MINUTES OF
SPECIAL MEETING OF SENATE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

April 1, 2020

CONFIDENTIAL
Minutes of a Special Meeting of the Senate Executive Committee held on the above date at 1:30 p.m., remotely via BlueJeans

Those present:
Dr. D. Barnard, Chair
Prof. J. Anderson
Prof. P. Blunden
Prof. T. Chen
Prof. M. Gabbert
Dean E. Jurkowski
Prof. C. Miller
Dr. T. Mondor
Ms. T. Nagra
Prof. D. Oliver
Dr. J. Ristock
Prof. A. Schultz
Dean J. Taylor
Ms. L. Zapshala-Kelln
Mr. J. Leclerc, University Secretary
Dr. S. Coyston,
Associate University Secretary

Assessors present:
Ms. S. Bonner-Proulx
Ms. N. Lam
Ms. J. Minarik
Prof. M. Shaw
Prof. D. Watt

Regrets:
Prof. R. Biscontri

Absent:
none

Also present:
Mr. N. Marnoch, Registrar
Ms. M. Watson, Executive Assistant to the University Secretary

President Barnard said the University was experiencing a very difficult time, given the COVID-19 pandemic. There had been progress on conversations with the federal government regarding research matters. Discussions with the province were continuing. President Barnard said many people at the University were doing good work. He was impressed with what had been accomplished to date and what was yet at hand. Many things were yet to be decided for the 2020 Fall Term, and there would be changes arising from the pandemic that would impact the University in unknown ways. President Barnard expressed his appreciation for the work that had been done by many people, in many roles at the University, in dealing with the situation.

I CONSIDERATION OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF MARCH 25, 2020

It was noted that Professor Shaw should be listed under Assessors who were present at the meeting.

On page 3, the first sentence of the eighth paragraph was revised to read: “Professor Chen observed that some other institutions had decided on blanket pass/fail grades.”
Professor Oliver MOVED, seconded by Professor Chen, THAT the minutes of the meeting of the Special Meeting of Senate Executive Committee held on March 25, 2020, be approved as amended.

CARRIED

II BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES - none

III RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE ACADEMIC ADVISORY SUB-COMMITTEE OF THE PANDEMIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

1. **Revised Academic Schedule for the 2020 Summer Term**

President Barnard reminded the committee that, on March 16, 2020, Senate had delegated its approval authority to the Senate Executive Committee for academic matters arising during the emergency period. The Pandemic Planning Committee had established an Academic Advisory Sub-committee chaired by Dr. Mondor, Deputy Provost (Academic Programs and Planning).

Dr. Mondor said the Academic Advisory Sub-committee had been meeting regularly and was bringing forward several proposals for Senate Executive’s consideration, including revisions to the Academic Schedule for the 2020 Summer Term. He recalled that Senate Executive (March 18, 2020) had previously approved a recommendation, on behalf of Senate, to delay the start of the Summer Term to June 1, 2020. More recently, Mr. Marnoch, Registrar, had developed a revised Academic Schedule for the Summer Term encompassing the period from May 4 to the end of August, 2020, as detailed in the proposal.

Mr. Marnoch said the proposal involved four options for units to offer courses in the 2020 Summer Term. There would be two options for Summer Online and Alternate Delivery, for 3 credit hour and 6 credit hour courses, which would both start June 1 and end August 14, plus two condensed, five-week periods, Summer Condensed 1, which would start June 1 and end July 3, and Summer Condensed 2, which would start July 13 and end August 14. The revised schedule also included Registration Revision and Voluntary Withdrawal deadlines, which had been determined according to established practices.

**Professor Miller MOVED, seconded by Professor Schultz, THAT the Senate Executive Committee approve, on behalf of Senate, a revised Academic Schedule for the 2020 Summer Term.**

Recognizing it was not a matter for Senate Executive, Professor Blunden suggested that the University should review the level of compensation for Sessional Instructors teaching in the Summer Term, to reflect the additional work that would be required to develop or adjust courses so they could be offered using online and alternate delivery platforms.

Professor Shaw identified two concerns with respect to the proposed Summer Condensed 1 and 2 options for course delivery, including that they would limit the time that University of Manitoba Faculty Association (UMFA) members could use as vacation, to spend time with their families, and to plan for the Fall Term. He proposed that the Summer Condensed Terms should follow the traditional
structure of 120-minute classes five days per week for four weeks, rather than
the proposed 90-minute classes five days per week for five weeks. The Summer
Condensed 1 and 2 options could be scheduled from June 1 to June 23 and from
June 20 to July 27, respectively, to allow UMFA members time in August to
spend with their families and prepare for the Fall Term.

