



ACADEMIC COUNCIL

MINUTES of MEETING of TUESDAY, MAY 26, 2020 VIDEOCONFERENCE, 2:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Present:

Murphy, Steven (Chair)
Barari, Ahmad
Bliemel, Michael
Crawford, Greg
Davidson, Catherine
Gaber, Hossam
Habibi, Sarah
Heydari, Shahram
Hogue, Jessica
Hosseini Nejad, Mehdi
Jacobs, Les
Jones, Ferdinand
Kay, Robin
Kishawy, Hossam
LeSage, Ann
Liscano, Ramiro
Livingston, Lori
Lloyd, Meghann
Mahmoud, Qusay
Marques, Olga
Mostaghim, Amir
Murphy, Bernadette

Nugent, Kimberly
Partosoedarso, Elita
Petrie, Olivia
Pierce, Tess
Rinaldi, Jen
Roy, Langis
Scott, Hannah
Shon, Phillip
Stoett, Peter
Stokes, Joe
Williams, Alyssa
Woolridge, Lyndsay
Wu, Terry

Staff:

Babb, Shay
Dinwoodie,
Becky
Foy, Cheryl
MacIsaac, Brad
McCartney,
Kimberley
Molinaro, Nichole
O'Halloran, Niall
Pitcher, Cathy

Regrets:

Davis, Owen
Desaulniers, Jean-Paul
Khalid, Osama
Mohany, Atef
Naumkin, Fedor
Rahnamayan, Shahryar
Tokuhiko, Akira

1. Call to Order

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

2. Agenda

The Chair noted that under Business Arising, the fall convocation matter would be addressed during the Provost's remarks and J. Stokes would speak to a correction to the Academic Calendar instead.

Upon a motion duly made by G. Crawford and seconded by H. Kishawy, the Agenda was approved as amended.

3. Chair's Remarks

The Chair thanked everyone for participating in the meeting and ensuring the continuance of governance during this difficult period. He thanked the members for their commitment. The Chair welcomed Chancellor Frazer to his first Academic Council meeting. The Chair thanked everyone who participated in the virtual Open House on the weekend. He remarked that it was a successful event and went very smoothly.

The Chair discussed the anticipated drop in enrolment due to COVID19. A number of firms have been employed to try to determine the plans of postsecondary students. Many students have lost summer employment and will also be dealing with a reduction in family income. We are not dealing with a typical economic down turn. The Chair noted that everything will be on the table in order to try to achieve a balanced budget.

It is going to be a strange year and will be a strange year for postsecondary education. COVID19 started a conversation that was overdue - how do we better integrate digital technology into postsecondary education and enhance the face to face on campus experience? The goal is to make education more dynamic and more experiential. It is also important to discuss how we must be ready to be online for the fall. We can learn lessons from more than dabbling in technology. Many faculty came to our institution because they want to be involved in transforming education. The university will emerge as a stronger institution.

While the storm clouds are overhead, the university is planning for when the storm clouds dissipate. We must make it through this time and be financially solvent. We must also be thinking about how we differentiate the university from others in the sector.

The Chair responded to questions from Council members. There was a request for additional information regarding enrolment numbers. There was also a suggestion to be more proactive with respect to incoming prospective students and to think about how faculty can assist with recruitment efforts. The Chair advised that applications were down 7% pre-COVID for Ontario Tech as opposed to downtown institutions, which were down about 2%. However, certain numbers are not yet available.

4. Minutes of the Meeting of April 28, 2020

A. Barari noted that he was in attendance at the April meeting.

Upon a motion duly made by H. Kishawy and seconded by Q. Mahmoud, the Minutes were approved as amended.

5. Business Arising from the Minutes

(a) Fall Convocation – Graduate Students Becoming Eligible to Graduate in Summer Term

J. Stokes noted a correction to the Academic Calendar - Thanksgiving is a separate holiday and the fall reading week will start on the Tuesday. He also advised Council that following consultation with the President, Provost and senior leadership team, it was determined that the fall will likely be too soon to have large gatherings and convocation for the 2020 cohort will be rescheduled for Spring 2021. He confirmed that there will be separate convocation ceremonies for the 2020 and 2021 graduates.

A member commented that the Academic Council (AC) webpage must be brought up to date on the posting of approved minutes.

6. Inquiries and Communications

There were none.

7. Provost's Remarks

(a) Senior Academic Administrator Search Updates

The Provost was pleased to advise Council that the search committee for the next Dean of the Faculty of Education arrived at a recommendation the previous day. She thanked Laverne Smith & Associates for their work on the search. She also expressed thanks to the search committee members for all of their work. She noted that a robust process was followed.

