

May 24, 2015

Arvind,

RE: Review of Meeting Held on May 18

The Executive Committee of The Board of Governors would like to thank you for your continued leadership of the University of British Columbia.

The purpose of the meeting held on May 18th was to provide you important feedback and advice on how to move forward in your leadership mandate. The Board of Governors is pleased with your evolving vision for the University and supportive of the many difficult personnel decisions made to date.

While changes in strategic vision and key personnel can be unsettling at any organization, it is especially so at an organization such as UBC, which has had stable leadership and strategic vision for the past seven years. The Board has noted that your first year as leader of The University of British Columbia has been an unsettled one. Relationships with key stakeholder groups, notably your senior executive, the Faculty Deans and the Board of Governors are not at functional levels to allow you to move forward in a confident manner –unusual even for an organization undergoing strategic shifts in vision and key personnel.

The Executive Committee of the Board has identified key aspects of your leadership style and management skills which require a “course correction” in order for you to lead the University effectively. To be very clear, we all wish you to succeed, as it is in the best interest of the University that you do.

The following are the key discussion points raised during our meeting. While many of the items may have been addressed and discussed, we would like to sit down with you after a period of reflection to plan steps toward a resolution and/or improvement:

1. Creating an environment of trust

- *This is arguably the most critical issue of your tenure so far. Because there is a low level of trust among those that work most closely with you, morale is low. You are rarely seen to solicit or seek advice from those best positioned to support you. You are deemed too quick to engage in debate in a confrontational or dismissive manner, which is demoralising to a group of executives in fear of their employment security. Members of the Board of Governors have also experienced similar interactions in and out of formal settings. Engagement and positive reinforcement must be consistent and predictable and in a manner that is “Presidential”.*
- *As the President of the University, people are looking to you to set the tone. By not seeking advice or being receptive to it, you are reinforcing a view that you trust no one’s opinions but your own. Moreover, you must refrain from thinking controversial thoughts out loud, especially when the facts are far from certain. Creating division among individuals whether within the Executive, the Board or the Deans must cease immediately. The role of the President is to bring people to together.*
- *We are pleased that you are open to “360 Reviews” as this will allow for a safe environment for your employees to provide you with the information you will need to work more constructively with them in the future.*

2. Creating an environment of collegiality and collaboration

- *The role of a leader is to build collegiality and collaboration across the organization. This is particularly crucial during a time of change. Ironically, the very people most fearful of change are the ones who would value contributing to it most. A leader must facilitate discussions that are “fact finding”. Such meetings encourage discussion and advancement of advice to the President,*

(absent of debate from him). Strategic vision and major changes in operational direction must be socialised with key stakeholders well in advance.

- *Following on the concerns with the Deans, we will look for your strategy on how to better engage and partner with the Deans on a go forward basis.*

3. Undertake a review of the President's Office

- *We are deeply concerned that your office is not providing you with the information you need on a trusted and timely basis. The issue with the Dean's in response to the Provost announcement was a catastrophic example that you are not either being informed in a timely manner or worse, the very people you are relying on are unable or currently not in a position to develop relationships of trust to provide you with the information you need prior to any major initiative.*
- *This does not take away from your obligation to solicit your own information from the senior executive, the Deans, the Board etc.*
- *We are also very concerned that your office is not only inexperienced and perhaps under resourced, but that certain members of your team do not reflect well on the tone that the office should wish to establish with stakeholders on and off campus.*

4. Communications

- *Communication of change and strategic vision has been poor. The Executive Committee of the Board has witnessed a degradation of quality in the communications from the President's Office and Executive in the past number of months. Communication releases of key departures have inflamed concerns on campus and in the*

community. Specifically, while the communications are fact based, they are void of empathy, often not tied to University strategy and deemed to be hastily released without proper pre-consultation to prepare key stakeholders in advance.

- *Moreover, Board materials are often short on details and timeliness is an issue. This all suggests that professionals are “reacting” to events that should be within their proactive control.*

5. Developing your vision of UBC’s purpose, vision and strategic imperative

- *The Board of Governors strongly supports your “getting back to basics” approach to the operation of the University. That being said, with the passage of time the Board and other key stakeholders are now expecting a more tangible plan on how these initiatives will be undertaken and over what time horizon.*
- *Your messaging has been very clear regarding your priorities but the “tactics” are not. Normally, a strategy is rolled out in its entirety, from grand vision to plans of execution. Unfortunately, you have mapped out a strategy prior to key stakeholders becoming deeply engaged. The result is that the articulated vision is deemed to be “yours” and not “theirs”. The President simply cannot enforce a vision on the University without the traditional forums of engagement. How will this engagement now take place? An operationalized strategic plan with clearly articulated tactics for the key components of the strategy and vision is requested.*

6. Board of Governors Meeting Agendas

- *First and foremost, the Board of Governors is a **governance** board. This means that the meetings must prioritise items critical in running the University as prescribed by the University Act. In*

fulfilling its fiduciary duties, the Board must not be treated as a distraction or a nuisance. The Board's mandate includes many, if not most, of the items discussed in this note today and had the Board been engaged more seriously earlier, many of these issues could have likely been prevented.

- *While agendas are developed by the Chair and the Standing Committee Chairs in close consultation with the Executive and the Board Secretariat, ultimately it is the responsibility of the President to ensure that sufficient time is allocated to formally discuss key strategic items. The President drives the agenda and where issues arise, the President is expected to work with the Board Chair to reconcile conflicts and challenges in the agenda.*
- *We simply do not accept that the President has not been allocated proper consideration for Board discussions. We expect to see more proactive engagement by the President in shaping strategic discussions at the Board and Standing Committees and that these meetings are well resources with supporting documentation.*

7. Provost Search

- *Fairly or unfairly, how this search is conducted will be defining for you. We would like to see a formal plan from you on the steps to be taken to conduct a transparent and respectful process in search of UBC's next Provost. We appreciate that the summer is not ideal to launch a search, but that should not detract from a formal review being undertaken to review the appropriate Provost model for UBC and with concrete steps taken thereafter with respect to the formal search process.*

8. Accepting Accountability

- *We found our discussion with you on May 18th constructive. We appreciate that you have come to understand that you have some key deficiencies in your leadership style that must be addressed. No doubt, it is difficult to reconcile how the very skills that made you a success at Mitacs are the very skills working against you as the President of one of Canada's most important Universities.*
- *As a leader of an organization, you are fully accountable for your actions and the actions of others who are reacting in response to your behaviours. To be completely transparent with you, we are still not certain that you fully appreciate the scope of your accountability. As President and leader, issues such as low employee morale on campus, the relationship challenges with your key stakeholders and the simmering external reputational risks developing as a result of these challenges, are fully yours to own.*

Arvind, we understand that this is a very difficult time for you. As members of the Board of Governors, we felt that this discussion was necessary, at this time, and in the best interest of the University. We convey once again, that we wish to see you succeed as President of UBC, as it is in everyone's best interest to see you thrive in your role.

We ask that you formalize your thoughts on paper in response to these concerns. Moreover, we are keen to see a working paper or roadmap on a way forward, armed with this feedback.

We look forward to the outcome of your reflection and will certainly work with you in a trusted and constructive manner.

Sincerely,

John Montalbano

