

ACADEMIC COUNCIL

MINUTES of the MEETING of TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 2020 Videoconference, 2:30 - 4:30 p.m.

Present:

Murphy, Steven (Chair)
Barari, Ahmad
Barber, Wendy
Bliemel, Michael
Bradbury, Jeremy
Crawford, Greg
Davis, Owen
Davidson, Catherine
Easton, Brad
Eklund, Mike
Fernando, Shanti
Gaber, Hossam
Heydari, Shahram
Hogue, Jessica
Hossein Nejad, Mehdi
Jacobs, Les
Jones, Ferdinand
Kay, Robin
King, Alyson
Kishawy, Hossam
Livingston, Lori

Mahmoud, Qusay
Marques, Olga
McCabe, Janet
Mostaghim, Amir
Naumkin, Fedor
Obasohan, Jacinta
Partosoedarso, Elita
Pierce, Tess
Rahnamayan,
Shahryar
Rodgers, Carol
Roy, Langis
Sami, Ramin
Scott, Hannah
Serenko, Alexander
Shon, Phillip
Stoett, Peter
Stokes, Joe
Tokuhiro, Akira

Staff & Guests:

Babb, Shay
Bruno, Jamie
Dinwoodie,
Becky
Foy, Cheryl
Hester, Krista
MacIsaac, Brad
McCartney,
Kimberley
McGovern, Sue
Molinaro, Nichole
O'Halloran, Niall
Pitcher, Cathy

Regrets:

Frazer, Mitch
Lloyd, Meghann
Sheikh, Jahan

1. Call to Order

The Chair called the meeting to order at 2:32 p.m.

2. Agenda

A question was asked about the item coming for written consultation. It was agreed to add the item under Other Business.

Upon a motion duly made by F. Jones and seconded by O. Davis, the Agenda was approved as amended.

3. Chair's Remarks

The Chair welcomed everyone to the first Academic Council meeting of the 2020-2021, a year unlike any others and one for the history books. He congratulated university members for rallying so well and preparing courses for online delivery this fall. He acknowledged that this has taken a lot of work by faculty and staff and he expressed his appreciation.

The Chair welcomed the newest members of Academic Council. He noted that Academic Council is an important governing body and thanked members for agreeing to serve. He reminded Council of the orientation session happening immediately following the meeting.

The Chair thanked the members again for making time during the summer months to meet. He greatly appreciates their commitment to the continued governance of the institution.

He discussed the university's approach to COVID, which continues to prioritize the health and safety of our community members. There are examples of outbreaks at other Ontario institutions and he is proud of how the university has handled it and is minimizing risk by limiting attendance on campus. The Chair discussed the level of new cases of COVID in the province, which is concerning for the university community and wider community. This will continue to be monitored and it could have potential implications for operations on campus. He stressed the importance of having contingency plans in place. There is also concern about the combined flu and COVID seasons. The virus has been shown to be capable of hiding during the summer and coming back. The flu season is imminent and puts those susceptible at further risk.

The Chair discussed the recent online orientation events, in which the Student Union was active in organizing. The focus is on engaging students and making them feel welcome. He congratulated the Faculty of Science for winning Stanley the Goose this year.

Recruitment Strategy

The Chair explained that this topic has been brought up before and the Steering Committee discussed it during their last meeting. There is a team working on a communications plan for outreach and passionate faculty would be welcome to participate. The more that faculty get involved and speak to students, the more it shows that the university is a caring place. He asked Council members to think about how we best capture faculty and student perspectives to assist with recruiting. He noted that it is an important time of year for recruitment efforts for 2021, as high school students will be submitting applications this fall.

4. Minutes of the Meeting of August 25, 2020

The Chair noted a correction as A. King attended the last meeting but was listed under Regrets.

Upon a motion duly made by J. Bradbury and seconded by B. Easton, the Minutes were approved as amended.

5. Business Arising from the Minutes

There was none.

6. Inquiries and Communications COU Academic Colleague Update

A. King provided an overview of the COU Academic Colleague reports.

7. Provost's Remarks

(a) Senior Academic Administrator Search Updates

The Provost started by sharing that she hopes everyone is keeping safe and well. She is also proud of how the university has transitioned smoothly into the fall term and thanked everyone for their efforts in getting us to this point.

The Provost congratulated Dr. Langis Roy on his appointment as Interim Deputy Provost in addition to his role as Dean of the School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies. She confirmed that the length of the term is one year, with the possibility of extension in accordance with senior academic administrator search procedures. She shared that there has been a lot of support expressed for the appointment. The Provost also provided an update on the search for the next Dean of the Faculty of Engineering and Applied Science. The search committee has short-listed two candidates and public meetings to be held soon. An announcement will be made by a campus wide e-mail and in the Weekly Report. The Provost thanked the members of the search committee for their work.

