



REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

St. Francis Xavier University Board of Governors

Friday, October 20, 2023 – 9:00am

Keating Centre Conference Rooms

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

1. WELCOME AND ROLL CALL

D. Flood called the October 20 meeting of the Board of Governors to order at 9:05 a.m. Roll Call was taken followed by a Land Acknowledgement from A. Hakin and then W. Kirkpatrick offered a prayer to open the meeting.

2. AGENDA

MOTION: That the agenda be approved as circulated (R. CHISHOLM/W. SWEET) **Motion carried.**

D. Flood asked if any Governors had a conflict of interest with any of the agenda items. B. Burke, J. Peacock, L. Harling-Stalker, P. Marzlin and A. Leblanc declared a conflict with item #12.3. No other conflicts were declared.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – JUNE 16, 2023

It was noted that D. Graham also left the room for the duration of discussion regarding item #16.

MOTION: That the minutes of the Board of Governors meetings held on June 16, 2023 be approved as circulated (K.SHERIDAN/C.DORRINGTON). **Motion carried.**

4. PRESIDENT'S UPDATE

President A. Hakin provided highlights from a written report that was submitted to the Board. These included:

- Members of the University community welcomed over 900 first year students and their families to our campus on August 31 and September 1. A community connection welcome was offered for Indigenous, Black, 2SLGBTQIA+ and international students as well as a relaxed start welcome to offer students seeking a lower sensory arrival experience.
- Homecoming was held from October 13 -15. Registration was strong and many alumni returned to campus. Some marquee events included the Welcome Home Dinner and the Awards of Excellence and Hall of Honour inductions.

- Dr. Erin Morton joined StFX as the Dean of the Faculty of Arts in August 2023. Dr. Morton was previously the Acting Associate Dean in the School of Graduate Studies and a Professor in the Department of History at the University of New Brunswick.
- Earlier in the summer, a Search Committee for the position of Director, Recruitment, was formed and the services of the Search Consultancy Facet by Royer Thompson were engaged to support the work of the Committee. The position was posted nationally during July and August and interviews for short-listed candidates continue. The competition will continue until the position is filled.
- A comprehensive fundraising campaign is under design by Vice President Advancement, David Graham and his team. Key features of the campaign will be presented to the Board for their input and advice.
- The Amelia Saputo Centre is in the final phase of renovations. We have experienced significant delays due to labour shortages and supply chain issues, resulting in significant hardships for several of our departments and for our students.
- Functional program planning for the Institute in Innovation in Health is ongoing to establish accurate project costing. Nova Scotia is currently experiencing significant construction cost increases and careful project management in terms of cost and scope will be essential.
- The government of Nova Scotia announced a new Deputy Minister, Ryan Grant for Advanced Education. An on-campus meeting with the new DM was held on October 13. Meetings have also been requested with the Minister of Advanced Education, the Honourable Brian Wong and the Minister of Health and MLA for Antigonish, the Honorable Michelle Thompson.
- In mid-September, a meeting was held at StFX with the Honourable Sean Fraser, Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, to discuss local housing issues. Meetings have been scheduled in mid-October in Ottawa with other Ministers to discuss some of the challenges faced by StFX.

Board members discussed the value of personally meeting with students, which was appreciated by parents. Inquiry was made about the effectiveness of open house events, questioning the ratio of attendees to registrants. A data discrepancy in recent years was noted, making it challenging to gauge the event's impact accurately. Suggestions were made regarding potential insights from this year's admissions-on-the-spot process.

Concerns were raised about the anticipated increase in costs associated with the construction of I2H, with clarification sought on fixed-price contracts. Efforts to secure a fixed-cost contract amid fluctuating construction industry dynamics were outlined, emphasizing the importance of managing budgetary risks effectively.

5. ACADEMIC VICE-PRESIDENT AND PROVOST UPDATE

Dr. Amanda Cockshutt (Academic Vice President and Provost) provided highlights from a written report presented to the Board. Highlights from the presentation included:

- Overall we are down 2.0% in undergraduate full time numbers reflecting a smaller entering class than last year. It is of great concern that our first year first degree undergraduate student number is the lowest it has been in well over a decade.
- Full time graduate student numbers are largely unchanged (up 1%).

- Part time graduate students, largely MEd students, continue to be strong although our current numbers have decreased from last year.
- Visa student numbers remain largely unchanged at 5.0% of the total student population despite investments in international recruitment.
- We continued to see decreases in part time undergraduate student numbers and transfer student numbers due in large part to the continued softening of the non degree Internationally Educated Nurses upgrading program offered through StFX Online, Graduate and Professional Studies as more players enter this field.

