



BOARD VIDEOCONFERENCE

June 3, 2021

2:00 p.m. – 3:47 p.m.

MINUTES

Board members present:

Herbert, Sue, Acting Board Chair
Brooks, Beverly
Lang, Pat
Woolf, Daniel
Tapp, Shelley (ex-officio)

President/CEO and secretary to the board:

Deakin, Janice

Staff support:

Colyar, Julia, Vice President, Policy and Research
Kale Brown, Director, Finance and Administration
Permato, Ellen, Executive Assistant and recording Secretary

1. Call to order

Sue Herbert, Acting Board Chair, called the meeting to order at 2:02 p.m. and established that a quorum of council members was present.

2. Approval of meeting agenda

Motion:

That the board approves the meeting agenda.

Moved by Pat Lang; seconded by Beverly Brooks

CARRIED

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3. Minutes of Meeting of March 9, 2021

Motion:

That the board approves the minutes of the meeting of March 9, 2021.

Moved by Pat Lang; seconded by Beverly Brooks

CARRIED

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4.1. Board chair (acting) update

S. Herbert reported that she and Janice Deakin continue to have their bi-weekly Zoom meetings. There might be a new board member by fall. Governance best practice, board structure and committee membership will be reviewed through summer.

She thanked the Deputy for the reappointment of Daniel Woolf.

The Audit Committee met earlier with mostly financial matters on the agenda. She thanked Pat Lang for chairing the committee and meeting.

4.2 President and CEO update

Janice Deakin reminded the board that the requirement for revenue generation has been removed from the Mandate letter. The ministry has not issued a revised version.

New staff have been reporting for work through April and May. Two out of the five new researchers came from the Humber Data Analyst Program and are holders of Honours degrees. Three out of four interns hired in the fall of 2020 are staying full time through the summer. All have been through onboarding processes which include IT support and training. More interns will be hired for the summer and fall term.

Implementation of the research framework and work as per the business plan are well underway. External contracts with SRDC and Ken Snowden, Hamilton Community Research Foundation and the School Boards in Toronto and Hamilton have been established. An RFP was issued for a skills consortium with anticipated funding for between four and ten projects that will look at advancing the understanding of best practices for transferring relevant skills from course work to the real-world scenarios.

J. Deakin also reported that she has been working closely with the DM and her ADM staff on arrangements to secure data access within the Ministry. She would like the researchers to be able to access and pull reports directly from the Ministry systems in order to address questions of interest. Lack of data impacts the range, scope, and timing of their work. Data sharing arrangements with other groups that collect, control, and interpret sector data - including CUPA, OCAS –are still being developed but look promising.

The Microcredentials blog and report attracted lots of interest. The work has resulted in a closer collaboration on a webinar with eCampusOntario and an invitation through ONCAT to participate in a panel at a national conference in the fall. Publication of reports will increase over the next six months.

The newly designed website in English and French is now fully functional and in compliance with Ontario's accessibility laws. HEQCO's IT system security has been upgraded against cyberattacks.

Kale Brown, the new Director of Finance and Administration has been designated to support HEQCO's appointed Ethics Executive and will attend the Ethics Executive Orientation Workshop hosted by the Integrity Commissioner.

4.3 Ministry of Colleges and Universities update

Shelley Tapp, deputy minister reported on the following:

