

President's Sustainability Council Meeting

October 11, 2017

1:30pm-3:00pm

305 York Lanes

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Minutes

In attendance: Usman Khan, Chair; Nicole Arseanault, Martin Bunch, Richard Francki, Mikhaela Gray, Magdalena Krol, Carol McAuley, Auldrey Lopo, Ijade Maxwell Rodrgues, Jen Mills, Tim Moore, Pamela Persaud, Andrew Plunkett, Helen Psathas , David Ravensbergen, Fariba Rawhani, Nancy Sangiuliano, Sapna Sharma

Guest: Rhonda L. Lenton

Regrets: Anthony Barbisan, Hanay Farag, Alice Pitt, Michael Charles, Brian Yau, Roshni Raveenthiran, Ross McMillan, Sheila Forshaw, Yvette Munro, Lorna Schwartzenruber, Ravi De Costa, Craig Scott, Chris Wong, Laura Taylor, Deborah McGregor, Steve Aslop, Ian Garrett, Celia Haig-Brown, Lucy Fromowitz

Chair's Remarks:

The former Chair of the President Sustainability Council, Martin Bunch, introduced himself to the Council. He thanked the Council members for all of their work. He noted that the President's Sustainability Council is an advisory body to the President. The 2016-2017 year was focused on developing a sustainability strategy for the University. Martin introduced the incoming Chair of the Council Usman Khan. Chair Khan welcomed meeting participants to the first meeting of the academic year and invited Dr. Rhonda Lenton to give remarks.

President's Welcome:

The President has been involved in the President's Sustainability Council in a variety of different ways over the years. She has always been impressed with York's broad definition of how sustainability is understood. Sustainability in the curriculum reflects how York has been recognized as a leader on sustainability. Dr. Lenton noted that she had a conversation at the Faculty of Environmental Studies the day before about the potential for York in terms of differentiating the University from other institutions through leadership in sustainability, in addition to research and creative activities. York needs to continue to build on its strengths. Dr. Lenton noted that since the Council's founding in 2007, recommendations are always thorough. The recommendations are a great accountability tool to measure York's progress. There have been over 100 recommendations made and endorsed by the University administration. There is faster progress when staff, faculty, administration and students all collaborate together.

Dr. Lenton highlighted specific recommendations from previous years including the 2015 recommendation that looked at best practices from other Universities in regards to strategic planning and the new recommendation to undertake a strategic process on sustainability at

York. The consultations that took place in 2016-2017 and the new strategic plan bode well for the University. Moving forward the Council needs to understand the relationship between the strategy and implementation. In this next phase there is a tremendous opportunity to link the sustainability strategy with other priorities that are emerging regarding emissions and funding. It will be important to get input from the Council on how the overall strategic goals relate to other opportunities for the University.

Dr. Lenton noted the greenhouse gas reduction plan opportunity that is now available through the Provincial Government. The implementation plan will need to identify how the University can be responsive when new opportunities arise. The President was pleased to announce that the strategy has been approved and noted that it will be released eminently. The President thanked folks who were a part of the strategic planning process. Dr. Lenton mentioned that the University will continue to ensure that administrators support the implementation of sustainable initiatives through an action plan.

The President thanked Martin for his three year term as Chair of the Council and noted that he was instrumental in the success of the sustainability strategy. Dr. Lenton welcomed and thanked the new Chair Usman Khan whose own research areas align with the Council's sustainability mandate and is a continuing member of the PSC.

From energy conservation to green buildings, to waste reduction, to sustainable transportation, and teaching and research; York has made progress as an institution over the past number of years. Two subway stations have been confirmed to open on December 17 which is a tremendous opportunity for the University. There will be fewer people commuting via vehicle to campus and there is an opportunity to reimagine how to use the Commons in a sustainable way. The President is impressed by work that has been done, noted that sustainability is a differentiator for York, highlighted that there is more that we can be doing, and that she is excited about efforts that will be made to continue to ensure that we are implementing the new sustainability strategy and ensuring that it is related to other initiatives.

Chair Khan thanked Dr. Lenton for her time and remarks.

Roundtable Introductions:

Meeting participants had an opportunity to introduce themselves.

Approval of Meeting Minutes:

Usman Khan motioned to approve the meeting minutes of April 21, 2017. The minutes were seconded by Andrew and approved as presented.

PSC Working Groups for 2017-18:

The working groups for the 2017-2018 academic year are as follow:

- Research
- Administrative and Organization Structure
- Campus Operations and Development
- Social Justice and Human Rights
- Curriculum

Each member is asked to join at least one of the working groups.

A meeting participant asked if the Council could review the purpose of each working group, their future state and the terms of reference for the Council. The Chair noted that this could be discussed further at a future meeting.

Another participant noted that last year the working groups greatly benefited from student participation and encouraged the students to get involved. The Chair met with the students before the first Council meeting and discussed the importance of joining a working group.

It was noted that working group chairs should take students into consideration and poll them for their availability for meetings. It was also suggested that every working group meeting date, time and location should be shared with the entire Council before the meeting. It was requested that a brief orientation take place at the beginning of each working group meeting for new members. It was suggested that the working group chairs circulate the list of previous recommendations to members, which can be reviewed in advance to help new members understand what has been discussed in the past.

Mikhaela will send out information to the Council members on working groups, Chairs and contact information.

Sustainability Strategy:

Update

Richard Francki provided an update on the Province of Ontario's greenhouse gas reduction plan that was rolled out in the end of September. The program requires that institutions develop a strategic plan with targets that align with greenhouse gas targets. Within the last 12 months, the Province of Ontario joined the cap and trade program. The York University Keele campus is a mandatory participant. The cost of carbon will be priced and emitters of carbon will have to purchase credits, with the cost of carbon increasing over time. This will motivate institutions to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases. The University has four years to reduce carbon emissions before it will need to purchase credits. The government is providing funding which can be used to reduce emissions in the province. Emissions need to be reduced by 80% by year 2050 and 37% by 2030. York needs to submit a Greenhouse Gas Reduction plan to the Government in May 2018.