Dr. Cockshutt discussed efforts to mitigate enrolment softening, including implementing the first phase of the International Recruitment Plan, hiring two new international recruiters, and strengthening relationships with agents in underserved markets. Despite these initiatives, enrollment gains have not materialized yet, and focus remains on key markets. To boost domestic enrollment, an Open House was highlighted for October 22, and new strategic markets are being targeted. There is a focus on analyzing how to allocate limited merit-based scholarships effectively to attract high-quality students. Challenges persist as exit surveys reveal that larger scholarships elsewhere often lead students to decline offers from StFX.

During the discussion, various concerns were raised regarding enrollment drops and reputation management. There was a comparison made with other institutions, noting a significant decline in first-year numbers due to recruitment strategies and higher scholarship offerings elsewhere. Efforts to improve messaging, particularly regarding class sizes, were emphasized.

Scholarship allocations and reforming restrictive funds were discussed, along with the need to balance financial constraints. Concerns were raised about the effectiveness of current recruitment strategies and the importance of promoting distinctive aspects of the university. Housing affordability for staff and adapting to post-COVID workforce needs were also highlighted. The discussion touched on scholarship impacts on reputation and the ongoing effort to cultivate an academic-focused culture.

6. FINANCIAL UPDATE

6.1 2023-24 Financial Results

L. Raitt, Chair of the Finance Committee, introduced M. Foster to provide the financial update.

The first set of financial projections for the 2023-24 fiscal period have been completed based on actual results to September 30, 2023. The detailed projections are attached. Operations is currently projecting a deficit of (\$3.68m) along with a projected surplus in Ancillary of \$957k netted with a capital fund deficit of (\$7.2m) for an overall deficit of (\$9.923m). The following commentary highlights some of the key variances.

Revenue:

- Provincial Grant Operating over \$600k from deferred maintenance funds from the Province being used.
- Undergrad enrollment is down approximately 86 tuitions and at this point no additional students are being projected for accelerated nursing.

- Part-time is expected to be down \$2.615m. This is as a result of a drop in the Distance Nursing program for Internationally Educated Nurses (ON and NS).
- The current estimate for Ancillary is a surplus of \$957k (\$1.019m under the budgeted surplus).
- Overall revenue is below budget by \$1.408m. Occupancy is budgeted to be 1,694 but is expected to be 1,555. Lower occupancy also means lower meal plans.

M. Foster noted that the projections provided are an estimate based on current information available. Assumptions that have been made could change throughout the year. As a result, there are items worth highlighting that could change the projected bottom line. M. Foster highlighted the following opportunities and risks that may contribute to our financial outcomes:

Opportunities:

- Tuition fees could increase if some students pick up extra courses or if there is an unexpected intake of students in January. If we get uptake on the additional accelerated nursing seats there could be potential of receiving some funding from the Province.
- Departments tend to be conservative when completing this set of projections. There is most likely some cushion in the projections.

Risks:

- Tuition fees could decrease if we have a large number of students decide to discontinue their studies.
- Residence occupancy and food service would also decrease if students decide to withdraw.
- The unpredictability of winter weather can have a negative effect on our heating costs, snow removal costs and our labour costs.

6.2 Borrowing Resolution

The Board was provided with a copy of the most recent Commitment Letter from Scotiabank, dated December 2, 2022. F. Foster advised that the credit facilities provided by Scotiabank are renewed annually through a Letter of Commitment. To ensure transparency with regard to the University's credit facilities, the Commitment Letter is brought through the Finance Committee and the Board for approval.

MOTION: That on the recommendation of the Finance Committee, StFX University be authorized to enter into credit facilities from the Bank of Nova Scotia subject to the terms and conditions contained in the Commitment Letter from the Bank of Nova Scotia dated December 2, 2022. (M. WALSH/K. GARDINER) **Motion carried.**

7. PROGRESS REPORT ON GOVERNANCE REVIEW

K. Gardiner, Chair of the Governance and Nominating Committee, provided an overview of progress related to completing the recommendations identified in the StFX Governance review (completed in April 2020). K. Gardiner highlighted completed tasks such as changes in board size and composition, updating the Board Skills Matrix, and establishing new Standing Committees with approved Terms of Reference and Work Plans. A Risk Management Framework and a new Strategic Plan with progress metrics for reporting were also developed. Some recommendations, including improving board diversity and strengthening the Board-Senate relationship, are still works in progress. These areas

align with feedback received through the Board Evaluation process, and will continue to be addressed through the work of the Governance and Nominating Committee.

In response to questions from the Board, A. Hakin noted that updated metrics related to the implementation of the StFX Strategic Plan will be presented to the Board in December 2023.

