

**Staff Association Area Reps Meeting
Minutes of Jun 11, 2020**

Program: [Chat with Provost Dr. James Rush](#)

- Welcome/Intro by Lisa Habel and Steve Bradley
- Greetings by Dr Rush and acknowledgement of current working situation
- Presentation by Dr Rush - Provost's Update (by PowerPoint)
 - Recap of Impact of Global Pandemic
 - Uncertainty, Upheaval, Transition from pandemic response to planning for return and recovery is underway
 - Current Student Surveys - how are students responding to situation
 - International Students - still interested in study abroad and in Canada, even if online, may defer entry to next year
 - Current students - willing to continue online, worried about securing internships/employment
 - Incoming students - Considering deferring enrollment, worried about financial pressures
 - Fall Term
 - Classes primarily online with some courses, activities and supports in-person
 - Smaller classes (grad, UG) seminars, labs
 - Residences and other facilities (e.g. library, athletics) open in compliance with public health directives
 - Fall 2020 Preparations
 - Enrollment assumptions still hold (attrition expected but not able to predict), 15% budget holdback still in effect (Fall will be key point in re-rationalizing this), hiring and expense constraints still in effect, Workforce Planning (e.g. RTW, provincial guidelines), COVID-19 testing
 - Return/Reopening Phase: Top Priorities:
 - Health and Safety
 - Re-start the right on-campus work by bringing in (phased approach):
 - The right people, At the right time, In the right way
 - Ensure the core mission (academic, research and service) being fulfilled
 - Longer Term Considerations
 - Reimagined/Revised strategic plan (checking against current conditions)
 - Greater focus on Digital, Remote Work, Teaching and Learning
 - Federal Update
 - Continue to work with gov't on definitions and eligibility criteria for different announcements/ programs including:
 - Student Support packages
 - Discussions ongoing with various federal departments to use both existing and new programs to fund additional co-op placements both inside and outside of government
 - Provincial and Municipal Update (note: provincial update now out of date)
 - Province announced stages for reopening of businesses and organizations

- UW continues outreach in support or regional emergency response coordination
 - UW working with community partners for co-op hiring
 - Change Management Communications Framework
 - Build on our *Emergency Communications* discipline
 - Embed communications support within ICPC (Integrated Coordination and Planning Committee) structures
 - Ensure connective and support throughout period of change and anxiety
 - Integrated Coordination and Planning Committee (ICPC) structure
 - Central Planning Group with 3 committees (Academic Affairs, Research and Innovation, Financial and Operational Impacts)
 - ICPC Priority Focus Areas
 - Immediate - 3-4 months - scenario planning for 2020-21, safety and preventing spread
 - Ongoing and Further Afield - consider impact and opportunities related to Strat Plan
 - 2020-2025 Strategic Plan - signature commitments and others goals
 - Status update on action teams and implementation
 - Accomplished & Current status presented to demonstrate needs of recalibrating and reestablishing
 - Visual diagram presented to demonstrated strategic areas of developing talent, advancing research internationalization, strengthening diverse communities - to emphasize can't lose sight of strategic plan
- Questions (submitted in advance)

1. What is Waterloo's intentional and long term action plans to address racism, conscious/unconscious bias, inclusivity, equity and diversity as a University Community?

Thinking about recent events but if we are true to ourselves there are decades and centuries of behaviour and processes to reconcile. In a pointed way, we are taking some immediate actions that will lead to a longer term plan. An announcement is coming soon about President's Task force related to racism. There were some messages from the President's Office recently about initiatives and resources and more will be forthcoming to help clarify the University's response to this challenge and obligations that we have as a community.

2. When might the hiring freeze be lifted and is it a hiring freeze or cancellation of pending hires? & Can you offer any reassurances against layoffs etc. with the looming budget cuts?

For clarity, a hiring constraint, with exceptions, is in place, not a freeze. This will continue to evolve and as we have more clarity on enrolments and how enrolments are distributed, we will then need to make some decisions about how resources are directed.

In the spring term, we had good enrolment even after transition to fully online, a positive early sign. However, many are continuing students and many supposed to be on co-op terms now taking academic terms has buffered the situation. The Fall term, it is the next big check-in point – this is when most new students start (incoming class) and international students would normally relocate.

3. At the Town Hall, President Hamdullahpur said that we need to look at doing things differently in the future. We have all been working at home for the past few months and keeping the University operating. Do you anticipate a greater acceptance of work-from-home requests for employees where it does not adversely affect our ability to deliver on our core mission?

Part of the ICPC (Integrated Coordination and Planning Committee) working group work includes looking at how people are working, what working on and where in conjunction with a phased scale of activity. There will be ongoing considerations that will ultimately determine the outcomes. I think the situation we have been through has been quite educational about what can be done and how. I wouldn't be surprised if there is more but I can't commit to anything and don't expect that this would be the same in all areas.

4. Why are employees that are over JobVal “penalized” for getting good performance evaluations? HR is so concerned about getting newer employees up to JobVal, but those who have been here and consistently get 4+ each year, don't even bring home enough to cover milk each month. Add to that, pension contributions went up and some of us will have smaller take home amounts than the previous year once Parking is charged again. We understand managers have a “slush fund” to distribute each year, but how is that monitored and is it always the manager's favourite or is it supposed to be rotated?

