

ACADEMIC COUNCIL

MINUTES of the MEETING of TUESDAY, APRIL 27, 2021 Videoconference, 2:30 - 4:30 p.m.

Present:

Murphy, Steven (Chair)
Al-Shawesh, Yousef
Barari, Ahmad
Barber, Wendy
Bliemel, Michael
Bradbury, Jeremy
Davis, Owen
Davidson, Catherine
Dubrowski, Adam
Easton, Brad
Eklund, Mike
Elliott, Laura
Fernando, Shanti
Frazer, Mitch
Gaber, Hossam
Heydari, Shahram
Hogue, Jessica
Hossein Nejad, Mehdi
Jacobs, Les
Kay, Robin
King, Alyson
Kishawy, Hossam
Livingston, Lori

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

Staff & Guests:

Abdalbari, Anwar
Abdelmassih, Sarah
Ali, Salam
Babb, Shay
Bauer, Chelsea
Bignell, Paul
Brar, Rupinder
Bruno, Jamie
Callahan, Stephanie
Cardoza, Sanya
Crouse, Dan
Deoraj, Keisha
Dinwoodie, Becky
Dwyer-Kuntz, Tricia
Forbes, Susan
Foy, Cheryl
Hamilton, Barb
Heslip, Michelle
Hester, Krista
Hynes, Katelyn
Livingstone, Clarissa
Lowe, Josh
Maclsaac, Brad
McArthur, Fiona
McCartney, Kimberley
McGovern, Sue
McKenzie, Chantal
McLaughlin, Christine
Molinaro, Nichole
Nickle, Joanne
Pitcher, Cathy
O'Halloran, Niall
Qadri, Syed
Sankarial, Joshua
Scanga, Franco
Shah, Alena
Woolridge, Lyndsay
Wright, Sharifa

Regrets:

Crawford, Greg
Jones, Ferdinand
Lloyd, Meghann
Sami, Ramin
Sheikh, Jahan

1. Call to Order

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

The Chair reminded Council that at the November meeting, a request was made to consider using the Google Meet polling feature to vote on motions during virtual AC meetings and it was referred to the Governance & Nominations Committee (GNC) for consideration. The Chair reported that after much discussion at the past several GNC meetings and reviewing several options, GNC recommended testing out the following voting practice during the remaining meetings of Academic Council for the 2020-2021 academic year:

- For procedural items (agenda, minutes, termination) and items where there appears to be consensus, the Chair will ask “Does anyone object to approving the motion by unanimous consent?”
- When there does not appear to be a consensus or when there is an objection to approving a motion by unanimous consent, the Chair will call for members participating online to vote by using the “raise hands” feature, followed by members participating by phone to vote by voice.

The Chair advised Council that the practice would be tested out starting at that meeting. Depending on the outcome of the pilot, a procedure will be developed to formalize the voting practice for virtual Council meetings.

2. Agenda

Upon a motion duly made by H. Gaber and seconded by J. Hogue, the Agenda was approved as presented.

3. Chair’s Remarks

The Chair congratulated Council members on successfully completing the winter term. It was an incredibly difficult time and he hopes that it was the worst of the worst. He expressed appreciation for all of their efforts this semester and throughout COVID. The Chair also hopes everyone is keeping as well as they can be throughout this third provincial emergency and stay-at-home order. The Chair noted that the vaccine age has been opened up to ages 40+. He encouraged everyone to take advantage of the vaccine. It is important for everyone to recognize the mental strain we have

been under and to consider what works best for us in order to look after our mental health. It is also important to keep an eye on our community members – students and colleagues. When we come out of the pandemic, we must be conscious that people have been isolated for over a year and are suffering mentally. He hopes everyone realizes that the university has taken a cautious approach and will continue to do so in order to prioritize the safety of our community. We need to stay safe and congratulate ourselves for getting through the past year. Everyone needs some time off to rest and recover.

The Chair reported on several recent events that he attended since the last Council meeting, including:

- Open House on March 27;
- 3MT Competition – he thanked L. Roy and the team that coordinated the event;
- Brilliant Catalyst Indigenous Entrepreneurship event – he highlighted the Indigenous catering service that serves meals that would have been available on Turtle Island before the arrival of settler peoples; and
- COU Executive Heads meeting and COU Council meeting at the beginning of the month – he noted that the Academic Colleagues did a great job presenting on how they see the landscape shifting in terms of blended learning and mental health.

