BROCK UNIVERSITY GRADUATE COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of January 26, 2011 Sankey Chamber 2:00 pm

Present: J. Allard, D. Antwi-Amoabeng, K. Arnell, J. Atkinson, D. Butz, L. Duhaime, C.

Federici, D. Hayes, M. Hennigar, S. Houghten, H. Junke, R. Kuchapski, L. Kwong (for R. Dimand), Y. Li (for J. Yuen), J. McNamara, J. Mercier, C. Merriam, B. Minor, R. Parker, G. Pepper, M. Plyley, M. Richards, M. Rose (Chair), S. Rothstein, K. Samokhin, D. Samson, C. Santos, S. Sekel, S. Tilley, C. Ugulini (Admin Support), S. Vint, Rebecca

Ward (for M. Feldman), M. Webber

Regrets: M. Knuttila, I. Makus

Programs not Represented: Earth Sciences, Philosophy

- 1. <u>Approval of Agenda</u> **MOVED** (M. Webber/M. Richards) that the Agenda of January 26, 2011 be approved. **CARRIED**
- 2. <u>Approval of Minutes of November 24, 2010</u> **MOVED** (S. Sekel/C. Merriam) that the Minutes of the meeting of November 24, 2010 be approved. **CARRIED**
- 3. Business Arising from Minutes

A question was asked about the committee to be struck to discuss the management of exit requirements in Graduate programs. The Dean committed to convening that committee prior to the next Graduate Council meeting.

4. <u>Dean's Report</u>

Graduate Council was referred to the Dean's January Update. The Update was supplemented by an oral report addressing ongoing Communications work in the FGS, Graduate enrolment projections, and a reflective January FGS status report – aka the "State of the Union."

- a) With reference to <u>FGS Communications</u>, the Dean commended Heather Junke on her very fine work on behalf of the Faculty.
 - The importance of this work cannot be underestimated as it is designed to assist the University in keeping a strong public focus on the research, scholarship and general dynamism of the Research and Graduate Studies sector, thereby contributing to Brock's growing reputation for academic excellence.

- In coordination with faculty and staff, Heather produces a number of ongoing print and electronic publications on a regular schedule from the Dean's update, to semi-annual newsletters for internal and external circulation, and continuous website updates. Every piece that is produced is made available to and channeled through University Communications and Marketing for more general dissemination. Every attempt is made to leverage all publications in order to get word of graduate student and graduate faculty accomplishments out to the community at large.
- Attention was specifically drawn to the newly launched *e-Bulletin*, which is located on the FGS website, under the Faculty and Staff section of the FGS website at http://www.brocku.ca/graduate-studies/faculty-login/fgs-ebulletin. This is a site well worth bookmarking. All announcements pertinent to the ongoing work of GPDs, including the latest information on scholarship and related opportunities for graduate students will be posted to this site, which will be updated frequently. This initiative has been undertaken in response to GPDs' concerns about receiving, in the past, a great deal of information via frequent e-mails, which can mount up in electronic in-boxes.
- The *e-Bulletin* is only the latest example of Heather's ongoing contribution to the FGS website. She has also led the transition team for the FGS with respect to Brock's new website design and maintains it, updating photos and stories regularly on the basis of information provided to her by FGS staff and by active GPDs who send her information about their students and program news in a timely way.
- b) With reference to <u>Graduate Enrolment Projections</u>, the Dean reviewed the enrolment projection model for 2011-12, taking into consideration both the projected flow-through from currently enrolled students who will continue into a second or subsequent year and the new intake enrolment targets established during consultations with each graduate program in December 2010.
 - When those numbers are analyzed, through a projection model developed by ACID (the University's Academic Committee on Institutional Data), it is clear that we are with current intake targets in place projecting a shortfall in domestic eligible master's enrolments. In other words the model does not project our filling all of the funded spaces available to Brock University under the current Ministry funding formula. We expect not only to fill but to exceed our funded envelope on the doctoral side.
 - Looking to the future and a possible redistribution of funded graduate spaces in the province by the end of next year, it will be important to be able to demonstrate the demand for spaces in our domestic eligible programs, if Brock is to be in a position to argue for more funded spaces for graduate students over the next half-decade or so.
 - Hence the Dean urged GPDs to work with their admissions committees to achieve as many strong domestic eligible master's admissions as possible,

starting early and working with potential applicants as assiduously as possible. It is the beginning of the admission cycle, so a good time to know what we need to accomplish if we possibly can.

c) Reflective Status Report: The Dean emphasized the challenges faced by the graduate sector in the past and at present, emphasizing the centrality of Brock's Graduate Program Directors as the "guardians," "the keepers of the flame," in terms of our nascent graduate culture and its importance to the university's reputation as a comprehensive university. Stability and continued modest but measurable growth are particularly important to our young faculty whose scholarly futures are tied in so many ways to the synergies that come into play when undergraduate and graduate operations are aligned and mutually supportive.

