

ACADEMIC COUNCIL
Minutes of the Meeting of November 28, 2023
2:30 – 4:36 p.m. via videoconference

Present:

Murphy, Steven (Chair)	Fernando, Shanti	Rastpour, Amir
Aquanno, Scott	Hosseini, Sayyed Ali	Rodgers, Carol
Azad, Nader	Hossein Nejad, Mehdi	Ruttenberg-Rozen, Robyn
Bailey, Robert	Jacobs, Les	Simmons, Denina
Barber, Wendy	King, Alyson	Stoett, Peter
Beligan, Mihai	Kishawy, Hossam	Thompson, Dwight
Bluehardt, Mary	Liscano, Ramiro	Ubor, Tega
Bryant, Toba	Livingston, Lori	Vettor, Shannon
Christou, Ted	MacMillan, Patricia	Watterworth, Michael
Davidson, Catherine	McAlpin, Breanne	
Duff, Ana	Naumkin, Fedor	
Eklund, Mike	Nokleby, Scott	

Regrets:

Aamir, Asifa	Georgees, Ifrodet
Arcand, JoAnne	Kay, Robin
Barari, Ahmad	Jones, Ferdinand
Brown, Samantha	McGregor, Carolyn
Crawford, Greg	Partosoedarso, Elita
Felder, Ruth	Serote, MaryCae
Frazer, Mitch	Stokes, Joe

Staff & Guests:

Bauer, Chelsea	Hester, Krista	Papke, Darryl
Bruno, Jamie	Jahan, Celine	Scanga, Franco
Callahan, Stephanie	Kassariss, Andrea	Thayer, Candi
Forbes, Susan	Levy, Melissa	Thrush, Sarah
Freeman, Jennifer	Livingstone, Clarissa	Townsend, Lisa
Gottlieb, Sara	MacIsaac, Brad	Turner, Lauren
Hall, Chris	McCartney, Kimberley	Windsor, Shelly
Hamilton, Barbara	Nyaamine, Ruth	Wingate, Adam
Heslip, Michelle	O'Halloran, Niall	

1. Call to Order

The Chair called the meeting to order at 2:30 p.m. D. Simmons read the land acknowledgement and provided some personal reflections.

2. Agenda

Upon a motion duly made by H. Kishawy and seconded by A. King, the Agenda was approved as presented.

3. Chair's Remarks

The Chair noted that the report of the Blue-Ribbon Panel has been released and the sector is awaiting the government's response. He provided a brief update on his recent trip to southeast Asia, noting that there is an opportunity for Ontario Tech in the region as it is undergoing a nuclear renaissance. He also noted opportunities in the area of artificial intelligence (AI).

4. Inquiries and Communications

COU Academic Colleague Report

A. King presented the COU Academic Colleague Report which covered two meetings of the COU and one meeting of the Council of Colleagues as well as executive heads. Amongst the colleagues, discussions focused on mitigating anti-LGBTQ2S+ movements and making campuses safer for all people. The primary conclusion of the colleagues was that having both symbolic actions such as institutional statements as well as concrete actions such as medical centre staff trained in trans-positive care, are critical. This conclusion, amongst others, were presented to the executive heads. The colleagues and executive heads also discussed recent events in the Middle East and the challenges of being seen to take sides. Colleagues and executive heads were aligned in wanting to support equity seeking groups on campus. In response to a question, A. King confirmed that safety was considered for faculty and staff as well as students.

5. Provost's Remarks

The Provost advised Academic Council that the Faculty of Engineering and Applied Science will be hosting a memorial ceremony on December 6 at 11 a.m. for the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women.

