

## University of New England

### OPEN Council Meeting Minutes – Zoom Video Conference

Friday 24 September 2021, 9:00 am AEDT

#### Present:

Mr James Harris, *Chancellor & Chair*  
 Ms Jan McClelland AM, *Deputy Chancellor*  
 Prof Brigid Heywood, *Vice-Chancellor & CEO*  
 A/Prof Robyn Bartel, *Chair of Academic Board*  
 Mr Russell Evans – from 10:30  
 Dr Melanie Fillios

Mr Phil Hess  
 Mr Col Murray  
 Mrs Jane Schmude  
 Ms Meredith Symons  
 Ms Emma Wellham – from 10:00  
 Mr David van Aanholt

#### In attendance:

Prof Peter Creamer, *Chief Operating Officer*  
 Prof Heiko Daniel, *Deputy VC (Research)*  
 Mrs Gabrielle Price, *Director Governance and University Secretary*  
 Mr Peter Forster, *Director, The Consultancy Bureau (Guest)*  
 Ms Amy O'Toole, *Specialist (Governance Liaison)*  
 Ms Elizabeth Taylor, *Chief of Staff*

Ms Meg McKechnie, *Acting Chief Financial Officer*  
 Prof Michael Wilmore, *Interim Deputy VC*  
 Pamela Neil, *Specialist (University Secretariat)*

## 1. MEETING OPENING

The Chair welcomed members and attendees to the fifth open session meeting for 2021, and welcomed new Council Member Col Murray, the Acting Chief Financial Officer Meg McKechnie and Director, The Consultancy Bureau, Peter Forster, observing at the meeting as part of the external review of Council.

### 1.1 \* Acknowledgement of Country

The University of New England respects and acknowledges that its people, programs 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 acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land we call New England and pay our respects to the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which this meeting takes place.

### 1.2 \* Apologies

There were no apologies.

Emma Wellham joined the meeting at 10:00 and Russell Evans joined the meeting at 10:30.

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

New Council member Mr Col Murray declared a conflict of interest regarding their role as Mayor of Tamworth Regional Council, in particular the development of UNE campus discussions currently being undertaken by UNE. Mr Murray noted he had from 1 September advised Tamworth Council of the conflict and withdrawn from any Tamworth Council discussions/information regarding this matter and would also excuse himself from discussion of these matters at UNE.

Professor Heywood disclosed for the record that related to their already disclosed Directorship on the Board of AARNET, J B Were had been appointed as the investment manager to AARNET. Professor Heywood confirmed they had no part in the appointment of J B Were as an investment manager to AARNET.

Professor Heywood also disclosed that in addition to a previously disclosed continuing role as a board member of Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation (ANSTO) they had been invited to participate on an advisory committee for that organisation.

#### **1.4 \* Order of Business**

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

#### **1.5 \* Introduction to new Council Member**

Mr Col Murray thanked the Chair and members for their appointment to the UNE Council and provided a short history of their involvement in the Tamworth and New England region both as a local business person and employer and most recently as Mayor of the Tamworth Regional Council. Mr Murray noted that he had resigned from the role of Mayor and his term would formally conclude in December of this year following local Council elections.

The members discussed the University's commitment to regional education and the important place the City of Tamworth has in that strategy.

### **2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

Minutes of the Open Council meeting held on 30 July 2021 were approved as a true and correct record. These minutes are available in the Convene Document Library.

#### **2.2 Action Items**

There were no actions from previous meetings.

### **3 STRATEGIC ITEMS**

### 3.1 \* Chancellor's Open Report #21045

The Chancellor thanked the Vice-Chancellor for the success of the vaccination hubs organized and managed by UNE in the communities regionally.

The Chancellor provided an update on a recent meeting with the Federal Minister of Education, The Hon. Alan Tudge, to discuss the future of education and universities in their communities, in particular the services provided and employment created locally.

Council members discussed:

- The establishment of the Regional Australia Research & Training Institute and the proposed model.
  - The Vice-Chancellor and CEO confirmed that the model would be virtual, consistent with UNE's current approach to the delivery of regional health care;
- The future fundraising proposed for the Regional Australia Research & Training Institute, in addition to the establishment funds already raised (\$3.66m). The Vice-Chancellor and CEO confirmed that future fundraising would be announced shortly and that a team had been created to link the program to other activities at UNE, similar to the development of AgriTech;
- The need to streamline student entry into UNE and the avoidance of unnecessary roadblocks in the conversion rate of applications to enrollment. In particular opportunities to reduce the time it takes to accept applications, process offers and enroll students for the upcoming academic year.
  - The Interim Deputy Vice-Chancellor confirmed that work is currently underway to minimize the time between student application and enrollment. School leaver applications form an important part of the meetings attended by the Vice-Chancellor and CEO on behalf of UNE with the NSW Vice-Chancellor's Committee. In particular the disruption caused by Covid-19 to the HSC examination in 2021. Significant reductions in the time from application to enrollment have been made in the past 6 months.
  - The Vice-Chancellor and CEO confirmed that T3 and T1 application rates had been high for 2020/21.

