

MINUTES OF THE OPEN SESSION
COUNCIL OF THE GINA CODY SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING AND COMPUTER SCIENCE

Friday, April 16, 2021

PRESENT:

Chair: Debbabi, M.

Voting members: Agarwal, A.; Akgunduz, A.; Athienitis, A.; Bagchi, A.; Ben Hamza, A.; Campbell, S.; Contreras, I.; De Visscher, A.; El Ayoubi, C.; Fayyaz, F.; Gopakumar, G.; Goodarzi, B.; Hammad, A.; Hashtrudi Zad, S.; Jahanshahi-Anbuhi, S.; Kuzgunkaya, O.; Khalid, Z.; Lucia, W.; Narayanan, L.; Ng, H.; Ormandjieva, O.; Paquet, J.; Pugh, M.; Qiu, D.; Safa, T.; Shayan, Y.; Shihab, E.; Singh, T.; Soliman, A.; Stathopoulos, T.; Thiel, S.; Vermeire, B.; Walia, J.; Witte, R.; Youssef, A.; Zeng, Y.

Non-Voting members: Bencheikh, Z.; Binsley, R.; Kraulis, I.; Pawelek, P.; Ward, M.

Observers: Clarke, A.; De Melo, D.; Fiorentino, N.; Gosselin, G.; Himmo, M.; Leger, J. (for Allaire, V.), Miatello, M.

Guests: Bessette, J-S.; Bigras, F.; Di Grappa, M.; Jitto, L.; Leduc, L.; Morrissey, G.; Pardillo, G.; Pichot, F.; Wright, E.

REGRETS:

Voting members: Arabian, M.; Carr, G.; Edwards, J.-M.; Maistre, M.; Morgan, A.; Nazemi, A.; Rathore, A.; Ronci, D.; Whitelaw, A.

Non-Voting members: Allaire, V.

Observer: Martel, C.

1. Call to Order of the Open Session

The Chair called the open session of the meeting to order at 2:03 p.m.

2. Adoption of the Agenda

Motion 2021-03-01 Upon motion duly moved and seconded (M. Pugh/S. Thiel), it was passed that the Agenda be adopted as submitted.

Vote: Carried unanimously

3. Approval of the Minutes of Open Session ECFC 2021-02 – March 12, 2021

Motion 2021-03-02 Upon motion duly moved and seconded (T. Stathopoulos /M. Pugh), it was passed that the Minutes be approved as submitted.

Vote: Carried unanimously

4. Project UNITY – Presented by France Bigras, Gracy Pardillo, Michael Di Grappa, Jean-Sebastien Bessette
Mr. Michael Di Grappa, VP, Services and Sustainability, Ms. France Bigras, Associate VP IITS and Chief Information Officer, Ms. Gracy Pardillo, Associate VP Finance and Controller, and Mr. Jean-Sebastien Bessette, Project Director were welcomed to council to provide an overview of the UNITY Project. The project was discussed in three sections: UNITY features, training opportunities and the revised project timeline.
- 1) UNITY features: UNITY will transform the human resources, finance, and procurement practices at Concordia. A special thanks was given to the change agents and super users at the Gina Cody School that helped ensure the project's success. Employees will gain autonomy to have access to personal information, employment information and pay stubs. Faculty members will be able to spend less time on administrative tasks and more time on core activities of teaching and research. One of the significant changes will be the module for expense reimbursements, called Concur. It will allow receipt photographs to be submitted online.
 - 2) Training opportunities: Training courses are offered based on specific user roles. There will be e-learning given as the principle self serving session. For more complex roles, virtual sessions will be provided with opportunities to practice. Training sessions will be monitored to ensure the community is getting this training done and are prepared to use this new system. UNITY members will also have access to a new tool called TTS access directly from inside the application.
 - 3) Revised project timeline: During Spring 2021, the pilot and training programs will begin to be offered. In June 2021 there will be a focus on e-learning and with this it will allow an outreach to the community now to provide information, allowing the community to go at their own pace. In the Fall 2021, a virtual live session will be offered. More collaboration and working sessions with the community leading up to the live launch will continue. The aim is to launch UNITY in November 2021.

