



Meeting of the Board of Governors

February 13, 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 special meeting of the Board of Governors was held on Thursday, February 13, 2025, at 9:00 a.m., by virtual means using Microsoft Teams.

Governors present: Henry Demone (Chair), Bert Frizzell (First Vice-Chair), Dr. Jeff Hennessy (President and Vice-Chancellor), Allan MacDonald, Bethany Moffatt, Cameron MacKeen, Cathy Simpson, Charles Coll, Christine Luckasavitch, Clive Anderson, Dr. Andrew Davis, Dr. Jeff Banks, Ed Barrett, Gale Colpitts, Karen Hutt, Mark Adam, Martin Suter, Matt Rios, Melinda Daye, Nastasya Kennedy, Rev. Dr. Dan Green, Rev. Judith R. Tod, Robert Ffrench, Robert McGregor, Shana Lespere, Stan Thomas, Tim Formuziewich, Tracey McGillivray, Yash Gahlot

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

Regrets: Cora Tolliver, Pam Mood, Nancy McCain (Chancellor), Shelley Fleckenstein, Ross Langley

1. Call to Order

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

Rev. Anna Robbins opened the meeting with a prayer.

2. Approval of Meeting Agenda

IT WAS MOVED by M. Suter / J. Hennessy

THAT the Meeting Agenda be approved as distributed.

CARRIED.

3. Approval of Minutes

It was noted that there were two names missing on the list of attendees from the December 11 Draft minutes.

IT WAS MOVED by M. Suter / R. McGregor

THAT the Minutes from December 11, 2024, be approved with an amendment to add the missing names.

CARRIED.

4. Approval of Consent Agenda

IT WAS MOVED by S. Lespere / J. Hennessy

THAT the Consent Agenda be approved as distributed.

CARRIED.

5. President's Report (Closed Session)

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

IT WAS MOVED by M. Suter / S. Lespere

THAT the meeting move into Closed Session (9:06 a.m.)

CARRIED.

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

IT WAS MOVED by M. Suter / S. Lespere

THAT the meeting return to Open Session (10:00 a.m.)

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:

- February is African Heritage Month, and Lerato Chondoma and her team have organized numerous events and activities to celebrate.
- The first-ever Melanin Market was a great success and is expected to become a recurring event.
- The Black Excellence Gala is coming up next week, along with many other community-supported events.
- Zabrina Whitman and her team are hosting a Midwinter Feast on February 18th to celebrate Mi'kmaq culture.
- The nursing program is progressing well, with plans for a standalone curriculum at Acadia.
- A partnership has been established with Tajikeimik, the Mi'kmaq Health Directorate, which represents 13 Mi'kmaq communities in Nova Scotia.
- Acadia has been identified as Tajikeimik's university of choice for collaboration, and they have provided support in funding discussions with the province.

- Zabrina Whitman and Lerato Chondoma have made remarkable contributions in their short time at Acadia.
- Bargaining preparations are underway with the academic sector to review the collective agreement.
- Academic planning is a key focus and will be discussed further in the Academic Resources Committee meeting.
- Praise and gratitude for J. Hennessy's leadership, integrity, and resilience during these times.
- Honored to be part of Acadia and such a strong leadership team.

7. Motion: Appointment, Dean of Science

IT WAS MOVED by H. Demone / J. Hennessy

THAT the Board of Governors appoint Dr. Jeff Hooper as Dean of the Faculty of Pure and Applied Science for the period of March 1, 2025 to June 30, 2030.

Motion: Appointment, Dean of Libraries and Archives

IT WAS MOVED by H. Demone / J. Hennessy

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

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:

- Applications for enrollment remain up slightly, with a 25% increase in domestic deposits compared to last year.
- Excluding nursing numbers, domestic deposits are still up by 12.9% year over year.
- International student deposits are currently lower than last year, with 35 students paying the new \$5000 deposit compared to 45 last year.
- The current enrollment projection period is uncertain, as last year's constraints on offers between January and March make direct comparisons difficult.
- A cautious approach to budgeting is necessary due to enrollment uncertainties, with plans to reassess projections over the summer.
- Despite challenges, overall enrollment deposits are still 9% higher than last year when nursing numbers are excluded.
- Last year's domestic campaign was successful, and hopes remain high for continued positive trends this year.

