

ASUS Town Hall Meeting #3

Humphrey Hall Room 102

Friday, April 9th

12:00-1:30pm

Josh: we've heard a lot about the timeline, so please try and keep discussions to new topics.

Dean: context in which this is taking place. Some of the issues we think are important and worthy of discussion. Right now we're doing part of a university-wide planning process that the principal initiated to have the academic plan completed by a December 2010. When he sent out his vision statement in January 2010 this started the process.

From January to April we engaged in a process of data and opinion-gathering. With the principal's vision statement came a set of templates asking specific questions which we had to address. We also produced our own response that addressed a number of issues not clearly contained in the template.

From April to August the university committee, consisting of 6 professors, will be considering the letters from all the Faculties, to come up with a final vision statement of where we should be heading in 5 to 6 years.

This will be available widely for discussion. The principal hopes that will receive approval in December. At that point the work will be returned to the Faculty to prepare implementation plans. These plans will then be widely discussed. Any changes will have to be approved by Faculty Board, Committee of departments, etc.

Faculty process started in early January, when the Faculty released a briefing document. Prior to that we had discussion at Faculty Board and various committees to discuss what issues would be present in the document.

In February responses were received from all the departments. All those documents and other documents will be forwarded to the university committee.

Between February and April we've been trying to gather information within the Faculty from the departmental level, and up. Department heads were asked, as far as possible, to involve students and faculty within this. It is clear that students have not felt they have been involved, and this is why we are holding these.

The fourth version of the Faculty document is available on the website and has been available since Monday. That will also be true of the final document. If any of you have comments, please feel free to respond directly to deanartsci@queensu.ca.

Just a little bit about the structure of the document and then a discussion of issues. It starts off with an introduction. The second section deals with provincial government context. The third and fourth describe the structures and current state and the fifth and sixth discuss planning. There are a number of constituents, budgets, planning processes, etc. that have to be satisfied. Those sections identified some

of those issues. Section seven describes faculty goals. Final section, the one that involved most discussion, considers some challenges and choices we think the faculty should consider. The main sections here are the undergraduate program, the graduate program, organization, international, etc.

Some issues seem to have attracted more attention than others. Virtualization is the one most have commented on. What we're talking about is essentially the use of electronic tools to help, change, support the pedagogical initiatives of the Faculty. People are assuming this means no people involved – in the versions that we've been thinking of is a blend of the use of these tools that maybe appropriate to different academic environments. The final decision on the use of any of these techniques lies with the professor and the department.

As you probably know most of our revenue is generated by the students, by tuition fees and the government based on the number of students. The easiest way to increase our revenue is to increase the number of students. The government has indicated they want an increase of 20,000 places and over the next 5 years they want around 48-55 thousand places. This is an enormous impact. We're not going to take all these students, but even the small number of students we do take will have a large impact.

A lot of questions regarding merging departments. Smaller departments are more vulnerable to budget cuts. For the budget year coming up we had to send additional money to smaller departments otherwise they would not have been able to function. Possible merging has both financial and in some cases academic advantages. The decision to merge has to lie in the departments themselves. We can advise, but they decide.

About 30% of the budget supports research, either directly or indirectly. Should we go on to foraging research at that level or leave it to the vice-principal of research? This gives you access to people with the latest information and the opportunity to access things you wouldn't be able to without this research aspect.

Internationalization and diversity are very important. We've been able to increase the number of international students coming in and students going out to international locations. Diversity and how we are meeting this is an issue that has received a lot of attention.

The last topic I put on because it hasn't got a lot of attention and I'd be interested in any comments. We're the largest faculty of Queen's. It could be argued that we're too big. Only about half a dozen universities still have faculty of Arts and Science; most places it is split. In structural terms it's an important issue. Purely personally, not speaking as a Dean, I think the faculty of Arts and Science has a lot of beneficial aspects – allows for depth and breadth, but there is a credible argument on the other side, so I would appreciate any views on that.

I will leave that up, please feel free to bring up any new issues. I've heard about timing, I accept that it didn't work as well as planned and we're looking into what we can do better. If you want to talk about that you're free to do so, but I get the point that it did not work as planned.

Member: I was just wondering if I could get consent from everyone to film this? Everyone cool?

Member: we have heard a lot about virtualization to do with saving money in the future, and how do you think this might affect class attendance? It's gone down a great deal and it's already difficult for students to come to class. I also want to hear specific techniques anyone is talking about.

Dean: in terms of does it save money, it's pretty difficult to say. If it's done properly it may not. Other universities can show what is beneficial. If you do it properly it's a grey area whether it saves money. Turn it to Dr. Pierce, he know mores.

