

MEETING MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS

8:30 AM, Thursday, June 6, 2024

Council Chambers (GH-111) and via Zoom Videoconference

- Attendance:** Jane Allen (*Chair*), Nicole Agyei-Odame, Catherine Anderson, Justin Boye, Dina Brooks, Sandra Cruickshanks, Stephen Elop, David Farrar, David Feather, Michael Ferencich, Susan Galloway, Saara Greene, Barry Hill, David Huctwith, Sarrah Lal, Ben Menka, Brad Merkel, Kevin Nye, Wayne Purboo, Michael Ramsay, Jennifer Rowe, Fareen Samji, Susan Tighe, Andrea Thyret-Kidd (*University Secretary*), Michelle Zheng (*Associate University Secretary*), Kelly Snow (*Assistant University Secretary*)
- Observers:** Omer Ahmed, Catherine Anderson, Kusum Bhatta, Andrea Farquhar, Saher Fazilat, Ehab Kamarah, Andy Knights, Lili Litwin, Wanda McKenna, Richard Stubbs, Rob Walters
- Invited:** Matheus Grasselli, *Deputy Provost*
Khaled Hassanein, *Dean, Faculty of Business*
Paula Hearn, *Manager, Accessibility Program*
Jerry Hurley, *Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences*
Maureen MacDonald, *Dean, Faculty of Science*
Debbie Martin, *Associate Vice-President, Real Estate, Ancillary Operations and Partnerships*
Lou Mitton, *Controller*
Steven Moore, *Treasurer*
Patricia Suleiman, *Director of Human Rights and Accessibility*
Pamela Swett, *Dean, Faculty of Humanities*
Sean Van Koughnett, *Associate Vice-President (Students & Learning) & Dean of Students*
Nicole Wagner, *Chair of the Budget Committee*
Representative from the Solidarity for Palestinian Human Rights (SPHR) Group
- Regrets:** Emma Apatu, Lisa Brown, Ryan Clarke, Natalia Lishchyna, Joseph Mancinelli, Mamdouh Shoukri, Silvia Stankovic, Brenda Vrkljan, Bob Walker
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OPEN SESSION

1. Remarks from the Chair

Jane Allen, *Chair of the Board of Governors*, welcomed members, observers and guests to the meeting. J. Allen introduced Kusum Bhatta, the new President of the Graduate Students Association, as a new Board observer.

1. Update on the Committee to Recommend a President

The Committee met in late April, and the position has been widely advertised. The search partners are actively recruiting for the role.

2. Notice of Meeting - May 23, 2024

The Notice of Meeting was circulated on May 23, 2024.

3. Approval of the Agenda - Open Session

It was duly moved and seconded,

that the Board of Governors approve the Open Session agenda for the meeting of June 6, 2024, 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 - April 18, 2024 - Open Session

Motion:

that the Board of Governors approve the Open Session minutes of the meeting held on April 18, 2024, as circulated.

Approved by *Consent*.

6. Report from the Senate

1. Proposal to Establish the McMaster Centre for Research on Employment and Work (MCREW)

Motion:

that the Board of Governors approve the establishment of the McMaster Centre for Research on Employment and Work (MCREW), as circulated.

Approved by *Consent*.

2. Terms of Reference

- a. MacDATA Institute: Establishment of the Scientific Advisory Committee and Co-Director
- b. Establishment of the Academic Director, Learning Spaces & Digital Teaching and Learning
- c. Establishment of the Dr. Terrence Hoffman Humanities Professor-in-Residence
- d. Revised Terms of Reference and Name Change - ArcelorMittal Dofasco Chair in Experimental Cancer Therapeutics
- e. Name Change - Homewood Chair in Mental Health and Trauma
- f. Revised Terms of Reference and Name Change - Director, Office of Undergraduate Research, Faculty of Science

Motion:

that the Board of Governors approve or receive the recommendations contained in the report from the Senate.

Approved by *Consent*.

3. Research Centres & Institutes Annual Report 2023

This item was for information.

4. Strategic Research Plan

This item was for information.

7. Reports Received for Information

1. Health, Safety and Well-being Report

This item was for information.

2. Annual Report on Health, Safety and Well-being

This item was for information.

8. Committee Reports

1. Executive and Governance Committee

a. Actions Taken on Behalf of the Board of Governors

This item was for information.

2. Remunerations Committee

a. Request for Ratification: MUALA (Academic Librarians)

Motion:

that the Board of Governors approve the tentative agreement between McMaster University and MUALA (Academic Librarians) for a 4-year renewal agreement, effective August 1, 2024 and expiring July 31, 2028, with terms outlined in the circulated report.

