

NIPISSING UNIVERSITY
BOARD OF GOVERNORS MEETING

OPEN SESSION

September 16, 2021

The Open Session of the regular Board of Governors meeting was held on Thursday, September 16, 2021, at 5:30 p.m. via Zoom Remote Conferencing.

Members Present: Marianne Berube, Board Chair
Veronica Afonso
Johanne Brousseau
Patti Carr
Paul Cook
Fran Couchie
Hilary Earl
Stuart Kidd
Judy Koziol
Joanne Laplante
Gillian McCann
Joe McIntosh
Bobby Ray
Judy Smith
Dave Smits
Lisa Snider
Rick Vanderlee
Roxana Vernescu
Kevin Wamsley
Kathy Wilcox
Emily Wilson

Regrets: John D'Agostino
Stephen Tedesco

Invited Arja Vainio-Mattila

Guests: Cheryl Sutton
Renee Hacquard
Maggie Daniel
Tiffany Cecchetto
Christine Dowdall (University Secretary)

Official Observers: Sarah Pecoskie-Schweir

of Live Stream Connections: 14

Recording Secretary: Abby Blaszczyk (Executive Assistant, President's Office)

1. Call to Order/Land Acknowledgment

The meeting was called to order at 5:32 p.m. The Board Chair offered a traditional land acknowledgement.

2. Declaration of Conflict of Interest

The Board Chair called for conflicts of interest concerning any of the agenda items; no such declarations were made.

3. Use of Recording and/or Broadcasting Devices

The Board Chair reminded everyone that only pre-approved methods of recording and/or broadcasting devices may be used during the meeting. Disseminating any information during the meeting is prohibited.

Members were reminded that the meeting was being live streamed to observers.

4. Consent Agenda

The following items were included on the consent agenda:

- i. For Adoption
 - (a) Minutes of the June 3, 2021, Board of Governors Meeting (Open Session);
- ii. For Information Only
 - (a) Minutes from Meetings of the Board's Standing Committees:
 1. Audit & Finance Committee – Minutes from September 7, 2021;
 - (b) Reports from Other Committees/Bodies:
 1. Nipissing University Alumni Advisory Board (NUAAB).

Resolution 2021-09-01: ***That the items included "for adoption" on the September 16, 2021, consent agenda for the Open Session of the Board of Governors meeting be approved as circulated, while the items included on the consent agenda "for information only" be received.***

*Moved by Stuart Kidd; seconded by Gillian McCann.
Carried.*

5. Adoption of the Regular Agenda

Resolution 2021-09-02: ***That the Board of Governors adopt the September 16, 2021, Open Session regular agenda as circulated.***

*Moved by Rick Vanderlee; seconded by Dave Smits.
Carried.*

6. Chair's Remarks

The Board Chair welcomed members of the Board to a new academic year, and roundtable introductions were made.

The Chair provided a brief overview of the roles and responsibilities of a governor and noted that plans are underway for a Board retreat in November. Further information will be distributed in the coming weeks.

In response to a question regarding the agenda being focused on reporting rather than on strategic forward discussions, the Board Chair noted that the Board will continue to work towards improving the meeting structure as recommended in last year's training session, moving towards a more strategic-thinking governing body.

7. Presentation of Draft Audited Financial Statements

Tiffany Cecchetto, KPMG, provided a detailed review of the draft audited financial statements at the September 7, 2021, meeting of the Audit & Finance Committee. Noting that KPMG provided a clean opinion on the financial statements, Ms. Cecchetto conducted a high-level review for the full Board.

Several questions were addressed, including clarification around the donations revenue amount of \$81,000. Ms. Cecchetto stated that only the amount spent in-year from donations is recorded as revenue. Other donation revenues received but not yet spent are recorded as deferred contributions on the Statement of Financial Position. In response to a question regarding the overall financial health of the University, Ms. Cecchetto noted that from a cashflow and capital perspective, Nipissing University is in a stronger position when compared to other institutions in the same peer group. She spoke to the importance of sufficient working capital to support ongoing operations of the University. Ongoing deficits will continue to impact Nipissing's working capital which will in turn impact the institution's financial health.

