



## BOARD OF GOVERNORS

### Governance, Nominations & Human Resources Committee (GNHR)

Minutes of the Public Session of the Meeting of March 30, 2021

2:00 – 2:50 p.m., Videoconference

**Members:** Maria Saros (Chair), Laura Elliott, Francis Garwe, Mitch Frazer, Kori Kingsbury, Steven Murphy, Dietmar Reiner, Trevin Stratton

**Regrets:** Lisa Edgar

**Staff:** Jamie Bruno, Cheryl Foy, Barb Hamilton, Lori Livingston, Andrew Sunstrum

**Guests:** Mike Eklund

#### 1. Call to Order

The Chair called the meeting to order at 2:01 p.m.

#### 2. Agenda

*Upon a motion duly made by L. Elliott and seconded by F. Garwe, the Agenda was approved as presented.*

#### 3. Conflict of Interest Declaration

There were no conflict of interest declarations.

#### 4. Chair's Remarks

The Chair thanked the members for attending the meeting. It is difficult to believe that we are a year into the pandemic. We have adjusted to the normalcy of meeting virtually and look forward to when we can meet in person again. The Chair extended her thanks to the senior leadership team for their continued support of the community. There is reason for optimism as the vaccine rollout continues to improve in pace and supply. She shared that the committee chairs have been working with the Secretariat to ensure there is more time

allocated for strategic discussion during meetings. She looks forward to the continued discussion of EDI during today's meeting.

## 5. President's Remarks

The President reported on the release of the President Equity Taskforce (PET) Report, which was recently released to the university community. The report serves as a template for the university. He confirmed that the university has hired a Director of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion and she is already working on setting an agenda of goals for the university in the short, medium and long-term. The President reported that throughout the pandemic, the university has been alerted to a number of issues related to EDI:

**Accessibility:** As we move online, access does not mean only access to buildings and the university as a whole. It also includes access to broadband internet. The Province has committed to improving broadband access. We will have to consider ongoing solutions.

**Ideology:** Universities are microcosms of society. Part of a university's mission should be to be leaders in society and be self-reflective. Many institutions take the approach that EDI should be handled in one way when there are many ways to approach EDI and if a different approach is taken, can be subject to criticism from an ideological perspective. The President shared a story of his interaction with Elders in the university. He had a discussion with them about land acknowledgments and the Elders encouraged him to personalize it so that it takes the acknowledgment off the page and gives it more meaning.

At the Board level, the President shared that he is proud of the gains that have been made since he joined. He referred to the 2018 Board recruitment process, which was focused on EDI principles. The Board looked for the very best people and, as a result of the focused search, there were no white male appointees. He emphasized the importance of being guided by principles to achieve the best results. It is essential to think about how we can incorporate EDI into our Board processes going forward.

## 6. Governance

### 6.1 Strategic Discussion: Governance EDI Strategy

The Chair reminded the committee that they received the PET Report at the December Board meeting. She referenced the recommendations included in the report. The Chair also discussed the educational session with Dr. Brown in December, during which he made a powerful comment about moving from inclusion to belonging.

The Chair posed the following questions for the committee to discuss:

- (a) *How important is it for the Board to ensure Board composition reflects the broader university community?*

Comments from the committee included:

- must balance with a diversity of skills, thought and expertise;
- the 2018 recruitment process was rigorous and aligned with an EDI focus - it was evident in the process that EDI was a priority;
- do we have any statistical information on community demographics that would assist with determining whether Board composition reflects our community?
- important to focus on underrepresented groups and be mindful of the community composition of the immediate vicinity of the university;
- should set goals for Board membership diversity and when recruiting, should focus on achieving those goals; should also focus on the recruitment of individuals with disabilities;
- would be helpful to establish a targeted recruitment process;
- concern that setting specific targets might have unintended consequences;
- suggestion that we should have a principled focus setting out the Board's commitment and intent rather than establishing specific targets;
- there are elements in the PET report that will be crucial;
- in the healthcare sector, they rely heavily on demographic data available on Durham Region – there is demographic information available;
- data will help inform the Board's direction and strategy;
- must determine KPIs to help us identify when we are making progress;
- will be helpful to have data to identify where we might be underrepresented;
- when we look at community, it is also important to look at our student population – important to ensure that students and faculty can see themselves in the Board membership;
- representation from underrepresented communities integral;
- also important to take into account intersectionality – an individual may represent several communities;
- do we have an EDI evaluation of the Board? must identify gaps on the Board as they consider future vacancies; and
- should also be mindful of just “ticking boxes”.

*(b) What commitments will the Board make to improving their understanding of EDI?*

Comments from the committee included:

- the Board should commit to continuous professional development;
- must keep abreast of education on EDI;
- committee members expressed support for committing to further education on EDI; and

- optional PD sessions provide further opportunities for learning – also referenced Pi Day Speaker Series, which included some EDI topics;
- should also consider adding EDI questions to the Board/Committee annual assessment – do governors feel included? Could be used to assess current status of Board’s inclusiveness;
- helpful to be a bit more specific with respect to diversity aspect of the Board;
- suggestion that the new EDI Director provide an update to the Board to ensure the work is being done in parallel; and
- governors would be willing to share their learnings from their professional lives.

## **6.2 Annual Board & Committee Practices Assessment**

C. Foy provided an overview of the report included in the materials. She asked the committee to consider whether the assessments should go into a greater level of individual assessment and whether we should use the assessments as an opportunity to gather additional information from governors. We have not yet asked governors to self-identify on intersectionality. Should this be added to the annual assessment or should a separate survey be developed? What question(s) would the committee want to add this year, if any?

A member noted that the assessment would provide an opportunity to identify a few areas where the Board could be more helpful to the university. There was a discussion regarding what other institutions’ Boards are doing with respect to EDI. B. Dinwoodie updated the committee on the benchmarking exercise that was conducted at the start of the Board year with respect to the approach other institutions’ Boards are taking with respect to EDI. The responses collected during the benchmarking indicated that other institutions’ Boards had not yet developed an EDI statement and that it was being addressed at the institutional level. The Board Chair shared his experience working at a provincially owned organization and advised that EDI is front and centre of every discussion with the shareholders.

The committee supported aiming for a 100% response rate for the annual assessments. They also agreed that EDI is critical for Board effectiveness. They want to ensure that the Board takes intentional steps when making their EDI commitments. Whatever the Board does with respect to EDI, it is important to ensure it is thoughtful and purposeful. A member commented that the Board must also be “wary of symbolism.” It was suggested to add an open-ended question to the Board Practices Assessment to the effect of “What is your perspective about the Board’s role in EDI?” It is important to engage with the communities that you want to represent. The Board must have the buy in of the community and ensure it is authentic and developed from a place of true meaning. The

committee agreed that it is a good time to leverage the survey and assess the governors' perceptions of EDI.

**7. Consent Agenda:**

The Chair noted that the policies being presented underpin the university's work on EDI.

*Upon a motion duly made by K. Kingsbury and seconded by D. Reiner, the Consent Agenda was approved as presented..*

**7.1 Accommodation Policy**

**7.2 Respectful Campus Policy**

**7.3 Procedures to Prevent and Address Discrimination and Harassment By or Against Employees**

**7.4 Minutes of the Meeting of January 28, 2021**

**8. For Information:**

**8.1 Annual Pension Plan Report**

**9. Other Business**

**10. Adjournment**

*There being no other business, upon a motion duly made by L. Elliott, the public session of the meeting adjourned at 2:55 p.m.*

Becky Dinwoodie, Secretary