The Chair responded to questions and comments from Council. A member commented that engineering 3MT presentations are generally not as appealing as those from other Faculties and perhaps there should be a separate competition for engineering students. The Chair noted that there are students who present on very technical topics and across the province, engineering figures prominently among finalists who move on. We should think about ways to encourage 3MT candidates from FEAS. A comment was made that the Open House provides a great opportunity for potential students to interact with faculty members and could influence a student's decision to attend the university.

(a) 2021 Honorary Degree Recipients

The Chair informed Council that we will be recognizing our 2020 and 2021 graduating students' commitment and dedication to academic success in a new virtual format. This new event format will allow us to safely honour our graduates' hard work, dedication and accomplishments with them, their family and friends, and our campus community. The postponed ceremonies for the Class of 2020 will take place on Wednesday, June 23 and the ceremonies for the Class of 2021 will take place on Friday, June 25.

The Chair announced the 2021 honorary degree recipients and provided an overview of their accomplishments:

- **Dr. Mohamed Lachemi**
- **The Right Honourable Brian Mulroney and Mila Mulroney**
- **Noreen Taylor**

The Chair confirmed that the convocation ceremonies will be by Faculty this year and graduates would be honoured by Faculty going forward.

4. Minutes of the Meeting of March 23, 2021

Upon a motion duly made by L. Roy and seconded by L. Elliott, the Minutes were approved as presented.

5. Business Arising from the Minutes

(a) Summer 2021 Meetings

The Chair reminded members that at the last Council meeting a member asked whether Council would be meeting throughout the summer as it did last summer and the question was brought to the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee discussed this at their last meeting. Since it is still uncertain at this point as to whether summer meetings will be required, the committee supported scheduling meetings of the Steering Committee and Academic Council for July and August to hold the meeting times in case they are necessary and they will be cancelled if not needed.

6. Provost's Remarks

The Provost noted that we have reached the end of another academic term. Everyone should be proud of their accomplishments over the past year. The pandemic has created strains for all of us and we have worked together to ensure that our students have been able to continue and complete their diploma and degree programs. The Provost highlighted several of the events that have been happening to celebrate those accomplishments. Last week was National Volunteer Week and she thanked the Advancement Team who coordinated the delivery of a small token of our appreciation to university volunteers. She also reminded Council that the nomination period for the Administrative Staff Awards of Excellence closes tomorrow and she directed members to the website for additional information. Given how hard the Administrative Staff have worked this past year, this is our opportunity to recognize them.

(a) 2020 Teaching Award Recipients

The Provost provided an overview of the Celebrate Teaching Awards. Every year, the Teaching and Learning Center receives hundreds of nominations for the awards. Due to the impact of the pandemic, Student Choice awards were made the priority. This was available in three categories: Teaching Assistant, Undergraduate, and Graduate instructor.

The Provost announced this year's winners:

Faculty of Education

- Keisha Deoraj, Teaching Assistant
- Tricia Dwyer-Kuntz, Undergraduate
- Joseph Stokes, Graduate

Faculty of Engineering and Applied Science

- Anshuman Sharma, Teaching Assistant
- Anwar Abdalbari, Undergraduate

Faculty of Engineering Systems and Nuclear Science

- Sarah Watt, Teaching Assistant
- Salam Ali, Graduate
- Rachid Machrafi, Undergraduate

Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities

- Lyndsay Woolridge, Teaching Assistant
- Tanya Karam-Zanders, Undergraduate

Faculty of Science

- John Nemec, Teaching Assistant
- Rupinder Brar, Undergraduate

Faculty of Health Sciences

- Rufeyda Cosgun, Teaching Assistant
- Syed Qadri, Undergraduate
- Adam Dubrowski, Graduate

Faculty of Business and Information Technology

- Rajinder Khurmi, Teaching Assistant
- Joshua Lowe, Undergraduate
- Julie Thorpe, Graduate

The Provost congratulated the award recipients, many of whom were in attendance. She confirmed that the recipients would be receiving a certificate commemorating their award.

The Provost also provided an update on the work of the President's Indigenous Reconciliation Task Force. She noted that a tremendous amount of work has been done over the past several years. She reported that during the closing prayer of the last meeting, Elder Shirley Williams acknowledged the work of the group and the work of Ontario Tech. Elder Williams told the committee members to be proud of their accomplishments and the progress that has been made towards truth and reconciliation.

(b) 2021 Programs Annual Report

The Provost referred Council members to the annual programs report that was included in the meeting material, which provides an overview of the development and growth of the program offerings at Ontario Tech.

7. Inquiries & Communications

There was none.

8. Steering Committee:

(a) Delegation of Authority Review

Upon a motion duly made by T. Pierce and seconded by W. Barber, Academic Council unanimously renewed the delegation of authority to the Steering Committee on the same basis as it was approved on April 3, 2020.

