



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

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**Minutes of the Public Session of the Meeting of March 22, 2023**  
**2:00 p.m. to 4:03 p.m. Videoconference**

**Attendees:** Lynne Zucker (Chair), Eric Agius (Interim Chair), Ahmad Barari, Kevin Chan, Laura Elliott, Mitch Frazer, Matthew Mackenzie, Steven Murphy, Michael Rencheck, Joshua Sankarlal, Jim Wilson

**Staff:** James Barnett, Sarah Cantrell, Sara Gottlieb, Les Jacobs, Lori Livingston, Brad MacIsaac, Fiona McArthur, Kimberley McCartney, Lauren Turner

**1. Call to Order**

The Chair called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m. and read aloud the land acknowledgement.

**2. Agenda**

*Upon a motion duly made by M. Rencheck and seconded by E. Agius, the Agenda was approved as presented.*

**3. Conflict of Interest Declaration**

There was none.

Kevin Chan joined the meeting.

**4. Minutes of Public Session of Meeting of January 12, 2023**

*Upon a motion duly made by M. Rencheck and seconded by M. Mackenzie, the Minutes were approved as presented.*

**5. Chair's Remarks**

The Chair welcomed the Committee and guests to today's meeting; she also welcomed Michael Rencheck to his first meeting as a Committee member. The Chair then commented positively on two recent professional development sessions for governors: (i) L. Jacobs presented on Faculty Research in February; and (ii) the morning's session on Telling Our Story. She also highlighted the recent Project Arrow tour, expressing pleasure at having the opportunity to speak to the students who worked on the concept car. Turning to the day's agenda, she encouraged Committee members to bring their expertise to bear on the important items before them.

Ahmad Barari and Mitch Frazer joined the meeting.

## **6. President's Remarks**

The President provided an update on a number of items including the striking of the Government of Ontario's Blue-Ribbon Panel, the growth of the University's in-demand programs and the growth in Ontario Tech's research funding and standing as a small research-intensive university. To attempt to mitigate financial pressures from the ongoing tuition and grant freeze, he highlighted strategies in three key areas: (i) growth in high-demand areas; (ii) growth in international student enrolment to a targeted 15%; and (iii) leveraging real estate. He advised the Committee that while the University hopes that the province will agree to an across-the-board tuition increase, planning will proceed on the assumption that there will not be one. He then acknowledged the work of the Provost on the Integrated Academic Research Plan, its uniqueness in higher education, and the forthcoming targets which will be presented to the Committee later in the spring. He closed by commenting on the passing of Helen Vari, who, along with her late husband George, was a great friend and generous donor to the higher education sector.

## **7. Advancement**

### **7.1 Strategic Discussion: Campus Master Plan**

B. Maclsaac presented an overview of developments on the Campus Master Plan over the last 14 months, highlighting investments in the downtown campus, the reduction of leased space, significant renovations in Charles Hall, and a successful reclassification of Charles Hall with the Ministry to make it eligible for a renewal grant. He noted the recent purchase of 55 Bond Street, which is also aligned with the Plan.

He then turned to the enrolment scenarios described in the materials, outlining the attendant expansion in space needs for each. Space, it was noted, includes not only academic spaces but also commercial services such as food and housing as well as transportation. B. Maclsaac advised that the University has significant volumes of potential expansion designs should government funding become available. He also noted that revisions to the joint campus master plan are underway with Durham College along with discussions about future building placements. B. Maclsaac ended his remarks with the subject of housing, highlighting the University's shift towards a "Sticky Campus" from a previous commuter campus orientation.

The Committee congratulated the leadership team on reducing the ratio of leased space to 6%. In response to a question, B. Maclsaac confirmed that attracting international students is a key consideration in the discussion about housing and that the Ontario Tech Student Union has been engaged on the issue. A consultant retained by the University has collected survey data that shows an unmet demand for housing and an international student preference to reside on campus.

Kevin Chan left the meeting.

In response to a question about lease reductions, B. Maclsaac confirmed savings of \$1.2 million/year by moving out of 11 Simcoe and no additional cost to moving into Campus Corners. He highlighted the benefits of lease-to-own partnerships, including building assets, on the University's financial statements. In response to a question, B. Maclsaac confirmed that space needs were modelled on significant reduction from sector standards recognizing the University's drive for efficiency as well as aggressive reductions in administrative space. He advised that the Provost's Office has detailed data that allows for accurate assessments of instructional space needs. The Provost added that the Integrated Academic Research Plan pushes the University towards increased hybrid and virtual course offerings; she cautioned however that some programs do not lend themselves to those platforms due to professional accreditation requirements or learning and competency expectations.

A discussion of housing considerations then ensued. J. Sankarlal shared student concerns, including reductions in OSAP, pressure on living expenses, and the importance of safe accommodations. With respect to the latter, the potential vulnerability of international students due to language barriers was highlighted. In response to a comment, B. Maclsaac confirmed that he will work with the Provost to determine the best path for consultation with the broader University community on the issue. In response to a question, B. Maclsaac advised that the University surveys students who decline offers to the University; he further advised that first year residence is guaranteed.

