



MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS

AUGUST 13, 2020

The meeting was held at 10:30 a.m. via Zoom videoconference.

PRESENT: R. Konrad, Chair
 A. Bryson, Acting Secretary

 S. Bennett C. Rorabeck
 W. Boye B. Ross
 C. Burghardt-Jesson A. Shepard
 G. Dick S. Shortreed
 K. Gibbons D. Simmonds
 C. Karakatsanis C. Stephenson
 D. Keddy K. Sullivan
 J. Kum P. Thomlinson
 S. Neiman J. Toswell
 G. Parraga S. Trosow
 S. Pitel H. Usher

By Invitation: A. Blackburn-Evans, K. Cole, P. Eluchok, A. Hrymak, L. Logan,
 J. O’Brien, T. Rice, M. Ruddock

Secretariat Resource: L.A. McKivor

Regrets: E. Holder, M. Lerner

Land Acknowledgement

D. Keddy read a Land Acknowledgement.

BG.20-87

REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT

The Report of the President, distributed with the agenda, consisted of the following topics: COVID-19 and Fall Semester Plans, and a Return to Campus Plan.

A. Shepard, President & Vice-Chancellor, offered his thanks to the Board for convening during the summer. Given the extraordinary circumstances of COVID-19, he expressed that senior administration sincerely desired to maintain a flow of communication with the Board and would be sharing a report outlining the planning for a safe return to campus this fall.

A. Shepard offered thanks to his team and the entire university for the incredible response, collaboration, and adoption of new and interesting ways of working that have emerged during the pandemic. He thanked in particular L. Logan, Vice-President (Operations & Finance) and J. O'Brien, Associate Vice-President (Human Resources) for spearheading the work associated with Western's Report [Appendix II], submitted to the Government of Ontario, Ministry of Colleges and Universities, and the Ministry of Health, the federal government sector managing International Student Arrivals, and the Public Health Agency of Canada. He said that the requirements now identified at the federal level for compliance prior to international students' return to Canadian campuses has been met at Western, and the University's planning has been championed as a model for thoroughness of approach.

A. Shepard confirmed a close alliance with the London Health Unit and reported that there is a level of comfort with Western's pandemic planning. Although the circumstances of the pandemic are fluid, and Western may need to modify plans at any point, the current trajectory plots out a safe, reasonable, and calculated return to campus for faculty, staff, and students. The plan has been well received and provides both flexibility and an endorsement of a mixed model of learning, research, and teaching.

A. Shepard shared that some important aspects of the current planning have been the opening of libraries, the partial opening of the athletic center, and students living within residences, given the deep importance of the informal engagement that happens at universities.

Lastly, A. Shepard noted that Western has made substantial financial investments to ensure that the fall opening will be successful including increased financial aid at the undergraduate and graduate levels, and significant investments in personal protective equipment.

BG.20-87a COVID-19 and Fall Semester Plans - Update

Board members were provided with slides entitled Update of Western's Fall 2020 Planning in Exhibit I. A. Hrymak, Provost and Vice-President (Academic), informed the Board that first year, first entry acceptance rates are strong, although tilted to domestic students. He said that travel and visas were forecast to produce difficulties; therefore, focus was shifted to domestically located international students. Tuition revenue is not expected to be impacted but additional costs are anticipated. He reported that upper year undergraduate and graduate enrolment has not produced major deviations. Fall and winter are anticipated to be treated similarly with detailed planning at the faculty levels.

The Community Connections program spearheaded by Student Experience, in collaboration with the faculties and the Registrar's Office, successfully brought approximately 1500 students and their family members to campus as a partial replacement of March Break Open House activities.

A. Hrymak reported that the Smart Start program initiated by the Faculty of Education was successful in supporting students coming out of high school who may not be comfortable with the pivot to online learning. He reported that over 1500 students have taken the first set of diagnostics and that it is anticipated that this program will be maintained for the future.

