



Meeting of the Board of Governors

June 19, 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, June 19, 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, Christine Luckasavitch, Clive Anderson, Dr. Andrew Davis, Dr. Jeff Banks, Ed Barrett, Gale Colpitts, Karen Hutt, Mark Adam, Martin Suter, Melinda Daye, Nastasya Kennedy, Paul Black, Rev. Dr. Dan Green, Rev. Judith R. Tod, Robert McGregor, Ross Langley, Shanna Lespere, Shelley Fleckenstein, Stan Thomas, Tim Formuziewich, Tracey McGillivray, Tove Biskop, Yas Jawad

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

Regrets: Cora Tolliver, Cathy Simpson, Pam Mood, and Nancy McCain

Guests: Corinne Haigh and Tanya Surette

1. Call to Order

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

Rev. Dr. Dan Green opened the meeting with a prayer.

2. Approval of Meeting Agenda

IT WAS MOVED by M. Suter / A. Davis

THAT the Meeting Agenda be approved as distributed.

CARRIED.

3. Approval of Consent Agenda

IT WAS MOVED by M. Suter / 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 C. Coll / C. Luckasavitch

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 C. Coll / A. Davis

THAT the meeting return to Open Session

CARRIED.

5. School of Counselling

C. Haigh introduced the proposed School of Counselling.

- The change aims to move the current Counselling program to its own school to better meet provincial mental health needs and create new growth opportunities.
- It is not a new program or closure, just a move from the School of Education to a new academic unit.
- No formal policy exists for the creation of a school, so the process was guided by consultation with Senate Committees, the Chair of Senate, and the University Act, which grants the Board authority to establish schools.
- Senate unanimously endorsed the creation of the new school

T. Surrett shared a presentation on the proposed School of Counselling:

- The Graduate Counselling Program has operated for over 50 years and is nationally recognized for its rigor and quality.
- It is one of only six programs in Canada accredited by CACEP, which governs curriculum, supervision, and faculty standards.
- Acadia is the only CACEP-accredited program east of Ontario, making it a key training site in Atlantic Canada.
- Only 40 students per year are admitted, turning away 70–75% of qualified applicants due to limited resources.
- The program runs independently within the School of Education, with its own Admissions Committee, and is led by Counsellor Educators.
- The majority of applicants now come from non-education backgrounds, and all students follow a shared curriculum informed by national standards.
- Counselling Therapy is a regulated profession in Nova Scotia, distinct from Psychology, and growing in demand across sectors.
- Acadia graduates are well-prepared for regulation and employment in schools, healthcare, and private practice.

- The profession will soon fall under the Regulated Health Professions Act, increasing its formal recognition.
- The Nova Scotia Teachers Union plans to require one counselor per school by 2026, boosting demand.
- Acadia is the only in-person Counselling Program in the province and is one of four provincially prioritized health programs.

A Discussion took place.

A question was raised about what will become of the stream that is currently training school counsellors.

There is no intent to change the curriculum. The School Counselling stream will be maintained, and applicants will continue to identify either the school or agency stream upon entry.

A question was raised about how many of the students admitted each year will be in the School Counselling stream.

The program aims for an even split between school and agency streams.

A question arose about whether other provinces have competing programs supplying school counsellors, and if Acadia's program is recognized outside Nova Scotia.

While other programs exist, many lack the same accreditation. Acadia's program is nationally recognized and prepares graduates for licensure.

IT WAS MOVED by J. Hennessy / G. Colpitts

THAT the Board of Governors approves the creation of a new School of Counselling in the Faculty of Professional Studies.

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:

- Curriculum development for the standalone Nursing program is progressing well, with a planned launch in Fall 2026.
- A leadership meeting took place with Tajikeimik, who expressed strong support for the partnership.
- Eighteen Schedule H consultation meetings have been held across campus, including town halls and departmental sessions.
- Faculties are actively engaged in curriculum renewal and restructuring.

