



REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

St. Francis Xavier University Board of Governors

Friday, February 21, 2025 – 9:00 am

Mulroney Hall 4034

Present: Dennis Flood (Chair), Bill Burke, Jacob Cruchet, Ron Chisholm, Marc Furlotte, Karen Gardiner, Andy Hakin, Lynda Harling Stalker, Alfred LeBlanc, Greg MacEachern, Peter Marzlin, Sylvia Parris-Drummond, Lisa Raitt, Kathleen Sheridan, William Sweet, Marie Walsh, Bishop Wayne Kirkpatrick, Cynthia Dorrington (virtual), Jamie O'Reilly (virtual), Paul Ash (virtual)

Regrets: Rose Paul, Avery Vadnai, Lisa Raitt, Michael Gillis

Staff: Eileen Alma, Amanda Cockshutt, Monica Foster, David Graham, Elizabeth Yeo, Anna Zuschlag

1. WELCOME AND ROLL CALL

D. Flood called the February 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. 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. P. Ash stated that due to his work with the Nova Scotia Department of Education, he would excuse himself from discussions on Bill 12. No other conflicts were declared.

Note: M. Foster asked that the Finance Committee's reports be moved forward on the agenda.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – October 18, 2024

MOTION: That the minutes of the Board of Governors meetings held on October 18, 2024, be approved as circulated (W. KIRKPATRICK/P. MARZLIN). **Motion carried.**

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – December 4, 2024

MOTION: That the minutes of the Board of Governors meetings held on December 4, 2024, be approved as circulated (W. SWEET/P. MARZLIN). **Motion carried.**

4./5. PRESIDENT'S UPDATE/ACADEMIC VP & PROVOST REPORT

President A. Hakin and VP-Academic A. Cockshutt provided highlights from their written reports that were submitted to the Board. These highlights included the following:

- A. Cockshutt updated numbers on enrolment. Enrolment numbers are down 5% in undergraduate and 48% in graduate applications. Domestic undergraduate applications are down 1.5% for undergrad and down 10% for domestic graduate. The international applications are down considerably from last year: down 46%, with confirmations down 46%

as well. She noted that the impact on revenue needs to be taken into consideration, while reminding the Board that this situation does not affect only StFX. It is a Canada-wide issue.

- There are good results from recruitment and marketing in domestic applications in the BBA (up 38%) and HK (up 58%). Money into recruitment is important. When funds are put into recruiting for specific programs, the outcomes are positive

A. Cockshutt welcomed questions. The discussion included whether the ongoing situation in the US with regard to EDIA issues could be an opportunity for marketing and recruitment, foregrounding the StFX experience as safe and positive. The approach could be more generalized rather than targeted at marginalized communities. It was noted that the post-secondary market in the US is more pedigree-based than in Canada. It was also noted that this path could be used to address underserved groups in provinces like Alberta where EDIA has been problematized as well.

Discussion continued around the challenge of improving enrolment numbers for international students and whether there are other factors beyond issues around permanent residency, unscrupulous recruiters, and infrastructure keeping students away. A. Cockshutt noted that StFX does use a recruiting company, but they are only engaged to recruit for StFX. The aim for StFX is not to exceed approximately 10–12% international students, whereas CBU is at 70% international students. The caveat is that programs that have been developed specifically for international students have been impacted by government-based challenges. A. Hakin reminded the Board that the NS government is not concerned with numbers (domestic or international) outside the province, as indicated in Bill 12, and their priority is the Nova Scotia student, even though StFX is a national institution, with national reach.

P. Ash left the meeting at 10:00 am.

A. Hakin provided the Board with a brief background on the Strategic Alignment Proposal as a lead-in to discussion on Bill 12. The following are highlights from his presentation:

- The NS government was given three years of activities on a three-year budget. The government gave StFX the go-ahead, but with no indication of whether there would be funding to cover the 57 recommendations.
- StFX has reprioritized the list based on financial capabilities and internal processes. The proposal was resubmitted. The government now wants more information on the existing proposal along with new government initiatives by April 30. It has been difficult to plan because there is little-to-no-information on financing from the government or the length of the bilateral agreement, which could be one, two, or three years.
- Timing and predictability for financial planning have been very difficult because StFX does not know what the government's contribution will be, along with shifting expectations.
- A January 28 letter to A. Hakin from the Deputy Minister of Advanced Education asking for input and comment on creating a bilateral agreement based on tuition policy, an operating grant, and performance-based funding. A. Hakin's response to the Minister included variations on the following points:
 - Determining government contributions should be aligned with the financial year to enable StFX to plan its budget in a timely manner, rather than having to make

assumptions and readjustments. The operating grant has decreased dramatically. Many of the government's numbers haven't changed in years and no longer reflect what StFX has done to meet their targets.