8. VP STUDENTS REPORT

Elizabeth Yeo (Vice-President, Students) provided an update on Student Services activities, based on a written report was submitted to the Board. E. Yeo highlighted positive developments at the start of the year, including indicators of a flourishing campus community and a decrease in incidents. Homecoming saw improvements in various areas, such as decreased underage drinking and assaults, indicating cultural shifts. Equity remains a significant focus within student services, with the reform of PACAR and the establishment of working groups focusing on religious inclusion, transition experiences, and Black student success. Equity in athletics is also emphasized, aiming to align with recommendations from various committees and organizations. Efforts are being made to ensure equity is a primary objective in athletics, with training provided to teams at the start of play. Additionally, there is a call for committee members to join the Equity and Safety in Sport initiative.

Discussion with the Board highlighted the importance of integrating academics with athletics and ensuring it is part of the conversation. There was a suggestion to strengthen this integration by including faculty representation on the equity and safety in sport committee. Additionally, it was emphasized that equity initiatives should not be viewed in isolation but rather approached holistically, considering the individual's entire well-being.

9. STUDENTS' UNION REPORT

Sophia Fabiano (President, Students' Union) highlighted a few points from a written report submitted to the Board including:

- The Executive Team has finalized the Union's Annual Plan which was presented to their membership at the Annual General Meeting on October 18th. The Students' Union has identified four areas of focus: (1) Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility; (2) Sustainability, Affordability, and Development; (3) Health, Wellness and Safety; and, (4) Advocacy, Support and Visibility
- The anticipated end date for the Bloomfield renovation has been changed to November 20. The Union continues to update students on progress through their webpage and social media.
- The Union co-hosted a successful orientation week this year with high student attendance at all Union events, including Society Night and Final Concert.
- The Union President and VP Academic Affairs have been working closely with Student Services to address sexual violence and has been meeting regularly with the Sexual Violence Policy Review Committee and Sexual Violence Prevention Committee.
- Representatives of the Union have met the Department of Advanced Education at the Government Student Roundtable to discuss student issues and priorities across the province. The upcoming MOU between the Provincial Governance and the Council of Nova Scotia University Presidents was also addressed.

10. VP ADVANCEMENT REPORT

D. Graham (Vice-President, Advancement) presented plans for the development of a multiyear fundraising strategy and the structure of the Office of Advancement's forthcoming campaign. Highlights from the presentation included:

- The campaign will focus on continuing to build a University the way it is Meant to Be, and will reflect and advance all values identified in the StFX Strategic Plan.
- Campaign priorities will include: replacement of the central heating plant, renovation of Cameron/MacKinnon Halls to modern standard; financial aid increased endowment; and, campus sustainability/beautification endowment.
- The total campaign objective is currently \$150-175 million over 5 to 7 years.

The discussion revolved around various topics related to fundraising, campus sustainability, and alumni engagement. There was concern about the reliance on debt for campus projects and the need to emphasize environmental initiatives, like transitioning to net-zero emissions. Board members emphasized the importance of effective storytelling to engage donors emotionally and garner support. There was also a call for a more assertive approach to alumni communication to ensure they remain connected and supportive. Ideas were proposed to make Homecoming a revenue-generating event and to address the accessibility and usage of campus facilities like the Annex. Additionally, there was discussion about the need for year-round campus operations and integrating this into fundraising campaigns to modernize the University for the 21st century.

The Office of Advancement will continue to refine the campaign, based on the feedback of the Board, and will continue to provide updates to the Advancement and External Relations Committee.

11. ALUMNI ASSOCIATION REPORT

Kathleen Sheridan (President, Alumni Association) briefly reviewed points from a written report submitted to the Board.

- The Alumni Association's governing Council, at its Homecoming meeting in October 2023, voted in favour of a motion brought forward by our Nominations and Governance Committee to change Alumni Councilor terms of office to commence on April 1 (previously January 1). This change was brought forward to better align the Council year and terms to facilitate successful Committee transitions, better align budgeting processes and to onboard new members at a time which better engages their involvement.
- The Association held its Annual General Meeting in-person during Homecoming weekend in Antigonish on October 13, and formed the Executive Committee of the Association as of April 1, 2024 for a term of one year.
- The Association's governing Alumni Council met in-person from October 12-13, in Antigonish. Highlights included: updates from the Vice President, Advancement; a presentation from Recruitment on both domestic and international strategies; reports from our various Committee Chairs; a StFX alumni chapter development discussion; a presentation from the StFX Honorary Doctorate Committee; and updates from various student leaders on campus about the work they hope to accomplish in the year ahead.
- The Alumni Association recently re-branded all of its awards under the banner of Alumni Recognition Awards, in the spirit of the launch of our new strategic plan earlier in the year. The awards were all presented at one ceremony during Homecoming weekend in the Schwartz Auditorium.

