

The Chair, M. Mkandawire, called the meeting to order at 1:30 pm.

He began with the acknowledgement that Cape Breton University is located in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq People. This territory is covered by the "Treaties of Peace and Friendship" which Mi'kmaq and Wolastoqiyik (Maliseet) people first signed with the British Crown in 1726. The treaties did not deal with surrender of lands and resources but in fact recognized Mi'kmaq and Wolastoqiyik (Maliseet) title and established the rules for what was to be an ongoing relationship between nations.

Prior to beginning the meeting, M. Mkandawire the tragic loss of a CBU student. Senators paused for a moment of silence to remember Cameron Forbes.

### **University Updates**

Dr. Richard MacKinnon advised that President Dingwall is unwell today and that he sends his sincere regrets. He began with great thanks to all faculty and staff for the efforts in preparing for the move to online teaching for the fall. He referred to the work of the Andy Parnaby and his working group in the development of a new course for students. This course focuses on preparing students for the online learning environment with four main components; digital know-how, getting organized, academic essentials and knowing your university. Upon completion, the hope is that new and returning students will have a full understanding of what this term's new way of learning will look like. With a start date of August 17<sup>th</sup>, there are currently 243 students registered for the course. In addition to this course, Peter MacIntyre will be offering a free live online course on August 26<sup>th</sup> which will provide students with an experience of an online course. The Week of Welcome and Start Smart events are being developed with a move to virtual events and considerations are being made to ensure students in all time zones are able to participate. With regard to faculty development, R. Nicholls and the CTL have been working with faculty to provide specialized equipment, a license for anti-plagiarism software, compiling a list of faculty members requiring remote proctors, assessing the Top Hat learning platform, a student facilitation system, the development of a 911 IT assistance system, a faculty troubleshooting system, among a host of other items.

Ms. Becky Chisholm, Director of Marketing and Communications, reported that on July 1<sup>st</sup> CBU launched Thrive with an aim to built confidence for new and returning students using a variety of communication tools. She reported that approximately 250 students are registered for Start Smart this term. The marketing team is adapting and being innovative in their strategies with the shift to online learning. With the COVID-19 restrictions, much of their work will be digitized and a more visible presence will be noticed going forward.

Ms. Patti Merrigan, CBU's Director of Human Resources, noted that due to the recent changes announced by Public Health with regard to restrictions, CBU has formed a team to being the process of a developing a limited basis, Return to Campus Plan. This team has been monitoring any changes to Public Health requirements and are has regular communications with the Province and representative from other universities. On July 6<sup>th</sup>, Phase 1 of the Return to Campus Plan was introduced which provided priority campus access through an application process and detailed the requirements before coming to and while

on campus. To date, approximately 150 applications to return to campus have been received. She also noted that the Plan is subject to change to adhere to any future changes set out by Public Health. Phase two of the plan is under development and the hope is to have it ready in the next few weeks. In conjunction with the Plan an app is being developed that allow for individuals to check in through it rather than the manual sign in process currently being used. The reintroduction of required services for students is also currently being discussed.

Mr. Gordon MacInnis provided an update as it pertains to finances which ties in to enrolment numbers. He noted that as of August 12<sup>th</sup>, 3784 students were enrolled for the fall term and 1874 registered for the winter term which raises a question on the gap between the two. The possible reasons may be student waiting to register for their winter classes after they experience the online learning in the fall, finances or that students are finishing their program of study in the fall term. There is a fear that the deregistration process this year may see a significant increase which may be due to the inability to earn income over the summer months. He noted that a model has been developed to compare tuition revenues to last year and the July comparison shows a decrease in approximately \$12.7 million, which does not include the waived fees. At end of day August 13<sup>th</sup> slippage of in excess of \$4 million is being reported and the budget impact has been recalibrated to a possible \$25.5 million revenue short fall with expenses likely to far exceed budgetary expectations. For clarification, he noted that the two main sources of revenue for CBU are from tuition and provincial operating grants.

Mr. Amrinder Singh, SU President, reported that the Union met with the G. MacInnis to request and discuss various items including an extension to the registration finalization date and fall payment dates, how required labs and practical work will be offered, along with the pass/fail grading system. The Union has also been receiving many questions with regard to how lectures will be offered and if text books will be available online.

On the question of the required training as part of the application to return to campus, P. Merrigan responded that when an application is received by the HR department and email was sent to the individual however, an all employee email will be circulated for everyone to complete it in advance of making application.

On the question of a projected timeline for the winter term, R. MacKinnon reported that the focus has been on the fall term and no final decision has been made as direction from Public Health has not yet been received. In a follow-up a suggestion, was offered that a firm date of when this decision might be made should be identified.

On the question if any consideration has been given to reintroducing the pass/fail grad, R. MacKinnon responded that because this was introduced with the sudden shift to online learning in March, it was not an option that was being considered. However, after a conversation with the SU VPA, he agreed to raise this with the Deans for their input at their next meeting. In follow up, M. Keating suggested this might not be a best option and that students should take advantage of the Start Smart program to familiarize themselves with the changes and prepare for the online semester.

On the suggestion of the deregistration policy in these extraordinary times being waived, G. MacInnis noted that he and the Students' Union members recently discussed this topic and that it is up for discussion at the University Executive Committee. The discussion will be how to handle non-payment; is it better to deregister or withhold grades and graduation.

In response to the suggestion of using an average of enrolment numbers from the last number of years rather than just 2019, as it was a banner year for enrolment, G. MacInnis noted this is possible but would not be relevant for these purposes and noted that to date, the numbers for 2019 and 2020 are comparable.

G. MacInnis agreed with a comment that a comparative of first year enrolment numbers might show a signal of trend of students remaining close to home rather than travelling off-island. The enrolment system is not able to track day-to-day stats but as of August 15<sup>th</sup> these daily numbers are pulled from the system and tracked manually so a more detailed account will be available in the coming days.

On the question of open educational resources (OER) and lectures referred to in the report of the Students' Union, R. MacKinnon replied the OER option is being explored and the options found will be available to student but its use will be with the preference of the faculty member. J. Hoover shared a link of available options on the CBU website (<https://libguides.cbu.ca/OER>). With respect to lectures, comments were offered that a variety of formats will likely be used but again how they are delivered will depend on the faculty member. M. Keating also noted that it was suggested a message be sent to students to request the types of technology they have and to suggest they contact the faculty member in advance of registering for a course to request the format the course will be taught. She also suggested to be proactive, faculty members might want to send a note to those already registered in their class and provide this information. A. Anwar offered his experience with OER and how invaluable it is to his students which are predominantly abroad and that if possible, he suggested faculty consider using an asynchronous format as it truly helps students for a host of obvious reasons. G. Lee-Dadswell added that some labs can easily be shifted to an online format where others, of course, cannot.

In response to a question on ICA and overload contracts, G. MacInnis responded that the process was delayed somewhat this year with the uncertainty of enrolment numbers.

With no further questions the meeting was adjourned at 3:05 pm.

**Debbie Brennick**  
**Secretary to Senate**