



Meeting of the Board of Governors

April 24, 2025 – 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.

A meeting of the Board of Governors was held on Thursday, April 24, 2025, at 9:00 a.m., in the Acadia Room, K.C. Irving Environmental Science Centre, and by virtual means using Microsoft Teams.

Governors present: Henry Demone (Chair), Bert Frizzell (First Vice-Chair), Dr. Jeff Hennessey (President and Vice-Chancellor), Allan MacDonald, Cameron MacKeen, Cathy Simpson, Charles Coll, Dr. Andrew Davis, Dr. Jeff Banks, Dr. Candy M. O'Connor, Ed Barrett, Gale Colpitts, Mark Adam, Martin Suter, Matt Rios, Melinda Daye, Nastasya Kennedy, Rev. Dr. Dan Green, Rev. Judith R. Tod, Robert McGregor, Shana Lespere, Shelley Fleckenstein, Stan Thomas, Tracey McGillivray, Yash Gahlot

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

Regrets: Christine Luckasavitch, Karen Hutt, Clive Anderson, Tim Formuziewich

1. **Call to Order**

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

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 E. Barrett / J. Banks

THAT the Consent Agenda be approved as distributed.

CARRIED.

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

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

IT WAS MOVED by D. Green / R. McGregor
THAT the meeting move into Closed Session

CARRIED.

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

IT WAS MOVED by S. Fleckenstein / E. Barrett
THAT the meeting return to Open Session

CARRIED.

J. Tod provided a prayer.

5. Consideration of the 2025-2026 Budget

The 2025-2026 Budget package was distributed via email before today's meeting and posted to Teams.

S. Lespere reported on the proposed budget:

- Grateful to the Finance Team for providing clear and accurate information.
- Thankful to FARC and the Executive team for their diligence and oversight.
- The quality of the financial reporting has improved, even if the figures themselves are concerning.

E. Beaudin presented the proposed budget.

- The current financial structure is unsustainable; immediate action is required. The 2025–26 budget is a starting point, but insufficient on its own.
- Cash flow projections are concerning; only one of six provincial financial health indicators is being met. With a potential intervention required by 2027–28 if benchmarks are not met.
- Some underutilized reserves will be drawn on to bridge gaps temporarily, but this is not a long-term solution.
- Staffing levels have increased significantly post-COVID and must be reduced to align with sustainability goals. Salaries account for about two-thirds of expenditures and are a key driver of costs.
- The year-end forecast shows a large deficit, and there were three main budget shortfalls in 2024–25: tuition (especially international), interest income, and salary budgeting.
- Operating cash is expected to fall into a significant deficit by March 2026.
- The institution currently holds both permanently and temporarily restricted reserves; some will be used for scholarships and operations.
- Tuition for domestic students is frozen for two years; out-of-province and international increases are planned.
- Bilateral funding agreement includes clawbacks that pose risks in future years.

- International student enrolment continues to decline; domestic enrolment is increasing but doesn't offset the loss.
- Funding for the nursing program is confirmed for now, but risks remain in later years.
- Interest revenue is down; the sale of surplus IP addresses is planned to generate short-term income.
- Open Acadia is targeting 5% annual growth under new leadership.
- Cuts have been made across all portfolios; the current budget is minimal.
- Administrative cost reductions will begin with planned savings from retirements, vacancies, and streamlining.
- Despite fiscal constraints, some support remains for strategic priorities like campus culture and EDIAR.
- The financial sustainability plan will include measures such as fundraising, cost containment, program review, technology and academic planning, enrollment strategy, and land leasing opportunities.
- The 2025–26 budget sets a foundation but does not achieve full sustainability. A more robust financial sustainability plan will be presented to the board in October.

A conversation took place:

Appreciation was expressed for the clear budget.

Can specific actions for years 2, 3, and 4 be identified now to ensure continuity of direction?

A five-year forecast has been prepared. A full financial sustainability plan will be presented to the board in October. The intention is to explore all options and maintain transparency and accuracy.

A comment was made about a budget line showing 25% less funding for Nursing despite its strategic importance.

This reflects past issues where proposals lacked full costing and approval. The institution is now ensuring all proposals are properly reviewed and approved by finance before submission.

A question was raised about whether early retirement incentives would be introduced for staff as well as faculty.

A program is being explored for staff and faculty, with a mix of attrition and targeted consolidations. If insufficient, strategic cuts may follow.

A question was raised about whether Acadia's online education pricing is competitive.

The current pricing is high compared to competitors. New credential types and professional programming could be an alternative revenue strategy.

The chair called for a motion.

IT WAS MOVED by M. Suter / S. Thomas

THAT the Board of Governors approve the 2025-2026 budget.

CARRIED.

