



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

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**Minutes of the Public Session of the Meeting of Thursday, October 8, 2020**  
**2:00 p.m. to 3:35 p.m., Videoconference Only**

- Attendees:** Thorsten Koseck (Chair), Liqun Cao, Kevin Chan, Mitch Frazer, Steven Murphy, Dietmar Reiner, Jim Wilson, Lynne Zucker
- Staff:** Jamie Bruno, Becky Dinwoodie, Cheryl Foy, Andy Gallagher, Les Jacobs, Lori Livingston, Brad Maclsaac, Sue McGovern
- Guests:** Chelsea Bauer, Kerry Johnson, Mike Eklund, Kerry Johnson, Christine McLaughlin, Hannah Scott

**1. Call to Order**

The Chair called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m.

**2. Agenda**

*Upon a motion duly made by L. Zucker and seconded by S. Murphy, the Agenda was approved as presented.*

**3. Conflict of Interest Declaration**

There were none.

**4. Minutes of Public Session of Meeting of May 28, 2020**

*Upon a motion duly made by J. Wilson and seconded by K. Chan, the Minutes were approved as presented.*

**5. Chair's Remarks**

The Chair shared a story to demonstrate pre-task safety and emphasized its importance. He thanked everyone for participating in the meeting and acknowledged that these are trying times. The Chair thanked the senior leadership team for how they have been handling the pandemic. He shared that his son, who is an Ontario Tech student, is doing well from a mental health and learning perspective. He has children attending different postsecondary institutions and shared that there is a noticeable difference in how the institutions are delivering their programs online.

## 6. President's Remarks

The President acknowledged that people are tired and feeling the strain of the ongoing COVID situation. He noted that the fall Reading Week is coming up, which is usually a stressful time of year and has been exacerbated by the pandemic. The President reported that he is spending a lot of time attending department meetings to thank everyone for their efforts.

The President observed that working flat out does not necessarily lead to a business' survival. He emphasized the importance of staying focused on what the university will look like post-pandemic. The Provost is working hard to learn the lessons that are accumulating from transitioning to online learning in order to determine what is working and what is not. The focus will be on enriching our digital platform across the institution. The President followed up on the Chair's comment about the mental health of the university community. It is important to ensure our community has continued access to mental health services and to normalize conversations about the struggles people are experiencing. He encourages everyone to build time in their day to be physically and mentally active.

The President noted that we have had a strong start to the fall term and hopes that continues.

The Chair asked a question about the sticky campus priority and whether there are preparations to ensure we carry on with that priority to take it to the next level. The President responded that the sticky campus is relevant now more than ever. The university has enlarged its campus to include the virtual world and is working to build a sense of community online. When individuals feel they are part of something and that people care, that contributes to the sticky campus experience. From what the President has heard from students, they are having very positive experiences. He added that the sticky campus concept will evolve over time. The President advised that they continue to ask questions, such as:

- How do we make the campus sticky?
- How do we value our students' time while on campus?
- How do we ensure that when students are away from campus that they still feel cared about by their community?

The Chair suggested that the university should focus on the first-year student experience and helping them build their network of colleagues to help them get acclimated to the campus experience when it is safe to return. The President advised that the university's Student Union and student clubs have been readily adaptable to moving online. Further, the Provost is in the process of reinventing orientation and some of the changes were implemented virtually this year.

A committee member asked about the lessons learned with our first-year students and whether information is being collected on how successful the virtual orientation and transition has been for them. L. Livingston advised that a number of task forces were established to plan for this year, including one focused on first-year transition. A survey

was conducted of incoming students prior to the start of classes and part way through the semester. Further, Student Life is continuing to keep data on the usage of services by student groups. The Faculty of Education is conducting a research project focused on how our students are adapting to the COVID situation.

There was also a discussion regarding whether this would be the new normal as opposed to a temporary measure to deal with COVID. The President noted that realistically, the university is looking at this as a multi-year phenomenon as opposed to a discrete event. It is quite possible that the 2021-2022 academic year may not be a normal year, which makes the collection of data that much more important. Each week, we are learning something new and it is crucial to implement those lessons to differentiate ourselves.

## **7. Strategy**

### **7.1 S&P Terms of Reference Review**

C. Foy reviewed the S&P Terms of Reference with the committee. She asked the committee members to focus their review on the mandate, number of meetings, and membership composition to ensure they remain appropriate. A comment was made about including the strengthening of the relationship with Durham College as part of the mandate. C. Foy advised that the relationship with Durham College is usually managed by the Board Chair and is normally discussed by the Board's Governance, Nominations & Human Resources Committee.

### **7.2 Review of University's Mission, Vision & Values**

L. Livingston advised the committee that initially the plan was to bring the update of the university's mission, vision, and values forward earlier in the year and it was postponed due to the pandemic. She noted that discussions about refreshing the mission, vision and values commenced as far back as 2015-2016 during the renewal of the university's Strategic Plan. The decision at that time was not to refresh them. Since then, S. Murphy has joined the university as President and L. Livingston joined as Provost. The five strategic pillars have been implemented since their arrival, which form the basis of the university's Integrated Plan.

L. Livingston explained that a working paper on the mission, vision, and values has been developed, which describes the history of the disconnect between the university's mission, vision, and values and strategic plan. L. Livingston advised that they are ready to begin consultations with the university community. She reviewed the consultation process, which will include strategic focus group discussions and accepting written feedback on the working paper. Academic Council will be consulted during their meeting on November 24. The goal is to bring a recommendation to the Board for approval in December. There was a discussion regarding how the committee could provide support for the refreshed mission, vision, and values at the Board level. B. Maclsaac discussed the process that was used in the past. He advised that there has been ongoing consultation and listening to feedback on the mission, vision, and values over the past four years. It was suggested that a separate consultation session be held for the Board to allow governors to provide feedback before it comes forward for approval.