Dr. Pierce: currently overseeing a series of different virtualization projects. One course is film 240, using lecture-capture techniques. We engaged with the professor to see if any of those technologies could be used in other courses. Biology 102 there was a lecture capture. Students attended the classes as normal, but could also review the course online. The other course was Politics 110, his lectures were captured and then uploaded for students to use for studying purposes. Both cases these were supplemental. Professors reported there wasn't any difference in attendance. The material and research done suggested that's generally the case. We also surveyed the students. Overwhelmingly they thought it was beneficial. When asked if they would do it again around 80-85% said they would. When asked if they would like it to happen in other courses around the same percent said it depends on the course. It really depended on the instructor as well. On the negative side the lighting isn't great, some details like when students asked questions you couldn't hear what students said, and so on. We have to look at the setup of the space.

Finally, other element is that we had an individual from the centre of learning and he looked at the pedagogical aspect. We used ITS to oversee the course. We're looking for a review to see if we should go ahead with this. At this point these professors want to continue. We can only carry 3 courses, the possibility of expanding is only 3 more courses. The other experiment was that there was a 3rd section – those students only got lectures through online sources, however course was supplemented with meetings each month where instructors and TAs were present to return person-to-person engagement. Also upper year geology course that experimented with distance learning, where students sat at different universities and engaged in a virtual conference. Not as many reports, but also something that has been experimented with.

That's what's happened so far at Queen's, but now asking if we can expand.

Nick Day: I think this discussion is irrelevant from the big picture. Why are we focussing on virtualization? Why isn't budget cuts the number one issue? Why aren't we pressuring to run a deficit and increase funding from the government?

Dean: I think you're correct that the budget cuts is why we're moving along so quickly. The issues we're addressing are whether or not we have budget cuts. Why are we going down this route? As a faculty we receive a certain amount of funding every year. I have to work within this amount – I have to operate within the picture that's in front of me. We have to have these discussions within the Faculty. I try to keep the Faculty issues front and centre in the minds of administration. I lobby for funding that we need and should have. The principal continuously lobbies the government to try and get more money. I don't think it's an either/or situation.

Elamin Abdelmahmoud: Nick's point is that there is philosophically a grand canyon. Students see that the school's goal is to provide the best quality education, sometimes that means going into debt to retain quality. It seems as though the Board of Trustees and the principal have a different philosophy to not go into debt. That seems against the philosophy of an educational institution. Not going into debt means nothing to us.

Dean: I agree there are different positions on what the university ought to be doing financially. You're right, one is to say we're not going to debt and that our first priority is not going into debt. Traditionally that is how Queen's has functioned. The body responsible for this is the Board of Trustees. It is not the case that other people don't have views on the best way to go, but legally that's where that decision is made. Other position is we say 'ok, we go into debt, borrow what we need now and worry about the future later'. As soon as you have the loan you now have to start payments to pay down the debt from the operating budget. There's a trade-off. Another extension is we push the pay-back period as far into the future and hope everything will be ok by the time we have to pay it back. Most people probably don't see any indication that governments will be able to pay back money into public institutions. Another aspect of that position is that we get the benefit of the loan, but the people that are going to pay are 5-10 years down the line. Those are the two sides to that.

Chris Rudnicki: question about the endowment. Why don't we dip into this in the time of crisis? What is it for if not to use it now?

Dean: not in charge of accounting, I give you the answer as I understand it. Somewhat the answer is akin to the one I just gave. Endowment provides us with revenue that goes into the operating budget. If we take money out then the money that comes into our operating budget goes down. It's similar to "do we want to pay now or later?". There are huge aspects of the endowment that are locked in, where legally we can't touch. Assuming the amount is correct, you're still faced with the issue of "do we deal with the issues now or later?".

Also, we're in debt now, it's a question of how much. The plan by principal Williams was rejected because it left us in debt after 3 years with no plan. So still faced with problem that unless you know what future is, you don't know.

Nick Day: taking out loans is not the same as avoidance. My understanding is that they use those loans to exert pressure to increase funding to the schools. I appreciate that you said your job is to represent the views – as that voice, I know that the faculty rejected this planning process for that very reason. My understanding is that people are calling for the same message. Are you willing to send that to principal?

Dean: I sent that motion immediately to the principal and spoke on the phone. I transmitted the message as soon as I could. I think there's one truth regarding the path other universities have taken, but I haven't seen any evidence the government has paid back those loans. One of the fears is that if we don't go into debt, do we get rewarded for that? Or when the government decides to bail everyone out they decide we don't need any money. But I haven't heard the government paying back any debt. For example, McGill is still carrying their loan. Given the current situation, the provincial government is in

huge debt, where are we going to come in the government's priorities? Government is hearing a lot of voices. I certainly don't disagree.