- At the beginning of July 2023, the Association signed a small business insurance agreement with TD Insurance, providing alumni with even more benefits. The Association continues to explore options with new affinity partners that will provide more value-add for our alumni.

12. RECEIVING OF REPORTS

12.1 Executive Committee

D. Flood (Chair, Executive Committee) noted the absence of the Bishop at the Board meeting and highlighted the well-attended lecture series initiated by the Vicar of the Founder. The Bishop requested assistance in administering the office of the Vicar of the Founder, and the Executive Committee suggested that the board could provide support using existing staff resources. A written report from the Bishop as the Vicar of the Founder was provided.

12.2 Audit and Investment Committee

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

MOTION: That on the recommendation of the Audit and Investment Committee, the Investment Committee Report for Quarter Ended June 30, 2023 be approved as presented. (M. FURLOTTE/K. GARDINER). **Motion carried.**

M. Furlotte then reviewed the content of a Statement of Investment Policies and Procedures (SIPP), which was circulated to the Board in advance of the discussion.

MOTION: That on the recommendation of the Audit and Investment Committee, the Statement of Investment Policies and Procedures be approved as presented. (M. FURLOTTE/C. DORRINGTON). **Motion carried.**

12.3 Governance and Nominating Committee

K. Gardiner (Chair, Governance & Nominating Committee) provided an overview of a Chancellor appointment process, which was circulated to the Board in advance of the discussion.

MOTION: That on the recommendation of the Governance and Nominating Committee, the StFX Chancellor appointment process be approved as presented. (K. GARDINER/K. SHERIDAN). **Motion carried.**

A. Leblanc, B. Burke, L. Harling Stalker, and P. Marzlin exited the meeting having previously expressed a conflict of interest. K. Gardiner provided an overview of possible appointments to standing committees. She noted that moving forward, the Governance and Nominating Committee will present committee appointments to the Board annually in June, and that this will be integrated into the Governance and Nominating Committee workplan and Board of Governors annual masterplan.

MOTION: That on the recommendation of the Governance and Nominating Committee the following members be appointed to the following Standing Committees of the Board of Governors, effective August 1, 2023:

- Alfred Leblanc – Advancement and External Relations, Audit and Investment Committees
- Rose Paul – Property and Risk Management Committee
- Bill Burke – Governance and Nominating Committee
- Lynda Harling Stalker – Advancement and External Relations Committee
- Peter Marzlin – Finance Committee

(K. GARDINER/K. SHERIDAN). **Motion carried.**

12.4 Finance Committee

L. Raitt (Chair, Finance Committee) noted that all items discussed in the most recent Finance Committee meeting had been covered earlier in the Board’s agenda.

12.5 Property and Risk Management Committee

M. Rodrigue (Chair, Property and Risk Management Committee) noted that the Property and Risk Committee discussed construction challenges encountered with the I2H and Saputo Centre projects, noting a cost increase from initial projections. They highlighted ongoing evaluation of these projects and their associated costs, with plans to reassess how the projects are being costed moving forward. Additionally, there was a suggestion to have the Director of Risk Management present an updated risk register for further discussion at a future Board meeting.

12.6 Advancement and External Relations Committee

G. MacEachern (Chair, Advancement and External Relations Committee) noted that many of the items discussed by the Advancement and External Relations Committee had been covered as part of the VP Advancement’s update. It was noted that government relations will be a recurring agenda item for the committee. Key points from the White Paper were also emphasized. G. MacEachern expressed enthusiasm about leveraging Homecoming for strategic purposes.

13. IN CAMERA – PRESIDENTIAL REAPPOINTMENT

On a motion by S. FABIANO, seconded by J. O’REILLY and carried, the Board moved in camera at 12:37pm. The President and Vice-Chancellor exited the meeting. All guests and members of administration also exited the meeting. The remaining Board members stayed for the in-camera session.

On a motion by S. FABIANO, seconded by W. SWEET and carried, the Board exited in-camera at 1:00pm. The President, administration, and guests rejoined the meeting.

14. HOUSEKEEPING AND FUTURE BUSINESS

For other business, there was a suggestion to further limit spending on Board meetings, as part of giving back to the institution and supporting its financial sustainability. The Dr. Agnes Calliste African Heritage Lecture was noted as taking place on October 26, inviting those in town to attend. An update on negotiations concerning an MOU was provided, and it was clarified that negotiations are ongoing.

15. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:15pm (M. RODRIGUE/S. FABIANO).