Following the discussion, the following resolution was put forward:

Resolution 2021-09-03: ***That the Board of Governors accept the recommendation of the Audit and Finance Committee to approve the Consolidated Audited Financial Statements for the year ended April 30, 2021, as presented.***

*Moved by Dave Smits; seconded by Stuart Kidd.
Carried.*

8. Chancellor's Remarks

The Chancellor expressed his excitement in supporting the Nipissing University Student Union at the upcoming grand opening of the Student Centre on September 17, 2021. He spoke to his commitment to building relationships with students and ensuring sustainable partnerships between the University and community members.

9. President's Remarks

The President spoke to the recent announcement that Nipissing University will recognize the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation on September 30 as an institutional holiday. As such, remote and in-person classes have been rescheduled and employees will not be required to report to work. Members of the University community are encouraged to honour the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation through personal reflection, education and awareness, and participation in a variety of events and programs available to the Lakers community.

Noting that a fulsome report will be appended to the meeting minutes, President Wamsley provided a summary of recent events including the welcoming of students and staff back to campus. He congratulated those who worked extensively to prepare the building and classrooms for both online and in-person learning. He highlighted a limited return of on-campus events, such as the Welcome Back Pow Wow and a 'Sports Talk' with Brock McGillis, the first male professional hockey player to openly come out as gay.

As the University continues to welcome more people back to campus, Dr. Wamsley asked for patience with the ever-changing COVID-19 environment.

- **Goals & Priorities**

President Wamsley spoke to his continued engagement with internal and external community members about the challenges, aspirations and opportunities at Nipissing University. These discussions will help provide a framework for the strategic planning process that is expected to begin in January 2022. This will be a major focus for the 2021-22 academic year.

In addition to the strategic plan, Dr. Wamsley highlighted a number of additional areas of focus, including addressing the deficit through government advocacy efforts, a heightened focus on international recruitment, an academic programming review, and the creation and implementation of a sustainability plan.

10. Vice-Presidents' Remarks

The Provost and Vice-President, Academic & Research (PVPAR) spoke to several highlights from her written report, including a brief overview of enrolment numbers which are trending slightly up when compared to last year. She noted that 61 Laurentian University students will be studying at Nipissing this fall, either as a transfer student or on a letter of permission. This collaboration with Laurentian allows these students to continue their studies in the North.

The PVPAR also spoke to the difficulties international students from India are facing amidst the COVID-19 pandemic travel restrictions. Until these students are able to attend classes in person, a number of them will be taking courses online as part of a special cohort. Once restrictions are lifted, Nipissing looks forward to welcoming these students to in-person learning.

Dr. Vainio-Mattila congratulated the many achievements of faculty members in terms of research funding announcements. She also noted that Nipissing University has been granted \$483,000 for the

“Transcultural Interdisciplinary Learning Experiences” (TILE) Global Skills Opportunity designed to enhance outbound mobility experiences for low-income, Indigenous and students with disabilities. The proposal was prepared by Dr. Pat Maher, Dr. Casey Phillips and Laura Solano-Moya.

A number of questions were raised, including a request for further information about the students from Laurentian. The PVPAR reported that the 61 students were from a variety of programs with most enrolled in Indigenous and environmental programs.

The Vice-President, Finance & Administration (VPFA) spoke to the ongoing administration of the mandatory COVID-19 vaccination policy, noting that any issues arising continue to be addressed.

The VPFA reviewed the recommended revisions to the Approval Authority Policy, noting the addition of clarifying language concerning approvals for the expenses submitted by Board members. Following a friendly amendment suggestion in the body of the policy that clarifies the fact that Academic Chairs do not have supervisory responsibilities, a resolution was put forward:

Resolution 2021-09-04: ***That the Board of Governors accepts the recommendation of the Vice-President, Finance & Administration to approve the revisions to the Approval Authority Policy as presented.***

*Moved by Patti Carr; seconded by Kathy Wilcox.
Carried.*

11. Board Committee Reports

- **Audit & Finance Committee**

The Committee Chair spoke to the importance of fulfilling the fiduciary responsibilities of the Board while allowing the University to focus on the future. He noted the implementation of semester-end closes that will review the consolidated numbers, performance and projections when compared to budget. In response to a question regarding ongoing stress testing of the University’s financials, the Committee Chair spoke to anticipated discussions at the Audit & Finance Committee level regarding the fluidity required to manage a wide variety of emergencies and situations.

