

MEETING MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS

8:30 AM, Thursday, December 14, 2023

Gilmour Hall, Council Room (Room 111)

Attendance: Jane Allen (*Chair*), Nicole Agyei-Odame, Catherine Anderson, Dina Brooks, Lisa Brown, Ryan Clarke, Sandra Cruickshanks, Stephen Elop, David Farrar, David Feather, Michael Ferencich, Susan Galloway, Barry Hill, David Huctwith, Sarrah Lal, Natalia Lishchyna, Mary-Lou Maher, Ben Menka, Brad Merkel, Kevin Nye, Wayne Purboo, Jennifer Rowe, Fareen Samji, Mamdouh Shoukri, Susan Tighe, Brenda Vrkljan, Bob Walker, Andrea Thyret-Kidd (*University Secretary*), Michelle Zheng (*Associate University Secretary*), Christine Richard (*Associate University Secretary*), Kelly Snow (*Assistant University Secretary*)

Observers: Catherine Anderson, Monique Beech, Saher Fazilat, Emily Heikoop, Lili Litwin, Debbie Martin, Wanda McKenna, Paul O’Byrne, Lil Scime, Richard Stubbs, Rob Walters

Invited: Dave Cano, *Director of Sustainability*
James Cotton, *Associate Director of McMaster Institute of Energy Studies*
Matheus Grasselli, *Deputy Provost*
Khaled Hassanein, *Dean of Business*
Steve Hranilovic, *Vice-Provost & Dean of Graduate Studies*
Jerry Hurley, *Dean of Social Sciences*
Craig MacDonald, *Technical Directory Strategic Development*
Maureen MacDonald, *Dean of Science*
Karen McGlynn, *Senior Manager, Accounting and Financial Reporting*
Lou Mitton, *Controller*
Steven Moore, *Treasurer*
Dave Novog, *Professor and NSERC Industrial Research Chair*
Melissa Pool, *Associate Vice-President, Academic Planning & Finance*
Heather Sheardown, *Dean, Faculty of Engineering*
Pamela Swett, *Dean of Humanities*
Dave Tucker, *Chief Nuclear Officer and Associate Vice-President – Nuclear*,
Barrington Walker, *Vice-Provost, Equity and Inclusion*
Nikki Walton, *Manager, Strategic Nuclear Initiatives*

Regrets: Emma Apatu, Justin Boye, Saara Greene, Joseph Mancinelli, Mehdi Narimani

OPEN SESSION

1. Notice of Meeting – November 30, 2023

The Notice of Meeting was circulated on November 30, 2023

2. Remarks from the Chair

Jane Allen, *Chair of the Board of Governors*, welcomed new and returning members and observers to the meeting and provided attendees with a brief overview of procedures and agenda items.

3. Approval of the Agenda - Open Session

There were no requests to have items moved from the Consent to the Regular agenda of the Open Session.

It was duly moved and seconded,

that the Board of Governors approve the Open Session agenda for the meeting of December 14, 2023, and that items 5 through 8 be approved or received for information by consent.

The motion was *Carried*.

4. Declarations of Conflict of Interest

No conflicts were declared.

CONSENT

5. Minutes of the Previous Meeting - October 26, 2023 (Open Session)

Motion:

that the Board of Governors approve the Open Session minutes of the meeting held on October 26, 2023, as circulated.

Approved by *Consent*.

6. Reports Received for Information

- 1. Ombuds Office Annual Report 2022-23**
- 2. Health Safety and Well-being Report**

7. Report from the Senate

1. Revised Terms of Reference - November Meeting

- a. Revised Terms of Reference and Name Change - Associate Vice-President (Research)

This item was for information.

2. Terms of Reference - December Meeting

- a. Establishment of the Terms of Reference for the Michael G. DeGroote Chair in Genetic Anthropology
- b. Establishment of the Homewood Research Chair in Women's Mental Health and Depression
- c. Establishment of the Joseph & Amy Ip Chair in Bio-Innovation

Motion:

that the Board of Governors approve and receive for information the recommendations as contained in the report from the Senate.

Approved by *Consent*.

Note: Item 7.2.c. had been erroneously included in the meeting package and approved by consent, but the Senate had not yet approved this item. It was later approved by Senate and then the Board's Executive and Governance Committee, on behalf of the Board, at its February 5th, 2024, meeting.

8. Committee Reports

1. Planning and Resources Committee

- a. December 31, 2022 FLIT Financial Statement (McMaster Innovation Park)

Motion:

that the Board of Governors receive the December 31, 2022 FLIT Financial Statements.

Approved by *Consent*.

- b. McMaster Continuing Education Fees

Motion:

that the Board of Governors approve the McMaster Continuing Education 2024-25 Fees.

