

## ACADEMIC COUNCIL

### MINUTES of the MEETING of TUESDAY, JANUARY 26, 2021 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  
Elliott, Laura  
Fernando, Shanti  
Frazer, Mitch  
Heydari, Shahram  
Hogue, Jessica  
Hossein Nejad, Mehdi  
Jacobs, Les  
Jones, Ferdinand  
King, Alyson  
Kishawy, Hossam  
Livingston, Lori

Lloyd, Meghann  
Mahmoud, Qusay  
Marques, Olga  
McCabe, Janet  
Naumkin, Fedor  
Obasohan, Jacinta  
Pierce, Tess  
Partosoedarso, Elita  
Rodgers, Carol  
Roy, Langis  
Scott, Hannah  
Serenko, Alexander  
Shon, Phillip  
Stoett, Peter  
Stokes, Joe  
Tokuhiko, Akira

#### Staff & Guests:

Al-Shawesh, Yousef  
Babb, Shay  
Bauer, Chelsea  
Bignell, Paul  
Bruno, Jamie  
Crouse, Dan  
Dinwoodie, Becky  
Drinkwalter, Andra  
Foy, Cheryl  
Freeman, Jenn  
Hamilton, Barb  
Heslip, Michelle  
Hester, Krista  
Maclsaac, Brad  
McCartney, Kimberley  
McGovern, Sue  
McLaughlin, Christine  
Molinaro, Nichole  
Nickle, Joanne  
Pitcher, Cathy  
O'Halloran, Niall  
Sankarial, Joshua  
Scanga, Franco  
Shah, Alena  
Sunstrum, Andrew  
Yardy, Kevin  
Wright, Sharifa

#### Regrets:

Dubrowski, Adam  
Gaber, Hossam  
Kay, Robin  
Mostaghim, Amir  
Rahnamayan, Shahryar  
Sami, Ramin  
Sheikh, Jahan

#### 1. Call to Order

The Chair called the meeting to order at 2:31 p.m.

## 2. Agenda

A request was made to move the minutes and business arising from the minutes from the Consent Agenda to the main agenda. A question was asked about whether the minutes would be included in a Consent Agenda going forward. The Chair advised this would be discussed with the Steering Committee.

*Upon a motion duly made by H. Kishawy and seconded by L. Elliott, the Agenda was approved as amended.*

## 3. Chair's Remarks

The Chair wished everyone a Happy New Year. He commented that if ever there was a year that people were happy to see end, it was 2020. The holidays looked very different this year and he hoped everyone enjoyed them as best they could and that they had an opportunity to rest and recharge. The Chair welcomed governor, L. Elliott, to her first meeting as the governor member of Academic Council (AC).

The Chair noted that with the short winter days, cold, and snow, everyone is feeling the stress and strain. He encouraged everyone to check in on their colleagues. For many people in our community, this will be a really tough time of year and it is important for people to know they are cared about. He advised he is trying to do this in virtual meetings and on phone calls. While things seem bleak at the end of January, spring will be arriving soon.

The Chair also provided an update on the university's planning for the fall. It is prudent to start planning for the cycle in the fall. In normal times, this would have started by now. Everything remains uncertain with respect to the pandemic. While he is optimistic and hopes that the vaccines roll out without a hitch, it is important to plan for the likely eventuality that not all of our university population, particularly students, will be vaccinated by the fall. It is very difficult to not think that the vast majority of the fall will be in a virtual environment. The university must be nimble and agile, but needs to plan and keep the community safe. He is proud that from the start, the university has prioritized the safety of our community. The university will be planning for the worst-case scenario and hope for the best and work to make systems as flexible as possible. Flexibility will be key to the approach, but safety must be prioritized. The university will return to a new normal as soon as we are able to.

The Chair invited questions from AC members. The questions and comments included:

- The Chair's comments with respect to the mental health of the community are appreciated. Will any additional resources be made available to faculty and staff?
- The university planning for the worst and hoping for the best is a prudent approach – what does that mean for the fall?

- The Chair advised that being flexible means they are constantly monitoring the number of students that can be on campus at any given time and identifying those students that are required to be on campus. They are also looking at whether it would be possible to bring back more people if vaccinations are running through the spring/summer months. This information is needed early in the spring to make an adjustment for the fall semester due to the trickle-down effects of decision-making.
- Another consideration is how a third wave would affect the population.
- The university continues to work with public health agencies in Durham Region. The data available will help guide the planning for the fall semester. If it was possible to say with a lot of confidence that most people would be vaccinated by early-mid summer, could plan to be on campus as much as possible in the fall. The President commented that he would love to get back to campus as he can hardly wait to see people. This planning must be done given the environment we are living in.
- J. Bruno reported on the resources available to faculty and staff. They are continuing to work with Morneau Shepell to develop tools and resources to support the university community. The resources available are communicated in the Weekly Report, including professional development opportunities.