6. Provost, VP Academic Report

The Provost & VP Academic Report was circulated as part of the Board Report before today's meeting and posted to Teams.

A. Cunsolo provided highlights:

- Fifteen academic planning sessions have been held, including five with students and one all-staff/faculty town hall.
- Following the release of Bill 12 and Schedule H, sessions were held with faculty and leaders to explain implications and gather input.
- A dual approach is being taken: developing an academic plan while responding to new government reporting requirements.
- A critical response team is being formed, in alignment with the financial sustainability plan, to coordinate academic restructuring.
- Leadership roles are being adjusted to provide capacity for this work, including a part-time project manager and a data support team.
- Work is underway with Senate committees to streamline and coordinate program review and curriculum changes.
- Strategic relationships are being developed, including a proposed Halifax industry/government day to gather labour market data.
- Working with N. Handrigan and her team on a university-wide impact storytelling campaign to help with alumni and public engagement.
- Strong engagement from academic leaders and staff is emerging, with innovative curriculum proposals and improved collaboration.
- The goal is to create programs that are responsive, efficient, and aligned with Acadia's mission and distinctiveness.
- Acadia is maintaining strong communication with the government and receiving positive feedback on its proactive response.
- The new nursing program is highly subscribed and on track for Fall 2026, with a unique focus on Mi'kmaq, African Nova Scotian, and French health programming.
- A new Health and Wellness Research Institute is being established to unify and highlight Acadia's health research work.
- Plans are progressing to create a standalone School of Counselling to meet high demand and expand enrolment.
- The Africentric B.Ed. program is progressing well with strong community and donor

partnerships.

- Significant progress has been made in EDI and Indigenization through creative leadership and restructuring.
- Ongoing efforts continue to build trust and accessibility in the Provost's role, recognizing past concerns and working toward positive cultural change.

7. Motion: Appointment, Dean of Libraries and Archives

IT WAS MOVED by J. Hennessy / G. Colpitts

THAT the Board of Governors appoint Jennifer Richard as Dean of Libraries and Archives for the period of July 1, 2025, to June 30, 2028 .

CARRIED

8. VP Student Experience Report

The VP Experience Report was circulated as part of the Board Report before today's meeting and posted to Teams.

S. Duguay provided highlights:

- When the 2022–23 enrollment growth plan had been approved, international applications were up 48%. The recent government changes significantly impacted those numbers.
- Enrollment had been heavily affected by past funding cuts; much of the recent staffing growth reflected recovery from those losses.
- Key support positions, such as Mental Health Services, were added to address growing student needs.
- The marketing team, which did not exist prior, was established and has grown under the current leadership.
- Recent federal policy changes have significantly altered the recruitment landscape, requiring greater efficiency in the recruitment team's efforts.
- Unfortunately, we are no longer able to recruit in key regions where we had previously been active.
- Interest in Canada has declined over the past 18 months, with IRCC rejecting many applicants.
- A comprehensive review of our academic program offerings is underway and will be critical to future recruitment efforts.
- Overall, it was a strong year for the student experience.
- Residence incidents have been minimal, which marks a major improvement from previous years.

A conversation took place:

What has been the impact of the pool closure?

The strongest response came from swimmers and their families. Mental health support was offered to affected students, but ultimately, they declined. The closure was driven by ongoing unsustainable operational costs and the deteriorating physical condition of the facility. The general community has been understanding and accepting of the situation.

Will increased provincial investment in mental health reduce the university's responsibility for providing those services?

There's no indication that provincial services will replace or reduce campus-based mental health support. Universities have increasingly assumed responsibilities typically handled by public services.

Has increased U.S. student recruitment been considered due to the political climate there?

Recruitment efforts have expanded in the U.S., with some recent success. However, U.S. students typically consider larger Canadian institutions, making market penetration difficult for Acadia.

9. VP Finance, Administration & CFO Report

The VP Finance, Administration & CFO Report was circulated as part of the Board Report before today's meeting and posted to Teams.

10. VP External Relations Report

The VP External Relations Report was circulated as part of the Board Report before today's meeting and posted to Teams.

N. Handrigan provided an update:

- Around 12 years ago, the university reinvested in Alumni and Development portfolios following a period of neglect.
- The initial focus was on repairing donor and alumni relationships, collecting on past pledges, and launching the *Campaign for Acadia*.
- That campaign exceeded its goal and significantly increased the endowment while supporting campus infrastructure and student scholarships, despite being shut down early due to COVID.
- The current team maintains regular contact with hundreds of alumni and continues to provide personalized fund reports.
- Ongoing engagement across Canada and internationally helps maintain donor interest and university visibility.
- The office is now addressing long-overdue back-office tasks, including cleaning up 852 special reserve accounts.
- Despite operational pressures, continuing frontline alumni and donor engagement is

considered essential.

