

Committee Chairs' Oral Reports to the Board of Governors

Written summaries of the committee Chairs' oral reports to the Board of Governors from the meeting of 23 June 2020 are provided below for the following committees:

- Academic Resources
- External Relations
- Finance and Audit
- Governance and Human Resources
- Investment
- Land and Property

**Academic Resources Committee
Reference Notes for the June 23, 2020 Board meeting**

Information Items

Provost's Items

The Provost discussed four key matters:

(1) academic continuity in the context of COVID-19

- starting with good news, summer 2020 enrolments were 23% above target, made possible by the commitment of the faculty members and course instructors to move the session to online and remote learning;
- planning is underway for the Fall 2020 term; a set of *Principles to Guide Fall 2020 Course Planning* together with public health regulations are governing the many preparations underway, which at this stage include:
 - arrangements to enable Faculties' requests for essential on-campus academic activities in the fall term (approximately 60 courses)
 - the implementation of a curb-side pick-up program and digital scanning option by the Libraries, commencing in the coming weeks
 - a virtual option to sustain global learning capacity for students as an alternative to the study abroad and university-exchange programs which are not available to students in the autumn
 - providing students in need of accommodation access to study space on campus coincident with the commencement of the fall term
- Planning has also commenced to offer a robust Winter 2021 term, particularly as an attractive option for students who opt to defer enrolling in the fall term amid the uncertainty caused by the pandemic

(2) the status of faculty recruitment for 2020-2021:

- 107 tenure-track appointments were authorized for the 2020-2021 academic year, with good progress across the Faculties with 87 of them either successfully concluded or in progress (54 completed, 33 in progress); owing to the uncertain impact of the pandemic, only critical tenure stream appointment requests are being authorized for the 2021-2022 cycle, and that complement call has prioritized the appointment of Indigenous and Black faculty members

(3) Fall 2020 Admissions early results:

- from the starting point of domestic 101 applications being relatively flat and international 101 applications below the system average, the admissions results are trending toward a challenging enrolment picture for the fall: 101 domestic conversions are -9.3% vs 2019, and 101 international are +12.3% for a combined result of -7.6%; though still early, the 105 pool of domestic and international applicants has decreased by 10% and 13% respectively; several strategies are being implemented to improve conversions, which will continue over the summer months;
- relative to a budget position, undergraduate enrolments are at 83% of the target for FW 2020-21 vs 89% at this time last year; however there is time to reduce that gap over the next couple of months, together with plans for the winter 2021 admission cycle;
- the pandemic, and the lingering effect of the 2018 labour disruption, have had an impact on enrolments

(4) University Academic Plan 2020-2025:

- After a thorough consultation exercise on the new academic plan that ran the course of the 2019-2020 year – which included reflections from the Board - the new Plan is

proceeding to Senate for review and approval at its meeting this week. Timely additions were made to the Plan to incorporate recognition of the international mobilization against anti-Black racism as an important element of the planning context for the University moving forward. Members were provided a copy of the document.

Vice-President Research and Innovation Items

Vice-President Asif also reported on four areas:

- (1) Research Activity at York:** research activity has remained high despite the challenges of the pandemic for researchers; several applications in progress for large-scale research applications; on track for an upward trend in both SSHRC and NSERC funding vs 2019, for an overall increase in Tri-Council funding following successive increases from 2017 onwards
- (2) COVID-19 Research Project Funding:** 10 York-funded COVID-19 projects have been awarded to study human and public health impacts of the pandemic; and 10 other proposals for external funding to study the pandemic have received support from the University
- (3) York Research Chairs:** the selection process of the 2020 recipients of this internal research program has been completed, with 12 new Chairs selected for a total of 43 active Chairs as of 1 July 2020; the selection process includes Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) considerations, with best practices adopted for the exercise; with this year's complement of recipients the aggregate data shows that 37% of the Chairs are women and 33% are visible minorities; work will continue to improve those metrics
- (4) Ramping Up Research:** a plan has been developed to facilitate the gradual return of researchers to campus beginning the week of June 29th in a staged process that is compliant with the Province's Framework for Re-opening; priority is being given to time-sensitive research, including activities involving graduate students close to completion of their degree (which will see approximately 10% of researchers return to on campus facilities in the first phase); a Research Continuity Planning Group is guiding the implementation of the resumed research presence on campus