**ACTION:** Professor Wilmore provide the Secretariat with report produced by Anthony Smith, the Executive Principal for Brand Partnerships Business Development, outlining how UNE might improve offer rates (conversion rate for student applications to enrollment).

The Chancellor invited Mr Forster to talk about the external review of UNE Council, currently underway. Mr Forster confirmed the review included surveys, interviews and an analysis of UNE governance arrangements including UNE's policies, guidelines and the record of historical Council, Committee and Academic Board meetings. Mr Forster thanked everyone who participated in the survey and contributed to the interviews to date. The final report will be submitted to Council in November 2021.

Council NOTED the Chancellor's report to Council, report #21045.

### 3.2 \* Vice-Chancellor and CEO's Open Report #21050

The Chair invited the Vice-Chancellor and CEO, Professor Brigid Heywood, to speak to the report. Professor Heywood highlighted key areas of the report including:

- The contribution UNE Life has made to the vaccination of residents in the New England and surrounding areas. The Vice-Chancellor confirmed that approximately 30% of New England has received their first vaccination, including Year 12 students, Indigenous peoples in the region and members of the police, defence force and their families. A trial of a rapid antibody testing facility is being held.
- Commonwealth's and NSW Health discussions and emerging guidance regarding requirements for vaccination for university staff and students attending campus.
- The pathway being created by NSW government for the return of international university students. The Chancellor confirmed UNE's involvement in the work being undertaken to create a quarantine program for international students coming to Australia.
- Uncertainty regarding continuation of the Australian Government's support of the Graduate Reform program announced in 2020. A decision not to extend this program will have implications for the offering of an undergraduate certificate in 2022.
- The proposal that Zoom, due to the quantum of activity, be provided to universities by a third party. The Vice-Chancellor raised privacy and information security concerns for UNE if the provider were to be off-shore.
- UNE's TEQSA re-registration and the quality assurance work being undertaken including regarding a comprehensive program of course reviews. The Vice-Chancellor and CEO thanked Prof. Wilmore and the Quality Assurance Team for their efforts.
- The National Student Survey received by the university for the UNE students. The data suggests that engagement with the mature age cohort of external students has been high.
- The Fair Work requirements for casual staff conversion. UNE will meet the regulatory deadline of 28 October 2021 for completion of this work with eligible staff being offered continuing employment.

Council members discussed:

- Encouraging staff to engage with the UNE check in surveys. 2/3 staff are currently not engaging with the survey. The Vice-Chancellor and CEO confirmed that engagement of continuing staff with the survey was a priority. Rapid engagement software is being explored as a means to facilitating spontaneous engagement on a variety of matters;
- Where the LMS (Learning Management System), the effective delivery of education with a low carbon footprint and CO<sup>2</sup> emissions, sits on the dashboard.
  - The Vice-Chancellor noted the LMS as a core virtual 'space' used by all UNE students, wherever they are, providing consistency.
  - The LMS space design acknowledges the 84% of UNE students who are online and who do not attend a physical campus. It is the responsibility of the 'Places Plus' pillar to help ensure the university focuses on solutions which support the whole UNE student co-hort.
- The factors affecting students' expression of the on-campus students' experience not being as positive as the online students' experience. There is a lack of clarity for students as to what the on-campus experience will be in a post Covid-19 world, in particular the college

experience. The new Executive Principal for Student Experience, Professor Shelley Kinash and the College Team are piloting a new four year plan for college engagement.

The Chair thanked the Vice-Chancellor and CEO for the report.

Council NOTED the Vice-Chancellor and CEO's report to Council, report #21050.

### **3.2.1 \* Focus Area UNE Business (Sustainability +) #21100**

The Chair invited the Vice-Chancellor and CEO, Professor Brigid Heywood to present the report and to highlight key areas.

