



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

Minutes of the Public Session of the Meeting of October 27, 2022
2:00 p.m. to 4:06 p.m. Videoconference

Attendees: Lynne Zucker (Chair), Eric Agius, Ahmad Barari, Laura Elliott, Mitch Frazer, Matthew Mackenzie, Steven Murphy, Jim Wilson

Regrets: Carla Carmichael, Kevin Chan, Joshua Sankarlal

Staff: James Barnett, Sarah Cantrell, Krista Hester, Les Jacobs, Lori Livingston, Brad MacIsaac, Yvonne Stefanin, 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. Mackenzie and seconded by J. Wilson, the Agenda was approved as presented.

3. Conflict of Interest Declaration

There was none.

4. Minutes of Public Session of Meeting of May 12, 2022

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

5. Chair's Remarks

The Chair welcomed the new University Secretary, Lauren Turner, and James Barnett, the new Vice-President, Advancement to both the University and the Strategy and Planning Committee. She thanked Krista Hester for her service as Interim University Secretary. The Chair went on to congratulate the Chancellor and the Advancement team on the success of the Chancellor's run and the organizers of the Women for STEM Summit conference for putting on an excellent event.

6. President's Remarks

The President expressed enthusiasm for how the academic year has started, noting the great atmosphere and positivity on campus. He echoed the Chair's congratulations on the Chancellor's Challenge, which raised \$160,000 for scholarships, and the

Women for STEM conference. The President closed with some comments on the most recent Universities Canada meeting where reflections on the last two years of being online and looking to the future were key themes. He noted that the senior leadership team is focused on opportunities and increased flexibility, an outlook reflected in strategic planning and other initiatives.

7. Strategy and Planning Terms of Reference Review

The University Secretary presented the Committee with the opportunity to give input on the current Terms of Reference, noting that she may have revisions to propose based on the outcome of the review of the Auditor General of Ontario of university governance. In response to a question, the University Secretary recommended keeping the language around *in camera* sessions flexible. There were no changes suggested for the Terms of Reference at this time.

8. Strategy

8.1 Strategic Discussion: Strategic Priorities for 2022-2023

The Provost and Vice-President, Academic (Provost) provided an overview of the financial environment in which the University operates, noting that it has been estimated that between 2018 and 2025, higher education will have experienced a reduction of approximately \$2.5 billion in revenue from government sources, a 30% reduction in real money being injected into the sector. She noted the pressures to mount new initiatives, often at the government's direction, with no new revenue. She also commented on the heightened competition for students, both domestic and international.

The Provost advised the Committee that Ontario Tech University must find ways to differentiate itself in the sector if it wishes to stay competitive, generate revenues, and continue operations. To that end, five key areas of focus have been set for the year going forward that will inform the University's planning process:

1. Learning Re-imagined/Tech with a Conscience - Innovative Programming
2. Learning Re-imagined/Tech with a Conscience - Differentiated Technology and Physical Space
3. Sticky Campus/Learning Re-imagined - Student-Centric University
4. Sticky Campus - Commitment to Mental Health and Equity, Inclusion and Diversity
5. Partnerships – Building Community/Partnerships to Support Learning, Opportunities and Discoveries

The President then added some commentary about financial pressures, noting tuition freezes and the increasing rate at which universities are turning to international students as a source of funding. With respect to the latter, he observed that international students were once recognized as a source of global perspective and mindset for institutions, but that their value to an organization has shifted to a financial one because of budgetary restraints.

The President then discussed some areas in which the University could think differently, for example reaching both international and domestic markets online. He commented on the importance of having strength in both in-person and online offerings running in parallel, avoiding overlap and maximizing synergy.

In response to a question, the President discussed the talent at the University and the ability to drive towards this vision. He noted the highly innovative approaches that some members of the University took to delivering education during the pandemic. The Provost echoed these sentiments, and noted that some programs by their very nature require in person learning. She expressed the view that the University has talent in both spaces. The President expressed an intention to align future hiring decisions with the strategic direction of the University.

In response to another question, the President advised the Committee that partnerships is a strength of the University. He discussed the importance of differentiated degrees and how the University dedicates significant thought to how it interfaces with international and domestic markets. A discussion then ensued on understanding the reasons why students choose the University and finding ways to differentiate experiential learning.

In response to a question, the President advised that the higher education sector, particularly the Council of Ontario Universities, is pressuring the government for increased funding. He acknowledged, however, the numerous competing interests and the need to keep expectations realistic. A short discussion then ensued on the value of international graduate students as ambassadors for undergraduate offerings at the University. The Provost advised that the tuition working group is reviewing international graduate tuition levels with information expected to track to Academic Council and the Board of Governors. She noted that this year there were adjustments and additions made to graduate international tuition scholarships.

8.2 Towards the 2023-2025 Integrated Academic Research Plan

The Provost updated the Committee on work underway to produce the third iteration of the rolling planning approach that began at the University in 2019. She noted that having an integrated rolling plan has been critical to weathering the turbulence of the pandemic and staying flexible in the face of new challenges such as surging inflation and market uncertainties.

The Provost reminded the Committee of the commitment made in 2019 to have a consistent approach to planning. She noted that in the second iteration of the Plan, evaluation – initially only qualitative – was introduced. The outputs allowed the University to identify successes as well as opportunities for improvement. In the third iteration of the Plan, quantitative evaluation will be tied to the planning process; it will link action plans to measurable goals.

