

Senate Minutes

September 13, 2024
CE339

The Chair, F. Odartey-Wellington, called the meeting to order at 1:30 pm.

1. **Roll Call and Declaration of Quorum and Land Acknowledgement**

The Chair began with the acknowledgement that Cape Breton University is located in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq People. This territory is covered by the "Treaties of Peace and Friendship" which Mi'kmaq and Wolastoqiyik (Maliseet) people first signed with the British Crown in 1726. The treaties did not deal with surrender of lands and resources but in fact recognized Mi'kmaq and Wolastoqiyik (Maliseet) title and established the rules for what was to be an ongoing relationship between nations.

Present:

Sahand Ashtab, Tammy Bernasky, Matthias Bierenstiel, Melissa Bishop, Tanya Brann-Barrett, Karen Butterworth, Geoff Carre, Linda Cavanaugh, Pooja Chahal, Martin Chandler, Paula Condon, Virginia Gunn, Ali Heydari, Michael Henick, Harkanwal Kaur, Karen Kennedy, Janet Kuhnke, Kanchan Kumari, Ellyn Lyle, Gordon MacInnis, Stephanie MacQuarrie, Bishakha Mazumdar, John Nadeau, Kathleen Nash, Rod Nicholls, Olabode Peters Olaniran, Felix Odartey-Wellington, Joe Parish, Andy Parnaby, Karen Rowe, Nancy Samson, Rebecca Seymore, Nancy Spina, Laurianne Sylvester, Éric Thériault, Jamie Tunnicliff, Bilynda Whiting, Terry MacDonald,

Regrets:

Catherine Arseneau, Sean Campbell, David Dingwall, Ayse Ersoy, Kylie Ewing, Chad Hillier, Abiola Emmanuel Ilori, Carrie Karsgaard, Kimberley Lamarche, Tracy Lillington, Doug Lionais, John Mayich, Marcia Ostashewski, Michelle Prendergast

2. **Items to be considered in closed session:**

2.1 **Approval of the CIC Graduand list**

It was moved by J. Nadeau, seconded by M. Henick, to move into Closed Session for the purpose of conducting confidential business.

Motion Carried.

Following a closed session, **it was moved** by T. Brann-Barrett, seconded by S. MacQuarrie, to move to Open Session.

Motion Carried.

3. Reports and Items for Information

3.1 President

R. Nicholls, on behalf of President Dingwall, provided the following:

- Cape Breton University hosted its 4th President's Leadership Dinner at the Halifax Convention Centre and welcomed over 600 guests. The evening featured a fireside chat with President Dingwall and Ambassador Bob Rae and showcased some of Cape Breton's finest talent.
- In the coming weeks and months, the President will be undertaking several international trips, including India, Egypt and China, to strengthen partnerships and reinforce the message that Cape Breton University and Canada remain premier destinations for high-quality education.

3.2 Vice President Academic and Provost

R. Nicholls advised that this is the first Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) update of the year, emphasizing its importance, particularly for new senators. The focus remains on enhancing the student experience and success, which are fundamentally influenced by enrollment numbers.

- Over the last 5 enrollment intakes (January 2023 to May 2024), the implementation of a series of measures resulted in a trajectory aimed at stabilizing enrollment at approximately 7,000 students by September 2027.
- For this academic year, fall/winter 2024-2025, the target was set at 8,275 total students, with current enrollment at 8,033. That will likely rise to about 8,100 once fall numbers are finalized, and in January 2025 the total number will reach 8,275 and more. Last year, by contrast, enrolment hit an all-time high of nearly 10,000 students as the so-called Post-Baccalaureate bubble peaked.
- Despite comforting total enrollment figures this year, we must look in a clinically ruthless way at the disturbing SEM shortfall in new student targets, particularly for new international students. As discussed in the March Senate meeting, this is a direct consequence of IRCC policy changes in January and which continue to be made.
- On a positive note, domestic enrollment is strong, reaching a level not seen since 2011. There are a number of variables including, but not exclusively so, increases in nursing, education, and the attractor effect of the new social work programs. However, attention must be paid to relative enrolment shifts between programs that traditionally satisfy domestic demand.
- Most notably from a financial point of view, new student decreases in programs such as BHTM, BET, and PB's will have negative ripple effects over the next few years. The extent cannot be exactly predicted but it is very real.

- The overall goal of about 7,000 students in 2027 is, at present, unchanged. Yet it was always emphasized that SEM planning is designed to flexibly adapt to changing circumstances. For instance, the total number and particularly the composition of a prospective adjusted number (shaped by potentially adjusted program distribution targets) must be monitored with revisionary eyes within Schools and, holistically, between Schools.
- This academic process will invariably focus on new and ongoing program initiatives and improvements aimed at increasing the number of new international and domestic students to CBU and, as soon as possible, on making up for losses this year and likely next year.
- Those efforts will be supported by significant investments in IT infrastructure recently, the prospect of a tremendous improvement of campus facilities by 2027, and an incrementally enhanced student experience made possible by recent SEM investments. At the same time, collegially driven program initiatives – individually and, most importantly, as a whole – must be disciplined by realistic faculty deployment plans and the prevailing financial reality in the medium term.
- In conclusion, challenges must be squarely faced and responses identified as soon as possible. Still, as celebrations for CBU’s 50th anniversary year come to a conclusion, we should resist the dangerously infectious idea that CBU is beginning its “19th Nervous Breakdown.”

