

Minutes of the 28th Governing Body meeting

Date: Tuesday, 22nd October 2024
Time: 3.00pm – 5.45pm, Tourism & Leisure building boardroom,
Waterford Campus

Chairperson: Professor Patrick Prendergast

Attendees: Professor Veronica Campbell
Mr Jim Bergin
Ms Ruth Beadle
Ms Eileen Curtis
Dr David Dempsey
Mr Mark Dunne
Mr Richard Lacey
Mr Kevin Lewis
Mr Corey Shanahan
Professor Marie-Christine Ho Ba Tho
Mr Derek Sheridan
Ms Trish Finegan

Apologies: Ms Louise Grubb
Mr Ray Ryan
Ms Pauline Oakes

In attendance under the Code of Governance:
Ms Elaine Sheridan, VP Governance /University Secretary

In attendance for Agenda Items 3 & 4.2
Mr Cormac O’ Toole

In attendance for Agenda Item 4.1
Dr John Power, Branding Manager

In attendance for Agenda Item 4.2
Dr Patricia Mulcahy, VP Global Partnerships

In attendance for Agenda Item 7
Dr David Ryan, Associate VP Sustainability

Secretariat: Ms Annette Byrne

Item Title

Section A

1. Chairperson's Opening:

1.1 Welcome & approval of Agenda

NOTED The Chairperson welcomed all to the meeting. Confirming the meeting was quorate and with approval of the agenda he commenced the normal business.

1.2 Invitation of Elected staff members

NOTED The Chairperson firstly welcomed the Students' Union nominee Mr Shanahan, as approved by the Governing Body at the previous meeting, who provided a brief self-introduction. The Chairperson then informed the Governing Body that staff elections have been conducted and outlined the successful candidates as follows; Mr Lacey re-elected in the academic category and Mr Sheridan in the PMSS category. He then requested approval of same to invite the candidates to join the meeting as members of the Governing Body. Mr Sheridan joined the meeting and provided brief self-introduction to the Governing Body. Finally, the Chairperson informed all that the remaining student member recommended for appointment to the Governing Body is Ms Finegan noting that Ms Finegan would join the meeting during the course of the meeting. This was agreed by all.

Re-Appointment of External Governing Body Members

Dr Dempsey excused himself from the meeting at this point.

AGREED To accept the re-appointment of external members Ms Grubb, Ms Oakes and Dr Dempsey to the Governing Body for a term of four years.

NOTED Ms Sheridan outlined details of the remaining vacancies.

1.3 Conflict of Interest

NOTED The Chairperson asked members if they had any conflicts of interest to declare associated with items on the meeting agenda. No members present declared a conflict for this meeting.

1.4 Approval of minutes: 17th September 2024

AGREED To approve the minutes of 17th September and to publish on the website.

1.5 Matters arising (Action Log)

NOTED The Chairperson indicated that matters, as noted on the Action Log, are in hand. The following updates were provided:

- Re: Senior Vice President roles - It was agreed that the Chairperson would now write to the Minister for Further & Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science regarding same as there had been no progress on the matter;
- Update re Carlow College to be provided during the course of the meeting;
- Hospitality & Entertainment policy currently being reviewed by the relevant parties with an expectation to close out by the end of the year;
- Recruitment Challenges – update to be provided at November meeting;
- Multi Annual Forecasting – update to be provided to FCIC on 18 /11 and GB on 26/11.

There were no other matters arising.

2. Report from President:

NOTED The President provided updates to the Governing Body as follows;

- Recent announcement regarding the development of a Pharmacy programme at SETU. The President extended her gratitude to those who have worked tirelessly on securing this particular initiative;
- Recent meetings with Wexford County Council regarding site acquisition and development of a masterplan;
- Awaiting announcements from Government regarding PPP Capital projects;
- The appointment of an external consultancy firm to progress SETU Advancement Plan and Philanthropy;
- Update regarding the recent CINNTE review noting positive comments and verbal feedback provided by the panel. A final report will be made available in due course;
- External Stakeholder engagement and meetings on a number of different matters;
- An update regarding Budget 2025 allocations for Higher Education, as well as recent SETU Research Funding Awards;
- An update in relation to events held between late September to October period including the signing of MOU's and Staff Excellence awards.