### 7.3 Strategic Discussion: Blended Learning

S. Murphy introduced the strategic discussion. He noted that a good starting point is to ask: “What does blended learning mean?”. Prior to the pandemic, people would have gravitated to a definition involving a combination of online and face-to-face delivery. By that definition, blended learning has been around for a long time at Ontario Tech. It is important to have this discussion now given how much has changed due to the COVID landscape.

The next questions to ask are:

- What should blended learning look like at Ontario Tech?
- How do we get there?

S. Murphy reminded the committee that most of the university’s employees are working offsite and may continue to do so going forward. He has seen definitions of “blended” in reference to organizations, as well. Faculty members have always had a mix, depending on the discipline (e.g. lab work, work from home doing research, classroom time, etc.). There are many different ways of interpreting what “blended” and “hybrid” mean. It’s also important to discuss experiential learning and what that means (e.g. breakout sessions in class, simulations, work placements, etc.). All of these require something different from the student.

S. Murphy noted that the university was established to be responsive to employers’ needs. The university will have a chance to take hold of the opportunity that the pandemic has provided to the sector and accelerate our digital presence. In the new normal, many places will likely fall into a hybrid category.

The committee considered how the university will define and differentiate itself in a hybrid environment. S. Murphy advised that this would differ from discipline to discipline. Every university will have changed due to the pandemic and this presents an opportunity for Ontario Tech to capitalize on enhanced digital learning. There are many misconceptions related to blended learning and concern was expressed that the goal was to be a fully online institution. S. Murphy emphasized that they want to hear from the community. He also noted that the Faculty of Education is one of the leaders in the country with regard to learning with technology embedded in it.

Comments from the committee included:

- timing of return to campus must be right in terms of prioritizing safety; and
- encouraged the team to be creative in bringing students back to campus and being a leader in blended learning.

L. Livingston discussed the verb “blended” and reviewed the definition. The current thinking around the term is very limited and includes face-to-face and online instruction. Blended learning is also used to refer to many different types of learning. Lectures, labs, tutorials, co-ops, experiential learning – these are mixed together to create an experience

for our students. Traditional face-to-face lectures are quite passive and students' attention spans are short. The best strategy to keep students' attention is to combine the auditory and visual senses. The sense of touch could also be added to the strategy, which is common in health care and chemistry labs. L. Livingston used the examples of learning catheterization and simulating code blue situations to demonstrate active learning.

C. Foy discussed the process that will be followed to engage the community in the evolution of blended learning at the institution. She noted that we are at the very beginning of the process, which is why it is being discussed with the committee. Strategic discussions have also been scheduled with Academic Council. There are different conceptions of what blended learning is and anxieties associated with some of those. The initial conversation with Academic Council will be what members think about blended learning and trying to develop a collective definition. A key thing coming out of that discussion will likely be that blended learning is that not one thing but a set of things that will develop over time. Once we feel we have landed on what blended learning is not, Academic Council will discuss where we want to go with it and what the implementation challenges would be. The last part of discussion will be how to roll it out, respecting academic freedom. The focus will be on where we want to go collectively.

A committee member commented that a cultural shift is required in addition to the process of change. Anxiety may arise about what the change means for the future. There was a discussion regarding whether the university has considered being part of a consortium of institutions doing something similar. S. Murphy advised that nearly every institution across the globe is having this type of conversation. It is important to normalize what we mean by blended (often interpreted as online as opposed to face-to-face). He added that Ontario Tech has an advantage because it is a younger institution and shifted quickly online. The creativity required to transition online is the same creativity required to incorporate different types of learning in a program. In terms of consortia, the university has many partnerships with different institutions. Until we have a clear picture of where we are going and feeling grounded, we will wait to develop these types of partnerships.

## **8. Planning**

### **8.1 Integrated Planning & Strategy (pre-budget)**

L. Livingston reminded the committee that last year a new approach to integrated planning was implemented – the university adopted a rolling plan approach, where departments annually review what was accomplished over the past year and identify what was successfully completed and consider adding new actions and goals. This year will be the first year that we will be conducting an evaluation of the past year. This type of planning holds people accountable as opposed to being merely aspirational. It also

allows us to adjust to the unexpected. A year over year planning process will serve us in good stead in light of the pandemic.

## **8.2 Board Retreat Planning**

C. Foy reminded the committee that for the past two years, the retreat has been held on the same day as the S&P meeting in May and the proposed plan for 2021 would be for the retreat to be held virtually. The committee had no objections to holding the retreat on May 13, the same date as the S&P meeting. C. Foy discussed the proposed retreat topic. Building on last year's retreat focused on a deep dive into blended learning, it was proposed that next year's retreat focus on:

- What does the future university look like and where we are going?
- Desire of some students for online and on demand learning.
- Explore trends in blended learning.
- Different elements of online learning and the merging of different models.
- Exploring challenges faced in different sectors (e.g. LinkedIn, Google) & the potential impact of partnerships with educational institutions.

S. Murphy added that this would be an important visioning exercise for where we can get to as a university. The pandemic has accelerated our sector by about two decades. We are also seeing trends of Google learning and consulting firms offering courses.

When people think about university, they typically envision 18-24 year olds. There is an opportunity to explore how we could serve learners over the course of their lifetime. Universities should have relevance to learners right across their life span in conjunction with private and public partners in designing offerings. Four to six years is a long time to obtain a credential and does not necessarily align with adult learners. It takes something like COVID to focus on why science, health care, etc. are important.

## **9. Other Business**

## **10. Adjournment**

*There being no other business, upon a motion duly made by K. Chan, the meeting adjourned at 3:35 p.m.*

Becky Dinwoodie, Secretary