In response to a question, the Provost spoke of the benefits of a rolling two year plan, which allows the University to regularly assess the merits of continuing or halting initiatives in real time. She went on to note that not everything the University

is driving to accomplish requires funding; the focus is on continuous improvement. S. Cantrell added that there are specific stop points throughout the year to assess progress. She gave the example of the strategic enrolment plan as a case study.

9 Planning

9.1 Integrated Planning Process

S. Cantrell presented the Integrated Planning Process for the Committee's information.

The Committee Chair congratulated the Provost and S. Cantrell on their progress with the Integrated Academic Research Plan and metric development.

9.2 Enrolment Update

Before commenting on enrolment, S. Cantrell advised the Committee that the Ontario Universities Fair was hosted in person for the first time in two years and was a huge success for the University. She then gave some highlights of the Enrolment Update, including year over year increases of 19.5% for domestic applications and 20.4% for international applications and 5.2% for registrations.

S. Cantrell then commented on the impacts of the delays at Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, acknowledging the efforts of staff in this regard. She noted that the delays have led to volatility in graduate numbers.

The Committee expressed pleasure at the registration numbers, particularly after four years of decline. In response to a question, S. Cantrell advised the Committee that student retention is a metric currently under examination. She noted some sources of insights, including financial need reported to the Registrar's Office and academic standards that highlight where students are struggling. She advised that reporting is available at the Faculty level and that Deans and their teams are studying the issue. In response to a comment, S. Cantrell acknowledged the pressures of the pandemic and the disruption of the high school curriculum as mental health aspects of student life that is on the minds of senior leaders.

In response to another question, S. Cantrell commented on enrolment caps due to capacity, discussions about increasing capacity, and expanding co-op programs as a way to draw students. In response to a further question, S. Cantrell confirmed that there is no government funding for graduate students beyond their fourth year of study. A discussion then ensued on possible drivers of the increase in applications. The Provost highlighted the efforts of J. Stokes and the team in the Office of the Registrar. She also noted that given the importance of student enrolment numbers, there was a conscious decision to strategically allocate funds to supporting recruitment initiatives last year.

9.3 Board Retreat Planning

The Chair introduced the Board Retreat Planning item, noting that this has generally been an annual event at the University. The President shared early thinking about the structure of the retreat:

- Inclusion of a dinner and a social event
- Inclusion of student presenters
- Inclusion of a tour
- Timed to be adjacent to an in-person Board of Governors meeting

He noted that the retreat is generally held in May. The Committee expressed support for the timing and format.

The President then discussed possible themes or topics including the differentiation of Ontario Tech, partnerships, international aspects of education, and significant research.

The Committee suggested having a speaker, inviting faculty to present innovative research or pedagogy, and having a very clear articulation of the outcomes expected from the retreat. The Committee suggested that the retreat could help governors to become better ambassadors of the University.

10 Significant Project & Contract Oversight

10.1 Subcritical Nuclear Assembly

L. Jacobs, Vice-President, Research, presented information about the Subcritical Nuclear Assembly. He advised the Committee that there is currently a renaissance of nuclear energy with people recognizing its value for having zero emissions and providing energy security; it is anticipated that project investments in nuclear energy are expected to value \$20 billion in the near future. L. Jacobs noted the research potential of such investment as well as training opportunities as workers re-skill to join the sector. He then discussed the University's strength in energy, the Brilliant Energy Institute, and investment in the Sion Laboratories.

L. Jacobs advised the Committee that the University has submitted an initial application and have started community consultation as part of the licensing process to operate a subcritical reactor on campus. In response to a question, he stated that the licensing process is projected to take 12-16 months. In response to a further question, L. Jacobs shared that the public's view of nuclear energy has shifted over the last decade, but that the University is taking potential community concerns very seriously. He noted that a consultant has been retained to assist the University with consultation, stressing that having the support of local indigenous communities is crucial.

A discussion then ensued on the currency of the reactor, sources of uranium, and L. Jacobs' site visit to the reactor at McMaster University. In response to a question, he confirmed that there are no small modular reactors licensed yet in Canada.

10.2 Capital Project Tracking Sheets

B. MacIsaac presented the Capital Project Tracking Sheets, noting that they now contain information about projects under \$5 million in accordance with input from

the Committee and a recommendation in the report issued by the Ontario Internal Audit Division.

B. Maclsaac then gave an overview of key facilities items, noting that the renovations of Charles Hall are 99 per cent complete and that supply chains remain a challenge with some impact to timelines. With respect to information technology (IT), he drew the Committee's attention to the successful implementation of Qless, two over-budget projects, and an initiative pertaining to active directory that has been complicated by customizations such that the support of a consultant is required.

The Committee expressed support for the revised reporting format and recommended that strategic projects be expressly flagged as such and their place in the broader strategic work of the University be explicit.

11 Other Business

In response to a question, B. Maclsaac gave a brief update on the pressures on parking spots at the University.

12 Adjournment

Upon a motion duly made by J. Wilson and seconded by E. Agius the public session adjourned at 4:06 p.m.

Lauren Turner, University Secretary