



## REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

St. Francis Xavier University Board of Governors

Friday, February 24, 2023 – 9:00am

Keating Centre Conference Rooms

**Present:** Dennis Flood (Chair), Simone Abbass, Eileen Alma, Bill Burke, Ron Chisholm, Amanda Cockshutt, Cynthia Dorrington, Monica Foster, Marc Furlotte, Karen Gardiner, Chris Gilham, David Graham, Andy Hakin, Lynda Harling Stalker, Bishop Wayne Kirkpatrick, Peter Marzlin, Jamie O'Reilly, John Peacock, Lisa Raitt, Brendan Roberts, Marc Rodrigue, Kathleen Sheridan, Violet Silva, William Sweet

**Regrets:** Denton Anthony, Paul Ash, Duaine Devereaux, Deborah Gillis, Joshua Kroker, Peter Ludlow, Paul McFarland, Sylvia Parris-Drummond, Andrea Paul, Marie Walsh, Lisa Craig

**Guests:** Elizabeth Yeo, Brian Scriver

### 1. WELCOME AND ROLL CALL

D. Flood called the February 24 meeting of the Board of Governors to order at 9:00 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 (K.GARDINER/W. SWEET) Motion carried.

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

### 3. MINUTES

**MOTION:** That the minutes of the Board of Governors meeting held on December 12, 2022 be approved as circulated (J. O'REILLY/W. SWEET) Motion carried.

### 4. PRESIDENT'S UPDATE

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

- A proposal has been submitted to the Government of Nova Scotia that requests funding support for the Institute for Innovation in Health (I2H) that was previously referred as the Centre for Innovation in Health. The proposal was included in the Board's meeting package and consists of a briefing note and more fulsome description of the project.
- The university's central heating plant is a 100-year-old facility which includes a backup generator, subsurface infrastructure, and an aged electrical system. The facility burns three million litres of mostly light furnace oil per year. The ongoing increasing expense combined with the university's financial pressures and the unacceptable environmental impact of the plant is unsustainable. The Board was provided with a presentation that has been created to advocate for government funding to eliminate the current central heating and help Antigonish to become Canada's first net-zero emissions town.

- At a January meeting of our Faculty, a request signed by 26 of faculty members was presented for consideration. Following discussion, the following two motions were approved:
  - The University Faculty respectfully requests the President undertake meaningful efforts to broaden the recognition of religious and cultural diversity on campus in an effort to bring them in line with the vision laid out by the Action Committee on Anti-Racism. We request that the President strike a committee to explore these issues, make recommendations to various university bodies, and report back regularly to Faculty (on or no later than the Fall of 2023).
  - That the Chair of University Faculty request the President to strike a committee to apply the stated vision of the President's Action Committee on Anti-Racism regarding racial diversity also to religious and cultural diversity. Like PACAR, this committee's mandate shall be to "identify and address systemic barriers to full and equal participation at StFX, review university policies, procedures, and practices to ensure alignment with our goals of equity and inclusion." The committee shall make recommendations to various university bodies, and report to Faculty each term.
- President Hakin has since met with Drs. Levin, Penner and Trembinski to discuss next steps. As an addendum to his report, Dr. Hakin included a copy of the letter presented at the faculty meeting which provided further information on their request.

**MOTION:** That a committee of the Board of Governors be struck to examine the fourth object of the StFX Act related to the Catholic character issue in light of the President's Action Committee on Anti-Racism. Further that the Committee of the Board of Governors be comprised of 2 members of the Alumni Association, 2 members of representatives of the Priests, the Vicar of the Founder, and two student representatives to report back to the Board. (R. CHISHOLM/S. ABBASS).

A discussion followed about the proposed committee, including the importance of faculty representation. The Board noted existing efforts underway to advance equity and inclusion through the work of the President's Action Committee on Anti-Racism (PACAR), including the establishment of various working groups, including one focused on religious inclusion. It was also noted that the Bishop as the Vicar of the Founder has established an advisory group to assist the Bishop in executing his role to assist in the promotion of the objects of the university, as outlined in the StFX University Act. The Board requested additional information be provided to adequately consider the motion.