The following is a slightly fleshed-out version of this report, which has been submitted by the Dean for these Minutes – in view of the fact that a power failure immediately prior to the Graduate Council meeting had "eaten her written notes," rendering her oral report somewhat more spontaneous and less coherent than she had hoped.

- Over the past half-decade we have faced the internal challenge of simultaneously growing and consolidating our graduate programming and its administration in a climate characterized by rapid change and fiscal restraint. It has not been easy to establish a fully functional Faculty of Graduate Studies that successfully negotiates the centralized/decentralized model that characterizes Brock as an institution. But with hard work and good will, great progress has been made. Nor has it been easy to develop new graduate programs and increase graduate enrolments without new resources on the academic and on the administrative side to support these initiatives. But we have done so, moderately and intentionally, and again through hard work and good will. It has been particularly challenging to have done so when the University itself has changed and continues to change in so many ways and at a rapid pace from marketing and branding shifts, to new website development and a focus on new ways of thinking about program development and delivery within the context of a new integrated strategic plan.
- External challenges have also been significant. The Province's *Reaching Higher* Program, initiated in 2004-05, presented opportunities for growth and bolstered the capacity of Ontario's universities to increase opportunities and spaces for domestic students. Brock has been able to take advantage of these new funded master's spaces and this is a good thing. At the same time, however, the sheer number of domestic master's spaces available in the province and the appetite for PhD student growth on the part of virtually all of Ontario universities have created a competitive environment that has placed great pressure on schools with smaller and less established graduate programming, such as ourselves. There is no doubt that larger institutions, with their very large numbers of funded graduate spaces, are reaching into the application pools traditionally attached to institutions like our own. At the same time, support for international students by the provincial government has not significantly increased, despite pressure from the graduate sector which means that programs dependent upon international enrolments for their strength and viability remain sorely challenged.

• The end of the *Reaching Higher* program, however (and there is little sense that a "Reaching Higher II" will be put into place), correlates with other changes in the provincial landscape that signify and suggest further external challenges in the future for Graduate Studies across the province over the next half-decade or so. Speaking from her experience as Academic Colleague at the Council of Ontario Universities, a member and past chair of the Ontario Council for Graduate Studies, and a member of the Ontario Universities Council for Quality Assurance (the "Quality Council"), Dean Rose observed that – in her view – a "pendulum" was swinging, as pendulums do, from a focus on graduate studies and research to a new focus on "student experience" and particularly undergraduate student experience.

She tied her observations to recent projects and publications undertaken by HEQCO, the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario, which was created as an "arm's length" research body that would provide the Ontario government, specifically the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, with data to assist them in decision-making. In practice, HEQCO undertakes research projects of its own devising, but also carries out research at the request of the government.

The HEQCO website is well worth a visit: http://www.heqco.ca/Pages/wel.aspx. The number and breadth of HEQCO's research projects is amazing, and instructive, as is its blog, "Itsnotacademic": http://www.heqco.ca/Pages/wel.aspx. http://www.heqco.ca/Pages/wel.aspx.

Of seminal importance was the publication of the HEQCO-sponsored book, *Academic Transformation: the Forces Reshaping Higher Education in Ontario* by Ian D. Clark, Greg Moran, Michael Skolnik and David Trick (2009), which makes the case for differentiation in Ontario universities. As well, the book identifies a number of other issues needing further research and consideration, many coalescing around the issue of student experience and the need for greater attention to undergraduate education (which none of us, as educators, would contend with). However, an examination of recent HECQO studies and publications suggests a very significant shift towards an undergraduate focus on the part of the province, as well as a focus on "pathways," greater connectivity and student mobility between colleges and universities at the undergraduate level. A list of recent publications, including those commissioned by HEQCO through Academica, can be found at http://www.heqco.ca/en-CA/Research/Research/20Publications/Pages/default.aspx.

There is also a current study underway by HEQCO on the CGPSS survey as a measure of graduate student satisfaction. OCGS is participating with CUPA (representatives of the universities' institutional analysis offices) in attempting to guide HEQCO researchers on this project, since CGPSS is not a student satisfaction survey, nor a student engagement survey (like NSSE), and so is not a particularly responsive instrument for such questions. Informal statements have been made at the table (Dean Rose is a member of the sub-committee, as is

Patrick Beard) about the purpose of this study as being related to testing the success of the Reaching Higher initiative: what has been the success of graduate expansion under the Reaching Higher Program in terms of graduate student satisfaction with their graduate experience?

