

# UTS Council meeting report

14 April 2021

This report covers some of the non-confidential matters considered by UTS Council at its 14 April 2021 meeting.

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

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## Strategic items of business

### Themes from the Retreat

Following on from the UTS Council Retreat Report, the Vice-Chancellor highlighted the following themes that emerged from the Retreat:

- Differentiation – Lifelong learning & employability;
- Relationship & Partnership focus;
- Customer experience and mutual accountability – staff, students, partners;
- New Ways of Working;
- Research integrated teaching, outcome translation and commercialisation;
- Social impact.

Council noted that the themes that emerged from the Retreat did not represent a complete re-set of the Strategy. They do however provide an opportunity for further refinement of the Strategy's strategic initiatives. Further discussion highlighted the challenges associated with progressing the Strategy given both the resource constraints and the need to accelerate the pace of change.

Elected staff representatives also highlighted the importance of maintaining a focus on staff communication that translates the strategy into relatable language. This will be critical to ongoing engagement with the Strategy by staff.

### DVC Innovation and Enterprise Strategic Report

DVC Innovation and Enterprise outlined progress with strategy implementation in areas relevant to his portfolio. Some of the activities that have been undertaken in support of Enterprise Learning were outlined including reflections on some of the lessons learnt through both success and failure.

Business customers are seeking to access the full range of UTS organizational capability. Research, modern content and multidisciplinary approaches are anticipated for workforce solutions.

The Precincts and current NSW Government priorities were discussed. A number of proposals have been submitted to NSW Government including the **UTS Vault Secure Research Facility**. This will provide a unique, multi-tenanted and highly secure facility to work with Defence, cyber-security companies, industry and start-ups. UTS has submitted a request for \$7.285m for construction and fit out through the NSW

Government Jobs Plus Program and are projecting total income of \$22.8m through a combination of contract research, short courses, micro-credentials and rental income.

Council also sought advice on how the UTS Start-up community had been impacted by the pandemic. It was determined that at a future meeting there will be a briefing on UTS Start-up activities.

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## 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.*

Following the NSW Government's announcement of a significant relaxation of COVID-19 restrictions at the end of March, UTS made changes to our own campus settings, which were implemented from Monday 29 March. While universities and other educational institutions were exempt from many of the general restrictions placed on other businesses and organisations, UTS remained in step with community standards wherever possible and appropriate. Now that the majority of restrictions have been lifted, and many parts of the community are returning to near pre-COVID conditions, we seized the opportunity to ease our own COVID-related protocols

The Federal Government position on international border closures was discussed. Scenarios were explored and the priority for UTS of first welcoming back completing UTS students who have been affected by the border closure.

### Work Health and Safety Annual Report 2020

*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.*

Council discussed the Report. Further clarification was sought in relation to the management of disclosures in the *Respect.Now.Always* (RNA) area. The Council was advised that the management of disclosures and the associated reporting continues to be refined.

Council requested consideration be given to separating the reporting of on-campus versus off-campus complaints in the RNA area, including the timeframe for responding to and resolving complaints.

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## 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.*

The Finance Committee Chair provided Council with an update in relation to the University's discussions with T-Corp. He noted that T-Corp had recently confirmed that it would not be establishing a fossil-free investment fund given it would not be consistent with NSW Government policy. As a consequence of this advice the University will be seeking alternative investment options.

### **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 2020.

### **Report from Governance Committee**

*To fulfil a strategic governance role, the Governance Committee undertakes specific functions in regard to policy and general governance matters, and advises Council on a number of matters.*

Council agreed that the mandatory requirement for faculties to have a dean's advisory committee be waived. Every faculty was required to have a Faculty Board as required by Academic Board in the UTS Rules. Given this requirement, Council held the view that also requiring Faculty's to have a Dean's Advisory Committee was overly proscriptive.

The changes will provide the Deans with flexibility and will enable the Deans to determine the manner in which the function of providing advice to the Dean on matters relating to the operation, management and development of the faculty would be achieved, through appropriate committees, systems and processes, as determined by the Dean.

## Report from Academic Board

The Chair, Academic Board outlined the achievements of Academic Board over the past year. The continuing focus on Academic Strategic Risk and course performance were discussed. Council noted the receipt of the Academic Board Annual Report for 2020.

Council approved amendments to the UTS Student Rules in response to the changes to the process for submission, ratification and publication of results.

Council also approved amendments to the UTS Student Rules to support new qualification types approved in late 2020. The new qualification types included an Associate Degree in Advanced Manufacturing and an Undergraduate Certificate in Science.

## Report from Student/Council Liaison Group

Council noted the report on the Student Leadership Program, an initiative presented by the student representative for Law, recommending improvements in support for students during their elected term that have been referred to the Governance Support Unit for implementation. These include a more expansive induction guide, assistance with consultation for the annual presentation to Academic Board, and handover documentation for incoming/outgoing student members.

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## Items for approval

- Council Committee Membership

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## 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

None

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## Other reports

- Fit for 2027 Update
- Work Health and Safety Report
- Physical Infrastructure Committee Report
- Governance Committee Report
- Remuneration Committee Report