- Two internal Moodle sites have been created to support Schedule H as a learning platform.
- All academic program reviews have been paused for one year to focus on restructuring.
- A Joint Communications Committee has been proposed to support coordinated messaging and engagement.
- Feedback from Advanced Education and MPHEC has been positive.
- Academic strategic planning and visioning sessions are underway across faculties.
- A policy scan is in progress to identify institutional strengths, weaknesses, and gaps.
- An Acadia storytelling campaign is being developed in collaboration with External Relations.

7. VP Finance, Administration & CFO Report

E. Beaudin and A. Cunsolo reported on the proposed Early Retirement Incentive.

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 an update:

- The university's audit began this week, with financial statements expected soon, and a return to regular reporting is anticipated.
- The goal is to have financial statements ready for the week of July 11, followed by approval and presentation to the Board.
- The Financial Sustainability Plan is targeted for presentation to the Board in October.
- Enterprise Risk Management is being reinvigorated with support from Ashley Doyle, who will help create a customized program beginning in the fall.
- The new Director of HR, starting July 7, was hired through a consultative, campus-engaged process and received strong feedback.
- Improving HR's relationship with faculty is a priority, with hopes that the new Director will foster a more inclusive, supportive environment.
- The Dayforce payroll and pension system will go live in August, with the first pay period in early September.
- A new MOA was signed with AUFA to transition to biweekly pay, replacing the outdated monthly system.
- Information sessions and one-on-one support will be offered to facilitate the payroll transition.
- Employee engagement has been a major focus, despite financial pressures.
- Lisa Spiegel has been leading Employee Engagement work in HR for six months and is seeing positive results.

- Following the October engagement survey, eight subcommittees were formed, involving over 60 faculty and staff.
- Recommendations from these committees will be presented on July 15, with implementation to follow.
- Many of the proposed engagement ideas are low-cost but high-impact, contributing to a continued improvement in campus culture.

8. Contribution Agreement for the Childcare Facility

The Contribution Agreement for the Childcare Facility was distributed via email prior to today's meeting.

E. Beaudin presented the motion:

- In February, the Board approved entering negotiations with the Province for a Modular Child Care Program Contribution Agreement, with the understanding that the finalized agreement would return to the Executive Committee for sign-off; it is now being brought to the full Board for approval.
- The primary risk is that Acadia must have the facility operational within 12 months of construction completion or potentially repay all or part of the funding.
- This risk is considered manageable; there has already been external interest from potential operators.
- All other identified risks were mitigated during negotiations.
- The anticipated start date is early August, with construction projected to take approximately 18 months.
- The project is widely supported and viewed as highly beneficial for Acadia and the region.
- Public Works is currently working on the site plan.
- The existing Childcare Committee will be maintained and expanded to include additional student and community representatives to guide implementation.

A question was raised about whether priority for seats will be given to faculty, staff, and students over the community, or if it will be first come, first served.

The current agreement with the province does not include those details, but such considerations will be addressed once an operator is in place.

A question was raised to clarify whether all decision-making and contractual authority remains with the university, and if the Advisory Board is purely consultative.

The Advisory Board will make recommendations only, and the university retains full decision-making authority.

IT WAS MOVED by J. Hennessy / S. Lespere

THAT the Board of Governors authorize the VP Finance Administration and CFO to execute the Modular Child Care Program Contribution Agreement on behalf of Acadia University.

CARRIED.

9. VP Student Experience Report

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

S. Duguay provided highlights:

- Work is progressing on the new One-Stop Shop Student Service model, with a smaller-scale version planned to launch in the fall.
- The initiative involves significant cross-campus coordination and aims to enhance student services.
- Registration is currently underway and looking favorable.
- Despite early positive numbers, about 50% of registrations are still expected between now and September.
- Final enrollment figures will likely be solidified by October.

A question was raised about whether year-one costs for the One-Stop-Shop would be higher with reduced costs in subsequent years.

