

WESTERN SYDNEY UNIVERSITY



BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Minutes of meeting 2020/6 of the Board of Trustees of Western Sydney University, held at 8.30am on Wednesday 7 October 2020, in Boardroom 1, Building EB, Parramatta South Campus and by Zoom.

Present: Board of Trustees present in Boardroom, Parramatta South Campus
Professor Peter Shergold AC (Chair and Chancellor)
Ms Elizabeth Dibbs (Deputy Chancellor)
Ms Kerry Stubbs (Deputy Chancellor)
Professor Alpha Possamai-Inesedy (Chair of Academic Senate)
Dr Ben Etherington
Dr David Harland
Ms Naomi Hastings
Ms Rose Lewis (*arrived at 8.35am*)

Board of Trustees present by Zoom
Professor Barney Glover AO (Vice-Chancellor and President)
Ms Carmel Hourigan (Deputy Chancellor) (*joined at 9.15am*)
Emeritus Professor MaryAnn Bin-Sallik AO (*joined at 9.20am*)
Ms Holly Kramer
Ms Georgia Lee
Mr Peeyush Gupta AM
Dr Linda O'Brien AM
Mr Bob Sahota
Ms Gabrielle Trainor AO

Apologies: Mr Joseph Carrozzi

In Attendance: Western Sydney University in attendance by Zoom
Mr Angelo Kourtis (Vice-President, People and Advancement)
Ms Helen Fleming (University Secretary and General Counsel)

Western Sydney University present in Boardroom, Parramatta South Campus

Professor Scott Bowman AO (Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor)
Mr Peter Pickering (Vice-President, Finance and Resources)
Professor Deborah Sweeney (Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research, Enterprise and International)
Professor Simon Barrie (Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Academic)
Ms Sophie Buck (Director, Office of Governance Services)
Ms Christine Sharpe (Executive Governance Officer) (Minutes)
Mrs Belinda Salvatori (Executive Assistant) (Meeting Support)

(For Item 4.1 only)

Professor Kate Stevens, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) (*joined by Zoom at 11.20am*)

1. OPENING AND PROCEDURAL MATTERS

1.1 Welcome

The Chair welcomed members and observers and 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.

The Chancellor welcomed Professor Scott Bowman AO, Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor, to his first meeting of the Board.

1.2 Apologies

The Board noted one apology from Mr Joseph Carrozzi.

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

The Board of Trustees approved the minutes and confidential minutes of its 5 August 2020 meeting.

[7/10/2020:1]

1.5 Action Sheets from Previous Meetings

The Board noted the actions taken on items listed.

1.6 Starring of Items

Resolution

The Board of Trustees approved all unstarred items as having been considered and noted, and their respective recommendations as adopted.

[7/10/2020:2]

1.7 Arrangement of Business

The following items were identified for consideration in closed session: 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 4.1, 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4, and 5.5.

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

2.1 Chancellor's Report [Open Session Item]

The Chancellor's report was taken as read.

Foreign Interference legislation

The Chancellor briefed the Board on Australia's Foreign Relations (State and Territory Arrangements) Bill, which will empower the Commonwealth Government to intervene to regulate all State and Territory agreements with foreign nations, if they are considered adverse to Australian's foreign relations or are inconsistent with foreign policy. Universities were added late in the drafting of the Bill, and it has become apparent that the scale and range of university activities that will be covered by this legislation will be significant. The Bill has the potential to discourage international and research collaboration that significantly benefits Australia. Chancellors will lobby the Government to take a risk-based approach to implementation of the legislation including by allowing universities to report on activities and offer transparency through an annual reporting process, rather than requiring Government approval for all agreements and collaborations.

The Chancellor also briefed the Board on a matter involving cancellation of a PhD student's visa.

Strategy Session – February 2021

The Chancellor spoke to the significant amount of media coverage regarding university governance issues. The Board will have an opportunity to focus on university governance at the Board Strategy Session in February 2021.

[Ms Gabrielle Trainor left the meeting at 9.00am]

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

The Vice-Chancellor's report was taken as read.

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

COVID-19 update

The Vice-Chancellor advised that the University is currently in Stage 3 of its return to campus plan with increased activity on campus with students attending laboratories, practicals and simulation activities. Planning is underway for intensification of campuses for Summer session and Autumn 2021.

The University has successfully transitioned into recovery management, with a Recovery Management Team (RMT) replacing the Crisis Management Team. The RMT monitors aspects of the COVID-19 response such as the Student Assistance Fund, Western Success and general communications. Daily dashboards with real-time data including updates on the health and welfare of staff and students, are provided to the Senior Leadership Group.

The University is moving towards a HyFlex (hybrid/flexible) environment, as it has recognised the need for hybrid classrooms and a flexible delivery without diminishing the campus experience.

Safe Corridor

A safe corridor for international students coming to Australia is being trialled in the Northern Territory with up to 70 Charles Darwin University students arriving from Singapore. Upon arrival, students will spend 14 days in quarantine before commencing classes.