- **Executive Committee**

The Board Chair noted several time sensitive items discussed at the Executive Committee, including the approval of a number of appointments to the Research Ethics Board and the documented support for the naming of the Dr. Muriel Sawyer Board Room at the NUSU Student Centre.

As the Joint Committee of the Board and Senate on Governance currently has one vacant position, the following resolution was made:

Resolution 2021-09-05: ***That the Board of Governors accepts the recommendation of the Executive Committee to appoint Bobby Ray as a representative on the Joint Board/Senate Committee on Governance.***

*Moved by Stuart Kidd; seconded by Fran Couchie.
Carried.*

12. Board Representatives on Other Committees/Bodies

Nipissing University Student Union

The NUSU President spoke to a successful Orientation Week, highlighting a number of events and activities. He invited all faculty, staff and students to attend the virtual grand opening of the Nipissing University Student Union Student Centre on September 17, 2021, at 3:30 p.m.

Academic Senate

Kathy Wilcox, one of the Board of Governors representatives on the Academic Senate, announced that following a joint orientation session with the Academic Senate and the Board of Governors on September 10, the Senate held the first meeting of the new school year. She congratulated the award and grant recipients that were announced in the Provost's report, and she thanked Board member Bobby Ray for his dedication as a former representative on the Senate.

13. Question Period

A point of procedure request was made to have the Chair call for affirmative votes on resolutions before calling for negative votes. The Chair explained that due to the nature of the virtual meeting format, the University Secretary had advised that best practices for voting in such environments included calling for negative votes first, assuming that anyone who did not vote in the negative was, by default, voting in the affirmative. However, the Board Chair agreed to resume the practice of calling for affirmative votes first.

14. Other Business

A request was received from the University's Pension and Benefits Advisory Committee to allow a presentation from one of their members to the Board regarding the University's pension plan. As this pertains to employee benefits matters, the request, including next steps, will be discussed in the Closed Session meeting.

15. Next Meeting/Adjournment

The next Committee Day is scheduled for Monday, October 18, 2021.

The next Board meeting was originally scheduled for November 11; however, the date may be changed in order to combine the meeting with the Board retreat. Additional information will be distributed as soon as a date and time are confirmed.

Resolution 2021-09-06: ***That the Open Session of the Board of Governors' regular meeting now adjourn.***

*Moved by Patti Carr; seconded by Dave Smits.
Carried.*

Open session adjourned at 7:19 p.m.

President & Vice-Chancellor/
Secretary of the Board

Board Chair

16 September 2021

Nipissing University Board of Governors

President's Report

Thank you to members of the Board of Governors, to the Nipissing University community, and to alumni and members of the North Bay community for your warm welcome. I have been residing in North Bay for four weeks now and have been spending my time getting to know our campus and the city of North Bay and surrounding region.

Our priority as a university in the past few months has been preparing for our campus opening, welcoming back our faculty, staff, and students – welcoming our students to residence and to class, in whatever format that will be. I want to congratulate our staff for getting the campus ready physically and for creating the safest conditions possible for our Fall opening. We have been working very closely with the Province and with Public Health on our vaccination and testing policies and public meeting policies.

I am pleased to report, following my first departmental meeting this morning, that professors are reporting a certain energy from students in the classroom last week and this week – they are saying that students are engaged and speaking in class more than usual. There is also a limited return of cultural activities on campus. Our varsity teams are practicing and will start competing soon, and tomorrow we are co-hosting a welcome Pow Wow with Canadore College by the pond, and last night we hosted Brock McGillis, the first openly gay men's professional hockey player – we had an excellent turnout in our gym and online. It is a very compelling and inspiring story and I know that we will see some ripples of change on our campus from this presentation. All this to say that we are cautiously opening and are

doing our best as a community to meet the pandemic challenges as they come.

