



BOARD OF GOVERNORS
Approved Minutes of the Meeting (Open Session) held on
Tuesday, November 24, 2020, 3:00 p.m.
Videoconference

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Robert (Bob) Hanf (Chair), Paul Beesley, Fatima Beydoun, Scott Brison, Level Chan, Cassandra Dorrington, Cheryl Fraser, Angeline Gillis, Ahsan Habib, Kevin Hewitt, Kristan Hines, Joyce Hoeven, Laurie Jennings, Brian Johnston, Jay MacIsaac, Merle MacIsaac, Carolan McLarney, Aparna Mohan, Sherry Porter, Robert Richardson, Deep Saini (President), Devarsh Sood, Madeleine Stinson, Michele Williams

NON-MEMBERS PRESENT:

Alice Aiken (Vice President Research & Innovation), Peter Fardy (Vice President Advancement), Frank Harvey (Provost and Vice President Academic - Acting), Matt Hebb (Vice President Government and Global Relations), Gitta Kulczycki (Vice-President Finance & Administration), Susan Brousseau (University Secretary), Cheryl MacDonald (Board Governance Assistant), Judith Ng'ethe (Associate Secretary of Senate)

GUESTS:

Quenta Adams (Director, Student Academic Success), Donna Bourne-Tyson (Dean of Libraries), Peter Coutts (Assistant Vice-President Facilities Management), Josh Leon (Assistant Vice-President IT Services), Jalana Lewis (Director of African Nova Scotian Community Engagement), Susan Spence (Vice-Provost Planning and Analytics), Theresa Rajack-Talley (Vice-Provost Equity and Inclusion), Susan Robertson (Assistant Vice-President Financial Services), Jasmine Walsh (Assistant Vice-President Human Resources), Michelle Williams (Professor, Schulich School of Law), David Westwood (DFA Observer), Sarah Elliott (Student Minute Taker)

REGRETS:

Candace Thomas

1. Approval of Agenda

The agenda was approved as presented.

2. Consent Agenda

All items were adopted by consent.

2.1 Minutes of Meeting October 20, 2020

THAT the Board of Governors approve the minutes of the meeting of October 20, 2020 as presented.

Approved by CONSENT.

2.2 Board of Governors Appointment 2020-21 – Student Appointment

THAT the Board of Governors, on the recommendation of the Board Governance and Human Resources Committee, approve the appointment of Aparna Mohan as a student

Board member on the Board of Governors of Dalhousie University for a term to run from the date of Board approval to April 30, 2022.

AND

THAT the Board of Governors, on the recommendation of the Board Governance and Human Resources Committee, approve the appointment of Aparna Mohan to the Board Capital Projects & Facilities Committee for a term to run from the date of Board approval to June 30, 2021.

Approved by CONSENT.

3. Business Arising from the Minutes

There was no business arising noted.

4. Chair's Report

R. Hanf welcomed A. Mohan to her first meeting as a student Board member. He noted that he had no significant items to report since the last meeting in October. He reminded Board members of the Board mini-retreat scheduled for November 25, 2020.

5. President's Report

D. Saini began his report by congratulating Engineering student Sierra Sparks on becoming Dalhousie's 92nd Rhodes scholar.

D. Saini referred members to his written report and highlighted several current items. He provided an update on the continuing challenges in dealing with the pandemic, noting that two cases of COVID-19 have been identified in the University's off-campus student population. He spoke to the continued hard work by faculty, staff and students, highlighting efforts made by Student Affairs, the International Centre and Ancillary Services to develop a plan in line with federal and provincial requirements for the return of international students to Halifax. He also highlighted the work undertaken by the Return to Campus Committee; this group's work has been fundamental in ensuring academic continuity, the resumption of research, and the development and implementation of a phased return to campus.

Following the report, D. Saini responded to questions, noting the ongoing development of a comprehensive online learning strategy that is being led by F. Harvey. F. Harvey noted that lessons learned are being used to improve online learning experiences in the short term, but also the medium term and the longer term through the development of the new strategic plan and the digital strategy, which will offer a clear sense of priorities around such areas as health and safety, the student experience, online learning, etc. He referenced past reports to the Board that focused on addressing the strategies and mechanisms used to transition to online learning and detailed supports provided to faculty and students to address challenges. He noted that efforts to improve upon delivery are ongoing and of utmost concern.

