



**NORTHERN ALBERTA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
Board of Governors**

ACADEMIC COUNCIL

**Monday, April 15, 2019
2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Ernest's Dining Room, Small Side**

MINUTES

PRESENT:

Dr. Glenn Feltham (Chair)	Dr. Sue Fitzsimmons	Sandra Marocco	David Migadel	Jamie Corfield
Malcolm Haines	Jen Glenday	Garry Wilson	Dr. Alexander Ondrus	Sonja Wojdak
Gary Gora	Boni Ehmann	Dong Ye	Robert Ackroyd	Karen Velasco
Naomi Pela	Brenda Needham	Willow Shelley	Aleksandra Jaruga	

RESOURCES: Dr. Ray Block Sandy Timmer (recorder)

GUESTS: Susan Maheden Gail Wall
Emi Oke

REGRETS: Colin Doucet Chaimae Janah Alexis Flinkert

1. OPENING

1.1 Call to Order and Approval of the Agenda

Dr. Feltham welcomed Academic Council members to their last meeting of the academic year and called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m.

Moved by Gary Gora that the Agenda be approved as presented.

Carried

1.2 Approval of the Minutes of the Meeting of March 18, 2019

Moved by Dr. Alex Ondrus that the Minutes of the meeting of March 18, 2019 be approved as presented.

Carried

2. UPDATE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dr. Feltham thanked everyone on Academic Council for their insights and input on matters related to our academic mission this academic year. We have worked through our vision document, as well as processes and structures that will help us be more effective. Dr. Feltham noted that one of the processes we will look at further is awards. We want to improve the processes and broaden the scope to ensure that all qualified candidates are considered.

In the coming year Academic Council will be part of the new campus planning. We will continue to focus on pathways and lifelong learning at NAIT in the next academic year as well and what that means for our academic model.

3. BUSINESS ARISING

Dr. Feltham noted that the business arising items will be addressed in the presentation later in the meeting. The requested Scheduling policy and procedures are included in the meeting materials for the presentation.

4. ADMINISTRATION

There were no items for administration.

5. INFORMATION ITEMS

5.1 Draft Policy on Policy Development

Dr. Sue Fitzsimmons presented the draft policy on Policy Development. She noted that this is still a work in progress but wanted to bring this to Academic Council's attention for information only at this time. This Policy will provide a framework for policy development and will specify if a policy comes under the Board or Administration. This will also specify common language to be used for consistency. There will be owners assigned to the various policies for accountability. This will provide better clarity on where policies reside and who will be responsible for them.

This framework has shifted to principles-based rather than rules-based as it is more about what NAIT believes about something and how do we go about making this happen. This draft will also be presented to the Board's Governance Committee to review.

Policies are essential to an organization to help guide decisions and direction.

Council discussed the draft Policy with Dr. Fitzsimmons and accepted it for information.

6. PRESENTATIONS

Dr. Feltham commented that today's presentation on Scheduling is a follow-up to the presentation at the last meeting. Dr. Feltham invited Susan Maheden and Gail Wall to provide the Scheduling presentation.

• Presentation 1: Scheduling Office, Part 2

Ms. Wall briefly reviewed what was discussed at the last Academic Council for scheduling processes. Gail reviewed the Scheduling Policy and Procedures in the meeting package. The Procedures are new. Gail advised that an external consultant assisted the advisory committee to draft the policy and the three procedures. The procedures formalized the practices that have been used. It was noted that some items are aspirational, so we are still working towards achieving those goals.

Currently, all space is NAIT space and we are working from a centralized system for bookings. Occasionally, events happen at NAIT that are not planned for – we have to make

accommodation for those events. At present, the advanced planning model is driven by student enrolment deadlines -- we are planning 18 months ahead. The model schedules for the academic year but six months ahead is needed to get preparations in line for the schedule. Discussion ensued with Ms. Wall on the length of time needed. Subsequently, it was suggested to have a meeting with Ms. Wall and some designated members from Academic Council to look at the history of the 18-24-month planning process, as well as all of the spaces that are available to book, including leased space. [Action Item]

Gail then provided an overview of each of the Scheduling Procedures. There are always some changes that occur with programs and we have to be able to adapt to those changes. There are also certain labs and classrooms that are specialized and may be in more demand.

Gail reviewed the standards that have been incorporated into the Procedures. It was suggested that a Scheduling presentation be given to Chairs. [Action Item]

Gail and Susan concluded their presentation and this item will come back to Academic Council in the next academic year for further discussion.

• **Presentation 2: Discussion on a Potential Fall Break**

Dr. Feltham invited Susan Maheden and Brenda Needham to provide their presentations on a potential Fall Break. Susan is presenting from administration's perspective and Brenda will present from a student's perspective.

Ms. Maheden discussed implementing a Fall Break and how this will impact the institute from an administration point of view. Some of the topics considered were:

- What does the research say?
- What are other institutions doing?
- What do students and instructors want?
- What are the options we considered?
- What are the impacts and considerations?

Susan advised that a task team from the Academic Portfolio Leadership team (APLC) was created to further investigate a Fall Break and then presented these findings to APLC. Susan noted that there is very little research available on the benefits of a Fall Break, but a university study showed students thought it was positive; however, became stressed again once they returned to school (they were stressed prior to the break although it was a different kind of stress before and after).

Of the 18 post-secondary institutes consulted, several had some type of break in the Fall. It was noted that SAIT does not have a Fall Break.

What do NAIT students say?

- 2082 students responded to the NAITSA survey
- Response rate for the Fall Break question was 41% (956 students)
- Over 50% of students reported high or very high levels of stress (51.5%)
- Nearly 80% of students are very interested or somewhat interested in a fall break

What do NAIT instructors say?

- Survey sent to 1054 members and 348 responded for a response rate of 33%
- Nearly 70% of respondents are supportive of implementing a fall break in some form

Discussion with the group ensued. Some considerations were – Should we have a break?; When should it be?; How long should it be?; How do we support students to use the break effectively?. Some options that were suggested were to stay status quo (no Fall Break), adding days to existing holidays such as Thanksgiving or Remembrance Day, or having flex learning days (one day per month similar to a PD Day allowing for tutorial or study sessions).

Brenda Needham then presented on behalf of students. She commented that NAIT and NAITSA are always looking for strategies to support student mental health and well-being. A Fall Break could be part of that solution for mental health and student success.

The Student Association considered what NAIT can do that's better than other post-secondaries for students to mitigate the stress of school. Brenda noted that student counselling is very busy with students as they deal with stress and anxiety.

Ms. Needham advised that NAITSA considered some of the same options as presented by Ms. Maheden, except staying status quo (no break). They suggested that the Fall Break would be a time for instructors to catch up, perhaps do tutorials, but not assign additional work to students over the break. It should be a time for the student to step away from studies for a short period. Brenda pointed out that a survey of students showed that Mental Health Support was #3 on their list of most-needed services for students.

However, teaching hours still need to be met. So, those hours over the Fall Break would have to be made up elsewhere. Student were asked how they would like to make those hours up. Students responded to the survey that they could start earlier in September or end later in December or a mixture of both and the majority of respondents would prefer to start earlier and end later to make up those hours for the Fall Break.

Academic Council discussed both the presentations and the various options for a Fall Break.

This topic will come back to Academic Council in the new academic year for further discussion.

7. NEXT MEETINGS

- Monday, September 9, 2019 at 2:00-4:00 p.m., Orientation Meeting, Governor's Boardroom, T811 and
- Monday, September 16, 2019 at 2:00-4:00 p.m., Governor's Boardroom, T811

8. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 3:57 p.m.