Laura: I would like to think you're a fair man. I think it is unreasonable that students will go into personal debt because their institution won't go into debt. Reflects huge problems with the way schools are being run. It's not fair. Secondly, I appreciate you putting it into the bigger context, but I'm not willing to just accept that and play the game. That involves privatizing our education and putting out education in the hands of the Board of Trustees that just want to make money. Some of this financial crisis isn't real and expects us to just play along. We've been taught to critically engage and challenge those above us.

Dean: main things I agree with is that we must challenge the situation. On the issue of is it fair for students to go into debt? That goes into a bigger question of who is responsible for education. I've had 3 children go through university that are very well acquainted with the financial aspect. I'm certainly sympathetic to the effects. Who should be paying is a bigger issue. Whole spectrum there from entirely private to entirely public. I've lived in both, there are plusses and minuses associated with them all. Speaking selfishly as Dean, as long as I can get the budget to run the Faculty I don't mind too much as long as the amount isn't too great. You're free to challenge that. Some decisions are right some are wrong. These are big issues in terms of what kind of country you want to live in.

Kavita: I brought a lot of friends today. I didn't think the methods that were being used were effective, so we decided to try and get people out. That's partly why you have a larger attendance – because of us. A lot of discussion about Board of Trustees has to do with restructuring. We're moving more towards a business model. I want to ask what sort of impact you and students have into how they run? How can we oppose those changes? It doesn't seem BOT has the best interests of students at heart. They have this business model, not best for students. Not going into debt as an institution so that students do is absolutely absurd. My first question is BOT and how we can have input, and how personal debt and student debt has been taken into account?

Dean: first question – not sure if I'm going to be able to address these issues. I'm not a member of BOT, I attend as a guest in the general meeting of the Board, but I don't take part in anything else. Also, my experience of the Board stretches back 4 years. In terms of moving to business model, I don't know. The board has always taken a very hard line on debt. There was only one occasion I can remember. I don't know that it's accurate to say we're moving into different model.

In terms of where the Board has its interests - I think they believe they have the interests of the students at heart. Most of them have been undergraduates. They cannot be faulted based on their commitment to Queen's.

I don't think the Board is interested in making a profit because any money that it makes goes back into Queen's.

In terms of how they function, it's through a bunch of committees, they bring these recommendations to the Board. Principal is the main conduit between the Board and Senate. As you know they recently approved a committee that will be composed of senate and Board members.

I'm not sure if I answered your question.

Kavita: I want to express frustration and the fact that students' voices are not being able to be heard at the highest level. I don't think we have enough representation – only 3 voting members. I've consistently seen motions put forth by students and this was shot down. Nobody could go and voice their opinion on this. The number of international students didn't even know that was happening.

Dean: My frustration is that I'm Dean of the largest Faculty and I do not get to address the Board except by invitation. 3 student representatives do, but none of the Deans do, which I think is interesting. I think in many respects the Board may see itself as responsive to the needs of students. Something you may want to think of in terms of the context of information. Last year, 4 of the Deans were asked to make presentations – in the 4 years I've been here, that was the only time I was invited.

On your second point, I don't really have the numbers I would need to address the issue. I've seen reports trying to address student debt. I don't have the information to give you an accurate answer in terms of are students worse off now than they were 10 years ago. So I'm sorry about that.

Kavita: I was trying to ask how student debt has been considered. It has everything to do with budget cuts. How has it been considered because the two are so linked.

Dean: Fair question, within the Faculty I don't think we've given much interest in it, but as a University as a whole they certainly have. The issue of student debt and how the university can service that comes up quite frequently. One of Queen's goals is to try and be at the top in terms of financial support. Ongoing issue. I agree with you it hasn't been addressed explicitly in our document because it's university-wide.

Elamin Abdelmahmoud: My point is about all these issues that we have. These are not issues I think go along with budget cuts. Huge disconnect between the board and the actual reality. In that situation these students, I'm not speaking for them, but a lot of them feel you could emphasize that this is the reality, we are in a crisis, we've been waiting to take money out of the endowment fund, that we have to go further into debt, this is the time. When you need to increase enrolment but can't accommodate them – these are things you should be spending money on. It's time for that rainy day argument to drop because this is it. I'm wondering if you will include it in your report, precisely as drastic as it sounds.

Dean: I'll certainly considerate it. I don't think the principal is unaware that we are in crisis. I can assure you that the financial situation is an issue at every meeting. We're writing that document in light of the fact that we know the university already knows, but I agree it depends what audience.

