

Approved minutes for Meeting 83 of the Athabasca University General Faculties Council held on January 30, 2024 via Microsoft Teams.

Present: Alex Clark (Chair), Nina Acharya, Carmen Allen, Jolene Armstrong, Walid Belassi, Angela Beltaos, Davina Bhandar, Chantel Bradley, Caroline Buzanko, Priscilla Campeau, Karie-Lynn Chambers, Andrew Chiarella, Martha Cleveland-Innes, Lynn Corcoran, Michael Dabrowski, Elaine Fabbro, Glen Farrelly, Shawn Fraser, Stella George, Bob Heller, Steven Johnson, Paul Kellogg, Dietmar Kennepohl, Angela Kuzyk, Jacqueline Limoges, Manijeh Mannani, Alain May, Sue Mitchell, Mark Morpurgo, Dale Mountain, Brock Olive, Jennifer Pascoe, Cori Paul, Andrew Perrin, Frederique Pivot, Matthew Prineas, Ann Reynolds, Kristin Rodier, Bailey Sousa, Dur-E-Najaf Syed, Ching Tan, Vina Tirven-Gadum, Jeff Vallance, Eric Wang, Lisa Watson, Shauna Zenteno

Regrets: Carrie Anton, F. Haider Alvi, Derek Briton, Mark Crawford, Megan Hall, Brittany Hollett, Lorraine Thirsk, Ray Welshman

Guest: Catherine Swindlehurst

Governance Staff: Tyler Tollefson (Chief Governance Officer and General Counsel), Eileen HENDY (Governance Coordinator), Allison Strydhorst (Recording Secretary)

The Chair welcomed new member Derek Briton and introduced Tyler Tollefson, Chief Governance Officer and General Counsel.

Call to Order

The Chair delivered the AU land acknowledgement and called the meeting to order at 9:03 a.m.

1. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

- 1.1 **Motion 83-01** That the General Faculties Council approves the agenda and thereby approves the consent agenda, including the minutes of Meeting 82 held November 14, 2023, as presented.

Watson/Morpurgo

Carried

2. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

- 2.1 Subject to the [Code of Conduct for Members of the University Community](#) and the Conflict of Interest provision (clauses 11.1 and 11.2) of the [General Faculties Council Rules](#), members will be asked to declare any conflict they may have with respect to particular agenda items contained within the meeting agenda.

No conflicts declared.

3. REPORTS

3.1 Report of the Chair

The Chair presented this item noting:

- work continuing on the university strategic plan
- work continuing on the Associate Vice President, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion recruitment

- work continuing on the workload analysis project, noting the Office of the Provost and Vice President Academic and Human Resources will be working with the Deans to review survey findings and recommendations to identify priorities moving forward.

3.2 Faculty of Business Quarterly Report

The Dean, Faculty of Business presented this item.

3.3 Faculty of Graduate Studies Quarterly Report

The Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies presented this item.

3.4 Faculty of Health Disciplines Quarterly Report

The Dean, Faculty of Health Disciplines presented this item noting work is beginning on the faculty strategic plan renewal and the faculty is prioritizing recruitment for vacant positions.

3.5 Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences Quarterly Report

The Dean, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences presented this item noting:

- work has commenced on the strategic recruitment to vacant positions in the faculty
- the map the system internal competition is complete with four applications received across the four teaching faculties
- work continuing on strategically prioritizing tasks and responsibilities for Brightspace requirements

3.6 Faculty of Science and Technology Quarterly Report

The Dean, Faculty of Science and Technology presented this item noting:

- the importance of having the Master of Architecture accredited to ensure students can be licensed
- an upcoming article in DigitalEd featuring AU as a success story

Break: 9:43-9:55 a.m.

4. ACTION AND DISCUSSION ITEMS

4.1 University Strategic Planning

The Chief Growth Officer presented this item noting the first draft of the Strategic Plan may be ready for consultation at the March meeting and the final draft brought for approval to the May GFC meeting. It was further noted, a number of themes have risen throughout the consultation process including learner experience, teaching and pedagogy and building trust.