- The communications team, especially Fred Sgambati, continues to win external awards for excellence.
- In light of Bill 12 and Schedule H, external messaging is focused on communicating opportunities and positive future directions.
- An alumni survey is being launched for the first time in eight years to inform future programming.
- A new story campaign will gather testimonials from alumni about how Acadia has impacted their lives and careers.
- The Alumni Awards Dinner is coming up, and everyone is encouraged to attend.
- The Student Center Campaign continues to go very well.

N. McCain spoke about the Student Center Campaign:

- The campaign is nearing its goal.
- Thank you to all Board members for their contributions. We are aiming for 100% Board support.
- Groundbreaking is planned for this fall, with fundraising efforts continuing.
- The new space will really benefit students, and future projects are already being considered.

Gratitude was expressed to N. McCain for a tremendous job.

11. Amendments to the External Relations Policies

The proposed changes were circulated prior to today's meeting.

This is a request for Board approval to globally update all policies and governance documents by replacing "Advancement" with "External Relations," including related committee and position titles.

IT WAS MOVED by T. McGillivray / S. Fleckenstein

***THAT the Board of Governors approve the change of the name
"Advancement" to "External Relations" in all policies.***

CARRIED.

The proposed change will update the Naming Policy by renaming Advancement to External Relations, naming scope, clarifying Board authority, adding EDI considerations, and updating section titles and contacts.

IT WAS MOVED by T. McGillivray / M. Suter

***THAT the Board of Governors approve the amendments to the External
Relations Naming Policy as distributed.***

CARRIED.

The proposed changes will update the Endowed Chair Professorship Policy by standardizing the format, simplifying the language, and clearly stating specific minimum funding amounts.

A question was raised around whether there is a provision to amend the specified dollar amount in the future, considering inflation and other factors.

Minimum funding levels for all positions are subject to review and revision at any time. However, any revisions will not override existing gift agreements made prior to the revision date.

IT WAS MOVED by T. McGillivray / M. Daye

THAT the Board of Governors approve the amendments to the Endowed Chair/Professorship Policy as distributed.

CARRIED.

12. Senate Update

T. McGillivray expressed appreciation and gratitude to President Hennessy and Dr Cunsolo in guiding Senate through the implications of Bill 12. Particularly, the balanced transparency, open dialogue, and decisiveness. Their leadership will be essential in navigating the year ahead.

The following motion was approved by the Senate. It is being presented to the Board of Governors because it is a change to the voting membership of Senate, therefore, it requires both Senate and Board of Governors approval.

IT WAS MOVED by T. McGillivray / M. Adam

THAT the non-voting Senate member currently listed as the Coordinator of Indigenous Affairs become a voting member of Senate and be listed as the Executive Advisor on L'nu Affairs and Indigenization.

CARRIED.

13. Update from the Presidents

Acadia Divinity College (ADC) – A. Robbins

No update

Acadia Students' Union (ASU) – Y. Gahlot

Y. Gahlot provided an update:

- The transition to the incoming executive team has taken place, including a full-day session that went well.
- Incoming executives are prepared to begin their roles as of May 1, with outgoing execs available to support as needed.

- A reported deficit of approximately \$30,000 is expected for the year, though this may change depending on student enrolment.
- Building renovations are scheduled for the fall, requiring office relocations and contributing to a predicted deficit for the coming year.
- Appreciation was expressed for the opportunity to serve and for the support received from the university community.

The Board Chair thanked Y. Gahlot for his service throughout the year.

Acadia Alumni Association (AAA) – M. Rios

M. Rios provided an update in C. Luckasavitch absence:

- C. Luckasavitch sent her regrets.
- The Alumni Association had a very successful year under her leadership.
- The Association appoints one-third of the Board of Governors and distributes funds to campus and alumni initiatives.
- A \$1M commitment was made to the Student Centre initiative, with the first year fulfilled.
- Approximately \$15K was distributed to student scholarships, programming, EDI, and athletics.
- The Association continues to strongly support the Office of Alumni Relations in engaging the alumni community.
- Preparations are underway for the Alumni AGM, board appointments, and a new five-year strategic plan aligned with university priorities.
- The Alumni Dinner is coming up next week. This is a great opportunity to celebrate with the community. Everyone is encouraged to attend.

The Board Chair recognized that this was M. Rios' final Board of Governors meeting, noting appreciation for all he has contributed.

14. Update from Board Committees

Academic Resources Committee – M. Rios

- The committee was initially focused on academic strategic planning, but has shifted in light of new external pressures.
- This committee's purpose is to create space for Dr Cunsolo to share updates and receive feedback from governors, faculty, Senate leaders, and students.
- The committee aims to foster open dialogue and constructive challenges to academic planning.
- There has been strong engagement and commitment from members.

