

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA



Enrolment Services
Senate & Curriculum Services
Brock Hall
2016-1874 East Mall
Vancouver, BC V6T 1Z1

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Memo to: Vancouver Senate and Okanagan Senate

**From: Committee to Consider the Council of Senates:
Joint UBC Okanagan and UBC Vancouver**

Re: Council of Senates Implementation

Background

UBC Okanagan opened officially on July 1, 2005. In order to accommodate this historic development in the UBC system, The *University Act* was amended (*University Act*, R.S.B.C. 1996, C. 468) and a Council of Senates of the University of British Columbia was created (see Section 38.1 of the *University Act*). An Ad Hoc Committee to Consider the Council of Senates was established by the Interim Academic Governing Body of UBC Okanagan on March 22, 2005. The Vancouver Senate established a similar ad hoc Committee on March 23, 2005.

Mandate of the Two Campus-Based Ad Hoc Committees

The broad mandate of the two Ad Hoc Committees was to consider and make recommendations for the establishment of the UBC Council of Senates, including recommendations pertaining to the roles, responsibilities, rules and procedures of the Council of Senates relative to the Vancouver and Okanagan Senates.

Both the Okanagan and Vancouver Ad Hoc Committees met several times separately during the summer and then jointly in early September. The following report resulting from their deliberations is forwarded as a consensus document for consideration by the Okanagan Senate and the Vancouver Senate. The recommendations, if adopted, would provide a framework for the Council of Senates to have an inaugural meeting at which time the Council itself could set its own rules and procedures with guidance from the report.

The Ad Hoc Committees, while recognizing that neither Senate has authority to mandate changes to the *University Act*, propose some recommendations that will require such

changes. These will need to be considered carefully by both Senates as well as the Council of Senates once it is operational.

DISCUSSION

1. Role of Council of Senates

The Ad Hoc Committees expressed concerns regarding the potentially far-reaching powers of the Council of Senates as allowed by the *University Act*. In particular, there is mutual concern about the fact that the Council will be able to refer matters to itself (see Section 38.2 (1)) and thereby usurp the authorities and responsibilities of the campus-based Senates. A corollary concern is that the Council will be seen as a dispute-resolving body for routine issues that are properly discussed and adjudicated by the campus-based Senates. It is recommended, therefore, that:

- a. The role of the Council should be one of broad system-wide oversight, rather than problem solving or “managerial”;
- b. The Council should ordinarily act only on issues that have been referred to it (except in those areas where the Council has clear authority, as outlined below), and then only on matters that are of system-wide significance; and
- c. The Council should interpret and respond to any issues referred to it by consulting an explicit body of documentation that might include: The *University Act*, TREK 2010, the Academic Plans of UBC V and UBC O, (and their successors), extant Board of Governors and Senate policies and precedents, and any other documents deemed useful in understanding the mission and scope of the UBC system.

2. Procedures

For a matter to be referred to the Council by either Senate, a vote of super majority (i.e., 3/4) within the Senate will be required. The quorum for the Council should be set relatively high, but only a simple majority will be required to pass most motions. The Council should meet at least once annually. At the end of the first year of operation, i.e., in January 2007, the joint Committees recommend that the President convene a Committee to review the Council. A process for undertaking such a review should be established at that time.

3. Elected Membership

Chairs of Senate Committees

UBC Okanagan is expecting to have six standing committees of Senate while UBC Vancouver currently has fourteen (excluding Budget and Elections). To compensate for the concern of undue influence, UBC Vancouver will suggest that the Chairs of six to eight committees be appointed to the Council of Senates, while UBC Okanagan will send all six standing committee Chairs to the Council.

The Chairs of the standing committees should not be elected by Senate but should be appointed by virtue of the nature of the Committee that they chair. In the case of UBC Vancouver, the Nominating Committee should consider and recommend which Committee chairs should be appointed to the Council. Suggestions based on current Committees are:

Curriculum, Admissions, Tributes, Academic Policy, Student Awards,
Appeals on Academic Standing, Student Appeals on Academic Discipline.

Student Representation

The *University Act* describes the composition of the Council of Senates (Section 38.1 (1)) and even though it allows for student membership through elections from among Senate members, it does not provide designated student seats. The Ad Hoc Committees recommend that students be explicitly considered.