The Chairperson thanked the President for her report and opened the floor to comments and advice. The Governing Body commended the President and welcomed the announcement regarding Pharmacy.

Ms Finegan joined the meeting at this stage and provided a brief self-introduction.

3. Interim Report Carlow College:

NOTED Mr O'Toole joined the meeting for this item. The Chairperson commenced by providing context to the matter and the importance of clarifying the opportunities and risks for SETU. Mr O'Toole provided background and historical information regarding Carlow College noting that funding through the Technological Sector Advancement Fund (TSAF) programme is available for a full due diligence process. Referring to the memo circulated, Ms Sheridan informed the Governing Body that she has engaged the University's legal provider Holmes Law to conduct the due diligence and legal processes associated with the property, noting that this is not yet completed. She outlined several discoveries and other matters that are not yet concluded. Ms Sheridan indicated that the legal provider will continue this body of work over the next couple of months and then furnish the Governing Body with a final report to enable further consideration of the matter. A discussion ensued and the Governing Body requested Ms Sheridan to follow up on some queries raised while indicating that the discussion has been very helpful and looked forward to further updates. The Chairperson thanked all and Mr O'Toole left the meeting.

Prof Ho Ba Tho joined the meeting at this stage.

4. Strategic Discussion:

4.1 Presentation on Branding

NOTED Dr Power was welcomed to the meeting. He provided a presentation in relation to the SETU Brand strategy, the journey thus far including challenges and opportunities outlining where the brand is now placed and priorities going forward. He outlined the growing awareness of SETU, particularly evidenced by social media growth, website traffic and provided metrics and key data to support this awareness. Dr Power continued by outlining the strategic priorities in building the SETU brand so that it continues positive momentum and has international presence in postgraduate markets, research and innovation. Key priorities also include building stakeholder engagement; branding for inclusivity; employer branding; social media channel amplification and promotional campaigns. The Chairperson thanked Dr Power for his presentation and he left the meeting. There was a brief discussion in terms of assessing the brand, how the brand works for research and a gap identified regarding SETU corporate branding. It was suggested that feedback from the Governing Body in this regard is provided to the Branding Manager.