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.

E. Beaudin provided highlights:

- The implementation of the new payroll and pension system remains on track to go live in the summer.
- Grant Thornton completed a financial services review with 20 recommendations, 75% of which are already in progress.
- Plans are underway to shift expense processing to EFTs, replacing the current 89% check-based system by March to improve efficiency.
- A new procurement card system will consolidate two separate card programs, streamlining financial management for over 200 university-issued cards.
- Employee engagement efforts include follow-up sessions from the fall employee survey, which had 300 participants, aiming to improve campus culture.
- The budget process is on schedule, with internal revisions in progress and an Advisory Committee meeting set for next week to finalize the budget by April.
- An enabling motion will allow continued operations into April since budget approval was originally planned for March.
- The university has hired a data manager to enhance strategic data management and improve decision-making transparency.
- The leadership team is excited about having a dedicated resource for managing and utilizing data more effectively.

The Chair called for a motion to approve the Enabling Motion

IT WAS MOVED M. Suter / R. Ffrench

THAT the *Enabling Motion* be approved as distributed.

CARRIED

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 highlights:

- The Alumni Association held a meeting on February 1 in Halifax, and there was also a lovely dinner hosted by President Hennessy.
- Efforts are ongoing to improve back-end systems in collaboration with financial services,

this is the time of year people start looking for their tax receipts.

- Alumni programming continues to focus on strategic priorities, including recruitment, EDIAR, and academic partnerships with faculty.
- A comprehensive alumni survey, the first since 2017, will be conducted to understand preferences for communications, programming, and giving.
- The Alumni Awards Dinner is scheduled for May 1st in Halifax, with Maya Macatumpag-Murray announced as the Outstanding Young Alum and the Distinguished Alumni Award recipient to be announced soon.
- Fundraising efforts for the Student Center Campaign exceeded the 2024 target. With a generous donation from the J. T. Clark Family Foundation.

A conversation took place:

A concern was raised about the need to address public concerns over funding priorities and ensure clear messaging to distinguish the purpose of the Student Centre campaign from the pool discussions.

It was clarified that the Student Centre is being funded by donors.

A suggestion was made to add this to the FAQ's page.

11. Proposal for Childcare Facility

The Childcare Facility report was added to Teams and circulated via email prior to today's meeting

E. Beaudin provided an update on the Childcare Facility:

- The initial funding application was unsuccessful, but we were approached by the province in the fall to discuss options.
- The province offered to cover all capital costs for a 104-space modular daycare facility, removing financial barriers for Acadia.
- The board's prior concerns about financial risk were addressed through legal review and consultations with Deloitte and McGinnis Cooper.
- A surplus property on Highland Ave has been identified as the proposed daycare site, with additional revenue opportunities from adjacent land.
- The Muslim Association has expressed interest in a long-term lease for a community center next to the daycare.
- Having a daycare on campus presents research and learning opportunities for students and academic programs.
- Acadia's role will be as a landlord, with an external operator managing the daycare to limit financial and operational risk.
- The daycare lease will be structured to cover direct costs and reserve funds for future maintenance and improvements.
- Deloitte confirmed that the proposed 104-seat facility exceeds the viability threshold,

ensuring financial sustainability.

- This is a low-risk, high-value opportunity for Acadia and the community.

A brief conversation took place sharing support for the proposed daycare.

IT WAS MOVED by J. Hennessy / G. Colpitts

THAT the Board of Governors authorize the Vice President Finance and Administration to negotiate a contract with the Province of Nova Scotia to build a 104-space modular childcare facility on a portion of Acadia's property PID 55288633 and to bring back the finalized contract to the Board of Governors Executive for final approval.

CARRIED.

12. Presidential Review Process

The Presidential Review Process document was added to Teams and circulated via email prior to today's meeting.

H. Demone reported on the proposed Presidential Review Process:

- The presidential review process was originally designed to be highly comprehensive but has proven too onerous to follow.
- The current process requires forming a large committee, nearly the same size as a presidential search committee, making it time-consuming and impractical.
- The board is being asked to amend the policy to create a more streamlined and practical review process.
- The revised process will still gather feedback from key stakeholders, including alumni, major donors, faculty, students, and administrators.
- The Board Chair will collect feedback in advance of the June board meeting, with results reviewed by the HR committee and reported in camera to the Board of Governors.
- The proposed change ensures regular and effective presidential reviews while aligning with board policies that are practical and consistently followed.

