
University of New England
Council OPEN Meeting
Council Room & Zoom Video Conference
Friday 27 May 2022

Present:

Mr James Harris, <i>Chancellor & Chair</i>	A/Prof. Melanie Fillios
Ms Jan McClelland AM, <i>Deputy Chancellor</i>	Mr Phil Hess
Prof. Brigid Heywood, <i>Vice-Chancellor & CEO</i>	Mr Col Murray
Prof. Robyn Bartel, <i>Chair of Academic Board</i>	Mrs Jane Schmude
Mr David van Aanholt	Ms Meredith Symons (joined the meeting from item 4.1)
Ms Megan Aitken	Ms Emma Wellham
Mr Russell Evans	

In attendance:

Prof. Peter Creamer, <i>Chief Operating Officer</i>	Mrs Gabrielle Price, <i>Director Governance and University Secretary</i> (minutes)
Prof. Simon Evans, <i>Deputy VC</i>	
Prof. David Miron, <i>Acting Deputy VC (Research)</i>	
Ms Meg McKechnie, <i>Acting Chief Financial Officer</i>	

Observers

Sue Crew	Professor Mike Wilmore, Pro Vice-Chancellor Academic Development (<i>for item 3.1</i>)
Bryn Griffiths	Dr Marty Schmude (<i>for item 3.1</i>)
	Mr Johann Boshoff (<i>for item 3.1</i>)

1 MEETING OPENING

The Chancellor and Chair opened the meeting welcoming all members and observers. The Chancellor noted Ms Meredith Symons had advised they may need to join late.

1.1 * Reconciliation Action Plan - Acknowledgement of Country

The University of New England respects and acknowledges that its people, courses and facilities are built on land, and surrounded by a sense of belonging, both ancient and contemporary, of the world's oldest living culture. In doing so, UNE values and respects Indigenous knowledge systems as a vital part of the knowledge capital of Australia. We recognise the strength, resilience and capacity of the Aboriginal community and pay our respects to the Elders past, present and future.

1.2 * Apologies

Professor Mike Wilson Interim DVCR was unable to attend the meeting.

1.3 * Conflict of Interest Declaration and Disclosed Register of Interest

Council members were asked to disclose any material interest, consistent with Schedule 2A Clause 5 of the University of New England 1993 Act (NSW). Ms Jane Schmude declared a close relationship with Dr Marty Schmude who was presenting today as part of Item 3.1. It was noted that presentation was for information only. There were no other conflicts declared.

Council members were asked to update their Disclosed Register of Interest with the Secretariat as required.

1.4 * Order of Business

There were no changes to the order of business.

Council ACCEPTED the order of business and ADOPTED non-starred items.

1.5 Confirmation of Minutes

Minutes of the meeting held on 31 March 2022 had been circulated for comment. A signed copy of the minutes once confirmed will be available for viewing in the Convene Document Library. *[Post meeting note: the March Council minutes have now been confirmed]*

1.6 * Action Items

There were no outstanding action item.

Action	Due Date	Assigned To	Status
5.1. Due Diligence Obligations (WHS) Report #22074 - 31/03/22 Chief Operating Officer to consider presenting the information for the outliers on the sick leave bar chart by faculty. 20/05/22 – Agenda 27/05/22 meeting – Report #22074	27 May 2022	COO	Completed

2 CHANCELLOR'S REPORT

2.1 * Chancellor's OPEN Report #22057

The Chancellor Mr James Harris spoke briefly to the report and updates regarding activities. With no issues raised the Council moved the resolution.

Council NOTED the Chancellor's OPEN Report #22057.

3 MANAGEMENT REPORTS

3.1 * Vice-Chancellor & CEO's OPEN Oral report #22063

The Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive Officer Professor Brigid Heywood:

- provided an update regarding recent media around payments of casual staff noting some misinformation and that any issues of this nature would be the subject of reporting to the Audit and Risk Committee;

- outlined the significant body of work underway to support master planning, noting the critical importance that this helps to inform decisions about the development of study centres and of campuses;
- spoke about UNE's ambition to maintain status as a leading regional University and that consideration of how and where we want to align with the sector and when we are comfortable being different is important; and
- explained that UNE is conscious that operations in different places can increase the total cost of operations and this needs to be balanced by place based education which is having an impact and delivering growth and benefits and is exploring in all areas new offerings and partnership opportunities for growth.

[Professor Mike Wilmore, Dr Marty Schmude and Mr Johann Boshoff joined the meeting]

The Chair welcomed Professor Michael Wilmore, Mr Johann Boshoff and Dr Marty Schmude to discuss and demonstrate Atrium, a Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program (HEPPP) funded project, focused on providing information to the unit or course coordinator to support actions or outreach activities to improve student retention. Professor Wilmore noted:

- during the pilot there was an 8% uplift of student engagement;
- feedback from unit and course coordinators has been positive that the information helps flag those students at risk of attrition; and
- there were still some privacy and governance protocols to be confirmed or finalised.

