



REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

St. Francis Xavier University Board of Governors

Friday, October 18, 2024 – 9:00 am

Mulroney Hall 4034

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

Regrets: Rose Paul, Avery Vadnai, Lisa Craig, Paul Ash

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

1. WELCOME AND ROLL CALL

D. Flood called the October 18 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 (L. HARLING STALKER/W. SWEET). **Motion carried.**

D. Flood asked if any Governors had a conflict of interest with any of the agenda items. L. Raitt declared a conflict with discussions around Pomerleau, having a seat on its Board, and will leave the room when required. No other conflicts were declared.

Note: F. Chang asked that the Students' Union report be shared after the break. E. Yeo agreed to move the VP Students report further down the agenda.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – JUNE 14, 2024

MOTION: That the minutes of the Board of Governors meetings held on June 14, 2024, be approved as circulated (W. SWEET/K. SHERIDAN). **Motion carried.**

4. PRESIDENT'S UPDATE

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

- A. Hakin recognized L. Harling Stalker as the new director of the Brian Mulroney Institute of Government.
- A. Hakin shared the successes of several campus events that took place in the first few weeks of the school year: The Mulroney Institute/Deveau Centre–hosted three-day commemoration of the 25th anniversary of the Supreme Court of Canada's Marshall decision, recognizing A. Zuschlag and L. Harling Stalker for their efforts on behalf of the

Mulroney Institute; and the Israel–Palestine event promoting civil discourse, with thanks to Megan Fogarty.

- StFX has received very positive feedback on the announcement of Dr. Mila Mulroney as the 11th Chancellor. She will be installed at the upcoming convocation. An event is being planned with the new Chancellor in Florida in March 2025.
- A. Hakin shared a hearty thank you to StFX with regard to the X-Ring he was presented with at the President’s Gala in June 2024.
- Homecoming 2024 was a great success. A touching moment was the Class of ’59 toasting the late Prime Minister Brian Mulroney in Mulroney Hall’s replica office. It was a very positive weekend with regard to town/campus interactions, with an effective strategy to bring and keep more students on campus for events.
- The Mulroney Institute/Students’ Union co-hosted a debate for the Antigonish mayoral candidates in Barrick Auditorium. It was very well attended by community members. Events such as these create and strengthen connections with the community, and there are new connections that can be made between StFX and the councils, both town and county.
- To date, there has been no response from the provincial government on the priorities report that StFX submitted at the government’s request. An announcement is imminent from Minister of Health Michelle Thompson on international students and Nursing programs.
- The Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada’s (IRCC) actions and position on international students continue to be a real challenge for institutions across the country, putting pressure on domestic undergraduate and graduate enrolment and programming as well. The issue is top of the agenda with Universities Canada. StFX is working to be in close alignment with IRCC’s priorities.

Board members discussed the data collection around Open House and whether tracking was taking place with regard to who attended Open House and who then registered as a student. Tracking was done, but the numbers were not available at the time of the meeting.

Discussion continued around the issue of international students, including clarifying what the IRCC’s priorities entail: They prioritized specific “areas,” health care, agriculture and trades, transportation, STEM, and so on. It was noted that the arts are not represented in the priorities. StFX programs largely fall within these areas. Members asked about numbers for attestation papers; the numbers were still evolving at the time of the meeting.

The discussion shifted to international students and recruitment. Concerns were raised over balancing cost with returns. A. Hakin noted that StFX has been working on a robust strategy for international recruitment. Board members discussed the potential of moving recruitment into new markets beyond India. E. Alma shared that Coady’s strategy was to lean into relationships with diaspora groups abroad and in Canada. Bishop Kirkpatrick suggested possible networking for recruitment in Africa, with Nigeria as an example where priests were already involved. C. Dorrington suggested doing work with provincial/national organizations with connections abroad before making recruiting trips overseas. R. Chisholm suggested sister parishes in South and Central America could be places for recruitment, perhaps through initiating partnerships and programs. L. Raitt reminded the Board that Canada–India relations are strained, which has impacted visas, and to expect long-term challenges, especially with wait times.

A. Hakin noted that the international students challenge was connected to the increasing strain on funds and the decrease in provincial funding across Canada. StFX was currently in a relatively good

place and has marketability. G. MacEachern said that the political context was important to keep in mind: The Canadian consensus around immigration was shifting downward, and governments were responding accordingly, even if the response was causing issues in important sectors.

