



ACADEMIC SENATE MEETING MINUTES 18 MAY 2021

Minutes of the 355th meeting (special) of Academic Senate held at 9:30am on Wednesday, 18 May 2021 in 20.5 and via WebEx.

PART 1 – PRELIMINARY BUSINESS

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Prof Paul Wellings (Chair)

Dr Jenny Atchison

A/Prof Stephen Beirne

Prof Sue Bennett

Ms Jaymee Beveridge

Dr Kellie Buckley-Walker

Dr Jane Carey

Mr Jackson Cocks

Prof Julia Coyle

Prof Theo Farrell

Ms Madeline Findlay

Dr Belinda Gibbons

Mr Alexander Hall

A/Prof Chris Hyland

Mr Damien Israel

A/Prof Julie Kiggins

Prof Valerie Linton

Prof Jennifer Martin

Prof Tracey Moroney

Prof Trish Mundy

Prof Colin Picker

A/Prof Christian Ritz

A/Prof Ann Rogerson

Prof Greg Rose

Ms Nadia Verrucci

Prof Wilma Vialle

Dr Elena Vlahu-Gjorgievska

Ms Sarah Vogel

A/Prof Margaret Wallace

A/Prof Karen Walton

A/Prof Ika Willis

Prof Jiangtao Xi

A/Prof Yanguang Yu

APOLOGIES:

Prof Thomas Astell-Burt

Prof Karen Charlton

Prof Zhengyi Jiang

A/Prof Konstantin Konstaninov

A/Prof Wanqing Li

Dr Germanas Peleckis

A/Prof Montse Ros

Dr Marian Wong

IN ATTENDANCE:

Prof Clive Baldock, Dean of Graduate Research

Ms Theresa Hoynes, Director, Student Services and Accommodation Division

Ms Antoinette Faddoul, Academic Senate Executive Officer

Ms Tori Funnell, Senior Manager, Governance Unit

Ms Cherry Siu-Ho, Director, Governance and Legal Division

OBSERVERS:

Prof Joe Chicharo

Dr Luis Gomez Romero

Dr Marcelo Svirsky

Dr Pawel Wagner

Dr Andrew Whelan

Dr Tracey Woolrych

***1.1 Welcome and Apologies**

The Chair of the special meeting opened the 355th meeting of Academic Senate and provided instructions about how the meeting would run given the meeting was delivered both face-to-face and in a virtual capacity via WebEx.

The Chair welcomed new members to their first meeting of Academic Senate.

***1.2 Arrangement of Agenda**

1.2.1 Conflicts of Interest

An Academic Senate member declared their membership on University Council.

PART 2: GENERAL BUSINESS

***2.1 Academic Senate Membership Model**

Discussion of the Academic Senate membership model as set out in the Agenda item for the meeting was proposed by an Academic Senate Member.

The Chief Operating Officer (COO) provided a detailed account of the progression of the University Council's (Council) review of Academic Senate (Senate) membership and composition. This set out a timeline of meeting dates where the review was discussed at both meetings of Senate and Council. The final approval of the new composition and model for Senate was approved by Council at its 9 April 2021 meeting.

A Senate member stated that at its last meeting in March, Senate rejected the proposed membership model and requested further consultation, following which Council passed the resolution for the new membership model of Senate. This in turn led to the special meeting of Senate being called by the petitioners. The member expressed disquiet about the developments at Council and stressed the need for a new way for Senate and Council to work in the future. The member suggested that the election process was rushed through in order to have a new membership in place for the special meeting which led to many members being present in the meeting who do not have adequate background information on previous discussions in relation to this matter.

Another member spoke in support of the paper and in support of those observers present at the meeting being provided the opportunity to speak. She stated that the elected positions of Associate Dean and Head of School should be reclassified as ex-officio positions, given that those roles are appointed by management. She added that Council had not recognised the resolution passed by Senate at its 3 March meeting, and encouraged a more collegial relationship between Senate and Council moving forward.

An observer and former member of Senate stated that the Winchester review recommended the overall size of membership be reduced while maintaining elected and ex officio ratios. He asserted that the new model approved by Council has reversed this recommendation. He stated that the resolution passed by Senate at the March meeting called on Council to allow Senate to review the membership before final approval of the new composition and membership model, and subsequently as this did not occur, the special meeting was called to formally object to the new model.

Another observer and former member of Senate asserted that Senate has become a servile committee of Council. He asked that the proposed resolution be passed as a reminder to Council that all professional and academic staff need to be consulted and heard on matters that impact them.

