

# July 31, 2024

## Board Meeting Minutes

GROUP	Ontario Tech Student Union (OTSU) Board of Directors
LOCATION	Google Meet
DATE & TIME	Wednesday, June 26, 2024, 5:30pm
NOTE TAKER	Salvador Caruncho
ATTENDEES	<p><b>Directors:</b> Faculty of Science &amp; Chair, Eloghosa Avenbuan; Faculty of Graduate Studies &amp; Vice Chair, Samuel Canonaco; Faculty of Education, Arajenthira Narenthira; Faculty of Health Science, Kashaf Awan; Faculty of Engineering and Applied Science, Sifatul Mostafi, Faculty of Social Science &amp; Humanities</p> <p><b>Executives:</b> President, Rai Muhammad Ali; VP Student Affairs, Zainab Hussain; VP Student Life, Areej Fatima; VP Downtown, Matifadza Chidova</p> <p><b>Staff:</b> Executive Director, Brian Robson; Financial Controller, Mayooran Thurairajah; HR Generalist &amp; Chief Returning Officer, Salvador Caruncho</p>
REGRETS	None

### OPENING PROCEDURES

#### 1. CALL TO ORDER

Meeting was called into order at 5:32 p.m.

#### 2. TERRITORIAL RECOGNITION

#### 3. AGENDA APPROVAL

##### RESOLUTION

Moved by L. Horner and seconded by S. Canonaco. Motion carried.

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the OTSU Board of Directors approve the July 31, 2024 Board Meeting Agenda.

#### 4. MINUTES APPROVAL

##### RESOLUTION

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Moved by A. Narenthira and seconded by A. Parameswaran. Motion carried.

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the OTSU Board of Directors approve the minutes for the May 31, 2024 Board Meeting.

##### AGENDA TOPICS

#### 5. EXECUTIVE REPORTS

*See the full executive reports on the OTSU website.*

President:

- Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA) – Letter of intent submitted and approved, OTSU is now an official observer
- Ex-officio seat on Academic Council – Meeting with Dr. Murphy was cancelled, but President spoke with Dr. Livingston (Provost) who is aware of initiative and encourages ongoing efforts by OTSU to make it happen
- OTSU Print Shop – printer is expected to arrive in the next two weeks.
- Centralized catering options – on pause until clubs ratification which is set for August 5, 2024
- VP Job description revision – President working on new descriptions and will review them with Executive Director and HR Generalist before presenting at the next meeting
- Elections committee report to be submitted at this meeting

A. Narenthira asked if there was a backup plan if ex officio seat on Academic Council cannot be secured. President replied that the backup plan is to move the general elections so that future executives could participate in selection for the Academic Council. This will take place even if the ex officio seat is granted.

A. Narenthira followed up asking what the plan was for this year. President replied that VP Student Affairs attends the meetings currently, but just as observers.

A. Narenthira asked if the executives were planning on liaising with students that are on the council. President replied that he does not want executives to steer student's votes on the council. OTSU executives are aware of what goes on in the meetings, but they do not have a vote.

A. Narenthira inquired whether there were issues with the by-laws preventing changes to VP job descriptions. President confirmed that the descriptions would be brought to the board for review and then presented at the AGM.

Chair suggested that VP job descriptions fall under the HR Committee's purview and suggests the HR Committee review the job descriptions before bringing them to the board. Executive Director questioned whether it was a matter for the HR Committee or the Policy Committee. Chair suggested Policy Committee, then HR Committee, then Board, then AGM as the review process. L. Horner suggested a joint session of the committees. President suggests bypassing committees for simplicity. Chair suggested that bypassing committees could become an undesired practice. A. Narenthira agreed with chair and suggested that the review should go through both committees before being brought to the board.

VP Student Affairs:

- Has been working on Academic Appeals web page, collecting information that needs to go on the page, and reaching out to students for their perspective on what aspects of academic appeals have been difficult to navigate.

- Transit Advocacy. Has been advocating for additional specialized services drop-off/pick-up locations. Also started drafting the transit satisfaction questionnaire to be presented at the November board meeting.
- Wrote blog post on mental health awareness

Vice Chair asked if the specialized service pickup/drop-off is offered by Ontario Tech or Durham Transit. VP Affairs answered that it was offered by DRT. Vice Chair suggested selecting additional location depending on where needs exist, suggesting CIRC may be an option. L. Horner asked where the downtown campus fit in with transit plans. VP Affairs replied that the transit questionnaire is open to all students and that VP Affairs can work with VP Downtown to promote the questionnaire and to advocate for shuttle service.

