

General Faculties Council
GFC EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
Approved Minutes

Meeting 86
April 27, 2022, 2:00 p.m.

By Zoom platform

Voting Members

Teri Balsler, Vice-Chair
Jessica Ayala
Joule Bergerson
Rachel Lauer
Meghan McDonough
Alex Paquette
Renzo Pereyra
Bill Rosehart
Richard Sigurdson
April Viczko
Jennifer Winter – arrived during Item 2

Non-Voting Member

David Stewart

Secretary

Lise Houle

Scribe

Elizabeth Sjogren

Regrets

Ed McCauley, Chair

Guests

Deborah Book, Legal Counsel – present for Item 4
Shaziah Jinnah, incoming Students' Union Vice-President (Academic)

The Vice-Chair called the meeting to order at 2:05 p.m. and confirmed quorum.

1. Approval of the Agenda

Moved/Seconded

That the Agenda for the April 27, 2022 General Faculties Council Executive Committee meeting be approved.

Carried

2. Remarks of the Vice-Chair

The Vice-Chair observed that it is the end of the Winter term, and thanked members for all their efforts during this difficult time.

In response to questions, it was reported that:

- There is awareness that many members of the University community are concerned that the University's mask mandate is set to lift at the end of the Winter term and would prefer for the mask mandate to be extended. The administration is observing the decisions of other institutions in the province and considering current provincial restrictions. A communication is being prepared and will be sent to the University community soon.
- Guests will be permitted at the upcoming convocation ceremonies. The Registrar's office has communicated this to graduates and Faculty leaders, and a general announcement will be sent to the University community soon.

The Committee then discussed the anticipated lifting of the University's mask mandate:

- There is anxiety for instructors and students about going into the classroom, concerns about the general campus environment without masks being required, and impacts on those who will be in the classroom at the start of the Spring term next week. An FAQ will be needed to help people move forward, providing information such as whether an instructor can require masks in their classroom.
- Many members of the University community are hoping for a balance between what the provincial government dictates and other dimensions such as reasonable health protections
- Members of the University community were proud that administration kept its commitment to have a mask mandate until the end of the Winter term, even when the provincial government lifted its restrictions partway through the term
- It was speculated which decision would generate more objection from the University community: continuing the mask mandate or lifting it
- The Committee suggested that the University community could be polled in order to provide clear evidence of opinions, however it was noted that persons who are not attending convocation or attending classrooms in the Spring term may not feel as unsafe as those who are. It was also observed that any decision about masking should be based on science and not opinions.
- Many learning environments do not permit distancing, such as in the Fine Arts
- It could be helpful to ask the University of Alberta about its experience after it lifted its mask mandate
- It is predicted that many members of the University community will choose to continue to wear masks even if the mandate is lifted

3. Approval of the March 23, 2022 Meeting Minutes

Documentation was circulated with the Agenda.

Moved/Seconded

That the Minutes of the General Faculties Council Executive Committee meeting held on March 23, 2022 be approved.

Carried

4. Revisions to the University's Occupational Health and Safety Policy

Documentation was circulated with the Agenda. Deborah Book presented this item.

Highlights:

- The proponent provided an overview of the rationale for the proposed revisions to the University's Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Policy, and reported that the Environment, Health, Safety & Sustainability Committee of the Board of Governors is the approval authority for this policy
- Discussion included:
 - Whether it is necessary to say in section 4.1 that the University is committed to “complying with all applicable environmental health and safety regulations”, since this should be a given
 - Section 4.4 is not clear about how leaders will carry out the requirement that they ensure that students and employees are provided with the training and tools required to perform their work safely
 - The roles and responsibilities of Senior Leadership Team members, department heads, directors, managers, and supervisors are different, and so their abilities to provide training and tools to students and employees (section 4.4) and to ensure environmental compliance (section 5.4) may differ. The proponent indicated that some responsibilities would have to fall to senior leaders and so these sections will be reviewed for clarity.
 - Section 4.5 is not clear about how violations of the policy will be identified
 - It was suggested that section 5.5 (responsibilities of the University community) be moved higher in the document
 - The OHS Policy refers to a “healthy and safe working, learning, and living environment” and the Harassment Policy refers to conduct in the “working, living or educational environment”, and it is therefore unclear under which policy a harassment incident should be reported. The proponent indicated that “injuries” in the OHS Policy is meant to be broadly defined to include psychological injury (harassment) and that the drafting team is looking into clarifying process in this area.
 - The definition of “supervisor” refers to directing or overseeing a “person, group, department, organization, or operation” but does not refer specifically to students, and so it is unclear where teachers/instructors and postdoctoral scholars fit within this definition and what their responsibilities therefore are
 - Section 5.6 does not indicate how matters will be referred to the Joint Worksite Health and Safety Committee for consideration
 - It was suggested that the Environment, Health and Safety Management System (EHSMS) be reviewed every three years, in alignment with the requirement to review the policy every three years, rather than saying that the EHSMS will be reviewed “periodically” (section 4.3)
- In response to a question, it was explained that section 5.3 of the policy empowers the University's Environment, Health, and Safety (EHS) team to consider what compliance with the policy means

5. Appointment of Three Academic Staff Members to the Academic Planning and Priorities Committee (one to be a member of GFC)

Documentation was circulated with the Agenda.

The Committee named, in rank order, academic staff members to be approached by the University Secretariat to serve on the Academic Planning and Priorities Committee (APPC). The first three individuals to agree to serve will be deemed appointed by the Committee.

The Committee directed the University Secretariat to start with filling the GFC member seat and then move on to the two at-large seats, eliminating any at-large nominees from the Faculty of the appointed GFC member, so that no Faculty is duplicated in the APPC membership.

6. Appointment of Two Academic Staff Members to the Academic Program Subcommittee

Documentation was circulated with the Agenda.

The Committee named, in rank order, academic staff members to be approached by the University Secretariat to serve on the Academic Program Subcommittee (APS). The first two individuals to agree to serve will be deemed appointed by the Committee.

The Committee directed that, as the University Secretariat works through the rank-ordered list, nominees be eliminated as appropriate to ensure that no Faculty is duplicated in the APS membership.

Secretary's Note: Because, when the Committee named Jocelyn Hayley as the APS Academic Co-Chair on October 21, 2020, the language "...effective immediately, for a three-year term or until her (time) on the APS ends if that is sooner" was used, Jocelyn Hayley's re-appointment to the APS for a one-year term allows her to also continue in the Academic Co-Chair role until June 30, 2023.

7. Review of the Draft May 12, 2022 GFC Agenda

The Committee reviewed the draft agenda for the May 12, 2022 GFC meeting. In response to a question, it was confirmed that the APPC has reviewed and recommended the proposal to dissolve the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine departments, and that the Dean of the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine can introduce and provide background and context on the proposal at the GFC meeting.

8. Other Business

There was no other business.

9. Adjournment

Moved/Seconded

That the General Faculties Council Executive Committee adjourn the April 27, 2022 meeting.

Carried

The meeting was adjourned at 3:13 p.m.

Lise Houle
Interim University Secretary