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## INTERNAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

September 15, 2020

2:30 to 3:30 p.m.

*Zoom Meeting*

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**Attendance:** Chair: Adam Shaen, (Human Resources); Kathy Pozihun (VP Administration & Finance); David Barnett (Provost & VP Academic); Rob Bell (COPE); Matthew Benoit (CUPE); Jason Freeburn (LUTA); Sukhraj Grewal (LUSU); Dave Andreason (OPSEU); Pat Larin (SchII); Md Nazrul Islam (GSA); Jack Drewes (IUOE)

**Regrets:** Bernie Chasse (USW); Gautam Das (LUFA); Dave Tommasini (Unifor);

**Recorder:** Kylie Williams (Human Resources)

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### 1. Approval of the Agenda

Moved by Jason Freeburn that the agenda be approved

Seconded by Matthew Benoit. All in favour.

Carried

### 2. Approval of the Minutes of the previous meeting of August 10, 2020

Moved by Dave Andreason that the minutes be approved.

Seconded by Matthew Benoit. All in favour.

Carried

### 3. Business Arising from the Minutes

There was no business arising from the minutes

### 4. Lakehead COVID-19 Update – Kathy Pozihun & David Barnett

COVID-19 continues to be closely monitored and Kathy reported that the number of cases in Ontario are beginning to rise again with positive cases being identified at McMaster, Carlton and Western Universities. The Transition Committee has developed a comprehensive document to outline return to campus guidelines, which is now available on the COVID-19

website. In addition to the mandatory COVID Awareness training required for all employees prior to returning to campus, mandatory student training has been rolled out.

So far, the fall term is off to a successful start. 303 students moved into Residence in Thunder Bay and 34 students in Orillia. Food Services in Thunder Bay have been consolidated in the Residence Cafeteria and Starbucks is open in the Agora. The Library is now also open for students to schedule study space. Computer labs in the Library remain closed but labs in the ATAC are available for use.

David reported that enrollment for the fall term has seen a 2% FTE reduction. Domestic returning student rates are strong but there are a lower number of domestic students in year one than projected. As anticipated, there has been a significant reduction in international student enrollment, partially due to current governmental guideline on international travel. Enrollment will continue to be monitored closely and preparations for the winter term are underway. To mitigate this decline in enrollment the University will focus on retention strategies.

Kathy updated the committee regarding the University's budget which, like enrollment numbers, is below target. The University remains in a period of extreme budget caution. With the limited student and staff activity on campus, ancillary services have been greatly impacted. Residence occupancy is far below capacity, many Food Service options have been closed down as not to incur losses and parking revenue has taken a significant hit.

When asked about the number of students on campus, David indicated that there are approximately 100 classes or labs being held on campus in Thunder Bay and less than 20 in Orillia.

Pat asked if the government might assist the University with the current budgetary shortfalls. While they have not made any commitments, the government is interested in learning about the impact of the pandemic on the University's enrollment and financial situation. The University will continue to advocate to the Provincial and Federal governments.

Dave asked if there are plans to resume regular operations at the Library. David Confirmed that at this point the Library will remain as bookable study space with resources available to be reserved and picked up. Administration will continue to evaluate the options as the environment changes.

Matthew asked when Graduate Assistants can expect to have designated workspace on campus. David indicated that each faculty Dean has presented a return to campus plan that should include graduate students. David will follow up with the Deans working group to ensure this is occurring.

## 5. Questions for Senior Administration

Dave asked if anyone was using Nutanix online VM's. Jason has used it multiple times and plans to increase use in the next few weeks. He added, Nutanix has been a great resource and made a world of difference.

## 6. Roundtable

**Adam Shaen (Human Resources)** – The Human Resources team remains busy with fall onboarding of new or returning employees. HR is also in the early stages of tendering the University LTD plan to solicit stronger market rates. A full public RFP will be pushed out in

October and finalist presentations are expected to occur shortly after the RFP closes. Members of IRC will be invited to participate in these presentations, should they occur. Adam will keep the committee apprised on this process.

**Dave Andreason (OPSEU)** – Most TSC employees are back on campus assisting to prepare educators and testing systems. The Nutanix lab is set up but many instructors have not adopted it yet.

**Rob Bell (COPE)** – The majority of COPE members are back working on campus in some capacity. Rob relayed that it has been a struggle bouncing between working at home and working on campus, but members are dealing well with the transition. The union is also working with HR on two outstanding issues.

**Jason Freeburn (LUTA)** – The fall term start has been more hectic than usual. Most members are mainly working at home where they can. Nutanix has been very helpful and Jason has noticed students in residence utilizing the ATAC lab space to attend Zoom classes. He has encountered challenges with some international students being unable to access website resources at their end but have found workarounds for this issue. Technicians are finding ways to be more interactive with students to make up for the less personal means of course delivery.

**Matthew Benoit (CUPE)** – CUPE is preparing for collective bargaining with their union representative.

**Pat Larin (Schll)** – There have been mixed reactions from members transitioning back to working on campus. Pat indicated the financial audit was successfully completed remotely this year. He asked about COVID protocol adherence on campus as there have been many reports of students not wearing PPE or social distancing. Adam indicated that the University has taken the approach of educating and communicating the proper protocols and not actively policing compliance. Employees are encouraged to bring reports of these instances to their Supervisor, Health & Safety and/or provide their own polite reminder of appropriate protocols to those not adhering to them.

**Md Nazrul Islam (GSA)** – No update

**Sukhraj Grewal (LUSU)** – LUSU staff have an alternate schedule for working remotely and have a COVID-19 safety plan in place. The office is open, and they are providing basic services, such as distributing student bus passes.

**Jack Drewes (IUOE)** – IUOE employees have been working to reopen buildings on campus, repairing and replacing equipment that broke while many building and systems were shut down.

**David Barnett (Provost & VP Academic)** – David expressed his appreciation to the members of the COVID transition teams and working groups, praising all their work over the past few months. Looking ahead to the winter term all indications are pointing towards continuation of the remote learning model. Discussions will occur with the Deans to address experiential learning details. Upon further review, the Executive Team will communicate a decision in the near future.

**Kathy Pozihun (VP Administration & Finance)** – Kathy extended her thanks to everyone for all the work that occurred over this extremely busy summer. She asked the committee representatives to extend her thanks to their teams and colleagues. She announced that

Senate has reconvened with almost 100 people attending the first meeting. The Board of Governors has also resumed their regular business. Regarding budget development, Kathy indicated that work for 2021/2022 budget has commenced with the ultimate goal of developing a balanced plan to keep the University sustainable.

## 7. Other Business

An update was requested on the Wellness Strategy, the EDI Action Plan and the Employee Experience Survey. Adam confirmed that the Wellness Strategy is in late stages of approval and should be moving ahead shortly. The EDI Action Plan had a planned roll out in March of 2020. However, the original launch was cancelled due to the campus closure. The University is looking into hosting a virtual launch in late September. The Employee Experience Survey results have been delivered to Senior Administration to disseminate and develop department specific action plans. Departments are at different stages of this process and Adam recognized that the COVID-19 pandemic may alter certain action plans. The intention is to resurvey employees next year as per the original timelines.

## 8. Adjournment

**Moved** by Jason Freeburn that the meeting be adjourned  
**Seconded** by Sukhraj Grewal. All in favour.

**Carried**

Meeting was adjourned at 3:27 p.m.