

StFX Religious Inclusion Working Group

May 23, 2025 Meeting Minutes

9:00 – 10:00 via Teams Chair: Elizabeth Yeo

In attendance: Barry MacKenzie, Donna Tremblinski, Sara Parks, Donald MacGillivray, Sylvie Brazeau, Hailey Qualizza

1. Approval of Previous Minutes

- February 14, 2025
 - Mover: Donna
 - Seconder: Sarah
 - Status: Approved
- February 26, 2025
 - Mover: Sylvie
 - Seconder: Sarah
 - Status: Approved
- March 21, 2025
 - Mover: Donna
 - Seconder: Sarah
 - Status: Approved
- April 1, 2025
 - Mover: Donald
 - Seconder: Donna
 - Status: Approved
- April 23, 2025
 - Mover: Donna
 - Seconder: Barry
 - Status: Approved

2. Discussion on Draft Religious Inclusion Action Plan

- General Feedback:
 - Committees members felt the structure, aligned with the PACAR framework was appropriate, and comprehensive in terms of integrating religious inclusion into institutional life.
 - Members acknowledged the collaborative effort and emphasized the importance of religious literacy as a core outcome.

Key Discussion Points:

- Introduction and Historical Context:
 - Members requested expanded recognition of the Sisters of Notre Dame, highlighting their foundational role in women's education.
 - Recommendation to include a brief mention of the Coady Institute's historical and global contributions.
- Religious Inclusion Working Group Mandate:
 - Affirmed broad definition of religion and the importance of religious literacy for the whole community.
- Inclusive Teaching, Learning, and Research:
 - Policy on student accommodation received positively. The process with the Joint Committee on Studies is ongoing.
 - The approach is to provide permanent policy frameworks to ensure longevity beyond current leadership.
- Organizational Environment:
 - ****Training and PD:**** Endorsed integration of antisemitism and Islamophobia into ongoing PD. Members acknowledged there may be variety of perspectives on the approach but affirmed the necessity of training.
 - ****Staff Accommodations:**** Guidance for managers and communication strategies were highlighted as essential for effective implementation.
 - ****EDIA Culture:**** Strong support for embedding inclusion into hiring and performance evaluation.
- Living and Social Environment:
 - Support for using CAS Standards to document and expand multifaith and secular support services in parallel with and in collaboration with existing Chaplaincy.
- Ceremonial Policy:
 - General agreement on preserving Catholic heritage while ensuring inclusivity and optional participation.
Question raised by a committee member (not currently in attendance) about feasibility and visibility of faith-based ceremonies during Convocation Weekend. There was a preference expressed for a separate invitation to faith-based events ie from Student Services rather than listing services as part of the main Convocation program. This is due to concern that there may not be meaningful engagement from a range of faith traditions. The committee agreed to reflect on this and revisit at the

next meeting, but it was suggested that this approach is worth advancing to see if sufficient representation would warrant the inclusion of all those who wish to be listed in the Convocation Schedule.

One committee member, who is not currently present for this discussion, expressed concern that individuals representing a religion should not have an official role in university ceremonies such as convocation. However, in earlier discussions, the broader group examined this question in the context of StFX's unique Catholic heritage, and the CAS (Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education) standards.

The CAS standards emphasize the importance of immersive education that supports the development of the whole person—including intellectual, emotional, physical, social, and spiritual well-being. At StFX, this commitment to wholistic student development is foundational to our mission and reflected in our institutional values.

Recognizing this, the committee explored an approach that honours our Catholic heritage while supporting an inclusive and educational ceremonial experience. Specifically, it was suggested that the chaplain's role could include brief, contextual remarks acknowledging that the inclusion of a prayer reflects StFX's commitment to educating the whole person, including support for spiritual wellness.

Similarly, the participation of the Vicar of the Founder—a role unique to StFX—could be accompanied by an explanation of its historical and symbolic significance. A brief script might be developed to explain that the remarks offered by the Vicar reflect the university's Catholic roots and how those roots have shaped our ongoing commitments to service, community, and social justice.

This framing ensures that ceremonial elements are presented in a way that is respectful, inclusive, and informative for all attendees—regardless of their background or beliefs.

3. Next Steps

- A follow-up meeting will be scheduled for next week to finalize the remaining sections of the Action Plan and revisit the ceremonial inclusion section in greater detail.
- Members were invited to submit editorial suggestions or nuanced edits in advance for group review.

Meeting Adjourned.