

## ACADEMIC COUNCIL

### Minutes of the Meeting of June 25, 2024

2:30 – 3:54 p.m. [videoconference](#)

#### Present:

Murphy, Steven (Chair)  
Aquanno, Scott  
Bailey, Robert  
Beligan, Mihai  
Bluechardt, Mary  
Christou, Ted  
Crawford, Greg  
Davidson, Catherine  
Eklund, Mike

Fernando, Shanti  
Hosseini, Sayyed Ali  
Jacobs, Les  
Kay, Robin  
King, Alyson  
Kishawy, Hossam  
Liscano, Ramiro  
MacMillan, Patricia  
McGregor, Carolyn

Nokleby, Scott  
Rodgers, Carol  
Simmons, Denina  
Stoett, Peter  
Stokes, Joe  
Thompson, Dwight  
Vettor, Shannon

#### Regrets:

Aamir, Asifa  
Arcand, JoAnne  
Azad, Nader  
Barari, Ahmad  
Barber, Wendy  
Brown, Samantha  
Bryant, Toba  
Duff, Ana  
Felder, Ruth  
Frazer, Mitch

Giorgees, Ifrodet  
Hossein Nejad, Mehdi  
Jones, Ferdinand  
Livingston, Lori  
McAlpin, Breanne  
Naumkin, Fedor  
Partosoedarso, Elita  
Rastpour, Amir  
Ruttenberg-Rozen,  
Robyn

Serote, MaryCae  
Ubor, Tega  
Watterworth, Michael

#### Staff & Guests:

Ayotte, Kirstie  
Bauer, Chelsea  
Hamilton, Barbara  
Hester, Krista  
Hussain, Zainab  
Kassar, Andrea

Maclsaac, Brad  
McLaughlin, Christine  
Nickle, Joanne  
O'Halloran, Niall  
O' Malley, Grace  
Papke, Darryl

Thrush, Sarah  
Townsend, Lisa  
Wingate, Adam

#### 1. Call to Order

The Chair called the meeting to order at 2:30 p.m. B. Bailey reflected on the importance of sincere land acknowledgments, emphasizing Ontario Tech University's recognition of the lands of the Mississauga's of Scugog Island First Nation under the Williams Treaties. He acknowledged the traditional territory of various Indigenous Nations and highlighted the history of mistreatment.

## 2. Agenda

A member requested that item 11(a) and 11 (b) be removed from the Consent Agenda and placed on the regular meeting agenda.

*Upon a motion duly made by G. Crawford and seconded by H. Kishawy, the Agenda was approved as amended.*

## 3. Chair's Remarks

The Chair welcomed attendees to the last Academic Council meeting of the year and wished everyone a great summer while also acknowledging that research and teaching continue year-round. He thanked members for their service, noting the growing difficulty of finding volunteers for governance roles. Special thanks were given to G. Crawford for his service as Dean of the Faculty of Science and R. Kay for his service as Dean of the Mitch and Leslie Faculty of Education.

He highlighted a record number of applicant confirmations for the upcoming fall term, reflecting a 44% increase since 2020, and extended his thanks to J. Stokes and his team for their hard work. He also mentioned recent campus events for June's Pride Month celebrations and last Friday's National Indigenous Peoples Day.

## 4. Inquiries and Communications

### a) COU Academic Report

A. King noted that the last meeting was held in May and focused on safeguarding research, discussing the federal policy on sensitive technologies and research affiliations.

Responding to a question regarding mental health expenditures, A. King mentioned that it was discussed, and a report was provided. She offered to follow up directly with the member.

In response to a question regarding SMA4, S. Murphy emphasized the University's commitment to maintaining autonomy and mentioned that updates regarding Bill 166 were pending. He anticipated communication from the Ministry by the end of the month and noted preparations were underway internally, despite uncertainties about potential changes or delays. He also referred to previous consultations with the Academic Council and expressed readiness to engage based on past processes.

The discussion then centered on new partnership reporting requirements imposed by the Province, which are perceived as potentially stricter than federal standards. Concerns were expressed regarding constraints on academic freedom and institutional autonomy, especially in fields such as social sciences and engineering. S. Murphy highlighted that feedback had been provided to legislative bodies to underscore the significance of these freedoms for researchers, promoting ethical research practices and flexibility in utilizing technologies like AI in education. He

mentioned an ongoing consultation process throughout the Fall aimed at refining legislation, recognizing the distinct needs of universities compared to the private sector.

## **5. Provost's Remarks**

M. Bluechardt mentioned that L. Livingston sends her regrets but relayed her gratitude to G. Crawford and R. Kay for their significant contributions.