COVID19 Update

The Provost discussed the university's pandemic response. The first phase required an acute response and everyone stepped up to continue with and complete the winter term. The Registrar's Office is working diligently doing degree audits to ensure students can graduate. The second phase is a planning phase and we are still facing a tremendous amount of uncertainty. The Provost acknowledged that everyone is feeling a loss of control. We can start to plan and think about what lies ahead. She discussed a Winnipeg news program that addressed Post-COVID19 changes that will likely be here to stay, which included:

- working from home;
- people will be spending less and saving more;
- returning to food basics;
- urban planning and social and health planning will change; and
- rise in digital lifestyles (e-commerce, telehealth, e-learning).

She recognized that everyone is experiencing different personal circumstances (child care, home schooling, elder care). The Provost remarked that with good communications, they are hoping to give a sense of control back to the community.

The Post-COVID19 planning is just beginning and requires input from a variety of sectors inside and outside the university. The university is continuing to respond to government directives and Public Health. The Emergency Response Team is starting to look at what we need to do to safely return to work.

Return to Work Assumptions

- anxiety in the work place – uncertainty about presence of virus in the work place;
- telecommuting will continue for some time to come – unsure about how far into 2020/2021 will continue;
- continue to rely on technological platforms to keep working;
- estimating very gradual return to work – at very best, may experience approximately 20% of normal population on campus and could be as low as 1/10 or less; and
- when directives are lifted, will not mean that doors are open and everyone allowed to return at once.

The Provost informed Council that a number of task forces had been established to assist with the planning and additional task forces would be added, if necessary. The COVID19 website will transition to a new planning/go forward website. There will also be several town halls scheduled to answer questions from the university community.

The Provost discussed the investments that will be made in resources to assist with the transition online. Two new faculty development officers will be hired for the Teaching and Learning Centre. They will also be backfilling a maternity leave to add a media content support. Tools are being put in place to support faculty, staff and students. There will also be investments in new software supports (e.g. Leganto). They are also examining Proctortrack for enhanced exam integrity.

The Provost responded to questions from members:

- Will there be a task force or committee set up to study the impact of the change in course delivery on the quality and reputation of individual programs?
 - No specific task force to examine that impact – need to be constantly evaluating our efforts – continuous quality assurance cycle.

- What's the process if academic decisions need to be made coming out of the task force recommendations?
 - The Provost met with the task force Chairs and agreed to a communications plan.
 - The role of the task forces is advisory and academic decision making will flow through the normal governance approval processes.

A privacy concern was raised about Proctortrack recording what students are working on and monitoring all of their keystrokes. It was suggested to not invest additional resources in reviewing Proctortrack since Respondus Monitor seems to work well. The Provost advised that it is being evaluated as a second option and no commitment has been made. Further, it is being made available to universities at no charge.

8. Steering Committee Delegation of Authority Review

C. Foy reminded AC that when they made the decision to delegate authority to the Steering Committee it was agreed to review and confirm that delegation at every regular AC meeting. AC is being asked to confirm that they agree to leave the delegation of authority in place. The motion language was clarified for Council. C. Foy also confirmed that the delegation of authority would continue to be reviewed on a regular basis until AC determines it is no longer required.

Upon a motion duly made by P. Shon and seconded by A. Mostaghim, Academic Council renewed the delegation of authority to the Steering Committee on the same basis as it was approved on April 3.

9. COVID-19 Motions

H. Scott raised a point of order that the Steering Committee should not be amending motions (by separating one motion into two) that come to them for consideration. However, she agreed to the proposed separation of the motion into two distinct motions.

T. Pierce shared the Steering Committee's feedback on the proposed motions with the Council:

- concern that members do not want Academic Council to pass a motion that would be at odds with action the institution has to take to respond to a rapidly evolving situation;
- concern that the phrase "returning to established modes of teaching" wouldn't allow for some of the changes that would be required to address physical distancing requirements that may be in place when a return to campus would be possible;
- concern about transitioning from online to face to face classes during the fall term - if we start the fall term online, we should end the term online, as this provides a degree of certainty to international students that they will be able to complete their courses, as well to our domestic students who might

commute but need to stay home due to child care, elder care, financial constraints, etc.;

- need to avoid transitioning during the middle of the 2020/2021 year as it could have a profound and deep impact on students who have not planned for the switch from one mode to another;
- in addition to Ontario Public Health, the university must also comply with federal and provincial regulations;
- if we are running labs on campus, one ill person could affect the entire campus (e.g. meat packing plants, Canada Post) – also risk of negative reputational consequences;
- information from Ontario Public Health is that they are predicting a second wave to hit in late fall or early winter (e.g. spike observed following Mother’s Day); and
- safety should be the prime consideration.