Approved by *Consent*.

b. Request for Ratification: IUOE Local 772 (Operating Engineers)

Motion:

that the Board of Governors approve the tentative agreement between McMaster University and IUOE Local 772 (Operating Engineers) for a 5-year renewal agreement, effective May 1, 2024 and expiring April 30, 2029, with terms outlined in the circulated report.

Approved by *Consent*.

3. Planning and Resources Committee

a. Policy on Research Participant Confidentiality and the Retention of Legal Counsel

Motion:

that the Board of Governors approve the Policy on Research Participant Confidentiality and the Retention of Legal Counsel effective June 6, 2024.

Approved by *Consent*.

b. Engaging and Partnering for People-Centred Care Non-Academic Micro-Credential

Motion:

that the Board of Governors approve the fee of \$425 for the non-academic microcredential in Engaging and Partnering for People-Centred Care.

Approved by *Consent*.

c. UN PRI 2023 Signatory Assessment - Summary Report

This item was for information.

d. Energy Management Plan

This item was for information.

REGULAR

9. Business Arising

There was no business arising.

10. Communications

David Farrar, *President and Vice-Chancellor*, 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 addressed the ongoing issue of encampments at universities across North America. Members heard that the encampments represent a diverse coalition of individuals with differing perspectives on the future direction of universities and were united by their shared concerns regarding the situation in Gaza and broader human rights issues.

Historically, universities have played a crucial role in activism, contributing to significant societal changes, as seen in movements against the Vietnam War and Apartheid in South Africa. However, the current climate has led to more extreme reactions, including intimidation and property destruction, which regrettably did occur at McMaster and left some community members feeling trapped during demonstrations.

Despite these challenges, meaningful discussions were held with members of the Solidarity for Palestinian Human Rights (SPHR) group, as they sought a resolution and engaged in many serious and thoughtful conversations with Sean Van Koughnett, *Associate Vice-President (Students & Learning) & Dean of Students*. Both parties reached an

agreement that addressed student demands while upholding freedom of expression. The agreement included several key commitments: annual transparency regarding university investments, the establishment of an open process for community feedback on investment decisions, the incorporation of human rights considerations in international agreements, and support for scholars at risk and students from conflict zones. While this resolution marked significant progress, it is important to note that dissent remains within the encampment regarding the outcome. D. Farrar commended SPHR, S. Van Koughnett and all those involved for their efforts in facilitating this resolution. Their ability to find common ground is a testament to why McMaster has achieved a resolution, while many other universities continue to grapple with similar challenges.

A member noted that they appreciated the transparency and thanked S. Van Koughnett and members of the SPHR group for navigating many difficult and often tense situations. The member explained, however, that the vote was close, and many students are disappointed. Efforts must continue to repair trust and build relationships. The member also advised that the McMaster University Faculty Association (MUFA) passed motions to request that faculty members support a comprehensive audit, divestment, and review of the University's investments into Israeli institutions and that many faculty members support the student's peaceful protest.

D. Farrar reiterated that there have been numerous incidents of intimidation towards staff and other community members, and property damage caused by some individuals partaking in the encampments. Universities are having to balance their support for an important social movement with the necessity of keeping their campuses safe for everyone. In response to a question, there was a brief discussion of the many diverse groups that were involved in the encampment and at arriving at the agreement to end it.

In response to a question, D. Farrar highlighted the recent signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Aga Khan University (AKU). McMaster and AKU have a long history of cooperation, which began 40 years ago with McMaster's involvement in the launch of AKU's School of Nursing in Pakistan. This program has grown to include campuses in Afghanistan, Kenya, Pakistan, Tanzania, Uganda and the United Kingdom. This latest MOU renews and expands on this cooperation and further aligns McMaster's academic and research strengths with those of AKU in health care, as well as in other areas such as sustainability, climate change, data science, cultural studies and global peace.

11. President's Report to the Board

An individual interrupted the meeting and accused the President and the Board of complicity in genocide. J. Allen called a brief recess. As the individual would not end the disruption and vacate the Council Chambers, the meeting could not continue and was moved to Zoom videoconference.

12. Report from the Senate

D. Farrar presented the Senate report to the Board.

1. Accessibility Policy

At its meeting on May 15, 2024, the Senate reviewed and approved a set of proposed revisions to the University Policy on Accessibility.

It was duly moved and seconded,

that the Board of Governors approve the Accessibility Policy, effective June 6, 2024 and as circulated.

The motion was *Carried*.

