BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Strategy & Planning Committee (S&P)

Minutes of the Public Session of the Meeting of April 3, 2025
1:00 p.m. to 2:12 p.m. Hybrid

Present: Eric Agius (Chair), Lisa McBride (Vice-Chair), Laura Elliott, Emily Whetung-MacInnes, Matthew Mackenzie, Peter Marchut, Steven Murphy, Michael Rencheck, Hannah Scott

Regrets: Ahmad Barari, Mitch Frazer

Staff: Kirstie Ayotte, Nicola Crow, Lee Hays, Krista Hester, Les Jacobs, Lori Livingston, Brad MacIsaac, Ade Oyemade

Guests: Mikael Eklund, Chelsea Bauer, Dwight Thompson (guest Governor)

1. **Call to Order**
   The Chair called the Public session of the S&P meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. and read aloud the Land Acknowledgment.

2. **Agenda (M)**
   A member requested that item 8.1 be removed from the Consent Agenda for discussion.

   Upon a motion duly made by P. Marchut and seconded by H. Scott, the Agenda was approved as amended.

3. **Conflict of Interest Declaration**
   None noted

4. **Chair's Remarks**
   The Chair began by reminding Committee members of some meeting protocols, and Public session attendees were welcomed though were noted unable to participate or engage in the meeting.

   He reminded Board members to complete the upcoming Annual Board Practices Assessment and Skills Matrix, which will be distributed the week of April 27 and due

by May 9, 2025. He emphasized the importance of full participation, noting that these tools support governance best practices, board recruitment and professional development. He also expressed sincere appreciation to President Murphy, and all involved in organizing an excellent Board Advance session, and commended Dr. Lenga and Dr. Cooper for their thoughtful and engaging presentations.

5. **President's Remarks**

The President thanked faculty, staff, and students for their dedication throughout the academic year and announced Ontario Tech's leadership in the next phase of Project Arrow 2.0, following the success of Canada's first zero-emission concept vehicle. He noted that the University has secured $11 million in new federal and provincial funding, with faculty and students set to collaborate with industry partners to integrate advanced technologies such as 3D-printed carbon components and AI systems—further solidifying the University's role in sustainable transportation innovation.

He also highlighted key campus achievements, including the winner of Ontario Tech's Three Minute Thesis (3MT) competition – a Master of Health Science student whose research focuses on literacy predictors to support healthier dietary choices. They will go on to represent the University at the provincial 3MT competition in May.

Congratulations were also extended to the Celebrate Teaching Award nominees and recipients, recognizing excellence in teaching across the University. The President also celebrated the accomplishments of student-athletes during a year of notable firsts, including the men's soccer team competing nationally and the women's lacrosse team earning their first medal. He underscored the important role of athletics in fostering community spirit and pride in the University.

6. **Strategy**

6.1 Strategic Conversation: Annual Digital Strategy Update* (D)

L. Livingston advised that in 2022, the University began reporting annually on its digital strategy, focusing on how technology was helping to diversify our offerings by embracing technology-enabled learning platforms and other digital utilities (e.g. wayfinding). As the Institution has grown, it has become clear that Ontario Tech needs to move away from a shared platform with Durham College to control its own digital future. She acknowledged the efforts of staff during this transition and emphasized the importance of AI integration as a key forward facing priority for the University.

B. MacIsaac reminded members that the University uses the Integrated Academic-Research Plan (IARP), updated annually by the Provost, with enabling plans like the digital strategy supporting key priorities. The goal is to advance technology to help achieve the President's and Provost's objectives.

A. Oyemade highlighted that the University has made significant strides in evolving its digital strategy, transitioning from a support team to a key strategic partner in shaping a comprehensive digital ecosystem across the Institution. She noted that the University has focused on enhancing its technological infrastructure, improving systems to support both faculty and students, and ensuring that advancements align with broader strategic goals.

She advised that efforts have been made to increase flexibility in program offerings and create opportunities for continuous learning, using cloud-based systems and integrating emerging technologies such as AI. She noted that as part of these changes, there has been a focused effort to improve the student experience, including enhancing classroom technology and streamlining administrative systems to better support admissions and other processes. With these transformations, the University is positioning itself as a leader in technology-driven education, committed to fostering student success and preparing graduates for the competitive job market.

In response to a question regarding vendors, B. MacIsaac advised that a high percentage of purchases are directed toward Ontario based suppliers. He noted that efforts are ongoing to explore more Canadian options, though challenges remain in terms of availability and system capabilities. A. Oyemade emphasized that data hosting is within Canada.