## **7.2 Research Strategy**

L. Jacobs presented the Research Strategy, noting that this discussion builds on the presentation delivered during an optional professional development session in February. He shared the view that commercialization of research is a unique differentiator at the University, particularly its approach of responding to partners' needs with specific research activities.

He then discussed two initiatives immediately on the horizon for the University: (i) a hydrogen commercialization and demonstration centre; and (ii) supply chains for small modular reactors (SMRs). With respect to the former, he shared that over \$1 million in public grants have been secured and a soft launch is proximate. He invited Committee feedback on indicators of success and the University taking a leadership stance in these spaces. In response to a question, L. Jacobs confirmed that the University has Brilliant Venture and an accelerator incubator. He also noted Brilliant Catalyst and how it is part of the same ecosystem, sharing that there are 130 startups in his office. The Committee suggested ensuring that problem-solving for industry and the attraction of venture capital and capitalization on intellectual property (IP) be defined separately. In response to a question about IP and incentivization of academics to participate, L. Jacobs advised that the IP Policy is being refreshed this year to align with those objectives.

L. Jacobs advised the Committee that the first chair of SMR was named this year and that the University is currently seeking technical and marketing staff. A discussion then ensued on metrics and reputational impacts. The Committee encouraged a thoughtful approach to alignment between research endeavors and the overall reputation that the University is seeking to build. A brief discussion ensued on the benefits of multidisciplinary projects and not focusing solely on a program or initiative's profitability.

### **7.3 Micro-credentials**

S. Cantrell provided opening remarks on Micro-credentials, advising the Committee that Ontario Tech has piloted innovative offerings for the last few years that upskill both traditional and non-traditional students; efforts are now moving towards scalability of micro-credential programming.

Jim Wilson joined the meeting.

F. McArthur then provided an overview of the micro-credentials available at Ontario Tech, highlighting a focus on authentic assessments and demonstrable evidence of learning. She shared with the Committee the pathways that learners may pursue, some of which are integrated into academic programming. She described the grant funding received from the TD Ready Commitment and some of the practical skills that learners can obtain; she noted that Ontario Tech owns the intellectual property at the end of the contract. Turning to the sustainability of offering micro-credentials, she advised the Committee that a process for development and approval of expanded content is being formalized.

A discussion then ensued on the potential of micro-credentials. In response to a question, S. Cantrell confirmed that a future state may include university credits built on micro-credentials. In response to another question, S. Cantrell advised that the audience for micro-credentials is both students and those external to the University. She highlighted the value of career readiness skills for students. In response to a further question, she expressed the view that the offerings from Ontario Tech TALENT are sufficiently distinct, particularly in the award of digital badges, to allow both organizations to succeed.

Looking to the future, S. Cantrell advised the Committee that a white paper is currently underway that outlines opportunities, describes synergies with academic and student success goals, and presents a sustainable business model that diversifies the University's portfolio of offerings. A brief discussion ensued on defining success, a future state of University-level credentials with plug-and-play components, and the changing ways that employers approach training and development for employees.

## **8. Planning**

### **8.1 Board Retreat Update**

The President provided an update on Board Retreat planning, advising the Committee that K. Menard has been retained as a facilitator; he provided a brief summary of her qualifications. Building on the momentum of the professional development session this morning, the Retreat will focus on refining and crystallizing key messages about the University and to solidify a plan for governors' ambassadorial roles.

## **9. Significant Project & Contract Oversight**

### **9.1 Capital Project Tracking Sheets**

B. MacIsaac presented the Capital Project Tracking Sheets, noting the revisions made in response to Committee and Board feedback. He drew the Committee's attention to investments in infrastructure that will lead to energy savings and forward-looking investments in Information Technology including future migration to the cloud. With respect to the latter, he noted that there will be a discussion about this next year that will include considerations of flexibility and security.

### **9.2 Subcritical Nuclear Assembly**

L. Jacobs presented an update on the Subcritical Nuclear Assembly, highlighting the public announcement launch at the Canadian Nuclear Association in February and ongoing engagement and consultation activities.

### **9.3 Brilliant Venture**

L. Jacobs presented on Brilliant Venture, a new initiative that drives forward the mandate to democratize entrepreneurship at the University. He noted that most leading universities have a venture fund of some sort and that Ontario Tech wishes to compete on that stage alongside them. He went on to advise the Committee that he has been working closely with S. Gottlieb with the aspiration of starting to fund startups in the fall. The Committee expressed enthusiasm for Brilliant Venture. In response to a question, L. Jacobs shared that assessors of potential startups will include himself, the President and Vice-Chancellor, the Vice-President, Administration, the Deputy Provost and the Director, Creativity & Entrepreneurship; the due diligence process is under development. In response to a further question, L. Jacobs confirmed that communications about Brilliant Venture are also in development and that he will be working with the Advancement Office on potential synergies.

## **10 Adjournment**

*Upon a motion duly made by E. Agius, the public session adjourned at 4:03 p.m.*

Lauren Turner, University Secretary