1. Land acknowledgement by Kathy Becker, UWSA President

2. Remarks from Vivek Goel, UW President (includes responses to some pre-submitted questions)
   - Currently in a learning and listening phase.
   - Appreciate the questions that were submitted. Many are on topics still learning about and there are others on campus that know more. There will also be other ways we’ll address the questions. For example, planning an upcoming President’s Forum.
   - Thoughts today are about motivation for further discussion to learn about employees’ perspectives. I’ll comment on the current pandemic situation, return to campus and the future.
   - Comments on current pandemic situation
     - Waterloo Region moving to step 3. If current trends continue, further easing of public health measures and we can start to think about more activities Waterloo can start to engage for Fall.
     - We won’t be in Covid 0-risk over the next months/years. Covid is becoming endemic. Will be with us for years so we need to manage the impact but can’t let it stop activities.
     - Critical factor - will enough people be vaccinated that we can manage uptick in cases? The risk of severe disease/death is significantly reduced for fully vaccinated individuals.
     - As we open up, there will be more interactions so more cases. Also, more cases when moving indoors when the weather gets colder. Waterloo will have cases and outbreaks, but it doesn’t mean Covid is running rampant on campus.
     - In a good place in Canada but have to recognize that it’s not the same globally. Need for vigilance at the border which will have significant impacts on our international students and impact student mobility and research activities.

   - Campus plans
     - Tremendous amount of work has been done. Plans are very cautious.
     - Fall 2021 - I’m in agreement with plans for September. The educational environment overall will remain as already planned for Fall, but there’s opportunity to think about
other student support activities, which will have an impact on who needs to be on campus.

- Looking ahead to January - hope is we’ll be able to have much broader range of activities.

- Universities Canada polls and others point to students wanting to be on campus but in a safe way. For example, want to see high level of vaccination coverage before returning.

- As student activity increases, we’re going to need more staff and faculty on campus and this needs to be done in a safe manner.

- Individual work assignments and how decisions are being made about working on campus:
  - For an institution as large and diverse as Waterloo, has to be an element of location decision-making. That is the framework that is being developed and is in the process of being implemented.
  - Going to ensure there are regular conversations amongst leadership to ensure we have an equitable approach, and we are clear and transparent about considerations for decisions making.
  - My first meeting with the Deans on this is next week and my commitment is to clarity and transparency.

- Looking beyond the immediate phase
  - next few months have some uncertainly and may be a fourth wave with restrictions.

  - Beyond this I am excited – we are seeing a once in a lifetime/generation shift in society. There are great opportunities for Waterloo in these areas of digital technology.

  - Also seeing significant changes and revelations such as inequalities in society. The role of institutes of higher education are significant in terms of how we prepare our students and how we help society at large.

  - In the teaching area we have learned what is effective and what is not in terms of technology. Can use this learning to imagine the future in terms of learning, accessibility, experiential opportunities, collaboration and bringing Waterloo to the fore and reinventing the future of education. Opportunity to shift away from a very traditional education model to a more collaborative model of teaching and curriculum development and bringing in a variety of expertise.
    - So not just a shift of technology but also pedagogy for best possible outcomes for students.

  - On the research side, strategic planning has already identified some areas related to significant societal challenges and so we also have opportunity to think about where we want to excel.
Waterloo Region has a very important role to play in how we build the future as well (for example, looking to be bringing manufacturing back and using smart technologies).

Long term future for work:
- this is one of the fundamental changes in society which has been accelerated because of the pandemic.
- We don’t have answers because we don’t know what the future looks like yet because this has to be developed but we know students want blended learning, so we need to examine carefully and sort of our priorities.
- we’ve been successfully working from home for many months because we had to. As we go forward, need to think about the future state and many considerations. For example, where are blended/hybrid models feasible, how to onboard new employees, how to develop new teams.
  - We need to sort out for each role and each employee what is required on campus and what can be done remotely. This needs a lot of discussion and dialogue, and at the local level where the nature of the work is best understood, particularly for an institution that has such a diverse range of what employees do.

These are my comments. I’m really in a phase of learning and listening so happy to hear questions or comments.

3. Introduction of President Goel & invitation for questions by Wendy de Gomez, Area Reps Vice-Chair

Questions:

Q: The Healthy Workplace Statement includes a commitment to create and foster a healthy, safe, and supportive work environment where individuals are valued, engaged and able to thrive, with fair and equitable access for all. It specifies that all employees at all levels are accountable to meet this commitment. But in my work with staff, I often learn of situations where some high-level employees who excel in their cutting edge research, maintaining high-level external connections, or securing funding for the University also have supervisory responsibilities over other employees. For whatever reason, these responsibilities aren’t given the same care and attention as their high-level work, and their direct reports often suffer with a lack of effective leadership. This scenario usually has serious negative impacts on their direct reports’ physical and mental health.

