Dear Colleagues:

As you likely know, academic governance moved to the Office of the Provost as of July 4, while I chair General Faculties Council for the upcoming academic year. I am committed to the further development of collegial governance at MacEwan, and I intend to provide monthly updates to the University community as we continue to implement changes to the GFC and its subsidiary bodies in response to MacEwan’s placement in Part I of the Post-secondary Learning Act as an Undergraduate University.

Dr. David Marshall was hired last winter as a consultant to review AGC and its structures and provide an analysis of steps to transition to a GFC. The “Marshall Report” is serving as a high-level guide for our PSLA implementation process. To make good on a commitment by former president Deb Saucier at the April GFC, I have shared, along with this communication, the Executive Summary of the Marshall report, for your information about changes which are in progress.

There are a number of major tasks required to implement the PSLA which my office and the PSLA taskforce must undertake so to be ready for 2019/20. This includes developing interim Bylaws for the GFC itself, coming to a shared understanding of the authority of the GFC to approve and recommend business placed before it, and developing terms of reference for recently established core standing committees.

More information on progress on these items will be forthcoming. Much of the work, which must be completed before the end of August, has been delegated by GFC to its Executive Committee, a group of a dozen voting colleagues, including eight faculty members drawn from across the university. The academy has entrusted this group to put in place the structures necessary to build a fully-realized GFC to hand off to an incoming president for 2020/21.

Open Positions on the GFC
For vacant positions on the GFC, nominations for faculty representation closed on June 25, 2019. Unfortunately, there were not enough nominations to fill all twelve of the open, electable positions. This means that no election could be held. Rather, GFC Executive Committee confirmed those nominees as elected by acclamation through a formal motion. To fill remaining vacant positions for which there were no nominees, GFC Executive Committee consulted with the Executive Committees of the Faculty and School Councils to identify others who could reasonably be called upon to serve on an interim basis. These positions were appointed to GFC for one-year terms, anticipating that nominees will come forward and these spots would be duly elected next year.

Going forward, to support a more robust participation, GFC nominations and elections will proceed earlier in the spring. In addition, more information about GFC functions will be available to potential nominees so that they can learn more about the expectations for the roles and about the benefits of participation.

GFC Schedule
The 2019/20 GFC meeting schedule approved at the June 7 meeting will require some modifications to align with meetings of the Board of Governors. We anticipate six meetings of General Faculties Council will be held during the upcoming academic year.
Standing Committees

One of the critical tasks of the GFC Executive will be populating the approved standing committees of GFC, so that core business can proceed as usual, even as we continue to implement changes in response to the PSLA.

In June, the GFC voted to dissolve its standing committees, other than the Faculty and School Councils, and immediately re-established the following standing committees to ensure continuity of operations through 2019/20:

- Executive Committee;
- Program and Curriculum Committee;
- Committee on Admissions and Transfer;
- Faculty Development Committee; and
- Research Ethics Board/Animal Research Ethics Board.

These committees will operate throughout the year, and preparatory work to establish initial terms of reference is underway for September 1, with the intention to bring these terms of reference to GFC Executive for approval over the next couple of weeks. GFC Executive, in its role as a nominating body, will then populate these committees for 2019/20.

The opportunity to conduct our academic business through the structure of a formal General Faculties Council is a significant achievement in the development of MacEwan University. While the timing of this shift presents challenges for the upcoming year, it presents us a clear opportunity to refresh governance in this brief interim period.

Sincerely,

Dr. Craig Monk
Provost & Vice-President, Academic
Chair, General Faculties Council, 2019/20
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How are curricular items approved?
For the moment, curricular items should be treated as business as usual, with new programs heading to Program and Curriculum Committee (in place of historic APPC), and changes to admission and transfer standards heading to the Committee on Admissions and Transfer. Please send finished materials to GFC@macewan.ca. As we continue to identify the authorities of the GFC, and delegations thereof, the critical path of some things like curricular items will likely shift. However, without those changes yet in place, we will continue as normal with processes for curricular approval.

What about the Research Ethics Board?
The Research Ethics Board will continue normal operations. Review the REB website to identify if you need to submit an application and procedures to do so.

Are Faculty and School Councils standing committees of GFC?
In April, GFC voted to make all Faculty and School Councils formal standing committees of the GFC, in keeping with the PSLA. This formalization will not result in immediate changes in Faculty and School Councils, but it provides a more integrated collegial governance structure to support future process developments, such as delegation of GFC duties (where GFC deems appropriate) and election of GFC members from Faculty and School councils.

Is there any continuity of membership on GFC?
In April, the fourteen faculty members duly elected to AGC with terms extending beyond 2018-19 were appointed as GFC members for the remainder of their original elected terms. This means that if you elected representatives to AGC in the past, they retain their membership on GFC until the natural end of their term. This provides important continuity.

How is the GFC different from the AGC?
In general, the GFC is similar to the former AGC, but it has more authority granted in legislation—both more specifically-defined authority listed in the Post-secondary Learning Act and more general authority for academic matters.

How does the formalization of Faculty and School Councils as standing committees impact their business?
This formalization will not result in immediate changes in Faculty and School Councils, but it provides a more integrated collegial governance structure to support future developments. For example, once we work through the authorities of GFC, it could facilitate delegation of some GFC duties (for example, some curricular approvals). Also, it will support the election of GFC members from Faculties and School Councils, and it can help formalize the lines of authority for receiving reports and recommendations.