September 26, 2019

In the weeks since my last update, staff from the Office of the Provost have worked with colleagues across campus to move forward academic governance for the 2019-20 academic year. The GFC Executive Committee from last year carried out the mandate given it by Council in June and completed the work necessary for us to hold, on September 23, the first of six scheduled GFC meetings this year. Dates for these meetings, plus the meetings of the standing committees of Council, are live on this website.

Most critically, General Faculties Council bylaws have been adopted. While there are many things in the interim bylaws that will likely persist, they are in force only until August 30, 2020. Legislative changes last year gave 2018-19 AGC interim powers, after it transitioned to a GFC, but only the Council for the current year has the authority to make lasting changes to our governance structure. From the foundation upon which we now stand, the whole group—acting on the recommendations of the new Executive Committee—will chart the path forward. This will include a comprehensive review of the bylaws once we begin to do business using them.

I am very pleased to see that GFC membership for this interim year includes so many experienced colleagues as well as newer colleagues keen to make a contribution. Because GFC is committed to the robust participation of its members on standing committees, Council members are likely providing more service this year than has been the case. AGC suffered, as the Marshall Report outlined, because individuals who did the work on its standing committees were not present at GFC to contextualize their decisions and, when necessary, argue for their recommendations to be accepted. Not all seats on the standing committees can be held by GFC members, and so I am particularly grateful to other members of the academic community who have stepped up and volunteered their time. Needless to say, we required a lot of good faith from volunteers in anticipation of more typical election processes next spring.

General Faculties Council has already contributed this year to ongoing business of the University. Through two iterations of its Executive Committee, it has provided feedback to the development of a statement on Freedom of Expression. It approved changes to the Academic Schedule Regulations, making a future Fall Reading Week possible, and it approved and recommended to the Board changes to an Emeritus Designation Policy. GFC chose Dave Kato as its Vice-Chair, and it recommended Dr. Cynthia Zutter for a vacant seat on the Presidential Search Committee.
The Office of the Provost will turn its attention, now, to ensuring that the 2019-2020 standing committees launch over the next three to four weeks. In the meantime, Executive will continue to review material to support future recommendations on membership, committee structure, and a more comprehensive understanding of sovereign powers.

We welcome your questions at gfc@macewan.ca, and we are always happy to receive input as to your thoughts on bicameral governance. There are many members of the MacEwan University community who have valuable experience from past AGCs, and we are interested in hearing from you as to what, from that old model, was most effective and what perhaps may be left behind as we embrace true bicamerality.

Sincerely,

Dr. Craig Monk
Provost and Vice-President Academic