

INTERNAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

**November 16 & 29, 2021
2:30 to 3:30 p.m. & 1:00 to 2:00 p.m.**

Zoom Meeting

Attendance: Chair: Sherry Herchak (Human Resources) & Roshni Antony (AVP, Human Resources); David Barnett (Provost & VP Academic); Kathy Pozihun (VP Administration & Finance); Rob Bell & Alexis Paulusma (COPE); Jason Freeburn (LUTA); Dave Andreason & Roy Teniuk (OPSEU); Gautam Das (LUFA); Pat Larin (SchII); Lahama Naeem (LUSU); Jack Drewes (IUOE); Paul Vergara (CUPE); Rahul Parameswaran (GSA); Heather Spivak (Unifor)

Regrets: Bernie Chasse (USW)

Recorder: Kylie Williams (Human Resources)

1. Approval of the Agenda

Moved by Dave Andreason that the agenda been approved.

Seconded by Heather Spivak. All in favour.

Carried

2. Approval of the Minutes of the previous meeting of October 19, 2021

Moved by Heather Spivak that the minutes be approved.

Seconded by Rahul Parameswaran. All in favour.

Carried

3. Business Arising from the Minutes

It was asked if there was a response from CAAT following the University's submission of data. David relayed the University has not received a proposal back as of November 16, 2021.

4. Lakehead COVID-19 Update

David relayed that there is a pause on large gatherings and potential challenges for international students arriving in Canada. Testing in lieu of the proper vaccinations is being addressed at the government level. Work continues on campus towards having everyone vaccinated. The focus is shifting towards the winter term to ensure everyone is in compliance with the mandatory vaccination policy. December 1st is the deadline students

have been given to upload their vaccination or apply for an exemption. Students who are not vaccinated will be deregistered from face-to-face learning activities and moved online where possible. The mixture of online and in person delivery methods will continue into the winter term. David added, the fall of 2022 will strive towards pre-COVID course models, but the University will pivot based on the health situation at that time.

5. 2022/23 Budget Presentation

David presented on the 2022-2023 integrated budget planning process at Lakehead University. The current provincial landscape was discussed, with emphasis on the challenges posed by current tuition restraints, domestic and international enrollment levels, Strategic Mandate Agreement (SMA 3), and the impacts of the pandemic.

Some of the greatest impacts have been the result of a reduction in international enrollment at both the undergraduate and Master's level. Some programs were able to mitigate the risk through winter and spring/summer program intake. The University will review the current mitigation strategies in place and work towards increasing enrollment. Work will continue to assist with students safe arrival on campus and the processing of deferrals as needed.

Other impacts to revenue have been the recovery of ancillary operations which were drastically affected by the pandemic, along with the tuition freeze stretching over the last few years and the absence of a tuition framework for 2022/23. There also continues to be uncertainty surrounding performance-based metrics in year 3 of SMA 3. Unfortunately, the University continues to experience and respond to a 3% structural deficit as expenses outpace revenues.

Due to the ongoing financial challenges the University continues to exercise extreme budget caution. Emphasis will be placed on financial management in these uncertain times.

Gautam inquired which metrics under SMA 3 the University is doing well with and where we are not. David replied that recently there have been challenges with graduation, but we are seeing more retention. He added, with the performance based funding system you can only lose. There is little opportunity to do better and receive more funding.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:35 p.m. on November 16th, and continued November 29th at 1:00 p.m.

Kathy commented that the University's financial statements show we are in a very strong position due primarily to strong markets on April 30, 2021 when investments were evaluated. She continued, that moving forward there remain many areas of concern. We are still in the pandemic with a new variant of COVID upon us. Enrollment targets are just being met, there has been a downward slide in some areas of SMA 3 putting funding at risk and the structural deficit remains in place. David added that enrollment is trending downwards and there are ongoing challenges with student mobility as vaccine mandates continue.

Kathy provided clarification to the committee on the matters of: restricted funds on the audited financial statements, salary costs in relation to the 1% cap on economic increases and budget mitigation strategies.

6. Questions for Senior Administration

Heather expressed Unifor's concerns over contracting out the work of retired union members. Sherry indicated this matter would be better discussed at a Labour Management meeting. Kathy added the University will abide by the collective agreement and encouraged further discussion at the labour management table.

Kathy advised that CAAT had just delivered their report. This will be shared with the pension board. Jack asked if the concerns with the pension plan apply to the LUEPP plan as last year's pension actuarial report was based on the Professional pension plan. Kathy confirmed that LUEPP does not pose the same types of difficulties when considering other plans and, unlike the Professional plan, does not have a solvency deficit associated with it. While Lakehead does have two pension plans, we are one University. If there were a change to be contemplated, it should include both plans. Jack requested more information about CAAT be provided to the University community in the form of a subcommittee or a townhall meeting. Kathy will bring this request forward to the pension committee for consideration.

7. Roundtable

Rob Bell (COPE) – Rob informed the committee COPE is working on a few issues with HR. Starting December 1st Karen Anderson is the new unit Vice President of COPE.

Pat Larin (Schll) – Schedule II will be planning a general meeting in the new year over. To be hosted over Zoom.

Lahama Naeem (LUSU) – LUSU has held a successful bi-election. Lahama informed the committee that starting January there may be a new face from LUSU on IRC.

Jason Freeburn (LUTA) – Jason relayed that Technical Staff will soon be following up with Roshni regarding a series of questions. He asked what will happen to the monthly employer pension contributions the University has been making over 2021 to decouple CPP. Kathy confirmed that the additional line item on paystubs will end on December 31, 2021. The non-union groups will have their employer pension contributions completely decoupled from CPP on June 30, 2022.

Roy Teniuk (OPSEU) – OPSEU elections will occur in January or February. Roy relayed that health and welfare is an issue at this time. COVID is taking its toll and many members are under stress. Roy also conveyed his appreciation of administration and the many difficult decisions that have been made throughout the pandemic, including the vaccination piece. He wanted Kathy and David to know that their efforts are valued by the members of the internal relations committee.

Heather Spivak (Unifor) – No update.

Jack Drewes (IUOE) – IUOE members remain busy. As people return to campus there are more maintenance issues being observed.

Gautam Das (LUFA) – Gautam spoke on the topic of pension reform. LUFA offered to help arrange presentations from CAAT so that employee groups are better informed. He also felt that the Internal Relations committee should be advised of what options are available, adding that a stronger pension will help with the retention of employees.

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

Roshni Antony (Human Resources) – Roshni informed the committee that the first wellness newsletter can be expected in early December and hopefully there will another issue every month going forward. There is also a wellness presentation underway for early January.

Kathy Pozihun (VP Administration & Finance) – In regard to the COVID vaccination policy, Kathy reported that 92% of staff are fully vaccinated along with 98% of students on campus. On behalf of the President, David and Kathy were happy to extend the Christmas holiday closure as a gesture of appreciation for everything done over this challenging year.

8. Other Business

It was confirmed there would be no December meeting of the Internal Relations Committee.

9. Adjournment

Meeting was adjourned at 1:57 p.m. on November 29, 2021