### **a) Senior Academic Administrator Search Update**

M. Bluechardt noted that the Mitch and Leslie Frazier Dean of Education search is approaching its conclusion with the Search Advisory Committee set to recommend a candidate to the Provost following the candidates' recent public presentations. She also noted that the Search Advisory Committee for the Deputy Provost position has finalized its membership and will commence in late summer or early fall. Additionally, she confirmed that the President's Office has issued a call for expressions of interest to serve on the Dean of Engineering and Applied Science Renewal Advisory Committee.

## **6. Institutional and SMA Metrics Annual Report**

S. Thrush acknowledged the University's leadership and collective efforts, noting significant achievements despite the challenging context. She introduced a qualitative summary report alongside the dashboard to provide narratives behind successes and challenges related to institutional goals by integrating qualitative and quantitative data. She clarified the challenges related to staff turnover in the qualitative report, noting the university met employee permanence targets despite and the challenges centred around contractual staff issues.

She advised that the comparison of Ontario Tech's student experience metrics with sector norms revealed they mirrored sector averages for first-year students but exceeded gains for fourth-year students and emphasized the University's performance on SMA metrics, surpassing all targets and receiving additional funding. She noted upcoming changes in funding criteria, which will increase the weight of performance metrics to 25% and place a greater emphasis on labor market demands. Responding to a question regarding metrics for courses taught by full-time faculty, S. Thrush noted that the 2020-2021 academic year saw an increase in courses taught by full-time faculty, attributed primarily to COVID-19 related factors such as hiring limitations for part-time instructors. Aside from this exception, the percentage of courses taught by full-time faculty has hovered around 77-80%.

Addressing concerns regarding the student-faculty ratio increase over the last two years, S. Thrush noted that when considering Limited Term Faculty Members (LTFMs), the university exceeds the 31:1 target ratio. Planned delays in hiring, partly due to the Early Retirement Incentive (ERI) program, have contributed to the current figures. However, with ongoing planning and hires, the aim is to stay within the 31:1 target in the future, and she acknowledged the possibility of reporting LTFMs on a separate line.

## Committee Reports:

### 7. Undergraduate Studies Committee (USC)

#### a) Major Program Modification

##### i. Pre-Engineering Pathway

M. Bluehardt presented the MPM Pre-Engineering pathway noting that the program is designed to help under-represented groups who have not had the opportunity or completed required science and math courses in high school.

H. Kishawy clarified that this pathway does not coincide with the Yorkville opportunity but aligns with an initiative led by the President which aims to increase capacity for Indigenous and underrepresented students.

Responding to a question regarding the consultation process, G. Crawford confirmed that the Faculty of Science was consulted and collaborated on developing three new courses designed to prepare students, particularly from underrepresented groups and Indigenous backgrounds, for first-year engineering courses and that these courses were intended as a pilot initiative to gauge student interest and staffing needs, initially using existing faculty resources.

H. Kishawy noted that this pre-engineering pathway program is tailored for its engineering programs, not as a pathway to other universities or programs and that it supports students who may have faced barriers accessing engineering education, and ensuring they are prepared for Ontario Tech's curriculum. Expansion beyond Ontario Tech will be considered based on the pilot program's success and demand.

*Upon a Motion duly made by S. Nokleby and seconded by H. Kishawy, pursuant to the recommendation of the Undergraduate Studies Committee, Academic Council hereby approves the Major Program Modification to add a Pre-Engineering Pathway for all Bachelor of Engineering programs.*

##### b) English Language Proficiency – Oxford ELLT

M. Bluehardt presented the English Language Proficiency – Oxford ELLT motion noting that the initiative aims to expand access to an English language proficiency test for international applicants, allowing the students flexibility to complete online or at one of the available in person test centers.

J. Stokes clarified that different English language proficiency standards for various programs are not unusual. Programs like teacher education and nursing have historically required higher English proficiency due to the rigorous communication demands during practicum and professional settings and that this differential requirement has been in place for about a decade at the University, ensuring students meet specific standards relevant to their fields.

*Upon a Motion duly made by J. Stokes and seconded by C. McGregor, pursuant to the recommendation of the Undergraduate Studies Committee, Academic Council hereby approves the Oxford International Digital Institute (OIDI) partnership and use of the Oxford ELLT test from applicants, as sufficient evidence of English language proficiency with a recommended minimum score of 8 for Education and Nursing programs and 7 for other undergraduate programs and effective for the January 2025 intake.*

### **c) English Language Proficiency – Oxford ELP Partnership**

M. Bluehardt presented the motion for the English Language Proficiency – Oxford ELP Partnership.

J. Stokes pointed out the distinction between this motion and the previous one: the former approves the test as evidence of English proficiency, while this motion establishes a pathway for students from Oxford Centers globally to enter university programs. He emphasized the annual reviews conducted to assess the effectiveness of these tests and pathways via faculty reports. Additionally, he clarified that while entry is typically for first-year students, those with previous university experience in a different language might enter at an upper-year level, subject to faculty discretion and credit transfer evaluations.