Quality Assurance Legislation

The Committee received a report from the Joint Sub-Committee on Quality Assurance, advising that revisions are being made to both the *Senate Policy on Quality Assurance* and the *York University Quality Assurance Procedures* to enhance the Senate oversight function and clarity of processes and requirements for the review of and approval of academic program proposals and cyclical reviews.

EXTERNAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE

Reference Notes for the June 2020 Board meeting

INFORMATION ITEMS

Communications & Public Affairs Division Year-End Report

The Committee received the 2019-20 Year-End Report from the Communications & Public Affairs Division (C&PA).

C&PA developed its first strategic plan two years ago, with four strategic goals:

- Differentiate and Integrate York's Brand
- Strengthen Institutional Communication Planning
- Broaden Pan-University Digital Strategy
- Expand Influencer Strategy

The past year has been a breakout year where major pan university strategies were solidified which position York well for future success. The year-end report brings to the fore all the areas in which C&PA has been performing well, including the digital strategy, web optimization strategy, increasing York's external visibility through news stories and thought leadership opportunities, and strengthening the impact of the reputation-building initiatives executed collaboratively with all Faculties and Divisions.

In relation to the Board in particular, the Board website was refreshed, and biographies rewritten for a common approach, highlighting the extensive and relevant experience of each Governor. Thank you again to all Governors for your interest and engagement in the updates.

A number of pan-University successes are a testament to the strengthening of the brand, such as:

- For the fourth year in a row, York held its position in the Maclean's National Reputation Ranking at 21/49 while increasing its position in the Leader of Tomorrow category by four spots, now ranked 15th out of 49 universities.
- York earned high international recognition, placing 33rd out of 767 universities globally by the highly respected Times Higher Education (THE) in its 2020 Impact Rankings. York ranked in the top 10 in four key categories, and top 100 in 15 of the 17 key categories.

Since the External Relations Committee met, two C&PA initiatives were recognized in the **CASE 2020 Circle of Excellence Awards**, for videography and for photography. These awards provide external validation of the best in class work being done at York – my congratulations to the team in Communications.

(Note: CASE = Council for Advancement and Support of Education)

Points of Pride

The Points of Pride are included in the Board package and are excellent examples of the positive impact York is making internationally, nationally and locally.

1. A new modelling study from Distinguished Research Professor Jianhong Wu of York University's Faculty of Science shows that enhanced testing and contact tracing for the coronavirus in Ontario could allow physical distancing measures to be relaxed, while keeping the reproduction ratio under one and preventing a second wave of infections.

2. For the second year in a row, York University has been recognized by Times Higher Education (THE) in its Global Impact rankings with an impressive 33rd place out of 767 universities.
3. York's recently launched storytelling website, yorku.ca/bettertogetherstories, hit a milestone with 100+ pieces of content. Showcasing the many ways the York University community is stepping up in innovative and extraordinary ways to respond to this unprecedented global crisis, the website is an excellent resource to learn about the collective efforts that are making a positive difference at home and around the world.

Campaign and Alumni Engagement Year-end Update

Vice-President Jeff O'Hagan provided a report on the 2019-20 year-end. He reminded members that the campaign, launched on April 21, 2016, committed to raising **\$500 million** and increasing the number of alumni engaged in making a difference in the lives of our students and the communities we serve.

The campaign is finishing its penultimate year and is close to reaching the target. While there is strong central leadership for the campaign led by the President, this year we also built momentum across the University, working with advancement staff in the Faculties and the Deans on both fundraising and alumni engagement. The focus now is exceeding the \$500M goal and we are well-positioned for this in the coming year. One focal point will be fundraising for the Markham campus project, a key strategic priority for the University.