EDI Committee – C. Anderson

- No update

Enrolment Marketing Committee – C. Coll

- The committee met on April 7 ahead of the Executive Committee meeting and welcomed new members.
- The meeting cycle has been increased to better align with board meetings and key points in the VP Student Experience's annual cycle.
- Discussions aim to both inform the committee and give the VP a chance to highlight challenges and initiatives.
- The portfolio is broad, including enrollment, retention, student supports, and marketing.
- There has been strong collaboration between enrollment and finance in this year's budget planning.
- The committee will focus on retention and the one-stop shop initiative at its next meeting on May 26.

External Relations Committee – T. McGillivray

- T. McGillivray extended a huge congratulations to N. McCain and N. Handrigan on an incredibly successful campaign for the Student Centre.
- The committee is still on hiatus because the focus remains on the Student Centre Campaign.
- Aiming to resume committee activities soon.

Finance, Audit, and Risk Committee – S. Lespere

- No further report

Governance Committee – R. Langley

- The Governance Committee has been discussing Bill 12 and its implications for governance structure.
- A full governance review, including possibly retaining Maureen Reed, is on hold pending further direction from the government.
- The Nominating report was circulated prior to today's meeting with the changes highlighted in yellow. The Changes include S. Lespere becoming Chair of FARC and C. Coll becoming Board Secretary.

IT WAS MOVED H. Demone / M. Suter

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

CARRIED.

- The updated Governance Committee Terms of Reference were circulated before today's meeting. The only change is to update the name of the Canadian Baptist of Atlantic Canada.

IT WAS MOVED R. Langley / D. Green

THAT the Board of Governors approve the updated Terms of Reference for the Governance Committee.

CARRIED.

Human Resources Committee – H. Demone

- A meeting was held earlier this week to provide the President with a mandate for the upcoming AUFA negotiations.
- This is an important step toward ensuring institutional sustainability.
- A clear strategy is in place, with bargaining scheduled to begin on May 6.
- Pre-bargaining discussions have gone very well so far.
- Updates will be shared as the process continues.

A Conversation took place:

Appreciation was expressed to administration and AUFA for engaging constructively.

A question was raised regarding the timeline.

Negotiations will begin May 6, with the current agreement expiring June 30. Historically, agreements have not been signed before expiry. The goal is to sign earlier this time.

Investment Committee – Ed Barratt

- The Investment Committee reported that the fund remains strong, and the committee is pleased with the overall results.
- Benchmarks and other elements may be re-examined, with a reminder that one year of results does not determine long-term policy.
- Committee discussion included strategic allocation, target returns, and acceptable levels of risk.
- Broader concerns were noted about heavy exposure to U.S. equities, reflecting trends seen in other institutions.

Student Life Committee – Y. Gahlot

- There has not been a meeting of the Student Life Committee.

A discussion took place around the importance of this committee and how to ensure that it becomes more active.

This will be referred to the Governance Committee for review and potential remodeling.

Town & Gown Committee – S. Fleckenstein

- The next committee meeting is scheduled for Monday, April 28.
- Affordable housing remains a recurring priority on the agenda.
- Significant progress has been made in improving community harmony, with fewer

complaints from local residents.

- Notable improvements have been seen around events like Cheaton Cup and Homecoming, with fewer incidents reported.
- Planning is underway for the MOU for 2025.

A discussion took place:

Has the collaboration with the town and RCMP improved student-related issues like homecoming?

There has been strong cooperation with the town, and student incidents have decreased. The RCMP has increased its presence, including deploying a mobile unit, which has been effective in curbing large gatherings and risky behavior.

Is the pilot surveillance camera project still active, and has it been formally reviewed?

The cameras are still in place, but there appears to have been no formal decision to make the pilot permanent. There was concern about the optics of surveillance, especially among students. It was suggested that the Town & Gown Committee revisit this and decide whether to make it permanent or end it.

Can the RCMP mobile command centre be placed somewhere less visible during major events like homecoming?

Concerns were raised about the high visibility of the RCMP mobile command near Raymond Field and Alumni Hall. An alternative like the Acadia security parking lot was suggested to balance visibility with alumni and community optics.

15. Other Business

A question was raised around the status of the renaming of the residence located at 55 University Ave., following the motion passed about a year ago to revoke the previous name.

There has been no final decision. Discussions are ongoing, but the process has proven complex and sensitive.

There was no further business.

The Chair called for a motion to move to Closed Session

IT WAS MOVED M. Suter / M. Rios

THAT the meeting move to Closed Session.

CARRIED.

16. Adjournment

The meeting continued in Closed Session until it was adjourned

Henry Demone, Chair

Sonya Pineo, Recording Secretary