



**NORTHERN ALBERTA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
Board of Governors**

ACADEMIC COUNCIL

**Monday, March 30, 2020
2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Via Teams Meeting**

MINUTES

PRESENT:

Dr. Ray Block (Chair)	Dr. Sue Fitzsimmons	Sandra Marocco	Malcolm Haines	Jen Crothers
Jamie Corfield	Garry Wilson	Dong Ye	Robert Ackroyd	Steve Chattargoon
Norman Hill	Max Arevalo	Sonja Wojdak	Karen Velasco	Emi Oke
Alexis Flinkert	Aleksandra Jaruga	Khevna Dave		

RESOURCES:

Sandy Timmer (recorder)

GUESTS:

John O'Keeffe	David McDine	Allessandra Medeiros
Jerilyn Kotelniski		

REGRETS:

Matt Rigby	Gurtar Singh
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1. OPENING

1.1 Call to Order and Approval of the Agenda

Dr. Ray Block welcomed everyone to this new virtual meeting and called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m.

No conflicts of interest were declared by Council members.

Moved by Malcolm Haines that the Agenda be approved as presented.

Carried

1.2 Approval of the Minutes of the Meeting of February 3, 2020

Moved by Garry Wilson that the Minutes of the meeting of February 3, 2020 be approved as presented.

Carried

1.3 Business Arising from the Previous Meeting

There was no business arising from the last meeting.

2. UPDATE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dr. Block wanted to thank everyone for all of their hard work and ability to quickly adjust to a new way of teaching to keep our students learning so they can continue towards completing their classes.

Dr. Block touched on the transition plan that is going before the Board on April 2nd for their approval. As everyone knows, the government passed their 2020 Provincial Budget on February 27th. While there were few surprises in the budget, with the addition of this new pandemic, more strain will be put on our financial sustainability.

On March 27th, all PSI presidents and Board Chairs met with the Minister and he reconfirmed the Province's requirement that post-secondaries will need to meet their projected expenditure targets. The new Investment Management Agreements (IMAs) that the ministry has with each post-secondary sets out these projected targets. These IMAs follow the Ontario model for their post-secondaries. Our IMA must be submitted to the government by May 31, 2020.

2.1 Student Housing

Dr. Block provided a brief update on student housing. He advised that this project is still very much on management's radar. Ray and Jeff Dumont met with the City and were advised that the LRT on Blatchford is still a major project for them which impacts our campus development plans which include student housing. We think we are about three years away before we can start work on student housing.

3. ADMINISTRATION

3.1 NAIT's Process for Responding to COVID-19

Dr. Block welcomed Mr. John O'Keeffe, our Director of Campus Safety and Security. Mr. O'Keeffe is currently heading up the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) for NAIT as we learn to navigate through this new pandemic era.

Mr. O'Keeffe provided an overview of the EOC and its function. He advised that the EOC is following international codes of best practice for an emergency operations centre. A team has been pulled together consisting of individuals from NAIT with strengths in certain key areas. Priorities for the institute were identified and initially, the EOC dealt with the emergency side of the situation and it will evolve as the crisis does.

Currently, most of the campus has been completely shut down, except for a few locations such as the computer lab for students to access if they do not have a device of their own.

A task force of senior leaders was also pulled together. John meets daily with the task force and weekly with the Executive Committee to provide updates. Decisions have often needed to be made quickly in response to the fast evolution of this virus' impacts.

John noted that there is also an emergency response working group within the PSI system and information and tools are shared for consistency where possible. John is also in constant contact with the Ministry of Advanced Education and their emergency operations centre.

The EOC will continue to update staff and students as we know more through our communications with these various entities.

Dr. Block thanked Mr. O'Keeffe and also Josh Bowen for their excellent work in setting up the EOC and how quickly it has come together to respond to this pandemic. Mr. O'Keeffe then departed the meeting.

Dr. Sue Fitzsimmons noted that NAIT's EOC has been recognized across the city and province as the model to use so wanted to congratulate everyone on the EOC team.

3.2 Board Member Considerations for Future NAIT Strategic Planning

Dr. Fitzsimmons referred to a Board member's comments and suggestions for polytechnic education in many areas. This is for Academic Council's consideration. Many of these topics will be brought forward to our board at a strategic planning meeting.