The goal is to implement the project without additional funding, using a modest existing budget. Some initial investment is planned for space improvements and enhanced communication tools, but the team is aiming to build efficiencies that will reduce ongoing costs over time.

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:

- The Bulletin magazine has been delayed due to Fred Sgambati's retirement, but is expected by the end of the month.
- The Annual Appeal has been sent by email and mail.
- The All-Alumni survey has launched and received hundreds of responses, with both positive and critical feedback.
- Recent Alumni events included the Alumni Awards Dinner and Convocation receptions for new graduates.
- A reunion for All 70s classes is being hosted on campus this weekend.

- Fundraising for the Student Centre continues to go very well.
- The Campaign is nearing its target, with hopes of announcing its completion by year-end.
- Gratitude was expressed to the Board members, who have contributed significantly.
- Special thanks were extended to Nancy McCain and the volunteers leading the Campaign.
- Planning has begun for the next major campaign focused on scholarships and financial aid.
- An analysis is underway to determine the full scope of donor support needed to offset operating dollars.

A question arose about whether there will be designated scholarships and financial aid for Indigenous and Black students.

Such support exists and remains a priority. While some scholarships are tied to specific donor terms, efforts are underway to secure more general funding and expand support through partnerships with corporations and foundations.

11. Senate Update

T. McGillivray reported a positive shift in tone with Senate compared to previous years. She expressed confidence that the current Senior Leadership Team is setting a strong foundation for future work. She also reported that her term as a Board representative was recently renewed.

12. Update from the Presidents

Acadia Divinity College (ADC) –A. Robbins

A. Robbins provided an update:

- Launched the Master of Arts in Theology with a specialization in Counselling, following extended Senate discussion.
- Welcoming two new faculty members, Rev. Dr. Seidel Abel Boanerges and Rev. Dr. Mark Andrew Jefferson.
- Excited to have been reappointed by the ADC Board for a new six-year term as President.
- Held a Vision: Faith Shaping Future event exploring the reciprocal relationship between faith and future direction.
- Received a grant to support work on decolonizing the Board, with continued efforts underway.
- Innovation continues through the ADC Future Lab, attracting North American interest, especially in trend reports and strategic planning.
- Ongoing recognition for ADC's AI-based course, including interest from CBC and other seminars.
- Hosted East Coast Summer School with strong youth pastor engagement.

- Published a new volume of East Coast Theology titled Hospitality: Myth or Reality.
- Appreciation for Ashlee's participation in the commissioning service and her comments on Acadia's campus hospitality.
- Celebrated Rev. Judith Tod for her longstanding leadership, denominational service, and refugee support work; a tribute video is now available online.

Acadia Students' Union (ASU) – Y. Jawad

Y. Jawad provided an update:

- Have been focused on policy development and ensuring governance documents reflect student realities.
- Attended the Maritime Student Congress (MSC) at Saint Mary's University, co-hosted by Students Nova Scotia and the New Brunswick Student Alliance.
- Connected with MLA Leah Martin, who invited the ASU President to Cole Harbour for further engagement.
- VP Academic & External Zahide Cam was elected Vice-Chair of Students Nova Scotia and EDI Director for the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA).
- VP Student Life Trayvon Nicholls is now ASU's secondary delegate to Students Nova Scotia.
- VP Finance & Operations Emma Boles is now the primary delegate to CASA.
- Plans to attend CASA's Policy & Strategy Conference in Calgary and a training session with Students Nova Scotia at StFX in July.
- Held a productive and collaborative meeting with President Hennessy and S. Duguay to propose amendments to the university's protest policy.
- Continued a comprehensive review of ASU bylaws, including early discussions on executive and role title restructuring.
- Identified top advocacy priorities for the year: improved campus healthcare, accessibility, food security, and student wellness services.
- Working on a strategy to expand MSI access for international students, in collaboration with the Wong International Centre.
- Initiated discussions with Student Housing Nova Scotia on implementing the Affordable Student Housing (DASH) Fund, approved by referendum.
- A unit on Highland Ave. is being converted into affordable, accessible student housing.
- VP Academic & External is developing a scholarship resource guide for students.
- Developing two food security resource guides, one for Acadia services and one for Wolfville community resources.
- VP Finance & Operations is actively seeking sponsorships for major ASU programming and events.

