

ACADEMIC COUNCIL

MINUTES of the MEETING of TUESDAY, OCTOBER 27, 2020 Videoconference, 2:30 - 4:30 p.m.

Present:

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

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

Staff & Guests:

Alam, Nazifa
Aristide, Maykah
Lochan
Babb, Shay
Basheer, Omar
Bauer, Chelsea
Bignell, Paul
Bruno, Jamie
Carr, Daniel
Dinwoodie, Becky
Donovan, Mills
Drea, Catherine
Fernandes, Sevrina
Foy, Cheryl
Gerrits, Melissa
Hamilton, Barbara
Hester, Krista
Hong, Daniel
Lachine, Noah
Livingstone, Clarissa
Maclsaac, Brad
McCartney, Kimberley
McGovern, Sue
McLaughlin, Christine
Mim, Farhin
Mohamed, Abdalla
Molinaro, Nichole
Nickle, Joanne
Oegema, Hannah
O'Halloran, Niall
Pitcher, Cathy
Presas, Daniel
Qi, Winston
Robern, Gil
Sankarlal, Josh
Taylor, Isaac
Uppal, Amtoj
Worden, Braeden

Wright, Sharifa
Yee, Ryan

Regrets:

Crawford, Greg
Frazer, Mitch
Hogue, Jessica
Kay, Robin
Sami, Ramin
Sheikh, Jahan

1. Call to Order

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

2. Agenda

Upon a motion duly made by A. Mostaghim and seconded by F. Jones, the Agenda was approved as presented.

3. Chair's Remarks

The Chair noted that it is midterm time and he appreciates the hard work going into this semester. The Chair discussed the status of COVID in Ontario and reminded everyone to continue to take precautions to prevent contracting and spreading the virus.

The Chair reported on recent announcements and events, including Project Arrow and the Women for STEM Summit. He was pleased to announce the recent awards of Professor Emeritus to Dr. Waker and Dr. Holdway.

He advised that special sessions will be scheduled for the first two parts of the blended learning strategic discussion and the first will be taking place on November 3 from 2:30 – 3:30 p.m., the same time slot as Academic Council. In response to a question about the timing of the second and third parts of the blended learning discussion, the Chair advised that part two is tentatively scheduled for the first Tuesday in December and will be confirmed after discussion with the Steering Committee.

4. Minutes of the Meeting of September 22, 2020

Upon a motion duly made by M. Eklund and seconded by B. Easton, the Minutes were approved as presented.

M. Lloyd abstained.

5. Business Arising from the Minutes

There was none.

6. Inquiries and Communications

There was none.

7. Provost's Remarks

The Provost expressed her heartfelt thanks to everyone for their continued contributions to the university over the past several months. She offered her congratulations to the following individuals:

- Dr. Jennifer Laffier, Faculty of Education – Minister's Award of Excellence;
- Dr. Allison Mann, Faculty of Education – Minister's Award of Excellence;
- Sara Dara, 4th-year engineering student - recipient of Women in Nuclear Canada scholarship;
- Dr. Joanne Arcand, Faculty of Health Sciences – National New Investigator Award from the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada; and
- Dr. Tanner Mirlees – named president of the Canadian Communication Association.

The Provost noted that next week is Treaties Recognition Week and more information on the upcoming events honouring the week will be included in the Weekly Report.

The Provost provided an enrolment update. She reminded Council of the key statistics – application numbers in January decreased by 10% over the previous year and the combined decrease in applications for the entire year was 12%. She thanked the Registrar's Office Team who helped convert applications to actual registrations. The Provost also thanked those who have participated in virtual open houses and other events. She advised that the registration for new first years is down by about 7%. At the last Council meeting it was reported that enrolment was up about 3.5% overall. At the deadline of the Student Experience Guarantee on October 9, the university experienced an increased number of students withdrawing. As of the meeting, overall registrations were up by about 2% over last year. The Provost advised that November 1 is the next key date, which is the reporting date to the Ministry.

The Provost advised that they are concerned about the drop in the first-year student cohort that will create an ongoing challenge in enrolment for the next three to five years. The Provost will provide an update at next month's meeting once they have the November count dates. The President added that in Ontario, the top five institutions increased their acceptances and lowered their entrance averages, which has presented a challenge for other smaller institutions.

(a) Senior Academic Administrator Search Updates

The Provost thanked everyone who participated in the search process for the Dean of FEAS. She also thanked those who attended the presentations and submitted questions and comments. She advised that an announcement is imminent pending Board approval.

(b) Vision, Mission, and Values Consultations

The Provost advised that consultations on updating the university's vision, mission and values started in 2015/2016 when the university was updating its strategic plan. It was decided to put the refresh on the vision, mission and values on hold at the time. Given the considerable change in senior leadership and Board renewal over the past few years, the timing is appropriate to proceed with the refresh. The Provost informed Council that town hall consultations are being held over the next several weeks and encouraged members to participate. The results of the consultations will be presented to Academic Council in November for a consultation session. The final proposal will be presented to the Board for approval.