With respect to a query on measurement of student success in the current environment, F. Harvey noted the work underway to compile information from the responses to several recent surveys, discussion boards and other mechanisms for receiving feedback. This information is currently being distilled and more information will be available once this data is reviewed. A report on the work in this area will be presented to the Academic & Student Affairs Committee in December.

In response to a question on the government relations initiative and pandemic-related support, D. Saini noted that discussions with the Province related to the higher education sector are happening through the Council of Nova Scotia University Presidents (CONSUP) and are directly connected to changes in enrolment numbers and changes in other revenue streams. Discussions are at an advanced stage, with a

support package anticipated from the government later this semester or early next term. He also noted that the Province has assured CONSUP that the current level of government operating grant funding will be maintained.

6. Dalhousie Student Union President's Report

M. Stinson referred members to her report included in the meeting materials. She spoke to the motion approved yesterday by Senate allowing students to convert letter grades to a PASS or ILL grade for courses taken in the fall and winter terms of 2020-21, emphasizing that this was a positive step towards supporting students' mental health, and shared some of their sentiments of relief with the Board. She highlighted that mental health and well-being continues to be an issue of great importance and noted that the DSU is currently collecting data on how students think it should be addressed. She has continued to bring these issues to the attention of the Board and Senate.

Following the report, M. Stinson responded to brief questions, noting that an earlier discussion on University expenditures (and particularly academic vs administrative expenditure areas) has led to meetings with the Vice-President Finance & Administration and some work is continuing on this. Additionally, a report on this issue is expected at the next meeting of the Academic and Student Affairs Committee. In response to a question on the student supports needed, M. Stinson noted that students are often too exhausted to access formal mental health services offered and commented that the implementation of measures such as PASS/ILL grade options is one way the University can assist students in relieving current pressures.

D. Saini reminded Board members that December 1st is Giving Tuesday and Dalhousie's focus this year is on improving food security for students. He encouraged members to participate as they are able.

7. Items for Decision

7.1 Budget Advisory Committee Final Report

F. Harvey provided a brief report, reviewing the process followed in the development of the final 2020-21 operating budget plan. This included the regular consultation process prior to the preparation of the February 2020 draft report (which then saw the process – and subsequent feedback sessions - halted due to the arrival of the pandemic); the June fiscal update to the Board, which was prepared in consideration of then-projected enrolment scenarios; and the final report, which took into consideration the earlier Budget Advisory Committee recommendations from February 2020 and feedback received, final fall enrolment numbers that were much more positive than anticipated, and emerging needs and continuing uncertainty going forward. F. Harvey thanked S. Robertson, M. Rowlston, G. Kulczycki, and I. Nason (prior to his retirement in June) for their hard work and dedication in preparing this report.

R. Hanf thanked the Administration for their excellent work on the report, noting it is one of the best he has seen in his time on the Board.

7.2 Final Operating Budget Recommendations for 2020-2021

C. Dorrington introduced the item, noting that the operating budget for 2020-21 recommended for approval has been developed based on the estimates, assumptions and recommendations in the Budget Advisory Committee's (BAC) Operating Budget Plan for 2020-21. She noted in particular the following:

- The budget provides significant financial support for students through increased bursaries (twice as much as in previous years) and by waiving some fees (Fitness Centre and Athletics fees, for example) for the year — for a total of \$10.6M in fees waived and additional bursary support.

- Strategic initiatives funding has necessarily prioritized the allocation to address high impact needs and initiatives related to the current pandemic, including additional supports to address mounting workload pressures faced by all faculty and staff as the university transition to online delivery. A further round of strategic initiatives funding allocations for supports has been launched.
- There remain significant lost Ancillary, Faculty and Unit revenues (-\$19M) and the budget plan results in a \$9.8M shortfall. To the extent this cannot be mitigated before year-end, reserve funds made possible from previous years' surpluses will be used to cover the deficit.

C. Dorrington spoke to the five-month delay in bringing forward the recommended budget and noted that this is as a result of the onset of the pandemic last spring. This period allowed the university the time to understand the impact of the pandemic on fall 2020 enrolment. She noted that there remain continuing financial risks related to the COVID-19 pandemic; the budget presented balances these risks with measured investment in Dalhousie's academic mission, its people, and supports for students.