Alumni engagement continues to build. Over 75% of donors to the Campaign are alumni. In terms of activities, the team has pivoted from in-person events to a full scope of online events, both live and recorded on the Alumni website and York Alumni YouTube channel. Examples are the Scholars@home and York Circle @home series, featuring York faculty, the new alumni book club, and regional virtual send-offs. We are seeing more people take part in virtual events than previously attended in person events, and we are looking at ways to drive this engagement even further.

The York Bryden Alumni Awards, a celebration of alumni who have made remarkable contributions to their fields, their communities and to York, mark their 20th anniversary in 2020. The celebration will be held virtually this year with a major online retrospective of previous winners.

Convocation is also being held virtually this year and is starting as we speak. In addition to recorded ceremonies for each Faculty, graduates are being sent a special box with a cap & tassel, diploma, Faculty-specific program, confetti, alumni pin and postcard. Alumni are being asked to send greetings, and students asked to post on social media and have been provided with tools, backgrounds and other digital material to help with the celebrations.

Government and Community Relations Year-end Update

The committee received a year-end update from Ijade Maxwell Rodrigues, Chief of Government and Community Relations. While great progress was noted for both government relations and community relations, the report focused on government relations as community relations was highlighted at last month's meeting.

The past year has been spent building relationships, and the University has made headway with all level of government. The committee heard about a number of highlights from the past year:

One particularly successful initiative this year was the **Federal Election Strategy**. Prior to the federal election, the government relations team reached out to candidates in the 16 ridings surrounding the Keele, Glendon and Markham campuses and also held two on-campus all-candidates events. This strategy has paid off post-election as a relationship was already established with the successful candidates. 17 York alumni or faculty were elected; 3 are now in cabinet.

The **York University Brief** is the main communication tool for government relations, with eight editions a year, plus a special election edition last year. Most of the content is condensed from YFile, and the focus is on stories of interest for different levels of government.

The **federal Deputy Minister Champion program** allows the University to profile York's star researchers within the federal government and to arrange an annual federal panel on working in government with the career centre. We have signed an MOU for annual paid student placements within the Canada School of Public Service. We are fortunate that York's designated champion is President of the Canada School of Public Service and double York alumnus Taki Sarantakis, who is committed to helping York.

York is the first **CIFAL Centre** in Canada, one of 20 around the world devoted to building capacities for sustainable development. We are working closely with the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) which coordinates the network.

Higher Education Strategy Associates produced **an economic and social impact report**, highlighting the University's contributions. Some key findings were:

- 21,226 people have a university degree and would not otherwise due to York's focus on access
- York alumni volunteer at a rate 13.5 percentage points higher than other GTA graduates
- York's estimated economic impact was \$4B and 13,480 jobs in 2018

The full findings of the report will be presented to the committee in the Fall.

York was one of the main sponsors of the 2019 Ontario Economic Summit and Ontario Business Achievement Awards, allowing us to profile York to a number of stakeholders and talk about York's role and impact.

York has made active contributions to the COVID response in a number of ways, some of which are highlighted in the Points of Pride.

FINANCE & AUDIT COMMITTEE
Reference Notes for the June 2020 Board meeting

INFORMATION ITEMS

Audit Results: Ernst & Young LLP

- The Report of the External Auditors was received and discussed in conjunction with the review of the Financial Statements. An unqualified audit opinion was provided.
- The auditors confirmed there are no significant items to report and no changes in accounting policies/standards this fiscal year.

Internal Audit Status Report April 1 – May 31, 2020

- The Committee approved the proposed Internal Audit Plan for 2020–2021.
- The Committee received a comprehensive Internal Audit Status report covering the period of April 1, 2020 – May 31, 2020. The department undertook eight audit engagements in this time, of which two have been completed.
- A report on the status of prior audit corrective action recommendations was also received and reported on by the Director.