*Upon a Motion duly made by B. Bailey and seconded by G. Crawford, pursuant to the recommendation of the Undergraduate Studies Committee, Academic Council hereby approves the Oxford ELP partnership.*

## **8. Graduate Studies Committee (GSC)**

T. Christou acknowledged the end of terms for various members and thanked everyone for their contributions. He highlighted SGPS's new pre-orientation program on Canvas which is aimed to build student connections before September's orientation. He noted that eight sessions have been held so far, each with around 100 students.

He advised that the approach for Fall Orientation will be more spread out, offering information asynchronously throughout the year to better support student engagement. He acknowledged the idea of extending similar initiatives to the undergraduate level and willingness to share resources used at the graduate level.

In response to a question regarding international student delays, J. Stokes confirmed that there was a 15-week backlog at Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) affecting fall visa applications. He noted exemptions for undergraduates but significant delays for graduate admissions, with provincial attestation rates below 60%. He emphasized sector-wide implications and upcoming decisions amid concerns over IRCC policies impacting institutions across the province and country.

## **9. Governance & Nominations Committee**

### **a) 2024-25 Academic Council – Expressions of Interest**

K. Hester confirmed that two open positions on the Steering Committee are vacant, but do not pose a concern for quorum. In response to a question, she confirmed that expressions of interest were still open from elected members of Academic Council to fill the standing committee vacancies but the election period for members of Academic Council were closed with no plans to re-open them. She also noted that no interest has been received regarding vacant Academic Council positions and that it would remain for consideration by the GNC if any anyone interested came forward.

*Upon a Motion duly made by B. Bailey and seconded by G. Crawford, pursuant to the recommendation of the Governance & Nominations Committee, Academic Council hereby approves the following amended appointments:*

*Academic Council Vice-Chair Position on the Academic Appeals Committee for the term of September 1, 2024 to August 31, 2025.*

- *Janice Strap (FSci)*

*Academic Council Teaching Staff Position on the Governance and Nominations Committee for the term of September 1, 2024 to August 31, 2025.*

- *Scott Nokleby (FEAS)*
- *Shannon Vettor (FSSH)*

#### **b) 2024-2025 Academic Council Research Committee Renewal**

*Upon a Motion duly made by G. Crawford and seconded by L. Jacobs, pursuant to the renewal nomination received from the Vice-President, Research and Innovation, and recommendation of the Governance & Nominations Committee, Academic Council hereby approves the following renewal of the following faculty member to the Research Committee for the term of September 1, 2024, until August 31, 2025:*

- *Sean Forrester, Faculty of Science*

### **10. Research Committee**

L. Jacobs highlighted a successful year for research, noting significant improvements in both domestic and international reputation. He underscored the role of reputation in nurturing partnerships with academic institutions, research entities, and industry collaborators.

He emphasized the university's commitment to advancing research funding and scholarly outputs, citing a positive trajectory in publications and academic achievements and expressed satisfaction with the collaborative efforts across the university community and emphasized the upcoming strategic plan aimed at enhancing research further. He highlighted that the plan, led by the Research Committee, will involve extensive consultations

He highlighted that the 2024 federal budget proposes a significant overhaul of research institutions, introducing a Capstone Institution led by a single president or CEO to integrate various research bodies. The focus is on enhancing support for graduate students and postdocs, reflecting a major investment in research funding. He noted that while consultations are limited and the timeline is rapid, the University perceives potential benefits from these changes.

The request to remove item 11a) from the Consent Agenda has been retracted as it was addressed and clarified earlier in the discussion during item 9a).

Item 11b) - 18 Month Follow-Up – MSc and PhD in Computer Science\* (I) was removed from the consent agenda for further discussion.

G. Crawford clarified discrepancies in recommendations, noting that while suggestions like annual teaching of graduate courses and workload adjustments for teaching assistants are reviewed comprehensively, their implementation can vary based on university circumstances and feasibility and acknowledged ongoing efforts to advocate for additional resources in budgeting and academic planning.

The Chair stated that the 18-month follow-up report for MSc and PhD in Computer Science is presented for informational purposes and does not require a separate motion.

## **11. Consent Agenda**

- a) Minutes of the Meeting of May 28, 2024\* (M)
- b) PULLED
- c) Program Nomenclature Directives (USC and GSC)\*(I)
- d) Conferral of Degrees – Spring/Summer 2024\* (M)

*Upon a motion duly made by R. Bailey and seconded by H. Kishway, the Consent Agenda was approved as amended.*

## **12. Other Business**

### **(a) Land acknowledgement for June Academic Council meeting**

D. Simmons volunteered to provide the land acknowledgement for September.

## **14. Termination (M)**

*Upon a motion made by S. Nokleby, the meeting was adjourned at 3:54 p.m.*

Krista Hester, Interim University Secretary