(b) Blended Learning Strategic Discussions

(O. Davis joined at 3:15 p.m.)

The fifth session was held on April 9, which started with a recap of the work that was done in the first 4 sessions. This was followed by a discussion focused on identifying principles/guidelines and what is important to keep in mind as we manage the challenge of technology in teaching and learning, as well as considering how to differentiate Ontario Tech from other institutions in a post-COVID world. For the next session, we will be inviting academic colleagues who presented recently at COU to give AC a sense of what other institutions are thinking and doing. For the final blended learning session, we will be considering the path forward. The Chair provided the dates being considered for the next session in May.

The Chair responded to questions and comments from members, which included:

- What will we do with the information, as it's turned out to be a large project?
 - The next step is to benchmark what others are doing.

- We may want to continue holding discussions on the topic as things continue to evolve over the next 2-3 years.
- The Chair commended C. Foy and B. Dinwoodie for their efforts to pull all of the information together.
- We will continue to improve our self awareness, as well as our awareness of what the competition is doing. The Chair encouraged members to continue to build on it and synthesize it as we observe the entrepreneurial spirit at the university.
- If we are going to continue to have discussions, how will we get the wider university community involved (TAs, graduate students, sessional instructors, etc.)?
 - Some of the most powerful things we do is share between instructors, or between student and instructor; encourage organic discussions at Faculty Councils, workshops; the Chair invited suggestions as to how we can foster these types of discussions at the Faculty level.
- Will there be new policies on blended learning or just a strategic approach of the university?
 - Must have both – use the time to reinvent ways to put the learner/student at the centre of our approach – use technology only when it improves the learning environment.
- If developing blended learning policies, need a clearer definition of blended learning.
- How is putting the “student at the centre” different from what we are doing now?
 - Adopting a lecture-based model as we have for the past several centuries is not necessarily student-centric.
 - Important debate to have and to start questioning the pedagogical assumptions behind the current practice.
- Must ensure we think about real accessibility for impoverished students.
- Should elected members raise these topics at Faculty Councils?
- Concern about how some of the points are presented in the report (e.g. binge-watching presented as an opportunity as opposed to a challenge); adopting a student-centric approach requires a lot of resources, which is not reflected in the documentation.
 - The Chair acknowledged that resourcing is required in order to do this well.
 - Clarified that it was from a student perspective that it was an opportunity to be able to binge watch lectures before exams.
 - C. Foy added that AC has been invited to comment on the documents all along to ensure the material accurately reflects the discussions.

9. Conferral of Degrees - Winter Term 2021

J. Stokes presented the proposal for approval.

Upon a motion duly made by J. Stokes and seconded by R. Kay, pursuant to the recommendations of each Faculty and the Registrar, Academic Council unanimously confirmed the eligibility for graduation of those students who have fulfilled all degree requirements at the end of the Winter Term 2021 and recommends the conferral of degrees by the Chancellor.

O. Davis abstained

10. Policy Consultation:

(a) Not-for-Academic Credit Digital Badges, Microcredentials, and Stackable Credentials Policy

L. Livingston provided an overview of the policy. She noted that microcredentials are gaining notoriety on the provincial landscape and are now considered OSAP eligible. The province is also encouraging collaboration among academic institutions. It is important to start to put frameworks into place as we develop these credentials. L. Livingston clarified that the policy applies to credentials that are not for academic credit (e.g. HR, Continuous Learning, Student Life, etc.)

L. Livingston responded to questions and comments from Council, which included:

- Will third parties be developing them or are they being developed in-house?
- Concern about quality control
 - L. Livingston explained that quality control is one of the reasons for establishing policies and an oversight committee; they are in the early stages of setting this up; important to ensure that we understand the pressures these credentials would put on the registration system, LMS, etc.
 - Important to understand what is being marketed with the university's name attached to it.
 - Applies to microcredentials being developed at the university
- What is the difference between academic and non-academic credentials?
- Why would the oversight committee report to the Provost and not to AC?
- The oversight committee will not be having public meetings – concern about the structure being presented.
 - L. Livingston explained that the credentials are similar to continuous learning offerings but in microcredential format.
 - Ontario Tech Talent is a subsidiary of the university, which operates independently of the university.
 - If Faculties wanted to generate revenue by offering non-academic credentials, could do so.