T. Biskop provided an update on event planning and campus life:

- Major focus on a stronger sense of community
- Planning a dynamic and inclusive Orientation Week, along with a full year of community-focused events.
- Upcoming events include a coffee crawl to connect students with the town, a pancake breakfast focused on food security, and a student-athlete integration day.
- Exploring the creation of memorable, Acadia-specific traditions (e.g., lighting the first storm fire in the K.C. Irving Centre, and Christmas lighting).
- Launched a refreshed social media strategy to highlight both ASU initiatives and broader campus activities.
- Actively collaborating with other departments and organizations to foster cross-campus connections and avoid siloing of student engagement efforts.

Strong appreciation and praise were extended for the current ASU Executive Team. Their work and leadership are very impressive.

Acadia Alumni Association (AAA) – C. Luckasavitch

C. Luckasavitch provided an update:

- Recognized Indigenous History Month, Pride Season, and National Indigenous Peoples Day (June 21), and encouraged active allyship and learning.
- Held the Alumni Association AGM on May 7 in a fully virtual format to better engage alumni worldwide.
- The Board meeting and retreat were held on May 24, onboarding five new directors, including a student representative.
- Thanked President Hennessey for engaging with the Association during the Board retreat.
- Currently developing the Association's 2025–2027 strategic plan, including focus areas, goals, and measurable impacts.
- Ongoing commitment to recognizing outstanding alumni and faculty through awards, including recent surprise presentations.
- Upcoming events include the All-70s reunion this weekend, which will feature a smudging ceremony as an educational opportunity.
- Promoted the Alumni Book Club's upcoming session featuring author Laura Churchill Duke.
- Noted the Alumni Golf Tournament and other events, with all details available on the website.
- Extended appreciation to Oonagh Proudfoot and Melanie Jackson for their continued service and support.
- Recognized Oonagh Proudfoot for 25 years of service to Acadia University.

A comment was made about the absence of a yearbook in recent years, suggesting that with Alumni support, the yearbook might be reinvigorated.

The ASU is currently exploring the possibility of reviving the yearbook, inspired by recent conversations with other student groups who have successfully managed theirs.

A comment was made that efforts should continue to reconnect with students who missed in-person graduations during COVID

A full in-person Convocation ceremony is planned for the classes of 2020 and 2021 to cross the stage this October, with invitations extended and efforts underway to reconnect with graduates.

13. Update from Board Committees

Academic Resources Committee – A. Cunsolo

- The Committee last met in March under the leadership of the previous Chair, M. Rios.
- There is a commitment to continue the work, particularly around Schedule H.
- Plans are underway to reinvigorate the Committee with a new Chair.
- The Committee plays a key role in communication and alignment between Senate and the Board.
- The Chair of Senate and a Board representative sit on the Committee, enhancing cross-governance collaboration.
- Anticipating significant shifts ahead, with a need for proactive planning.
- Upcoming policy work will involve clear communication strategies and improved coordination.

EDI Committee – C. Anderson

- The Committee last met on May 29. Regular monthly meetings continue.
- The Committee has been actively engaged in reviewing institutional policies through an EDIAR lens.
- Ongoing focus includes supporting inclusive hiring practices, improving campus climate, and advising on strategic priorities aligned with EDIAR goals.
- L. Chondoma and Z. Whitman continue to make incredible progress in their portfolios.
- The beaded grad caps and handmade medicine pouches were well received at Convocation.
- Preparations are underway for National Indigenous Peoples Day.
- A brand identity is being developed for the Office of Indigenous Affairs.
- An Indigenous Handbook has been created and is pending approval.
- Early-stage recruitment strategy underway to enhance Indigenous student enrolment.
- Listening sessions will be hosted across campus, starting with Residence Life, identifying concerns including mental health, racism, sexual violence, and support gaps.