8. Steering Committee Delegation of Authority Review

T. Pierce noted that we are officially in the second wave of the pandemic and the government has implemented a modified stage 2 in several regions of Ontario. While the Steering Committee has not yet used the delegation of authority, the committee would like to keep it in place as a precaution. A comment was made that we will be dealing with COVID-19 for an extended period of time and that if this is the "new normal", Academic Council should consider ending the delegation of authority.

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

One member voted in opposition and one member abstained.

9. Conferral of Degrees – Summer 2020

Upon a motion duly made by J. Stokes and seconded by F. Jones, 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 Summer Term 2020 and recommends the conferral of degrees by the Chancellor.

Committee Reports

10. Research Update

L. Jacobs provided an update on research funding. He informed Council that the university has experienced a significant increase over last year and there is still six

months left for reporting. L. Jacobs advised that the Research Board has set its five priorities for the year:

- Research Metrics Dashboard
- Canada Research Chairs program policy review
- Data Management Strategy
- Policy Reviews and Renewals
- Support & establishment of institutes and research centres

L. Jacobs advised that the university has signed on as a charter member of [Luminary](#). He explained that the main idea of this national initiative is to get universities involved in thinking about research and innovation with Indigenous partners. L. Jacobs also discussed a new research, teaching and learning collaboration with UofT Scarborough. The initial focus will be on research collaborations and will be launching in the next couple of weeks. He noted that there will be a workshop for interested faculty from the collaborating institutions. He discussed the strengths that Ontario Tech brings to the collaboration and encouraged everyone to think about the opportunity and to get involved.

11. Undergraduate Studies Committee and Graduate Studies Committee Report

(a) Virtual Proctor System Directives

L. Livingston introduced the proposed directives. She noted that the directives were developed as a result of a recommendation of the E-learning Taskforce. The rapid transition to online learning during COVID has required us to rethink the methods of course evaluation. She informed Council that the university has long had a licence to use Respondus. With the arrival of COVID, the province also invested in a means of virtual proctoring, Proctortrack. The legal department has conducted a review of the exam monitoring tools for issues, including from a privacy perspective. The university has obligations under privacy law and the directives were drafted by the Office of the University Secretary and General Counsel. The directives were developed to address a gap in existing exam proctoring policy and procedures.

The Provost responded to questions from Council members and the following is a summary of the key points of the discussion:

- Do the directives apply to live proctoring?
 - L. Roy advised that it is completely optional for instructors – instructors have the freedom to run exams as they prefer.
 - If an instructor chooses to use a virtual proctor system, then the directives apply.
- What about the collection of biometric data?
 - L. Roy clarified that biometric data is data used identify a specific individual.
- Concern about the effects of virtual proctor systems on students' mental health

- it seems to be creating additional anxiety among students – even webcams feel more intrusive than being in a classroom.
 - It is an opportune time to think about the norm of exams & to consider shifting away from final exams and implementing alternative assessment methods.
 - L. Roy advised that they are also in touch with the Student Union and Student Life and are aware of the anxiety that surrounds this.
- System should not prevent students from behaving as they normally would.
- Often, it is not the proctor system that is creating issues, but it is the way exams are being set up in the system.
- Suggestion made to communicate suggested practices to instructors using the virtual proctor system.
- Faculty encouraged to think about alternatives to final exams so that reliance on virtual proctor system wouldn't be required.
 - L. Livingston advised that there is a considerable amount of info on the website available to students and instructors – additional resources on the TLC website.
 - Only proctors and course instructors can view the information captured by the remote proctor system.
- With the security breach that occurred several weeks ago, difficult to have confidence in a system that has been breached.
- What do instructors do with suspicious activities that are flagged? How do flags translate to potential academic misconduct? Concern about time constraints involved in investigating flags.
 - Cannot have a one size fits all rule.
 - Can assign proctors to view the videos – the number of flags only an indicator and instructor can decide to further review.
 - L. Livingston advised that it was a quality assurance breach of Proctortrack – only a small number of instructors were affected.
 - Number of students evaluated using Proctortrack is approximately 700 – received no communications that indicated that any of the university's accounts were compromised as part of the breach.
- Concern about use of virtual proctor systems from the perspective of vulnerable students.
 - C. Foy added that the Privacy Office has been involved in assessing the technology from a privacy perspective and is listening to and anticipating student concerns – FAQs are available on the website.

