



BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Governance, Nominations & Human Resources Committee (GNHR)

Minutes of the Public Session of the Meeting of Thursday, October 22, 2020 Video Conference, 2:00 p.m. to 3:20 p.m.

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

Regrets: Kori Kingsbury

Staff: Jarek Baginski, Jamie Bruno, Becky Dinwoodie, Cheryl Foy, Barb Hamilton, Monica Jain, Les Jacobs, Lori Livingston, Langis Roy

Guests : Chelsea Bauer (FA), Mike Eklund (FA), Andrew Sunstrum

1. Call to Order

The Chair called the meeting to order at 2:02 p.m.

2. Agenda

Upon a motion duly made by D. Reiner and seconded by L. Elliott, the Agenda was approved as presented.

3. Conflict of Interest Declaration

There was none.

4. Chair's Remarks

The Chair started by thanking F. Garwe for his leadership and mentorship. She remarked that he is leaving big shoes to fill. She thanked the senior leadership team for leading the university through the pandemic and prioritizing the health and safety of the university community.

The Chair advised that she has a conflict and must step off the call for a short while and F. Garwe has agreed to step in during that time.

5. President's Remarks

The President also expressed thanks to F. Garwe for his leadership. The President provided an update on the university's COVID efforts. The university has had a more seamless transition online than many other institutions. The President shared that when he has the opportunity, he asks students how the fall term is going. Overwhelmingly, the responses have been positive. The President attributed this to the hard work of faculty and staff. He is proud of how the university continues to support students during this difficult time. We will use what we have learned during the pandemic to strengthen the institution going forward. The President noted that several institutions have tried to hold classes in person and others are offering a hybrid model. He has been hearing that other institutions are not communicating as effectively as Ontario Tech and are making very last-minute changes. He advised that the Provost has been speaking to the Deans in order to understand what is working across the university.

The President advised that from a governance perspective, in-depth strategic discussions are being held with Academic Council about blended learning. He clarified that the intention is not to become a fully online university. He looks forward to the discussion and debate about how the university will become more of what it was intended to be as set out in its founding legislation. Academic Council will be discussing: What blended learning is and is not; What blended learning means for Ontario Tech?; and, How do we promote culture change at the university going forward?

The President also discussed government relations and the potential impact of a tuition freeze. There was a discussion regarding how Ontario university presidents would be aligning regarding this potential issue. The President advised that the Ontario university presidents are working with the new CEO of COU, Steve Orsini, to present the government with several options instead of freezing tuition.

The President responded to a question about enrolment at institutions that are struggling with the transition online. It seems that in a time of crisis, students gravitate to institutions with recognizable names. The big-name institutions have lowered entry requirements and increased student intake, which has had a domino effect on less recognizable institutions. The university's first year enrolment is down about 7%, which will have budget consequences as the students work their way through the system. He is confident that we can win students back with a different and value-added proposition going forward.

6. Governance:

6.1 GNHR Terms of Reference Review

C. Foy advised that the committee has an annual opportunity to review and comment on its Terms of Reference. She asked the committee to consider, in particular, whether the mandate and membership are still appropriate and whether the number of meetings is sufficient. There was a discussion regarding whether there are other frameworks out there that could help improve the effectiveness of the committee. C. Foy advised that we are always looking at new ways of doing things to improve efficiency. There was general

agreement that the Terms of Reference are broad enough to encompass the work that the committee is doing. There could be changes coming out of the development of the EDI governance strategy this year.

6.2 By-laws Implementation Update

C. Foy reminded the committee that this is a multi-year project coming out of the by-law review. She referred the committee to the By-law Implementation Plan, which provides the status of all of the work being done. She highlighted several of the key accomplishments. The focus for Academic Council's Governance and Nominations Committee this year will be rolling out good governance principles to Faculty Councils.

6.3 Board Engagement:

(M. Saros left at 2:30 p.m.)

(a) Board PD 2020-2021

C. Foy presented the proposed professional development work plan for the year. The work plan was developed keeping in mind the university's strategic priorities, the work of the Board this year, and getting to know different areas of the university. C. Foy added that we could also offer some optional sessions, if governors are interested. She asked the committee what other areas they think the Board members would like to learn about.