An observer questioned how Senate can uphold its values which include fairness, transparency, respect of individuals and independence if that respect is not given by Council. The observer suggested that the newly approved model does not support the Winchester review and its recommendations, does not address gender equity, and that the model has been implemented in a deceptive way which was disrespectful to previous members.

The Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor (SDVC) stated that he was also in attendance at the special meeting as an observer and former member of Senate. He stated the recent review of Senate was different to that of the previous reviews of Senate since 2005, including the review undertaken by Professor Winchester. There had been no deception in the decision-making process as Council passed the resolution for a newly constituted membership model of Senate with full knowledge of feedback from Senate members. In response to some of the concerns raised, he commented that Heads of School are independent people with their own views who vote with their consciences, which has been demonstrated at Senate on many occasions. He further noted that a number of petitioners of the special meeting were Heads of School, and that the new membership shows gender equity in favour of women.

Further to this, the SDVC noted that the Working Group who undertook the review of Senate designed the membership to have representation from every level and function across the University. He respectfully asked that the new composition of membership for Senate be given the chance to do their job.

A member of Senate spoke about the various roles she had held with Senate over a twelve year period including that of elected Chair for six years. In her role of Chair, she held the position of Chair for the national committee of Chairs of Academic Senates and Boards. She also formed part of the Working Group who undertook the review. Benchmarking across the sector showed that the previous composition of UOW's Senate was too large. She commented that the notion of 'us' versus 'them' and to refer to people in their roles as managerial is disrespectful. She also noted that student representatives are elected positions on Senate and had not been included in the breakdown of elected and ex officio membership provided by the authors of the agenda paper. She noted that across the sector student representatives are more effective when there are more of them on a committee. The review has increased student representation, and therefore increased elected positions which needed to be taken into consideration.

The Chair of Senate stated that under section 9 of the *University of Wollongong By-Law 2005*, the Vice-Chancellor is able to preside at any committee meeting held in the University. He thanked the VC for agreeing to chair the special meeting and added that as a member of the Working Party, and an active member of Council who participated in the decision-making process, it was important for him to be able to speak as a Senate member at the special meeting. He noted that Professor Winchester's recommendation was that Senate become more agile and to consider matters of academic quality assurance and risk management. He stated that he has some concerns about some aspects of the new model for Senate and noted that it can be improved over time including with regard to Senate's functions and electoral rules.

He suggested an amendment to (iii) of the draft resolution, that being to remove 'membership model' and replace it with a timeframe to work within:

(iii) recommend that the University Council undertake further consultation with Academic Senate and the wider University community to identify subsequent enhancements to be made to the Academic Senate ~~membership model~~ within the course of the two years prior to June 2023.

A Senate member seconded the amendment.

The original proposer of discussion of the Agenda item stated that as a new member of Senate, she recently attended the induction session, at which there was discussion about collegiality and transparency. She observed that it would appear that there has been a breakdown in trust and consultation with Senate in recent years. Additionally the University has undergone many changes of late, with COVID-19 initiating a lot of changes, as well as the restructure of faculties and the introduction of the One-UOW Model. She commented that it is the role of the University executive management to ensure that appropriate information and consultation is undertaken. The member asked that Senate be given a voice and listened to respectfully and stated that there is a need to consider executive power and how it is used. Further to this, she agreed with the proposed amended resolution and noted it was a good way forward.

The majority indicated their support for the amendment.

The amended resolution was passed with 19 for and 5 against.

RESOLVED 2021/19

that Academic Senate:

- (i) *express its disappointment with the 9 April 2021 decision of Council to approve and implement a new Academic Senate membership model, the final format of which was not presented to, nor discussed by Academic Senate;*
- (ii) *note the concerns raised in relation to the new Academic Senate membership model and the process by which the new model was approved, as set out in the agenda paper; and*
- (iii) *recommend that the University Council undertake further consultation with Academic Senate and the wider University community to identify subsequent enhancements to be made to the Academic Senate within the course of the two years prior to June 2023.*

PART 3: FUTURE MEETINGS

***3.1 Next Meeting**

Wednesday 26 May 2021

The Chair thanked the previous members of Academic Senate and the petitioners of the meeting. He noted it was an important interface between the old and new Academic Senate, and thanked the Working Group who put the membership model together.

The meeting closed at 10.39am

Signed as a true record:



Chair

Date 20 Sept 2021