(a) Senior Academic Administrator Search Update

The Provost provided updates on three decanal searches:

- i. Faculty of Business and Information Technology – the Provost thanked those who participated in the interview process for the three finalists as well as those who attended the presentations. She advised that an announcement regarding the successful candidate is forthcoming and will hopefully be made prior to the holidays
- ii. Faculty of Science – membership on the search advisory committee has been finalized and scheduling is underway for January to bring the committee together and begin the search process
- iii. Faculty of Education – a call for expressions of interest in serving on the search advisory committee has gone out and membership is being finalized; the work of the committee is expected to begin in early March

(b) Planning Update

L. Livingston and S. Thrush presented the Planning Update. They reminded Academic Council that a key component of the evolution of the Integrated Academic-Research Plan (IARP) is regular evaluation for accountability purposes. S. Thrush drew members' attention to the materials package, which includes a distillation of the reports provided by units and Faculties to close off the last IARP. The next round of reporting will include qualitative narratives about the accomplishments of Faculties, programs and administrative units. Academic Council was invited to provide input on the prototype of the proposed reporting. In response to a question about challenges, S. Thrush advised that removing duplication in submitted materials is time-consuming. For example, if a number of Faculties work together to bring a new program forward, reporting on that initiative will be repeated across Faculty reports. She then discussed how the quantitative data in the dashboards will complement the planned qualitative components, which will be used for illustrative purposes. A member expressed concern about creating new metrics when there is already negative sentiment towards the metrics in the Strategic Mandate Agreements; it was queried whether or not metrics advance the core mission of the University. S. Thrush expressed the view that there is value in establishing "waterlines", being accountable to ourselves, and demonstrating progress against the plan the University has committed to. A member then expressed concern and guilt about tuition fees charged to international students and government inaction on funding leading to reliance on those fees. The Chair thanked the member for their concern and reminded Academic Council that while the University is looking to grow, it remains below the average percentage enrolment of international students for universities and will be below the average of colleges. The importance of balance was emphasized.

6. Budget Approach 2024-2027

B. MacIsaac opened the Budget Approach 2024-2027 presentation with a snapshot of the University's finances as of October 2023. He highlighted inflationary pressures on some utility and subscription costs offset by \$4 million in additional interest, that expenses balanced out additional revenues, and that the University is tracking towards a \$3.5-4 million surplus at year end. The latter is necessary for deferred maintenance and capital renewal.

S. Thrush then provided an overview of enrolment, noting that projections now go out three years. She advised that the model upon which budget assumptions are based is conservative, but still has some risks, including an assumption of continued high performance in attracting applicants. She echoed the Chair's observation that international student enrolment will grow but stay below sector averages.

B. MacIsaac then discussed expenses. He drew Academic Council's attention to the projected intake of 1000 full time students over last year's budget assumption, which equates to approximately \$12 million in tuition. This is balanced by a projected increase of \$12 million in labour costs, which includes planned increases from settled collective agreements as well as negotiations presently underway. He advised that there is \$1 million for allocation, the majority of which is restricted, and \$1 million for capital renewal. He commented on the importance of replacing some aging equipment

that, due to fragility, has become high priority. He then explained the structural deficit in the University's finances owing to the expanding costs of labour and the cut and frozen tuition and grants. He advised Academic Council that during consultations, concerns have been raised about the growth agenda but wished to be clear that investments are being made in people first and foremost. The University's priority is advancing the objectives of the IARP. In response to a question about the meaning of unfunded students, B. Maclsaac explained that they are students accepted outside of the corridor set by the Ministry. He provided an example where the University could open another section of a pre-existing course to allow greater enrolment.

The Provost then discussed strategic allocations in the budget. She noted that a sub-\$1 million surplus is razor thin, representing just 0.4% of the overall operating budget. She noted the myriad uncertainties in the post-secondary system, including the lack of clarity about the government's intentions on the Blue-Ribbon Panel report, global conflict, and inflation. She advised Academic Council that multiple scenarios were modelled because of this uncertainty and that additional data expected in January (e.g., student application numbers) will help to solidify the University's approach. She emphasized the importance of striving for a balanced budget while also driving differentiated growth based in the University's areas of excellence. The presentation closed with B. Maclsaac sharing process and timelines and inviting input to the main budget mailbox or to himself directly.