- When we, as an institution, use these tools, the guidance is that biometric collection should not be collected as part of the tool.
- With academic freedom, faculty have the freedom to choose what they want to use.
- Concern expressed about the consultation process and lack of student feedback.
- Students expressing concerns about privacy and mental health – increase in test anxiety.
- Suggestion made to include the list of policies and procedures for consultation on Canvas to alert students.
 - N. O'Halloran provided an overview of the consultation process; he noted that this type of system has been in use for a while and it was a priority to get the directives in place to regulate how the data collected in the system can be used in order to provide administrative controls on who can use the data; part of the urgency in developing the directives was to implement guidance and create barriers to the misuse of information.
- Consultation was at an inopportune time for students.
- Consider further consultation with students and instructors who have experience using such a system.
 - L. Livingston spoke to the concerns expressed by the Student Union, which fall into three categories:
 - ability to toggle back and forth between questions – technical fix is there;
 - System crashing and students having to reconnect during an exam; and
 - Concern about eye movements being marked as flags.
 - L. Livingston reminded Council that instructors have been using Respondus since before COVID.
- Deans have been discussing alternative forms of assessment over the past couple of years – have been encouraging instructors to use alternative forms of assessment.
 - L. Livingston suggested scheduling a strategic discussion for Academic Council to discuss alternative forms of assessment and the effectiveness of virtual system proctoring as a means of protecting academic integrity.
- Need a directive in place to protect students' privacy.
- Given the concerns about these systems, even if someone brings forward an allegation of academic misconduct, it is possible the allegations would be dismissed or appealed, so not sure how useful these are.
- Suggestion to have training on alternative evaluation examples.
- The backtracking may not be applicable in all programs due to preparing students for licensure exams. And preparing students to be successful on

these exams that do not allow backtracking.

- Have been talking about alternative assessments for a long time, but it would be a good faculty development opportunity if had formal training on alternative assessment methods
- What's worse, the cure or disease? Have had much discussion about the cure but not the disease. We must try to prevent academic misconduct. As an institution, should be aware that means of evaluating students does not decrease value of degrees. Challenge is that we need a better tool of preventing academic misconduct.
- Suggestion made that the directive could include a statement about the university not endorsing the use of these tools due to these concerns and to make it clear in the directives that the purpose of the directives is to protect students.
- While we do need the directives, it would be helpful to conduct further consultation with students. If professors are using the systems, we should put directives in place.
- Suggestion that the directives should be reviewed after four months to allow for further review and consultation.
- Suggestion not to endorse any one particular system as the available tech is evolving quickly.
- Suggestion to bring the directives back to Academic Council and to find a balance between not endorsing virtual proctor systems but sets out that if an instructor chooses to use a virtual proctor system, then the directives must be followed.

L. Roy withdrew the motion and the directives will return to Academic Council next month.

12. Governance & Nominations Committee

(a) Vice-Chair Nomination

Upon a motion duly made by L. Livingston and seconded by H. Kishawy, pursuant to the recommendation of the Governance and Nominations Committee, Academic Council unanimously appointed Amir Mostaghim as Vice-Chair of Academic Council for the term of November 1, 2020 until October 31, 2021.

A. Mostaghim abstained.

T. Pierce thanked A. Mostaghim for volunteering for the role.

(b) By-law Implementation Plan Update

L. Livingston presented the update. She noted that much progress has been made against the By-laws Implementation Plan. Most significantly, the establishment of a new Academic Council Governance and Nominations Committee (GNC). The GNC

is responsible for overseeing the implementation of By-law No. 2; accordingly, the By-law Implementation Plan guides the development of the GNC's annual work plan. The GNC has made good progress in reviewing the Terms of Reference of Academic Council's standing committees and developing governance procedures, namely the selection of a Vice-Chair and Board Liaison. The implementation of the new By-laws is providing a solid foundation for good governance processes and is working to strengthen bicameral governance.

(c) Faculty Council Membership Lists

L. Livingston presented the Faculty Council membership lists for approval. A correction was made to the Faculty of Health Sciences Faculty Council Membership List - Carol Cancelliere should be added as a limited term faculty member.

Upon a motion duly made by L. Livingston and seconded by A. Barari, pursuant to the recommendation of the Governance and Nominations Committee, Academic Council unanimously approved the following 2020-2021 Faculty Council membership lists, as amended:

- *Faculty of Business & Information Technology*
- *Faculty of Education*
- *Faculty of Energy Systems & Nuclear Science*
- *Faculty of Engineering & Applied Science*
- *Faculty of Health Sciences*
- *Faculty of Science*
- *Faculty of Social Science & Humanities*

13. Other Business

Upon a motion duly made by H. Scott and seconded by O. Davis, Academic Council unanimously resolved that Ontario Tech University move to a videoconferencing platform that allows up to 250 participants.

C. Foy clarified that it is a hortative motion.

14. Termination

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

Becky Dinwoodie, Secretary