A concern was raised that an annual review still seems demanding, suggesting a less frequent 360-degree evaluation.

The process remains comprehensive, but an annual review is necessary, supplemented by quarterly check-ins with the president.

IT WAS MOVED by H. Demone / J. Banks

THAT the Board of Governors adopt the new presidential review process as outlined in the document that was circulated with the board material.

CARRIED.

13. Senate Update

T. McGillivray provided an update:

- The academic calendar has been approved through the 2029-30 academic year, with some concerns about the distribution of Fridays compared to other class days.
- The adoption of the consent agenda approach continues to improve Senate efficiency.
- The Economics Department review was recently completed, and the review process, feedback, and report were of a high standard.

14. Update from the Presidents

Acadia Divinity College (ADC) – A. Robbins

A. Robbins provided an update:

- The strategic vision for the college is progressing and will be presented to the board in April.
- Interviews for the Gladstone Chair are taking place next week following the retirement of Stuart Blythe last year.
- Work is underway on a large Lilly grant proposal for theological schools, which could have a significant impact if secured.
- Theological schools are closely monitoring potential impacts from executive orders in the U.S. on accrediting bodies.
- As a board member of the Association of Theological Schools, considering whether a Canadian office may be needed to address Canadian-specific concerns.

A question seeking clarification on whether the impact on accrediting bodies is due to an executive order targeting the Department of Education and its funding.

They are monitoring potential U.S. directives on EDI in higher education, which wouldn't affect Canadian institutions but could hinder collaboration. Acadia remains committed to its values.

Acadia Students' Union (ASU) – Y. Gahlot

No update

Acadia Alumni Association (AAA) – C. Luckasavitch

C. Luckasavitch provided an update:

- The February board meeting was held in Halifax – a big thank you to Davis Pier for hosting.
- The budget for the upcoming years has been approved, and work continues on the strategic plan to guide priorities for the next five years.
- The Gold Dinner for graduates of the last decade was a sold-out success.
- Alumni are encouraged to participate in the upcoming alumni survey, which will help shape strategic initiatives.
- The Alumni Awards Dinner is scheduled for May 1st, with tickets available for those interested in attending.
- The Alumni Association has allocated funding to support African Heritage Month initiatives, ensuring students have resources for celebrations.

- An online alumni event on February 24th will honor Acadia athletes, featuring Ted Upshaw and board member Veronica Russell.
- The Midwinter Feast on February 18th is an important Mi'kmaq cultural event, previously outlawed under the Indian Act, now revived as a celebration of resilience.
- The BMO Lecture Series on February 26th will feature Chief Terry Paul, leader of one of Canada's most economically successful First Nations.
- A Celebrating Women in Sport event will take place on March 8th, hosted by Oonagh Proudfoot and Ann Dodge.
- The Acadia Alumni Book Club's next meeting on March 24th will discuss *Roar* by Shelley Thompson.
- The Alumni Association AGM is scheduled for May 7th, with the spring meeting planned for May 24th-25th on campus.
- Special recognition was given to Melanie Jackson and Oonagh Proudfoot for their outstanding work in Alumni Relations.

A question was raised about how the alumni survey results are processed and utilized and the level of response typically received.

The survey is aimed at understanding engagement, communication preferences, event interests, and donation behaviors. It is a shorter survey than the one in 2017. The goal is to assess how alumni prefer to be contacted (email, social media, etc.), what content and programming they value, and what influences their giving decisions. The results will guide future alumni engagement strategies. The survey will be distributed via email and social media, as many graduates no longer check their old university emails.

15. Update from Board Committees

Academic Resources Committee – M. Rios

- The Academic Resources Committee has met twice in recent months as part of the institution's strategic direction.
- Dr. Cunsolo has introduced an ambitious strategic academic planning process with broad engagement across the academic sector.
- It appears that no comprehensive strategic academic planning process has been conducted in decades, making this initiative highly necessary.
- The process will guide the committee's work over the coming months, with key milestones outlined for progress.
- Dr. Cunsolo provided an update on the purpose and structure of the strategic academic plan in the most recent meeting.
- The outputs of this work will be presented to the full board while being discussed in more detail within the committee.