The Committee also received a Banking Resolution Update.

GOVERNANCE & HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Reference Notes for the June 2020 Board meeting

In addition to the appointment matters addressed during the Closed Session of the Board, the Governance & Human Resources Committee discussed the following information items.

INFORMATION ITEMS

Annual Report to the Board from the Sexual Violence Office

- The Committee received annual reports from the Centre for Sexual Violence Response, Support & Education and the Sexual Violence Policy Advisory Committee.
- Sexual Violence Response, Support & Education
 - o The Centre provides sexual violence prevention support and resources to York's whole community of staff, students, and faculty, with a focus on the most vulnerable individuals.
 - o The Centre aims to create innovative programming and important campaigns often in collaboration with the internal and external community.
 - o Some highlights from the past year are set out in the report.
- Sexual Violence Advisory Committee
 - o The Sexual Violence Advisory Committee was initially established in early 2019 to review the York University Policy on Sexual Violence and to make recommendations on policy amendments. Its membership includes diverse representation from students, faculty, and staff.
 - o The Advisory Committee's recommendations were approved by the Board, and the policy was revised in October 2019.
 - o The Province has also required that all colleges and universities establish a task force that will continue to review policies and procedures and make and receive recommendations regarding additional steps York could take to create a safer space on campus.
 - o The Advisory Committee was well-placed to take on these additional tasks and began meeting in March 2020. It made a number of recommendations, which are set out in the report.
 - o The Advisory Committee has committed to meeting at a minimum bi-annually.

Human Resources

Pension Valuation Results

- The Committee received the York University Pension Valuation results as at 31 December 2019. A strong 2019 investment return (16.3102%) yielded gains resulting in an improved financial position.
- While the University is not required to file an actuarial valuation until December 31, 2020, York has decided to file an off-cycle valuation to achieve contribution certainty for an additional two years with the stronger funded status as of December 31, 2019.

Labour Relations Update

- The Committee received a confidential update on labour relations.
- CUPE 3903
 - o Work continues on institutional approaches to engagement with CUPE 3903 and its members, with a view to strengthening relations and preparing for the next round of negotiations expected to start in the summer of 2020.
- YUFA
 - o Mediation continues with YUFA over the issue of indexing the minimum guarantee portion of pension under the York Pension Plan, an issue which was a part of negotiations for the renewal of the 2018-21 collective agreement.

- Labour Relations and COVID-19
 - o The Committee received an update on Division of Equity, People and Culture (EPC) initiatives and activities supporting York's response to COVID-19.

Employee Benefits Usage Costs

- The Committee received and discussed a detailed report.
- For the calendar year 2019, the University paid for \$41.5M (\$39.6M in 2018) in health and dental claims on behalf of its employees and their dependents.
- The cost of benefits per member has increased approximately 2% per year between 2016 and 2019. In comparison to Sun Life's higher education book of business, the University is consistently higher in per member costs.
- A June 2015 Internal Audit report related to "Employee Health Benefits Administration" made a number of recommendations, and the University is now looking to address some of the findings and recommendations coming out of the report.
- *Benefits 2030*, a multi-year plan to address benefit cost mitigation, audit findings, and respond to this Committee's interest, was a key Human Resources priority for 2019-20, and a number of actions were taken.

Health and Safety Quarterly Report

- The Committee received an update on health and safety initiatives at the University, including:
 - o Joint Health and Safety Committee (JHSC) transformation
 - o Workplace Health and Safety Performance and Culture
 - o Incidents
- The focus has shifted somewhat over the past few months to focus on some emergent workplace health, safety and well-being needs related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Employment Equity Report

- The Committee received and discussed the 2019 Employment Equity Statistical Report, which is in the agenda. The report provides a summary of the University's progress in achieving representation amongst five groups: Women, Visible Minorities (Racialized), Aboriginal (Indigenous) Peoples, Persons with Disabilities, and the LGBTQ2+ community.
- Some significant areas of under-representation are Visible Minorities (Racialized) among non-academic employees in areas that include supervisors, professionals, and skilled crafts and trades. There is also significant underrepresentation of persons with disabilities in areas that include senior manager, middle and other managers, and professionals.
- One item of particular interest for the Committee was the Canada Research Chairs program. York has met the December 2019 Equity Target Results for women, Persons with Disabilities and Racialized groups.