As their leader, how will you motivate these high-level employees to recognize the need to care, support and set staff up for success in a healthy work environment, including a psychologically safe environment, when the balance of power is in their favour, and when there may not be repercussions for not adhering to this commitment?

A: As a public health physician I am very committed to the healthy workplace statement and concepts you have outlined whether it’s the health of students or the health of employees. In a decentralized environment and where many employees may be working where faculty where
are principal investigators and leaders. We have to work much more collaboratively and bring senior leaders together and prepare them exactly to address the kinds of questions you have raised.

In my last role we initiated a healthy labs initiative as staff, research staff, grad students and PDFs didn’t have the best possible experience, in particular lack of attention to their health and mental health. We did workshops for the leaders, many of whom didn’t see themselves as managers of people.

This is something we’ll have to work on. Will need to get more examples to know where we need to work.

Q: I had the opportunity to read some of the news articles around your vision around post-pandemic universities, can you comment on UW’s advantage in this space and your visions for once in century/lifetime opportunity.

A: Part of my excitement, even before we started to think about post-pandemic, is that these are already concepts in Waterloo’s strategic plans. In terms of shift in education of students, everyone was moving towards work/experiential-integrated learning. This is an area of advantage. And because we’re seeing rapid transition there is need for re-skilling/up-skilling the workforce, with experiences in co-op and connections with employers, we are very well positioned to move into the area and make it a continuum.

On the research side, there is rapid acceleration in the use of technologies in health care and tele medicine, retails, food services for example and Waterloo can help develop new technologies and tools and do the research that would underlie this.

UW has leadership in a number of areas that are top of the agenda for coming years.

Q: Can you comment on how you see the relationship between the UW administration and the UWSA.

A: I have experience working with unions and staff associations and a very large contingent of non-unionized staff and with a similar relationship to the UWSA.

I am committed to working with representatives of employees. The difference is in the framework. My sense is that there is a healthy and relationship and I would like to continue that. The excellence of an institution is based so much on talent and can only be achieved if there is a good relationship and employees feel engaged and involved.

We can talk about immediate issues of employees and also the big issues of the institution.

Q: In the work that we do, I consider staff to be the largest and most untapped resources for the institution. What would you consider to be the potential of this unused resource?

A: Absolute agreement that staff are a resource. You can’t be a great institution, particularly a university, without having great staff. Staff may know or have perspectives on things that go outside of their work. How do we create opportunities for them to engage? From a leadership perspective, this is a huge opportunity and engagement will help staff develop better and
prepare them for future career development.

Don’t have an immediate answer but as we work on the implementation of the strategic plan we can bring this in.

Q: If you and former President Hamdullahpur were to have lunch in 5 or 10 years time what would the conversation be about in terms of experiences at Waterloo?

A: That collectively over the decade, Waterloo has continued on this amazing trajectory (Others don’t realize that UW is only 60 years old and already has gotten to an amazing place and I’m and hope the trajectory will continue). I talked last week with David Johnston and having a session set up with Jim Downey as well.

Q: What words of wisdom would you give to staff to have healthy work and life balance?

A: I think the most important thing is understanding what is important in their life and making sure you make time for this. With the kind of work we do, and many people work with deadlines, it’s important to carve out time. I remember last summer, the public health officer took 2 weeks off – she made the time for herself and her family.

Q: I believe there is a large divide between faculty and staff. How aware of you of this divide and if this is the case, what do you think you will do to address this?

A: I’m still learning about Waterloo, but I can appreciate because I think this is similar to other universities. I am trying to use the term employees and only staff/faculty where the distinction is relevant to the discussion. My commitment is to a healthy workplace. Faculty have very unique roles, and many see themselves as entrepreneurs or working in a ‘cottage industry’. We have to work to bring faculty to understanding of being employees and managers and make sure our faculty understand their roles as employees, and that staff are employees, and all are working to better the institution.

Q: I’ve been seeing many of our senior leaders delivering their addresses from their UW offices. Have any of our senior leaders been required to work exclusively from home during this time and manage childcare and remote learning over the past 18 months? I think this is an important lived perspective that is missing from all this planning work that has been going on.

A: Every person’s situation is unique so I can’t claim to understand everyone’s environment. I have also gone through a long period working from home. I don’t have young children and some people have to take care of others. But I can sympathize. Senior leaders have been working on campus at times. As leaders we must acknowledge there are people that have to come to campus because of their roles, and leaders come to campus to demonstrate the campus is safe.

4. Approval of minutes from June 10, 2021
   Approved.

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Next meeting: TBA