Approved by *Consent*.

- c. Audited Financial Statements of Contributory Pension Plan for Salaried Employees of McMaster University, Including McMaster Divinity College 2000 as at June 30, 2023

This item was for information.

- d. Audited Financial Statements of Contributory Pension Plan for Salaried Employees of McMaster University, Including McMaster Divinity College, Original Plan as at June 30, 2023

This item was for information.

- e. Audited Financial Statements of Contributory Pension Plan for Hourly Rate Employees of McMaster University, Including McMaster Divinity College as at June 30, 2023

This item was for information.

REGULAR

9. Business Arising

There was no business arising.

10. President's Report to the Board

David Farrar, *President and Vice-Chancellor*, presented his report. D. Farrar began his remarks by acknowledging that McMaster is located on the traditional territories of the Mississauga and Haudenosaunee nations and within the lands protected by the Dish with One Spoon Wampum agreement. D. Farrar spoke of the Walls to Bridges program, led by its inaugural national director Savage Bear. It was noted for its innovative approach to education by facilitating joint courses for university students and incarcerated students at the Grand Valley Institution for Women. With a 17% post-secondary enrollment rate, it surpasses the 1% federal average, and in doing so significantly enhances educational opportunities in correctional settings.

Members heard that Housing and Conference Services are addressing concerns from students regarding the 10 Bay graduate student residence, where recent water tests have detected coliform bacteria in parts of the building's water supply. Precautionary measures such as providing alternative drinking water and conducting chlorine flushes have been implemented. Members were advised that significant efforts are ongoing to resolve these and other issues promptly.

The University has recently achieved impressive recognition: placing 78th globally out of 1400 universities in the 2024 QS World University Sustainability Rankings, showcasing its commitment to sustainability through initiatives like Zero Waste McMaster and surpassing carbon reduction targets. It has also ranked 85th globally and 5th in Canada in the Times Higher Education Global Employability Ranking, which reflects its dedication to equipping students with skills for success in the job market.

Members heard that University leaders continue to engage with provincial and federal governments to address funding challenges. On the provincial front, the Blue-Ribbon Panel's report on Ontario's post-secondary sector recommended ending the tuition freeze, increasing operating grants by 10%, and providing adequate funding to cover unfunded domestic students in STEM and Health Sciences. While the government assesses university efficiencies, senior leadership has met with key figures on Advocacy Day at Queen's Park to discuss financial challenges and advocate for increased funding, as well as to provide updates on key research areas.

At the federal level, senior leadership visited Ottawa to meet with MPs and other officials, focusing on initiatives such as pandemic prevention, nuclear science, decarbonization and student housing expansion. McMaster officials urged funding for university housing projects, citing recent support for cities like London and advocating for similar backing for universities. Members were advised that the federal government announced a change impacting international students aiming to study in Canada. Beginning January 2024, prospective students must show they can access \$20,635, in addition to their first year of tuition and travel costs to obtain a study permit, up from \$10,000. While this will not affect current McMaster students, the Registrar's Office is assessing its impact on future international student enrollment.

In response to a question about student housing, D. Farrar emphasized that there is data to show that international students are not the reason for a lack of housing. In noting that there is not much room on campus for additional student residences, D. Farrar explained that there are opportunities for residences off-site and along the light-rail transit (LRT).

There was a brief discussion of the ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas, particularly regarding its effect on McMaster's student community. D. Farrar emphasized the importance for both Palestinian and Jewish students to feel safe and supported, but also to understand the difference between appropriate and inappropriate behaviour. Members heard that there have been some student protests on campus. D. Farrar also spoke to the danger of misinformation published by media outlets regarding the conflict.

11. Communications

1. Equity and Inclusion Office Annual Report 2022-2023

D. Farrar introduced Barrington Walker, *Vice-Provost, Equity and Inclusion*, who provided a high-level synopsis of the Equity and Inclusion Office's (EIO) Annual Report.

In noting the increased polarization surrounding issues of equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI), there were questions about the role the EIO can perform in mitigating these sentiments. B. Walker explained that the polarization is very real, although much of it results largely from political winds, over which the office and the University has little control. B. Walker noted that McMaster is an institution that respects differences and has an internal human rights code. The EIO is uniquely positioned to have those conversations. Susan Tighe, *Provost & Vice-President*, thanked B. Walker and noted that the office has talented people who have helped to navigate this increasingly difficult political landscape.

2. Renewing and Strengthening McMaster's Faculty Complement

S. Tighe delivered a presentation on renewing and strengthening the faculty complement. Members heard that most faculty members stay at McMaster, although many are receiving offers from competing institutions. This presentation included a brief overview of the recruitment and approval process for new faculty hires, as well as how the hiring of new faculty fits into the budget model.