Elamin Abdelmahmoud: More severe is the academic crisis, and that has not been emphasized. That needs to be rescued.

Dean: We're between a rock and a hard place. Many of these are issues we have to consider whether we were in financial crisis or not. We didn't want it to be all about money, but then criticized for not talking about money. Money does frame our discussions.

Chris Rudnicki: back to McGill. They made the decision to go into debt and they are still in debt. But they are still the highest in terms of reputation and quality. I think if there's a decision between academic integrity and going into debt, then the choice is clear. We must chose academics over keeping a debtless institution.

Dean: if you look at the ratings of university, Queen's is doing as well as McGill. I'm not sure that choosing one financial path over another has influenced the ratings. However they do have much greater international penetration than we have.

Jordan: in the document there was talk about re-weighting upper-year courses. I didn't really see it elaborated on. It seems this could affect the breadth of upper-year classes.

Dr. Pierce: a lot of departments are reviewing upper-year courses to see if they can get credit. For example, thesis work ranges from 0.5 credit to 2 credits in each department. We've asked should courses with more student work be weighted more? Departments are searching for appropriate levels to recognize student work.

Nick Day: in our perspective the position is go into debt. Can we shift and focus more on student information and student opinion.

Dean: all your responses are being recorded and will be submitted to the Principal.

Jill Evans: we thought since the attendance was lower he could respond. Please feel free to say whether you want him to respond or not.

Dean: wanted to assure you that whatever you have said is being recorded.

Kelly: I found out that GPA system cost 33 million dollars.

Dean: no. For QUASR that is the cost.

Kelly: talking about decisions, and I think it would be wise to look at the decisions they've made during the recession. I think that's really important because saying not going into more debt is not a great idea, than that decision doesn't seem like such a great idea. That was not a student decision, even if senate passed it last year, when the largest student population is not present.

My second point is more personal, I have been frustrated and I have put a lot of my frustration to you and I apologize. I do know that you care a lot to have these meetings and your passion gives me hope, but my frustration was a little misguided, because as I have encountered the ASUS executive this year. It's disheartening to see you come to meetings late, come dressed inappropriately, in jeans and hoodies. My frustration is more than just the administration; it has been our executive that hasn't represented us. It's rude to speak during students' opinions. It's hard to take it. I hope the future is in good hands. Robyn is taking notes like a mad woman over there. But professionally you have failed us. I'm not sure if this is your last day, but I would encourage you to keep that advice. You could have done a lot more in

helping our student voice and letting us know what is going on. I've put my energy at the administration at this point. I think you guys are a little at fault on that one as well.

Dean: I have to say that we do meet regularly and that we received a lot of support and help from them. I can comment on dress, I would like to say that I dress like this just to go on a train.

Kelly: I just think the executive should live up to that. You must dress the part and be taken very seriously.

Laura: I'm kind of in awe of Kelly's passionate plea. I agree that I have put my entire education on hold for this cause, just ask my supervisor. That's my own choice, but I feel the rushed timeline is the biggest problem. The reason I've had to put other things on hold is because I do have to be responding to emails, mobilizing people, etc. I want to have more information about how these comments and voices, I know they're being transcribed, but there's rigorous, thematic ways that can ensure these are being transcribed in the document. I know you said "they'll take away what they need from that", but I don't trust that. As it stands, the draft you gave still does not have the departmental responses. How will this be structured? Maybe you can't answer, but if you can feed that information back to us then we can know that our voices are in good hands. I know that we in Kinesiology asked a statement to be put into our department's response, but it didn't fit the criteria the principal gave us. I want a clearer sense of how will be included.

Dean: I will hear responses from the heads regarding the draft, we will be going back through the draft and consider what we can include given the discussion. Given that we're trying to produce a document that is reasonably compact, it's difficult to make decisions. In addition to the document that is on the web, every response that we've received will go to the principal's committee. At the moment that is pretty high. The reason they're not available on the web right now is because we wanted the focus to be on the Faculty document. I've contacted the heads to see if they want their responses to be publicly available. They were originally under the impression that they would not be made public, so some wanted to make some changes. We have to ask them if they want them widely-accessible. We'll be discussing that this evening. Irrespective of that, all of the responses will be copied to the principal's committee. If you have something, send it to me and it will be sent.

Member: will those be changed or edited?

Dean: the ones as Robyn types up will go directly, without editing. People are free to write directly to the principal.

Michael Ghazal: I don't feel the clothing that they wear has anything to do with their job. That you would say that offends me. I'm sorry that we were whispering during your speech, it pertains to this meeting and I apologize. We do these jobs for the students. That's why I do it that's why Jill and Josh do it as well.

