

666TH MEETING OF SENATE
FRIDAY, OCTOBER 11, 2024, 1:30 P.M.
MCGREER 100 AND BY VIDEOCONFERENCE

MINUTES

Chair: Principal Sébastien Lebel-Grenier

Present: Dr. Hafid Agourram, Sonoma Brawley, Dr. Eva Bures, Leana Ceresoli, Julien Collin, Bruno Courtemanche, Dr. Julie Desjardins, Alpha Diallo, Dr. Anthony Di Mascio, Sophia Driscoll, Dr. Valerio Faraoni, Dr. Mark Gandey, Fiona Gaombalet, Dr. Kerry Hull, Catherine Lavallée-Welch, Dr. Heather Lawford, Alex Mador, Dr. Matthew Peros, Roser Rise, Dr. John Ruan, Hans Rouleau, Dr. Michael Teed, Dr. Maxime Trempe, Dr. Yanan Wang, Dr. Andrew Webster, Dr. Dawn Wiseman

* Dr Julie Desjardins arrived at 1: 56 p.m., followed by Dr Eva Bures at 2:12 p.m. and Dr Dawn Wiseman at 2:15 p.m.

Regrets: Dr. Patrick McBrine, Dr. Jean Manore, Dr. Jessica Riddell, Dr. Cranmer Rutihinda

Secretary: Geneviève Gagné

Principal Lebel-Grenier formally opened the 666th meeting at 1:35 p.m. and welcomed Alpha Diallo as the Graduate Student Representative to the Senate. He continued by informing Senators of the adoption of the changes to the University Statutes by the Board of Governors on September 27, 2024— granting voting rights to Deans of all five Academic Divisions, and to both School of Education Senators. The Chair indicated that the updated Statutes would be available on the portal and website by Friday, October 18, 2024.

666/1 AGENDA

The agenda was approved with the removal of item 7.1.

Moved by: Heather Lawford

Seconded by: Michael Teed

Motion carried.

666/2 APPROVAL OF MINUTES

2.1 MINUTES OF THE 664TH SENATE MEETING

The Minutes of the 664th meeting of Senate, held on June 14, 2024, were approved with an amendment to remove the name of Christina Lépine of the attendees' list.

Moved by: Andrew Webster

Seconded by: Alexandre Mador

Motion carried.

2.2 MINUTES OF THE 665TH SENATE MEETING

The Minutes of the 665th Senate meeting, held on September 13, 2024, were approved as presented.

Moved by: Sonoma Brawley

Seconded by: Leana Ceresoli

Motion carried.

666/3 BUSINESS ARISING

The Chair mentioned to Senators that the process to implement the corrections and changes to the Academic Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures is completed. This process refers to the elements presented 663rd Senate meeting (item 663/3) and at the 665th Senate Meeting (item 665/3).

666/4 COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE CHAIR

Principal Lebel-Grenier started his communication with the projected \$2 M deficit the University is facing this year and the worsening situation for the years to come if actions are not undertaken. He conveyed that the University needs to find ways to increase revenues and savings on both academic and non-academic fronts – measures necessary to ensure the long-term sustainability of the University, and its ability to continue offering a unique experience to its students. He stated that distinct meetings have been held with faculty and librarians, staff, and members of the Board of Governors to discuss the recovery plan. A meeting with the Student Representative Council (SRC) is scheduled for the upcoming days to inform them of the situation. Principal Lebel-Grenier denoted that ongoing communications and consultations will take place to ensure clarity and transparency on the recovery plan implementation.

The Chair referenced the recently presented Bill 74 at the National Assembly, which seeks to expand the discretionary powers of the Minister of Immigration and the Minister of Higher Education to limit the number of international students in the province, potentially complicating the process of studying in Quebec compared to other Canadian provinces. He noted that this issue was raised at the recent Bureau de coopération interuniversitaire (BCI) meeting, and political efforts will be made to limit the discretionary scope of these ministerial powers. Additionally, he conveyed that, beyond Quebec's political landscape, the federal government's announcement of a 10% reduction in immigration quotas will further affect international student admissions, with more updates expected in the coming weeks.

The University remains vigilant as the situation develops. Principal Lebel-Grenier underscored that international students are essential to the University's identity, and the institution is committed to preserving this vital component. The Chair's Communication concluded with Geneviève Gagné and Dr. Matthew Peros presenting the Centraide Estrie Campaign, encouraging everyone's participation in this fundraising effort, which is supporting local organizations helping people in need.

