



## Board of Governors Meeting

### Thursday, October 17, 2024 – Minutes

*The Board of Governors of Acadia University acknowledges that we are located in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq People.*

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A meeting of the Board of Governors was held on Thursday, October 17, 2024 , at 9:00 a.m., in the Great Room, Wu Welcome Centre, and by virtual means using Microsoft Teams.

Governors present: Henry Demone (Chair), Bert Frizzell (First Vice-Chair), Dr. Jeff Hennessy (President and Vice-Chancellor), Bethany Moffatt, Cathy Simpson, Charles Coll, Christine Luckasavitch, Clive Anderson, Dr. Andrew Davis, Dr. Anna Robbins, Dr. Candy O'Connor, Dr. Jeff Banks, Ed Barrett, Gale Colpitts, Ross Langley, Martin Suter, Matt Rios, Melinda Daye, Nastasya Kennedy

Management present: Erin Beaudin, Ashlee Cunsolo, Scott Duguay, Mary MacVicar, Nancy Handrigan, and Sonya Pineo (University Secretary).

Regrets: Nancy McCain (Chancellor), Cameron MacKeen, Karen Hutt, Rob McGregor, Pam Mood, Mark Adam, Tracey McGillivray

#### **1. Call to Order**

H. Demone, Board Chair, called the meeting to order, welcomed meeting participants and provided a territorial acknowledgment.

- The Board Chair welcomed the new Governors, Tim Formuziewich, Cathy Simpson, Nastasya Kennedy, and Ed Barrett noting that Ed had served previously a number of years ago.
- The Chair welcomed the new University Secretary, Sonya Pineo.
- Rev. Anna Robbins opened the meeting with a prayer.

#### **2. Approval of Meeting Agenda**

**IT WAS MOVED** by M. Suter / D. Green

**THAT the Meeting Agenda be approved as distributed.**

**CARRIED.**

#### **3. Approval of Consent Agenda**

**IT WAS MOVED** by S. Fleckenstein/ N. Kennedy

**THAT the Consent Agenda be approved as distributed.**

**CARRIED.**

**4. Approval of Minutes**

**IT WAS MOVED** by M. Suter/ S. Fleckenstein

**THAT the Minutes from June 21, 2024 be approved as distributed.**

**CARRIED.**

**5. Business arising from Minutes**

Safe Disclosure Policy

The implementation of a "safe disclosure policy" aimed at providing employees a secure platform, known as the "Care Program," for reporting wrongdoing. B. Moffatt and E. Beaudin are key leaders on the initiative, with collaboration from Grant Thornton as external partners. The policy has been in development for over a year and is intended to position Acadia University as a leader in safe disclosure practices. It will allow employees to report issues confidentially and ensure responses are tracked and managed through a structured process. The goal is to support transparency, safety, and responsiveness in addressing employee concerns.

The anticipated launch date is November 1, with communication to inform the campus.

There will be quarterly reports on the program usage to the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee, and annual reports to the Board

**MOTION TO APPROVE THE SAFE DISCLOSURE POLICY**

**IT WAS MOVED** by B. Moffatt / M. Suter

**THAT the Board of Governors approve the Safe Disclosure Policy.**

**CARRIED**

**6. President's Report (Closed Session)**

The Chair called for a motion to move the meeting into Closed Session.

**IT WAS MOVED** by M. Rios / C. Luckasavitch

**THAT the meeting move to Closed Session. (9:13 AM)**

**CARRIED.**

The Chair called for a motion to return the meeting to Open Session.

**IT WAS MOVED** by M. Suter / D. Green

**THAT the meeting return to Open Session. (9:34 AM)**

**CARRIED.**

## 7. Acadia's Strategic Direction

Acadia's Strategic Direction document was posted to Teams and distributed via email prior to today's meeting.

J. Hennessy introduced the strategic direction document, aiming to focus on a few key areas to ensure that Acadia University has a clear vision for growth, purpose, and relevance over the next five years. This document builds on what we heard during the June Board Retreat. The Strategic Direction is framed around four main pillars, each aiming to create a cohesive, forward-thinking environment that prepares Acadia's students for global challenges and future workforce needs.