Professor Miller agreed that faculty who would be teaching into August would
require a break as well as time to mount Fall Term classes to be offered online or
by some other alternate delivery mode. Professor Chen said this would be true
for some Sessional Instructors, too.

Dr. Mondor acknowledged that many things would change from previous
Summer Terms. There would also be significant changes to instruction, from
what had originally been planned. The proposed revisions for the Summer Term
would create a structure that could be applied to most courses that Faculties,
Colleges, and Schools would offer over the summer. In recent years, students
were increasingly registering in the Summer Term and it was anticipated that this
would continue this year given interruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic
and uncertainty about the Fall Term.

Dr. Mondor said he was not unsympathetic to faculty members wanting a break.
He noted that the start of Summer Term had been pushed ahead to June 1. Also,
it would not necessarily be the case that every instructor would have to teach the
entire Summer Term. Some might teach only in the Summer Condensed 1 or the
Summer Condensed 2 option. Teaching schedules could be developed with a
view to providing instructors with some sort of a break.

Dr. Mondor said the Sub-committee had strongly recommended the revised
Summer Term, as proposed, in order to provide a good experience for students.

In response to a question, Mr. Marnoch said registration for classes scheduled to
start May 4 would open on April 20. Registration for classes scheduled to start
June 1 would be opened on May 19. Pending approval of the revised Academic
Schedule for the Summer Term, information would be sent to departments and
schedulers with timelines for creating timetables, including in Aurora. Students
would be able to see course offerings in Aurora by the beginning of May.

Professor Chen asked if the decision to establish 90-minute classes was made
based on evidence that this was more conducive to remote teaching and learning
than 120-minute classes. Dr. Mondor said this had not been a consideration, as
far as he was aware. The Centre for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning
had provided advice on the number of weeks required for students to master and
retain course material where students were concurrently registered in several 3
credit hour courses. The Sub-committee felt strongly that students should be
given a chance to succeed in their courses and retain the material they would
learn.

CARRIED
2. **Proposal to Allow Students a Pass/Fail Grading Choice**

Dr. Mondor recalled that, at the previous meeting (March 25, 2019), Senate Executive had approved, on behalf of Senate, an alternative grading mechanism, to allow students to select whether or not to exclude individual grades obtained for courses completed in the 2020 Winter Term, including spanned courses, from calculations of Grade Point Averages used internally, at the University. The advantage of this approach, which had been strongly supported by the Academic Advisory Sub-committee, as well as Deans and Directors, was that students’ course grades would be retained in Aurora and could be used for prerequisite, progression, and admission purposes.

Dr. Mondor referred the committee to a recommendation from the Sub-committee to also allow students a pass/fail grading choice. The proposal had the support of Deans and Directors. Dr. Mondor informed Senate Executive that, since the last meeting, universities across Canada had taken decisions to offer their students a pass/fail grading choice. At the University of Manitoba, the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Arts had received a proposal that students in that Faculty be given that option.

Dr. Mondor said it was important to be aware that, when a student selected “pass” as the grade, it was not possible to retain a record of the letter grade for that course in Aurora. This might have future implications for students who subsequently found that they required a grade in a given course, for admission, entrance, prerequisite, progression, or graduation purposes. This would be the case, as Senate-approved academic regulations concerning these things, for Faculties, Colleges, Schools, and programs, would continue to apply. It would be important to clearly communicate the potential implications to students, and it would be imperative for students to investigate and understand the ramifications of their choices. Dr. Mondor noted, in particular, that Advanced Entry requirements for some limited admission programs, including the Bachelor of Commerce (Honours) program and Bachelor of Science in Engineering programs, for example, included minimum grades in specific courses. Students who chose to receive a grade of “pass” for a prerequisite course(s) would not be eligible for admission to these programs.

Recognizing there would be risks for some students, Dr. Mondor said the Sub-committee had felt, nonetheless, that it was important to give students the option of a pass/fail grading choice and to ensure students across the University had the same choices with respect to alternative grading options by adopting a pass/fail option at the institutional level.

Dr. Mondor said the Sub-committee was recommending one change to the proposal included with the agenda. Specifically, that students would have until May 10, 2020, rather than June 1, 2020, to declare an alternative grading option, including either the pass/fail option or the option to exclude particular course grades from Grade Point Average calculations. The change was necessary in order to allow sufficient time to assess applications for admission to various programs across the University. Dr. Mondor said students who could not meet the May 10\textsuperscript{th} deadline could request an accommodation.
In response to a question, Dr. Mondor said it was difficult to compare alternative grading options adopted across Canadian universities. Other institutions had approved a pass/fail option but were continuing to figure out how the decision would impact their programs. There did not appear to be a coherent approach across institutions. Dr. Mondor said the University’s decision to give students the option to exclude particular course grades from Grade Point Average calculations was unique and would protect students, as letter grades would be retained in Aurora and could subsequently be used to assess students for progression and admission, for example.