- In March, the government announced that it is providing \$106 million in support to assist colleges and universities most impacted financially by COVID-19.
- In April, the government proposed legislation to establish the Northern Ontario School of Medicine and the Université de Hearst independent universities. The proposed legislation, if passed, would give the institutions independent governance and administration, empower them to expand and explore more programs in new communities across northern Ontario and grant their own degrees.
- On microcredentials: A \$59.5 million grant over the next three years has been received to support the development of rapid training programs and help people retrain and upgrade their skills to find new employment. An additional \$2 million has been received for the development of virtual skills passport to set the foundation for lifelong learning and allows them to share credentials digitally with prospective employers.
- Also in March, the government announced the extension of OSAP to financially support students taking microcredentials. Today, there are about 900 approved microcredentials applications for the 2021-22 academic year.
- HEQCO's report on microcredentials published in May was a great example of timely research on work on a government priority and was helpful to inform the ongoing policy work including development of the definition in the quality framework for Ontario.
- Last December, the government announced a \$50 million investment in virtual learning and educational technology. In May, the government announced that there are nearly 400 successful projects contracted by eCampus. An additional \$24 million investment would allow access to more competitive international education.
- Consultations are ongoing within the sector on the reopening of schools which is a huge priority for the province. There is a desire to get a strong direction out to the public on a fall reopening.
- On HEQCO: The budget allocation for FY 2021-22 is unchanged at \$4.1 million. She thanked the organization for sending out the Ontario Campus Free Speech annual reporting memo. An update on board appointments will be coming in the next few days. The organization is not due for any agency review.

5.1 Research Presentation

Ken Chatoor, Senior Researcher presented *Students with Disabilities*. His presentation outlined the background of the project, aims of the research, methodology, results of findings in Ontario, key takeaways and recommendations.

6.1 External audit report and financial statements for fiscal year ending March 31, 2021

Pat Lang reported that the auditors presented their report to the Audit Committee. They were extremely complementary about the level of cooperation between staff and auditors and the quality of materials given to them.

The audit approach is consistent with prior years. The auditors found no evidence of management overrides of controls. There is nothing new on accounting policies that would affect the outcome of the audit and there is no additional audit work to be done. The report is free of any management bias and material misstatement. They concluded that no accounting errors and mistakes were found. It was a clean audit and HEQCO, like in the past, is in a very good shape.

Motion:

That the board approves the external audit report and financial statements for fiscal year ending March 31, 2021.

Moved by Pat Lang; seconded by Beverly Brooks
CARRIED
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6.2 4th quarter financial statement FY 2020-21

Motion:

That the board approves the 4th quarter financial statement for FY 2020-21 for submission to the Minister of Colleges and Universities.

Moved by Daniel Woolf; seconded by Beverly Brooks
CARRIED
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6.3 Budget for FY 2021-22

Motion:

That the board approves the FY 2021-22 budget as presented.

Moved by Pat Lang; seconded by Beverly Brooks
CARRIED
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6.4 1st Quarter Enterprise Risk Management Heat Map

Kale Brown stated that this is a forward-looking report for the board. He highlighted some risk factor reductions that have taken place since last quarter report:

The risk factor related to skills shortage and inability to attract new talent has gone down. This was brought about by the hiring of researchers, which completed the staffing transition; interns were put in place and onboarding of new staff went smoothly.

The Research Framework in the Business Plan put in place last year continues to bring in strong results, provides strong direction in leadership in the research department, and fills up the research pipeline.

With respect to financial management, the full-time position of Director, Finance and Management led to an increased oversight of the department. With onboarding of new staff including the director, the Admin department has the capability to review policies, procedures and strategies to reduce risks.

7.1 Annual Report 2020-21

J. Deakin reported that HEQCO is required to submit its Annual Report to the Minister by July 31st using the template provided by the government. She explained that the Annual Report focused on the KPIs presented in the 2020-2023 Business Plan. The Annual Report shows that HEQCO was able to achieve the KPIs that were outlined in that Business Plan despite the loss of senior leadership and research directors during the course of that reporting period. She acknowledged the work done by the remaining senior managers will continue to generate projects.

Motion:

That the board approves the Annual Report 2020-21 as presented and authorizes the president & CEO to submit the report to the Minister of Colleges and Universities no later than July 31, 2021.

Moved by Pat Lang; seconded by Beverly Brooks

CARRIED

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8. Other Business

None

9. The board moved to in camera session at 3:47 p.m.