#### **4. Provost's Remarks**

The Provost also shared that she hopes everyone is staying safe.

(G. Crawford joined at 2:54 p.m.)

She reminded everyone that it is Bell Let's Talk week and encouraged everyone to check in with each other.

#### **(a) Student Success**

The Provost delivered a presentation on student success initiatives. She discussed the details of the Learner Enhanced Academic Programming (LEAP). She also reported on the establishment of additional standing committees focused on student success and strategic enrolment management, pursuant to recommendations included in the review of the Provost's Office. The Provost responded to questions and comments from AC, which included:

- Will there be any additional investment in first year orientation or resources for academic advisors?
  - The Provost advised that as reported on the budget at the last AC meeting, there will be two primary areas of investment if the university has surplus funds this year: enhanced investment in recruitment and retention and investment in technology. The investments in technology would include bringing back an early warning system, which was developed a few years ago.

- She also clarified that only Ontario institutions are represented in the retention data in the presentation.
- What kind of early warning system is being developed?
  - The Provost advised that the early warning system already exists in a rudimentary form and it came to an end in 2018.
  - If the university is going to invest time and effort into a system, they should bring it back and determine whether we could benefit from it or if something new needs to be developed.
- With respect to the Maclean's rankings, there are some factors that have not been addressed, primarily that Ontario Tech has the highest student to teacher ratio. The university has over serviced faculty compared to faculty at other institutions. Also, the university has high administrative costs compared to other institutions. It would help retention if faculty had more time to interact and get involved with our students and help our students feel special. No level of services outside of the classroom can make up for in-class experience.
- Hope there is analysis being done at the program level to identify weaknesses and learn from success stories.
- Is anything going to be done for students who are traditionally underserved? Can they accommodate different needs of students? Research shows that the opportunity to speak with instructors and fellow students in smaller class sizes contribute to success.
  - The Provost emphasized that student retention is everyone's business.
  - We have been working hard as an institution to increase faculty:student ratios until we ran into COVID. COVID will muddy the data with respect to student success. Further, there are 166 factors that impact a student's ability to succeed academically.
- Another difference we will be facing next year is that grade 12 students will have spent an entire year or more online learning. We can anticipate a tired, burned out cohort in the fall. From the student success perspective, we must consider how we are going to work harder to ensure those students are engaged in their learning experience.

### **(b) Updated Vision, Mission and Values (VMV)**

The Provost reminded AC that it is the Board's responsibility to establish VMV in consultation with AC. She discussed the consultation process in refreshing the VMV. The rationale is set out in the report included in the meeting material. She responded to the questions and comments of AC members, which included:

- Good consultation process.
- How was input from consultations taken into consideration? Reference was made to the feedback from AC in November about including research intensity.
  - The Provost advised that the version presented today differs greatly from what was presented to the Board in December. What is consistent is the values section – this did not change

from the last version that was presented. The Board felt strongly that the vision and mission should differentiate Ontario Tech from other institutions in the province and that it should be a forward-thinking vision and mission.

- She noted that the Board is tasked with establishing the VMV and ensuring the VMV align with the university's strategic planning.
- The Provost clarified that a special consultation session was held with the Board on December 17.
- It is the role of any university to create new knowledge – really like “tech with a conscience” – VMV seems to focus on research into existing technology and the ethical implications of that technology rather than creating new knowledge and technology.
- Appreciate that intellectual resilience/excellence has been added back in as a value.
- Concern was expressed about the Board revising the document and not returning the document to AC for further consultation.
  - The Provost noted that the values section did not change following the Board consultation.
  - She thanked the community for their input into the values section and the Board accepted it as is.
- Comment about first statement: “sustain the planet”. The planet is not a threat. The problem is human civilization and the biodiversity that sustains it. This is not optimal language.
- Instead of "sustain the planet", it might be better to tie in the previous language around "make an impact on the world".

AC was advised that the comments are being duly noted and that this is not necessarily the final version going forward to the Board for approval. A member commented that they hope L. Elliott and the Chair recognize that there is some need for further consultation, which may be beneficial to the final outcome. L. Elliott confirmed that she noted all of the comments from AC and that when they consider the VMV at the Board, these would be raised for further consideration.

## **5. Steering Committee:**

### **(a) Delegation of Authority Review**

T. Pierce presented the proposal to AC. A request was made to use the polling feature for voting. The Chair advised that polling would be discussed with the Governance and Nominations Committee.

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

There were two abstentions.

