university stakeholders.

During Phase 2, from September 2019 to August 2020, the Working Group on EDI, composed of a cross-section of students, faculty and staff representative of the diverse areas of the University, addressed priorities stemming from community consultations in Phase 1 and developed a strategy for advancing EDI in all aspects of life at Concordia, with the goal of coordinating and enhancing on-going initiatives. The priorities identified in Phase 1 were tested via a university-wide

EDI survey, a series of EDI conversations and meetings with units and departments across the University. Dr. Ostiguy provided some highlights of the survey results.

Following the consultations, the Working Group generated five guiding principles and 115 recommendations. These recommendations are organized into three pillars which provide a foundation for a coordinated EDI strategy. The three pillars addressed five areas of discrimination and harassment reported by members of the University community and include gender, race/ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation and religion.

Ms. White said that an immediate priority identified by the EDI Working Group was the need to establish an Equity Office. Now established, the Equity Office, in collaboration with partners, will develop a strategic plan to advance equity, diversity, accessibility and inclusion at all levels of the University. Priorities, informed by the EDI Working Group recommendations include education and training, advising and support, and response and intervention. The five guiding principles of the Equity Office are equity, diversity, inclusion, accessibility, and intersectionality.

Ms. White concluded by speaking of the Equity Office's approach, which will be informed by research and data, consultative, engaged with the community and partner with other specialized units, such as the Office of Indigenous Directors, Black Perspectives Office, etc.

Following the presentation, Ms. White, Drs. Ostiguy, Carr and Whitelaw responded to comments and questions of clarification.

12. Question period

Referring to the recent announcement of hybrid learning for the fall semester, Dr. Freedman voiced concerns about the impact on the mental health of students and wondered if Concordia is pivoting toward becoming more of an online university. Dr. Carr explained that the hybrid model was announced because, while the goal is obviously to enable more in-person courses and activities, at this stage, in February, it is impossible to forecast the health situation for fall and what guidelines and restrictions may be imposed by public health authorities. He added that there is no plan or ambition that Concordia will become an online university and expressed some surprise that he should even have to say this.

That said, it is clear from the experience of the past eleven months that some activities can effectively be delivered in an online environment. Consultations and reflections are ongoing with the Deans and Department Chairs about priorities for fall.

With respect to the student mental health issue, it is also the case that the negative impact of the lack of face-to-face encounters and attendant social dynamics must be balanced by an approach which is respectful of physical health and safety. The

University has committed many additional resources to support student mental health and all of higher education is going to have to reflect and figure out what it wants to do in the future.

Dr. Whitelaw added that the Advisory Committee for Teaching and Learning (ACTL) is looking into how activities are delivered now while leading a university-wide conversation and consultation about pedagogy in order to identify the best approach for teaching and learning in the future. Dr. Carr noted that this initiative is ongoing and the ACTL report and proposals will be presented to Senate in due course.

Ms. Ajike asked whether a graduation ceremony will be held this spring. Dr. Whitelaw replied that the health situation does not permit holding an in-person ceremony but added that a virtual celebration is being planned, in consultation with students, Laura Mitchell and Andrew Woodall.

13. Other business

There was no other business to bring before the meeting.

14. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 3:40 p.m.



Danielle Tessier
Secretary of Senate