

Spring 2021

Dear Seniors' College Members,

As our spring term courses are coming to an end, we know that many of you are welcoming the opportunities that this warmer weather is providing. It seems that everyone I talk to is busy in their gardens or putting on their hiking boots! And hope is in the air again as our COVID-19 numbers are dropping, and more and more Nova Scotians are being vaccinated.

We do want to take this opportunity to update you on what the Board and Curriculum Committee have been working on, and our plans for going forward. First, however, we would like to thank our instructors for this term: Barbara Ross, Sandi Berwick, Daphna Levit, Alex Roberts and Cameron Reed. All of these instructors have put in many hours of preparation and made tremendous effort to deliver their courses on Zoom. Unfortunately, two of our courses had to be cancelled in the third week, because of new COVID restrictions and technical difficulties. However, the two instructors involved in the cancelled courses, Sandi Berwick and Alex Roberts, generously provided all those registered for their classes with their course materials. They have also agreed to offer their courses again in the future when our classes are once again offered in person.

Our thanks go out to the class managers for this term: Grace Patterson, Jane MacKay, Linda Rand, Diana Aleksis and Wendy Cox. All of our virtual courses are made possible through the skills, effort and ingenuity demonstrated by our tech team. This term, technical support was provided by John Stewart, Mimi Little, Johan Geldenhuys, and, of course Bill Li and Bob Russell, and our co-production managers, Will Yarr and Matt Halverson. Our conscientious and diligent faculty coordinators, Joan Hicks, Fran Jordan and Jocelyne Hellou are owed a huge vote of thanks for lining up all the wonderful instructors and the courses that have been presented this year on Zoom. And special thanks to our Office Manager, Sue Hawkes, for her continued support to all of us, and always offered in a kind and friendly manner. Our special thanks as well to our Curriculum Committee Chair, Anne Chisholm for the leadership she provides to our organization.

In April, the Board appointed Curriculum Committee Chair, Anne Chisholm, to chair an Ad Hoc Committee to consider how we might go forward, post pandemic. The committee consisted of members of the curriculum committee, including all chapter coordinators as well as a few members of the Board. Preparing for each term requires considerable lead time, and because restrictions in regard to the pandemic keep changing, it was decided that the safest recourse for the Seniors' College would be to offer fall term 2021 on Zoom. However, it is anticipated that by winter 2022, enough Nova Scotians will have been vaccinated and restrictions will be lifted such that we can once again meet in person. Therefore the recommendation of this committee that was approved by the Board is that we offer two courses on Zoom, and the rest of the classes in HRM and all chapters will be in person. In reaching their decision, the committee took into consideration the fact that many members have welcomed the opportunity to be able to watch recorded classes at a time convenient for them, and liked the fact that they didn't have to drive in bad weather. They also considered that several people who live outside of our chapter areas, or for other reasons cannot attend in-person classes, have been able to become members of the Seniors' College and enjoy our classes on Zoom. On the other hand, we have heard from an even greater number of our members that while they appreciated our offering classes on Zoom, they prefer in-person classes. We also had to consider many of our instructors prefer teaching in-person classes.

During the winter term when we will be offering this mix of in-person and Zoom classes, we will be surveying our members to determine if this is the right mix, and what your preferences are as we go forward. Based on your feedback, we will then proceed with the strategic planning process which we had begun with Tony Schellinck's 2019 Member's Survey.

We also wanted to update you on the special resolution that had been proposed by Phil Warman and seconded by Nancy Pitts for discussion at our AGM in March, but which was deferred. The special resolution pertained to changing the by-laws so that membership on the Board would include two members associated with chapters outside of HRM. The Board Executive met with Phil and Nancy on May 9, and after discussion, the motion was withdrawn and an agreement was reached whereby beginning in December, 2021, when the Nominating Committee is formed, it will include all Chapter Coordinators or their delegates, and one member on the Curriculum Committee from HRM. In so doing, it is hoped that, going forward, we will have more nominees from any or all of the chapters than has previously been the case. This change to the make-up of the Nominating Committee has been reflected in our updated Policy and Procedures Manual, in Section 2.1. Of course, we would like our Standing Committees to be more inclusive of our general membership as well, and as these Committee Chairs look for volunteers, they too will be consulting with Chapter Coordinators for suggestions for candidates. We look forward to greater participation from our members in all of our chapters. We have learned this year that thanks to Zoom, most tasks can be performed from anywhere, but if they do involve travel outside of a member's chapter area, we do compensate for travel expenses.

One final item: we just want to remind you of the message you received from our Feedback Coordinator, Mimi Little. Please don't forget to complete the feedback form for the courses you took this spring!

We will be in touch in the coming months with announcements about our fall courses and Information Session. In the meantime, stay safe, and we wish you a very happy and healthy summer.

Kind regards
Lois Block, President
On behalf of the Board of Directors,
Seniors' College Association of Nova Scotia