Dr Marty Schmude explained that this was the 3rd year of the project with initial approach manual collection of data, and engagement with academics. The engagement with Business Intelligence and Computation, Analytics, Software and Informatics (CASI) unit was then required to move the information collection and mapping into a scalable solution for the University.

Mr Johann Boshoff demonstrated the student Retention Dashboard showing

- how unit coordinators can access class list and indicators of students who may be at risk;
- ability to drill down to see demographic information which might help tailor communications and solutions;
- ability to choose and personalise standard messages to students and email from the software, with a record sent to the SRM; and
- the ability to generate reports.

Council members discussed

- whether the data reliably predicted the probability of attrition
 - Dr Marty Schmude explained that the focus has been on initiating activities to support retention, but once there is some historical information around information metrics, actions taken and outcomes this should be able to be measured. Also that

there was opportunity to add in prediction measure into the dashboards for academics and management in the longer term;

- that from the view of an academic this was a great piece of work to support outreach by having information at hand previously not accessible that enables academics to see which students are not engaging or may need extra help; suggestion that the team should visit all disciplines and departments to get academics to sign on; and
- whether there was opportunity to trademark this system and its potential as many universities and vocational training not doing this.
 - Professor Wilmore noted the potential for this to be a step forward for the university in understanding of student behaviour and opportunities to explore this further post project are being considered.

The Vice-Chancellor acknowledged the Commonwealth HEPPP funding that made this possible the and relevance of this project to Digital+ strategy explaining that this linked to the Data insights project and that currently the business intelligence team does not have capacity to take on these projects, and that UNE was leveraging CASI to look how to resolve information needs and use, exploring how data lakes might be used to support students through better advice and targeted help.

Dr Marty Schmude acknowledged the support of the Executive Principle Student Experience Professor Kinash, A/Prof Brenda Wolodko who started this project, and the many academics who supported the development of the solution, as well as BI and CASI. He flagged that next steps included an all of academy roadshow to demonstrate the tool and its use and value add.

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor explained the initial focus would be to get the right balance between pull and push, to support effective engagements with students with a focus on vulnerable students and to support academic and professional support staff to engage in these activities.

The Vice-Chancellor also noted that the retention data is a lag indicator, but this tool has potential to help provide early indicators that enable dynamic engagement with students so that an intervention can occur when it is needed rather than after the fact.

The Chancellor thanked Professor Wilmore, Dr Marty Schmude and Mr Johann Boshoff and all of the team involved in this exciting work which goes to the heart of UNE supporting student success.

Council NOTED the Vice-Chancellor & CEO's Verbal OPEN report and the Atrium presentation #22063.

[Professor Mike Wilmore, Dr Marty Schmude and Mr Johann Boshoff left the meeting]

3.1.1 * Thematic Focus / Spotlight – Places #22178

The Vice-Chancellor referred to the discussion within 3.1 which focused on key places and issues and confirmed that further discussion on some areas would be had in the confidential session. Professor Heywood continued to the discussion on Places and Spaces referring to the reading pack provided within item 3.1.1 explaining that:

- a decision matrix for each location was being developed so as to provide a common contextual basis for decisions;
- while there was opportunity for different systems and structures based on context, all spaces would be linked by digital space;
- consistent with the criticality of these linkages, Council has confirmed business cases and plans last year and this for significant investments of tens of millions of dollars to enable key technology systems and infrastructure uplift to support these connections and support external students;
- the rubric developed last year defining the key principles for each of places and spaces was being followed and work is progressing as outlined in the dashboard – with some activities in green on track, in red are development and in Yellow are yet to commence; and
- improved mapping of initiatives to KPAs continues and will support future monitoring and will be considered in the Confidential system.

Professor Heywood referred to the need to be able to consider funding opportunities and have in place a mechanism / delegation or agile approval process considering strategy and risk and potential participation in a project development, including involvement of a UNE controlled entity. Work is continuing with advice from KPMG on identifying performance metrics and a benefits matrix that would help support effective decision making. In terms of opportunities it was confirmed that UNE monitors a number of Government and Non-Government databases providing funding opportunities varying from small to large.

Committee members

- discussed the value of a principles-based approach and delegation within the Council to act when there has been a governance process and those principles are met;
- suggested that Management bring forward a nominal business case before Council to explore how this might work and establish a framework where probity is not compromised;
- discussed that Governments are not fleet of foot in terms of funding to help manage expectations and ensure this is considered in benefits monitoring; and
- considered the potential of setting aside a pool of funds that might be allocated within the principles framework, suggesting the Innovation & Development Committee with agreed parameters and a set delegation might respond on behalf of Council.

ACTION: Vice-Chancellor and DGUS to propose options for consideration by Council to enable agile response to funding and partnership opportunities while retaining efficacy of governance processes.