Other components of the greenhouse gas reduction plan include funding opportunities. There are three funding envelopes including:

- 1) A grant that is only available to non-participant institutions. Glendon is a non-mandatory participant. Since it does not presently receive credits from the government, the campus is eligible to receive this grant.
- 2) An innovation fund with \$200 million dollars is available to Universities and Colleges. York has the potential to receive \$8.8 million dollars from this fund if submissions are accepted, which will be determined through a competitive process.

3) Interest free loan opportunity. The University would be required to pay back the loan over 10 years and the institution would need to demonstrate how they would pay back the loan in order for it to be approved. The funding has to be spent within three years.

Dr. Lenton noted that since the University is about to release the sustainability plan, it is not necessary or desirable to hold back the plan and rewrite it. The President indicated that the implementation plan is the next step. Details required by the government, audit and pieces specified by the government would be added to implementation plan. Alternatively, the greenhouse gas targets could be added as an appendix to the strategy.

Discussion followed and main points included:

- The potential to enhance funding for building the new Markham Centre through one of the funding envelopes and the challenges of future capital projects in regards to the timelines presented in the greenhouse gas reduction plan. Another complication includes that the Markham Campus will be plugged into a district energy system. Who would receive the carbon emission penalty in this case?
- Auditing emission reductions on campus;
- Developing a 1990 baseline for emissions. This is a challenge as 1990 data can be hard to find;
- The investment holding of pension fund and endowment fund are not included in carbon emission ;
- Sources of emissions and percentages have been collected and are available;
- Retrofitting needs on York's campuses will need to be considered within the implementation plan.

Implementation: Working Group Exercise

The Council needs to determine what needs to happen with the strategy over the next two years and how the Council will move the strategy forward. Two recommendations were proposed to the Council:

- 1) A working group could be established that focuses only on implementation or the previous sustainability strategy working group could be turned into the implementation working group.
- 2) Existing working groups could be utilized to identify short-term goals and long-term goals from the strategy and begin to build the implementation plan.

Council members discussed the two recommendations. Discussion points included:

- Some sustainability initiatives are already moving forward to implementation such as the energy management plan. The social justice and human rights working group has created a document on York U as an anchor institution. Similarly, the centre of Excellence on sustainable research could be tied to upcoming research plan. The Council needs to explicitly engage other people on campus that are related to the implementation of the strategy.
- Consumers need to be engaged in the development of the implementation plan including educating the community on the University's obligation to reduce emissions. The Council should engage staff, faculty, union groups, researchers and students.

Current PSC working groups can contribute to helping the community commit to reducing consumption.

- The implementation plan that is developed will need to be brought forward to the President and Vice-Presidents (PVP) to determine affordability.

It was suggested that the Council delay the decision on how to move forward until the Council has had an opportunity to look at the Government requirements regarding emissions and then discuss how the University can work with Council on commitments.

It was noted that the sustainability strategy was intended to act as high-level concept. Implementation plans that related to the strategy would be created in various areas that would have responsibility and oversight of implementing the outlined objectives. Dr. Lenton suggested that there may be some advantage to bring the various implementation plans together into one plan. There is a practical component of what needs to be done in addition to an educational component. One implementation plan could be created with different priorities listed in it.

The working group chairs will meet to discuss this further. A matrix needs to be developed to help coordinate the implementation plan.

PSC Annual report and Sustainability Report

The President's Sustainability Council is responsible for two reports. There is an annual report that focuses on recommendation and a second report that is used as a communication tool. The annual report will be posted to the website by October 13. The sustainability communication report is underway. It will be released in February/March 2018.

Past PSC Recommendation

This agenda item was deferred to the next meeting.

Future PSC Meetings

Meeting Dates

The PSC meeting dates for the 2017-2018 academic year have been scheduled as following:

- Wednesday, October 11, 2017 from 1:30pm-3:00pm in 305 York Lanes
- Monday, November 20, 2017 from 10:00am-12:00pm in 956 Kaneff Tower
- Wednesday, February 14, 2018 from 2:00pm-4:00pm in 956 Kaneff Tower
- Friday, April 20, 2018 from 9:00am-11:00am (Location TBC)

Guest presentations

This agenda item was deferred to the next meeting.

Other Business

There will be a conference on how to road map a carbon-free campus from May 29-June 1, 2018 at the Schulich School of Business.

Two Council members raised their concern regarding the suspension of YUACRI in March 2017. The Council had recommended that it be established a few years ago. They would like to see Council take some action to reinstate the advisory body as there is currently no timeline.

YUACRI enhanced our sustainability rating through the STARs program. YUACRI was cited by other Colleges and Universities as best practices in the province. YUACRI is a valuable consultation tool and it would be suggested that the Council address this concern. These Council members expressed their concern that there has not been any communication with campus groups that were involved with the committee since March.

Other Council members noted that this topic was sensitive. It was suggested that as a sustainability issue the Council should have conversations around divestment. The sustainability strategic plan includes goals on financial responsibility. In the sustainability consultation process, divestment was included as one of the issues and it did not come out as a priority from the York community. The social justice and human rights working group could discuss this further.

It was also recommended that a presentation on YUACRI be given to the Council to help members better understand the issues. Since the Vice-President Finance and Administration plays an important role in regards to YUACRI, it was noted that the Council should give the incoming Vice-President time to review the issues, familiarize herself with the historical context before addressing it as a Council.

Adjournment:

The meeting adjourned at 3:08pm.