The goal is to position Acadia as Canada's premier institution for applied liberal education, blending theoretical knowledge with practical skills and leadership to address global challenges. Our students will be prepared to tackle issues like climate change through a purpose-driven education, infusing all degree programs with an applied liberal arts focus. They will gain a sense of direction that extends beyond academic achievement, to contributing positively to society and addressing pressing global concerns.

We are currently educating what is probably the last generation of students who can impact climate change.

### Four Strategic Pillars:

#### Strategic Academic Programming

- Emphasizes applied liberal education, with a specific curricular focus on climate change.
- Students across all disciplines, from business to English to engineering, would engage with climate change topics to prepare for roles that may intersect with climate adaptation, policy, and sustainable practices.
- Potential common course requirements in climate studies and a Capstone course for senior students to integrate climate-related knowledge.
- Equip graduates with both the specific knowledge of their field and a broader understanding of environmental impacts, making Acadia's education distinct and relevant in an evolving job market.

#### Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Anti-Racism

- Emphasize equity, diversity, and inclusion across all aspects of campus life and academics.
- Proposals to incorporate Indigenous land stewardship, food sovereignty, and ecological perspectives throughout the climate curriculum.
- A campus and curriculum that represent and integrate diverse voices and approaches, particularly in addressing global challenges such as climate change.

#### Campus Culture

- Enhance community, mental health, and wellness support within the campus

environment.

- Recognizing student and faculty mental health needs, which have increased due to global challenges like climate anxiety.
- Strengthening student support services and promoting a purpose-driven community culture that reduces student anxieties about their future impact on the world.
- Build a supportive, resilient campus that fosters a strong sense of community and purpose.

#### Financial Health and Sustainability

- Ensure the university's financial stability through new revenue sources, cost management, and effective resource allocation.
- Revenue Strategies: Opportunities like Open Acadia to generate revenue through community education, possibly offering courses in climate and health-related fields. Land lease opportunities were mentioned, with a caution to respect indigenous and environmental protocols.

#### Discussion:

A question was raised around the climate change focus, questioning how it fits within fields like music and English, given its apparent alignment with disciplines like engineering or political science.

A. Cunsolo reported that faculty from every unit—including the arts—see how their work aligns with climate and sustainability themes. She noted that over 30% of courses already touch on climate and environmental issues. She provided examples of how several departments were already incorporating climate change. She emphasized that faculty across disciplines not only find relevance in climate-related themes but are also eager to expand their involvement, seeing climate change as an essential component of education in all fields.

Concerns were raised about the resourcing required to offer climate-related courses for all students, especially if a common first-year course or Capstone project becomes mandatory. There were also questions about the potential impact on other electives and the ability to maintain a liberal arts breadth.

The plan is to repurpose existing resources rather than increase budget allocations. Ultimately, Senate, not the board, would decide on specific curriculum adjustments.

Questions arose about whether this direction aligns with market demand and student interest. Will incoming students and parents perceive climate change education as a competitive advantage or if it risks limiting Acadia's appeal.

Preliminary findings indicate that students and prospective students value climate education, viewing it as a practical and meaningful component of their degrees. Students expressed anxiety about the uncertainty of their future due to climate change. Even those

not specializing in environmental fields recognize the importance of climate literacy in their future careers.

There is a need for a climate focus that incorporates Indigenous stewardship, equity, and justice. This could differentiate Acadia from other institutions by providing a more holistic, inclusive approach to environmental studies.

Further discussions took place.

A special meeting for the Board will be planned for additional discussion, this will likely happen in early December.

Board members will provide written feedback to the President. Taking the input into consideration, the plan may be revised.

#### **8. *Financial Update***

Documentation on the Financial Update were posted on Teams before the meeting and circulated as part of the meeting documentation by email.

M. MacVicar provided an update:

The Q1 update shows that while domestic enrollment is on track, international enrollment is below expectations, impacting revenue. Adjustments to the tuition model and residence occupancy are being monitored closely, but overall, the university anticipates a budget shortfall this year, mainly due to the decrease in International enrollment and associated residence and meal plan revenue.

Management is identifying ways to reduce a projected deficit through strategic spending adjustments and savings from unfilled positions. Investment performance is strong, with endowment assets growing to \$140 million, showing a notable increase over five years. Further updates will be provided to the board as actions are implemented.