A discussion then ensued on the Budget Approach. A member noted that budgets have fluctuated in terms of the number of years covered and remarked that there has been a pattern whereby the current year can be balanced but out-years are projected to be poor. The member drew the leadership's attention to the human resources – teaching and research resources – that deliver education at the University. In response, the Chair spoke about the danger facing the higher education sector, noting that some institutions are on the brink of insolvency and negotiating with the provincial government to continue operations. He emphasized that the modelling presented is not fearmongering, but rather a necessary reality in a very uncertain financial context in which multiple universities are running large deficits. B. Maclsaac added that a 2% increase in tuition, which may be a result of the Blue-Ribbon Panel's work, would only add \$1 million to the budget. A member raised activity-based budgeting, recommending that the approach to funding allocations be transparent to the community. The Chair clarified that allocations will be aligned with differentiated growth, not holding each Faculty to strict accountability which leads to counter-productive competition between them. In response to a concern about parking spaces and scheduling, B. Maclsaac advised that space allocations for increased student enrolment are being examined; the Provost added that additional online offerings and professional Master's programs, which will bring students to campus on the weekends, are also being considered.

Committee Reports:

7. Undergraduate Studies Committee (USC)

M. Bluechardt presented the USC report, noting that in addition to the motion item before Academic Council, there were several minor program adjustments which are captured on the consent agenda.

(a) Major Program Modification – Bachelor of Science in Integrative Neuroscience

M. Bluechardt presented the Major Program Modification, noting that the change is purely the program being re-named.

Upon a motion duly made by C. Rodgers and seconded by D. Simmon, pursuant to the recommendation of the Undergraduate Studies Committee, Academic Council hereby approves the Major Program Modification to the Bachelor of Science in Integrative Neuroscience, changing the name to Neuroscience.

8. Graduate Studies Committee (GSC)

T. Christou presented the GSC report. He invited members of Academic Council to the upcoming graduate student fair and mixer taking place on Thursday at 2:30 p.m.

(a) New Program Proposal – Master of Engineering (Meng) and Master of Applied Science (MASc) in Mechatronics Engineering

T. Christou presented the New Program Proposal, highlighting that it will prepare students for careers as well as encompass a strong research element.

Upon a motion duly made by S. Nokleby and seconded by H. Kishawy, pursuant to the recommendation of the Graduate Studies Committee, Academic Council hereby approves the Master of Engineering and Master of Applied Science in Mechatronics Engineering and recommends approval of the program to the Board of Governors.

9. Research Committee

L. Jacobs presented the Research Committee report, noting that it has been an eventful fall and was the busiest application year in the history of the Tri-council. He thanked everyone involved in research grants this term. He provided an update on campus activities, sharing that in contrast to the COVID period, many partners have been coming to visit the Ontario Tech campus. Events with a strong research focus have been hosted and partnerships entered and explored. He acknowledged the centrality of the efforts of faculty and staff in the success of those events. He then advised Academic Council of two upcoming calls: (i) Canada Research Chairs; and (ii) Research Excellence Awards.

10. Policy Amendments

(a) Policy on Micro-credentials and Continuous Learning Offerings and Committee Terms of Reference

M. Bluechardt introduced the Policy on Micro-credentials and Continuous Learning Offerings and Committee Terms of Reference, noting that the Policy is jointly endorsed to Academic Council by USC and GSC. C. Hall then provided an overview of the revisions to the documents. He reminded Academic Council of the 2022 revision

to the Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP) that referenced the committee to address micro-credentials in response to the provincial Quality Council requirement that universities reference a process for micro-credential approval. He advised Academic Council that for-academic-credit offerings will follow the same approval paths as set out in the IQAP; he noted that this distinction may be found in the illustrative summary and work flow diagram which are included in the materials package. In response to a question about the Terms of Reference, K. McCartney confirmed that a committee dedicated to continuous learning currently exists with authority delegated from Academic Council. In response to a request for clarification of approvals, K. McCartney advised that for-academic-credit offerings will continue to flow through Faculty Councils, USC and/or GSC as appropriate and will then be presented to Academic Council for information or approval, similar to, and sometimes included with, minor program adjustments and major program modifications. Not-for-academic-credit items will continue to be reported to Academic Council yearly in line with current practice.