Dr. Ristock MOVED, seconded by Professor Chen, that the Senate Executive Committee approve, on behalf of Senate:

THAT, in addition to allowing students to choose whether or not to include a grade received for any course completed in the 2020 Winter Term in any Grade Point Average Calculation (previously approved, Senate Executive, March 25, 2020), students, with the exception of those enrolled in the Faculty of Law, be allowed to choose whether or not to receive a ‘pass’ or ‘fail’ grade instead of a letter grade (for Winter Term or spanned courses ending in April 2020). Credit will be granted for courses for which a ‘pass’ grade is granted; and

THAT a ‘pass’ grade will be available only if the original letter grade is ‘D’ or higher; and

THAT the ‘pass’ or ‘fail’ designation would appear on the transcript with a notation indicating the student made this selection owing to the difficult learning situation during the COVID-19 pandemic; and

THAT, in the event a student chooses to receive a ‘pass’ or ‘fail’ grade, no letter grade will be retained or associated with the student’s performance in the course; and

THAT students will have until May 10, 2020 to declare to the Registrar’s Office using a method put into place by that Office, if they choose to exercise an alternative grading option (either pass/fail option or to exclude a course grade from Grade Point Average calculations); and

THAT students’ academic transcript as at May 10, 2020 will be used for the purposes of assessing any application for admission to a program at the University starting September 2020, or to determine eligibility to graduate in Spring 2020; and

THAT students who file a grade appeal, in accordance with the Final Examinations and Final Grades procedure, may elect a ‘pass’ or ‘fail’ grade categorization within seven (7) days of notification of the conclusion of their grade appeal; and

THAT regardless of any choice made with respect to course grading, students will remain obliged to meet all existing admission, prerequisite, progression, degree, and graduation policies and requirements that may apply to them.

Several committee members underscored the need to clearly communicate to students the potential implications of choosing a “pass” grading option for a course, including that the course would continue to be used to assess students
Dr. Mondor agreed that clear communications to students would be important. He read aloud the last paragraph on page 5, which signaled that students would need to understand the implications of their decisions. Dr. Ristock said communications to students would be sent by the Vice-Provost (Students) and the information would be included with other COVID-19 updates for students on the University website, as part of the Frequently Asked Questions. In addition, the Provost’s Office would communicate Senate Executive’s decisions to the Deans and Directors. Faculties, Colleges, and Schools would need to communicate the information to both students and Academic Advisors.

Dr. Mondor said Ms. Schnarr, Vice-Provost (Students) was working with Ms. Usick, Executive Director, Student Engagement and Success, to determine the best ways to communicate information about the various alternative grading options to students. The Sub-committee had considered requiring students to meet with an Academic Advisor before deciding on an alternative grading option. It had decided against this, as it might delay students from making a declaration, which would be problematic if they were seeking admission to program, for example. Students would be strongly encouraged to meet with an Academic Advisor. Dr. Mondor said he had asked Deans and Directors to be prepared to provide their students and potential applicants to the programs with clear guidelines, including information on the ramifications of choosing a grade of “pass.”

Referring to an indication in the proposal that a “pass” grade would be available only if the original letter grade was a “D” or higher, Dean Jurkowski noted that some Faculties had established a higher minimum grade as a passing grade in their programs. He raised the possibility of amending the proposal to specify that a “pass” grade would be available only if the original letter grade corresponded to the passing grade established by each Faculty, College, or School.

Dr. Mondor said there was a distinction to be made between a minimum grade required to remain in good academic standing in a given faculty and an alternative grade chosen by a student that would appear on the transcript. As the “pass” grade would have no particular letter grade equivalent, the minimum passing grade used within a Faculty would remain. If the minimum passing grade in any given Faculty was a “C,” a “pass” would not meet that expectation.

Ms. Bonner-Proulx supported the proposal to give students a pass/fail grading option. She proposed that it be amended to require a minimum letter grade of “C” for a “pass,” as it would allow students who selected the “pass” option to maintain the minimum academic standing required for course and program progression, in many cases, and would mitigate risks previously identified for students who would select a “pass” grade based on minimum requirement for a “D.”

