



**BOARD OF GOVERNORS**  
**Strategy & Planning Committee (S&P)**

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**Minutes of the Public Session of the Meeting of Thursday, March 18, 2021**  
**2:00 p.m. to 3:25 p.m., Videoconference Only**

**Attendees:** Thorsten Koseck (Chair), Azzam Abu-Rayash, Liqun Cao, Kevin Chan, Mitch Frazer, Steven Murphy, Dietmar Reiner, Jim Wilson, Lynne Zucker

**Staff:** Jamie Bruno, Becky Dinwoodie, Cheryl Foy, Barb Hamilton, Les Jacobs, Lori Livingston, Brad Maclsaac, Sue McGovern

**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 D. Reiner and seconded by K. Chan, the Agenda was approved as presented.*

**3. Conflict of Interest Declaration**

There was none.

**4. Chair's Remarks**

The Chair thanked the members for making time to attend the meeting. After a year of dealing with the pandemic, we can finally start to see a light at the end of the tunnel. He shared a story about a colleague in the United States who contracted COVID after following all of the protocols and made an exception to have dinner at a friend's. He encouraged everyone to remain vigilant and to get vaccinated when they have the opportunity.

**5. President's Remarks**

The President began by saying he also hopes everyone is keeping well and agrees that we can see the light at the end of the tunnel. He provided an update on the return to campus planning. He emphasized the need to stay nimble. The reality is that this year will differ from a normal year. In the best case scenario, classes will be able to be held

on campus. Planning will continue to be guided by public health. In the worst case scenario, emergency remote teaching will continue. If we must continue to observe physical distancing, there may be a blended scenario where large classes take place online and smaller labs can happen in person. Ensuring the safety of the campus community continues to be the main priority.

The Chair asked whether there is a drop dead date for the decision on next year's classes. The President updated the committee on the parallel planning that is taking place for the fall in order to be prepared for several scenarios and to be able to provide our students with some certainty. The Provost outlined the upcoming critical dates, including the university's virtual Open House being held on March 27. She emphasized that at this point, communications are key as we continue parallel mapping of the fall schedule. Most institutions have communicated that they will be back on campus and we will be delivering a similar message that we will be on campus if possible and providing online options, as well. The schedule for the Winter Term will be delayed until we have more certainty. There was a discussion regarding the messaging for international students. B. MacIsaac advised that work continues with the Faculties to provide flexibility to students who may not be able to travel or come to campus because of health issues.

There was also a discussion regarding whether the return to campus would be dependent on people being vaccinated. C. Foy advised that there is a COU working group examining the issue and a legal opinion will be obtained. From a legal perspective, they are exploring what incentives and/or constraints are appropriate for unvaccinated individuals. C. Foy explained that generally, when a legal opinion is obtained through COU, it provides a framework for the university to work within. The committee also discussed the anxiety levels that can be anticipated upon returning to campus. The President acknowledged the mental health concerns considering everything people have experienced over the past year.

The President discussed his efforts to try to get people to think about the future and focused on strong pedagogy that incorporates technology that will make us the experiential learning leader of Canada. They are also working to reshape how the university thinks about work and will be giving employees the flexibility to work both at home and on campus. The President acknowledged that there is an incredible amount of change happening at the same time. He noted that it makes little sense to insist that everyone comes back in person as the focus is on the work that people get done as opposed to where they do it.

## **6. Strategy**

### **6.1. Strategic Discussion: Sticky Campus – Post-COVID 19**

L. Livingston explained that COVID has shifted our reality and that the university now has three prominent campuses: north, downtown, and virtual. COVID has flipped our reality

where everything is now taking place virtually. Social interactions are important to the university community and people miss the collective spirit. The focus is on how to keep people connected to our campuses. L. Livingston noted there are three key emerging perspectives relating to COVID:

1. COVID has changed our behaviours and will have a lasting impact.
2. Resiliency in university design must focus on ability to adapt to changing environment.
3. Online learning and online work do not replace the face-to-face interactions.

There were three key strategic questions for the committee to consider:

- How do we strategically align the educational, work, and social needs of our constituents within our physical and virtual spaces?
- What strategies should guide the re-purposing of our existing spaces and our technological assets to be shared, flexible, and task-oriented?
- What strategic approach should we utilize in welcoming and reconnecting with our community stakeholders, industry partners, and alumni in new and meaningful ways?

L. Livingston advised that the current focus is getting students back on campus. As we transition back to a new reality and experience a shift in the proportion of people working in different locations, how do we welcome people back when some may not feel comfortable returning to campus?