Question and Feedback Period

- A question was asked if there was an option to upload graduate student bursaries and FRIS TA contracts. It has been explained that the UNITY project is integrating FRIS and student bursaries, but this will likely be more in January 2022. Currently work is being done to ensure we have the right information and it is a high priority for UNITY. The go live date will not be the end of the creation of UNITY. More features will come.
- Will Myconcordia and Cspace will be integrated with UNITY? It was explained that it will be integrated. UNITY will be used as the hub to gain access.
- It was mentioned that, in the previous year, a total of 5000 bursaries were processed in GCS alone. The process to complete a bursary application is incredibly long and the forms have sensitive information. Adding the bursary process to UNITY would be one of the most significant impacts if this is integrated. It was reiterated that it will not be a go live feature, but it is currently being worked on.
- Will UNITY be web-based? It was explained that UNITY will be accessed from the web browser through a web interface and that work is being done to optimize Cspace and Myconcordia to make it more user-friendly and to give a more integrated experience. Performance testing is very important and they have not heard any performance issues from other clients. Further confirmation will be done through performance testing activities.
- It was also mentioned that examinations of PhD and master's students should also be considered to be added to the system in the future. There is much to be done, examinations and the proposal defence and many signatures need to be collected.
- Will TA contracts be integrated? Part-time faculty documents and contract signing is on FRIS. Clearer examples of what will be on UNITY will be given in the future.
- Paper-based documents for procurement and human resource documents for recruitment will now be electronic when we go live in November. It will be done through DocuSign.

5. Chair's Remarks

- The university and the faculties are working on the progressive return to the campus, with the planning for the Fall term and an announcement will be made in May. The Summer term will have online delivery and in-person activities on an as need basis.
- Work is being done at the academic committee on teaching and learning. Dr. Ali Akgunduz, Associate Dean, Academic Programs is sitting on this committee as the GCS representative. The committee is working on the elaboration of guidelines. There are ongoing meetings working with the Chairs and the Associate Deans to identify priorities of what courses and activities should be given on campus.
- The results have been received for the NSERC Discovery Grant and the RTI competitions. Overall, the School is doing well as we are receiving higher NSERC Discovery Grant amounts, and many colleagues recovered NSERC Discovery grant support. Besides, we have received 2 NSERC DAS awards. Nevertheless, the success rate is going down from 64 percent to 51 percent. It is important to mention that we have had many more applications compared to last year.
- At least three professors that applied for bridge funding are back in the system. This means that the bridge funding program is useful, and we need to encourage faculty members to connect with the discovery grant program.
- It is important to note that 16 researchers benefitted from the COVID-19 extension with close to \$450k.
- Outstanding performances by professors in our CME department were noted. Dr. Xia Li was awarded a five-year discovery grant at a level of 44k per annum, which is an impressive amount for a first NSERC DG installment. She was also awarded a DAS at \$40k and an RTI valued at \$150k. This is an outstanding performance for a new hire and congratulations are deserved. Also, Dr. Pantcho Stoyanov received 30k for 5 year and Dr. Melanie Hazlett was awarded 33k for 5 years. A big congratulations to the department of Chemical and Materials Engineering, to the faculty members who received the awards and to Dr. Alex De Visscher as the Chair of the department for his wonderful leadership and work on hiring.
- The inaugural Gina Cody School Day was held on March 18, 2021 and it was a great success. It was a wonderful collaboration between University Advancement and Gina Cody School staff with the help of our faculty alumni chapter and GCS students. Three virtual events were held: a fireside chat with Charlie Kawwas, Chief Operating Officer of Broadcom, who was also presented with the Concordia Alumni of the Year award; a student showcase where undergraduate and graduate students shared their ongoing research and projects; and the day ended with a friendly trivia competition between students and faculty members in the evening. More than 300 people attended the virtual events and the #GinaCodySchool hashtag trended nationally on social media. Everyone who participated was thanked for helping make this event successful.
- The GCS Advisory Board meeting was held on March 29, 2021. There were two main items on the agenda. The presentation by President Graham Carr about the state of the university and the campaign priorities. Secondly, a presentation was delivered about the Applied AI institute. This initiative is very important in terms of structuring our research capacity in Applied Artificial Intelligence. The proposed institute brings together over 80 researchers from all four faculties working on different aspects of AI. The presentation has been presented to VPRGS and the next step will be a presentation to the Academic Cabinet in early May 2021 and the last phase of the approval process will be a presentation to Presidents' Executive Group. The intent is to have this entity fully operational in early June 2021.
- Further announcements were made for recent outstanding contributions made by GCS members:
 - Dr. Tsz Ho Kwok, Assistant Professor in Mechanical, Industrial and Aerospace Engineering, has been honored with the [2021 SME Geoff Boothroyd Outstanding Young Manufacturing Engineer Award for his research to bridge design and manufacturing processes. This award recognizes manufacturing engineers, age 35 or younger, who have made exceptional contributions to the manufacturing industry.](#)