Concerns were raised about the federal government's changes to the international student visa process, which has significantly impacted enrollment. Advocacy efforts to influence policy are ongoing. Given the uncertainty, the university plans to budget conservatively for international enrollment, focusing on a strategic enrollment plan to manage potential fluctuations and mitigate financial risks.

#### **9. *Provost, VP Academic Update***

The Provost and Vice-President Academic Report was posted to Teams before the meeting and circulated by email as part of the meeting documentation.

Dr. Cunsolo provided an enthusiastic update on her first two months. Some highlights included:

- There's a strong desire among faculty and staff for a cohesive academic plan. This plan will help unify efforts across departments while allowing programs to maintain their unique strengths.
- Policy and Structural Improvements: Working closely with the registrar to identify and amend academic policies that currently limit student access, success, and innovation. This includes establishing pathways for prior learning assessment, enabling students with professional and diverse learning backgrounds to receive credit.
- Acadia's nursing program is flourishing, with newly renovated facilities, state-of-the-art labs, and positive feedback from students and faculty. The program has garnered interest from health leaders, including Indigenous health authorities, to collaborate on curriculum development.
- The academic portfolio is increasingly focused on EDIAR initiatives. New hires including, an Associate VP for EDIAR and an advisor on Indigenous affairs, are shaping policies to incorporate these principles across academic planning and programming.
- Recently approved by the Senate, the university's new research plan sets a strong vision for research development, with broad support across the institution.

A discussion took place:

Questions were raised about the new prior learning assessment program, particularly regarding recognition of Indigenous knowledge and African Nova Scotian experience. A. Cunsolo emphasized this as a core reason for the program, which will validate diverse learning backgrounds. The development of an operational manual for the Provost's office is underway to ensure consistent documentation of policies, processes, and responsibilities.

There was interest in collaboration for an upcoming Indigenous agriculture conference, with plans to connect local farms, including Acadia's, to support Indigenous agricultural initiatives.

## **10. VP Student Experience Update**

The VP Student Experience Report was posted to Teams before the meeting and circulated by email as part of the meeting documentation.

S. Duguay provided an overview of the report:

Acadia's growth plan has been very successful, with enrollment reaching a high of 3,600 students.

International enrollment was impacted by federal visa processing issues, though Acadia fared much better than many institutions. The university is adapting its recruitment approach, conducting more direct engagement with international applicants and relying

less on agents.

Acadia is advocating for more tailored messaging from Nova Scotia to distinguish the province's offerings, including guaranteed housing for international students, to mitigate national concerns and improve future recruitment outcomes.

Questions were raised about the impacts of strained international relations with India and China on student enrollment - The focus is on diverse recruitment markets to avoid over-reliance on any single region.

A discussion took place around alumni engagement, especially with recent graduates who often feel disconnected immediately after graduation. Efforts are underway to foster a stronger sense of community among young alumni, with a focus on engagement rather than early financial solicitation.

### **11. Finance, Administration, and CFO Report**

The VP Finance, Administration & CFO Report was posted to Teams before the meeting and circulated by email as part of the meeting documentation.

E. Beaudin explained that the report was pretty straightforward but wanted to highlight the transition to Dayforce as the new provider for pension and payroll, with an expected go-live date of July 1, 2025.

KPMG has been engaged to review the past three years and ensure any existing issues are addressed before the new system is implemented. This change aims to enhance efficiency and reduce risk.

### **12. VP External Relations Report**

The VP External Relations Report was posted to Teams before the meeting and circulated by email as part of the meeting documentation.

N. Handrigan provided an overview of the report:

Terms of Reference Document: This is a valuable resource for understanding work related to named funds and campus naming initiatives, which are largely donation driven. The document contains insights into the university's donation-focused projects and efforts within external relations.

Recent meetings in Bermuda and Montreal engaged alumni, especially recent graduates, who showed strong interest in helping with student recruitment. It was an opportunity to connect and ensuring that they feel like they are part of the Acadia family.

A new mentorship program to support prospective students is in the works, with a focus on Florida and the Bahamas to start.