Comments and suggestions from the committee included:

- suggestion of having a "welcome back open house";
- encouraged the university to be seen as leaders in this area - opportunity to look at what is the end stage we are aiming for and how to move toward it?
- opportunity to be a leader as opposed to responding to the environment;
- continue to offer a combination of online and in person as a future reality;
- if able to be a step ahead, would be in position to help industry partners and other institutions that are facing similar issues;
- social aspect – what has transitioned online that we do not want to lose upon returning to campus?
- suggestion to take some control over who the university needs back on campus - start with the principle of who needs to come back - if we allow large groups of people to work from home without fully understanding the landscape when returning, it could be problematic – will be important to set out constraints;
- it will be an opportune time to host appreciation events/galas for the university community to help with engagement;
- strategy in the manufacturing environment is to have workers come back to work in person at least once or twice a week - also important to build in a transition phase to help people adjust and become more comfortable; and

- consider that if repurposing spaces, it is a great tool to drive culture change – use the refreshed vision, mission and values and incorporate into the space planning.

## **6.2. Strategic Risk Update**

C. Foy provided an update on strategic risk planning. She informed the committee that the focus is on ensuring we are not knocked off our strategic game. She provided an overview of the process followed, with the help of the Board, to identify twelve key strategic risks. They also identified the key foundational risks: financial sustainability and compliance. This year, they have been particularly focused on mapping the operational risks to the strategic risks. As one of next year's priorities, the senior leadership team is planning a review of the strategic risks to ensure they align with the strategic pillars. C. Foy responded to questions from the committee.

(J. Wilson joined at 2:48 p.m.)

Support was expressed for the alignment of the strategic risks with the university's vision, mission and values, and strategic priorities. There was a discussion regarding highlighting the key risks that would impede the university's progress on achieving its strategic priorities. There was also a discussion regarding how the implementation of risk management involves a cultural shift. C. Foy advised that they are observing good engagement in risk management at the senior level, which is crucial. The next step will be to hold risk owners accountable and make it part of the performance management process.

## **6.3. Strategic Planning Metrics**

L. Livingston provided an overview of the report included in the meeting material. She advised that the university has experienced a shift in its strategic priorities with the establishment of the President's key strategic pillars and the refreshed vision, mission, and values. Given these changes, it is an appropriate time to take another deep dive into the metrics and establishing meaningful targets. L. Livingston reviewed the proposals with the committee, which were:

### *Proposal 1:*

Create a set of indicators, derived from and associated with our current plans, to be associated with and balanced across the four main pillars of the university's mission:

- Tech with a conscience
- Learning re-imagined
- Creating a sticky campus
- Partnerships

*Proposal 2:*

Narrow the number of indicators by limiting to a maximum of no more than two or three per pillar.

*Proposal 3:*

Report back on an annual basis to the Board (i.e., in May/June timeframe).

L. Livingston responded to comments and questions from the committee. There was a discussion regarding whether the metrics would be cross-referenced with the new SMA indicators. L. Livingston clarified that they are looking to establish robust KPIs. A member commented that the metrics should help assess whether the university is making progress towards meeting the end goals of its strategic priorities and help determine whether any adjustments to the course of action need to be made. It will also be important to ensure that the indicators align and do not undermine the SMA metrics.

#### **6.4. Research Strategy Update**

L. Jacobs delivered an update on the university's research strategy. He reviewed the four pillars of the research strategy:

- Research Reputation
- Research Rankings
- Research Funding
- Research Intensity

L. Jacobs reviewed the progress that has been made since 2019. He noted that the progress reflects the university's nimbleness and ability to meet deadlines important to industry research. He also emphasized the multidisciplinary nature of the university's research priorities.

The Chair commended L. Jacobs and his team for the progress that has been made over a short period of time. Committee members supported the alignment of the research strategy with the university's vision, mission, and values, as well as the focus on EDI. There was a discussion regarding when L. Jacobs would be satisfied with the metrics. L. Jacobs emphasized industry sponsored research. He noted that much of the movement that has happened has been incremental and referenced the use of Mitacs (a matching program of industry sponsored graduate student placements). L. Jacobs explained that they are focusing on the talent that we offer. The initial focus is on the Durham and Northumberland Regions. This progress translates back to research benefits to the university, as well as supporting local economic development. The next big step will be to obtain big industry partnerships.

## **7. Planning**

## **7.1. Board Retreat Planning**

S. Murphy summarized what was finalized at the last S&P meeting. The retreat will be focused on what the new normal will look like post-COVID. He noted that some great comments were made during the meeting that will help with the planning. During the retreat, the following questions will be explored:

- How do we service our students more holistically?
- How do we put our students' education in their hands?
- How do we move to a user-centric design?

S. Murphy confirmed that a student panel will be part of the retreat to help the Board understand the expectations and assumptions of the next generation of students. There was a discussion regarding whether the retreat could be held in a hybrid format, with several people participating in person and others participating virtually. S. Murphy noted that as a public facing institution, we are strictly managing who can attend on campus, with priority being given to researchers and essential employees. The Board must be conscious that if they meet in person, that sends a message to the community.

## **8. Consent Agenda**

*Upon a motion duly made by L. Zucker and seconded by J. Wilson, the Consent Agenda was approved.*

### **8.1. Minutes of Public Session of Meeting of January 14, 2021**

## **9. Other Business**

## **10. Adjournment**

*Upon a motion duly made by D. Reiner, the public session adjourned at 3:29 p.m.*

Becky Dinwoodie, Secretary