D. Flood asked about the *Maclean's* survey and StFX's lower rankings, falling to 10th out of 20, and being substandard in four other categories. A. Hakin shared that a working group has been struck, including him and several directors, to work on improving the rankings. He noted that StFX needed to be more strategic with regard to the *Maclean's* survey, particularly since universities with more budgetary challenges are higher in ranking. The Board was reminded that student satisfaction was no longer a category.

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 the following:

- Overall, total student numbers were up 1.2% from last year, comprised of a 0.8% drop in full-time undergraduates combined with more graduate students, particularly in the part-time Med and MAEd. New students from high school increased 4.4%.
- The AAU data was not available at the time of the meeting.
- The year had been good for international numbers with a 16.7% increase.

Discussion and questions followed, with Board Members covering a number of topics, including the continued impact of COVID-19. A. Cockshutt said that COVID fallout was still a factor, especially with regard to part-time numbers – large numbers of students enrolled in part-time programs during the pandemic, and those numbers have since decreased. She noted that the International Nurses program's numbers are now more in line with pre-COVID numbers.

The effectiveness of Open Houses and the gendered distribution of students was discussed with regard to the shifting interests, and thus enrolment, of male students in universities. It was noted that high schools were no longer necessarily training male students to move on to university. A. Hakin shared that the current political and economic landscape has impacted enrolments and program choice – male students were returning to the trades because of workforce demands and access to money; the provincial government was incentivizing the trades. A. Cockshutt noted that StFX Athletics continued to be a draw for male students.

The recruitment team received compliments for their work in the face of employee turnover, though it was disappointing that, with universities in a seeming downturn, students were not considering Atlantic region institutions. A. Cockshutt noted that this region had the highest tuition in Canada, and it was difficult to attract those outside the region. It was suggested that work could be done to crystalize the out-of-province market.

The status of the university sector continued with discussion around the potential for the consolidation of the sector in Nova Scotia. A. Hakin said that there had been talk years ago about such a move, but it had not been part of recent sector–government discussions. It was noted that StFX was uniquely situated should such a move take place, with its economic integration with the

town and distinct identity being real market advantages. L. Raitt noted that the government would not want to take on more debt, and StFX was an employment and economic driver as well as an educational institution.

6. FINANCIAL UPDATE

6.1 2024–25 Financial Results

L. Raitt, Chair of the Finance Committee, thanked the Finance team for managing StFX's funds and budget. She introduced M. Foster to provide the financial update.

The first set of financial projections for the 2024–25 fiscal period has been completed based on actual results to September 30, 2024. The projections were included in the Board documents. Operations currently projects a small surplus (\$949k) along with a projected surplus in Ancillary of \$1.388m netted with a capital fund deficit of (\$7m) for an overall deficit of (\$4.663m). This is \$329k better than the budget.

The following includes several highlights from the Finance update:

- The overall focus is on expense management
- Tuition was down \$1.8m from the budget.
- Unexpected, major unrestricted donations/bequests (\$2.7m) were received.
- Two tranches of IP addresses were up for auction.
- The Provincial Deferred Maintenance monies and Dahdahleh Hall GICs were earning high interest (4%), so it was likely these would be approximately \$700k better.
- International House insurance outcomes were still unknown. Resolution of the situation was ongoing with discussions on next steps for turning the building into daycare space. StFX would prefer a land lease. The sale of the building/land could be approximately \$400k.

Discussion and questions followed, including around the use of potential proceeds from the sale of International House. Proceeds from a sale would show as a decrease in the deficit for the current year. D. Flood asked if the debt was being retired every year. M. Foster responded that it was and added that the line of credit was not being used either to avoid growing the debt.

6.2 Borrowing Resolution

The Board was provided with a copy of the most recent Commitment Letter from Scotiabank, dated January 16, 2024. 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 January 16, 2024 (R. CHISHOLM/L. RAITT). **Motion carried.**

7. PROGRESS REPORT ON GOVERNANCE REVIEW

K. Gardiner, Chair of the Governance and Nominating Committee, noted that the motion on approving the Code of Conduct and Conflict of Interest policy would be entered later in the meeting. She shared

that the next Board self-evaluation survey would likely be sent out to Board Members within the next week. She provided a brief reminder on the recommendations identified in the StFX Governance review (completed in April 2020) and noted the recommendations that had been implemented.

Discussions and questions followed, specifically around Recommendation #27 with regard to the creation of dashboard reports. A. Hakin said that dashboards showing progress are presented every year. Board Members enquired whether there were itemized lists of achievements. C. Dorrington responded that the President's reports/dashboards were representative of the actionable process of completing the Strategic Plan. Recommendation #27 should be marked as complete.