- Performance-based funding can pit universities against each other, creating competition rather than collaboration, which will decrease because money is at stake if seats in government-prioritized programs. The lack of transparency the government creating new seats creates, especially when the government is prioritizing NS students for those seats.
- NS tuition is the highest in Canada, which deeply impacts affordability. The real cost for domestic students has become much higher: travel costs on top of highest tuition in Canada is a barrier. Student contribution to StFX funds has increased as government contributions have decreased. Family budgeting for post-secondary should be transparent and known for the length of the degree, which cannot be provided on a one-year bilateral agreement.

The SAP brief is an overview of StFX–NS government relations over the last year. A. Hakin turned to Bill 12. He noted that the overarching message is that institutions must do what the government wants done, faster and cheaper. There was no communication or consultation around Bill 12, even during the January 18 meeting with the Minister. A. Hakin's outline of Bill 12 for the Board included the following highlights:

- Amendments to the Community Colleges Act. Colleges have been given degree-granting permission. These will likely be in education and nursing. They will be cheaper, with already lower tuition, and because they do not require tenured faculty. Universities cannot compete with colleges, which have more government funding than universities (upwards of 70%+). There was no consultation with post-secondary institutions. Domestic recruitment will become incredibly tight in NS within the next few years.
- Amendments to the Research Nova Scotia Corporation Act. The NS government used to match funds things Canada Foundation for Innovation grants, renovations, etc. The funding will now be based on alignment with the NS government's research priorities. Any national priorities in research will be jettisoned. This will hugely impact researchers, particularly those at the beginning of their careers.
- Amendments to the University Accountability and Sustainability Act. Before Bill 12, a university could ask for a "revitalization" period which is akin to receivership. It had never been used. It would be tremendous blow to any institution, particularly with regard to donations/fundraising. This is now under the Minister's purview, not the university, so institutions could be ordered into revitalization. The government's track record so far is that there has not been consultation in any regard, so the concern is that this would be the same for revitalization. StFX has been in a difficult financial situation, one of the worst in the province, even though StFX has done great work to get back on track, decreasing the debt from \$90 million to \$69 million. A. Cockshutt recommended the Board read the 2015 Act and the revised 2024 Act to understand the revitalization indicators and process. She noted revitalization also impacts faculty unions and union action.
- Boards of Governance Act established. No regulations have been attached yet. The composition of the Board of Governors can change as the government determines, including installing government appointees, who can make up to 50% of the Board. A potential requirement would be that there cannot be quorum unless the government

appointee is in attendance. The government has indicated that Boards need to act decisively on their fiduciary responsibilities.

A. Hakin said that the hope is that there will be talks between universities and the Minister before the Bill is passed. The overall impression is that universities must comply or face not receiving government funding. The thought is also that the government has not fully rolled out its plans for university governance structures. The size of the Board may go up with regulations. The Board will need to think about how to deal with vacancies. It was noted that StFX is the only institution without a government appointee. Concerned were raised over the rigour of the APC process and the potential misalignment of government appointees.

The discussion amongst the Board included questions around what must be done to ensure that StFX is fiduciarily in line with the government's requirements, knowing that great effort has already been done to get out of deficit budgeting and dealing with legacy debt. Hard choices will need to be made. A. Hakin stated that balancing the budget will be key.

There are avenues for championing universities and StFX. It was noted that the government has been receiving pushback from the public on its statements around the role of the Auditor General, so there could be room to communicate the situation on government–university relations. The Auditor General was to recommend the government address inequities in the post-secondary funding model, but, should the recommendation be put forth, the government is highly unlikely to act on it. It is a leadership moment for StFX.

6. FINANCIAL UPDATE

6.1 2024–25 Financial Projections

M. Foster presented the financial projections for 2024–25. The highlights include the following:

- Budgeted deficit has decreased from \$4.9 million to \$2.6 million, an improvement from September 2024.
- Recruitment and strategies around international students have been working, and StFX has seen an increase in international students, more so than any other school. The changes from IRC are still a detriment and continue to be a challenge, especially as more changes are expected.
- Unrestricted donations have been positive: approximately \$1.2–1.3 million in Apple shares, and a bequest settlement of approximately \$1.8
- The slow progress of Saputo has meant that the billing processes have been slow as well, leaving cash in StFX's accounts, so GICs keep earning. IIH construction costs have gone up and the project is a year behind, meaning monies are still in accounts accruing interest.
- Expense management has been largely successful, with savings in academic, administrative, and recruitment.
- The deficit could come in lower at year-end. The goal is a balanced budget, but without sacrificing necessities like Student Services and immediate maintenance needs (faucet break in MacKinnon in early February).