#### VP Student Life:

- Focused on editing and refining Clubs & Societies policies and procedures (to be presented today)
- Student appointments and meeting with society presidents
- RAs are going through training – VP Student Life made a presentation about OTSU as part of RA training
- Clubs & Societies committee met with VP Student Life for the first time. Policy and procedure changes were reviewed in committee

A. Narenthira asked about O-Week planning progress. VP Student Life noted that most of the planning for O-Week was finalized the previous month, though there are still a few events that need to be reviewed with Ontario Tech risk management.

#### VP Downtown:

- Downtown social media: Focusing on creating content about navigating downtown area as well as downtown campus. Current content does not reflect the campus's place in the city, local establishments, distances, how to navigate bus routes, etc. More of this type of content is set to be released in late August.
- Town & Gown: contacted Trent University and Durham College student associations who are interested in establishing Town & Gown, but also requires the participation of other institutions. The Ontario Tech structures that supported Town & Gown no longer exist, so this needs to be remedied.
- Invited by Whitby MP Ryan Turnbull to attend mental health event which provided insight into issues such as the need for mental health supports for alumni
- Student Discounts: Has been approaching local businesses to inquire about student discounts.
- Committees: Downtown Advisory Committee had discussions around improving the downtown resources guide.

#### RESOLUTION

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Moved by K. Awan and seconded by S. Canonaco. Motion carried.

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the OTSU Board of Directors approve the executive report for July 2024.

## 6. OPERATIONS REPORTS

Executive Directors welcomes Lindsay Horner onto the Board.

Executive Director is looking to improve work processes at the OTSU and reevaluating some of our tools. This includes shopping for an enterprise platform system to support operations. Latest demo for such a platform was on the day of the board meeting, so there was no time to include a summary of progress, but hopes to include a summary and potentially a recommendation at the next board meeting.

Fall planning is coming together for orientation weekend and for O-Week. Executive Director presents a sign-up sheet for directors to be involved and visible during some of the O-Week events. There are still some discussions to be had with risk and some contracts to finalize with some of the vendors for the larger events, but they should be finished this week so that everything is prepared a month in advance of O-Week.

Job posting has been prepared for volunteers who will provide added support during O-Week.

## 7. President Expenses

President presents expenses consisting of travel expenses to Gallivan's Annual Advisory Council Conference totalling \$302.40

### RESOLUTION

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Moved by S. Canonaco and seconded by K. Awan. Motion carried.

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the OTSU Board Directors approve the President's expenses as presented.

## 8. Union Observer Position

Executive Director refers to collective bargaining agreement which was negotiated in summer of 2023. One of the negotiated clauses requires that OTSU allow a union representative to petition the board for a non-voting observer position on the board with certain speaking rights. The union representative will make this proposal at a future board meeting.

## 9. Election Policy Recommendations

CRO thanks election committee members for their contributions that formed the proposal being presented.

Instead of presenting changes to wording of policy on a clause-by-clause basis, CRO asks that Board considers recommendations in principle because the format of changes may be dependent on whether all or only some of the recommendations are ultimately approved.

CRO summarizes recommendations. *[Complete recommendations report available on OTSU website as part of July 2024 Board Package.]*

L. Horner noted that in the past, candidates who were not successful in general elections could participate in Society elections. She asks what opportunities there are for those candidates who are unsuccessful in general elections.

CRO said that this perspective was considered and that it was decided that the increased democratic participation that is anticipated with the coordination of both sets of elections, which is likely to impact many students, outweighs the impact of not being able to run in both sets of elections, which would tend to affect a much smaller number of students. CRO also notes that there are numerous non-political avenues for participation for students seeking to be a part of the OTSU.

VP Student affairs asks to clarify whether students can run for a position in both the general election and the society elections. CRO states that the position of the elections committee is that students need to be decisive about what they want to represent during the elections. Furthermore, it is important to normalize losing in an election, especially given that in races with more than 2 candidates, the majority of participants will not be winners of the race. It is therefore important to normalize losing, making it a developmental and positive experience.

Vice Chair asked about the consequences of accumulating demerit points that do not amount to the disqualification threshold. CRO confirmed that there are no default consequences until 20 demerit points. Vice chair and CRO shared sentiment that this could be used to game the system and Vice Chair asked if there was a remedy for this. CRO stated that the election policy grants the CRO broad scope of authority to unilaterally (though subject to appeal to the elections

committee) adjust the number of demerit points issued for a given transaction. CRO restated the importance of the policy statement which would provide guidance on when these adjustments can be expected, i.e., demerits can be adjusted up when transgressions are willful and/or malicious and demerits can be adjusted down in the case of a bona fide error.

A. Narenthira expressed concern over the interim wording of the proposed policy statement that suggested that 'professionalism' is not expected of candidates. CRO concurred that the wording can be improved by replacing the 'professionalism' with something like 'expertise.'