The Provost updated Council on the work of the COVID planning task forces. She advised that several have already wrapped up their work. She anticipates that as October approaches, the work of the task forces will largely be complete. She explained the reason for cancelling that morning's meeting of the Community Advisory Task Force. The First-Year Student Transition Task Force completed a survey of first year students and the information collected has been distributed to all Faculties to pass on to first year instructors. A subcommittee of the International Task Force continues to look at funding for international students.

The university is looking at gaps in signage and conducting risk assessments on campus, as requests to host events on campus continue to be received. The wearing

of masks and physical distancing on campus are being monitored. The Provost shared a story of encountering a group of students last week who were not wearing masks. She stopped to remind them of the importance of following the guidelines.

The Provost informed Council that students will not be required to attend clinics to obtain medical notes throughout the 2020/2021 academic year and an absence declaration will be implemented instead. A question was asked about the process if a student identifies as having COVID. The Provost advised that Public Health conducts the contact tracing. If there is a student who has tested positive and has been on campus, the entire community will be informed. If students have not been on campus, it will not be communicated to the community.

A request was made that the task force reports be forwarded to Academic Council for review. The Provost advised that there is not much new information coming out of the task forces. The information is being communicated through the Community Advisory Task Force meetings, which are open to the public. She also advised that the task forces were not asked to submit regular reports and it would be difficult to retroactively implement. A comment was also made that a number of students did not receive the recent campus wide e-mail about a student on campus having COVID. The Provost confirmed that she would look into the issue.

8. Steering Committee Delegation of Authority Review

The Chair provided some background to the motion for the benefit of newest members of Council. T. Pierce shared the Steering Committee's comments on the delegation of authority. The committee thought it would be helpful to consider what has changed since last month's meeting. The Ontario government, in consultation with the Chief Medical Officer of Health, has extended orders currently in force under the Reopening Ontario (A Flexible Response to COVID-19) Act, 2020 (ROA) until September 22, 2020. Students in Ontario have returned to school and Ontario is experiencing an increase in the number of daily COVID cases. In response, the government has reduced the number individuals who can gather together. The committee expressed concern about ending the delegation of authority in advance of the impending second wave and feels it would be beneficial to renew the delegation in light of the circumstances rather than end it and have to implement it again at a time when reaching quorum might not be feasible. By continuing the delegation of authority, this ensures the governance role of Academic Council will be able to continue uninterrupted in the event Council cannot achieve quorum.

Upon a motion duly made by T. Pierce and seconded by H. Gaber, Academic Council unanimously renewed the delegation of authority to the Steering Committee on the same basis as it was approved on April 3.

9. Enrolment Update

The Provost discussed the summary report provided in the meeting material. She explained that this year's report differs from those of years past. They usually report on "Day 10" numbers (last day students can withdraw from programs/courses and receive full refund). The numbers presented in the report are not Day 10 numbers as the report was generated earlier than usual. The enrolment numbers are looking better than anticipated. They are seeing an increase in continuing students and a 6% decrease in first year students. This is likely due to the pass/fail option offered in Winter 2020 Term. The Provost advised that this could set us up for a double cohort of academically ineligible students going forward.

The Provost discussed the program that has been implemented to help students succeed in university while remaining in their program. There has been good uptake in the program. She reminded Council of the "Experience Guarantee", which allows students to withdraw by October 9, 2020 and receive a full refund if they are not satisfied with their experience.

The university is anticipating increased costs related to cleaning and other COVID-related measures and has also lost revenue from ancillary services (e.g. parking, on campus food, etc.). A request was made for an update when Day 10 numbers are available. The Provost advised that it will take a number of days for institutional analysis and to complete the appropriate count. She also confirmed that a budget update would be coming forward to the Board the following day.

A comment was made that some Faculties appear to be harder hit than others and asked whether a Faculty/program specific analysis would be done. The Provost confirmed that this type of analysis is constantly ongoing and that they must do a lot of data analysis this year to understand the impact of COVID. The Provost also clarified that any cost savings in maintenance and utilities are being offset by COVID expenses.

10. Planning Winter 2021 Courses

The Provost reminded Council of the two hortative motions passed at the May and June Council meetings. As the university is still operating under emergency provisions and we are seeing an increase in COVID cases on university campuses, it is apparent that the second wave is upon us. With safety at the forefront, the university needs to provide certainty to students about the mode of delivery in Winter 2021 Term. The Provost confirmed that the university will continue in emergency mode for the Winter 2021 Term as it is in the best interests of students and our community. She invited Council's feedback.

A member expressed concern about the mental health of faculty due to the increased workload – while they understand the need to be online, they are concerned about

the toll on faculty. Another member commented that the question should have been brought to Academic Council for recommendation.

A question was asked about holding classes outdoors. The Provost encouraged the member to work with their Dean and the Office of Risk about conducting a risk assessment. A question was also raised about the possibility of class sizes being reduced and hiring more sessional instructors. The Provost confirmed that they will have a better sense by November as to what options are available.

