

# WESTERN SYDNEY UNIVERSITY



## BOARD OF TRUSTEES

**Minutes** of meeting 2021/5 of the Board of Trustees of Western Sydney University, held at 8.30am on Wednesday 6 October 2021 via Zoom.

- Present:**
- Professor Peter Shergold AC (Chair and Chancellor)
  - Professor Barney Glover AO (Vice-Chancellor and President)
  - Professor Alphaia Possamai-Inesedy (Chair of Academic Senate)
  - Ms Elizabeth Dibbs (Deputy Chancellor)
  - Ms Kerry Stubbs (Deputy Chancellor)
  - Mr Joseph Carrozzi AM
  - Dr Ben Etherington
  - Dr David Harland
  - Ms Naomi Hastings
  - Ms Holly Kramer (Pro-Chancellor)
  - Ms Rose Lewis
  - Mr Lee Pinder
  - Mr Bob Sahota
  - Ms Natalia Vukolova
- Apologies:**
- Dr Linda O'Brien AM (Pro-Chancellor)
  - Emeritus Professor MaryAnn Bin-Sallik AO
  - Ms Georgia Lee
  - Mr Peeyush Gupta AM
- In Attendance:**
- Ms Jane Hutchison (University Secretary)
  - Professor Clare Pollock (Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Provost)
  - Mr Peter Pickering (Vice-President, Finance and Resources)
  - Professor Simon Barrie (Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Academic)
  - Mr Angelo Kourtis (Vice-President, People and Advancement)
  - Professor Deborah Sweeney (Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research, Enterprise and International)
  - Professor Michelle Trudgett (Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Indigenous Leadership)
  - Ms Sophie Buck (Director, Office of Governance Services)
  - Ms Christine Sharpe (Executive Governance Officer) (Minutes)
  - Mrs Kylie Cooke (Senior Governance Officer) (Meeting Support)
- Observer (for open sessions items only)
- Mr Bakar Mohamad (Academic Senate Undergraduate Student Representative)

## 1. OPENING AND PROCEDURAL MATTERS

### 1.1 Welcome

The Chair welcomed members and observers. The Chancellor acknowledged the traditional

custodians of the land on which the Board met and paid respects to their Elders past and present. He declared the meeting open and confirmed that there was a quorum present.

## **1.2 Apologies**

The Board noted apologies from Dr Linda O'Brien, Emeritus Professor MaryAnn Bin-Sallik, Ms Georgia Lee and Mr Peeyush Gupta.

## **1.3 Declarations of Material Interests**

The Chair invited Board members to declare any new material interests in relation to matters on the agenda or their role on the Board more generally. No new declarations were made.

## **1.4 Confirmation of Minutes**

The Board resolved as follows:

*Resolution*

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**The Board of Trustees approved the minutes and confidential minutes of its 4 August 2021 meeting.**

**[6/10/2021:1]**

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## **1.5 Action Sheets from Previous Meetings**

The Board noted the actions taken on items listed. It was agreed to include a report on the casual staff employment survey to the action sheet.

Ms Hastings advised that she may be resigning from the Board at the end of the year.

## **1.6 Starring of Items**

*Resolution*

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**The Board of Trustees resolved to approve all unstarred items as having been considered and noted, and their respective recommendations as adopted.**

**[6/10/2021:2]**

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## **1.7 Arrangement of Business**

The following items were identified for consideration in closed session: 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.3.1, 3.4, 3.5, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4.

## **2. CHANCELLOR'S AND VICE-CHANCELLOR'S REPORTS**

### **2.1 Chancellor's Report [Open Session Item]**

The Chancellor's report was taken as read.

2021 National Conference on University Governance

The Chancellor advised that the National Conference on University Governance has been postponed. The Conference will now take place face to face on 11 – 13 May 2022, in Brisbane.

### Response to the Afghanistan crisis

The Chancellor advised the Board that the University has played a positive role in meeting the challenges facing Afghan students. There are approximately 277 students currently enrolled who were born in Afghanistan. An Afghanistan student community support group and other support groups have met, via Zoom, to create a safe place for students, staff and anyone who has been impacted by the crisis.

The Chancellor advised the Board that he attended a meeting with Afghan students, to see what further support could be provided by the University, in addition to the food and accommodation already offered as part of the Student Assistance Fund. The students indicated that they would like the University to be a voice on their behalf for Afghans in Australia. The Chancellor and Vice-Chancellor wrote an opinion piece in the Sydney Morning Herald on 23 August 2021, in relation to this issue, and have advocated for Afghan students' interests to the Federal Government.

The Board acknowledged the University's leadership during the Afghanistan crisis.

### Delivery of the HSC in NSW

The Chancellor spoke to the delivery of the HSC in NSW during the COVID pandemic, noting that all HSC exams will be held between 9 November 2021 and 3 December 2021. ATAR results will be released on 21 January 2022 and HSC results will be released on 24 January 2022. Due to this disruption, a significant number of students may not be well prepared for university study. Universities may consider providing additional support, including bridging courses and mentoring programs to address this.

## **2.2 Vice-Chancellor's Report [Open Session Item]**

The Vice-Chancellor highlighted a number of items in his report, including:

### COVID-19 Update:

- A number of all-staff webinars have been held with members of the Senior Executive team present. These are well attended by staff with a comprehensive question and answer opportunity. During the all-staff webinars, emphasis is given to the importance of vaccinations and the return to campus strategy.
- A University state-wide vaccination strategy is being considered by the NSW Vice-Chancellors' Committee, so that there is a consistent approach across the sector.

The Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor provided the following update on the return to campus strategy:

- Critical face to face teaching will resume, including priority teaching activities such as laboratories and practicals and research activities from the 25 October.
- A phased approach will be implemented over the next three months, with an increasing number of students and staff on campus for the Summer semester.
- Staff will commence returning to campus in 2022, with fully activated campuses by Autumn Session.
- The University is not anticipating mandatory vaccinations will be required, except for certain groups, including for staff and students engaged in clinical and aged care facilities.

The Vice-Chancellor advised the Board that it is an evolving situation requiring focus on the complexities of the Public Health Orders.

### Safe Corridor Program

The Vice-Chancellor provided the Board with an update on the Safe Corridor Program, which is to commence in December 2021.

### Staff Pulse Survey

The Vice-Chancellor provided the Board with an update on the Staff Pulse Survey, highlighting the following:

- 2,718 staff members responded to the survey, which represents a 55% response rate from all staff including a large number of casual staff, and a 83% response rate from all ongoing and fixed term staff.
- 94% of respondents indicated that they are fully vaccinated, are booked in for vaccination appointment or trying to obtain an appointment.
- 85% of respondents feel they have the flexibility to manage work and other commitments, and that they have the technology and support they need to work from home.
- 80% of respondents feel positively about the support they receive from their supervisor.
- The survey reinforced the effectiveness of the University's regular communication with staff.
- 25% of respondents disagreed that they had enough time to do their job well and that the workload was manageable.

### West Invest

The Vice-Chancellor advised the Board that the University is compiling projects for the NSW Government's WestInvest fund, including the Tech Jobs Accelerator, Agri Tech Hub, Sports Tech Hub, Campbelltown Community and Justice Precinct and support for the arts and culture sector in Western Sydney.

### National Safety Survey

The University is participating in the National Student Safety Survey, which follows on from the 2016 Australian Human Rights Commission national survey into sexual offences at Australian universities. The University's response rate at the closing date for the survey was 9%, an improvement on the 2016 survey but under the national response rate. Results will be released in 2022.

### Casual Workforce Report

The Vice-Chancellor spoke to the report, highlighting the work that has been undertaken on the impact of the changes to the Fair Work Act regarding conversion of casual staff, and insights provided by casual staff responses to the Pulse Survey. The University will undertake a deeper survey of casual staff as soon as possible.

Board members sought clarification in relation to academic staff workload pressures at Levels B and C, and the long-term impact of the pandemic on research performance. The Vice-Chancellor reassured the Board that the University is continuing to produce outstanding research, and the University's rankings have continued to improve, despite the impact of the pandemic. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research, Enterprise and International advised the Board that the University is focusing on providing support to address the long-term impact of the disruption from COVID- 19 on researchers. Strategies such as reviewing promotion criteria and School Workplan policies, Academic Development programs, Early Career Researchers and Women's Fellowships at Levels A, B and C, are all examples of initiatives to support the impact of the disruption to research staff.

The Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor advised the Board that the Gender Equity Committee are looking at strategies and working with the Schools to combat the gendered impact of the COVID- 19 pandemic.

## **2.3 Academic Senate Report [Open Session Item]**

The Chair of Academic Senate spoke to aspects of the written report, including:

### Academic Senate Executive Approvals

The Academic Senate Executive Committee recently approved an extension to the existing COVID-19 Policy Response 2021 Policy Suspension or Variation Instrument for the Doctorate Policy. The variation concerned the maximum period of extensions for Research Training Scholarship (RTS) students without additional fees, which has been temporarily increased to two sessions.

Senate Executive Committee also approved variations to the eligibility criteria for the Pathways to Dreaming Scholarship and the Pasifika Achievement to Higher Education (PATHE) Scholarship, after a comprehensive review of the overall performance of students holding these scholarships.

### Presentation on Academic Fraud and Contract Cheating

Professor Phillip Dawson, Associate Director for the Centre for Research and Digital Learning at Deakin University, provided an insightful presentation to Academic Senate on the rapidly changing landscape of contract cheating and the challenges universities face in responding to developments.

*[Mr Bakar Mohamad left the meeting at 9.43am]*

## **3. SIGNIFICANT MATTERS FOR DELIBERATION OR APPROVAL**

### **3.1 2022-2024 Proposed Budget [Closed Session Item]**

This item was considered in closed session.

### **3.2 External Review of the Board of Trustees [Closed Session Item]**

This item was considered in closed session.

### **3.3 Western Growth Update [Closed Session Item]**

This item was considered in closed session.

#### **3.3.1 Establishment of Film/Recording Facilities Penrith Campus [Closed Session Item]**

This item was considered in closed session.

### **3.4 Transformation Program Update [Closed Session Item]**

This item was considered in closed session.

### **3.5 Board and Committee Membership [Closed Session Item]**

This item was considered in closed session.

## **4. BOARD COMMITTEES AND ADVISORY BODIES**

### **4.1 Audit and Risk Committee [Closed Session Item]**

This item was considered in closed session.

#### **4.2 Board Executive Committee [Closed Session Item]**

This item was considered in closed session.

#### **4.3 Finance and Investment Committee [Closed Session Item]**

This item was considered in closed session.

#### **4.4 University Infrastructure Committee [Closed Session Item]**

This item was considered in closed session.

### **5. OTHER MATTERS FOR APPROVAL OR NOTING**

#### **5.1 Uses of the University Seal [Open Session Item]**

*Resolution*

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**The Board of Trustees resolved to approve the affixing of the University Seal to those documents listed in the attached report, pursuant to the University Seal Policy.**

**[6/10/2021:15]**

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### **6. NEXT MEETING AND CLOSURE**

The next meeting of the Board will be held on Wednesday 8 December 2021 at 8.30am in Boardroom 1, Building EB, Parramatta South campus.

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 12.25pm.

Confirmed by:

(Chair)



(Date)

16/12/21