Governance

Vacancy Planning

- While vacancy planning had been somewhat deferred due to the outbreak of the pandemic, the Committee affirmed its support for proceeding over the summer with socially distanced visits with prospective nominees, in accordance with the local health guidelines.

INVESTMENT COMMITTEE
Reference Notes for the 23 June Board meeting

The Investment committee meets off-cycle of the Board. It met most recently on June 9th.

INFORMATION ITEMS

Equity Core-Satellite Performance Review

A global based core-satellite equities structure for the Endowment Fund was adopted in Spring 2019. The Committee received an analysis of the equities portfolio performance to the end of April 2020, including how the individual asset managers performed.

The review illustrated that the move to the core-satellite structure was prudent; it out-performed the previous asset structure by 6.16% between July 2019-April 2020, a period during which there was considerable volatility and a market correction.

10 months is a short time to gauge performance, but early indications confirm the decision taken to revise the equities structure in alignment with the Pension Fund investment approach.

Discussion of Sustainable Investing Planning

The Board was briefed in May that the Committee had begun to discuss avenues and initiatives to further the University's sustainability goals within investment strategy. One of the take-aways for the committee was to review the strategies and practices adopted by other universities that have divested their investment portfolios. This conversation commenced at its meeting in June.

As background, the committee received an overview of policies relating to sustainable investing at Canadian universities, noting specifically that increasingly universities with large endowments are committing to incorporating non-ESG sustainable investing strategies.

Regarding York's Endowment Fund, it is critical to note the now almost negligible portion of the equities portfolio that includes fossil fuel holdings:

- 0.28% of equities portfolio
- 0.18% of the total endowment portfolio
- 5 of the 7 fund managers in the core-satellite equities portfolio do not own securities in companies that that extract fossil fuels
- The 2 fund managers that do, the University assesses them individually on how they mitigate for climate related risks and carbon footprint in addition to performance
- Recently, Pier 21 (C Worldwide) dropped their fossil fuel holding, Royal Dutch Shell

A comprehensive discussion ensued which raised the following points:

- Consistent with the *Statement of Investment Policies and Principles*, the current approach to sustainable investing is through the appointment of the asset managers who implement decisions towards sustainability; divestment as a position for the Fund is a different decision point
- Periodically reviewing the question of divesting in fossil fuels to remain engaged in the debate
- Should the University be a signatory to the *United Nations' Principles for Responsible Investment*?
- The importance of understanding the fundamental questions of what divestment from fossil fuels and being a UNPRI signatory means before decisions are taken; should not be an empty token of symbolism

The committee is going to continue sustainability planning, with an education session at the next meeting.

Sustainable Infrastructure Fund: Search update

In 2019 a new strategic asset allocation for the endowment fund was approved by the Board. Changes to the equity portion of the portfolio and the fixed income allocations have been implemented in alignment with that new strategy. The focus for 2020 lies in two areas: progressing on the portfolio's recommended allocation to real assets and improving the long-term sustainability of the portfolio.

It was reported to the Board in May that the Committee endorsed dedicating 10% of the 20% total allocation in the real assets portfolio to a **renewable energy-focused infrastructure fund** to improve the sustainability profile of the portfolio. The renewable infrastructure fund would adopt ESG principles, in alignment with the Investment Committee's *Socially Responsible Investing* (SRI) initiative.

Several members of the Investment Committee are participating in the manager search exercise for the infrastructure fund. At the June Investment meeting an update on the status of the search was provided, advising that a short list of potential managers is being prepared, with interviews of the firms to proceed during the summer.