The committee shared the following feedback on the PD work plan:

- EDI is a huge area of challenges and opportunities for all organizations – must relate to the work of the university; focus on expectations for staff and support for students; EDI topic is incredibly important and all encompassing; C. Foy advised that at the December Board meeting, the Board would be receiving an update from the President's Equity Task Force and the February PD session would focus on what the Board can do to promote EDI.
- Important for the Board to learn about the EDI work already happening at the university – L. Livingston advised that the new Director of EDI was recently hired and is developing a strategic plan for the university; cultural competencies will be an area of focus.
- It is a comprehensive work plan – might be helpful to have a session on governors being ambassadors for the university as every governor has a unique skillset and must apply that to help promote the university. C. Foy advised that something similar to this was done during last year's retreat, when governors were asked to create a statement of commitment and an ambassador session could help carry on that momentum.
- A suggestion was made that the Board would benefit from an education session on the strategic relationship with Durham College (optional session or record it to make it available to governors at various times).
- Another helpful session would be Funding 101.

6.4 Development of Board Governance EDI Strategy

C. Foy advised that the Board is at the beginning stages of this initiative. The question that must be answered is: What can the Board do to complement the EDI work being done at the institution? C. Foy asked the members to identify what is important to the committee and what they would like to see in a work plan. GNHR will be the engine of EDI for the Board. The Board should build on what the university is already doing. C. Foy informed the committee that she does have an idea about a guest speaker for the February PD session, but welcomed ideas from the committee, as well. This initiative will be a multi-year plan (3-5 years). It will be internal and external facing.

A member commented that it is important for the university to demonstrate EDI leadership in Durham Region, as it will be linked to the brand we are building in the region. Are we walking and living the path? How is the university contributing to the well-being of the region? The university can play a key role in building the future. Another member commented that the Board benefits from governors coming from different environments.

(M. Saros returned at 2:53 p.m.)

6.5 Strategic Discussion: Mental Health in the Time of COVID

J. Baginski and M. Jain delivered a presentation on supporting student mental health in the time of COVID. The university recognizes that mental health is increasingly important and that the context for students has changed dramatically. They outlined the initiatives implemented to transition online and to support students during the pandemic. The committee was asked to assess whether the university is keeping up, changing accordingly, and to focus on the key next steps and strategies.

The committee had the following comments and questions:

- Encouraged to hear that the response times to students were dramatically reduced.
- How are our students resilient?
 - Students who are compromised will be compromised at a greater scale;
 - University does an excellent job supporting our students – from advisors to mental health supports.
- Applauded the team for the work they are doing – particularly the peer mentorship for first year students.
- Lessons learned in terms of service delivery during the pandemic?
 - Learned power of e-counselling – was previously only provided to remote students.
 - Have become better at delivering virtual services – have heard from students that they hope that the virtual option remains available for a blended delivery.
 - Also implemented the stepped care – better equipped to provide specialized and customized service – launched in September

- Wait list cut down significantly despite higher volumes – have capacity to accommodate those in acute need almost immediately.
- Happy to see the focus on this and that keeping the well-being of students and university community at the forefront.
- Concern about the lingering effects of COVID and economic recovery and the university should keep a focus on it.
- Programs/sessions geared towards mental health issues for the broader student population?
 - M. Jain spoke about Campus Connected – staff led session teaching peers to recognize signs and help their peers – once training completed, given a sticker to indicate those who can be approached for assistance – for students and staff.
 - Such programming is provided year-round.
 - Working to normalize mental health and eliminate the stigma – looking at emotional wellness.
- Very proud to be associated with the work being done at the university – great number of partners available to help – noted that physicians at CAREA available to help support students in the community.
 - Uptake across the sector was initially low but trend will be that demand will increase.
 - With the student population, there will be more need, especially over the next 18 months.

J. Bruno delivered a presentation on the efforts implemented to support staff mental health. He advised that in January, the university partnered with Mental Health Canada in providing a session called the “Working Mind”, which was designed to help employees learn to identify the symptoms and signs of mental health challenges and to help develop the tools to deal with them. This also assists managers in dealing with the effects of COVID. The Chair commented that she appreciates the level of care being taken to ensure everyone can emerge resilient from this crisis.

7. Consent Agenda:

7.1 Minutes of the Meeting of May 14, 2020

Upon a motion duly made by D. Reiner and seconded by F. Garwe, the Consent Agenda was approved as presented.

8. Other Business

9. Adjournment

There being no other business, upon a motion duly made, the public session adjourned at 3:33 p.m.

Becky Dinwoodie, Secretary