A. Cunsolo provided an update:

- Acadia has never had a dedicated strategic academic plan, making this process essential for aligning vision, resource allocation, and institutional goals.

- The plan aims to strengthen community engagement, enhance marketing and student recruitment, and improve institutional adaptability.
- The strategic academic planning process will officially launch on February 26th during a session led by President Hennessy.
- A series of in-person and virtual engagement sessions will take place from February to June, involving students, faculty, alumni, and community partners.
- Specific working groups will be formed to focus on key academic areas, ensuring detailed input and collaboration.
- The final strategic academic plan is expected to be completed between January and March 2026, aligning with the next fiscal year.
- Early discussions have already sparked enthusiasm among deans, faculty, and directors, fostering a renewed sense of vision and collaboration.

EDI Committee – C. Anderson

Enrolment Marketing Committee – C. Coll

- The committee continues to meet regularly, with two meetings held since the last Fall Board meeting.
- There is broad awareness of ongoing challenges related to recruitment, enrollment, and retention.
- The investment made in S. Duguay's team has been highly beneficial, allowing for restructuring and better responsiveness to challenges.
- Current enrollment numbers are looking positive, but uncertainty remains in the short, mid, and long term.
- The committee has increased its meeting frequency to align discussions with Board and Executive meetings for better coordination.
- A meeting is scheduled for March, with the flexibility to convene additional meetings if needed.
- Much appreciation to S. Duguay and his team

External Relations Committee – T. McGillivray

- The committee is still on hiatus because the focus remains on the Student Centre Campaign.

Finance, Audit, and Risk Committee – B. Moffatt

- The report was given in *Closed Session*

Governance Committee – H. Demone provided an update for R. Langley

- The committee is fully operational with R. Langley as the Chair

- R. Langley had to be away and asked H. Demone to present the Nominating Report

IT WAS MOVED H. Demone / M. Suter

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

CARRIED.

Human Resources Committee – H. Demone

No Report

Investment Committee – Ed Barratt

- The Investment Committee met twice, in November and December, to review policies, performance, and strategic planning.
- The committee refined its roles and responsibilities, particularly regarding its relationship with the new OCIO partner, Mercer.
- The investment portfolio showed favorable returns for the last quarter and the year overall.
- The target return in the investment policy was adjusted to better align with spending goals and long-term sustainability.
- Investment positions will continue to be reviewed annually, with a full review taking place on a longer cycle.
- Committee roles were clarified, confirming that all members have voting rights, except for the Chancellor, who is not an official member.
- The 2025 work plan was reviewed, outlining key discussion topics for the year ahead.
- The long-term impact of the payout rate was discussed, and it was reaffirmed as the preferred approach moving forward.
- The committee will explore emerging markets as a potential investment area and review alternative spending policies.

Student Life Committee – Y. Gahlot and R. Ffrench

- There has not been a meeting of the Student Life Committee. R. Ffrench has made multiple attempts to connect and schedule a meeting with no success

A discussion took place around the importance of the committee and how the busy schedule of the student Co-Chair can cause difficulty.

A suggestion was made to appoint a student representative from outside of the ASU, as well as involving alumni support.

These suggestions will be taken to the Governance Committee for review.

Town & Gown Committee – E. Beaudin

- The committee has been active, recently hosting a meeting with Red Spruce, which is exploring partnership opportunities within the community.
- The Soup and Sides program at the farmers' market is thriving, with strong participation from faculty, staff, and students.
- The ASU has been actively engaged in the committee, demonstrating increased student involvement in discussions.
- Key topics of discussion have included childcare and the pool, both of which are significant town-gown relationship issues.
- The relationship between the university and the town remains strong, with continued collaboration on various initiatives.
- Leadership of the committee will transition to the town in April, with Mayor McKay taking over as chair.
- The positive evolution of the town-university relationship is evident, and the committee looks forward to further collaboration.

16. Other Business

There was no other business

The Chair called for a motion to move to Closed Session

IT WAS MOVED M. Suter / S. Lespere

THAT the meeting move to Closed Session.

CARRIED.

17. Adjournment

The meeting continued in Closed Session until it was adjourned

Henry Demone, Chair

Sonya Pineo, Recording Secretary