Professor Miller supported the suggestion to increase the minimum grade required for a “pass,” to a grade of C. She observed that some other institutions
were giving students options for a pass/fail or a “D,” so courses could continue to be used for progression.

Dr. Mondor observed that a minimum grade of “C” was not universally required for prerequisite courses, so the proposed amendment would not resolve the risk of choosing a “pass” grade for all students. With respect to the possibility of a pass/fail or a “D” grade, he noted that students who obtained a “D” would not have the option to replace that grade with a “pass” in programs with a higher minimum passing grade. The Sub-committee had felt that this would not be as equitable as the proposed approach.

Professor Chen cautioned that establishing a grade of “C” as the threshold would have a disproportionate negative impact on students who were striving to obtain a “D” in a Written English course, including some international students, students whose first language was not English, and those who did not have access to the same educational background.

In response to a question, Dr. Mondor confirmed that students who did not have internet access and might not be immediately aware that they could choose an alternative grading mode would have an opportunity to make a declaration after the May 10, 2020 deadline.

Professor Blunden suggested that, given the various alternative grading options, in addition to the option to Voluntarily Withdraw by April 13th, any students who gave it some consideration would not elect the standard grading option but would select from among the alternative grading approaches depending on their particular priorities, whether to maximize their Grade Point Averages or to remain competitive for scholarships. He was concerned that, regardless of how much information was provided to students, the implications of the various choices would not be clear to some students. Risks would exist for students who would transfer between programs in future or hoped to gain admission to a professional program, who had chosen a “pass” grade for a course(s) without fully understanding the future implications of the decision. Those students would be compelled to retake courses or they might appeal to have their letter grades restored. There would be fewer risks for students who would continue in their current program and who were familiar with the requirements of their program.

Professor Blunden suggested that the one substantive difference between choosing a “pass” as a grade and selecting grades to be excluded from Grade Point Average calculations was the grade that would appear on the transcript. Considering this, he proposed that, where students elected to have grades excluded from Grade Point Average calculations, the grades should not appear on the external transcript but should be retained in Aurora to be used for internal purposes.

Dr. Mondor acknowledged the concerns raised. He said the various proposals for alternative grading options recognized that learning and assessments had changed significantly and in unpredictable ways over the previous month and that some students were experiencing difficulties with the changes, including, for many, experiencing increased stress. Institutions across the country and across North America were making similar decisions, in response to the same concerns.
The Sub-committee had considered the possibility of different transcripts for internal and external purposes, but that option was not available using Aurora without building that capacity into the student information system.

Professor Chen said students wanted and should be given various alternative grading options and be empowered to make decisions based on their circumstances and future plans, which might include how their transcript would appear when applying to programs at other institutions.

Professor Miller asked if Departments would be able to accept a “pass” grade where a grade of “C” or higher was required for progression. Dr. Mondor replied that this might be possible in instances where instructor permission had been established as a prerequisite for a particular course or there were Faculty regulations that would permit this.

Professor Miller suggested that, for many students, the option to Voluntarily Withdraw was not a real choice, as a minimum course load was required in order to remain eligible for student aid programs, including band support, and student awards. Also, for ethnically marginalized students, choosing to have a grade excluded from their Grade Point Average calculations but continue to show on the transcript could contribute to implicit bias in future hiring and admissions decisions.

In response to a question, Ms. Bonner-Proulx said students across the University felt strongly that, owing to the stresses placed on them in recent weeks, many final grades would not be an accurate reflection of students’ capabilities, past performance, or competitiveness to enter either other programs or upper year courses. She advocated for giving students, who would be affected in different ways by the changes in recent weeks, various options and the latitude to make their own decisions with respect to alternative grading options.

The motion was CARRIED.

3. Proposal to Limit Alternative Grading Approaches for Winter Term 2020

Dr. Mondor reviewed the various alternative grading options that would be available to students, as outlined in the proposal. He said it would be important to bring an end to the consideration of alternative grading options, given that the deadline for Voluntary Withdrawals and the end of term were approaching. The objective of the proposal was to reach an agreement to limit alternative grading approaches, for the 2020 Winter Term, to the ones outlined there.

Dr. Ristock MOVED, seconded by Professor Anderson, THAT the Senate Executive Committee approve, on behalf of Senate, that alternative approaches to grading for 2020 Winter Term courses, will be restricted to those approved by Senate Executive as of April 1, 2020.

Professor Anderson reiterated the need to clearly communicate the implications of Option 2 to students.
In response to a question, Dr. Mondor confirmed that the recommendation to restrict alternative grading approaches for 2020 Winter Term courses included options outlined in both items 3 and 4 on the agenda.

The motion was CARRIED.