During discussion about the government's changes regarding student admissions and how these affect conversion rates. The following points were discussed:

- The target for conversion rates was initially set at around 30%. It was noted that the federal government’s recent increase in required financial resources for students entering Canada could positively impact these rates.
- One CBU measure to improve conversion rates was to introduce a seat deposit increase (from \$2,500 to \$5,000) which made confirmation to attend much more certain.
- Early measurements indicate that conversion rates have improved to over 40% since implementing the deposit. Although continuous monitoring (and examination of variables) is essential, it is possible that by year’s end that conversion target could be doubled.
- Questions were raised about average credit loads per student. It was noted that only a minority of students in all programs take a “normal” load of 30 credits each academic year. There is a notable trend of domestic students extending their studies over longer periods, often taking fewer courses per term. Also a factor is that students in the SSOB post-baccalaureate programs take only 6 credits (their “capstone” course) in their last semester. In short, average credit loads are factored into SEM planning and are critical in budget planning
- Current data indicates that approximately 1,500 students will fulfill their graduation requirements by December 2024 and approximately 3,500 students will graduate in May 2025. This underlines the significance of new student decreases this fall.

Overall, the conversation highlighted the complexities of managing enrollment numbers, conversion rates, and the impacts of policy changes on student behavior. Further data and follow-up discussions are anticipated to clarify these metrics.

3.3 Unama'ki College

L. Sylvester provided updates on the following:

- Orientation was held for Indigenous Students on September 11.
- Eileen Paul was recently hired as the Community Engagement Lead and Mitchel Ferguson as the Comms/Branding Specialist.
- Second Cohort for BSc Pathway students will begin with a Biology Course, a refresh Math and Chemistry course before they begin the BSc courses in January. 17 students are registered.
- Gesgapegiac Cohort completed their BACS program and had a community celebration. UC team members attending the community event in early August.
- Indigenous Alumni Gala - Due to low registration and conflicts with other events (Halloween), they will be postponing the event until November or December as part of the 50-year celebrations.
- Indigenous Ally Partners - World Tourism Initiative will be hosting this event on October 29 and it is strongly encouraged for faculty, staff, executive, senate, to participate in the session.
- The Donald Marshall Institute has been renamed the Marshall Legacy Center. This year is the 25th anniversary of the Marshall Decision. Celebrations will be held at Eltuek on September 16 and at STFX on the evening of the 16th and September 17.
- Unama'ki College has been working on a recruitment plan and the team has been recruiting at community events and meeting with stakeholders in the community.
- School of Nursing Pinning Ceremony - Two Indigenous Nursing Students have successfully completed the Nursing Program. One student, Noah Matthews Cremo from Membertou passed the NCLEX and is officially an RN. The other student is scheduled to write the exam at the end of September.
- An Elders' Gathering will take place here on campus on October 9th. More details to come.
- Allies Walking Together on the Path of Change- UC will participate in a Social Work conference that is led by one of the Indigenous Students, Melanie Mellon
- Success Stories- Mitchel Ferguson has been working closely with students on success stories.
- Herself and Marcia Ostashewski travelled to NZ for a field course in Ind arts and music in July.
- Marcia Ostashewski has been nominated for a National Impact Award from SSHRC.
- Reminder that TRC day is on September 30, CBU closed. UC will be closed on Oct 1 for Treaty Day.

3.4 Students' Union

O. Olaniran presented the Students' Union Report which was included in the Senate Meeting Package, he highlighted the following:

- The Week of Welcome was a huge success. There have also been meetings on what events the Students' Union plans to have in the fall semester and for the rest of the year.
- They have hired and had an orientation with all center coordinators who have started their terms.

