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University of South Carolina
BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Ad Hoc Committee on Information Technology

February 26, 2021

The Ad Hoc Committee on Information Technology of the University of South Carolina Board of Trustees met at 10:00 a.m. on Friday, February 26, 2021, by Microsoft Teams and hosted in Conference Room 206-B of the Osborne Administration Building.

Committee members present were Ms. Leah B. Moody, Co-Chair; Mr. Doug Foster, Co-Chair; and Dr. Diana Hill-Mitchell. Committee members participating via Microsoft Teams video conference were Dr. Dirk Brown; Dr. Mark Ferguson; Dr. Hossein Haj-Hariri; Mr. Eddie King; Ms. Rose Buyck Newton; Dr. C. Dorn Smith III, Board Chair; and Mr. Thad H. Westbrook, Board Vice Chair. Mr. David Seaton was absent.

Other Board members participating were Mr. Mack I. Whittle, attending in person; and Mr. C. Dan Adams; Mr. Alex English; Mr. Brian C. Harlan; Mr. Richard A. Jones Jr.; and Mr. Robin D. Roberts participating via Microsoft Teams video conference.

Others attending in person were President Robert L. Caslen Jr.; Secretary J. Cantey Heath Jr.; Assistant Secretary Cameron Howell; and Board support staff. President's Chief of Staff Mark Bieger and Assistant Vice President, Media and External Engagement Jeff Stensland participated via Microsoft Teams video conference.

OPEN SESSION

I. Call to Order

Co-Chair Moody called the meeting to order, welcomed those in attendance, and asked

everyone at the table to introduce themselves. Secretary Heath confirmed Committee and Board members participating via Microsoft Teams video conference.

Co-Chair Moody called on Mr. Stensland to introduce members of the press joining by Microsoft Teams audio conference. Mr. Stensland advised there were no members of the press on the line.

Co-Chair Moody stated notice of the meeting had been posted and the press notified as required by the Freedom of Information Act; the agenda and supporting materials had been circulated; and a quorum was present to conduct business.

II. Ad Hoc Committee on Information Technology's Purpose

Co-Chair Moody stated the purpose of the Ad Hoc Committee on Information Technology is to assess existing technologies serving the University System and ascertain areas for improvement that will enhance the University's position and ensure the University can deliver education in accordance with its mission in a cost-effective manner. She recognized the COVID-19 pandemic significantly affected the University as students transitioned to online or hybrid learning and employees worked from home. She referred to the *EDUCAUSE Review* article authored by Susan Grajek and the 2020-2021 EDUCAUSE IT Issues Panel entitled "Top IT Issues, 2021: Emerging from the Pandemic" dated November 2, 2020. The article examines three scenarios for the role of technology in higher education following the pandemic: restore, evolve, or transform. The key questions to address are the following: how will the University focus on restoring itself to where it was before the pandemic, how will the University focus on evolving and adapting to the new normal, and how will the University focus on redefining and transforming the institution, as well as taking an active role in creating the innovative future of higher education.

III. Oversight by the Board of Trustees (BOT)

Co-Chair Foster stated when addressing information technology (IT) governance, there are numerous avenues from strategic plan alignment to specific project execution and IT performance execution that can be considered. For example, the Board of Trustees could monitor the progress of DoIT's annual planning process, which is developed in alignment with the University strategic plan. Another example would be developing a summary of business cases for projects that would measure performance for contributing value back to the University. This approach would create discipline around benefits realization. There are a variety of metrics and data that could be used to measure performance and provide oversight. A decision needs to be made as to the metrics and data that will be used to monitor and measure at the board level.

Co-Chair Moody called on Mr. Whittle, as chair of the Finance and Infrastructure Committee, to provide his thoughts on oversight. Mr. Whittle stated, from a finance perspective, there are too many systems in use and some of them do not interface. There needs to be an assessment to determine the minimum number of systems required to meet the needs and operate efficiently. Other considerations would be the following: are they the best systems, do they interface, and are they scalable with respect to automation and increased number of users? In general, the gold standard in software and application needs to be identified. Establishment of costs and a timetable would follow. Board oversight would measure cost-effectiveness, timeliness, and whether the project delivered what was promised.