Fundraising for the Student Center has reached an exciting high of \$17.4 million toward the \$24 million goal, which is up significantly from last year.

This weekend's upcoming Homecoming events were highlighted, with many activities for the Acadia Community.

A question was raised around Homecoming coinciding with Reading Week, it seems suboptimal is this a one-off? It wasn't ideal as many students were away.

This decision is made by Senate, and they plan to reconsider the timing next year.

**13. Senate Update – T. McGillivray**

No update

**14. Update from the Presidents**

**Acadia Divinity College (ADC) – A. Robbins**

A. Robbins provided an update.

- Divinity College has achieved the majority of goals set in its flexible strategic vision extending to 2026 and is now working on revising this vision for future growth.
- The college remains financially robust, concluding the year with a surplus and strong funding from tuition, government grants, fundraising, and growing endowments.
- Student numbers remain steady, with a dominant share of Atlantic Canada students, and efforts are being made to increase recruitment in Ontario, Quebec, and Western Canada. Unfortunately, no international students could enroll this year due to visa issues.
- The college received a \$1.2 million grant from the Lilly Foundation to explore AI's potential in theological education. They are experimenting with AI-generated syllabi, lectures, and even grading, which has shown promising results.
- A pilot course on AI ethics, fully generated by AI, is currently being tested with six students.
- There are plans to beta test AI-generated courses in multiple languages, aiming to provide accessible theological education worldwide at minimal cost.
- AI innovations are intended to allow faculty to concentrate more on mentoring and research while reducing time on administrative tasks.

**MOTION TO APPOINT ED BARRETT, STAN THOMAS AND CORA TOLLIVER TO THE ADC BOARD**

**IT WAS MOVED** by A. Robbins / D. Green

**THAT the Board of Governors appoint Ed Barrett, Stan Thomas and Cora Tolliver to the ADC Board.**

**CARRIED**

**Acadia Students' Union (ASU) – S. Taylor**

No update.



## **Acadia Alumni Association (AAA) – C. Luckasavitch**

C. Luckasavitch provided an update:

- The Alumni Association is developing a new strategic plan, aiming to complete and have it in motion by June 2025.
- Strengthening relationships with alumni and Mi'kma'ki communities is a priority.
- Alumni have donated nearly \$296,000 from 178 donors, with the Alumni Association committing \$1 million, matching up to \$250,000, which has been surpassed.
- The 150th anniversary of student journalism is on November 15, with a free press-themed panel featuring notable journalists and organized by an alumnus.

## **15. Updates from Board Committees**

### Academic Resources Committee – M. Daye

M. Daye delivered her final report as Chair of the Academic Resources Committee (ARC) with a heartfelt reflection on her tenure. She shared her pride in revitalizing the committee, which had been inactive for nearly a decade, and emphasized the progress made in re-establishing ARC as an influential body within the board.

### Advancement Committee – T. McGillivray

No Update

### EDI Committee – C. Luckasavitch provided an update for C. Anderson

- The committee is working to include the new Executive Director of Indigenous Affairs and Indigenization, Zabrina Whitman. Her perspective would be valuable.
- There is a strong sense that the university is actively advancing the EDI efforts, moving from planning to implementation.
- Aiming to have the new Associate Vice-President, Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility, and the Executive Director of Indigenous Affairs and Indigenization attend future Board meetings to share their insights directly
- A. Cunsolo further added:
- Acadia's EDI efforts are advancing under these two new key leaders, focusing on collaboration across EDI, Indigenization, and anti-racism initiatives.
- Current work includes inventorying campus EDI activities to identify needs and gaps, potential restructuring for better resource allocation, and developing training modules for campus members, particularly leaders.
- Plans also include exploring alternative dispute resolution methods to address conflicts compassionately, especially for Indigenous and racialized individuals. Both leaders may present their progress and ideas at the February board meeting.

### Finance, Audit, and Risk Committee (FARC) – M. Suter provided an update in B. Moffatt's absence.

- Efforts are underway to mitigate potential budget shortfalls through delayed hiring and other cost-saving measures.
- Early budget planning for the next fiscal year has begun, with a focus on improving the budget process, which has been acknowledged as ineffective.
- International enrollment challenges are impacting finances, and the committee

plans to work closely with management to develop a realistic and well-grounded budget for the coming year.

