



## **ACADEMIC COUNCIL (AC)**

Minutes of the special meeting of Tuesday, March 31, 2020  
2:30 - 3:30 p.m., Video Conference Only

### **Present:**

Murphy, Steven (Chair)  
Bliemel, Michael  
Crawford, Greg  
Davidson, Catherine  
Desaulniers, Jean-Paul  
Gaber, Hossam  
Habibi, Sarah  
Heydari, Shahram  
Hogue, Jessica  
Hossein Nejad, Mehdi  
Jacobs, Les  
Kay, Robin  
Kishawy, Hossam  
Livingston, Lori  
Lesage, Ann  
Liscano, Ramiro  
Lloyd, Meghann  
McCabe, Janet  
Mostaghim, Amir  
Murphy, Bernadette

Naumkin, Fedor  
Nugent, Kimberly  
Partosoedarso, Elita  
Pierce, Tess  
Rahnamayan,  
Shahryar  
Rinaldi, Jen  
Roy, Langis  
Scott, Hannah  
Shon, Phillip  
Stokes, Joe  
Tokuhiko, Akira  
Woolridge, Lyndsay  
Wu, Terry

### **Staff:**

Dinwoodie,  
Becky  
Foy, Cheryl  
Maclsaac, Brad  
McCartney,  
Kimberley  
Molinaro, Nichole  
Pitcher, Cathy

### **Regrets:**

Barari, Ahmad  
Jones, Ferdinand  
Khalid, Osama  
Mahmoud, Qusay  
Marques, Olga  
Mohany, Atef  
Petrie, Olivia  
Stoett, Peter  
Taylor, Noreen  
Williams, Alyssa

### **1. Call to Order**

The Chair called the meeting to order at 2:30 p.m.

### **2. Agenda**

A request was made to change the order of the agenda items to consider the conferral of nursing degrees before the Steering Committee Terms of Reference Amendment.

*Upon a motion duly made by A. Mostaghim and seconded by G. Crawford, the Agenda was unanimously approved, as amended.*

A question was asked about when the minutes from the special meeting of March 27 would be available. C. Foy advised that the goal is to present them all for approval at the next regular AC meeting.

A question was asked about the availability of the polling feature in BlueJeans. The Chair asked for the problem to be identified so that resolutions may be considered.

### **3. Chair's Remarks**

The Chair noted that we are going through an unprecedented time and that he appreciates how engaged the AC members have been. Council had a very nuanced discussion during the last special meeting regarding the amendments to the exam grading policy. Decisions need to be made quickly and thoughtfully and all universities and boards are thinking about how to accomplish this during the pandemic situation. As we look to public health for guidance on what we might expect, we might find ourselves in a further crisis situation than we are now. Accordingly, we must plan on how to continue operations in the most effective manner, and this includes the governing bodies. It is critical to focus on how to make decisions in a timely way.

He hopes that Council members feel that they were heard, as they were provided with more time and information. The Office of the University Secretary and General Counsel was asked to prepare draft amendments to the Steering Committee Terms of Reference (ToR) for consideration. The Chair thanked T. Pierce for her work on the ToR. He also thanked B. Dinwoodie and C. Foy for pulling the material together so quickly.

The Chair expressed his gratitude to AC for working together to ensure a contingency plan is in place prior to the current situation escalating. He has never felt prouder to lead this organization. He noted that the conferral of degrees to nursing students is one way to help with the pandemic response by getting our graduates in the field sooner.

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

The Provost echoed the Chair's sentiments by saying thank you to AC members. She hopes everyone is well and safe. She also thanked all faculty, staff and students for their willingness to be part of the solution and help transition online as quickly as we did. The Provost expressed thanks to the AVPs and Deans, Head of IT and the University Library for their outstanding leadership in terms of keeping academic operations moving forward. She shared some of the positive feedback received. She encouraged everyone to continue to be vigilant against the virus and to develop a daily routine. The Provost ended with one big thank you to everyone.

### **5. Conferral of Nursing Degrees for Winter Term 2020**

J. Stokes presented the report for consideration. J. McCabe added that the early conferral of nursing degrees would allow our students to become registered with a temporary licence and move them into positions with the hospitals and agencies they are working for

to assist with the pandemic response. A member asked that J. McCabe pass on thanks on behalf of AC to the nursing students and nursing colleagues for their efforts.

*Upon a motion duly made by J. Stokes and seconded by M. Lloyd, pursuant to the recommendations of the Faculty of Health Sciences and the Registrar, Academic Council unanimously confirmed the eligibility for graduation of those students who have fulfilled all nursing degree requirements at the end of the Winter Term 2020 and recommends the conferral of degrees by the Chancellor.*

The Chair thanked J. McCabe and J. Stokes for their work on making it possible for AC and the university to make this additional contribution to the front-line work to battle COVID-19.

## **6. Amendments to Academic Council Steering Committee (SC)**

The proposed amendments to the SC Terms of Reference (ToR) will allow AC to proactively delegate authority to a body of AC to make decisions in the event that AC cannot reach quorum. This would allow a committee of AC to participate in academic decision making during a time of crisis when we do not have the luxury of time. The Chair confirmed that the SC must always report decisions it makes on behalf of AC to AC for information.