A. Method – What needs to be done?

Co-Chair Foster stated there are a number of things that drive costs and complexity of IT infrastructure. The number of disparate systems and how they interface is the number one driver followed by culture and business processes.

Complicated business processes, regardless of how sophisticated the technology, drive costs and complexity. The creation of better business processes needs to be intentional to achieve the full benefit of IT infrastructure efficiencies. He stated the role of designing business processes lies with organizational excellence.

B. IT Governance Domains

1. Within BOT Committees

Co-Chair Moody stated the *EDUCAUSE Review* reading material provided for this meeting presents three stages colleges and universities dealing with the COVID pandemic believed they were in. The Restore Stage is institutional survival focused on reclaiming the institution's pre-pandemic approach to cost management, online learning, financial health, affordability and digital equity, and information security. The Evolve Stage relates to developing a post-pandemic institution that is student-centric; the student experience is emphasized, and the impact and lessons of the pandemic are incorporated into the institution's culture and vision. The Transform Stage involves epigenetic change. The realization that students, faculty, and staff can work and learn from home has led some institutions to launch or accelerate a transformation agenda that strengthens the role of technology and its alignment with institutional strategy.

Co-Chair Moody stated, under President Caslen's leadership, having focused on cost management and online learning early in the COVID pandemic, she believes the University is in the Evolve Stage. At the Board level, she believes the University System Committee is also in the Evolve Stage. Mr. Adams, as chair of the Academic Excellence and Student Experience

Committee agreed and felt his Committee was in the Evolve Stage as well. He stated he would like to see his Committee continue to advance the University as a leader in online learning and felt President Caslen's matrix would serve as a guide. Co-Chair Moody stated she will ask each Board Committee to consider its current stage and identify areas on which to focus.

Mr. English asked, as the University expands online course offerings, what is being done from an information security standpoint. Co-Chair Moody stated, while the Restore Strategy is tactical, the Evolve Strategy is strategic and expands the scope of cybersecurity efforts to include off-campus locations. She called on Senior Associate Provost for Social Innovation and eLearning Diana Hill-Mitchell to discuss information security from a System perspective. Dr. Hill-Mitchell stated while there are processes that should be used systemwide that would be beneficial for the online environment, there needs to be a governance structure to have those technology pieces in place. Co-Chair Foster added that, for a system to be sustainable, we must have a governance structure. Without a governance structure, over time you may end up with 300 independent applications. President Caslen stated Strategic Priority Five addresses development of a governance structure with respect to the right curriculum for Systemwide online learning, human resources, and information technology. He emphasized, for a governance structure to work, we need to build the agenda and start preparing people for the discussion around Systemwide policies. Co-Chair Foster stated, from a software perspective, the University has reasonable platforms; there are just too many of them. What is lacking is the basic infrastructure related to the underpinnings, networks, and

security. As governance discussions advance, he encouraged bringing in deans and faculty members into the conversation.

Co-Chair Moody invited Dr. Dirk Brown, faculty director of the University's McNair Institute for Entrepreneurism and Free Enterprise to comment. Dr. Brown stated he was in strong agreement that the significant challenge is developing infrastructure that is flexible. Dr. Mark Ferguson, who is a Distinguished Business Foundation Fellow and professor of Management Science in the Darla Moore School of Business, added his historical perspective with respect to different system implementations within private and public industry. He stated the one area the University has not focused on when new systems are implemented is cultural change. While it is easy to buy a new system, it is more difficult for people to adopt it willingly, which results in forcing the same old business processes on a new system that was not designed for that process. President Caslen said it is important that everyone across the University has a common understanding of the goals and standards, which should also include an understanding of the direction in which the University should proceed in supporting research and academics in the future.