Discussion included a brief update from M. Foster on Dahdaleh Hall. The set-up groundwork has largely been completed, completed over summer and fall; tenders are out for start of construction. Hopes are that construction will begin in March, with completion aimed for early 2027. Budget extras should be

able to be fundraised, through things like naming opportunities. The project is \$10 million short, though there are fundraising opportunities. The province has provided \$37.4 million for construction.

M. Foster provided an update on the sale of IP address tranches. Two have been sold (\$300,000 and \$200,000). The price on the rest have been increased. Approximately half have been sold, so there are tranches available to sell next year.

6.2 2025–26 Budget

M. Foster presented an update on the progress of creating the budget for 2025–26. The highlights of the presentation include the following:

- The budget is still a draft at this point.
- There has been success in getting numbers down, but operationally it will be painful.
- The deficit is currently \$5.7 million, with another round of asks for cuts.
- There is still no knowledge on what the NS government will give in funding or tuition. The assumption is there will be a 2% tuition increase and a 2% increase for the grant, going on last-year's numbers.
- Ancillary fees likely at a 2.8% increase.
- Salaries will increase by the settlement amounts.
- Residence numbers are good. There are a significant number of students returning to residence.
- More work to be done. With many unknowns from the government that may not be available by the next Finance Committee meeting on April 3.

Discussion and questions from the Board included confirmation that the 2% Strategic Alignment Proposal funds have been received. Ancillary Services budget increase for next year, in part due to housing, food, but largely Conference Services bringing in conferences in the summer, Special Olympics, and a flag-football tournament.

K. Gardiner asked if the Flux Lab could be a source of revenue or monetized. M. Foster responded that there is possibility there, but, A. Cockshutt added, that there is overhead built in that goes toward the bottom line. StFX does not own IP on the Flux Lab.

A. Cockshutt spoke to the changes in the budget allotted to the Faculty of Arts compared to the Faculty of Science. The allocation of funds has followed students to where they are, and those programs are largely in the Arts degrees. The increased funds to the VP-Academic's office is from the hiring of a finance manager, who is now tracking academic finance numbers, which was not being done for the last two years. Now it can be determined where money is spent by program and department. Other trimming has taken place in the VP-Academic in an attempt to offset increases, including cuts to funding and the 8th-floor café.

7. VP STUDENTS REPORT

Elizabeth Yeo (Vice-President, Students) provided an update on Student Services activities, based on a written report submitted to the Board. E. Yeo highlighted that the focus has been on the student experience, especially on student safety and connecting students with supports and resources. There has been success in getting extended support for services. The hope is that the provincial government will

continue to prioritize underserved populations, and the focus is on designing such initiatives. This includes work with Labour Skills NS on a project that involves career development and work experience for historically underrepresented groups (e.g., international students, queer, trans, African Nova Scotian, Indigenous). This project has received an 18-month extension.

The ongoing work around student culture has shown positive results, especially in residences. More students want to return to residence living as student leaders.

Discussion with the Board included conversation around the changing status of DEI and whether language around student services should be adjusted, keeping in mind that DEI-supporting initiatives on campus could be seen as a competitive market advantage because of the ongoing situation in the United States around such areas, as well as actions taken by the NS government and other provincial governments.

There was an exchange over religious inclusion on the school's website and how to respect and display StFX's Catholic tradition while maintaining inclusivity. E. Yeo noted that there is an action plan in progress through PACAR, with some changes have already implemented, but that StFX's Catholic heritage is taken into consideration as part of such initiatives. She added that the undergirding principle for work on inclusivity is remembering where StFX has been as it works toward where it wants to go. Board members expressed concern that this area involves StFX's branding and is under the Board's purview, and that action is being taken without Board knowledge or approval. These issues would likely concern the Alumni Association and donor relations as well.

The Board broke at 10:53 am. Regular meeting business resumed at 11:08 am.

