



REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

St. Francis Xavier University Board of Governors

Wednesday, December 6, 2023 – 2:00pm

Video Conference

- Present:** Eileen Alma, Paul Ash, Bill Burke, Francisco Chang, Ron Chisholm, Cynthia Dorrington, Dennis Flood (Chair), Marc Furlotte, Karen Gardiner, Andy Hakin, Lynda Harling Stalker, Wayne Kirkpatrick, Alfred LeBlanc, Greg MacEachern, Peter Marzlin, Sylvia Paris Drummond, Marc Rodrigue, Jamie O'Reilly, John Peacock, Lisa Raitt (Vice-Chair), Kathleen Sheridan, William Sweet, Marie Walsh
- Regrets:** Sophia Fabiano
- Guests:** Kerri Arthurs, Amanda Cockshutt, Lisa Craig, David Graham, Monica Foster, MJ MacLellan, Elizabeth Yeo

1. CALL TO ORDER

WELCOME, ROLL CALL, LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND PRAYER

D. Flood called the December 6, 2023, meeting of the Board of Governors to order at 2:00 pm. Roll Call was taken followed by a Land Acknowledgement from A. Hakin and then W. Kirkpatrick offered a prayer to open the meeting.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

MOTION: That the agenda be approved as circulated (C. DORRINGTON/A. LEBLANC) **Motion carried.**

D. Flood asked if any Governors had a conflict of interest with any of the agenda items and none were declared.

2. WHITE PAPER & UNIVERSITY STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATES

Dr. Hakin provided a written report for circulation. He highlighted the recent the X-Ring Ceremony of and the Fall Convocation ceremony were held on December 2 and 3, 2023. An honorary degree was awarded to Canadian playwright Djanet Sears. Other award winners included: Pauline MacIntosh '90, Outreach Award and Sherry Neville-MacLean '05 '15 Outstanding Staff Teaching Award.

The updated metrics for the University's Strategic Plan were provided by A. Hakin. These metrics provide an indication of how the University is progressing. There are differences in the data sources used from the previous metrics update. Data collection at StFX is improving but it is still not where it needs to be. A. Hakin will bring forward another update at the February meeting as the data continues to be rationalized.

A. Hakin reported that he has met with the Deputy Minister of Advanced Education to present, the White Paper, *Partnership for Prosperity: Charting the Future of St. Francis Xavier University*, which was well received. The white paper is a proposal which aims to foster collaboration with the Government of Nova Scotia to ensure the continued vitality of StFX and its impact on the province. M. Foster and D. Graham provided an overview of the paper with the following highlights:

Building Our University the Way it is Meant to Be

ACADEMICALLY DRIVEN | EQUITY, DIVERSITY, INCLUSION AND ACCESSIBILITY (EDIA) | COMMUNITY | RESPONSIVE | SUSTAINABILITY ●●●

- The paper outline two requests for assistance related to our financial situation: a preferred ask and a secondary ask; both which support our financial situation.
- One size does not fit all with respect to the funding support for universities within the province so the MOU with the province for funding is challenging. Our immersive, rural model is vastly different from a commuter campus.
- Support for deferred maintenance remains critical.
- Debt and debt servicing has led to the university's lack of investment in staff/service.
- Thanks to the members of the Board who provided input on an earlier draft. These comments helped to make the document more concise and direct as well as sharing a sense of urgency.

Board members recognized that a substantial portion of the university's debt stems from deliberate campus expansion decisions, such as the construction of Riley and O'Regan Halls. However, they noted a cultural shift with more students opting to live off-campus. The importance of providing historical context and detailing the current realities at StFX was emphasized, considering the ongoing culture shift and factors influencing student housing choices. This was seen as an opportunity for StFX to present a comprehensive perspective on current issues.

The Board questioned whether the presented problem was clear and if the narrative effectively outlined why StFX deserves special treatment. Emphasis was placed on ensuring a compelling storytelling approach.

Board members inquired about sharing the MOU document and agreed that A. Hakin would seek permission from the Chair of CONSUP before proceeding.

3. ACADEMIC PLAN UPDATE

Dr. Cockshutt, Academic Vice President and Provost, provided an update on enrollment and the implementation of the academic plan. Some highlights include:

- At present, applications for the 2024-25 academic year are up by 25%; offers of admissions are up by 46% and confirmations by 83%. We are optimistic for increased enrollment for the next academic year. Residence applications remain high as well as an increased number of returning students.
- Christiane Major has been hired as the new Director of Recruitment.
- Negotiations with the AUT continue and we remain optimistic that an agreement will be reached.
- New Post Baccalaureate Diplomas have been added which appeal to both international and domestic students.
- There is an ongoing review of our recruitment and admissions processes as well as of merit-based scholarships and bursaries.
- Student supports for academic success remains critical, i.e., X- Act (X-Academic Transition program). Students who participated in the program performed better than those who did not.
- The need to make data driven decisions is more important than ever before and it is imperative that we are more consistent with data collection.

- Work needs to be done at the committee level, i.e., Academic Priorities and Planning, Senate, Faculty, etc. to review degree structures and increase flexibility.

During the discussion, the Board raised concerns about the overall value of scholarships and expressed a preference for funding through endowments instead of operating funds. The ongoing review of degree structures prompted discussions on how to effectively measure outcomes. There was interest in collaborating with the government to tailor programs to better meet the needs of students. The importance of implementing mechanisms for early alerts to support students facing difficulties was also emphasized. Overall, the discussions underscored the Board's commitment to strategic planning, financial sustainability, and enhancing support systems for student success.

4. **AUDIT AND INVESTMENT COMMITTEE REPORT**

M. Furlotte, Chair of the Audit and Investment Committee reviewed the content of a draft Quarterly Investment Report for the Board from the Audit & Investment Committee.

M. Furlotte indicated that we are trending ahead of benchmark and hope to continue to move in this direction. We are in full compliance of our investment policy. At the recent Audit and Investment Committee meeting, members of Xaverian Capital provided a presentation and demonstrated the value of their experiential and academic learning with fund management.

MOTION: That on the recommendation of the Audit and Investment Committee the Board approve the Investment Committee Report for the Quarter Ended September 30, 2023, as presented (J. O'REILLY/W. SWEET). **Motion carried.**

5. **PRESIDENT'S REAPPOINTMENT – In Camera**

On a motion by J. PEACOCK, seconded by C. DORRINGTON and carried, the committee moved in camera at 3:40 pm. Guests and members of Administration exited the meeting. Only Board members remained for the in-camera session.

On a motion by J. PEACOCK, seconded by C. DORRINGTON and carried, the Board exited in-camera at 3:52 pm. Staff and administration rejoined the meeting.

6. **OTHER BUSINESS**

6.1 **NEXT MEETING**

D. Flood noted that the next regular meeting of the Board would be on February 22-23, 2024.

7. **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, the session of the December 6, 2023, meeting of the Board of Governors adjourned at 4:30 pm (KIRKPATRICK/HARLING STALKER). **Motion carried.**