On a motion of W. SWEET, the Board of Governors moved to postpone decision on the motion until the June 2023 Board meeting.

22 in favour. 2 opposed.

Motion carried.

## 5. ACADEMIC VICE-PRESIDENT AND PROVOST UPDATE

Dr. Amanda Cockshutt (Academic Vice President and Provost) was joined by Brian Scriver (Director, Recruitment) and provided highlights from a written report presented to the Board. Highlights from the presentation included:

- Applications continue to be strong; however, confirmations (students who have accepted their offer with a registration deposit paid) continue to lag behind the previous two years. There are many factors at play affecting applicant behaviour including the ongoing

pandemic, the economic landscape with high inflation and interest rates, and a very strong labour market.

- To increase confirmations, the Recruitment team has arranged a series of student engagement sessions across the country, and wherever possible a member of the senior leadership team is attending these sessions to support the efforts to convert applications.
- Recent conversations with NS Health and Advanced Education have led to developments around our online courses for Internationally Educated Nurses. Demand for these courses has softened considerably lately with other players in the market. Jack Rice, Director of StFX Online and Professional Studies, has been in discussion with the NS College of Nurses and they are presently assessing our courses for rapid implementation. We have capacity to register students immediately.
- Masters of Applied Computer Science continues to attract healthy applications from international students, largely from India. We are on track to continue with 40-50 new students in this program for the Fall 2023 intake. We have allocated resources to this program given the significant revenue stream that it generates.
- Other graduate programs, particularly the Masters of Education, attract a large number of students, mostly part-time, and are an important source of revenue for the university/ We are currently in the development phase for other Masters and Post Baccalaureate Diploma programs that will be attractive to non-traditional learners. A Masters of Public Health is early in the development phrase and a PBD in Digital Marketing is also in the works.

In response to questions from the Board, A. Cockshutt noted that many of the issues around recruitment, retention, and programming are key features of the Academic Plan which is the draft phase from the Academic Planning and Priorities Committee of Senate and will be circulated to the community in the coming weeks. Relating to the values articulated in the new StFX University Strategic Plan, the Academic Plan focuses the academic area on sustainability; relevance; and, equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility.

## 6. FINANCIAL UPDATE

### 6.1 2022-23 Projections

M. Foster (Vice-President, Finance and Administration) noted that the second set of financial projections for the 2022-23 fiscal period have been completed based on actual results to December 31, 2022. Operations is currently projecting a deficit of \$2.051m along with a projected deficit in Ancillary of \$2.808m for an overall deficit of \$4.859.

Due to the financial restatement, M. Foster noted that in future budget years there will be additional pressure on the budget from an operations standpoint. The projections provided to the Board are an estimate based on current information available. Assumptions that have been made could change by the end of the year. The current projections have not been updated for the change to how fixed assets and capital deferred revenue will be reported.

The budget assumed an increase of 150 domestic tuitions and 50 international tuitions. While confirmations met the overall target, they did not convert to students actually registering and coming to StFX. There were several factors including weak markets, students staying closer to home due to COVID, inability for recruiters to travel, etc.

There is still some financial uncertainty around the costs of Hurricane Fiona. The final total is still being determined as well as what will be covered by insurance. On February 5, 2023, pipes burst in International House. At this point the total amount of the damage is unknown but the expectation is that there will be some remediation costs in this fiscal year.

## 6.2 2023-24 Operating Budget

M. Foster noted that the most recent draft of the 2023-24 Operating Budget had been provided to the Board for information purposes. M. Foster provided an overview of key budget considerations, including:

- Government Operating Grant – 1% increase, plus funding for additional nursing seats.
- Enrolment – The assumption is that enrollment will be flat based on earlier analysis received from the Registrar’s office along with current enrollment reports. The additional accelerating nursing program seats that are being funded by the province have been added.
- Tuition Fees
  - Tuition increase of 3%; Other fees increasing 3%
  - Ancillary Fees – Room rentals increasing 2.15% on average; meal plans increasing 2.95% on average
- Salaries – Collective Agreements increases/obligations will add about 2% to annual salary costs. Progression through the ranks for faculty members will add approximately 2.5% to academic salary costs. The economic adjustment of 2% for non-union/management employees has been added.
- There is vulnerability around enrollment and residence/food service. The exposure is approximately \$10k per student for tuition (\$20k for an international student) and \$20k per residence-based student (\$30k for an international student).
- Residence Occupancy – There are 1,883 beds on campus (including FX Hall). Occupancy is being budgeted at 1,694 which is 90% of the total beds on campus.
- Food Service – Traditional meal plans are being budgeted at 1,210.
- Capital items previously budgeted in operating are not included.
- Deferred maintenance items being funded by the funds from the Province of NS have not been included in the budget since they net to zero.

Work is continuing to review various line items within the budget to reduce the overall projected deficit. The goal is to finalize the budget for presentation to the Finance Committee in March 2023 and then be brought forward to the Board for approval. A special meeting of the Board will be scheduled for April to consider the budget.

## 7. GOVERNANCE REVIEW

K. Gardiner (Chair, Governance and Nominating Committee) provided an overview of efforts underway to advance the recommendations of the Governance Review. Since the last update in October 2022, the Governance and Nominating Committee has:

- Developed a Board Member Self-Assessment, including an Optional Self-Identification Survey, ensuring that diversity considerations are included.
- Reviewed and updated the Board Skills Matrix, using members’ completed self-assessments, to help identify current gaps in Board diversity and skillsets around the Board table.

- Coordinated the Kairos Blanket Exercise, to help advance Board member training and development related to indigenization; decolonization; and, equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility (EDIA).
- Organized and participated in a joint meeting with the Senate Steering Committee to identify opportunities to strengthen the Board-Senate relationship and strategies for increasing the Board's understanding and engagement with the academic mission and activities of the University.
- Reviewed best practices in post-secondary governance, including a summary of practices employed at other institutions, as it relates to three priority areas of focus: (1) Board Equity, Diversity and Inclusion; (2) Code of Conduct and Conflict of Interest Policy; (3) Board Evaluation. The Board Secretary has prepared a series of briefing notes for further discussion among members of the Governance and Nominating Committee, to ensure that research-based, evidence-informed practices are applied in the development and implementation of these priority initiatives.

While the Governance and Nominating Committee is making progress on these recommendations, K. Gardiner noted the importance of ensuring that the committee continues to engage Board members in next steps related to the ongoing implementation of the Governance Review. K. Gardiner provided an opportunity for Board members to offer any feedback, comments, or suggestions related to any of the identified areas of focus. No feedback on the proposed approach or areas of focus was offered as part of the discussion.

## 8. VICAR OF THE FOUNDER UPDATE

Bishop Wayne Kirkpatrick provided a summary of activities underway by a committee established to advise the Vicar of the Founder of his role. Membership includes representation from Chaplaincy, Wellspring, Alumni, Student Services, Faculty, and several priests, some who were former members of the Board of Governors but all whom have a long-standing association with StFX University. Bishop Kirkpatrick provided an overview of activities underway to help fulfill the roles and responsibilities of the Vicar of the Founder, including:

- Establishing and supporting an endowed Vicar of the Founder lecture series, bringing to campus, speakers who will contribute to a richer understanding of the history and tradition of the university and their relevance in the contemporary world. We are proposing a speaker on *Laudato Si'* for the fall as part of the Season of Creation from September 1 to October 4.
- Supporting the development of Catholic studies; supporting the development of one or more endowed chairs in Catholic studies similar to endowed chairs in Celtic studies.
- Supporting the multifaith chaplaincy as it seeks to engage in addressing 'the deficit in meaning' that is often characteristic of contemporary culture, and in providing spiritual resources. We had an Evangelical speaker at the Chaplain's Prayer Breakfast in November and many students from different faith backgrounds attended. There was also the Emmaus Road Retreat weekend in November.
- Assisting in raising the profile of the Chaplaincy, Wellspring, and student initiatives such as Theology On Tap.