Dr. Matthew Peros noted that they are actively seeking ambassadors to represent the campaign and encouraged interested individuals to reach out for further details about the role. The campaign runs until November 16, 2024.

666/5 COMMITTEE ITEMS

5.1 ACADEMIC STANDING AND ADMISSION POLICY COMMITTEE (ASAP)

Registrar Hans Rouleau presented a report structured in two sections. The first part addressed the government's request to waive the requirement for medical certificates to justify absences of fewer than five days, aimed at reducing pressure on clinics. This request was initially brought to Senate by the Vice-Principal Academic and Research during the previous Senate meeting on September 13, 2024. He noted that the ASAP Committee had engaged in discussions with Deans, which led to the Policy on Short-Term Absences presented. Dr. Andrew Webster added that, although the government directive did not address the requirement for medical notes for assessment tasks or exams worth 20% of the final grade, a provision to this effect was incorporated into the policy to ensure the integrity of assessments and maintain operational standards. Dr. Webster referred Senators to the memo following the motion which includes an explanation of the implications on class, assessment tasks, examinations and practicum attendance.

Dr Julie Desjardin arrived at 1:56 p.m.

A discussion followed regarding the clarity of the policy on student absences and medical notes, highlighting ambiguities on the language, such as whether it applies to consecutive absences (e.g., a Friday class and the following Monday class). Concerns were also raised about internships and the role of University-appointed supervisors in requiring such documentation. Dr. Andrew Webster emphasized that the goal is to ensure the policy is clear and aligned with Ministry directives. Further revisions and discussions will be planned to refine the language to ensure the proper implementation of the policy.

Motion withdrawn.

The second part of the report addressed changes to the Academic Standing and Admission Policy Composition and Mandate. The key updates focused on revisions to titles and guidelines to align with the University's new academic structures, with one notable change being the removal of the Director of Enrolment position to add the Vice-Principal Student Affairs position newly created, in a non-voting capacity. Hans Rouleau noted that while the content of the mandate remained largely unchanged, it was reformatted for clarity.

Dr. Eva Bures arrived at 2:12 p.m.

A discussion followed regarding the guidelines, particularly the tie-breaking mechanism specified in article c., where the Chair, typically non-voting, would cast the deciding vote in the event of a tie. Registrar Hans Rouleau explained that this is a common practice in similar contexts at other universities.

Dr. Dawn Wiseman arrived at 2: 15 p.m.

MOTION

That Senate approves the Academic Standing and Admissions Policy Committee's recommendation to edit its mandate and change its composition (updating of titles and the removal of the Director of Enrolment as this position has been abolished), including the Committee's guidelines as presented in Annex 3.

Moved by: Andrew Webster

Seconded by: Alex Mador

Abstentions: Eva Bures and Dawn Wiseman

Motion carried.

5.2 NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Dr. Heather Lawford welcomed Dr. John Ruan, Alpha Diallo and Dr. Heather McKean-Edwards as new members of committees. She outlined that a few corrections were made since the last Senate meeting and that the documents presented reflect these changes.

MOTION

THAT Senate approves the new membership of Senate Committees for the 2024-2025 academic year as presented on October 11, 2024.

Moved by: Heather Lawford

Seconded by: Alex Mador

Motion carried.

5.3 SENATE PROGRAM ACADEMIC REVIEW COMMITTEE

Dr. Andrew Webster provided an update on the overall progress of program reviews for the academic programs of the University, noting the timeline and summary provided with the committee's report (item 5.3i). He stated that the current cycle of reviews is expected to be fully completed by the end of this academic year, with an additional period planned for 2025 to consolidate the progress made. This would bring the University completely up-to-date in maintaining its desired schedule, under which every program was reviewed at least every seven years.

Dr. Andrew Webster then presented an updated list of proposed reviewers for the program review for Philosophy. This was required as they had not been able to confirm two reviewers from the first list of proposed reviewers from the department.

MOTION

That Senate approves the proposed reviewers as presented in Appendix 2 for the Department of:

- Philosophy.

Moved by: Andrew Webster

Seconded by: Roser Rise

Motion carried.

6.1 ACADEMIC REPORT

Vice-Principal Academic and Research Dr. Andrew Webster revisited his recent presentation to faculty and librarians, addressing the financial challenges facing the University. He explained that the immediate challenge for the 2025-2026 academic year is a required reduction of approximately 4.3% within the academic sphere, totalling approximately \$1.5 million, which may be met by reducing current activities and using established processes. By the 2028-2029 academic year, however, the University faces an even greater challenge: a \$3 million reduction, potentially increased by up to an additional \$865,000, amounting to over a 10% total decrease in spending for the academic sphere of university activities. Dr. Webster emphasized that these significant reductions cannot be achieved through budget cuts alone, underscoring the necessity of structural changes to academic operations (academic and curriculum structures) to meet these targets.

