

## Higher Education Quality Council

### BOARD MEETING MINUTES

February 4, 2014  
12:00 p.m. – 1:50 p.m.

#### Present

##### Council Members:

Cindy Hazell  
Michael Hill  
Mark Stabile  
Paddy Buckley (representing Chris Monahan)

#### By phone:

Elizabeth Dowdeswell, Chair

#### Regrets:

Richard Dicerni

#### President and Secretary to the Board:

Harvey P. Weingarten

#### Staff supporting the Council:

Diana Macri, Chief Administrative Officer  
Fiona Deller, Executive Director, Policy & Partnerships  
Richard Wiggers, Executive Director, Research & Programs  
Martin Hicks, Executive Director, Data & Statistics  
Ellen Permato, Executive Assistant and Recording Secretary

#### 1. Call to order

The Chair called the meeting to order at 12:00 p.m. and established that a quorum of Council members was present.

She informed the members that Richard Dicerni would not be available to join the meeting and Deputy Minister Deborah Newman will give the Ministry's update by phone. She welcomed Paddy Buckley who will be substituting for Chris Monahan while the latter is on secondment to Queen's University.

#### 2. Approval of agenda

##### Motion:

1. That the Board approve the meeting agenda.

Moved by Michael Hill/seconded by Cindy Hazell  
Passed unanimously  
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### 3. **Approval of Meeting Minutes**

#### **Motion:**

1. That the Board approve the Minutes of the Board Meeting of December 6, 2013

Moved by Michael Hill/seconded by Mark Stabile

Passed unanimously.

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### 4.3 **Update from the Ministry**

The Deputy Minister confirmed that Paddy Buckley, a Director in the Policy and Programs Branch of the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities will attend Board meetings in Chris Monahan's place.

The selection process for a Francophone member with Francophone PSE experience for HEQCO's Board of Directors is underway.

The highlights of her update covered:

- Strategic Mandate Agreements
- Ontario Online
- Credit Transfer
- Ontario Education Number
- Major Capacity Expansion
- Credential Options
- HEQCO's 2014-15 Research Plan

A member noted that feedback from students on credit transfer initiatives was positive.

### 4.1 **Chair's update**

The Chair reported that the Business Plan 2014-15 to 2016-17 approved by the Board has been sent to the Minister for his approval as required by the MOU. Similarly, as per the MOU, the Board-approved first and second quarter financial statements have been sent to the Deputy.

She attended a Chair's Orientation conducted by the Office of the Commissioner of Conflict of Interest. There will be an Ethics Executive Orientation Session to be held on Feb. 25<sup>th</sup>. She will forward the information to the members in case they would be interested in attending.

In one of her informal sessions with the Deputy, she was informed of the pending appointment of a member with Francophone PSE experience to the Board of Directors of HEQCO. The Deputy continues to confirm her support of HEQCO.

Cindy Hazell announced that she had informed the Chair of her accepting a contract as a consultant for the planned Ontario Online not-for-profit corporation. She assured the Board that she will abstain from participating in issues that may pose a conflict of interest.

#### 4.2 **President's update**

H. Weingarten reported that more and more organizations are approaching HEQCO to either partner with it, learn more about the work it is doing or to seek advice. They are taking notice of HEQCO's focus on learning outcomes, system differentiation, skills training, under-represented groups and apprenticeship. He clarified that HEQCO does not receive any remuneration from these partnerships.

The members expressed their appreciation of the opportunities being brought about by external partnerships and their positive impact on HEQCO, but they also conveyed their concern on the Council's capacity to fulfill all of its commitments with present resources and government funding.

H. Weingarten informed them that one of the things on the agenda this year is HEQCO's plan to seek changes to regulations to permit external funding. In 2012, the Board proposed a set of principles to guide decisions around accepting external revenue (i.e. revenue other than that provided by the Ontario government). The principles were incorporated into the revised MOU.

He also reported on his research consultation meetings with presidents and senior executives of colleges, universities and Chambers of Commerce in Ontario. A meeting in Timmins was organized by Michael Hill where they met with the presidents of Northern College, Collège Boréal, Université de Hearst, Timmins Chamber of Commerce and Clear Logic Consulting.

#### 5.1 **Audit Committee Report**

Michael Hill reported that the Audit Committee met before the Board meeting to consider the following two items which are before the Board for approval. One of them is an amendment to HEQCO's Delegation of Authority Framework (Financial) that concerns signing off on the Chair's travel expense claims, and of board members' expenses in the absence of the Chair.