Job-ready Graduates (JRG) Higher Education Reform Package 2020 update

It is anticipated that the Job-ready Graduates (JRG) package, in its amended form, will pass the Senate.

The Vice-Chancellor advised the Committee that the Bill adopting the JRG package was reviewed by the Senate Education and Employment Legislation Committee. The Vice-

Chancellor appeared before the Committee reinforcing that the reform package will provide much needed certainty for the sector.

The University has seen movement in the modelling with more funding being potentially accessible to Western Sydney University. The University is now focussed on lobbying for additional places in support of the Western Sydney City Deal and other Western Sydney initiatives.

[Ms Carmel Hourigan joined the meeting via Zoom at 9.15am]

True Reward

The Vice-President (People and Advancement) spoke to this item and advised the Board that the number of UAC applications and portal applications (direct applications to the University) with Western Sydney University as a first preference increased, with a total of over 21,000 applications received (up 61 per cent on 2019).

The University is currently adopting a conservative metric to forecast load from applications received due to the volatility of the current market. However, even with a conservative metric, the University anticipates an additional 1,000 students in 2021. The impact on courses and campuses is currently being analysed and will be available in the next few weeks. The Standing Committees will be kept up to date on developments, and there will be an update at the next Board meeting.

[Emeritus Professor MaryAnn Bin-Sallik AO joined the meeting via Zoom at 9.20am]

Federal Budget

The Vice-Chancellor provided a briefing on the Federal Budget announcement, which includes \$1.5 billion additional funding for higher education. This consists of:

- \$290 million allocated over two years for 50,000 places in new higher education short courses in agriculture, health, information technology, science and teaching.
- \$300 million allocated for Commonwealth Grant Scheme payments for 12,000 additional undergraduate places, as part of the JRG package.
- \$1 billion allocated via the Research Support Program (RSP) to support universities for costs related to research infrastructure, research jobs, and partnerships with industry. Funds are allocated based on the current funding RSP method, meaning approximately 75 per cent of this investment will go to the Group of Eight Universities as research intensive universities. Of the remaining \$250 million, it is anticipated that Western Sydney University will receive between \$8 - \$10 million.

NUW Alliance Membership

The agreement to join NUW Alliance has been finalised. The Vice-Chancellor advised that the Board will be provided with updates as the partnership progresses.

Future Directions

The University released to all staff the *Future Directions 2021-2023* issues paper. Staff were encouraged to review the issues paper and provide feedback through an online process. A total of 130 comments were received. The University will now move to the next phase of consultation with Schools and Divisions.

The University released to all staff a call for Expressions of Interest (EOIs) for Voluntary Redundancy. A total of 281 EOIs were received, however approximately 100 staff were deemed to be in positions that could not be made redundant. Approximately 160 staff have been advised that their EOI will be taken into account under the change process.

The Vice-Chancellor advised the Board that he has recently held three all-staff webinars with open question sessions, focussing on COVID-19 and MyVoice Survey results.

National Priorities and Industry Linkage Fund

The Vice-Chancellor briefed the Board on the National Priorities and Industry Linkage Fund noting that funding will be provided to universities to enhance the ability to connect with industry and produced STEM and health graduates for the future.

MyVoice Survey 2020 Results

The Vice-Chancellor presented the results of the latest MyVoice survey. The survey contained similar questions to the 2018 survey with additional questions in relation to teaching and learning, research and the University's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. 86% of all staff completed the survey. Due to a technical error, a small number of questions were not asked of all staff, so these have been excluded from the final results.

The results highlight that the University performed most strongly in measures relating to health and safety, communication and diversity. In comparison to the sector, Western Sydney University exceeded benchmarks relating to executive leadership, communication, and health and safety.

Areas needing improvement relate to learning, research support, higher degree research supervision and wellbeing. The results also reveal that overall staff wellbeing has not improved since commencing working from home.

Board members sought clarification regarding the level of dissatisfaction of academics at Levels B, C and D. The Vice-Chancellor advised that staff at this level are early to mid-career academics who are managing a large team of staff and administrative workload within the Schools. These are primarily Directors of Academic Programs (DAPs) and Academic Course Advisors (ACAs). The University is looking at ways to support DAPs and ACAs with managing workload.

A Board member noted the pleasing number of responses to the management and leadership questions. The Vice-Chancellor advised the Board that the 2018 MyVoice survey was conducted after the implementation of Shared Services and before the early retirement scheme. Substantial change processes lead to fatigue and this was reflected in the 2018 responses. The University has since implemented a range of measures to lift the visibility of the leadership team.

[Ms Gabrielle Trainor re-joined the meeting at 10.10am]

2.3 Academic Senate Report [Open Session Item]

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

Presentations to Senate

Dr Roger Attwater, Senior Manager, Environmental Stability gave a presentation to Senate about the Environmental Sustainability Action Plan.