Safiah Chowdhury: I had a question regarding how this input will be included. The contention is not with the specific issues that you've raised, but in the process. The students seem to be opposed because they

oppose the process, so how will you be moving along knowing that the main issue is not what's contained in the draft, but with the idea of how the draft was made?

Dean: the faculty board motion does not relieve me of my responsibility to the principal. My ideal is that the department heads make their best effort to have student opinion included. I will continue to try and represent the faculty as best I can in terms of the vision statement that will come out. I don't know if that addresses all the issues.

Safiah Chowdhury: based on the meetings I've attended, none of the responses have addressed the issues brought up, but in the process. Will your draft reflect that this may not reflect the views of the faculty?

Dean: the objection is to the process rather than to the particular aspects of content?

Safiah Chowdhury: will the content reflect the voices of the student to not necessarily the specific issues, but to why are we even looking at virtualization?

Dean: difficult to answer because we're already in the process of looking at it, I'm not sure how to respond. One reason why is because it's already here. The question for us is what are the details of it. If we found out that none of it worked than we would back off.

Elamin: my first point is going forward, are you... ok never mind. Are we going to be addressing what the report does not have? For instance, it doesn't focus on anything to do with the curriculum. Can we include a more diverse curriculum, which is so much part of our academic plan moving forward. Second point is when I said "will you put that the rainy day has come in your report?", what are your reservations in including that?

Dean: because I think it's so widely accepted, I've done nothing but talk about that for the last year and a half. I'd rather take up the space talking about how we should deal with it. I assure you we feel there's a problem. It's in our face every day. I thought there were a considerable number of points relating to curriculum in the document, so I'm a little unsure about your question. Curriculum is core of what we're doing.

Dr. Pierce: There's elements in there that are pointing forward, but we didn't want to predispose departments saying "this will be done".

Kavita: can I suggest that students who haven't gotten to speak get to speak first.

Member: since we're talking about budget cuts, do we have access to the financial statements so that we can see them, so we can suggest things? I think that's really important to understand the severity of the situation. Also, I understand international students are important – internationalization and diversity and increasing the number of international students – but with all these issues taking place it will reduce our representation internationally, and thus this will not help with the enrolment. So I don't understand how this will help increase funds by increasing the number of international students?

President of SGPS: having the best possible response from the faculty is quite difficult to do. Many students feel excluded, I don't feel the response reflects the best views. Because of this exclusion at this level of planning, the idea is that this response will go above and it will be the responsibility of 6 people to compile this. I ask that you recognize that this has excluded graduate students up to this point – I ask that you add a disclaimer that says this, and that you change the committee of 6 to a committee of 9 with 3 student members. I think that will alleviate some of the concerns regarding representation. I think if the idea was to get our views and it hasn't been done at this level, it should be done at the next.

Samantha: we were talking about, obviously there's been some difficulty in lack of student involvement. Students know how they are being affected, but not that these forums are being held. How will you include students beyond this initial phase? In the summer and early on next year? Learn from this and ensure students are actively being involved.

Kelly: I think going off that it needs to be put in the document about the faculty rejection, I think it's really important that you state that you're confined to meet a deadline, that this is a top-down document and not necessarily including all the voices that you're supposed to include.

Dean: we have to publish our budget, the catch is that it's pretty complex. I have a CA beside me sometimes when I go through it – difficulty is being able to understand it. Current VP is looking at ways it can be more publicly available in a more readable format.

In terms of international students – from our point of view, they are important and international opportunities are important from academics reasons because it broadens Queen's. Financially there are plusses and minuses – not necessarily an advantage. Does our current situation hurt our ability to attract internationally? It's difficult to say, most universities are facing these crunches. So I don't think it has enormous bearing on that.

On the issues of exclusion of views, we're passing that on to the university and administration. I would urge people to write to me and we will include your views. There are still opportunities to be heard.

In terms of membership to the committee, I will pass these suggestions along. All I can do is pass long the information and he decides.

Inclusion of students in the future. I've already said that what we've been doing currently has not worked. We rely on the departments – it was pointed out that people haven't been told about these town halls; we sent an email, but it was pointed out that this doesn't always work, so we are looking at other ways to do this. We're also looking at forming a committee of all 27 departments.

All I can do is pass information on to the principal for how to include students and faculty in this process. I will certainly tell the administration that what we are doing currently does not work. Any suggestions would be very happily received.

Kelly: will you put it in that Faculty Board rejected this document? Will you put it in your introduction?

Dean: it's similar to Elamin's question. The motion itself has already gone to the principal.

Josh: please feel free to send any information to us if you feel you did not get to say it today. Thank you very much for attending.