As stated in the Agenda, the Board is interested in my goals and priorities.

As President, I have been engaged and will continue to be engaged in a learning exercise for a period of three months. I have been addressing students whenever possible, including welcoming students and parents to move-in, meeting with NUSU, and addressing our student athletes before they begin their seasons to talk about values and expectations. I have been meeting with community leaders and campus members daily to talk about Nipissing, its challenges and opportunities, its aspirations. In addition to these meetings – probably 50-60 meetings to date. Abby has joined me for many of these meetings, taking notes, while Maggie and Abby in the office are collecting the data and charting it. In addition to providing me with a foundation of information on which to base my term, I trust that the information will also provide a point of departure for strategic planning. I anticipate that we will deliberate on the framework for organizing the strategic planning process beginning immediately after Christmas, so that we have a consultation template created and approved by the end of March. Following that we will engage in our planning process which I hope will be designed to encourage maximum participation with maximum efficiency so that we will not claim vast blocks of time from people's already busy calendars. I trust that we will have the 5-year Strategic Plan ready for approval before the end of the next fiscal in 2022.

This is not to suggest that the University will be sitting on its hands until the Strategic Plan is complete. On the contrary, we have short-term priorities to attend to which are our focus right now. As we know from our Board meetings, we have been running deficits for some time –

parts of these deficits are structural in nature and others have been caused by the pandemic and reflect both student choices and the inability to generate revenues because of the safety measures that we imposed upon our campus.

One of the major priorities for us is to address some of the structural issues caused by a shortage of government funding – on our base budget and on our Northern grant for a period of two years. We will be travelling to Queen's Park to raise these issues in a context that is outside of our normal lobbying exercises to increase funding for post-secondary education. We have been placed at a relative disadvantage and this needs to be addressed immediately. The tuition cuts and freezes are a broader issue that all universities in Ontario will be addressing with the government. Generally speaking, we must see a rise in tuition rates concomitant with rising fixed costs that are offset by increases in support to scholarships and bursaries.

Another immediate priority is to increase the number of international students at Nipissing University. We rank as one of the bottom destinations for international students in Canada. A one-country institution does provide for global perspectives and understanding, which is a cornerstone to high quality education. A measured approach to international recruitment will diversify our campus and our city and it will help our annual revenues in the short term.

Another short-term priority is the creation of new academic programs, ones that support our current core programs and majors and fill a student demand. However, the runway for new programs, even if approved this year, could be another two years due to provincial processes of program approval – but we must get going and we are. We must also use our infrastructure to build more capacity in online learning and micro-credentialling and, generally, educational programs

that northern communities demand; these projects will be viewed as an augmentation of our core business and will be utilized to free up operational monies for departmental and program investments. Every university must do everything in its power to meet or exceed its budget targets, whether in periods of widespread investment or in periods of fiscal restraint and severe cuts. The Board requires and deserves a sustainability plan that very clearly outlines the steps the University will take to improve its financial position. This short-term plan will demonstrate the runway for achieving particular performance metrics. We will utilize our November meetings to have full discussions with the Board, specifically with respect to sustainability planning both short and long term.

It is my priority to elevate the reputation of Nipissing University as one of the leading primarily undergraduate institutions in the country. In so doing, we will also elevate the attention and engagement of our alumni who we will ask to support the University through donations, reputational support, and assisting our recruitment efforts. We must also immediately increase our presence in the community and that starts with me. We have many faculty and staff members whose work is already community-based and whose volunteer efforts are significant. Our narratives of academic quality and experience and community-building must be at the forefront, and I will be asking all of you for help.

Finally, it is my goal to turn the attention of major donors to Nipissing University to support scholarships, bursaries, academic chairs and academic funds, scientific equipment and technology. Our future requires that we build up our endowments and to create reserves for emergencies and whatever contingencies come our way.