None of these comments is intended to disparage the work of HEQCO. Research into matters related to higher education and the appropriate delivery of university programs to the students they intend to educate is necessary as well as useful. However, the focus by HEQCO on student experience, largely on the undergraduate side, appears to represent a shift that means that we will need to work even harder to continue to foreground research and graduate studies in the universities. For us this means – as a first and fundamental step – working as hard as we can to attract as many strong students as we can to Brock, especially at the master's level where there is so much competition for domestic applicants. Only by demonstrating the attractiveness of our graduate sector and the excellence of our ongoing work with the eager young minds we attract, will we be able to maintain the institutional weight and reputational clout that come from the fusion of graduate studies and research with all of these important undergraduate mandates within our institution.

Dean Rose concluded by urging programs to move on graduate admissions as
quickly as possible, and as early in the term as possible, as the applications come in,
and assured them that the FGS will be employing processes and additional personnel
to make the application process as efficient as possible at our end.

In response to the Dean's report, a comment by a member of Graduate Council addressed the need to be positive about what we have been able to accomplish so far. In the GPD's words, "we have made massive progress in five years against rather large odds," and she indicated that the establishment of the FGS and subsequent administrative improvements over the past few years have made the job of GPD much more manageable than in the period prior to that – as she knows from having been a GPD then and again now.

In response to another comment from the floor, a question about the University's new strategic plan and the seeming focus on new initiatives that are to be brought on quickly and may involve areas of expertise that do not appear to correspond to traditional faculty interests or complements, the Dean advised faculty vigilance in the sense of (a) contributing to Faculty Strategic Plans, which will supply the details about how individual Faculties can fit into or under the new strategic umbrella, and (b) figuring out ways of addressing the developmental agenda while remaining true to the strengths and interests that are already in place in faculty complements. When new large-scale initiatives emerge, "working with" the grain in active and energetic ways is essential.

d) Trudeau Lecture Series for 2010-2011: Professor Isabella Bakker of York University is scheduled to speak on February 2 at 7-9 pm in Pond Inlet. The topic is "Beyond the Strategic Silence: Towards the Global Economic Empowerment of Women." [Unfortunately this address was cancelled owing to the snowstorm that closed the University that day.]

5. Director's Report

a) Dean of Grad Studies Entrance Scholarship: The average has been changed to reflect the new FHB regulation. Averages are now calculated on the last 2 years of undergraduate study. Before, 80%+ = \$2,000; 90%+ = \$3000 in addition to the \$6,000 basic graduate fellowship awarded to students with admission averages of 75%+. For 2011/12 admissions, domestic master's students with 84%+ on the last two years of undergraduate study will receive \$2000. These averages will be calculated by the FGS. All students admitted to funded masters programs will receive the \$6,000 basic graduate fellowship.

International Entrance Bursary: we are going to offer a renewal process, depending on the defined length of program, and based on quota by Faculty (\$3000 over the 3 terms). The FGS will notify renewal students of their eligibility to re-apply. Applications from new students will be accepted by Graduate Studies and forwarded to programs. Basic criteria: to assist the neediest international students, with priority given to those from developing countries. An email with further clarification will be sent to GPDs.

- b) Admission letters will no longer be copied and forwarded to programs. The majority of the letters are being developed by mail merge and will be sent to programs by e-mail. The grad funding screen is still available for GPD viewing and contains all of the funding information.
- c) Calendar: Once the program entries are finalized and the 11/12 Graduate Calendar posted to the Web, graduate programs are asked to review the copy and inform Gail Pepper of any errors.
- d) SGSC Sub-Committee on Policy has discussed first draft fee. G. Pepper reported that no other Ontario universities have a first draft reduced fee. Some institutions offer a refund of fees in the last term if students have finished and have not used a lot of resources in the last term. The Sub-Committee on Policy suggests (1) establish a different fee or create an academic policy with a refund of fees or (2) define first draft as final draft. Comments forthcoming from Graduate Council included: it is impossible to have a one size fits all for all programs re: first draft; the simplest solution is to have the program define first draft; programs should define what is first draft and invite students' input in defining specific criteria. In response to a comment regarding student use of resources over the summer, G. Pepper noted that if a program is designed as a three-term program, it is the expectation that faculty and resources be available over the Summer.

6. GSA Report

D. Antwi-Amoabeng reported on the President's initiative to make the institution more research focussed. The President will provide funding in the amount of \$3000/year (\$1,000/term) to the GSA to assist with students' travel to conferences to present their research. Students will be required to distribute Brock's promotional material during their presentations. The application form will be posted on the GSA website shortly.

7. Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 3:30 pm.