- The Women's Center will go into its first full year with their Mae's Room being open. Mae's room is a lactation room for students and staff on campus.
- Since September 2023, the Food Bank has serviced more than 5,108 student appointments, serving more than 2,165 students, so they are likely on track to hit that same number this year.
- Their Food Bank coordinator and her community studies class organized a Food Drive at Daniels which was very successful. They raised \$1701.80 and received three large bins of non-perishable items.
- The Capers Helping Capers Initiative led by the Students' Union fundraising Coordinator and Executive Director, organized the annual golf tournament which took place at the Lingan Golf course. It was a very successful event raising \$15,000, and all the money raised there will be given to charities that the Students Union chose at the beginning of the year, Caleb's Courage, Pathways to employment, SPCA, and the HOSPICE Palliative Care Society of Cape Breton County.
- The drive home program was used to transport the nursing students to and from their clinical placements over the summer. They also worked closely with the University to do some airport pickups for the week of welcome, which was very successful.
- He attended a Campus Trust Conference in Calgary in June where he learned about the domestic student plan, and he was appointed to be on the Board of Trustees.
- He went to Acadia University to attend the Students' Nova Scotia's Annual General Meeting. He was accompanied by the Vice President Student Services Rebecca. They had the opportunity to join their counterparts from other schools to state their plans for Advocacy week and also met with government officials.
- They are adding new equipment to the Games Room and hope to complete the project by the end of September.
- O. Olaniran went on a one-day retreat with his team to work on their Strategic plan as we want to be adequately prepared and focused for the rest of the year.
- They are exploring the possibility of starting a childminding service as an extension to the daycare and we would be working closely with John Mayich the director of Student Affairs on this program.
- They have ongoing conversations about the bus shelter as we have been hearing concerns from students.
- He is advocating to make soccer more accessible to non-varsity students and plans to do this by creating a competitive inter-university club soccer league. This would mean more consistent competition for club soccer players.
- On behalf of the Executives he thanked the University for their continuous support.

3.5 Board of Governors

No Report

3.6 Executive Committee

É. Thériault advised that the Executive met on August 30th where they worked on the following:

- Welcomed existing and new members.
- Discussed updating the Terms of Reference for the Senate Standing Committees. Each committee has been asked to make recommendations for any necessary changes. After reviewing these recommendations, they will be forwarded to the executive committee, then to the by-laws committee, before being presented to the full Senate for a vote.
- Each committee has been assigned the task of drafting their mandate letters, which will outline their objectives for the upcoming year. The goal is to have these mandate letters ready by the next Senate Executive meeting.
- Planned the agenda for today's meeting and discussed the importance of a new Senator orientation, which will likely be included during next month's meeting.
- The next Executive meeting is scheduled for October 4th. Therefore, any questions for the Question period should be submitted by that date.
- Lastly, He discussed the list of members on the Senate Standing Committees which was circulated in the Senate package. He advised that Karen Butterworth is to replace Carolin Kreber on the By-Laws and Procedure Committee.

It was moved by É. Thériault, seconded by L. Sylvester, that Senate approve the membership of the Senate Standing Committees.

It was amended to add Karen Butterworth to the School of Education and Health
Motion Carried.

4. Approval of the Minutes

➤ Senate – June 7, 2024

It was moved by J. Parish, seconded by G. Carre, that Senate approve the minutes from the June 7th Senate meeting with a minor amendment to indicate that Martin Chandler sent his regrets.

Motion Carried. (7 abstentions)

5. Business Arising from the Minutes – N/A

A question was raised regarding an update on the attendance policy and the issue of children in the classroom. It was discussed and noted that a Report should come to Senate by the end of the year.

6. Report from Senate Committees

6.1 Planning and Review

K. Rowe reported that the Committee convened over the summer and has distributed a survey to faculty across all departments to gather input for developing pre-budget recommendations.

6.2 Teaching, Learning and Evaluation

T. MacDonald advised that the Committee met on September 5th to set priorities for the fall. They continue to work on items associated with the Planning and Review Committee and continue to work on the Ad Hoc Committees Exam Policy. They will be discussing the necessary updates to the Committees Terms of Reference and CBU's grading Standards as they move forward.

Following the update, the need for grading standards/grading definitions were discussed and that there is a need for narrative articulation of grade levels.

6.3 Academic

J. Parish advised that the Academic Committee's activities are outlined in his report included with the Senate Material. He highlighted the following:

The Committee voted in favour of a minor change to the Academic Calendar. This change would correct the roll-out dates for the Bachelor of Education programmes approved last November at Senate, which were in error. He also discussed the the 8 Month program in the Bachelor of Education has received resounding success nationwide. The province and external reviewers are quite happy with the results. The motion below is essentially standardising it as a regular part of the education degree offerings.

It was moved by J. Parish, seconded by E. Lyle, to approve the proposed changes to the Bachelor of Education Program.

Motion Carried. (1 abstention)

6.4 By-Laws and Procedures

J. Tunnicliff advised that there was nothing to report at this time and that the Committee will have their first meeting, Thursday, September 19th.

6.5 Quality Assurance

S. Ashtab noted that there wasn't an official report at this time. However, the Committee will continue to review the incoming QA self-study reports.

6.6 Research

M. Bierenstiel reported the following:

- The Committee met in July where himself and Marcia Ostashewski were elected as Co-chairs.
- They will updating the Committees mandate letters next meeting.
- They are organizing to fill a position on the The Research Ethics Board (REB) and also replacing the Chair of the Animal Care committees.
- A call out for President will Research awards will be out on Monday.

6.7 Appeals

No report

F. Odarety-Wellington welcomed new Senators and expressed thanks to all returning Senators. He also expressed gratitude to the previous Executives, Dr. Carolin Kreber, Dr. Erin Robertson and Dr. Éric Thériault.

7. Adjournment

É. Thériault
Secretary to Senate