3.3 Building Back Better: The Role of Online Learning in our Polytechnic Future

While we are already starting to plan for resuming business as we normally do, we should also use this crisis opportunity to learn from and build NAIT back better than it already is. What will we look like when we come out of this pandemic? How can we make NAIT even stronger? Sue asked everyone to bring forward any thoughts they have where our education mission is concerned. She will send out an email to everyone to respond to some or all of these questions:

- What do you believe we've learned from our rapid deployment of teaching and learning at a distance that we might want to build on for the future?
- How could we use this learning to build an even stronger NAIT?
- What is your sense of how distance and face-to-face methods might be best used to educate future NAIT students?

3.4 Changes to NAIT's Grading Procedure

As we are in this unprecedented time, it was necessary to change our procedure around grading. We have been in consultation with NAITSA who have been very helpful, and we are working on a protocol which will assist students to understand the changes.

Our intention is for the changes to apply to Winter 2020 only at this time.

Academic Council members discussed the changes with Jen Crothers. She noted these changes do not apply to apprentice students, only to the DDCP programs.

Honours/Pass/Fail will not factor into GPA. There will be communications coming forward to help clarify concerns. We are working with our Registrar counterparts to work through this as all post-secondaries are experiencing changes to grading practices for this term and we understand flexibility in how we review transcripts from this time for admissions and advanced credit purposes will be necessary across post-secondaries.

We are also working with our funding (scholarships/bursaries) providers on what this means for our eligibility criteria.

We are discussing with our Associate Deans Academic what this means for graduation eligibility for students completing this semester. Communications will be shared with students as decisions are made.

As there were no further questions, Sue wished to thank Jen and her student progression team for all their efforts to deal with this unusual time and get as much information together in a short amount of time for students.

3.5 Government of Alberta Performance Metrics Related to the Academic Portfolio

Dr. Fitzsimmons advised that, as Dr. Block mentioned earlier, the government has changed their funding model for post-secondaries and funding is now going to be tied to performance metrics. The COVID situation has had an additional impact, especially to our international students with the travel bans.

4. INFORMATION ITEMS

4.1 NSSI Update

Dr. Sue Fitzsimmons welcomed David McDine to speak on the NAIT Student Survey on Instruction (NSSI).

Mr. McDine advised Council that the survey has been suspended as of March 16th due to the COVID impacts of instruction now being online. For any classes that were originally intended to be online, the survey is still being issued as nothing has changed for those. As well, we did include contract instructors initially for those with a connection to our programs but due to moving classes online, only about 50 of those contract instructors were able to be surveyed.

David advised that there was very good uptake on the survey between January and March 16th, although there was a slight decline in the response rate compared to the previous term. David noted that this was somewhat expected due to all that was going on at this time.

In terms of results, David indicated that:

- 90% of students agree they are satisfied with the overall quality of instruction provided by their instructor
- 94% of students agree they are satisfied that their instructors treated students fairly with consideration for individual circumstances
- 96% of students agree that their instructor maintains a respectful learning environment
- 95% of students agree that their instructor is accessible

While we know we have great instructors at NAIT, these results are validating. It is disappointing that we had to suspend the survey this term but it was the right decision.

We should start to think about how we talk to our students about this pandemic experience and what we can learn from it. We want to hear from our students what their experience has been like to suddenly change course and have their classes online. We're still working through how we will gather this feedback.

David concluded by applauding our instructors and their nimbleness to adjust to the new teaching environment and continue to ensure our students have an excellent learning experience.

Dr. Fitzsimmons thanked David for his update for Academic Council and he departed the meeting.

5. QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Karen Velasco introduced Allesandra Mederios and Jerilyn Kotelniski as two new members of the NAITSA Executive. Allesandra has been elected as the VP Academic, and Jerilyn has been elected in the VP External position. Alexis Flinkert has been re-elected as VP Student Services and will be the Acting President until the by-election in the fall for the president position. Karen advised that the NAITSA offices have closed but most of their services are online and they have been receiving many inquiries from students.

6. OTHER BUSINESS

Dr. Block concluded the meeting by thanking everyone for all they are doing for NAIT and for their participation today.

7. NEXT MEETING – Monday, September 14, 2020 at 2:00-4:00 p.m. for Orientation and Monday, September 21, 2020 for the first meeting of the academic year

8. ADJOURNMENT

Moved by Garry Wilson that the meeting be adjourned at 2:55 p.m.

Carried