

UTS Council meeting report

17 April 2024

This report covers some of the non-confidential matters considered by UTS Council at its 17 April 2024 meeting.

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

Strategic items of business

Report from 2024 UTS Council Retreat

Over the two days of the Retreat, consideration was given to the consequence of the refinement of the UTS 2027 strategy and what the areas of focus should be for Council, and the University more broadly.

The Vice-Chancellor foreshadowed a range of current University projects that would be aligned with the themes and outcomes that had emerged from the ULT and Council Retreats. He further reflected that there is a sense of optimism that the University must seize opportunities to generate new revenue with required margins to support the University's strategic objectives and business model.

In addition to exploring opportunities to generate new sources of revenue, the University will focus on how both revenue and costs associated with the current business model can be enhanced. It was also noted that the University's investment in information technology provides the opportunity for transformation in its operations.

Recognising that there is an imperative to continue to execute the UTS Strategy, explore new business opportunities, and respond to environmental factors impacting upon the University, Council also noted the importance of monitoring the impact on UTS staff.

Culture and People

Council received an update on the progress of key initiatives being progressed as part of the People Strategy including advice on the development of an Employee Value Proposition (EVP).

In discussing the five pillars of the EVP, the Interim Executive Director indicated the importance of it resonating with staff and being authentic to their experience. Furthermore, the importance of staff understanding their obligations to support and contribute to the ongoing delivery of the EVP was emphasised.

Council noted that the EVP would be subject to further refinement and would be brought back to Council later in the year for further review. This would also follow on from the first Pulse Survey of staff that will be undertaken in May. The Vice-Chancellor will provide advice on the outcome of the Pulse Survey through his Report.

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.

The rising global tensions were discussed, and the Vice-Chancellor reiterated the University's position that our priority is to ensure the safety of our community while upholding the principles of academic freedom and freedom of expression.

In his Report, the Vice-Chancellor noted the encouraging results with respect to graduate employment outcomes for UTS domestic students following the release of 2023 survey results.

Council was advised that the sale of Blackfriars Campus was progressing positively and was well within the parameters that had been set, including both the sale price and the retention of the Child Care Centre.

Council members were referred to the Annual Student Misconduct Report that was attached to the Report from Academic Board. It was requested that this be given consideration in the context of the Examinations Audit that would soon be finalised and presented to the Audit and Risk Committee.

Work Health and Safety Annual Report 2023

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.

Each year the Council is provided with an annual report on UTS safety and wellbeing performance. Council discussed the Report and noted the number of reported psychosocial incidents. Consequently, Council requested that more information be provided to the June meeting as to the causes in the rise of psychosocial incidents, the mitigations that are being put in place and a reminder of the University's legal obligations in this area.

Council was advised that this year's WHS Mock Court for senior leaders would focus on a psychosocial incident to illustrate the University's obligations and responsibilities.

Members were satisfied that the current standing reports and Annual Report, as well as other reporting avenues, enabled Council to fulfil its Health and Safety due diligence responsibilities.

Social Justice report 2023

UTS has been producing an annual Social Justice Report since 2011.

The report illustrates the breadth of work being undertaken across the University to promote equity, diversity and social justice in accordance with the objectives of UTS2027 and the UTS Social Impact Framework (SIF).

UTS has put social justice at the heart of its strategic and operational priorities and committed to an institution-wide area of focus that maximises our capacity to deliver social change. The importance of the Social Impact Framework and the capacity of the University to monitor and measure its impact through the development of related Dashboards was noted.

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.

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 2013 as well as Council's Delegations and the Terms of Reference and Charters for its Committees.

The UTS 2023 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 2023.

Report from Student/Council Liaison Group (SCLG)

Council was updated on the process for reviewing the Student Partnership Agreement, due to expire later this year.

Council was also advised that a paper was tabled at the recent SCLG meeting in relation to the process and ethical considerations of developing partnerships external to the University. The paper has been referred to Management for a response.

Items for approval

Appointment to the ActivateUTS Board

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

Items of General Business

Transdisciplinary School Presentation

Professor Martin Tomitsch (Head of Transdisciplinary School (TD)) attended for this item and provided a presentation to Council. Professor Tomitsch outlined the history of the School and its unique position in UTS to build bridges between fields of study, knowledge and practice and focus on transdisciplinary scholarship and transdisciplinary education. The graduate employment outcomes for students who have completed the Bachelor of Creative Intelligence are very positive.

The School's education programs add to UTS distinctiveness and the University's leadership in this area is being recognized internationally.

Other reports

- Student Load Report 2024
- Work Health and Safety Report
- Report from Governance Committee
- Report from infrastructure Committee
- Report from Academic Board
- Report from Nominations Committee