4.2	<u>Global Engagement - International recruitment plan and costings</u> NOTED Dr Mulcahy and Mr O'Toole joined the meeting for this item. Dr Mulcahy commenced by recapping on the overall vision and overview of international student recruitment as outlined in the Strategic Plan and the strategy for progressing international recruitment. She outlined objectives in targeting international markets, faculty planning and streamlining policies and processes, as well as providing a set of costings and forecasts that will assist and support increases in international recruitment. Dr Mulcahy also indicated that investment is required into resources to support international recruitment in order to overcome delays in responding to applicants as well as addressing other elements within the global engagement strategy. The Chairperson thanked Dr Mulcahy for her update and queried the availability of funding for the proposed investment in resources. Mr O'Toole clarified that funding has been provided for. Governing Body members sought clarification with regards to other matters including recruitment from the US and Russian markets and if impediments exist. Dr Mulcahy clarified that applicants can apply directly to SETU from any country worldwide and that the University is not actively recruiting in Russia. She also clarified that there is further research required in relation to making an impact in the US market and that this will take more time to examine. She also informed the Governing Body that there has been recovery in international applicants which is now above pre Covid figures and that SETU has the highest number (172) of Ukrainian students funded by the state. It was therefore agreed to approve International Student Recruitment Strategic and Operational Plan as presented, noting that this has also been reviewed and approved by the Executive Management Team. The Chairperson thanked Dr Mulcahy and Mr O'Toole and they both left the meeting.
5.	<u>Corporate Administration:</u> <u>Annual Governance Statement 2022/23 – HEA Feedback & Response</u> NOTED Ms Sheridan outlined detail of the feedback received from the HEA regarding the Annual Governance Statement, and the responses to the feedback provided by the University noting that assurances have been provided to the HEA in these responses, and actions are in place or planned on foot of each of them. She also highlighted the request from the HEA to bring this feedback to the attention of the Governing Body informing all that the response would also be shared with the Audit & Risk Committee in due course. The Governing Body considered and acknowledged the response provided to the HEA indicating that all was in order and therefore does not require further amendment.
6.	<u>Academic Council:</u> NOTED Academic Council Minutes for 17th September 2024. The President referenced item 8 - Generative AI, noting that work in this regard is ongoing.
7.	<u>Sustainability Committee/ESG Committee:</u> NOTED Dr Ryan was welcomed to the meeting. The Chairperson firstly provided context regarding the matter suggesting that it would be useful to have a discussion at Governing Body regarding the formation of a Sustainability/ESG Committee prior to developing Terms of Reference for same. Dr Ryan continued by referring to strategic objective 9 of the Strategic Plan which strives to ensure that sustainable development is embedded into daily University life. He outlined legislative requirements in terms of a Climate Action Roadmap, ensuring that oversight is provided for annual ESG reporting and supporting sustainable economic, social and cultural development of the region and striving to reach sustainable goals and targets. A discussion ensued and it was agreed that proceeding with the formation of such committee of the Governing Body would be beneficial to the university as it would provide capacity of governance in this emerging area of activity, and allow SETU to be well prepared when ESG reporting becomes mandatory. It was therefore agreed to proceed to the next step in the process and Dr Ryan was requested to prepare a suitable set of Terms of Reference for consideration by the Governing Body. The Chairperson thanked Dr Ryan and he left the meeting.

8.	<u>Minutes of GB Committees:</u>
8.1	NOTED Audit & Risk Committee draft minutes of 6 th September 2024, no further actions required.
8.2	NOTED Finance & Capital Investment Committee draft minutes of 10 th September 2024. It was requested that further consideration was given to the information available pertaining to a drawdown of capital funding for a University DAC and that this is reconsidered at the next Finance & Capital Investment Committee meeting. Ms Sheridan indicated that she would relay this information to the VP Finance.
8.3	NOTED Joint Quality Committee draft minutes of 1 st October 2024.
8.4	NOTED It was noted that the draft Nominations Committee minutes of 9 th October 2024 had not yet been provided; however Ms Sheridan provided a brief update regarding the recommendations taken by the committee pertaining to dates for staff elections. These minutes will be available at the next meeting.
9.	<u>AOB:</u> NOTED The President excused herself from the meeting at 17.41pm. The Chairperson referred to the President's probationary period, now completed, and her request to undergo an annual review of performance for professional development purposes. He therefore proposed Ms Beadle as a member of the Governing Body to assist him in conducting this review. This was agreed by all. The President returned to the meeting at 17.43pm.
	<u>SECTION B:</u>
B1.	AGREED To accept and approve request to award Emeritus titles to retired staff members of SETU as per the list provided.
B2.	NOTED Arrangements for Conferring Ceremonies 2024. The Chairperson thanked those who have volunteered to provide assistance during the upcoming ceremonies.
B3.	NOTED Risk Paper as presented to Audit & Risk Committee on 6 September 2024.
B4.	NOTED Briefing Note regarding changes to Seanad Elections
B5.	NOTED Draft Minutes for SETU Subsidiary and DAC companies.
B6.	NOTED Correspondence from the Minister regarding CAO membership.
	There being no other business to attend to the Chairperson thanked all and closed the meeting at 5.50pm.

Approved:



Date: 26th November 2024