- Mohamed Amine Arfaoui, a PhD candidate in information systems engineering, was awarded the Prix Relève étoile Louis Berlinguet for the month of February from Quebec's Fonds de recherche. Mohamed was recognized for his research developing 6G networks using visible light communication (VLC) technology. The FRQNT awards the prize monthly to promote and recognize exceptional research by graduate students and postdoctoral fellows in Quebec.
- Charlotte Savage, an undergraduate student in Mechanical, Industrial and Aerospace Engineering, made the Forbes Top Entrepreneurs under 30 list for 2021. Charlotte is the founder and chief innovation officer of HaiLa Technologies, a Montreal-based technology start up. HaiLa is developing novel radio technology that enables data from wireless sensors to "ride" on existing signals in the air — enabling a new generation of sensors and radios that do not need batteries or other power supply. This exponentially reduces the power consumption of sensor devices, enabling the first-ever radioless IoT platform. Charlotte has helped HaiLa raise \$5 million in seed money to date.
- Donya Meshgin, an undergraduate student in the Real-time, Embedded and Avionics Software program at the Gina Cody School, helped develop an app to ease the anxiety of living with multiple sclerosis. The app uses augmented reality to alleviate the stress of self-administered medication. Donya was interviewed for [Let's Go on CBC](#) and was mentioned in [La Presse](#).
- A GCS graduate, Anas Alazzam, PhD 10, associate professor at [Khalifa University](#) in Abu Dhabi, led a team of researchers that developed a hand-held device that can detect COVID-19 infection within minutes. The device fits in the palm of a hand, provides results in 45 minutes and costs less than \$10 per test.
- On March 13th, Canadian freestyle skier Marion Thénault, an undergraduate student in Mechanical, Industrial and Aerospace Engineering, won the gold medal at the World Cup in Almaty, Kazakhstan, in the aerial's competition. Marion also took home the bronze medal at the World Cup event in Moscow in January.

6. Associate Dean Remarks

Anjali Agarwal, Associate Dean of Student Academic Services and Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

- Applications for undergraduate admissions has gone up for the first choice by 19 percent since last year. Admissions are seven percent higher and confirmations are six percent lower than we were last year currently.
- International applications for first choice are 25 percent higher and those who are admitted are three percent higher, but confirmation is 16 percent lower.
- Cegeps first choice applications are 23 percent higher, admits are 16 percent higher and confirmation is higher. Most cegep students are confirmed to come to GCS.
- There were delays in processing until now due to curriculum changes to the French baccalaureate program and the international baccalaureate program. These are now reviewed much faster since last week.
- Students can opt for one pass course. Pass notation will be available from May 10, 2021 to May 26, 2021 and if they have any F grades they will be converted to DISC after June 1st. More information can be found here: <https://www.concordia.ca/coronavirus/students/pass-disc.html>
- No formal annual assessments will be done this year. Students with conditional or failed standing (GPA lower than 2.0) will receive an email notifying students that they have to increase their grades.
- The GirlSET program is taking place during July 5, 2021 to July 16, 2021 and it will be done online for three hours. Dr. Agarwal is counting on faculty who helped organize this event last year to help again this year. Anyone else interested or who wishes to propose an activity are welcome to contact Dr. Agarwal by email: anjali.agarwal@concordia.ca

Ali Akgunduz, Associate Dean, Academic Programs

- The university is planning for the Fall term return to campus though it is difficult to plan while the pandemic is not stable. Chairs will work with their own units to come up with a plan.
- There is a need to bring first and second year students to campus to interact with their peers. To bring students, especially the first and second year students to campus for non-teaching activities, ideas are welcome to be brought forth.
- On campus exams remains unclear.
- Academic misconduct is an issue with the online exams. Faculty members need to minimize allowing the students to get external help during the exams. Some creative solutions are needed.

Hoi Dick (Eddie) Ng, Associate Dean Academic Affairs

- The workload letters for the coming academic year 2021-22 are currently being issued to all faculty members. Dr. Ng thanked the chairs and the associate chairs for helping with the process.
- Faculty members who have any questions or concerns can contact Department Associate Chairs, Ms. Morrissey, or Dr. Ng.
- Currently there is a Gina Cody School of Engineering and Computer Science Space Planning Committee. The committee's purpose is to evaluate the different aspects of the GCS needs and look at a long-term plan. The committee is divided into 5 focus groups. Any colleagues interested to join, please contact Dr. Ng hoi.ng@concordia.ca or Mr. Gosselin guy.gosselin@concordia.ca