Discussion held on how to foster trust noting:

- greater consultation from the university community
- greater involvement and engagement surrounding decision making processes
- modelling the I-CARE values to allow for good grounding
- greater communication to alleviate the perception of mistrust
- remembering that trust is earned, once eroded or broken it takes time to earn it back
- focusing on positive experiences and the closer relationship between systems, teaching and faculty
- exploring methods to address processes that can encourage the feeling of safety and trust

4.2 Middle States Commission on Higher Education

The Chair and Provost and Vice President Academic presented this item noting that even though there have been positive outcomes of being accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) there is a misalignment in terms of the type of institution AU is and the students we serve, further noting that regulatory changes in the United States are not in alignment with who we are as an open institution.

The Provost and Vice President Academic and Deputy Provost provided an overview of the process to request voluntary surrender from MSCHE.

Discussions held on:

- the importance of AU's position in the Canadian education system and the quality of education we provide
- refocusing AU on Canadian and program specific accreditations
- reputational impacts associated with a voluntary surrender of MSCHE accreditation
- ensuring that if AU does proceed with voluntary surrender we do so in good standing
- the processes, principles and concerns that led AU to consider seeking voluntary surrender of MSCHE accreditation

4.2.1 Motion 83-02 **That the General Faculties Council (GFC) recommends that the President, Athabasca University, initiate the process to voluntarily surrender accreditation from the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE).**

Fabbro/Zenteno

The Chair presented this item.

Carried

Opposed: Reynolds

Agenda Item 4.6 was presented prior to 4.3

4.3 Principles on use of Generative AI Tools and Principles of Academic Integrity

The Associate Vice President, Student and Faculty Relations, Associate Professor, School of Computing and Information Systems and Associate Professor, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences presented this item noting there will be a series of lunch and learn sessions, resources made available to all faculty, and work continuing with student groups on the principles on use for generative AI tools and principles of academic integrity, further noting that AI needs to be an important and ongoing discussion at AU.

Discussions held on:

- training related to what AI can and cannot do, how it can malfunction or be manipulated, and ensuring that learners have access to AI training
- how the draft Principles on use of Generative AI Tools and Principles of Academic Integrity will inform the Academic Integrity Policy

4.4 Flexible and Hybrid Work Culture

The Chief Growth Officer presented this item noting:

- a flexible and hybrid work culture is about building choice where we can and building a culture that supports choice
- that the Board of Governors formally approved the ending of the Near-Virtual Strategy at their December 8, 2023 meeting
- a small working group was established in November with the Vice President, Finance and Operations & CFO and the Chief Growth Officer as co-chairs tasked with providing team members choice in place based and online work spaces
- as part of building a positive in person presence sign in sheets have been removed from physical work locations to signal a more welcoming environment
- future updates to GFC will include the opening of AU main to team and community members

4.5 Nukskahtowin Update

The Interim Associate Vice President, Indigenous presented this item noting:

- talking circle held with the Faculty of Graduate Studies to reduce barriers for graduate learners
- talking circle will be held after convocation on the vision for the Nukskahtowin Strategic Plan
- work continuing with Terry Lusty on how to commemorate the ten-year anniversary of the seventh annual gathering of Truth and Reconciliation in Edmonton
- work continuing on policy development noting a concrete base is needed for Human Resources policies for Indigenous identity, cultural safety and lateral violence
- Nukskahtowin connects with Indigenous partners around Athabasca, Edmonton, and Calgary and takes part in talking circles to see what Nukskahtowin and AU can do on the ground

- 4.6 Motion 83-03 That General Faculties Council approves the suspension of new admissions to the Graduate Diploma in Leadership and Management, effective March 22, 2024, followed by the termination of the Graduate Diploma in Leadership and Management, effective July 1, 2026, or thereafter at the discretion of the Provost and Vice President Academic, subject to the approval by the Board of Governors and Alberta Advanced Education.

Belassi/Fabbro

The Dean, Faculty of Business presented this item.

Carried

5. BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE CONSENT AGENDA

None

6. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 11:27 a.m.