### **(b) Blended Learning Strategic Discussions**

The Chair reminded AC that the plan was to schedule a three-part strategic discussion focused on blended learning, separated into the following sessions:

- Part 1: exploring the concept of blended learning, with the purpose of getting clarity amongst ourselves as to what it is and what it is not at the university. The goal was to arrive at a more common understanding of what blended learning means at Ontario Tech.
- Part 2: discussing the challenges and opportunities associated with blended learning.
- Part 3: what's next and how we foster and promote cultural change at the institution.

During last month's strategic discussion, Academic Council reviewed and commented on the themes arising out of the first session, focused on what blended learning is and is not. Following that discussion, there was little time to complete the jamboard session on challenges and opportunities of blended learning. That discussion will be continued during the next strategic session.

The Chair advised Council that it was suggested that the format of the next strategic discussion be switched up; accordingly, breakout rooms will be used during the next session. Each room will be assigned one of the key themes coming out of the challenges identified during the jamboard session and AC members will be asked to discuss the specific challenge and brainstorm how to resolve it. There will be approximately 4-5 breakout rooms and a facilitator will be assigned to lead the discussion in each room. A list of the themes will be circulated to AC members in advance and members will be asked to list the top two themes they would prefer to discuss and breakout rooms will be assigned accordingly.

The Chair reminded members that a poll was circulated last week asking for confirmation of availability on two dates in order to schedule the next session. The dates were selected based on the deadline for submission for the eCampusOntario Expressions of Interest in support of the Government of Ontario's Virtual Learning Strategy and the timing of end of day for online school. The Chair reported that as of yesterday, just over half of AC members had responded to the poll. The Chair asked those who had not done so already to complete the poll so that the date could be finalized.

The Chair responded to questions and comments. A member commented that there is no assurance that the Board will take the comments coming out of these strategic discussions into account. The Chair advised that the blended learning discussions are essential to happen at the AC level and with faculty and staff, as they are the future of teaching and learning. He also confirmed that the Board is up to date about

the level of consultation with respect to blended learning. A request was made for B. Dinwoodie to resend the poll to AC.

## **6. Integrated Plan Update (U) (Lori Livingston/Les Jacobs)**

L. Livingston provided an update on the integrated planning process. She reported that the items that were completed from last year's plan were removed. The third version is near completion and will be moving through a series of consultation sessions soon. She confirmed that the updated Integrated Plan will return to AC next month.

## **7. 2021-2022 Tuition Framework**

B. Maclsaac provided an update on the tuition framework.

**(a) Domestic undergrad & graduate programs** – B. Maclsaac noted that the last tuition framework had a decrease of 10% and was then frozen by the government; the government has not yet released their 2021-2022 framework. At this time, we are anticipating that it will remain frozen. Accordingly, a flat tuition is being proposed for next year.

**(b) International undergrad & graduate programs** – B. Maclsaac advised that international tuitions across Ontario were reviewed and, with the proposed increases, the university's international tuition will remain below the mean.

B. Maclsaac responded to comments and questions from AC members. There was a discussion regarding the proposed tuition increases for international students and how we will not be able to continue to offset flat domestic tuition with increases to international. There was also a discussion regarding the tuition for those in the MASc verses MSc. A concern was raised that other universities are reducing tuition fees for international PhD students and while we were not proposing an increase the differential may hurt us in recruiting the best students. Another member commented that some of our tuition fees are too competitive due to the way they were originally set and the government policies that have limited annual increases.

B. Maclsaac reminded Council that the 5% increase for upper year international students is consistent with what was committed to a few years ago when the international surtax was implemented. He also advised that the Dean of the School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies lead a graduate funding review in 2018 and they are in discussions about how to support our international PhD students as part of the current budget deliberations. A member commented that we must think about our international PhD approach and become more competitive in this area. B. Maclsaac reminded Council that grant funding has been decreasing in real dollar terms for almost two decades and that there are not many levers left in terms of increasing revenue.

## **8. Policy Consultation:**

C. Foy proposed deferring the Accommodation and Respectful Campus Policies to next month's meeting to allow more time for discussion. AC members supported the deferral.

### **(a) Controlled Goods**

J. Freeman provided an overview of the policy documents and the rationale for the development of the policy. The policy focuses on defence and defence-related products and those types of materials. She advised that ACE does work that falls under the Controlled Goods regulation. J. Freeman responded to questions and comments from AC. She clarified that controlled substances fall under different legislation and this policy specifically relates to the Defence Production Act and the Controlled Goods Regulations.

