March 25, 2008

Motion

WHEREAS members of the Faculty of Arts expect the Dean to represent their views fairly, accurately and completely, particularly when those views are expressed through Faculty Council, the Faculty's representative collegial body; and
WHEREAS the Faculty of Arts Council passed a motion (unanimous, with one abstention) on December 18th, 2007, urging that the matter of Navitas/International College of Manitoba be considered as an academic matter by Senate (Note 1); and
WHEREAS at the Senate meeting of January 9th, the Dean of Arts did not communicate the Faculty Council vote of December 2007 (Note 2); and
WHEREAS at the meeting of the Board of Governors on January 29th, the Dean failed to communicate the Faculty Council vote of December 2007 (Note 3); and
WHEREAS at the Senate meeting of February 6th, the Dean of Arts misrepresented the Faculty Council vote of December 2007 (Note 4);
BE IT RESOLVED THAT this Faculty Council is deeply concerned that the Dean of Arts has failed to represent fairly, accurately and completely the position of Arts Council as expressed in its formal motion of December 2007, and censures the Dean for this failure.

References to the motion

(1) Text of December 18th 2007 Faculty Council motion:

MOTION (M. Gabbert/E. Comack): That this Council calls on the administration to submit to Senate for its consideration the proposal to establish a Navitas college, providing full documentation, including the agreement signed between Navitas and the University of Manitoba, so that Senate may make its recommendations and determinations as provided by the University Act; and that this motion be forwarded immediately to the University Secretary and the President of the University.

CARRIED with one abstention

Passed at a meeting of Arts Council, December 18, 2007

(2) See minutes of Senate meeting of January 9, 2008

(3) Transcript of Dean Sigurdson's comments to the Board of Governors, January 29, 2008:

Board of Governors Meeting
January 29, 2008
Transcribed by Brenda Austin-Smith (English), BoG Assessor for UMFA, from a tape recording of the Board of Governor's Meeting, in Room 312 Admin. Bldg. on March 17, 2008
Time of these comments on tape: 1:23:50 to 1:33:07
Excerpt from BOG Meeting: Comments by Dean Sigurdson
Richard Sigurdson, Dean of Arts:

"I'm not even sure what I'm going to say. This has been a difficult issue for me. Like Doug [Ruth] I've been struggling with this. Like a lot of you around the table, I wear a lot of different hats. I was elected to this board from the Senate, from all colleagues of the Senate. I feel I represent Senators. I think that the views of Senators need to be reflected in this discussion. I am also, however, the Dean of the Faculty of Arts, and as such, I'm a member of middle management. I don't know exactly how far up the administration I am, but I'm an administrator of the U of M, and I have a strong commitment to the administration of this university and have a vested interest in a number of matters related to that. And I am, as a member of the Board, I'm going to vote the way I think I should, but I do think that members of the Board should be aware there are significant concerns that have been raised by members of my faculty, this is the Faculty of Arts, as well as by senators, and some of them have come up to me, not as their Dean but as a senator representing them. I have to say that we have concerns and these should be represented. Moreover, people that are in my Faculty that report to me directly, like Department Heads, have had some concerns about this, the whole deal.

"I myself have been learning more and more about it, and I have come to the conclusion, frankly, that were this to come to any vote anywhere where one had to vote on it, I would vote in favour of the proposal to have Navitas run the International College of Manitoba. I think that it would be a good idea for us to have an arrangement with an institution that could do a better job, frankly, of recruiting international students and preparing them for success in our programs. We have had significant difficulties with international students at the undergraduate level who have come in and and partly for difficulties in language, partly difficulties in training, have been thrown into university classes and have not been prepared for success, and not surprisingly, have not succeeded. So if this arrangement is going to improve the likelihood, or increase likelihood that international students will succeed at this university, were they to come into the university, then I am all for it.

"That said, I think that there have been legitimate concerns that have been raised by fellow senators and by members of my Faculty, and so, in a response, what should Board members know, in considering this? Well, there was a lot of concern in my Faculty and I know that my Faculty is the one that always gets seen as raising trouble and raising concerns, and I know that there are some concerns raised in other faculties. But frankly, the other Faculties aren't as directly affected as we are, cause if you look at the range of courses that are likely to be taught by Navitas, they are largely first year Arts and Science courses and then a few others. So our Faculty members are directly concerned here.