A. Narenthira also expressed concern about non-students having a vote in the elections committee. Vice Chair suggested that this is balanced out by adding another student-at-large position onto the committee. Vice Chair suggested that empowering the board members could be fraught because in some cases board members are also political (i.e., elected).

A. Narenthira added that for recommendation 3, appearing/campaign in person together must also be considered an instance of slating, as well as specify that this restriction also applies to delegates. The CRO admitted that this was this was an oversight and that it ought to be added to the definition.

Chair suggested that other student unions actually allow running together in slates and that this approach has benefits such as an alignment of policies among slate members once elected. CRO agreed that there was nothing inherently wrong with slating and that it was a legitimate form of democratic representation. The CRO noted, however, that running in slates does not guarantee that all members of a slate will get elected, thereby potentially negating the potential benefits of platform alignment that slating could provide. Chair then clarifies suggesting that slates can be voted in as a team instead of being elected as individuals. CRO stated that such a system is has implicit problems that other forms of slating do not have, such as limiting student choice and diversity of opinions among participants in a given slate.

Chair then expressed the challenge for incumbents of fulfilling a platform if they are required to take a leave of absence to run in elections. CRO states the goal of the election committee was to make the election period as small and dense as possible while still ensuring opportunity for participation. CRO suggests, however, that the advantage of the incumbent would be unreasonable if they were allowed to remain active in their roles throughout the campaign period. Vice President Downtown suggests that it is already particularly challenging for VPs to complete their work given restrictions on their hours. Vice chair first confirms that the leave of absence is unpaid, then suggests that a solution may be to allow VPs to work overtime outside of the election period to make up for the lost time that is a consequence of the leave of absence. CRO concurred with VP Downtown and Chair that alternative solutions can be found to ensure that the work of incumbents are not unduly sacrificed for the sake of a re-election bid, but suggests that the solution should not come at the expense of perceived fairness in the election.

A. Narenthira suggested making the campaign period two weeks instead of one week. President replied that the campaign period is 1 ½ weeks. Pushing the elections earlier would be too close to the December break and pushing it forward would interfere with the plan to let the successful candidate run for a seat on Academic Council.

CRO will take the following recommendations back to committee: An effort to mitigate impact of leave of absence and changes that make the definition of slating more robust.

#### RESOLUTION

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Moved by S. Canonaco and seconded by K. Awan. Motion carried.

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the OTSU Board Directors approve the Election Committee policy recommendations in principle with the understanding that the Committee will consider (a) methods to reduce the impact of incumbents leaves of absence; and (b) improvements to what actions constitute slating.

## **10. Clubs & Societies Policy Recommendations**

*See the full budget details on the OTSU website.*

VP Student Life suggested that the committee's goals were to make the policy more compact and easy to read so that they are used as intended.

Additions to the Policy include the introduction of the club rating system where staff categorize clubs into Levels 1, 2, or 3 depending on which clubs are most active and have the most impact. The different levels correspond to different initial funding levels with limited amount of clubs occupying the top two tiers.

The second recommendation is the addition of a Societies Operating Policy. This will help societies better understand expectations of how Societies work and what they should be doing as well as providing guidelines for staff that support the Societies.

The third recommendation is the Preliminary Hearing Procedure. This is regarding club sanctions and informs whether a club is permitted to continue to operate when they are under investigation depending on the severity of the alleged misconduct that is being investigated.

A. Parameswaran asked if every one of the criteria listed is required to be met by clubs in order to achieve higher level ratings. VP Student Life noted that not all of the listed criteria need to be met, rather the criteria are guidelines used by staff to determine the appropriate rating for a club.

#### RESOLUTION

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Moved by S. Canonaco and seconded by A. Parameswaran. Motion carried.

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the OTSU Board of Directors approve the Clubs & Society Committee policy recommendations as presented.

### **11. Audit Results**

Financial Controller has presented an unqualified report which means a clean audit. Financial Controller summarizes report that lists auditor and management responsibilities. Report also describes a good financial position resulting in a surplus of approximately \$592,000 last year as well as a strong financial position.

No questions were posed. Financial Controller details that signatures from two board members are required on the documentation after which the auditors will provide the final report.

#### RESOLUTION

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Moved by A. Narenthira and seconded by K. Awan. Motion carried.

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the OTSU Board of Directors approve the 2024 OTSU Audit report.

### **12. New Business**

None.

### **13. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Executive Director notes that his planned announcement was already mentioned during the Operations Report, which was that sign-up sheets are now available for Directors to volunteer during O-Week events.

### **14. ADJOURNMENT**

Meeting was adjourned at 7:34pm. Moved by A. Narenthira and seconded by K. Awan.