### **(b) Accommodation Policy - deferred**

### **(c) Respectful Campus Policy - deferred**

### **(d) Harassment and Discrimination Procedures for Employees – deferred**

## **Committee Reports**

### **9. Research Board**

L. Jacobs delivered the Research Board update. He advised that they are making significant strides on the Strategic Research Plan and summarized the progress made on initiatives that are underway. He advised that two CRC applications have been approved (Tier 1 at FEAS and Tier 2 at FBIT) and that an announcement will be made soon. He commended the Deans and their offices and the Office of Research and Innovation on their work on the applications. He advised that they are also hoping that when new allocations of CRCs come out based on current Tri-Council funding that the university will get additional CRC allocations.

He also provided an update on partnerships. He advised that they are close to finalizing a major international collaboration around energy with a significant international energy organization. The collaborations with Ontario Shores continue to progress through COVID.

L. Jacobs advised that the university is about \$3m ahead of where we were this time last year. Staff have been vigorously pursuing Tri-Council COVID emergency research funds to cover contingency costs related to COVID. The university has received approximately \$1.1m from that fund. He also provided an update on the EDI initiative. Approximately \$800,000 will be allocated to an EDI formula so that EDI will be taken into account when disbursing the funds. This reflects the commitment to EDI in the Strategic Research Plan.

### **10. Undergraduate Studies Committee (USC)**



## **(a) Faculty of Education – Bachelor of Arts in Educational Studies and Digital Technology**

L. Roy provided a brief overview of the proposal.

*Upon a motion duly made by L. Roy and seconded by H. Kishawy, pursuant to the recommendation of USC, Academic Council unanimously approved the Major Program Modification to the Bachelor of Arts in Educational Studies and Digital Technology, as presented.*

### **11. Governance & Nominations Committee (GNC) (a) Anti-Racism Working Group Terms of Reference**

L. Livingston presented the proposal for approval. She provided an overview of the development of the Terms of Reference, as set out in the accompanying report. A question was asked about the faculty representation on the working group and the nomination process. C. Foy reviewed the nomination process as set out in the proposed terms of reference. She clarified that the working group is open to more than just members of AC. A suggestion was made that the Faculty should have a say in who represents them on the working group.

*A motion was made by M. Eklund and seconded by S. Heydari that the EDI Working Group Terms of Reference be referred back to the GNC to consider the comment about Faculty having the ability to select their representative.*

There was a robust discussion of the motion. The comments from AC included:

- opposed to sending it back to GNC as it would further delay the establishment of this working group;
- would assume that GNC is the place to decide the membership of committees of Academic Council;
- would prefer an election process and keeping the democratic process in the hands of the Faculty;
- support that GNC should make the decision as it is an AC working group and it's important that diverse faculty are represented and disagrees that Faculty should select who represents them.

C. Foy highlighted the EDI component of the nomination process. L. Livingston added that the committee's rationale for the proposed nomination process was that as a nominations committee, people can freely submit nominations and GNC could ensure there is diversity in the recommendations whereas elections might not have this result.

The motion was defeated by a vote of 3 in favour, 15 opposed and 6 abstentions.

*Upon a motion duly made by L. Livingston and seconded by J. Bradbury, pursuant to the recommendation of the Governance and Nominations Committee, Academic Council approved the Anti-Racism and Inclusion Working Group Terms of Reference, as presented.*

There were 4 abstentions.

### **12. Minutes of Meeting of November 24, 2020 (pulled from Consent Agenda)**

A request was made for an update on the impact of the student experience tuition guarantee. An update will be provided at the next meeting.

*Upon a motion duly made by M. Eklund and seconded by F. Jones, the Minutes were approved as presented.*

### **13. Consent Agenda:**

*Upon a motion duly made by O. Davis and seconded by L. Elliott, the Consent Agenda was approved as presented.*

- (a) Research Board Nomination
- (b) Graduate Student Members Nominations to Academic Council & Graduate Studies Committee
- (c) Academic Appeals Committee – Chair Appointment

### **14. For Information:**

- (a) 2021-2022 Academic Schedule – Undergraduate & Graduate
- (b) Minor Program Adjustments:
  - (i) Faculty of Health Sciences – Bachelor of Health Science in Medical Laboratory Science
  - (ii) Faculty of Science – Bachelor of Science in Integrative Neuroscience
  - (iii) Faculty of Science – Bachelor of Science in Computer Science, Data Science Specialization
  - (iv) Faculty of Science – Data Science Minor

A question was asked about the timing of orientation and the start of term and whether the term will now start on Tuesdays rather than Thursdays going forward. J. Stokes advised that an important consideration of scheduling orientation before Labour Day was to ensure we do not have an overly compressed exam schedule. This timing allows the addition of 2 days to the exam period and allows for more time in between exams. Further, in a non-COVID world, it also allows us to have residence move in to be timed with orientation.

### **15. Other Business**

### **16. Termination**

*Upon a motion duly made by A. Barari, the meeting terminated at 4:51 p.m.*

Becky Dinwoodie, Secretary

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