"We had an Arts Faculty Council and we invited Dr. Kerr to come to that meeting, and most of you have never been (some of you have been) to Arts Faculty Council. It doesn't tend to be a pleasant place for me often; it's a very lively place for debate and strong questions and I really appreciate Dr. Kerr have come and listened to the questions. I think much of the presentation came in response to some of the issues raised there. Those of you on Senate have heard of a variety of issues. Unfortunately, what we're not talking about very much is the actual deal and actual program that would be in place here. I understand the concerns the people have that shouldn't be discussing that here, that it's more the process. I think that's unfortunate, that we've lost the discussion, in some ways, the chance to talk about what this would mean for the University and again we've lost the opportunity to talk about the merits of this program.

"That said again, I think that the, my fellow senators and people in Arts have had three
general concerns, or there are three general categories of people who have concerns. One is the concern with the process, and you've heard that being expressed here. I don't think that these are illegitimate concerns; however, at this stage I'm not sure what to do about them, to tell you the truth. The motion to refer this back to Senate, I'm really of two minds on it. I think in some ways Senate could have contributed to the discussion, but at this stage, I'm a practical person, and at this stage, there have been already, the sides have dug in in various ways, and a question we really do have to ask is what would happen? Would we really benefit from a discussion, would we really have a discussion about the merits of this program were it to go back to Senate at this stage? And as a member of the Board, and as a Dean, and as an alumnus of this University, what might be the problem, what if Senate decides not to go with this deal? What are the default payments we would have to have to get out of the deal? I think those are very serious concerns, so I'm not sure what to do about the process.

"The second set of concerns people have had are more labour-issue oriented and that has to do with contracting out of work that is done on this campus currently by unionized faculty members, and that is, I think, another legitimate concern, but maybe not something that should stop us from going ahead with the deal.

"A concern that I would like to raise, the third area of concern, and this is specific to my Faculty, but also to Science, is that I think we do need a little more clarification about the issues of reviewing course material and exams, monitoring the program, and the role of departments in this. Some people have raised concerns about the extra work, the extent to which both our faculty and our staff will be doing extra work here, and again, I think that in the end this will be a good thing for us and a good thing for departments, we would get students who are better prepared, and I think that our departments should be able to work more closely, but we haven't been able to have that discussion, and so some of the people that are really going to be involved here, Department Heads in particular, haven't been as involved in the process. So when you hear the concerns that people have, sometimes they're now, sort of, hitching the horse, if you will, to the process issue when there are other things that are going on.

"Frankly, I think these can all be resolved if we have more discussion and more negotiation between those who are going to be affected, that is faculty members and departments. I think it was unfortunate the way this has developed in that people have got their backs up in a variety of ways, and we have really gotten away from talking about the merits of this program. But I do want to say, that the people who have some concerns, I think some of those concerns are very legitimate, and I think that having this attached to the University in some ways, being on campus, this is something different than just bringing people in for guest lectures or that sort of thing, and that this isn't an issue particularly of academic freedom and that sort of thing; this is a matter of people who will be providing courses in a relationship with the University in a relationship that is relatively close. I frankly think that we should have that relationship. I think that our departments should be brought into that discussion, but I do think that Board members should know that there are significant concerns, and that these concerns should be recognized by the Administration. I don't, however, agree with the idea of sending it back to Senate at this stage because I think the discussion would just be too poisoned. It already is poisoned, and I don't think we're going to be able to move forward.

"Sorry for taking so much time."
(4) The minutes of the Senate meeting of February 6, 2008 show that, following a statement by Senator Arlene Young referring to the unanimous vote in Arts Faculty Council, “Dean Sigurdson confirmed that at the December 18, 2007, Faculty of Arts Council there was a vote in favour of a motion very similar to the one presented by Professor Gabbert. Six weeks later, however, more information has been distributed to Senate. As a member of the Board of Governors, elected by Senate, Dean Sigurdson reported that the Board had discussed and defeated a similar motion at their January 29, 2008 meeting. He encouraged Senate to respect the decision made by the Board which does not easily give into any erosion to the tripartite division of power in the University. He indicated that, as a practical person, this contract is a binding agreement and stressed the importance of making sure as academics that this would work for the students and for the University. He applauded that the framework document would be made available.”