8. STUDENTS' UNION REPORT

J. Cruchet (Interim President, Students' Union) highlighted several points from a written report submitted to the Board, including the following:

- J. Cruchet introduced himself to the Board as the Interim and in-coming President of the Students' Union for 2025–26. He noted that elections had taken place.
- The VP-Academic is now the VP-Executive, with Alessandro D'Aquino elected to the position for next year. Day-to-day operations will remain the same. The move was meant to clarify the Union's structure.
- Mack Murphy, VP-Campus Affairs, is working on planning for the next round of campus events.
- Thanks were extended to the Alumni Association for the donation of \$1,000 to Kevin's Corner.
- In an update on the health/dental plan, it was shared that the Students' Union has returned to Gallivan Insurance, which had the best price point and best package.
- The Students' Union budget for 2025–26 is in the process of being finalized.
- J. Cruchet continues to work on a strategic action plan regarding Open Educational Resources. Progress has been made, discussions with administration have occurred.
- In November, the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations met with government officials. Former President Francisco Chang was able to meet with Prime Minister Trudeau.
- J. Cruchet attended Students Nova Scotia Advocacy Week, which included discussions around housing, inclusive learning, financial aid, health care, etc. It was noted that Bill 12 will impact students, and the Students' Union will need to be aware of these impacts.

Discussion and questions followed. J. Cruchet shared that voter turnout in the recent election had increased 15% over last year, with some 800 votes cast. This is still down from two years ago, with 1,000 votes cast. G. MacEachern expressed disappointment in the turnout. J. Cruchet stated that increasing voter turnout is a key priority.

G. MacEachern asked that the Students' Union work with Advancement on Homecoming initiatives to avoid repeating the issues from Homecoming 2024.

A. Hakin congratulated the Students' Union on its relationship with Students Nova Scotia, particularly Brendan Roberts' (Chair, Students' Union Board of Directors) presentation on housing and tuition affordability in January 2018 in front of Minister Brendan Maguire.

C. Dorrington left the meeting at 11:45 am.

9. VP ADVANCEMENT REPORT

D. Graham (Vice-President, Advancement) updated the Board on the Office of Advancement's initiatives, including the following highlights:

- D. Graham noted that Advancement has been in contact with regards to the Students' Union and Advancement collaborating on events planning, including on Homecoming, graduation, and X-Ring.
- G. MacEachern met with Jean-Guy Forgeron in Ottawa. He has agreed to facilitate opportunities for meetings with other deputy ministers for A. Hakin and D. Graham, particularly the Deputy Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities Canada.
- The Day of Giving is March 25. D. Graham encouraged the Board members to give, noting that other donors have asked if the Board provide support with donations.
- There will be a panel discussion on Canada-US relations on March 31 in Toronto. Panelists will include Frank McKenna, Lisa Raitt, Seamus O'Regan, and Sean Fraser. Dr. Asa McKercher, the Mulroney Institute's Steven K. Hudson Chair in Canada-US Relations, will moderate. CIBC will be a sponsor. The high-traction event will be of little cost to StFX.
- The Palm Beach, FL, trip will be in early March. Hilly Mahoney will host a celebration of Chancellor Mila Mulroney's installation. Guests will be Canadian and American. It will be an opportunity to match Heritage Canada's funds to the Mulroney Institute.
- Communications' Xcellence campaign has seen positive results. There have been good outcomes from the targeted campaign on the Nursing program. It was important to show the government that StFX has been on side with their priorities.
- The President's Gala is set for June 21. It is the 50th anniversary, with an "eras" theme.
- The Alumni News survey has gathered approximately 1,200 responses.
- Planned giving has changed to rolling averages to more accurately represent planned gift expectations rather than approaching them as "windfalls."

The discussion that followed included G. MacEachern suggested that StFX grad and Yukon MLA Sandy Silver has an interesting story and could be contacted for StFX-based initiatives. There was an extended exchange on the details around matching funds requirements for the Mulroney Institute and Dahdaleh Institute, and how they have impacted Advancement's priorities. Dahdaleh has approximately \$36 million in potential naming rights opportunities. He noted that Advancement and the leadership team are resourced appropriately to go after funds. A. Hakin added that development campaign committees will

be available to assist, expanding Advancement's reach and accessing new networks. D. Graham explained that getting the \$10 million in matching for Mulroney shouldn't be an issue or long process because networks and donor base are already in place, with inquiries coming in specifically on matching funds.