In response to a question, S. Tighe confirmed that very few new hires obtained their PhD at McMaster, which was preferable.

A member noted that there is a danger within the budget model which pushes the system to hire according to enrollment. Some fundamental areas for the University, such as research, may not attract as many students. S. Tighe agreed that it is critical to protect key areas and review the strategy from a long-term perspective. Members were advised that these conversations are ongoing between the Faculty Deans, the Vice-President Research, and the Provost's office. S. Tighe also noted that there needs to be attention paid to full-time equivalent (FTE) numbers and student to faculty ratios.

12. Report from the Senate

D. Farrar presented the report.

1. Enrolment Figures

D. Farrar introduced Melissa Pool, *Associate Vice-President, Academic Planning & Finance*, and Steve Hranilovic, *Vice-Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies*, who presented on the undergraduate and graduate enrolment figures, respectively.

A member asked about the strategy for transitioning students between their first and second year, as this period can be difficult for students. M. Pool explained that there is much focus on helping students who are experiencing academic difficulties find pathways better suited to their strengths, or accommodating them in another manner.

Members engaged in a brief discussion on the enrollment numbers for the Faculty of Business, noting that the domestic student enrolment has decreased.

13. Committee Reports

1. Planning and Resources Committee

Jennifer Rowe, *Chair of the Planning and Resources Committee*, presented the report.

a. Interim 2023-2024 Projection (5-month review report)

At its meeting on November 30, 2023, the Planning and Resources Committee received the interim 2023-2024 financial report of the operating fund projections. M. Pool and Lil Scime, *Interim Chief Financial Officer*, provided an overview of the highlights.

Members were reminded that while McMaster remains one of few fiscally sound universities in Ontario, the current financial situation is not without concern. It was mentioned that the cohort graduating this year will not be replaced, as the University is over the corridor funding levels. Recent geopolitical events are causing concern for international revenue. Furthermore, any material benefit arising from the Blue-Ribbon report cannot be assumed.

A member inquired as to whether reserves are being tapped to cover expenses and cautioned against overspending should tuition rates remain frozen. L. Scime noted that reserves, primarily allocated to support departments, are being utilized to aid Faculties through deficit reduction plans. L. Scime acknowledged the necessity for clearer communication regarding reserve usage to address ongoing deficits. The unique complexities in balancing the budget were discussed; government support remains uncertain and there can be risks if an institution carries a high surplus while seeking government funding at the same time.

Noting that the projections were provided in the interim report, a member wondered if there were opportunities to adjust the allocations as enrollment can now be sufficiently matched with forecasted expenses. S. Tighe explained that this is done

automatically and that, as part of the budget model process, support units bring forward budgets and allocations to the Budget Committee. All activity units have been asked to look at cost containment. Further, S. Tighe explained that there is considerable opportunity to adjust expenses, primarily around capital investments. Program expansions not supported by government grants are reviewed carefully.

This item was for information.

b. Sustainability Report 2022-2023

At the same meeting, the Planning and Resources Committee received the Sustainability Report for 2022-2023.

This item was for information.

c. Capital Projects Planning and Implementation Policy

At the same meeting, the Planning and Resources Committee approved the Capital Projects Planning and Implementation Policy. Debbie Martin, *Associate Vice-President, Real Estate, Partnerships and Ancillary Operations*, provided an overview of the policy. Members were advised there would be some minor formatting changes made after the policy was approved.

It was duly moved and seconded,

that the Board of Governors approve the Capital Projects Planning and Implementation Policy, effective December 14, 2023.

The motion was *Carried*.

2. Committee on University Advancement

Sandra Cruickshanks, *Chair of the Committee on University Advancement*, presented the report.

a. Annual Report from University Advancement

At its meeting on October 30, 2023, the Committee on University Advancement received the 2022-2023 Annual Report from University Advancement.

Lili Litwin, *Vice-President, University Advancement*, explained that this report covered the results over a 16-month period. L. Litwin provided an overview of its highlights, focusing on special gifts and donors. L. Litwin extended thanks to everyone across the University for their enthusiasm and willingness to collaborate.

This item was for information.

14. Presentation to the Board of Governors

D. Farrar introduced Matheus Grasselli, *Deputy Provost*, who delivered a presentation on Generative Artificial Intelligence. Members engaged in a thoughtful discussion of the unique opportunities and challenges of this technology.

15. Other Business

J. Allen called for any other business for the open session. All those who were not Board members or observers, excluding Lou Mitton, *Controller*, and Steven Moore, *Treasurer*, withdrew from the meeting at this time.