Emad Shihab, Associate Dean, Research and Graduate Studies

- Dr. Shihab congratulated all NSERC Discovery grant awardees.
- The Chemical and Materials Engineering masters and PhD programs received official notifications from the ministry. Thank you Dr. De Visscher and the Chemical and Materials Engineering department. The programs are open, and we already have some admits.
- The university sent the international graduate students letters asking them to be in Montreal for the Fall term. The university's message was to notify students that if they can be in Montreal, we would like them to be here for the Fall term.
- Admissions are strong for the course-based graduate programs. In terms of admits we are almost up 100 percent compared to last year. Thesis-based students are down 20 percent compared to last year.
- Department chairs are encouraged to speak to the faculty members to recruit thesis students at the PhD program.
- There is currently work being done with Ms. Himmo and the School of Graduate Studies to run a recruitment campaign for the GCS thesis-based program.
- Soon, there will be a process in place to give access to offices. This has been discussed quite a bit at the OCGG. We want the process to be streamlined and to follow the same process used to access research labs. More details will be forthcoming.
- Work is being done with SGS on a proposal to bill our course-based Meng students on a per credit basis rather than a per semester basis. The intent is to change and give students flexibility.
- Another project that is being done with SGS is a plan to support parental leave for our graduate students. More details will be forthcoming in the next few months.

7. Curriculum changes

- a) Undergraduate Curriculum Proposal for the 2021-22 Academic Year
Department of Building, Civil & Environmental Engineering: CIVI 498 (ECFC 2021-03-01)

Motion 2021-03-03 Upon motion duly moved and seconded (A. Akgunduz/A. Soliman), it was passed that document ECFC 2021-03-01, be ratified as submitted.

Vote: Carried unanimously

- b) Graduate Curriculum Proposal for the 2021-2022 Academic Year
Department of Building, Civil & Environmental Engineering: CIVI 691 (ECFC 2021-03-02)

Motion 2021-03-04 Upon motion duly moved and seconded (E. Shihab/A. Soliman) it was passed that document ECFC 2021-03-02, be ratified as submitted.

Vote: Carried unanimously

8. Ratifications of Elections (ECFC 2021-03-03)

Motion2021-03-05 Upon motion duly moved and seconded (H. Ng/M. Pugh), it was passed that document ECFC 2021-03-03, Selection Committee for the GCS Teaching Excellence Awards for Professors and Teaching Assistants be ratified as submitted.

Vote: Carried unanimously

Motion2021-03-06 Upon motion duly moved and seconded (H. Ng/A. Soliman), it was passed that document ECFC 2021-03-03, Faculty Tribunal Pool representatives be ratified as submitted.

Vote: Carried unanimously

Motion2021-03-07 Upon motion duly moved and seconded (H. Ng/T. Stathopoulos), it was passed that document ECFC 2021-03-03, Senate representatives be ratified as submitted.

Vote: Carried unanimously

Motion2021-03-08 Upon motion duly moved and seconded (H. Ng/A. Soliman), it was passed that document ECFC 2021-03-03, Graduate Curriculum Committee representatives be ratified as submitted.

Vote: Carried unanimously

Motion2021-03-09 Upon motion duly moved and seconded (H. Ng/L. Narayanan), it was passed that document ECFC 2021-03-03, Council of the School of Graduate Studies Steering Committee representatives be ratified as submitted.

Vote: Carried unanimously

Motion2021-03-10 Upon motion duly moved and seconded (H. Ng/G. Gopakumar), it was passed that document ECFC 2021--03-03, Council of Arts and Science representatives be ratified as submitted.

Vote: Carried unanimously

Motion2021-03-11 Upon motion duly moved and seconded (H. Ng/M. Pugh), it was passed that document ECFC 2021-03-03, Council of GCS -BCEE, CSSE, ECE representatives be ratified as submitted.

Vote: Carried unanimously

Motion2021-03-12 Upon motion duly moved and seconded (H. Ng/A. Soliman), it was passed that document ECFC 2021-03-03, Faculty Personnel and Tenure Committee representatives be ratified as submitted.

Vote: Carried unanimously

9. Other Business

- There are no requirements for international students to be vaccinated before entering Canada, however many students opt to wait to get the vaccination before arriving. Please keep in mind that the guidelines for travel are continually changing and, in the future, there may be a condition that students must be vaccinated to travel to Canada.

10. Adjournment at 3:40 p.m.

Zineb Bencheikh
Secretary of Faculty Council
Gina Cody School of Engineering & Computer Science