10. ALUMNI ASSOCIATION REPORT

K. Sheridan provided the Board with the Alumni Association report on behalf of M. Gillis, President of the Alumni Association. Highlights from her presentation include the following:

- The Alumni Association continues to focus on vision, visibility, and values.
- The Alumni Association is in a strong financial position.
- StFX students have pitched initiatives directly to the Alumni Council, which has, in turn, supported and sponsored several of these events, including Impact-X, an entrepreneurship summit; and Pucks for Purpose, a student-organized charity hockey tournament in March 2025.
- Echo Marketing and Alumni Association student ambassadors are assisting in amplifying the Alumni Association and the alumni experience across social media.
- The Alumni Association has moved forward with several diversity initiatives, affirming its commitment to inclusivity, including providing financial support and participation at the January launch of the 2SLGBTQIA+ chapter and the upcoming February 26 Black Excellence Panel.
- The Alumni Association is providing assistance to the recently launched Black Alumni Chapter in determining the needs and expectations of Black alumni through a survey.
- Increasing action around recruitment continues to be a priority.

After K. Sheridan's report, E. Alma thanked the Alumni Association for its support and collaboration with Coady on Impact X, noting that next year's event is already being planned.

11. VICAR OF THE FOUNDER REPORT

Bishop Kirkpatrick stated that he had nothing to add beyond the report provided in the Board package.

12. RECEIVING OF REPORTS

12.1 Executive Committee

D. Flood noted that the Executive Committee had passed a motion to accept the negotiated settlement with CUPE and UNIFOR.

12.2 Audit and Investment Committee

M. Furlotte noted an upcoming meeting of the Committee on March 11 looking toward the year-end on March 31. He provided a brief overview of the status of endowment fund. No motions were brought forward.

12.3 Governance and Nominating Committee

K. Gardiner (Chair, Governance & Nominating Committee) noted that the Board Evaluation Survey had generally positive feedback. She said that Bill 12 will likely have impact on governance and the Board's structure, though it is still to be determined what these might be. Three Governors' terms are ending (D.

Flood, P. Ash, M. Furlotte) as of June 30, and M. Walsh will not stand for another term. The recruitment of new members will be paused until there is more information from the government on Bill 12.

A. Hakin left the room at 12:19 pm, before the Board discussed the appointment of the next Board Chair.

MOTION: That, on the recommendation of the Governance & Nominating Committee, the StFX Board of Governors appoint Lisa Raitt as the next Chair of the Board of Governors. (K. GARDINER/S. PARRIS-DRUMMOND). **Motion carried.**

The members discussed the bylaws and Board member term length overlapping with taking on the chair position, and how Bill 12 might impact the Board structure and function. There was discussion on choosing a vice-chair. This is a process that needs to be created. K. Gardiner noted that the work done by the Governance & Nominating Committee on governance policies, selection procedures, and structure likely means that work expected under Bill 12 has already been accomplished.

A. Hakin returned to the meeting at 12:24 pm.

12.4 Finance Committee

M. Foster spoke on behalf of L. Raitt, Chair of the Finance Committee. She provided a brief background on the motion to continue the nursing scholarships.

MOTION: That, on the recommendation of the Finance Committee, the amendment to the language to the Finance Committee's Terms of Reference be approved by the Board of Governors as presented. (M. FOSTER/M. WALSH). **Motion carried.**

MOTION: That, on the recommendation of the Finance Committee, the current administrative levy of 0.75% to provide funding to support digital projects be reduced by \$200,000 and that this amount be used to fund additional scholarships for incoming nursing students until March 31, 2027, be approved by the Board of Governors. (R. CHISHOLM/W. SWEET). **Motion carried.**

12.5 Property & Risk Management Committee

R. Chisholm, chair of the Property & Risk Management Committee, provided brief background on both motions.

MOTION: That, on the recommendation of the Property & Risk Management Committee, the updated Enterprise Risk Management policy be approved by the Board of Governors as presented. (R. CHISHOLM/K. GARDINER). **Motion carried.**

MOTION: That, on the recommendation of the Property & Risk Management Committee, the amendment to the language to the Property & Risk Management Committee's Terms of Reference be approved by the Board of Governors as presented. (R. CHISHOLM/G. MACEACHERN). **Motion carried.**

12.6 Advancement and External Relations Committee

G. MacEachern (Chair, Advancement and External Relations Committee) noted the Committee is leaning into supporting Homecoming and recruiting more alumni from local areas, particularly to the tailgate event.

E. Alma shared that Coady has secured \$5.8 m in new funding from Global Affairs Canada for three different projects.

A. Hakin recognized the work that Bob Hale has been doing around Special Olympics and working to bring the National Special Olympics to campus.

13. HOUSEKEEPING AND FUTURE BUSINESS

D. Flood thanked Board Secretary Anna Zuschlag for her work on organizing the Board meeting, information session, and dinner, as well as the committee meetings.

14. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:35pm (J. CRUCHET/L. HARLING STALKER).