Council NOTED the Thematic Focus / Spotlight - Places, report #22178

4 CHAIR REPORTS

4.1 * Chair Report Academic Board #22003

Prof Robyn Bartel, Chair of Academic Board introduced report noting

- the report includes the suite of Academic Freedom policies and changes to the Code of Conduct for approval by the Council, these versions incorporate feedback and minor amendments and have been reviewed by the Academic Freedom Working Group of Academic Board;
- the mini tables in the report aim to identify risk and assure Council regarding UNE's compliance and ability to meet academic quality standards. In particular in this report flags compliance issues identified in relation to the Human Research Ethics Committee, highlights key risk matters relevant to the academic risk register including flagging retention and engagement and aspects of the Job Ready Graduation program as a risk for some student's entitlements;
- Academic Board vacancies reported at the last meeting, have now been filled; and
- a correction to the spelling of Melissa Parsons (in Research).

Council Members

- queried the meaning of the 'Destiny' column for example on page 6 of 12 regarding retention and engagement and asked about the relationship of this column (e.g.: action "articulated goals outcomes and targets" to metrics.
 - It was explained that column captured the actions in progress to help track a number of initiatives in different areas being progressed – many of which would be reported to the Academic Board at a future meeting.
 - The Deputy Vice-Chancellor explained that in terms of retention, Executive Principle Student Experience, Professor Shelley Kinash had been tasked with developing the overarching framework and this would be supported by other actions identified including Atrium HEPPP project outcomes and improved student data metrics
- asked about the Job Ready Graduate activity and the reference to students being required to pass 50% of units (page 7 of 12) querying why this was an issue given that 50% of units passed seemed a reasonable expectation for a Higher Education student achievement in order to secure a UNE award.
 - It was noted that student attrition and potential "fail" of a unit can be the result of life rather than academic achievement or capability and that this impacted some students opportunity to be flexible in their studies;
- Queried the risk table (page 5 of 12) of the report asking if the flagged issues were being used to help focus on those areas of high risk and how/if UNE was evaluating whether the systems currently in place are effective.

- It was explained that 10 key risks had been identified and were being tracked and were discussed with view to ensuring these were priorities for action.
- The Education Quality Directorate was working with the risk team to transition risks to management and to adopt standard language and categorisation of trends etc and to clearly assign risk and treatment owners.

The Chancellor thanked Professor Bartel for the report and acknowledged the discussion and moved to the resolution.

Council:

- 1) APPROVED the amendment to the:
 - a. Freedom of Speech Principles and Academic Freedom Statement; and
 - b. Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom Guidelines.
- 2) ENDORSED and RECOMMENDED to the Vice-Chancellor (FOR APPROVAL) amendment to the Code of Conduct (including a mandatory 12-month review); and
- 3) NOTED the Chair of Academic Board's report to Council, report #22003

5 ASSURANCE REPORTS

5.1 * Due Diligence Obligations (WHS) Report #22075

The Chief Operating Officer, Professor Peter Creamer spoke to this report highlighting that there was a rising rate of infections and UNE was tracking an increase in absenteeism due to illness both flu and rate of COVID-19 infections. UNE was actioning and reviewing where appropriate its COVID plans.

Members discussed:

- the increase in absences and the impact of those gaps on other staff;
- how UNE was evaluating whether systems of support for staff well-being were working and the reports on the various aspects of wellbeing were being followed up and addressed;
- leveraging information from exit interviews;
- UNE's response in terms of
 - access for all to Benestar which provided anonymous options for reporting issues that were followed through by UNE;
 - the opportunity of PPDR process gathering of feedback during which targeted actions can be considered and taken; and
 - approach to reporting including a matrix of wellbeing activities.

Professor Creamer noted that anonymity was often the preference of individuals.

Council NOTED the Due Diligence Obligations (WHS) Report #22075

6 SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS / PROGRAMS

Nil.

7 OPERATION REPORTS

7.1 * Council Policies Report #22069

The Director Governance and University Secretary spoke to the report noting that the Policy Framework Policy had been provided in draft at the previous Council meeting and had subsequently been to Academic Board and out for consultation. This was now return to Council for approval. Should this be confirmed today, a series of administrative changes to the policies listed in Appendix 1 of the report will be actioned.

Regarding the policy themes as provided as Associated Information there was some further changes to be considered, so these were provided for noting only.

Council:

- 1) APPROVED the Policy Framework Policy (attachment 2)
- 2) NOTED the draft Associated Information – Policy Themes which will be made by the Director Governance and University Secretary following further discussion with academic governance committees;
- 3) NOTED that on confirmation of the approval of the Policy Framework Policy, administrative changes to the policy instruments in Appendix 1 are proposed to be updated from current status as “Guideline” (or its plural) to “Policy” or its plural, consistent with the new Policy Framework Policy. These changes will be progressed under delegation held by Director Governance and University Secretary for Council policies and with VC approval for Vice-Chancellor approved policies; and
- 4) NOTED the Council Policies Report #22069.

8 GENERAL BUSINESS

There was no other business.

9 MEETING FINALISTION

9.1 * Next Meeting and Close

The Chancellor thanked all for their attendance and participation in the Open session of the Council noting the next Council meeting was scheduled for Friday 29 July 2022. The Chancellor closed the Open session at 10.16am and moved to the Confidential session.

Signed by Chair:



Mr James Harris, Chancellor

30 August 2022

Date