



BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Strategy & Planning Committee

Minutes of the Public Session of the Meeting of June 20, 2024 2:00 p.m. to 3:24 p.m. via– videoconference

Members: Lynne Zucker (Chair), Ahmad Barari, Frank Carnevale, Laura Elliott, Mitch Frazer, Matthew Mackenzie, Lisa McBride, Steven Murphy, Michael Rencheck, Kim Slade, Michael Watterworth

Regrets: Eric Agius, Hannah Scott

Staff: Kirstie Ayotte, James Barnett, Ken Bright, Jamie Bruno, Barbara Hamilton, Krista Hester, Les Jacobs, Lori Livingston, Brad MacIsaac, Joe Stokes, Sarah Thrush

Guests: Chelsea Bauer, Marc Couture (Blackstone Energy), Bruce Manwaring, Christine McLaughlin, Joanne Nickel, Dwight Thompson

1. Call to Order

The Chair called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m. and read aloud the land acknowledgment.

2. Agenda

Upon a motion duly made by K. Slade and seconded by M. Mackenzie, the Agenda was approved as presented.

3. Conflict of Interest Declaration

No conflicts were declared.

4. Chair's Remarks

The Chair began her remarks by acknowledging that this was her final S&P meeting as Chair and expressed gratitude for being part of the remarkable transformation during her six-year tenure at the University. She emphasized that this transformation was driven by the vision of the President, the senior leadership team, and the innovative faculty and staff of the institution.

5. President's Remarks

The President began by expressing gratitude to the Chair for her exemplary leadership not only within the Committee but also as a reliable source of advice over the years. He emphasized how her guidance has been immensely valuable to Ontario Tech's journey. He then highlighted the successful execution of six convocation ceremonies amid challenging global circumstances and extended thanks to all board members expressing appreciation for their presence at the convocations. He also recognized the dedication of faculty, staff, and student volunteers who played crucial roles behind the scenes and on stage, ensuring the ceremonies were memorable and meaningful for the graduating classes.

6. Strategy

6.1. Strategic Discussion: Sustainability and Energy Management

B. MacIsaac highlighted the University's commitment to sustainability, including targets for a 50% reduction in emissions by 2030 and a move towards low carbon by 2050. He acknowledged ongoing efforts by Facilities Management and introduced Marc Couture from Blackstone Energy Services to outline some strategies to achieve these goals.

M. Couture highlighted current opportunities and initiatives from an interval study, outlining pathways and next steps for consideration. He praised Ontario Tech's legacy as a leader in sustainability, noting the potential to renew campus infrastructure and enhance reputational integrity through holistic decarbonization efforts. The presentation included a path toward achieving decarbonization targets by 2050, emphasizing the importance of proactive measures starting with near-term projects. He continued by outlining three main components of the interval study and decarbonization roadmap: electrification of boiler plants and heating systems, addition of renewable energy sources like solar PV and heat pumps, and conservation measures such as LED lighting and controls upgrades. The estimate in 2024 dollars would be about \$25 million worth of investments to achieve this plan. He discussed two pathways identified in the study: self-funding initiatives annually or partnering with Enbridge Sustain and the Canadian Infrastructure Bank to leverage significant capital for decarbonization projects. Enbridge Sustain could potentially provide \$10-28 million for Ontario Tech University's initiatives, repaid through utility savings. His presentation concluded with plans for Ontario Tech to develop detailed decarbonization and infrastructure renewal strategies to maintain its leadership position.

B. MacIsaac added that K. Bright, Director of Campus Infrastructure and Sustainability, has worked alongside Blackstone Energy to review equipment upgrades, noting annual investments of approximately \$2 million from the government for replacements. He highlighted a boiler replacement costing \$1.2 million, essential for advancing low-carbon goals despite higher costs compared to older models. He notes that the presentation emphasized financial commitments to sustainability, including plans to accelerate replacements within budget projections.

Further discussion emphasized collaboration with university researchers to innovate in areas such as electric vehicles and solar energy storage, enhancing both operational efficiency and research capabilities.

In response to inquiries about the pending 30% investment tax credit, K. Bright clarified that the University's tax-exempt status means they are exploring ways to utilize such credits with guidance from Blackstone Energy and emphasized the need for transparent financial breakdowns, given the University's current financial pressures.

M. Rencheck echoed the call for clarity on expenditure allocation and raised concerns about performance guarantees and penalties related to the project's anticipated reductions, emphasizing accountability. B. Maclsaac acknowledged these concerns and committed to working with legal team to clarify financial analyses and performance guarantees prior to final decisions. He also highlighted ongoing efforts to explore various funding programs and encouraged board input on identifying cost-saving opportunities.

B. Maclsaac also noted the advantages and risks of being an early adopter in sustainability initiatives, highlighting potential savings and partnerships with researchers. K. Bright continued by emphasizing the University's history of innovation, citing past projects like Canada's largest geothermal system and ongoing pilot initiatives focused on smart community development. Both stressed the importance of balancing innovation with thorough risk assessment and reassured that there was no immediate rush, noting discussions and realistic implementation plans would take place over the summer and into the fall.

6.2. Integrated Academic Research Plan and SMA 2023-2024 Metrics Annual Report

L. Livingston reminded attendees that last June, the Board endorsed a five-year integrated academic research plan (2023-2028), which is evaluated annually to assess progress. She emphasized that effective integrated planning has relied heavily on these annual evaluations due to the challenges in the higher education sector. This year's evaluation includes a qualitative summary of successes and challenges from September to May, followed by a quantitative assessment using data dashboards. Strategic mandate agreement metrics are also annually reviewed due to their link to performance funding.

