



Special Meeting of the Board of Governors

December 11, 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.

A special meeting of the Board of Governors was held on Wednesday, December 11, 2024, 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, Dr. Andrew Davis, Dr. Jeff Banks, Ed Barrett, Gale Colpitts, Judith Tod, Martin Suter, Matt Rios, Melinda Daye, Nastasya Kennedy, Pam Mood, Robert Ffrench, Robert McGregor, Ross Langley, Shana Lespere, Stan Thomas

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

Regrets: Nancy McCain (Chancellor), Clive Anderson, Shelley Fleckenstein, Tim Formuziewich, Yash Gahlot, Karen Hutt, Christine Luckasavitch, Tracey McGillivray, Candy O'Connor, Anna Robbins, Cora Tolliver

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 R. Ffrench / S. Thomas

THAT the Meeting Agenda be approved as distributed.

CARRIED.

3. Approval of Minutes

IT WAS MOVED by P. Mood/ C. Coll

THAT the Minutes from October 17, 2024, be approved as distributed.

CARRIED.

4. Consideration of the Strategic Direction

The final draft version of the Strategic Direction document was distributed via email prior to today's meeting.

J. Hennessy provided an update. The Strategic Direction document has been refined through multiple discussions and stakeholder input, including a survey and an open session—the process aimed to incorporate diverse perspectives. The new strategy emphasizes flexibility, simplicity, and adaptability to changing circumstances, unlike the previous comprehensive plan, which faced disruptions from COVID and unplanned opportunities like nursing programs.

It combines liberal and experiential education, focusing outwardly to address local, provincial, and global challenges. It introduces planetary health as a guiding concept, encompassing human, organizational, and environmental health.

Four key pillars:

Strategic Academic Planning – Aligning academic priorities with Acadia's vision.

EDIAR – creating an inclusive and welcoming environment for students and staff

Campus Culture – Identifying and addressing pain points in campus culture to foster respect, recognition, and a strong sense of community.

Financial Health and Sustainability – Achieving long-term stability through efficient resource use and sustainable revenue streams.

This plan aims to improve Acadia's culture, stabilize finances, and establish Acadia as a desirable place for students and employees.

A question arose around the mechanism for processing decisions and reporting back to the Board.

Both, committees and the board will play roles in monitoring progress on the Strategic Direction. Detailed plans will be developed and reviewed through committees before being presented to the board, ensuring accountability and alignment with the strategic vision.

A question arose on how the plan will be rolled out.

A communication will be sent in the new year to formally conclude the Acadia 2025 plan and introduce the new direction. The rollout will include a series of thematic town halls.

Clarification was sought on how much more focus will be placed on experiential learning and what steps are needed to enhance its role in the Acadia learning experience.

Integration of liberal and applied education has evolved naturally at Acadia, creating a seamless blend of theoretical and practical learning.

A Conversation took place.

MOTION TO APPROVE THE STRATEGIC DIRECTION

IT WAS MOVED by B. Frizzell/ B. Moffatt

THAT the Board of Governors approve the Strategic Direction.

CARRIED, with one abstention (M. Suter)

5. Authorization to Proceed with the Student Center

N. Handrigan provided an update on the Student Center Campaign.

During Campaign for Acadia (2018-2022), the need to renew the SUB became clear. The idea emerged to create a modern, accessible, and sustainable space where students can access essential services, participate in leadership and club activities, and foster community engagement.

The renewed student center will also house services like the Health Centre, Counseling, Accessible Learning, ASU offices, Cajuns, the AFF, and The Axe Radio while introducing a contemporary hub for social and community activities, which the current outdated buildings cannot support effectively.

The plan is to modernize and unify the 1950 and 1970 SUBs with a red-brick exterior, an atrium, ramps, and an elevator. The interior will include limestone and wood finishes to create a welcoming environment.

The design and construction plans will be finalized over the next 6 to 8 months. With the hope that demolition and construction begin the following fall. The project is estimated to be completed by the end of 2027.

The project reflects a significant milestone in providing students with a contemporary, inclusive space that supports their well-being and community involvement while addressing Acadia's long-term strategic goals.

A suggestion was made to share the conceptual renderings of the project with the Board to help visualize.

The designs and floor plans are available. Perhaps a separate session with the project expert to review them would be beneficial.

A question was raised about the role and future of The Axe in the new design.

The Axe underwent renovations in 2017 through student fees and is in good condition. There are no plans for further renovations, but it continues to serve as a hub for student activities, with ongoing events regularly advertised.

E. Beaudin provided an overview of the cash flow plan showing a strong financial position in the initial years and a manageable need for bridge financing during the peak construction period. The plan projects a positive cash position by the end of the timeline, offering flexibility as the project progresses.

A conversation took place.

The Chair called for a motion.

IT WAS MOVED by J. Hennessy / R. Langley

THAT the Board of Governors authorize the official commencement of the Student Centre renewal project in accordance with the cash flow schedule and proposed timeline as distributed

CARRIED.

6. Other Business

- Notice of Withdrawal of Motion

H. Demone reported that while a Governance Review is important and needed, concerns were raised about the timing. The decision was made to withdraw the motion temporarily, allowing time to better understand the landscape before proceeding—the intent is to revisit the Governance Review in the future once conditions are more stable.

- Nominating Report

The Nominating Report was distributed via email prior to today's meeting.

H. Demone reported that having the committees fully populated is getting closer.

IT WAS MOVED by H. Demone / R. Langley

THAT the Nominating Report be approved as distributed with the addition of Ava Copas to the Governance Committee.

The Chair called for a motion to move to Closed Session

IT WAS MOVED C. Coll / B. Frizzell

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