- Held a session with Black student-athletes, who shared lived experiences and are working to establish a Black Student Athlete Association.
- L. Chondoma attended and spoke at the UN Permanent Forum for People of African Descent in New York.
- She was featured in an interview with Portia Clark on CBC's Information Morning.
- The UN Permanent Forum for People of African Descent will visit Nova Scotia in February 2026, and L. Chondoma is working with organizers to bring the delegation to Acadia as part of the visit.

A question was raised regarding the level of support available for new EDI hires.

Support is improving incrementally under the leadership of President Hennessy and A. Cunsolo. The Alumni Office and C. Luckasavitch also provide valuable support. Continued attention is needed to address workload pressures and ensure sustainability.

Enrolment Marketing Committee – C. Coll

- The Committee met on May 26.
- S. Duguay continues to keep the Committee updated, particularly on International Enrolment challenges.
- The meeting schedule has been reorganized to better align with S. Duguay's availability and maintain ongoing engagement.
- Current efforts to enhance recruitment and retention, especially regarding student supports and services, are encouraging.
- While challenges remain, the Committee is pleased with progress and remains committed to ongoing work.

External Relations Committee – T. McGillivray

- With the anticipated successful conclusion of the Student Centre campaign, the External Relations Committee will be reconstituted in September.
- The Committee currently has three Board members.
- The Committee allows up to six members, including up to three non-Board members.
- Governors interested in joining should submit their names to R. Langley, Chair of the Governance Committee, for consideration at the November meeting.
- Nancy Handrigan, VP External Relations, has been appointed to the Board of Directors of the Canadian Council for the Advancement of Education for a three-year term.
- This appointment recognizes Nancy's exceptional contributions and national recognition in the advancement and communications field.

Finance, Audit, and Risk Committee – S. Lespere

- The Committee met on June 12, though not prior to the Executive Committee as originally intended.
- Efforts are underway to schedule another meeting in the coming weeks.
- Financial statements were not yet available due to staffing changes and the concurrent workload of budgeting and audit preparation.
- Confidence was expressed that the university will return to a regular financial reporting schedule soon.
- The Committee will support J. Hennessy and E. Beaudin in advancing the Financial Sustainability Plan for the October Board meeting.

Governance Committee – R. Langley

- The Committee has been focused on routine responsibilities, including appointments, Bylaw reviews, and Terms of Reference updates.
- Primary work will be the Board Governance restructuring, which is currently on hold.

Human Resources Committee – H. Demone

- The Committee met on July 7 with a brief but important agenda.
- An update was received on AUFA negotiations.
- A formal process for Presidential Review will be established, moving away from the historically cumbersome approach.

Investment Committee – E. Barratt

- The Committee met the previous afternoon, though participation was limited due to many Governors' being en route to Acadia.
- The fund remains stable, with reduced volatility compared to previous periods.
- Regular review of asset allocation took place, along with a focused discussion on equity exposure in private markets.
- Considered how different target return rates would affect portfolio volatility and liquidity needs.

Student Life Committee – Y. Jawad

The Board Chair and Y. Jawad have been in discussion. There is hope that there will be an active Committee next year.

Town & Gown Committee – J. Hennessy

- The Committee last met on April 28 at the town chambers, with the Mayor now serving as Chair.

- A summary of current capital projects was provided by Marcel.
- Police-reported incidents involving students have significantly decreased compared to previous years, indicating improved relations between the university, police, and town.
- The town's pilot project to install security cameras did not yield useful results and has been discontinued.

14. Other Business

There was no further business.

The Chair called for a motion to move to Closed Session

IT WAS MOVED C. Coll / T. McGillivray

THAT the meeting move to Closed Session.

CARRIED.

15. Adjournment

The meeting continued in Closed Session until it was adjourned

Henry Demone, Chair

Sonya Pineo, Recording Secretary