A member commented that the university is doing a great job and they are hearing from students that they are loving the online delivery mode. It is a time saver for many students. A member shared the following feedback given by one of their students: “The online lectures are great. Profs are doing a great job engaging the student. The main disadvantage to me of doing this semester online as opposed to being at campus, is that we are not in an academic environment. However every time I attend a lecture, it gets me back in the right academic mindset, thanks to the energy of the professors.”

A suggestion was made that the E-Learning Taskforce should continue and touch base with students and faculty throughout the term to help identify difficulties. A member noted that the University of Alberta is implementing an international quarantine for student arrival in January, which was profiled in UA magazine. We may want to think about something like that for our international students.

11. Integrated Plan Update

The Provost reminded Council that the integrated planning process changed last year and it is a rolling plan, which allows us to accommodate for unanticipated circumstances, such as the pandemic. Unit leads have been asked to update their plans by October. There has been discussion for some time that the mission, vision and values are linked to the Integrated Plan and that it is time to discuss refreshing the vision, mission, and values of the university. The Provost clarified that it is the role of the Board to finalize the mission, vision and values. They will be starting the consultation process shortly and will be coming to Academic Council for feedback. In response to a question about what the consultation process will look like, the Provost advised that there are no firm dates in mind but would like to present recommendations to the Board in December.

12. Research Update

L. Jacobs delivered a research update. He reminded Council that in May, they approved the 5-year Strategic Research Plan. They are currently in stage 3 of on-campus research, which means that all researchers may apply to return to campus subject to health precautions. It is an inclusive process so that researchers who have family status concerns are also included in stage 3.

L. Jacobs discussed the need for continuity and support for knowledge transfer of apps developed or commercialization. They have developed a Brilliant Developer Studio, which will assist students and faculty with that. He confirmed that it will be pan university and unique in Ontario. A question was asked whether it is open to the broader community. L. Jacobs advised that it is principally focused on members of the university community and not the broader community.

13. Policy Consultation:

(a) Academic Integrity Policy Documents

S. Forbes presented the policy documents for consultation. She advised that the Academic Integrity Policy has been under review for some time. Several town halls were held throughout 2018 and 2019 and numerous consultation meetings have been held. S. Forbes responded to questions from Council. Given the time constraints, members were encouraged to send their comments in writing directly to S. Forbes. A comment was made that it is difficult to enforce academic integrity rules in the remote environment we are in due to workload. A request was made for a tracked changes version of the document to highlight the changes made from the previous version.

A member shared that they have started including an Honour Code for assignments and lab reports this semester: “I have not asked any of my fellow students or others for unauthorized assistance to complete this lab -AND- I have not offered any unauthorized assistance to any of my fellow students.” A question was also asked about why restorative justice was used as the basis of the policy and not another form of justice. S. Forbes advised that this could be considered when developing the underlying procedures.

Committee Reports

14. Governance & Nominations Committee

(a) 2020-2021 Academic Council Work Plan

L. Livingston presented the work plan. She explained that the work plan for 2020-2021 was developed using Academic Council’s work plan from the last year as a guide and includes annual standing items. The plan also includes additional items that were deferred from last year due to COVID. It is a draft document to allow it to evolve throughout the year. The timing of items on the plan is subject to revision depending on the Council and its committees’ priorities and relevant deadlines.

(b) Committee Nominations

L. Livingston presented the nominations for approval. A call for expressions of interest was issued on August 28, 2020 to fill vacant positions on several of Academic Council’s standing committees. The recommended term lengths are based on the members’ term dates on Academic Council. L. Livingston noted that filling committee

vacancies is on the GNC work plan for April 2021, with recommendations coming forward in May. The process was delayed this year in order to fill the vacant positions on Academic Council and give the new members an opportunity to participate.

Upon a motion duly made by L. Livingston and seconded by G. Crawford, Pursuant to the recommendation of the Governance and Nominations Committee, Academic Council unanimously approved the appointment of the following Academic Council members to the specified standing committee for the term as presented:

- *Governance & Nominations – Mike Eklund (October 1, 2020 – June 30, 2023)*
- *Governance & Nominations – Jacinta Obasohan (October 1, 2020 – August 31, 2021, with possibility of renewal)*
- *Graduate Studies – Hossam Gaber (October 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021)*
- *Steering Committee – Mehdi Hossein Nejad (October 1, 2020 – June 30, 2022)*

M. Eklund, H. Gaber, M. Hossein Nejad and J. Obasohan abstained.

15. Strategic Discussion: Blended Learning Part 1: Exploring the Concept

Due to time constraints, this will be brought back to the Steering Committee for consideration as to when the strategic discussion should be rescheduled.

16. Other Business

A question was asked regarding the scope of the Remote Oral Hearings and Informal Processes Directive and whether it applies to only students or the entire community. N. O'Halloran clarified that it is intended to allow for virtual hearings in a way that protects personal details requiring heightened privacy scrutiny. The directive could be used in academic integrity or appeal hearings. N. O'Halloran also outlined the consultation path.

17. Termination

Upon a motion duly made by A. Mostaghim, the meeting terminated at 4:27 p.m.

Becky Dinwoodie, Secretary