13. Committee Reports

1. Executive and Governance Committee

J. Allen, *Chair of the Executive and Governance Committee*, presented the report.

a. Revisions to Board of Governors By-Laws

The Executive and Governance Committee reviewed and approved minor revisions to the by-laws of the Board of Governors. These included revisions to the Terms of Reference for the Human Resources Committee. All other proposed by-law revisions were approved-in-principle by the Board of Governors at its April 18, 2024 meeting and were coming forward for final approval.

It was duly moved and seconded,

that the Board of Governors approve the revisions to the Board By-Laws, as circulated.

The motion was *Carried*.

2. Planning and Resources Committee

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

a. Tuition & Miscellaneous Fees Schedule

At its meeting on May 16, 2024, the Planning and Resources Committee approved the 2024-25 and 2025-26 Tuition and Miscellaneous Fee Package. Matheus Grasselli, *Deputy Provost*, provided a brief overview of the tuition and miscellaneous fee package.

In response to a question, M. Grasselli explained that it is not common for an institution to cut fees, but they will be providing international students with a comprehensive scholarship program.

It was duly moved and seconded,

that the Board of Governors approve the 2024-25 and 2025-26 Tuition and Miscellaneous Fee Package, as circulated.

The motion was *Carried*.

b. 2024-2025 Consolidated Budget

At the same meeting, the Planning and Resources Committee reviewed and approved the 2024-25 Consolidated Budget. Susan Tighe, *Provost and Vice-President (Academic)* and Nicole Wagner, *Chair of the Budget Committee* presented the 2024-25 Consolidated Budget.

There was discussion on issues related to international student enrolment and recruitment considering the caps imposed by the federal government, as well as the delegation and process of provincial attestation letters and how competitive this area has become. D. Farrar noted that graduate students are not impacted by the caps but may not be aware of this due to the messaging from the federal government.

A member thanked S. Tighe on efforts made towards expense management and acknowledged the challenges ahead, which could include dipping into appropriations. S. Tighe noted that a question was raised at the Senate meeting about hiring new faculty members and S. Tighe explained that they are becoming more cautious around hiring. This is a complex issue that universities will be grappling with long-term, not only in Ontario but across Canada. Some strategies have been successful, such as providing clarity around the Budget model. Advocacy efforts have resulted in the provincial government providing funding for a portion of McMaster's unfunded students.

In noticing that equipment and renovations spending have been significantly reduced in the budget, a member expressed concern about possible impacts on learning and research. S. Tighe

explained that this is a pause for now, and grants can possibly offset the cuts. Strategic investments will continue to be made through faculty allocations.

A member spoke to the usefulness of financial metrics in providing insight into the University's financial position, although cautioned that two stability indicators are at risk of breaching thresholds. Excessive debt could affect the University's credit rating. The member sought clarity on the comfort level regarding these indicators, specifically the operating and appropriations fund, and wondered whether there is a bottom threshold the University should avoid. Noting that the metrics would be discussed during the next item, S. Tighe explained that the University has six months worth of salaries accessible should a worst-case scenario occur. Efforts around cost containment and strategic investments are ongoing, and managing space, appropriations, and cash will be important. Saher Fazilat, *Vice-President (Operations and Finance)*, noted that much of the cutting is on the capital side and there is some leeway in appropriations.

It was duly moved and seconded,

that the Board of Governors approve the 2024/25 Consolidated Budget, as circulated.

The motion was *Carried*.

c. Financial Metrics

At the same meeting, the Planning and Resources Committee (PRC) received a presentation on Financial Metrics. Members were reminded of the extensive discussion held at the March Board meeting related to financial metrics, and the Board asked for greater transparency and focus. Omer Ahmed, *Associate Vice-President & Chief Financial Officer*, presented the metrics.

Members thanked O. Ahmed and the team for their work and for the increased transparency. It was noted that it may be appropriate for the Board to review the metrics every six months, as an annual review may be too infrequent to allow for corrective action to be taken. S. Fazilat explained that they would be returning to this in the fall and at the PRC as well.

This item was for information.

14. Recognition of Retiring Board Members

J. Allen recognized the retiring members of the Board of Governors: Susan Galloway, Mary Lou Maher, Emma Apatu, Sarrah Lal, Joseph Mancinelli, Mehdi Narimani, and Skylar Wang. Board-elected member David Feather was recognized and thanked for his many significant contributions to the Board and the University over the past twelve years, and members heard that he had kindly agreed to continue serving as Chair of the Pension Trust Committee.

15. Other Business

J. Allen called for any other business for open session. Debbie Martin, *Associate Vice-President, Real Estate, Ancillary Operations and Partnerships*, Lou Mitton, *Controller*, and Steven Moore, *Treasurer*, remained in the meeting.