

INTERNAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

**July 20, 2021
2:30 to 3:30 p.m.**

Zoom Meeting

Attendance: Chair: Sherry Herchak, (Human Resources); David Barnett (Provost & VP Academic); Alexis Paulusma (COPE); Jason Freeburn (LUTA); Dave Andreason (OPSEU); Gautam Das (LUFA); Jack Drewes (IUOE); Paul Vergara (CUPE); Heather Spivak (Unifor); Lahama Naeem (LUSU)

Regrets: Kathy Pozihun (VP Administration & Finance); Bernie Chasse (USW); Pat Larin (Schll); Rahul Parameswaran (GSA)

Recorder: Kylie Williams (Human Resources)

1. Approval of the Agenda

Moved by Jason Freeburn that the agenda been approved.

Seconded by Heather Spivak. All in favour.

Carried

2. Approval of the Minutes of the previous meeting of May 18, 2021

Moved by Dave Andreason that the minutes be approved.

Seconded by Jack Drewes. All in favour.

Carried

3. Business Arising from the Minutes

No business arising from the minutes.

4. Lakehead COVID-19 Update

David provided an update on the COVID-19 pandemic in the region. He relayed that the US boarder restrictions will be lifting in August and the Canadian boarder will be lifting restrictions more broadly come September. Things are also looking good on the vaccination front. Numbers of vaccinated individuals continue to rise. Due to the decline in need, the vaccination clinic at the Bora Laskin building will be closing this month with plans to vacate by the end of July.

Planning continues for the fall semester. The Ministry recently published their communication regarding university operations with further details to come. Based on these guidelines, fall reopening plans may proceed with no requirement for physical distancing and at full capacity. The University had planned to operate at 66% capacity so these new conditions will allow flexibility to allow more individuals in classes that were previously capped at 66% capacity. That said, David confirmed there would not be any changes to the fall schedule based on these instructions. The winter term planning will be reassessed based on these instructions and how things unfold. He added, masks would remain a requirement indoors where people cannot physically distance.

The University is planning to have employees return to the workplace by the beginning of the fall term. David recognized that having everyone return all at once is not feasible due to the support services needed, specifically that computers will need to be checked by TSC. Each unit will be looked at separately to ensure those who need to return at the beginning of the term are present and others would return shortly afterwards.

Dave asked if the computer lab capacity would be reduced given this new information. Jason added that they are looking at opening new labs because of 66% cap. David indicated he would contact the Deans immediately to see if there is a need to increase the capacity in the computer labs.

Heather asked when the buildings will be opening. David indicated the transition team is working on a reopening plan and hopes to have it in place shortly. At this time, he confirmed that the ATAC and UC buildings would be unlocked as of July 21st.

Alexis informed the committee that she has received many comments and concerns over the safety of returning to working on campus. Gautam confirmed that air quality is a concern of LUFA members as well. He requested communication about measures that the University has taken and any applicable policies or procedures. David, stated he is aware of concerns over the air quality and Hugh Briggs, Director of Physical Plant, is looking at testing and improving air quality if and where needed.

Lahama shared students also have a lot of anxiety over returning to campus and LUSU believes communication from the University would help ease this. She asked if masks and screening would still be in place. David confirmed that masks would need to be worn indoors and the transition committee is looking into other safety measures that may remain in place. They will also reanalyze everything for the winter semester, keeping in mind that some international students may still be unable to travel.

5. Questions for Senior Administration

Dave commented on the departmental return to campus plan for TSC and the timing of its release. He indicated it would have been ideal to have been provided this plan prior to the unions labour relations meeting with management. Sherry committed to arranging a follow up meeting with TSC management to specifically address that topic. Dave also shared that the TSC department has received a very large workload this year due to the impact of the pandemic. Staff have been asked to cancel their vacation plans over the summer. While they are understanding of the exceptional needs this year, he wanted confirmation that these holidays would not disappear. Sherry affirmed that in situations where vacation carry over may not comply with a policy or collective agreement that Human Resources should be involved to ensure these concerns are addressed.

Jack shared with the committee IUOE's willingness to start discussions regarding the University's pension plan and the CAAT pension plan. He added that IRC (or a subcommittee of IRC) would be the right forum to have these conversations. OPSEU, Unifor and LUTA representatives all shared their interest in looking at CAAT and making improvements to the University's pension plan. Gautam shared his appreciation of the members' interest in pension issues, stating that we have to work on these changes together. At this time there is not enough money in our current pension plan to retire. LUFA thinks that moving the University's pension to CAAT is the best option and encouraged IRC members to look at the CAAT website, adding the flexibility they offer is incredible. David committed to speak to Kathy about what discussions could be arranged with this group. He found it refreshing to see all these labour groups excited to participate in these discussions and motivated to make the pension situation better for the future. He expressed his thanks to LUFA for prompting this.

Lahama commented on the cyber security notice that was sent to members of the university community and asked if there were concerns that any other information was accessed. David confirmed that only information that is contained on the T4's was compromised. There are no concerns that information outside of this was accessed. Alexis inquired as to why notice was sent five months after the cyber security incident. David confirmed that further inquiry into the breach was necessary. Once the University was informed of the information compromised, Equifax was secured and affected members were informed. He added that at this time there is no reason to believe that the information accessed has been used. Gautam asked if there was any reason to believe the breach was due to negligence in securing our data. David responded that the University has been working constantly for years to protect our systems. Work is ongoing with cyber security experts make improvements and continue to secure our systems. The cyber event in February was not related in any way to negligence or malicious activity within the University community.

6. Roundtable

Alexis Paulusma (COPE) – No update.

Gautam Das (LUFA) – No update.

Jack Drewes (IUOE) – No update.

Paul Vergara (CUPE) – No update.

Dave Andreason (OPSEU) – Dave informed the committee that OPSEU remains busy with preparations for returning to work on campus and for the fall academic term.

Lahama Naeem (LUSU) – Lahama indicated the student union has been putting a lot of work into ensuring that students are engaged, and plans are underway for orientation in the fall.

Jason Freeburn (LUTA) – Jason relayed that Technical Staff are busy preparing for the fall term. He also mentioned the group is awaiting questions to be answered by Human Resources. Sherry committed to follow up with the Ian Kral, the Interim AVP HR and get back to LUTA.

Heather Spivak (Unifor) – Heather mentioned the issues that have been observed with the Equifax portal. David indicated they are in constant contact with Equifax to resolve this. In the interim there is a 1-800 number that individuals who experience issues with the online portal can call.

David Barnett (Provost & VP Academic) – No update.

7. Other Business

There was no other business to discuss.

8. Adjournment

Meeting was adjourned at 3:32 p.m.