- The oversight committee is in place to oversee resource demands that these offerings will require.
- The committee will also put together an annual report, just like Continuous Learning.
- L. Livingston clarified that it is not an academic pursuit but an administrative policy.
- Microcredentials are like the “wild west” of education – government funding is incentivizing fast action without much thought – terminology is a bit confusing and need terms defined in the policy.
- Microcredentials are referred to as microcertificates and AC has the authority to grant certificates – might also be helpful to implement academic and non-academic microcredential policies at same time to help understand the distinction.
- What if we want to offer badges in academic programs? Would they fall under this policy?
 - Simplest way of thinking about what is being presented is an offering from Ontario Tech that would not be included on a student’s transcript.
 - Trying to put into place a simple framework for non-academic credits to make it clear that down the road, when implementing academic microcredentials, they fall within the authority of the Faculties.
 - Not intended to impinge on the academic side of the house.
- Benefit of microcredentials is when stackable, can lead to the awarding of a certificate.
- Good idea to have an oversight committee – should be governed by USC and GSC – microcredentials are going to be developed by faculty and should follow QA processes in place.
- Policy extremely well laid out and there will likely be lessons learned along the way; there is a lot of interest coming from many organizations and professional groups.
 - There will be a commensurate document for academic microcredentials.

Committee Reports

11. Research Board

L. Jacobs delivered the Research Board report. He advised that it was the end of the reporting year on the university’s research activity. 2021 was a very active year and the number of research grant applications has exceeded 600 (25% higher than the previous year). The success rates have significantly improved (up from 142 to 236 this year with 146 pending). There has also been significant growth in agreements with partners and industry (135 agreements from about 120 a year ago and 97 about 2 years ago). He also provided an update on research funding, which is at

approximately \$21.5m (\$5m increase from prior year and doubled from when L. Jacobs started at the university). The grant success rate is at about 1.1 per faculty member. L. Jacobs advised that it is important to look at how this compares to the university's operating budget. We are at approximately 11% of the university's operating budget, which is similar to Ryerson. Waterloo is at 22%. The university is becoming more research intensive if we consider research funding as a percentage of operating budget. L. Jacobs advised that these are tremendous results particularly in the context of COVID.

L. Jacobs advised that they will be launching the competition for Research Excellence Awards. He also reported on the signing ceremony last week designating the university as a Collaborating Centre with the UN International Atomic Energy Agency. The Chair congratulated H. Kishawy and everyone involved in the nuclear designation. The Chair also thanked everyone who submitted grant applications.

12. Graduate Studies Committee

(a) FBIT - New Master of Business Analytics and AI Program Proposal

L. Roy provided a brief overview of the proposal for consideration. He responded to questions and comments from Council, including:

- The program is highly technical compared to others – will students have technical background for this program? Could the admission requirements be clarified?
 - In most commerce degrees, students must take one of those courses – would want to see students have at least some exposure to info systems to ensure they have an interest in the topic – if someone graduated many years ago and desire to upskill, would advise them to take one of the advanced courses to get caught up.
- Course outlines reference specific technology that will likely be outdated by the time the program is approved and entered into the academic calendar.
 - These are draft course proposals and not final – will be reviewed before finalizing – the Faculty has tried to steer away from referring to the actual product names as they change quickly.
- The course outlines include detailed assessment methods - if different professors teach the course, they might have different requirements.

Upon a motion duly made by L. Roy and seconded by M. Bliemel, pursuant to the recommendation of the Graduate Studies Committee, Academic Council unanimously approved the Master of Business Analytics and AI and recommend approval to the Board of Governors.

(b) Graduate Academic Integrity and Professional Unsuitability Calendar Revision

L. Roy provided background to the proposed revisions and responded to questions from Council members. It was suggested to refer to designated professional programs in the document.

Upon a motion duly made by L. Roy and seconded by J. Bradbury, pursuant to the recommendation of the Graduate Studies Committee, Academic Council unanimously approved the Graduate Academic Integrity and Professional Unsuitability Calendar Copy, as presented.

13. Governance & Nominations Committee

(a) Research Board Nomination

L. Livingston presented the nomination for approval.

Upon a motion duly made by L. Livingston and seconded by L. Jacobs, pursuant to the recommendation of the Governance and Nominations Committee, Academic Council unanimously approved the appointment of the following faculty member to the Research Board for the term effective November 2020 until October 2022:

- *Allyson Eamer, Faculty of Education*

(b) Academic Appeals Committee Terms of Reference Review

L. Livingston presented the proposed amendments for feedback. Given the time constraints, she also invited members to submit their comments directly to the USGC following the meeting.

14. Other Business

15. Termination

There being no other business, upon a motion duly made by J. Bradbury, the meeting terminated at 4:30 p.m.

Becky Dinwoodie, Secretary