T. Pierce advised that she requested splitting the motions as she felt that they addressed two separate issues and each one required a full, robust discussion.

MOTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION:

Motion 1:

Whereas emergency measures have been declared for the Province on Ontario regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, and Whereas the Ontario Tech University will begin to re-open only based on the guidance of Public Health Ontario, the Ministry of Colleges and Universities, or other provincial officials, It is moved that Academic Council recognizes that Ontario Tech University needs to be prepared to deliver courses in an emergency remote mode as may be necessary in Fall 2020.

C. Foy noted that this would be considered “hortative motion”, as AC would be expressing its opinion on a matter. Council had a robust discussion regarding the motion, which included the following key points:

- concern about being asked to switch mode of delivery in August as already preparing to be online in the fall and students have been notified that courses will be online;
- prefer long term planning – if start term in one mode, should continue in that mode;
- need to take into account the safety of TAs and faculty and everyone at the university;
- not comfortable with the motion being limited to Fall Term 2020;
- spirit of the motion is that there is agreement that courses should be going online for the Fall Term 2020;
- motion is stating what we will be doing anyway;

- clarified that they are planning for some labs to be on campus in the fall, if possible, so the motion language must provide some flexibility;
- suggestion to remove the word “remote” from the motion;
- discussion about changing the word “emergency” to “alternative” – there was support for leaving the word “emergency” in the motion to accurately reflect the situation;
- understanding that the emergency mode of teaching may be required beyond Fall Term 2020 as the crisis evolves;
- given the fact situation, the university must be able to plan for fall and winter terms online – if the fact situation changes, then can adjust plans;
- suggestion to replace “Fall 2020” to “as is prudent or reasonably necessary”;
- spirit of the motion is that the university will continue to evaluate the situation;

H. Scott exercised mover’s privilege to agree to remove the word “remote” from the motion and to change “Fall 2020” to “the academic year 2020/2021”. C. Foy posted the amended motion language in the chat feature for review.

Upon a motion duly made by H. Scott and seconded by F. Jones, whereas emergency measures have been declared for the Province of Ontario regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, and whereas the Ontario Tech University will begin to re-open only based on the guidance of Public Health Ontario, the Ministry of Colleges and Universities, or other provincial officials, Academic Council unanimously recognized that Ontario Tech University needs to be prepared to deliver courses in an emergency mode as may be necessary in the academic year 2020/2021.

Motion 2:

Furthermore that Ontario Tech University will return to established modes of teaching as soon as possible after Ontario Public Health declares this as safe.

Council considered the second motion relating to COVID19. The key comments on the proposed motion included:

- motion language is vague;
- proposed amendment – “will return to original modes of teaching as established in the Academic Calendar once the emergency situation is lifted by Academic Council”
- clarification that the Academic Calendar does not list the modes of delivery of teaching;
- another suggestion to make it clear that faculty would return to the mode of teaching as established by the programs and then follow governance process to make any changes;
- discussion about what “established mode” means - mode of delivery as it was before pandemic; and

- concern about constraining academic freedom.

Upon a motion duly made by H. Scott and seconded by Q. Mahmoud, due to time constraints, Academic Council agreed to defer this item until the next meeting.

10. Policy Consultation:

(a) Code of Ethics

N. O'Halloran delivered a presentation providing an overview of the Ethical Conduct Policy and its related procedures. Due to the time constraints and the comments made that additional discussion was required, it was proposed to defer the item. It was clarified that the consultation process needed to be completed before the June meeting of AC as the policy documents would be coming forward to the Board for approval on June 25. Council members were also invited to provide their feedback by e-mail. It was agreed that a special consultation session would be scheduled before the June AC meeting.

Committee Reports

11. Research Board - deferred

12. Graduate Studies Committee

(a) Graduate Calendar to Policy Migration Project - deferred

- i. Graduate Admission and Application Requirements
- ii. Graduate Categories and Decisions Policy
- iii. Graduate Program Changes and Transfers Policy
- iv. Graduate EDI and Non-Standard Admission Policy

(b) 2020 Graduate Student Conference Travel Award Guidelines - deferred

13. Governance & Nominations Committee (GNC)

- (a) Academic Council nomination - deferred
- (b) Honorary Degrees Committee Terms of Reference Review - deferred
- (c) Upcoming Committee Vacancies - deferred

14. Other Business

15. Termination

Upon a motion duly made by Q. Mahmoud and seconded by A. Mostaghim, the meeting terminated at 4:32 p.m.

Becky Dinwoodie, Secretary