A question was raised about the University's separation from Durham College's IT systems. A. Oyemade clarified that while some services, such as networking, privacy and security, and IT support to shared spaces, like the Athletic Centre and Library, will remain integrated for efficiency, the University is pursuing greater independence in areas like the Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system. This decision is driven by risk considerations and differing strategic goals, particularly the University's focus on AI integration, leading to a need to separate from Durham College in some system areas.

A question was also raised about the University's data sharing protocols with external partners, like Lakeridge Health. A. Oyemade explained that the University has established a robust data governance framework. This includes having data stewards in departments such as HR, student and Finance to ensure that there are proper vetting processes as part of any data sharing. Before sharing sensitive information, such as student data, it must be approved by relevant departments, ensuring compliance with Canadian regulations. These protocols ensure that data is managed securely and responsibly, especially when it is shared with external partners.

6.2 Research & Innovation* (U)

L. Jacobs provided an update on Research & Innovation at the University. He advised that the University's research funding is progressing well, with recent gains helping to maintain momentum from last year. He shared progress reports on federal funding from the Canadian Institute for Health Research, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), and the National Science and Engineering Research Council (NSERC), the latter of which remains the largest contributor thus reflecting the University's strong focus on STEM research. He noted that provincial funding has seen a decline, though efforts with organizations like the Ontario Centre of Innovation have helped mitigate the drop.

He also shared that foundation funding has also seen notable success, including some significant contributions. He highlighted that overall, this year, the University is on track for its highest funding levels, with a strong showing in research grants despite a slight decrease in applications. He added that this included the two highest grants ever received. Additionally, he advised that the University continues to build and maintain valuable research partnerships, with many multi-year collaborations in progress.

L. Jacobs noted that the University's research success is also reflected in university rankings, such as the Times Higher Education rankings. The Committee congratulated L. Jacobs and the Research and Innovation team.

7. Planning

7.1 Strategic Research Plan* (D)

L. Jacobs shared that the University is finalizing its strategic research priorities after six months of internal and stakeholder consultations. He highlighted a "pull" approach, where the University listens to partners and incorporates their input into the research process. The key priorities include AI and its applications, clean energy and climate change resilience, health promotion and equity, autonomous systems, community well-being and social innovation, entrepreneurship and business analytics, and materials and advanced manufacturing. He also emphasized the incorporation of attributes within the Plan like economic growth, sustainability, and an interdisciplinary approach. He advised that the consultation process is open for the Committee's feedback and that the Strategic Research Plan is designed to strengthen the University's engagement with industry partners, funding organizations, and other institutions.

A discussion raised concerns about Canada's economic challenges, particularly in

infrastructure, energy, and community well-being, suggesting that the University could play a more active role in addressing these issues. In response, it was acknowledged that areas like infrastructure and certain engineering disciplines are not currently emphasized in the University's focus. There was agreement that these gaps should be explored in the University's strategic plan to contribute more effectively to development.

A thorough discussion took place regarding potential non-STEM revenue streams, particularly in the Social Sciences. It was suggested that the University explore ways to leverage its policy research, textbooks, and other academic outputs, drawing inspiration from successful models used by other institutions. This sparked conversation on how to promote and monetize the intellectual work already produced, with the goal of increasing both visibility and revenue. There was strong support for integrating these opportunities into the broader strategic vision, recognizing their potential value to both the University and the community.

8. Consent Agenda* (M)

*Consent Agenda item pulled for discussion as noted in item #2

8.1 Minutes of Public Session of Meeting of February 6, 2025* (M)
A member advised that during the February 6, 2025 meeting, there was discussion about changing the name of the Board Retreat to Board Advance, but did not recall that there was a consensus, as noted in the minutes, to change the wording. The member advised that it was their view the minutes did not fully reflect the conversation.

Through discussion, it was noted that at the February 6, 2025 meeting most members approved the change, with some wanting to reconsider alternatives. The Chair confirmed that the minutes would be amended if the Committee supported the change to replace "consensus" with "the majority position".

Upon a motion duly made by L. Elliott and seconded by M. Mackenzie, the Minutes of the Public Session of the Meeting of February 6, 2025 were approved as amended.

9. Adjournment (M)
There being no other business, and upon a motion duly made by M. Rencheck, the Public session of the S&P meeting adjourned at 2:12 p.m.

Kirstie Ayotte, Assistant University Secretary