A. Hrymak reported that cost priorities are focused on safety and improving online delivery support.

Board of Governors – Open Session Minutes
August 13, 2020

L. Logan, Vice-President (Operations & Finance) reported that a phased and gradual return to campus began May 12th with Phase One and will culminate on August 31st with Phase Four. An individual's return to campus is under the direction of individual supervisors. L. Logan outlined that space and capacity planning focuses on the reduced capacity caused by physical distancing guidelines. She reported that capacity assessments of all spaces on campus, including dining halls, common spaces, and recreation facilities for a total of 42 buildings and six residences is now complete with the assistance of the firm Perkins & Will. This process informed Western's signage strategy. She indicated that the capacity of campus is forecast to be in the 23,000 to 27,000 range, excluding outdoor spaces.

L. Logan commented that facilitating building readiness began in early April with a focus on safety. Examples of work include upgrades to air filtration systems to recommended MERV grade filters and complete signage and wayfinding on campus.

Western's residence expectation was originally for 4100 students, however that number continues to change. L. Logan reported that residences are de-densified, with most students in single rooms, except for hybrid suites where students have requested to be together. She noted that tents will also be set up outside of most residences to expand usable space for students in addition to two tents generally available on campus. All residence plans have been shared with the Health Unit.

L. Logan reported that Western is focusing on educational language that stresses that health and safety is a shared responsibility. The University Students' Council (USC), Western's Communication team and Residence team are working closely together to coordinate messaging that will continue to be built on for other instances such as Broughdale.

A Board member questioned how Western's residence food services will operate given that individuals living off campus may not adhere to strict safety measures. L. Logan commented that initially food services will be restricted to residence members, however plans continue to evolve as situations present and clear protocols are developed.

A Board member asked if there is differentiation between weekdays and weekends. L. Logan expressed that they are conscious of demand on weekends and building security will be maintained with new protocols under development.

L. Logan addressed a question from a Board member seeking clarification on the safety of air quality and circulation in buildings, specifically older buildings. She indicated that no demand management activity is being done, fresh air intake has been maximized while maintaining humidity levels, and finally, filtration is being increased to MERV ratings in all buildings.

A Board member questioned the security of buildings for the coming fall. L. Logan expressed that research buildings may remain restricted to specific card access. Protocols for other areas on campus are being developed and will involve reduced hours of access. With reduced capacity on campus, the security of both buildings and people within the buildings are of great importance.

Board of Governors – Open Session Minutes
August 13, 2020

J. O'Brien, Associate Vice-President (Human Resources) reported that Western is now moving from a health, safety, and well-being perspective to focusing on culture, personal protective equipment availability, and response capabilities for positive COVID-19 cases. She said that Western is continuing to build on the longstanding safety culture to now include classroom and overall campus safety.

J. O'Brien reported that there is extensive signage on campus to assist the community with appropriate safety protocols and practices. She announced that Western will be implementing two new administrative roles to assist with safety protocols. These roles will be in addition to classroom ambassador roles to assist in the loading and unloading of classrooms, ensuring students have completed health assessments and monitoring mask wearing. J. O'Brien indicated that Western is continuing to build a culture that includes multiple methods for educational communication.

To augment the number of sinks on campus, J. O'Brien reported that mobile handwashing units will be available on campus to complement the tent environment, ensuring that social interactions are still permissible within a safe and socially distanced environment.

Western has established a partnership with the London Health Science Center, St. Joseph's lab that J. O'Brien outlined will provide 24-hour testing turnaround for symptomatic individuals. If an outbreak is detected, J. O'Brien indicated that a mobile testing unit is available. Contact tracing will be led by the Middlesex London Health Unit, with information support provided by Western.

J. O'Brien reported that a shift in focus will take place this fall recognizing the difficulties faced by individuals up to this point in the pandemic. Emphasis will be placed on health and well-being for faculty and staff. The Wellbeing team will be focusing on key messages from a mental health perspective. Opportunities for individuals to continue to connect will begin through virtual means with multiple initiatives planned.