Upon a motion duly made by M. Hossein Nejad and seconded by R. Ruttenberg-Rozen, pursuant to the recommendation of the Undergraduate Studies Committee and the Graduate Studies Committee, Academic Council hereby approves the amended Policy on Micro-credentials and Continuous Learning Offerings, which supersedes the existing Not-for-Academic Credit Digital Badges, Microcredentials, and Stackable Credentials Policy. Further, that Academic Council hereby recommends the Micro-credentials and Continuous Learning Committee Terms of Reference for approval by the Board of Governors.

(b) Intellectual Property Policy

L. Jacobs invited feedback from Academic Council on the Intellectual Property Policy as part of the consultative process. He made preliminary remarks, highlighting that the policy fundamentally reinforces that Ontario Tech is an inventor-owned environment for teaching and research. The University retains a license to use research and innovation. He acknowledged that the Policy has legal terminology. A member raised concerns about vagueness of language, sweeping rights being claimed by the University and the removal of an appeals process. J. Freeman thanked the member and all others who have provided feedback thus far; she advised that all input will go back to the Intellectual Property Committee for consideration. She invited the member to provide further detail on areas of vagueness in the policy. She then clarified that a faculty member may, at any point during the five-year license for use, request that the license period be extinguished. Moral rights, a new addition to the Policy, remain with the creator. C. Thayer noted that the policy contemplates dispute escalation and revisions to the policy attempted to clarify dispute resolution pathways; escalation to arbitration is consistent with the current policy. In response to a request for more plain language in the Policy, L. Jacobs advised that some degree of legal terminology is necessary to protect those availing themselves of it, but also that plain language FAQs will be produced. A discussion then ensued on the rationale for amending the Policy and how much the Policy is being modified after years of existence. L. Jacobs advised that the University wishes to create a framework that supports faculty to be innovative

in teaching and research. Licensure for the University is intended to enable partnership between faculty and the University to promote research outputs. In response to a question about the necessity of licensure, C. Thayer advised that the University must have a legal interest in intellectual property to commercialize it, for example by acting as a commercialization lead or entering into agreements. The sharing of revenues generated is consistent with the current Policy. A member then raised a concern about protection of intellectual property contained in teaching materials and a revocation process that requires vice-presidential approval. The member offered to provide further information about his concerns, which L. Jacobs accepted. He thanked the member, advising Academic Council that receiving concerns in writing is beneficial for the work of the Intellectual Property Committee.

11. Consent Agenda

(a) Minutes of the Meeting of October 24, 2023

(b) Minor Program Adjustments from USC

a. Bachelor of Engineering in Electrical Engineering

b. Bachelor of Science in Health Physics and Radiation Science

c. Bachelor of Science in Integrated Mathematics and Computer Science

(c) Cyclical Program Reviews from GSC

a. Master of Health Sciences

(d) Academic Policy Documents from GSC and USC

a. Final Examination Procedures

b. Final Examination Chief Proctor Directives

(e) Conferral of Degrees Fall 2023

Upon a motion duly made by H. Kishawy and seconded by A. King, the contents of the consent agenda were received for information or approved as appropriate.

12. Other Business

(a) Land acknowledgement for November Academic Council meeting

M. Eklund volunteered to do the land acknowledgement for January.

13. Termination (M)

Upon a motion made by S. Nokleby, the meeting was adjourned at 4:36 p.m.

Lauren Turner, University Secretary