Endowment Fund Performance

Fiscal Year 2019-20 (Finalized figures)

	Year to date (4 months)	Fiscal year to date (12 months)
Fund	-2.58%	2.17%
Benchmark (Hedged)	-6.20%	-2.56%
Difference	3.62%	4.73%

As of May 31, 2020 (Finalized figures)

	Year to date (5 months)	Fiscal year to date (1 months)
Fund	1.03	3.71%

Based on estimated change in the endowment fund's market value, the return for May is 3.71% versus a benchmark return of 3.53%

Calendar year-to-date returns

As at end of	Cumulative returns
January 2020	1.32%
February 2020	-2.25%
March 2020	-8.76%
April 2020	-2.58%
May 2020	1.03%

LAND & PROPERTY COMMITTEE

Reference Notes for the June 2020 Board meeting

INFORMATION ITEMS

Capital Construction Report

- The Committee received a capital construction report dated to May 31, 2020.
- The provincially-mandated shutdown of all non-critical construction was lifted as of May 4 for universities and colleges, with a number of health and safety guidelines in place.
- Construction projects have resumed, with York construction staff regularly on campus to monitor activities. Work is continuing remotely for projects in the design phase.
- A new Director of Construction Project Development, has been appointed to support and deliver construction projects going forward.
- The impact of the shutdown on project schedules varies. However, the move to predominantly remote course delivery this Fall will allow for the extension of the typical construction period beyond the summer months in some cases.

Markham Centre Campus Update

- The Committee received a comprehensive briefing on Markham Centre Campus, covering the construction preparations and preliminary planning for a student housing initiative.
- With the construction drawings and building permits nearing finalization, the completion of the building continues to track to July 2023. (95% of drawings were complete as of Friday.)
- As a result of the competitive pricing offered by construction manager Stuart Olson and savings associated with parkland space on campus, the project contingency has increased from approximately \$15M to \$27M.
- Although the complexities of the land lease will not allow for a permit to be issued this week as originally hoped, work is underway with the City of Markham to obtain a “permission to enter” that would allow Stuart Olson to prepare the site for construction.
- With respect to the student housing initiative, the original Markham proposal identified private sector market-residential developments in the vicinity of the campus as likely accommodation options for students. However, the high demand for existing York residence space and the desire to offer a “full student experience” have prompted explorations of a student residence in collaboration with the private sector.
 - o Preliminary discussions have been held with three proximate landowners, to assess their willingness to entertain of project of this nature.
 - o A two-stage RFP process has been initiated for a transaction advisor who will provide oversight of the procurement process to select a developer.
- Conversations continue with the provincial government about the campus expansion in Markham.

Lands for Learning Update

- As YUDC began efforts to develop of a vision for the *Lands for Learning*, its review of similar development by other universities revealed that several were guided by a vision statement and a real estate strategy.
- In view of this, the University has extended the work requested to be conducted by YUDC to encompass a real estate strategy and vision, with an RFP issued in late February 2020 and a successful team retained in early June, comprising the firms of DIALOG and Ernst & Young.
- With an aggressive timetable in place, targeting Board approval of a strategy and vision by late 2020 or early 2021, project kick-off sessions will begin shortly.
- Members were updated on the status of the administration's review of the report from Deloitte, presented to the Committee at the May meeting, on best practices in ancillary land development and proposed next steps including a decision-making framework.

Capital Asset and Debt Management

- The Committee was joined by representatives of Ernst & Young who have been assisting in the development of an asset management model tool.
- The intent of the model is to provide an holistic view of assets and debt, supporting the administration's development and articulation of a capital asset and debt management strategy based on strategic alignment, decision support, stewardship and data integrity.
- Once complete, the model will be transferred to and maintained by a unit within the Office of the Vice-President Finance and Administration.

Thanks and Appreciation

- Friday's meeting was the last for George Turlakis, whose term on the Board ends this month. Members expressed their thanks and appreciation for George's contributions to the Committee over the past two years.