#### 5.2 **Amendment to HEQCO's Delegation of Authority Framework (Financial)**

##### **Motion:**

1. That the Board accept the recommendation of the Audit Committee to approve HEQCO's amended Delegation of Authority Framework (Financial)

Moved by Michael Hill/seconded by Cindy Hazell

Passed unanimously.

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#### 5.3 **3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter Financial Statement**

##### **Motion:**

1. That the Board approve the 3rd Quarter Financial Statement

Moved by Michael Hill/seconded by Mark Stabile

Passed unanimously.

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## 6.1 2014-15 Research/Work Plan

Everything in the Research Plan derives from the Strategic Plan.

H. Weingarten enumerated HEQCO's current four priority areas:

1. increasing access of under-represented populations
2. learning outcomes as an index of quality
3. alignment of postsecondary education with labour markets
4. system design

Three major classes of activities to advance these areas are employed:

1. research projects (external and internal)
2. convening activities (conferences, workshops and panels)
3. knowledge mobilizations projects

He outlined new projects proposed for 2014-15 on accessibility, system design, alignment with labour markets and learning outcomes and provided a list of work already committed for 2014.

There is flexibility in the budget to accommodate new projects. More and more of the work is done internally using HEQCO staff and financial resources. However, HEQCO's budget comes solely from the government and is subject to change from year to year, making it difficult for long-term planning.

Over the past three years, the agency's organizational structure has been de-layered to a very flat organization. HEQCO continues to offer internships and is a highly desirable workplace for individuals with outstanding skills. Currently the agency is recruiting interns with outstanding quantitative analysis skills.

HEQCO continues to update its IT program and tools, and to equip the staff with computer software essential to do their work. To enhance HEQCO's effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability, a series of administrative and IT activities are planned for 2014-15, including the completion of a major records management project and refreshing the website.

The Chair asked the members for their comments and questions.

The members appreciated the style of the research report which provided a variety of comprehensible metrics. They noted that all four research priorities would entail a lot of discussion and collaboration. They expressed concern about the adequacy of HEQCO's resources.

Members commended the President/CEO for the exciting agenda and how it has been framed within a matrix. There is a lot of interface between themes, e.g., system design is associated with labour market alignment.

It was noted that system design's objective "to assess the real economic impact of a postsecondary institution to a region" is a challenging proposition.

They welcomed the study on accessibility aimed to benefit under-represented groups. A suggestion was made to include the participation of aboriginal leaders in projects for under-represented populations. One member reported that learning outcomes is currently under discussion in his university. The members would like to see HEQCO playing a more explicit and direct role in system design, differentiation and in the Strategic Mandate Agreement process. The metrics and level of detail presented was found to be helpful.

With regard to contractual positions, they inquired if HEQCO has sought secondment of staff from other institutions.

They also questioned whether there is anything the Ministry wants that is not in the plan, if there is balance between ongoing and new projects and between building capacity internally and related costs.

H. Weingarten responded by informing members that staff has IT technical support from external companies and that computer software has been regularly updated for work efficiency.

In terms of planning and spending, HEQCO sets priorities, assigns staff, sets timelines and allocates budget methodically. The agency does not take on projects when it is short of financial and personnel resources.

HEQCO takes on interns, who, if they are qualified after their internship, could be hired under contracts. The agency has been open to secondment of staff from other institutions.

The Research Plan was prepared in consultation with the Ministry. HEQCO is currently working with six institutions on learning outcomes and they were chosen because they are the most advanced in their thinking about the issue.

HEQCO is satisfied with the progress being made on the Strategic Mandate Agreement. It welcomed the government's paper on *Differentiation Policy Framework*. He also noted the usefulness of the Ontario Education Number (OEN) and its unique student identifier component in HEQCO's data gathering work.

Several projects are planned to examine best practices in apprenticeship and skills training. HEQCO will form an advisory panel with experts on skills and trades to help inform and shape these various activities

In the future, HEQCO might concentrate on fewer, large projects, maintaining a balance between internal and external projects. The goal is to put out 12 publications a year.

**Motion:**

1. That the Board approve the 2014-15 Research/Work Plan for submission to the Minister.

Moved by Mark Stabile/seconded by Michael Hill  
Passed unanimously.  
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7. **Executive Session (In-camera)**
8. **Adjournment**  
The meeting adjourned at 1:50 p.m.