

UTS Council meeting report

15 April 2020

This report covers some of the non-confidential matters considered by UTS Council at its 15 April 2020 meeting.

**The Report structure replicates the flow of the agenda.*

Strategic items of business

DVC Innovation and Enterprise Strategic Report

The DVC Innovation and Enterprise outlined some of the significant issues the world is facing as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic. Many of the impacts will give rise to opportunities and challenges in the four main areas covered by the portfolio.

Council discussed the devastating effect arising from the pandemic on the start-up community as well as small to medium enterprises (SME's). The challenges for UTS include maintaining the student start-up cohorts. UTS will have an important role to play in the recovery of the start-up precincts and SME's. Identifying the parts of the economy that can adapt, resuscitate or change forever will be challenging and will be key to identifying gaps in retraining needs that provide opportunities for UTS.

Council also discussed the challenges and opportunities for Precincts. The Moore Park Sports Precinct, the Sydney Innovation and Tech Precinct and the area around Central Station. The opportunities presented by the Sydney Science Park and Aerotropolis in Western Sydney, remains an area for key government investment, particularly for the creation of employment and new forms of training. The UTS model for distributed learning, including workplace delivery and training, is still an exciting option for partners and stakeholders in the precinct.

Council also raised the importance of identifying those areas of enterprise learning in which UTS has a comparative advantage, and the constraints the University may face in order to be well positioned to respond to opportunities.

Operations and performance

Report from the Vice-Chancellor

The Vice-Chancellor provides a report to each Council meeting containing updates on key developments and events that have occurred since Council's last meeting. Updates include; the implementation progress of the UTS 2027 Strategy, State and Federal Government issues, updates regarding the university sector and internal matters, particularly achievements and awards.

Council discussed the University's shift to remote working, teaching and learning and the significant support required to enable this. Council would like the Vice-Chancellor to relay to all staff, the sincere appreciation of Council for the remarkable and successful pivot to remote working, particularly in such stressful and difficult times.

Council further discussed the recently announced Government assistance package for universities and the implications for UTS. Council noted the Federal Government's assurance that 2021 Commonwealth Grant Scheme funding would be maintained at current funded student load. The University is also considering what opportunities there may be to access some of the 20,000 graduate certificate places the Federal Government has agreed to fund to support training requirements.

The Vice-Chancellor advised Council that the sector is also expecting increased demand for places at University in a few years based upon the increased birth rate that occurred in the 2002-2007 period following the introduction of the Federal Government's "baby bonus" scheme. Government levers and assistance were discussed.

Council discussed the UTS 2027 strategy, particularly in relation to the impact of Covid-19. The University has had to adjust its priorities for 2020 based upon the need to refocus resources, including investing in the shift to support large scale remote learning. The consequence of recalibrating UTS 2027 investment priorities will be reported through the Finance Committee in May and then to Council.

Council discussed monitoring the workload impact upon staff as a consequence of the pandemic, particularly in relation to the pivot to large-scale remote learning. Work is underway to enable the short-term redeployment of staff, where work has slowed, to alleviate pressure points where workload has increased, or where new areas of work have emerged as a response to Covid-19.

Work Health and Safety Annual Report 2019

Council monitors the University performance throughout the year. The Annual Work Health and Safety report provides valuable oversight on how well the University has performed.

The DVC Corporate Services highlighted areas of the report. The strong ongoing focus on deepening the safety culture is evidenced through local audits. The focus on training is being maintained and Council noted the increase in casual staff participation.

Council discussed the significant rise in mental health issues reported, as a result of increased willingness in reporting and accessing services at UTS. Mental health is receiving an increased focus and additional tools and resources are being made available to both Students and Staff. The Mental Health Strategy focusses on both prevention and critical response, and is a whole of University strategy.

Council discussed the process and advice regarding hazard reporting, follow-up investigation and resources for managers.

Reports from committees

Council has a number of committees, whose membership have particular expertise, to provide assistance and advice to Council on matters for Council consideration. These committees report back to Council.

Finance Committee

The Finance Committee advises Council on matters relating to the distribution and supervision of university finances, and acts on behalf of Council in areas of delegated authority.

Council discussed the Philanthropic Fundraising Policy proposal, governance arrangements and obligations to Donors and compliance with relevant legislation. The Policy will be reviewed in three years (rather than the customary five years) to consider any changes that may be required.

It was noted that the Vice-President (Advancement) would provide a briefing to Council later in the year. The briefing will provide an overview of the philanthropy process and how the University ensures compliance with both internal and external requirement.

Council discussed the application for debt facilities.

Report from Audit and Risk Committee

The primary responsibility of the Audit and Risk Committee is to assist Council in overseeing the activities undertaken by the UTS body corporate and, from time to time, other related entities as requested by Council.

The role of Council and its Committees in the approval process for the annual UTS Financial Statements is prescribed in section 41C of the Public Finance and Audit Act 2083 as well as Council's Delegations and the Terms of Reference and Charters for its Committees.

The UTS Financial Statements were discussed and Council agreed that based on the information contained in the Financial Statements, the Annual Engagement Plan and corresponding Annual Engagement Closing Report, and inquiries made of management and representatives of the Audit Office, the Audit and Risk Committee was satisfied that there were no apparent issues with the audit and reporting processes or the financial control environment with respect to the production of the Financial Statements. Council approved the Financial Statements. The Financial Statements will be submitted to the Audit Office of New South Wales and included in the UTS Annual Report for 2019.

Report from Commercial Activities Committee

To fulfil a strategic governance role, the Commercial Activities Committee undertakes specific functions in regard to the commercial activities specified in the Commercial Activities Policy, and advises Council on a number of matters.

Council extended its congratulations for the awarding of the Reliable, Affordable and Clean Energy (RACE) CRC as the leading participant. The formation of a company for the RACE for 2030 CRC was discussed and Council would like to see a mechanism or process for the ongoing evaluation of the development of CRCs. Council requested that it be updated on progress in relation to establishing the entity later in 2020.

Report from Academic Board

Council was advised as to the current focus of Academic Board, particularly in the context of the impact of Covid-19 on academic operations. The Chair of Academic Board advised Council that consideration of the impact was being assessed, in particular, within the context of academic risk. The Chair of Academic Board indicated that there may be opportunities to further refine the Academic Risk register and that she is in the process of engaging with Faculty Boards across the University.

The agility, integrity and flexibility of teaching and learning, particularly in an online environment were discussed. Council was encouraged by the governance arrangements for course approval and oversight.

Items for approval

None.

Items for noting

Council are provided papers for noting and include activity that has occurred between Council meetings.

- Chancellor's Report
 - Use of Power of Attorney, University Seal and Executive Action
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Items of General Business

Appointment to Insearch Board

Appointment to ActivateUTS Board

Other reports

- Work Health and Safety Report
- Physical Infrastructure Committee Report
- Governance Committee Report
- Remuneration Committee Report