Professor Heywood mentioned the enabling pillar of the Future Fit Strategy, 'Sustainability +' and the need for UNE to meet its regulatory and legislative obligations in the region and the community. The slide pack submitted, outlined the approach UNE is taking to connect across the four sustainability principles and linked to UNE functions. UNE activities are now being benchmarked to evidence the organisation's response to and compliance with legislative and statutory requirements.

Council members discussed:

- next steps to translate the report into an operational plan with individual projects, targets and timeframes against which progress towards the strategic objectives could be monitored by council. It was suggested that reviews or audits undertaken in 2022 will determine whether or not the university's educational programs address the sustainability guidelines; and
- automation of the sustainability target dashboard, taking advantage of cross functional metrics with relevance in a multiple range of areas. The Vice-Chancellor and CEO assured council members that the work would be reported in an appropriate manner using a dashboard.

The Chair thanked the Vice-Chancellor and CEO for the report.

Council NOTED the Focus Area UNE Business (Sustainability +), report #21100.

## **4 RELATED BUSINESS REPORTS**

### **4.1 \* Council and Committee Meeting Dates for 2022 #21253**

The Director of Governance and University Secretary, Mrs Gabrielle Price introduced the dates and highlighted changes from previous year.

The Chair thanked the Director of Governance and University Secretary for the report.

Council APPROVED the Council and Committee meeting dates for 2022, report #21253

### **4.2 \*Council Policies #21075**

The Chair invited the Director of Governance and University Secretary, Mrs Gabrielle Price to speak to the report.

Mrs Price referred to questions raised at the Council meeting in July 2021 and confirmed that the policy framework had been discussed with the UNE Legal Team. Work is underway to rationalise the large number of UNE policies in order to assure compliance.

The Chair thanked the Director of Governance and University Secretary for the report.

Council NOTED the Council Policies report #21100.

## **5 BUSINESS AS USUAL REPORTS**

### **5.1 \* Chair's Report - Academic Board #21025**

The Chair invited the Chair of Academic Board, Associate Professor Robyn Bartel to speak to the report.

Associate Professor Bartel highlighted the key areas in the report including:

- the self-review now completed;
- the update re Academic Freedom and continuing work on policies which will be brought to the Council at a later date;
- the review of Graduation processes which is being led by the Executive Principal, Student Experience, Professor Shelley Kinash. Associate Professor Bartel outlined that a report was scheduled to be provided to the Academic Board in December 2021;
- a number of working groups had been convened to undertake the policies reform work. Associate Professor Bartel confirmed that the date for withdrawal without academic penalty had been extended to 24 September 2021; and
- submission of the Risk Register and Third Parties to Audit & Risk Committee.

Council members discussed:

- A summary of outcomes from the consultation of the proposed academic calendar model presented to the university community was included in the report.
  - Professor Willmore reported that the consultation response and attendance at the live forums had been positive. Some concern was raised as to the representativeness of the people who attended with a high level of engagement from students and a lower level of engagement from staff.

The Chair thanked the Chair of Academic Board for the report.

Council:

1. NOTED an amendment to the UNE 2021 Principal Dates altering the Trimester 2 "Withdraw Without Academic Penalty" date from 30 August 2021 to 24 September 2021; and
2. NOTED the Chair's Report - Academic Board to Council , report #21025.

**5.2 \* WHS - Due Diligence Obligations #21080**

The Chair invited the Chief Operating Officer, Professor Peter Creamer, to speak to the report.

Professor Creamer highlighted the detailed work being undertaken during Covid-19, with regular meetings to ensure UNE is compliant with public health guidelines and to ensure staff and students are being looked after optimally.

Council members discussed:

- notable incidents and hazards – undertaking a review of the challenges associated with on campus students with complex needs (currently 9 individuals) and whether others will be included in the review;
- the work Professor Shelley Kinash is undertaking to review how UNE handles more broadly, student complaints, student grievances, understanding the particular context in which UNE students are currently working, with the view to a more proactive approach in which issues and outcomes are anticipated; and
- visibility in the dashboard, indicating the target against which the metrics can be tracked and a link to the relevant risk and appropriate performance.

The Chair thanked the Chief Operating Officer for the report.

Council NOTED the WHS - Due Diligence Obligations, report #21080.

**6 \* GENERAL BUSINESS & MEETING FINALISATION**

The Chancellor and Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and contributions. The date of the next meeting scheduled for 26 November 2021 was noted. With there being no further business, The Chancellor declared the open session closed at 11:00.

**Signed by Chair:**




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**Mr James Harris, Chancellor**

**02/11/2021**

**Date**