Strategic Plan Consultation

At the last Senate meeting, Professor Brian Stout introduced the 'vision' and 'mission' of the University's strategic plan, *Sustaining Success 2021-2026*. Senate members were allocated to Zoom breakout rooms where they provided feedback on the strategic plan. The primary feedback from the consultation was that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander element should be emphasised throughout the whole document and that sustainability, research and adaptability are important aspects. The language of the document was considered to be more accessible than previous strategic plans.

Question on Notice - Student Feedback on Unit and Teaching

A question on notice was submitted regarding the practice that currently prevents Unit Coordinators from receiving student feedback for classes with fewer than five students. This will be progressed to the Course and Unit Standards Working Party and the Academic Policy Advisory Group for discussion.

Policy Variations or Suspensions in Response to COVID-19

A number of policy variations or suspensions in response to COVID-19 have been ratified by Academic Senate, including the Grade Point Average (GPA) Neutral Scheme, the Withdrawal Without Academic Penalty and Repeat at No Cost arrangement, and the Examinations Policy – Deferred Examination Provisions. The Repeat at No Cost arrangement was clarified to apply only to commencing international students, and for one unit only.

3. SIGNIFICANT MATTERS FOR DELIBERATION OR APPROVAL

3.1 2021-2023 Draft Triennium Budget [Closed Session Item]

This item was considered in closed session.

3.2 2021-2026 Draft Strategic Plan Update [Closed Session Item]

This item was considered in closed session.

3.3 Graduate Member on the Board of Trustees [Closed Session Item]

This item was considered in closed session.

3.4 Western Growth [Closed Session Item]

This item was considered in closed session.

4. PRESENTATION

4.1 Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Cluster [Open Session Item]

[Professor Kate Stevens, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) joined the meeting by Zoom at 11.20am for this item]

The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics), Professor Kate Stevens, gave a presentation on the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics cluster. The cluster consists of the School of Built Environment, School of Computer, Data and Mathematical Sciences, School of Engineering, School of Science, the Hawkesbury Institute for the Environment and MARCS Institute for Brain, Behaviour and Development. Professor Stevens outlined the course profiles, students and disciplines that made up the STEM cluster.

Professor Stevens highlighted current STEM themes, linking teaching, research and engagement, including AgriPark/Tech, Advanced Manufacturing, Aerotropolis and Multiversity, Fire, Water, Health and Education Precincts and Urban Transformation, and Forecasting and Prediction Models.

Professor Stevens spoke to the cluster's external opportunities and the responsibility that the STEM cluster has to deliver on these developments within the region. In particular, she spoke of the National Priorities and Industry Linkage Fund; a \$900 million opportunity in block grants to support engagement with industry, and produce job-ready graduates.

[Professor Kate Stevens, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) left the meeting at 11.50am at the conclusion of this item]

[Professor Scott Bowman, Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor left the meeting at 11.47am]

5. BOARD COMMITTEES AND ADVISORY BODIES

5.1 Audit and Risk Committee [Closed Session Item]

This item was considered in closed session.

5.2 Board Executive Committee [Closed Session Item]

This item was considered in closed session.

5.3 Finance and Investment Committee [Closed Session Item]

This item was considered in closed session.

5.4 Foundation Council [Closed Session Item]

This item was considered in closed session.

5.5 University Infrastructure Committee [Closed Session Item]

This item was considered in closed session.

6. OTHER MATTERS FOR APPROVAL OR NOTING

6.1 Uses of the University Seal [Open Session Item]

Resolution

The Board of Trustees approved the affixing of the University Seal to those documents listed in the attached report, pursuant to the University Seal Usage Policy.

[7/10/2020:10]

7. NEXT MEETING AND CLOSURE

The next meeting of the Board will be held on Wednesday 2 December 2020 at 8.30am by Zoom.

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 12.32pm.

Confirmed by:

(Chair)



(Date)

2/12/20

STRATEGIC INFORMATION SESSION

The Board held a lunch time strategic information session immediately following the Board meeting.

21C Update: 2020 – The Plan and the Pivot

Professor Simon Barrie, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic), gave a presentation to the Board to update on 21C curriculum project. He spoke of how the plan to further deliver on major components of the 21C project in 2020 was superseded by the crisis of the COVID 19 pandemic, and how it was necessary to completely refocus the project to manage the transformation of curriculum online in the short timeframe required, and then build on this new “Hy/Flex” foundation.

Professor Barrie spoke of the curriculum and teaching transformation that occurred, and the systems integration required to support the transformation. The new SMS will deliver on this agility and sustainability, which puts the University into a robust position. Underpinning the transformation is the 21C theme of students co-creating change.

He spoke of the challenges on how to preserve the flexibility that has been proven to be something staff and students both like. The project has been delivering on a new policy framework to support the new flexible curriculum architecture to preserve this.

He spoke of the alternative credentials strategy (leveraging new curriculum elements), the resilience of staff and students, and the future of the project which will need to pivot again to respond to the post-COVID-19 pandemic and JRG context.