## 9. VP STUDENTS UPDATE

Elizabeth Yeo (Vice-President, Students) provided an update on Student Services activities. A written report was submitted to the Board. Highlights from the report included:

- The President’s Action Committee on Anti-Racism (PACAR) has completed the development of the PACAR Anti-Racism Action Plan. Work continues to advance priority actions, including: developing supports and policies to support recruitment, retention and employment equity; and securing \$100,000 in grant funding from Bell Canada to provide EDIA Peer Mentors.
- The Residence Renewal Project has completed Phase 4 with Student Services staff focusing on implementing a new staffing structure, standards, and protocols for residence life.
- StFX Human Rights and Equity is developing a 4-course equity education micro-credential. The courses will have 4 main areas of focus: Systems, 2SLGBTQIA+, Anti-Blackness and Anti-Indigeneity, and Disability and Mental Health. The courses will be based on the free “transforming practice: learning equity, learning excellence” modules created by the Social Equity Group Curriculum Committee into StFX’s elearning platform.

Work continues to advance strategic priorities outlined in the StFX Student Experience and Opportunity Plan. In her presentation, E. Yeo identified two ongoing initiatives, including the establishment of a first year framework that articulates the institution goals for orientation and transition of all new students to StFX, and the implementation of the Good Neighbours Project Plan for 2023-24. The Student Experience and Opportunity Plan and supporting implementation framework were provided to the Board for information purposes.

## 10. STUDENTS’ UNION REPORT

Brendan Roberts (President, Students’ Union) highlighted a few points from a written report submitted to the Board including:

- Following the General Election, Sophia Fabiano has been named President-elect, and Jack Harding has been named Vice President Academic Affairs-elect for the Students’ Union. The upcoming Representative Election will elect the Student Board of Governors representative, 5 student senators, and 8 Board directors in the coming weeks).
- The Students’ Union has successfully secured financing for the Bloomfield renovation project which will officially begin before the end of April. With total costing for the project projected at just under \$2M the Union is well within its resources to take on this project.
- In line with the recommendations outlined in the Students’ Union Governance Review, the Union’s new bylaws have passed through a referendum held in the General Election. B. Roberts provided an overview of changes to the organizational structure, including a reduction in the size of the Executive Committee (from four Vice-Presidents to three, with the removal of Vice-President Activities and Events, and Vice-President Residence Affairs and the creation of a new Vice-President, Campus Affairs).
- In November, delegates from StFX, Acadia, St. Mary’s and Cape Breton University met in Halifax for Provincial Advocacy Week. This year, the Students’ Union advocacy and policy recommendations focused on several key areas, including housing and general affordability of attending post-secondary education. B. Roberts noted several successes from provincial advocacy efforts this year, including: the announcement of a one-time \$550 bursary for students receiving Nova Scotia Student Financial Assistance, and removal of the 31-day clause with regards to Medical Services Insurance for international students.

In response to questions from the Board, B. Roberts noted the importance of continuing to promote social engagement and involvement across campus and developing a better understanding of the unique experiences of graduate students at StFX. This may inform a different student governance model at StFX, which includes a body representing the needs and interests of graduate students.

## 11. ALUMNI ASSOCIATION REPORT

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

- As voted by the membership at the Annual General Meeting in October 2022, the Alumni Association formed a new Executive Team. The Governing Council welcomed three new members who began their first three year term on June 1, 2023: Blair Gould '10, Kristie Forbes '10, and Megan Thompson '17. Each of the new Councilors are filling Atlantic Canada seats.
- The Alumni Council last met in December 2022, virtually. Highlights included: discussion and approval of the strategic plan; discussion and approval of the 2023-24 budget; and the path forward for the renewal of various alumni awards.
- The Alumni Council approved the Association's strategic plan at its December 2022 meeting. The approved plan, which is still undergoing final editing for the web, was provided to the Board for information purposes.
- The Association, in partnership with the Alumni Affairs Office, launched the X Connects Mentorship program. Alumni may donate their time, knowledge and skills to the initiative by signing up to be a mentor to a current StFX student or recent graduate. Further information is available on the Alumni Affairs website.
- National Dinner East is planned for April 1, 2023. The Alumni Association and TD Insurance will be presenting sponsors.