Thus, the four persons to be elected from each of the two Senates will have the same distribution; that is, two students, one convocation senator, and one elected faculty member.

4. Terms of Office

According to the *University Act* (Section 38.1 (3)), the term of office of elected Council members is three years, in phase with the UBC V and UBC O Senates. However, a three-year term is a very long appointment in the academic life of a student, so it is recommended that students be elected for a shorter period than suggested by the *Act*.

The *University Act* states that Council members may continue in their terms of office even if they cease to be members of either Senate. For reasons of continuity this makes sense, but only with the caveat that the individuals must retain their original status as faculty or students within the University.

5. Committees of the Council and Scope of Authority

There has been discussion as to the nature and number of Committees that should be under the umbrella of the Council of Senates. The *University Act* calls for the Council (rather than the Senates) to establish a standing committee for budgetary issues and to have responsibility for matters pertaining to promoting the interests of the university or for carrying out the objects and provisions of the *University Act*, to set out the terms of affiliation with other institutions of higher learning, and to make and publish rules for nomination, election, and voting (Section 38.2 (4)).

There has been some discussion of both increasing this list (to include the Library, which is seen as a system-wide resource) as well as decreasing the list (to place the responsibility for promoting the interests of the university and to develop

institutional affiliation back into the two Senates in the first instance), but as yet there is no resolution.

The ad hoc Committees make the following observations and suggestions about Committees of the Council:

- Members for Committees of the Council of Senates should be drawn from the two campus-based Senates, in addition to from the Council itself, as appropriate.
- The Council of Senates Budget Committee should report to each Senate at least annually.
- The Elections Committee should include two subcommittees: one for UBC O and one for UBC V. Each subcommittee would adjudicate election appeals specific its respective campus. The Committee of the whole would adjudicate appeals concerning system-wide elections.

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Role of the Council of Senates:

That the Senates endorse the following proposed changes to the University Act:

- A. Section 38.2 (1) The president, the board, the Vancouver Senate, or the Okanagan Senate may direct that a matter that the Vancouver senate or the Okanagan senate might consider, is considering or has considered in the exercise of that senate's powers under section 37 is referred to the council for consideration and disposition.
- B. DELETE 38.2 (2)(c) The council may substitute its disposition in respect of the matter for any disposition the Vancouver senate or the Okanagan senate may have made.
- C. Section 38.2 (4). Strike "(o) and (u)" and replace with "(l)" such that it reads, "Sections 37 (1) (e), (l), and 43 (1) do not apply to the Vancouver senate or the Okanagan senate and the council may act under those sections as though it was a senate."

Procedures

That the Rules and Procedures for the Council of Senates be drafted to reflect:

- D. That a motion undertaken by either campus-based Senate to refer a matter to the Council of Senates be carried by a 3/4 majority of those Senators present and voting.
- E. That items for referral are normally brought to either Senate for a vote by the Agenda Committee (at UBC V) or the Policies & Procedures Committee (at UBC O). This does not preclude, however, items arising from the floor.
- F. That the quorum for transaction of business by the Council of Senates be set at a minimum of 50% of the Council members from each campus.

Membership

- G. That the Council of Senates membership initially be as follows:
 - 1. President
 - 2. Chancellor
 - 3. Academic Vice-President UBC V
 - 4. Deputy Vice-Chancellor UBC O
 - 5. 4 UBC V senators elected by UBC V Senate (2 students, 1 convocation, 1 elected faculty)
 - 6. 4 UBC O senators elected by UBC O Senate (2 students, 1 convocation, 1 elected faculty)
 - 7. 1 UBC V designate appointed by the President
 - 8. 1 UBC O designate appointed by the President
 - 9. 8 chairs of Vancouver Senate standing committees
 - 10. 6 chairs of Okanagan Senate standing committees

Terms of Office

- H. That elected members of the Council who cease to be members of either the UBC V or UBC O Senates be permitted to retain their membership on the Council as long as they retain the faculty or student status that made them eligible for election to the Council.
- I. That the Senates endorse that University Act 38.1(4) be amended accordingly.
- J. That the Senates endorse that University Act 38.1 (1) (e) and (f) be amended to make explicit mention of “student senator” and “convocation senator”.

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- K. That the Senates endorse that University Act 38.1. (3) be amended such that the term of office for a student senator is one year, as distinct from the term of office for other members, which is three years.