She highlighted that the report acknowledges both successes and challenges, with the challenges now being included in response to the Board's request from the previous year. This eight-month report will transition to a twelve-month cycle, capturing the full year for the board. She highlighted that during this period, 81% of over 300 milestone activities were completed or on track, 18% were behind target or

amended, and only 1% were terminated, demonstrating the dedication of the campus community.

She noted challenges, including positional staffing issues due to a high number of leaves of absence, resulting in the need to backfill positions with short-term contracts. Additionally, IT challenges and space limitations have been noted and are being addressed through new leadership and investments in technology assets, and through increased use of our existing outdoor and online spaces.

S. Thrush presented the 2023-2024 Dashboard and Institutional Metrics report, emphasizing the University's systematic approach to planning and accountability. She highlighted the integration of qualitative elements to validate strategies against data, addressing issues like employee turnover and comparing findings with sector-wide trends for broader insights. As an example, she noted the assessment of key metrics included enrollment targets where PhD and undergraduate enrollments exceeded expectations, while master's enrollments fell short impacting revenue highlighting efforts that are underway to improve community response rates and adjust metrics to better reflect transfer student impacts. As another example, she noted that student retention rates, though positive, are being benchmarked against The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) sector standards and acknowledged challenges such as employee turnover and student-faculty ratios amid early retirements and hiring delays but despite these challenges, the University achieved a highly positive outcome in the SMA3 reporting year, meeting or surpassing all metrics to secure additional funding without penalties and advised that this success was amplified by other institutions' failures in key metrics contributing to funding gains. Looking ahead to the fifth year, which carries increased risk with 25% of performance funding at stake, the University plans to continue implementing robust risk mitigation strategies to minimize potential losses.

In response to whether the SMA metrics will be reset, S. Thrush indicated that there is ongoing discussion but no clear direction from the Ministry of Colleges and Universities as of yet.

Addressing a question about declining student satisfaction in the first year, S. Thrush explained that it was currently being investigated, noting that this has been a sector-wide trend since 2011. Plans are underway to develop surveys to understand possible causes, with a suspicion that the impact of COVID-19 on high school experiences may be a significant contributing factor.

When asked about possible federal funding availability relating to COVID-19, S. Thrush advised she was not aware of any federal COVID funds available for bolstering entry programs. She noted that while the University has transition events for students, the available COVID funding was primarily intended to cover additional expenses incurred by the university during the pandemic, rather than directly supporting students.

6.3. Annual Programs Update

a) 2023-2024 Quality Assurance Process and Programs Annual Report

L. Livingston presented the 2023-2024 Quality Assurance Process and Programs Report reminding attendees that the processes are mandated by both internal standards and expectations of the Quality Council. She highlighted that the Report was also presented to Academic Council this month and the recent approval of the BASc in Sustainability program was finalized in May and therefore would be reported within next year's annual report.

b) 2023-2024 Continuous Learning Annual Report

L. Livingston presented the 2023-2024 Continuous Learning Annual Report, which was also recently reviewed by the Academic Council this month. She emphasized the leadership of Chris Hall (Director, Continuous Learning) and his efforts to boost participation in continuous learning programs. The Report also covers developments in micro-credential activities throughout the year.

6.4. International Strategy Update

L. Livingston discussed the ongoing challenges in recruiting international students due to disruptions caused by Immigration, Refugee, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC). She emphasized the need to stay updated on evolving issues and their impact on our recruitment efforts.

J. Stokes reported a decline in applications and delays in processing due to IRCC backlogs. He highlighted Canada's declining reputation as a top study destination and the sector's struggle to meet provincial targets for attestation letters. He mentioned that government policies, including potential visa reductions and new study permit criteria, pose further enrollment risks, particularly in STEM fields. Despite efforts like pivoting to professional master's programs and strategic program development, ongoing reactionary measures are necessary amid uncertain future impacts on international enrollment.

In response to a question regarding revisiting the international student growth strategy, J. Stokes stated that the international student growth strategy needs a reevaluation due to recent changes noting that markets that were viable before January are no longer feasible due to price sensitivity and disrupted relations with key countries like India and China and efforts to manage the current year's challenges

have delayed the strategic review, but he emphasized the need to reassess and develop new plans.

7. Significant Project and Contract Oversight

7.1. Subcritical Nuclear Assembly

L. Jacobs discussed plans for a research reactor on campus, highlighting the need for a license and ongoing progress indicators. He noted delays with Indigenous consultations and a potential 18-month delay for a public hearing but despite setbacks, he emphasized innovative initiatives with Brookfield Sustainability Institute and anticipated developments in the fall despite the licensing process's slow pace compared to other countries like the United States.

In response to a question as to the reasoning behind the 18-month delay, M. Rencheck offered his assistance to cosign a letter to the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission (CNSC), highlighting the project's legitimacy and need for vendor support.

8. Consent Agenda

8.1. Minutes of Public Session of Meeting April 3, 2024

8.2. S&P Annual Report

9. Adjournment

There being no other business, and upon a motion duly made by M. Rencheck, the meeting adjourned at 3:24 p.m.

Krista Hester, Interim University Secretary