4. Proposal to Automatically Exclude Failing Grades from Grade Point Average Calculations

Dr. Mondor recalled that Senate Executive (March 25, 2020) had approved, on behalf of Senate, an alternative grading option for 2020 Winter Term courses, that would give students the option to exclude grades for particular courses from Grade Point Average calculations. As there was no reason why students who received an “F” would not want to exclude the grade from the calculations, the current proposal was to automatically failing grades, rather than having students declare that they wanted those grades to be excluded.

Ms. Nagra MOVED, seconded by Professor Schultz, that the Senate Executive Committee approve, on behalf of Senate:

THAT any failing grade received by a student in the 2020 Winter Term will be automatically excluded from all Grade Point Average calculations; and
THAT such grades will be denoted on the transcript as having been excluded from Grade Point Average calculations; and
THAT, unless otherwise specified, this restriction will not apply to Grade Point Average calculations that are used for admission purposes.

Professor Blunden observed that, with the various alternative grading options available to students for the 2020 Winter Term, the option to voluntarily withdraw was moot, as there would be no consequences associated with it. He asked how instructors should advise students, who were considering a Voluntary Withdrawal from courses that they anticipated they might fail. Dr. Mondor said the consequence for students to consider would be that the “F” grade would appear on their transcript.

Professor Blunden asked about the implications of the proposal for programs with academic regulations that limited the number of failures that students could have and still remain in the program. Dr. Mondor replied that it would be necessary for academic units to review their program-specific regulations, to understand the implications, and to recommend any required modifications to Senate.

Professor Schultz observed that minimum Grade Point Averages required for progression in health sciences programs were determined based on the requirements of various accrediting bodies. She asked if College Deans had participated in discussions of the current proposal, including on the Subcommittee, perhaps. Dr. Mondor said Dean Postl, Vice-Provost (Health Sciences) and Dean, Rady Faculty of Health Sciences, had participated in discussions with the Deans and Directors. In response to a question, he said students would continue to be required to meet any program-specific academic
regulations, including minimum passing grades and Grade Point Averages, for example, for programs offered by Colleges within the Rady Faculty of Health Sciences. It would be important for the Colleges, as well as other Faculties and Schools across the University, to communicate to students the consequences associated with decisions related to alternative grading options, considering their program-specific academic regulations.

CARRIED

IV REPORTS OF OTHER COMMITTEES OF SENATE, FACULTY AND SCHOOL COUNCILS

1. Report of the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Kinesiology and Recreation Management RE: Waiver of Degree Exit Requirements

Dr. Mondor said the Faculty of Kinesiology and Recreation Management was proposing to waive standard degree exit requirements for the 2020 Winter Term, including requirements for current CPR Level C and Emergency or Standard First Aid Certification, recognizing the societal response to the COVID-19 pandemic would preclude students from gaining these certifications.

Dr. Ristock MOVED, seconded by Professor Miller, THAT the Senate Executive Committee approve, on behalf of Senate, the waiver of Degree Exit Requirements, including Current CPR Level C and Emergency or Standard First Aid Certification requirements, for students graduating from the degree programs listed below following the 2020 Winter Term:

- Bachelor of Kinesiology
- Bachelor of Kinesiology – Athletic Therapy
- Bachelor of Physical Education
- Bachelor of Recreation Management and Community Development.

CARRIED


Dean Mondor said the College of Pharmacy had a standard approach to evaluating applications to the Doctor of Pharmacy (Pharm.D.) program, which had been approved by Senate to include a critical skills essay that was written in a group situation on the Bannatyne Campus. The College was proposing to waive and suspend the requirement for applicants apply for admission in the Fall 2020 intake.

Professor Oliver MOVED, seconded by Professor Miller, THAT the Senate Executive Committee approve, on behalf of Senate, a revised admissions process for the Fall 2020 intake into the Doctor of Pharmacy (Pharm.D.) program; specifically, that the Critical Skills Essay will not be required and eligible applicants will be ranked for selection based on the following:
• Adjusted Grade Point Average (AGPA) weighted at 66 percent;
• Pharmacy College Admissions Test (PCAT®) weighted at 34 percent.

CARRIED

V ADDITIONAL BUSINESS - none

VI ADJOURNMENT

Professor Barnard thanked Dr. Mondor, members of the Academic Advisory Sub-committee, and all those who had been involved in the development of the various proposals approved at the meeting, for their work.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:57 p.m.

These minutes, pages 1 to 11, together with the agenda, pages 1 to 12, comprise the minutes of a Special Meeting of Senate Executive Committee meeting held on April 1, 2020.