College of Engineering and Computing Dean Hossein Haj-Hariri spoke of his experience with transitioning information technology systems at the University of Virginia. The process began with an organizational excellence activity. Six months of data was collected from every unit to assess overall needs. Conflicts arose when comparing operational needs as a small university with the operational needs of multinational corporations. For that reason, he stressed the importance of identifying users' needs. Once needs are identified,

a governance structure can be overlaid to ensure the processes are implementable. Dean Haj-Hariri stated rather than have the Board determine what is best for the University, there needs to be an assimilation of data collected by various experts and committees that are then used to develop three proposals to be presented to the Board.

Co-Chair Moody stated the purpose of this ad hoc committee is for the Board to understand its oversight role. To do that, the Board needs to determine if the University is in a Restore Stage, an Evolve Stage, or a Transform Stage. With the new Board structure in place since August of 2020, there is now an IT component that crosses all Board committees. Rather than the Board determining needed systems, the Board needs an understanding as to what is being done so that it can have the proper oversight in exercising its fiduciary responsibilities. Dean Haj-Hariri suggested various subcommittees or committees be formed to collect the data needed for planning.

Board Chair Dorn Smith reiterated the Board needs to know how the University is positioned and where it is going with respect to IT. That will involve a cultural change and open discussion, and at the end of the day, the University will make the ultimate decision and the Board will provide oversight. While the IT system must be streamlined without impinging upon academic integrity or freedom, the University must be able to support the research and academic platforms.

Mr. Whittle stated, 15 years ago the Board approved \$20 million for One Carolina. Costs for that project, which has yet to be fully implemented, are now \$130 million above what the Board approved. He stated, to ensure that does

not happen again, the Board will be fully engaged and provide oversight in matters related to the University's IT system. Dr. Smith added, although the Board will provide oversight, it is imperative that Co-Chair Foster, Dean Haj-Harari, as well as other Deans help guide the University in the proper direction.

2. Additions to Board of Trustees Matrix / Charters

Co-Chair Moody asked that members of all the Board Committees, particularly Committee Chairs, review the *ISACA Journal* article entitled "Board-level Information Technology Committees" and the *EDUCAUSE Review* article entitled "Top IT Issues, 2021: Emerging from the Pandemic" and provide her with feedback as to whether committee matrices need to be revised for tracking purposes.

IV. IT Ad Hoc Committee's Timeline

Co-Chair Moody stated once she has feedback on what stage Committees believe they are in and whether Committee matrices need to be revised, she will schedule another meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee on Information Technology.

V. IT Alignment / Implications – UofSC's Strategic Plan

Co-Chair Moody stated she and Co-Chair Foster will develop outcomes and deadlines based on today's meeting and send them to the Committee for feedback. These would be aligned with the strategic plan for the USC Columbia, System Affairs, and the Administration. Co-Chair Foster indicated the Administration should be folded into the main campus.

VI. BOT Continuing Education (IT-CE)

Co-Chair Moody stated chairs of other Board Committees should consider building an Information Technology Continuing Education component into their matrices. Consideration should be given as to how the continuing education should be presented and

at what frequency. Mr. Whittle suggested Co-Chair Foster could lead a continuing education session where he educates the Board on the specific systems in place and how those systems interface. He would also like to hear what Co-Chair Foster's vision is for the future and how costs would be assigned to that. President Caslen stated having a common understanding of what the needs are as an administration, as faculty, and as a Board will make the process much easier.

Dr. Haj-Harari noted time is the most valuable resource faculty members have. When systems take time away, it has huge cost implications across the institution and should be considered as part of the System costs. Mr. Whittle asked if projected cost savings resulting from transitioning to a streamlined, efficient IT system have been calculated. Co-Chair Foster advised any cost savings achieved by streamlining systems would be reinvested to build out the systems.

VII. Adjournment

There being no other matters on the agenda, Chair Moody adjourned the meeting at 11:05 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "J. Cantey Heath, Jr.", written in a cursive style.

J. Cantey Heath, Jr.
Secretary