

**MINUTES OF THE THIRD MEETING OF
THE COUNCIL OF THE SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES
OPEN SESSION**

December 1, 2023 at 10:00 am in EV 2.309

PRESENT

Ex-officio members: E. Diamantoudi (Chair), R. Johal,.

Voting members: E. Adams, A. Aghdam, R. Berger, L. Blair, L. Caminati, A. Fattoum-Guedri, X. Huang, L. Jeancolas, R. Lakshmanan, C. Lesage, W. Linds, M. Medraj, M. Packirisamy, P. Pawelek, D. Raju, A. Salas, F. Scala, M. Sussman, MJ Thompson, S. Ullah, F. Yuen, M. Zaare.

Non-Voting members: S. De Celles, D. Lafrance (Secretary), M. Jordan (Recording Secretary).

Guests: K. Belloso, G. Beltran, N. Butt, D. Cossette, R. Dutta, E. MacFadden.

REGRETS

Voting members: C. An, M. Steinberg, P. Stoyanov, C. Wilds.

Non-Voting members: W. Cheaib, S. Gabriele.

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 am.

2. Approval of the Agenda

Moved and seconded (R. Berger, M. Medraj). Carried.

3. Approval of the Minutes of the Open Meeting of November 2, 2023

Moved and seconded (F. Scala, C. Lesage). Carried.

4. Chair's Remarks

Dr Diamantoudi brought Council members up to date on the latest details stemming from the provincial and federal governments with regard to the increase in tuition fees for out-of-province students and the immigration regulation changes for international students. She stressed that the situation was in a state of flux and that facts were still emerging.

The Chair thanked Dr Pawelek for his dedicated service to the School of Graduate Studies; he would be stepping down from his Associate Dean Position at the end of the year. Dr Geoff Dover, a seasoned GPD, will be taking his place.

5. Question Period

There were no questions.

Presentations

6. Three-Minute Thesis: "Like clean hands? Diversify your research!" *Riya Dutta, Master's student in Software Engineering*

Riya Dutta gave Council members a rendition of her three-minute thesis presentation which earned her the top honour at the CAGS 3MT national competition in Victoria, British Columbia.

7. Budget Discussion *Denis Cossette, Chief Financial Officer*

Mr Cossette provided Council with a summary of the current financial situation at the university which involves a deficit of \$19.4 million for the 2023-24 fiscal year. Despite implementing a mitigation plan, the deficit has increased due to a sustained decline in enrolment, affecting the university's operating revenue largely dependent on tuition and government grants.

The drop in revenue, coupled with inflation, rising interest rates, and employee costs, has led to an inability to cover core operating expenses. Projections estimate a structural challenge of \$65 million to \$75 million in the near future if additional cost-control measures are not implemented immediately.

The university attributes its financial strain to a historical annual funding shortfall for Quebec universities, budget cuts in 2013, and the inability to rely on increased enrolment as in the past. Immediate measures to address the current deficit include freezing executive salaries, continuing a hiring freeze for non-academic staff, and utilizing reserve funds. The university aims to cut overall spending by 7.8% to meet the Board-approved deficit of \$19.4 million.

The university plans to develop a comprehensive budget strategy beyond the mandated recovery plan to achieve financial stability in the next five years. This plan will seek to strike a balance between respecting our financial responsibilities and maintaining our current activities while promoting growth in key areas.

Other

8. Adjournment

Moved and seconded (F. Scala, M. Medraj). Carried.

Next Meeting: February 2, 2024 from 10:00 am – 12:00 noon in EV 2.309

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Jordan
Recording Secretary
Council of the School of Graduate Studies