The Board broke at 10:42 am. Bishop Kirkpatrick left the meeting. Regular meeting business resumed at 11:06 am.

8. STUDENTS' UNION REPORT

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

- The Executive Team had finalized the Union's Annual Plan, and copies were available.
- F. Chang and Katie Wilson (VP Finance) developed a budgeting tool to help students manage expenses. The team was working with on/off campus stakeholders to host financial literacy workshops. A workshop was held at the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre; another was planned for October at Kiknu.
- VP Academic Jacob Cruchet has been working on a strategic action plan with regard to Open Educational Resources. Progress has been made, discussions with administration have occurred.
- Hiring a website coordinator was in progress.
- Drive-U, SU's free drive-home service for students, purchased a new van.
- An Indigenous mural on Bloomfield's 4th floor was in process, with a proposed completion date by the end of the Fall semester.
- Preparations for X-Ring were moving forward.
- As of September 1, the "MyVirtualDoctor" platform transitioned to Dialogue because of increased prices. Gender-affirming care was included in the health plan.
- The SU took up a Get Out the Vote initiative with the local municipal elections and in anticipation of a provincial election in the coming weeks. The GOTV was aligned with the SU co-hosting the Antigonish mayoral debate with the Mulroney Institute.

Discussion and questions followed. B. Burke asked about the mural artist, who could be an outside artist, though F. Chang noted that the Indigenous Students would decide who the artist would be. The mural would be student-designed. K. Gardiner enquired about the status of the donor wall at the Inn. F. Chang said that it was supposed to be open by Homecoming, and that he would need to check on the status and report back. L. Raitt asked about the form of the budget tool, which was currently an Excel worksheet.

Concerns were raised by several Board Members about the service at the Inn during Homecoming, noting that they had received complaints from Alumni who were disappointed on several fronts, including an early closure and lack of non-alcoholic options. The Inn was seen as a gathering place for alumni, and this was thus an alumni and donor relations issue. F. Chang noted that there were

operational issues over Homecoming weekend, including staff shortages. The issues would be discussed with the bar manager.

D. Graham suggested that the SU and operational team could work on a more collaborative approach to incorporate the Inn into Homecoming, as well as Bloomfield as a whole. G. MacEachern noted that he had heard complaints for several years about the Inn. Alumni have not had positive experiences, and the SU should understand the importance of the Inn to Alumni.

9. 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 positive developments at the start of the school year, including increased engagement, as could be seen in the turnout for the Truth and Reconciliation ceremony and concert that followed. She noted that the incoming student group has had a more normalized high school experience after several student groups dealing with COVID-impacted high school experiences. The Student Experience and Opportunity Strategic Plan and the President's Action Committee on Anti-Racism Action Plan continued to drive action items.

Discussion with the Board included conversation on gathering of data on ethnicity and those students who came to StFX and then left. These could be demographics to target. E. Yeo said that this data was available. C. Dorrington noted that StFX needs to meet the changing student demographics and make sure that the campus culture reflected and represented all ethnicities. E. Yeo agreed that intercultural knowledge at the Student Services level was important.

The Board discussed StFX's Student Services lower ranking in *Maclean's*. E. Yeo noted that these scores reflected monies invested by the institutions. Five Student Services positions have been added. A. Hakin shared that StFX allocated 5.9% of the budget to Student Services, while Bishop's allocated at least double that. It was noted that money spent did not necessarily reflect the strength of Student Services. M. Foster said that salary scales were not the same across universities either.

F. Chang left the meeting at 11:41 am.

K. Sheridan asked if anti-Islam/antisemitism workshops were included in modules for first-years. E. Yeo noted that Student Services was working on expanding trainings. The Board discussed the importance of religious inclusion, such that opportunities to begin civil discourse on less sensitive subjects provided space for building up to more challenging topics. The example of Prime Minister Mulroney and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's interactions at the Atlantic Economic Forum was put forward. L. Harling Stalker shared that the Mulroney/SU mayoral debate was meant to model civil discourse for students, with a format that reflected this goal; and very positive feedback was received. If a provincial election was called, the Mulroney/SU collaboration hoped to put on a candidates forum. E. Alma offered that Coady could lean into this with conflict-sensitive approaches to community-building and peacebuilding workshops.