Governance Committee – H. Demone

- The committee is seeking a new chair after the previous candidate Sonny Oad was not reappointed by the provincial government.
- Several committees, including Academic Resources and Governance, are currently without chairs. Efforts are underway to fill these roles.
- The Interim Nominating Report remains incomplete, with plans to finalize committee chairs and populate committees in the coming weeks. The Chair called for a Motion to approve the 2024-2025 Nominating Report as incomplete.

**IT WAS MOVED** by D. Green / M. Suter

**THAT Bert Frizzell be appointed to the Board of Governors as one of the Board's appointees**

**CARRIED**

**IT WAS MOVED** by M. Daye / J. Banks

**THAT the Board of Governors approve the 2024-2025 Nominating Report as incomplete.**

**CARRIED**

Human Resources Committee – H. Demone

- There is a need to revise Acadia's Presidential Review Process. The current process is too complex, requiring a large committee, and has not been fully implemented in the past several presidents.
- A streamlined review process will be brought forward at the next meeting to make the review more practical and manageable. The new process will involve input from alumni, the Student Union President, and the Faculty Council. The process will include annual objectives, quarterly updates, and a yearly review to ensure ongoing accountability.

Investment Committee – H. Demone provided an update in E. Barratt's absence

Ed Barrett, though not present and being new to the Board, will be the new Chair of the Investment Committee. For the benefit of new directors, the Chair explained that the committee has adopted an outsourced Chief Investment Officer (CIO) model. The previous chair, Stu McLean, whose term as governor has ended, left the investment portfolio in excellent condition. The university's investments the highest they have ever been. The chair expressed confidence that Ed Barrett will be a strong leader for the committee moving forward.

Student Life Committee – S. Taylor and R. Ffrench

There are efforts to improve the Student Life Committee by having co-chairs lead initiatives—specifically, the Student Union President and R. Ffrench. Traditionally, the

Student Union President has had limited time for organizing meetings, so the idea was for Robert to handle organization while students participate to provide input. Last year, R. Ffrench was unable to contribute due to health issues but has now agreed to take on this role

#### Enrolment Marketing Committee – C. Coll

- Scott and his team have been working effectively to address various challenges.
- The Committee continues to meet regularly focusing on student recruitment and development
- Key initiatives include enhancing international recruitment strategies, though external factors like the federal election may impact these efforts.
- S. Duguay has also overseen a rebranding initiative, which has improved control over the university's identity and branding assets.
- There is a push for better data-driven decision-making, especially concerning recruitment, to improve student intake management.

A discussion took place around the challenges in attracting international students due to federal government policies and the impact of broader national sentiment, likely to worsen with potential government changes.

Acadia aims to stay competitive by offering targeted incentives, like guaranteed housing, which has already shown positive effects on enrollment.

Further discussions took place around distinguishing between government relations (GR) and marketing strategies to strengthen the institution's competitive position. leveraging GR to enhance the university's competitive position and differentiate from institutions with less favorable international student policies.

#### Town and Gown Committee – J. Hennessy provided an update in S. Fleckenstein's absence

- Relations between the institution and town are strong, with a significant decrease in nuisance and noise complaints, possibly due to improved police cooperation and a shift in student behavior.
- The municipal election will likely result in new council members, and potentially a new mayor, with results expected next week.
- Joint initiatives with the town are ongoing, focusing on issues like food insecurity and housing.
- A suggestion was made to follow up with the new council on the status of the town's video surveillance pilot project, which hasn't yielded useful results; removing it could positively impact students.

#### **15. Other Business**

- 2024-2025 Board Meeting Dates  
The 2024-2025 Board Meeting Dates were distributed prior to the meeting.

#### ***IT WAS MOVED***

***THAT the Board of Governors approve the updated 2024-2025 Board Meeting Dates.***

**CARRIED.**

The Chair called for a motion to move to Closed Session

**IT WAS MOVED** J. Banks / C. Simpson

**THAT the meeting move to Closed Session.**

**CARRIED.**

**17. Adjournment**

The meeting continued in Closed Session until it was adjourned

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*Henry Demone, Chair*

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*Sonya Pineo, Recording Secretary*