C. Foy walked through the proposed amendments to the AC ToR. In addition to the motions set out in the report, a third motion would likely be required to address the scope and duration of the delegation of authority, depending on the outcome of the first motion. It was clarified that the delegation of authority to the SC could be for a limited period of time, as well as limited in scope. The delegation could also come into effect as of a date set by AC. The delegation is also reviewable by AC – any delegation of authority can be revoked by the delegating body at any time. All decisions made by the SC would be reported to AC. C. Foy clarified that there are two separate motions set out in the accompanying report.

There was a lengthy discussion regarding how long the delegation of authority would remain in effect. There was support for delegating the authority for a month and then reviewing it on a monthly basis (at the regularly scheduled monthly AC meetings). It was reiterated that the plan was to continue to hold the already scheduled AC meetings, as long as quorum can be reached. AC always has the power to revoke and/or limit the delegation of authority and the delegation of authority would not preclude AC from continuing to schedule meetings and trying to meet. In an ideal scenario, AC would continue to have the ability to meet but must also plan for the worst by recommending the changes to the SC ToR.

The changes to the Steering Committee ToR would not affect the schedule of AC meetings. The current membership of the Steering Committee was confirmed – there are currently five *ex officio* members and five elected members on the committee. There is one vacancy for an elected member of AC.

AC continued to engage in a robust discussion of the proposed amendments to the SC ToR. A summary of the comments and related responses follows:

- the delegation of authority set out in the ToR is too vague and the limits on the delegation should be included in the ToR— for these reasons, the member opposed the motion
  - the Chair noted that there would be measures put in place to avoid the potential for any abuse of authority
- a member of the Steering Committee expressed support for the spirit of the motion and disagreed with the suggestion of including limitations in the ToR – the proposed limitations would be reflected in the minutes and would be available for future reference; AC members should focus on the spirit of the motion first, and then wordsmithing can happen later – out of mutual respect, believes that people would not abuse the power that is granted
- what would happen the following month if the delegation of authority is triggered by AC’s failure to reach quorum?
  - AC should be proactive rather than waiting to delegate the authority by failing to reach quorum – having the tool available to Council would be useful
  - if an AC meeting is called and quorum is not reached, a meeting of the Steering Committee would be quickly called
- ideally the delegation of authority would be time limited (approximately a month or so) and would be reconsidered by Council upon the expiry of the time period
- the amendment is being proposed based on the assumption that AC will continue with its monthly meetings – this implicitly provides at least a monthly opportunity for Council to reconsider the delegation
- a concern was expressed about the balance of elected versus *ex officio* members on the Steering Committee
- people must be able to be reached in a timely fashion – in an emergency situation, bodies must be able to make decisions quickly; it would be helpful to keep flexibility in the Steering Committee ToR
- there was general support from Council for enacting the delegation of authority for the period of a month
- there could be a situation where AC cannot meet due to problems with infrastructure (access to internet, phones, etc.) as opposed to health reasons
- the phone numbers of the members of the Steering Committee and AC should be shared to ensure governance continuity
- deciding to amend the ToR to give AC the right to delegate authority to the Steering Committee and proceeding with delegating that authority are separate considerations and should not be conflated
- a member commented that she was not comfortable voting on the proposal given the material was distributed only 24 hours in advance of the meeting
  - the Chair noted that the delegation of authority was discussed during last week’s AC meeting and that AC members were aware the proposal was coming forward – 24 hours is a long time in the current reality
- expressions of interest should be solicited from Council members who would be interested in serving on the SC to ensure the committee could fill vacancies as they arise

- there was concern that AC could end up in a situation where it could not reach quorum in order to approve extending the delegation of authority to the SC
- a request was made to show in the minutes that the delegation of authority would be for a month and that the schedule of AC meetings would not change
- suggested including a provision in the ToR requiring the SC to make all efforts to continue to coordinate AC meetings as scheduled, or as soon as possible thereafter
- should not put the time limitation in the SC ToR to provide for flexibility to adjust to the emergency situation facing them
- what happens if the emergency continues over the summer when AC is not scheduled to meet?
- C. Foy drafted the following language to add to the ToR and circulated it in the chat feature and B. Dinwoodie circulated it by e-mail: *The Steering Committee will make all efforts to arrange Academic Council meetings such that this delegation of authority is reviewed monthly or as quickly thereafter as possible.*
- B. Dinwoodie circulated it by e-mail to all Council members.

*Upon a motion duly made by B. Murphy and seconded by M. Lloyd, Academic Council recommended the proposed amendments to the Steering Committee Terms of Reference, as amended, for approval by the Board of Governors.*

*One member opposed and one member abstained.*

It was noted that the meeting was already almost half an hour over the allotted time. Council members were asked whether they preferred to extend the current meeting or convene another special meeting to discuss the actual delegation of authority. The Chair advised that the meeting would be called soon. Given that a number of members had to leave if the meeting were simply extended, it was decided to convene another special meeting as soon as possible to consider the delegation of authority.

## **7. Termination**

*Upon a motion duly made by B. Murphy and seconded by J. McCabe, the meeting terminated at 3:56 p.m.*

Becky Dinwoodie, Secretary