Dr. Andrew Webster further highlighted the six key areas representing cost in the academic sphere. He explained where the short-term savings for 2025-2026 would be realized focusing on the following four areas:

Short-term solutions

- Tenure-stream positions and limited-term appointment
Delaying or not approving new tenure-stream positions for July 2025 and limiting the new limited-term appointments.
- Part-time courses
Cutting into courses planned for the spring/summer terms for 2025-26 and the 2025-2026 fall and winter semesters, which will impact the upcoming fiscal year's budget. This represents the most flexible portion of the annual expenditure.
- Library and academic staff positions
Keeping currently unfilled positions vacant.
- Academic activity budgets
Freezing some activity budgets, reducing the number of Quebec fee waivers, etc.

Dr. Andrew Webster continued by mentioning the long-term solutions focusing on the following two areas:

- Academic structures
Reconsidering out academic structures, including those focusing on resource allocation, departmental organization, academic workloads, etc.
- Curriculum structures
Reviewing and revising our academic programs design and delivery

The Vice-Principal Academic and Research presented some key recommendations from the 2016 task force on sustainability report, led by Dr. Ugland, noting that these still aligned with long-term sustainability objectives essential in the current context. He explained that with the underlying intent of these recommendations were still applicable: structural adjustments to streamline resources and maintain financial stability while minimizing disruptions to the University's core academic mission.

Dr. Andrew Webster noted that initial recommendations on tenure-stream positions had originally been scheduled to be presented at the current Senate meeting; however, the Senate Planning Committee had decided to delay the process, as a clearer financial outlook was necessary for informed decision-making. In particular, it was clear that any discussion of the resources to be allocated to new faculty appointments had to be considered in the context of what resources were required for PT courses during the coming academic year. The two items were normally dealt with separately, but needed to be looked at together given the current financial context. Discussions would therefore take place on SPC over the next two months, with the Deans invited to contribute to SPC meetings, in order to finalize and present the Senate Planning Committee's recommendations on faculty appointments and on PT courses (for Fall and Winter semesters) to Senate at the December meeting.

Principal Lebel-Grenier provided information on the projected \$2M cuts from non-academic sectors. Full savings are expected within two years, with a plan being developed by the management team, and initial announcements are set for November.

A discussion followed concerning the involvement of students in the process. Principal Lebel-Grenier underscored the importance of student democracy, noting that the plan is to initiate conversations with SRC representatives to outline the detailed steps that will follow this discussion.

Questions were raised about donors' initiatives to alleviate the financial situation. Principal Lebel-Grenier emphasized that donations cannot be used to address short-term financial challenges or operational deficits, as this would misalign with the donor's intentions to support lasting institutional growth.

Comments were made on the need for a strategic growth and sustainability plan for the University, balancing innovation with financial realities. Principal Lebel-Grenier emphasized the importance of a solid business plan to address these challenges and affirmed the University's commitment to maintaining its community-oriented experience to students. He noted the goal of growing to a student body of 3,000, acknowledging that expansion beyond this target could be unrealistic and dilute the institution's unique identity. The Chair invited everyone to bring ideas during the strategic planning exercise and to be mindful of the overall University experience being offered.

6.2 RESEARCH AND GRADUATE STUDIES REPORT

Dr. Kerry Hull began by congratulating Dr. Heather Lawford on her renewal as a Tier II CRC Chair. She then informed Senators that the Ethics Committee is seeking members for the Animal Care, Research and Ethics Board, and Ethics Review Committee for Student Research Committees. Dr. Kerry Hull also clarified an error in the report, noting that 10 graduate research scholarships were awarded, not 11, bringing the total to 21 internal recipients.

666/7 RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 William School of Business – No recommendation

7.2 Division of Humanities – No recommendation

7.3 Division of Social Sciences – No recommendation

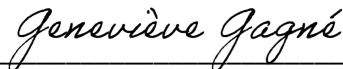
7.4 Division of Natural Sciences and Mathematics – No recommendation

7.5 School of Education – No recommendation

The meeting was adjourned at 3:49 p.m.



Sébastien Lebel-Grenier, Chair
Vice-Chancellor and Principal



Geneviève Gagné, Secretary General