Yes, there are a lot of complexities and can't give a thorough answer. I understand what talking about - looking for accountability in decision-making and monitoring - but I don't know how to answer the technical and process questions. Recommendation: Ask Michelle Hollis and Lee Hornberger – invite them to a meeting and present with specific questions. I will note to Michelle and Lee about this recommendation.

5. When will we get bi-weekly pay like most other universities and many companies? Although HR says they would lose interest money, that is only one side of the story. We want to work hard and be valued for our contributions. Many of us have to dip into our line of credit to pay the high rent/mortgage/living costs at the end of each month so our once monthly pay is actually literally costing us money. Is there any way you could impress on HR their interest income stance appears not to value our mental and financial health when we have to get stressed out at the end of each month just to make ends meet even though we work full time?

This has been an ongoing concern raised for a number of years. A good point about the variety of factors that need to be considered when making a decision. My understanding is that this was a primary financial decision back in the 90's as well as considerations for opportunity cost over workload cost. Social impact related issues are legitimate point. I am glad to make the various bodies involved aware of this greater complexity and imagine it has to be approached in systematic ways. I encourage the Staff Association to hear from members about prioritizing this issue and bring forward for discussion - have a sense of whether this is recurring annoyance for a small group of people or a priority above or amongst other top priorities.

6. COVID related – Instructors and faculty may be reaching burnout status. Besides vacations, will anything be implemented for extra personal days?

I don't have specific feedback, can't answer in a definitive way but there is growing recognition of the condition of employees, not just for Waterloo. Outside of vacation days and some flexibility there, this is a topic of ongoing discussion and on how to provide some relief. I don't

know what is possible yet but not an issue that is being ignored.

7. Could the executive consider taking up the issue of vision benefits with HR? For many, eyeglasses are not an option. Poor vision is a disability. Many can't work without them. We have a School of Optometry so we should be leading when promoting eye care. We've been told it's an HR decision, but it hasn't gotten us very far, can you help or can someone besides HR help?

I understand this has come up a number of times over time and thought some progress may have been made on this a few years ago where additional resources going into plan or flexible benefits plan was being discussed. Instead, it was decided by groups involved, include the Staff Association, that extra resources should be directed to dental benefits at that time.

Perhaps there is another opportunity to engage the Committee as they are currently looking at the distribution of the current program.

For clarity, the Pension and Benefits Committee determines benefits, not HR

(Note: following the Q&A, Lawrence Folland and Lawrence and Ted Bleaney provided additional information and clarity on the vision vs. dental care benefits and noted UWSA is very active in the current review of the benefits package which is ongoing right now)

8. How is the university going to ensure our safety when we return to work, some of us in less than 3 months? Is the safety office going to measure offices, classrooms, hallways, elevators and stairwells and post something like occupancy rates? How are they going to ensure particles from sneezes and coughs are filtered out of the ventilation system? Are they thinking about satellite schools they might not be as familiar with as well?

Part of the structure of the ICPC is a Return to Work group that involves the safety office and number of other offices to ensure it is phased in terms of top priority being healthy and safety and adhering to public health and safety guidelines. This committee is developing guidelines.

I can assure that the guidance will be in place when people are asked to be present on campus and more communication will be coming in advance and the planning is active and responsive to the government and public health requirements.

First stages of the guidelines should be available very soon.

9. Is the University going to issue form T2200 re

-My cell phone expenses have gone up tremendously since Mar 16/20: I'm dealing with phone calls request directly with Faculty members/other offices to solve issues in a more productive way.

-I upgraded my cell phone so I don't have to pay for extra charges

-I've purchased new office equipment to be able to have all the tools to work from home due to Covid-19

-Now that the temperatures are higher, I turn on my air conditioning all day, something I didn't do in the past

Please let them know, we are not working from home. **We are working AT Home due to a**

pandemic. It was not by choice and I'm sure many staff would prefer to go back to our normal life: Looking after students, faculty and other office needs.

I asked about this and Finance is working on a campus-wide guide. This involves a lot of accountability and need for having the right guidelines in place. Expect to hear about this in the near future. This is quite a change in practice and it hasn't been common practice so this is why it's taking some time.

10. What will the University of Waterloo do to ensure that it upholds and protects the free speech rights of all on campus without prejudice or prevarication?

In an academic context and in this time it is challenging to articulate a response. The University doesn't waiver to commitment to academic freedom and free speech and at the same time responses to distasteful expressions (e.g. of racism for example) is a struggle to do in a single communication in a single way. Ongoing commitment to both. We have a large diverse community of opinions and it's hard to strike the right tone at the right time but the principles and commitment of the University come from a strong place.

11. When will the new revised Policy 33 be ready?

This is taking longer than expected but positive to see that a number of policy committees still enthusiastic to continue their work in these times. There is a task force that has been assigned to go through the list of items from the feedback and provide direction for modifications by the policy committee taking the feedback into account. The committee is making good progress and they are targeting the end of Jun to have the have the review of feedback complete.

Chair: Lisa Habel

Minutes: JM