A Board member questioned how Western would proceed if guidelines are not followed. J. O'Brien indicated that from an employee perspective the issues would be dealt with from a compliance perspective including coaching. By influencing from a health and safety culture point of view in a productive way through engagement and communication, positive results will ensue. A. Hrymak indicated that compliance has been excellent to this point from the faculty and graduate student communities. Partnership with the USC will target undergraduate student compliance with consistent messaging.

A Board member expressed concern that with 23,000 to 27,000 students on campus, deviation from safety protocols should be expected. It was recommended that Western have a clear and well communicated route for managing dissension.

A Board member questioned how Western's clubs and sports organizations will be guided and governed during this time. A. Hrymak assured members that active engagement with the USC was underway to reiterate safety protocols and to help build community through virtual opportunities.

A Board member sought clarification for the percentage of first year students experiencing an on-campus course this fall. A. Hrymak expressed that extensive work had been done by the Deans to ensure that components of on-campus activities will be available for students, varying by faculty, but averaging to be 20%. Online alternatives have been created for students unable to participate on campus.

A. Shepard noted that in addition to partnering with the USC, Western has actively sought to engage club-level leadership to help influence behavior and student culture. He again expressed the importance of campus safety being a joint responsibility, shared with the student population.

A. Blackburn-Evans, Chief Communications Officer, outlined that in addition to the established and successful methods of communication, a shift in focus is taking place to support culture change communications particularly aimed at students. Engagement with campus student groups is a priority. Being patient, kind and respectful is important messaging.

A Board member offered compliments for the detailed planning and preparation evident in Western's pandemic response.

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QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS

A Board member questioned how continued care will be provided to faculty and staff when a clinic physician will be leaving the practice resulting in individuals losing the opportunity for care. J. O'Brien, Associate Vice-President (Human Resources) indicated that Western is actively recruiting family physicians and is hopeful that an outcome will be available for communication shortly. The ability to set up health care teams in the City of London has impacted Western's ability to retain physicians.

A Board member identified a concern with face-to-face instruction outside of a lab environment and a lack of information on the appropriate personal protective equipment necessary. Additionally, a question was raised relating to the level of responsibility an instructor holds within a classroom to ensure safety protocol was being followed. J. O'Brien indicated that classroom ambassadors will assist with this process. In addition, faculty level protocol decisions that have been made, such as the installation of Plexiglas shields at podiums, and individual kits for instructors that contain cleaning materials as well as specialized protective items have been distributed.

A Board member questioned the timeline for staff and faculty to vacate campus if a shutdown is mandated. The previous shutdown had provided an opportunity for faculty and staff to vacate their offices and facilities. J. O'Brien indicated that timelines for faculty and staff to be away from campus is mandated by senior leadership and would frequently fall within the Stage 2, 5-7-day phase.

A Board member questioned if Western's international student population is requesting reduced tuition fees. A. Hrymak, Provost and Vice-President (Academic) indicated that he was aware of petitions for relief on international student tuition. He indicated that Western is supporting increased scholarship and bursary support for students in need. Western has

invested approximately \$5 million in personnel support and software development to enhance the online environment. A. Hrymak further commented that services for students will remain in place for students to access as needed. Athletic and recreation ancillary fees have been reduced by 50%, whereas remaining fees stand with the proviso that if a service is not able to be offered, the fee will be addressed.

A Board member expressed that as many students and faculty will continue to work remotely, there is a need for messaging to be directed to individuals who will not be returning to campus, specifically in relation to cyber security.

The Chair of the Property and Finance Committee indicated that predominant attack vectors in the market place have been attacks to virtual private networks (VPN) resulting in the need for increased security, although Western's cyber strategy is well equipped to provide direction. A. Hrymak confirmed that cyber attacks are heightened during the pandemic, but because of collaboration software now being used for course delivery Western has become more proactive in establishing and communicating best practices.

A Board member expressed concern with the availability of technology for students and encouraged Western's leadership to be mindful of the needs of students to access technology to support their learning.

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OTHER BUSINESS

No other business was reported.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned to the confidential session at 11:55 a.m.

R. Konrad
Chair

A. Bryson
Acting Secretary