10. VP ADVANCEMENT REPORT

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

- A well-attended groundbreaking ceremony took place in early July for the Victor and Mona Dahdahleh Institute for Innovation in Health, with the Dahdahlehs in attendance.
- Homecoming 2024 was a success. The tailgate event received very positive feedback and was a place to build great school spirit, with thanks to the Alumni Association. Advancement was working toward more integrated efforts with all groups that are invested in Homecoming.
- Board Members were asked to please let A. Zuschlag know if they would be attending X-Ring and convocation/the Chancellor's installation.
- There has been a verbal commitment made for \$1m to go to Dahdahleh Hall's construction.
- During the week of October 21, there would be a President's Reception in Ontario.
- A Strategic Alumni Communications Framework was in development, focusing on Alumni areas of interest to create fundraising initiatives to those interests.
- A working group has been struck to begin plans for StFX's 175th anniversary in 2028.
- A possible President's Gala in Western Canada could be planned.
- Emilie Chiasson joined the Advancement team as the Manager of Annual Giving and Alumni Relations. She has extensive experience in fundraising initiatives.

The discussion that followed included the timing of the release of the 2024 Homecoming survey. The final version was approved, and it should be out within the next week. The Chancellor's installation would be in the afternoon as part of convocation. R. Chisholm asked if media would be in attendance at the installation to help raise StFX's profile. D. Graham responded that media attendance was possible but not likely national media; he shared that the feedback on Dr. Mulroney's appointment has been positive.

11. ALUMNI ASSOCIATION REPORT

M. Gillis (President, Alumni Association) briefly reviewed points from a written report submitted to the Board, including the following highlights:

- The Alumni Association was in good financial standing.
- Governance has been improved with a bylaw review, and the introduction of a "consent agenda" that was put into practice at the October meeting.
- Focus has been on affinity chapters, particularly launching Black, 2SLGBTQIA+, and Indigenous Alumni chapters. The Black Alumni Chapter was featured during Homecoming at the Black Student Success Centre.
- Work has begun on reengaging flatlined chapters. Actions included providing funds to chapters to organize events.
- Inspiring alumni engagement with Homecoming as great point of contact has been a driver of activity: The Alumni Association was a lead sponsor for the tailgate celebration. Pilot projects included encouraging engagement through "kits" for Xaverian spirit that could be shared with Alumni doing community events; and a "Blue & White" Week leading up to X-Ring.
- The Alumni Association would be sponsoring the Impact X event in November, a pitch competition on campus that would have high school students in attendance, as well as an Alumni panel to discuss social entrepreneurship.

The discussion that followed included the suggestion from L. Harling Stalker about creating parent chapters for parents of students currently attending StFX. A. Leblanc suggested choosing a city, such as Ottawa, to try new Alumni initiatives before going wide.

D. Flood noted that Bishop Kirkpatrick left the meeting during the scheduled break. The Vicar of the Founder report was provided in the Board package.

12. RECEIVING OF REPORTS

12.1 Executive Committee

D. Flood briefly discussed the role of the Chancellor as a member of the Board of Governors. He mentioned Chancellor Peacock's extraordinary engagement with the Board. He noted that the next Chancellor, Dr. Mila Mulrone, will likely not attend meetings, but she would be an active Chancellor and an asset to StFX.

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, 2024, 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/M. GILLIS). **Motion carried.**

12.3 Governance and Nominating Committee

K. Gardiner (Chair, Governance & Nominating Committee) provided an update on the progress of naming a replacement for the Chair of the Board of Governors, including the process conventions, which were circulated to the Board in advance of the discussion.

MOTION: That on the recommendation of the Governance and Nominating Committee, the Board Chair selection process be approved as presented. (K. GARDINER/C. DORRINGTON). **Motion carried.**

K. Gardiner spoke briefly to explain the Code of Conduct and Conflict of Interest policy, which were circulated to the Board in advance of the discussion.

MOTION: That on the recommendation of the Governance and Nominating Committee, the Code of Conduct and Conflict of Interest policy be approved as presented. (K. GARDINER/A. LEBLANC). **Motion carried.**

12.4 Finance Committee

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

12.5 Property and Risk Management Committee

R. Chisholm (Chair, Property and Risk Management Committee) noted changes to the heating/cooling system in Dahdahleh Hall were due to little room in the budget. The possibility of raising funds for the project via naming rights to rooms was discussed. R. Chisholm shared the Committee's belief that a third party to deal with issues if and as they emerged during Dahdahleh's construction would be ideal as a preventative measure. The Board was reminded of the Saputo Centre's official opening ceremony taking place later in the day.

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. He noted continued discussions around the status of the *Alumni News* and Homecoming survey.

13. HOUSEKEEPING AND FUTURE BUSINESS

The 2025 Board Meetings calendar was briefly discussed. The Board was reminded that the next Board meeting would be virtual on December 4, 2024.

14. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:15pm (W. SWEET/R. CHISHOLM).