## 12. RECEIVING OF REPORTS

### 12.1 Executive Committee

D. Flood (Chair, Executive Committee) noted that all items discussed at the most recent Executive Committee meeting had been covered in earlier items on the Board's agenda. Mr. Flood then introduced A. Hakin, to provide an overview of the StFX President's Action Committee on Anti-Racism (PACAR) Action Plan. The Plan was approved by the President and received support from the Executive Team on January 24, 2023. Board members had an opportunity to review the Plan in advance of the meeting, and to engage in discussion with the PACAR Co-Chairs, Robert Upshaw and Elizabeth Yeo, during the Information Session on February 23, 2024.

**MOTION:** That on the recommendation of the Executive Committee, the President's Action Committee on Anti-Racism (PACAR) Action Plan: Striving for Anti-Racism and Equity be endorsed by the StFX Board of Governors as presented (A. HAKIN/C. DORRINGTON). Motion carried.

### 12.2 Audit and Investment Committee

As advised at the December 2022 Board meeting, the University was required to restate previous financial statements. The auditors determined the errors to be material from an accounting standpoint and as such, the amended statements require Board approval. M. Furlotte (Chair, Audit and Investment Committee) provided an overview of key changes to the restated financial statements for 2021-22. It was noted that none of the adjustments made change the cash position of the university.

**MOTION:** That on the recommendation of the Audit and Investment Committee, the StFX Board of Governors approve the restated financial statements 2021-2022 as presented. (K. FURLOTTE/K. GARDINER).

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 December 31, 2022 be approved as presented. (M. FURLOTTE/R. CHISHOLM) Motion carried.

### **12.3 Governance and Nominating Committee**

K. Gardiner (Chair, Governance and Nominating Committee) commented on the ongoing work associated with the implementation of recommendations from the 2020 Governance Review and the importance of ongoing Board engagement in the process. The Committee is also considering potential candidates for Board and Committee Chair appointments.

K. Gardiner informed the Board that StFX University, under the direction of the Academic Vice-President and Provost, has initiated a search for the next Executive Director of the Coady Institute. The StFX University Bylaws (Section 10, Article II) dictates that in the appointment of the Executive Director, the Academic Vice-President and Provost shall engage a Search Committee which includes (in part), two (2) representatives of the Board.

Several names were considered by the Governance and Nominating Committee. There was general agreement that the members of the Board who serve on the Selection Committee possess strong institutional knowledge of the Coady, and could offer valuable insights that would inform the search for its next Executive Director.

**MOTION:** That on the recommendation of the Governance and Nominating Committee, Sylvia Parris-Drummond and Deborah Gillis be appointed to the Coady Executive Director Selection Committee (K. GARDINER/S. ABBASS). Motion carried.

### **12.4 Finance Committee**

L. Raitt, Chair of the Finance Committee, noted that the items discussed at the most recent committee meeting had been covered in earlier items on the Board's agenda.

### **12.5 Property and Risk Management Committee**

M. Rodrigue provided an update for the Property and Risk Management Committee. A Risk Management Committee is currently being formed by university management. Progress as it relates to the work of the Risk Management Committee will be shared with the Property and Risk Management Committee at subsequent meetings.

### **12.6 Advancement and External Relations Committee**

On behalf of D. Gillis (Chair, Advancement and External Relations Committee), D. Graham (Vice-President, Advancement) provided a brief overview of items discussed by the committee. This included a generative discussion regarding recommendations received through an internal review of the Advancement Office. D. Graham noted that an integrated approach to implementing the recommendations across Advancement will be necessary. Areas of focus include (but are not limited to): improving and centralizing data collection and management; developing a multi-year fundraising plan to



support university priorities; and building a Culture of Philanthropy Strategy that runs through the university's stakeholders, including: Deans and Faculty, Board of Governors, and Senior Leadership.

### **13. HOUSE KEEPING AND FUTURE BUSINESS**

D. Flood noted that the next regular meeting of the Board would be in April 17, 2023 to review and consider the proposed 2023-2024 Operating Budget. The meeting will take place virtually.

### **14. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:38pm (W. KIRKPATRICK).