

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA



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3 November 2006

To: Senate
From: Agenda Committee

Report on Changes to the Rules and Procedures of Senate to reflect the Establishment of the College for Interdisciplinary Studies

INTRODUCTION

At its September 2006 meeting, Senate requested that the Agenda Committee bring forward recommendations for changes to its Rules and Procedures to describe changes to the membership of Senate so as to reflect the establishment of the College for Interdisciplinary Studies. The Senate motion stated, in part:

“That the Agenda Committee is directed to report back with recommendations on associated changes to the Rules and Procedures of Senate at the November 2006 meeting of Senate.”

It is anticipated that the Senate Academic Policy Committee will make a series of recommendations at the November 2006 Senate meeting leading to the establishment of a College for Interdisciplinary Studies. The Agenda Committee has consulted with the Nominating Committee, the Senate Secretariat, and the University Counsel, and it has corresponded with the Academic Policy Committee on this matter. It has thereby developed this report.

SENATE MEMBERSHIP REQUIREMENT AND PRECEDENTS

The membership of the Vancouver Senate is specified in the University Act. The Act specifies that the membership of Senate includes:

- The deans of faculties
- A number of faculty members (with their number and with constraints on their eligibility as specified in the Act)
- A number of students (with their number and with constraints on their eligibility as specified in the Act)
- Additional members determined by the Senate (with constraints on their eligibility as specified in the Act)

While the representation of faculties on the Senate, including through the deans, is well defined in the Act, there is no provision with regard to the representation of colleges. The policies of Senate are also silent with regard to the representation of colleges on the Senate.

With regard to precedent, it is noted that the establishment of the College of Health Disciplines led to its Principal alone being added to the membership of Senate. It is also noted that the College of Graduate Studies at UBC Okanagan led to the addition of four members to the Okanagan Senate – the Dean, two faculty members and one student. However, the structure, powers and duties of the proposed College appear to be rather different to those of both the College of Health Disciplines and the College of Graduate Studies at UBC Okanagan, so that neither of these situations can be used to guide the current circumstances.

MEMBERSHIP CHANGE OPTIONS

The Committee considered two options to changes in the membership of the Senate, depending on the intended structure of the new College.

Option A

The Committee considered as one option that the Principal of the College alone be added to the membership of the Senate. This has the advantage of minimizing the increase in the size of the Senate, a matter that was raised in the Senate's April 1993 policy on academic governance. However, such a change would have two negative consequences. First, it would entail an increase in the ratio of administrators to members of other constituencies, including faculty and students - a change that has been of concern to those constituencies in the past. Secondly, it would create a cohort of faculty members and students (those who are members of the College) that would have reduced representation on the Senate relative to those who are members of the disciplinary faculties. (In fact, this has already been the case under the current structure of the Faculty of Graduate Studies.)

Option B

The Committee also considered a second option, namely to increase the membership of the Senate as if the new College were equivalent to a new Faculty from the viewpoint of Senate representation. This would imply that the membership of Senate should be expanded to include the Principal of the College, plus two faculty members who are members of the College, plus one student who is a member of the College. This option has the advantage of not increasing the ratio of administrators to members of other constituencies; and also has the advantage of providing the faculty members and students of the College with the same level of representation on the Senate as faculty members and students of the disciplinary faculties. We do note that this option would mean a larger increase (of four) in the overall size of the Senate, again a concern that was raised in Senate's April 1993 policy on academic governance.

DISCUSSION

The choice between the above two options depends very much on the intended powers and duties of the proposed College. Thus, if the College is to have the more limited powers and duties analogous to the College of Health Disciplines, then Option A might be more appropriate. If, on the other hand, the College is to have powers and duties more closely aligned to those of a faculty, Option B would be preferred. Relevant documents for assessing these powers and duties are the University Act, and the policies of the Senate itself. However, these sources are silent on the powers and duties of a college. Thus, while the resolution of these kinds of matters may well be intuitive, it would be appropriate to have such powers and duties appropriately articulated in an analogous way to the case of faculties.

Although the Act is silent on this aspect, it does state that the "academic governance of the University is vested with the Senate." Therefore, since the Academic Policy Committee is required "to consider proposals for the organization or reorganization of academic units," a request was made to that

Committee for some clarification on the College's intended powers and duties. Partly in response to this, the Academic Policy Committee has made a recommendation to grant certain powers to the College. In considering that Committee's report, it appears that the College will indeed be rather like a faculty, at least with respect to faculty members and students being members of the College, the inclusion of schools, and the delivery of degree programs. Therefore, it appears that Option B above is preferred over Option A.

The Academic Policy Committee has also included a specific recommendation that the Principal be added to the membership of Senate. In fact, this recommendation is entirely consistent with either of the options considered herein. Furthermore, that Committee's report includes a section "Deliberations of the Academic Policy Committee" that suggests that additional members may not need to be added to the membership of Senate at this time. However, we note that this is not a specific recommendation, and as such take it as advice to the Agenda Committee in making its own recommendation to Senate. While the Agenda Committee respects this opinion, in light of the discussion above it nevertheless takes the view that Option B above is more consistent than is Option A with respect to the intended powers and duties of the College and its stated advantages outweigh its disadvantages. Hence Option B forms the basis of our recommendation.

RECOMMENDATION:

"That Senate amend Section 3.5 of the Rules and Procedures of Senate as follows (additions shown underlined):

Membership and Officers of Senate

Current Membership of the Senate is as set out in Section 35.1 (2) of the University Act, with such other members with the following additions as permitted under Section 35.1 (2) (k) of the University Act:

Seven (7) additional representatives of the Convocation;

A representative of the professional librarians;

The Principal of the College of Health Disciplines;

The Principal of the College for Interdisciplinary Studies;

Two faculty members of the College for Interdisciplinary Studies, elected by and from the faculty members of that College;

One student from the College for Interdisciplinary Studies, elected by and from the students of that College; and

That the Agenda Committee be directed to review the addition of these seats to the membership of Senate and report back – with recommendations for changes to the composition of Senate if necessary – by January 2008."

Respectfully submitted,

Dean Michael Isaacson
Chair, Agenda Committee