

Minutes of a meeting of the USask Board of Governors

June 3, 2020
via teleconference

Present: Shelley Brown (chair), Allan Adam, Joy Crawford, Grant Devine, Jay Kalra, Ritu Malhotra, Grit McCreath, Autumn LaRose-Smith, Peter Stoicheff

Resource Officers: Karen Chad, Greg Fowler, Debra Pozega Osburn, Tony Vannelli, Melissa Just, Chelsea Willness (secretary)

Also in attendance: Cheryl Carver, Terry Summers, Wade Epp, Dara Hrytzak, Sheena Tait-Rowan

1. Roll Call

A roll call was conducted via teleconference due to COVID-19 physical distancing protocols. The meeting was called to order by the Chair at 9:03 am, noting that the meeting was properly constituted for the transaction of business, with the Chair as chair and the University Secretary as secretary.

2. Identification of Conflicts of Interest

The Chair called on members to identify any conflicts of interest. A Board member declared a potential conflict of interest but the Chair and Board deemed the circumstances acceptable.

3. Chair's Remarks

The Chair welcomed Board members to the meeting. She welcomed Autumn LaRose-Smith (incoming USSU President) to the Board, and offered congratulations on her election. She also acknowledged that this was Tony Vannelli's last meeting as Provost and stated that he will be very much missed. She then welcomed Melissa Just, who will be Interim Provost.

The Chair provided an update on the Governance & Executive committee meeting (motions to follow) and noted the ongoing work on board renewal and recommendations to the Ministry for the government appointees.

4. COVID-19 update

4.1 President's remarks

The President thanked Board members for attending and offered thanks to Autumn LaRose-Smith for stepping forward into USSU leadership role. The President began with updates on the university's response to the pandemic, including transition from crisis management to a dedicated pandemic response team (PRT) – focusing on the gradual increase of activity on campus and developing a comprehensive implementation plan. The PEC has approved a 'hybrid' approach to fall term activity,

which will remain primarily remote. The university continues to stay closely connected to government and sector partners. The President noted the decision to not increase tuition levels and the different student aid initiatives underway. He also reflected on the many ways that USask is contributing to the community including the College of Engineering's use of 3D printers to make needed equipment, culinary services donating fresh produce and food to the Friendship Inn and others, and the use of Merlis Belsher Place as a field hospital.

4.2 COVID-19 financial update

The President noted that we have separated out our structural financial situation versus the COVID-19 situation. He turned the floor to Greg Fowler, VP Finance & Resources, for more information on financial updates.

VP Fowler stated that today's update is further refined information from what was presented on April 29th, as we prepare to bring a revised budget to the Board in July. The pandemic continues to have a major impact on the university. Risks have increased related to projected losses due to investments, enrolment losses, etc. Temporary layoffs have been primarily under Services, with no net recovery of costs in that area (fee for service model). There are ongoing budget considerations due to reduced operating grant and reduced reserves.

VP Fowler noted that we have a financial sustainability strategy, and an update on that plan will come forward to the board in July. Since the Board's conditional budget approval in March, our preliminary results indicate we will present a balanced operating budget, excluding the costs related to COVID.

The respective Vice Presidents then offered a "high level" description of these changes.

- In University Relations, VP Pozega Osburn described changes over the course of the summer in order to meet required reductions. Although this is all quite challenging, it will bring us to the level of spending that has been requested, and it is anticipated to be sustainable going forward.
- In Research, VP Chad described changes to this portfolio. The shortfall is at least partly due to loss of royalties revenue in the short term, though we anticipate resolution to this net licensing matter in the future. But for this fiscal year, the OVPR was expected to absorb the full extent of this loss of revenue. Budget adjustment measures include a wide range of salary and non-salary adjustments.

The President noted that it is impossible to undertake these levels of reductions without consequences.

The Chair commented that the Board is supportive of changes being made to support financial position and take necessary steps to address the deficit.

VP Fowler continued his report, stating that overall, there are many significant actions being taken.

ASPA bargaining update

VP Fowler and AVP Carver provided updates and noted that there will be a call for the voting procedures to commence in the coming days. We will also start our work toward consultation on essential services.

Extension of Board Chair and Vice-Chair terms

The University Secretary provided updates on the discussion that occurred at the Governance & Executive Committee meeting, such that an extension to these two roles is desirable for leadership continuity, particularly given the current circumstances of the pandemic and the addition of new Board members. She noted that both the current Chair and Vice-Chair were recused from the discussions and voting on this matter. There were no questions from the Board on this item. Standing committee membership of Board members was discussed briefly as an information item.

The following resolution was moved and seconded.

That the Board of Governors approves extensions to the current Board Chair and vice-chair terms for Shelley Brown and Joy Crawford, effective immediately and expiring June 30, 2021.

CARRIED

5. Re-appointment – Dean, University Library

Melissa Just recused herself from the discussion of this item. Provost Vannelli noted that in the review of Dr. Just for Dean of the Library there was a lot of appreciation expressed for the way she has handled several difficult initiatives in her time as Dean so far, and there was enthusiastic support from the review committee for her re-appointment. A Board member commented on the Provost's excellent leadership of the review process. There were no questions on this item.

The following resolution was moved and seconded.

That the Board of Governors approves the re-appointment of Dr. Melissa Just as Dean, University Library, for a second term, for a five-year period effective February 1, 2022.

CARRIED

The Board Chair offered her thanks to Management for all the hard work that has been undertaken during this difficult time. She wished the Provost best of luck and thanked him on behalf of the Board for his incredible contributions to the University.

The meeting was adjourned to in-camera with the President at 10:35 am.

6. President's goals, contract and compensation [in camera]

(discussion)

The President exited, and the Board turned to in-camera.

(discussion)

The following resolution was moved and seconded.

That the Board of Governors approves the salary recommendation for President Peter Stoicheff.

CARRIED

The meeting was adjourned at 11:05 am.