Moved by C. Dorrington, seconded by P. Beesley:

THAT the Board of Governors, on the recommendation of the Board Finance, Audit, Investment and Risk Committee, approve the 2020-2021 Operating Budget with revenues of \$471.0 million and expenditures of \$480.8 million, with existing reserves used to achieve a balance as required.

CARRIED.

B. Hanf thanked C. Dorrington and the members of the Finance, Audit, Investment & Risk Committee for their diligent work in providing oversight, advice and direction to Management during this very challenging nine-month period.

7.3 Facilities Renewal Preliminary Budget 2021-2022

R. Richardson welcomed A. Mohan to the Capital Projects and Facilities Committee. He presented the Facilities Renewal preliminary budget for 2021-2022, noting the importance of moving forward with major planned projects according to schedules that will meet operational and academic priorities. He highlighted the one proposed project estimated to exceed \$1M, which is the Howe Hall to Killam tunnel renewal.

Moved by R. Richardson, seconded by P. Beesley:

THAT the Board of Governors, on the recommendation of the Board Capital Projects and Facilities Committee, approve the list of significant projects (greater than \$1 million for FY). Facilities Management is authorized, prior to the following June, to spend and enter into contractual commitments totaling no more than \$10 million to support the implementation of the approved Facilities Renewal projects.

CARRIED.

8. Items for Information

8.1 Proposal Digital Strategy – Update

F. Harvey introduced D. Bourne-Tyson, Dean of Libraries, and Josh Leon, CIO, to present on this item.

D. Bourne-Tyson referred Board members to the materials included in the meeting package, noting the importance of the development of a digital strategy for Dalhousie that will articulate what is needed to thrive in a digital world. The strategy will provide a framework for governance, security, infrastructure, service and shared values for conduct. It will support the University's strategic plan and will be based on broad consultation, best practices, evidence-based information and experience. D. Bourne-Tyson reported that the first draft will be completed by the end of December and will be followed by three months of wide consultation. The final plan will include guiding principles as well as deliverables including future oriented goals tied to the strategic priorities, goals that pertain to academic and operational areas of the University, and key performance indicators which will be further refined during the implementation planning phase. Extensive engagement and transparency will be employed throughout, and training will be provided to ensure the appropriate level of digital fluency to allow the plans to be carried out. She noted that the steering committee is very engaged and reviewed the timeline for completion, with a projected submission date to the Board on or before June 2021.

Following the report, D. Bourne-Tyson responded to questions related to community engagement, the incorporation of social media under governance, and the exploration of possible revenue generation related to digital content.

In response to a query related to a seeming lack of student representation, D. Bourne-Tyson noted that there is student participation in several of the discussion groups, and a meeting has been scheduled with the DSU next week to discuss the digital strategy more formally. F. Harvey noted that the digital plan is foundational to the larger strategic plan, the development of which has had, and will continue to have, extensive student involvement.

Responding to questions, J. Leon spoke to the importance of agility in the digital landscape, noting that the development of the framework within the strategy will assist in making decisions on new tools. Rising costs of software and cloud-based services is an issue, but Dalhousie's use of the cloud was critical in allowing for a rapid move to online learning at the start of the pandemic. D. Bourne-Tyson noted that useability is being carefully considered and a universal design approach has been undertaken. As well, consultations have been scheduled with Dalhousie's Accessibility Advisory Committee to ensure the digital strategy is viewed through this lens. She noted that usability testing is done through the libraries and tracked on an ongoing basis.

M. Stinson formally requested that a student representative be added to the Digital Strategy Steering Committee. F. Harvey will follow up with M. Stinson on this request following the meeting.

K. Hewitt noted that Senate has experienced the value of student representation and suggested that the appointment of recent graduates could also be an option; new alumni can provide a helpful perspective when current students are not available because of academic and other commitments. F. Harvey will meet with D. Bourne-Tyson and J. Leon to discuss which sub-committees would best benefit from student representation.

8.2 Community Equity Data Report

T. Rajack-Talley presented highlights from the 2019 Community Equity Data Report, which is more comprehensive than in past years. She reviewed the data collection process, noting improved response rates of 80%, as well as its limitations, given that data collection is based on voluntary self-identification. T. Rajack-Talley reviewed diversity trends among students, graduates, faculty, and staff, and highlighted issues arising and how they are being addressed.

Following the report, T. Rajack-Talley responded to questions, noting that work is ongoing to improve self-identification forms, including expanding category options and looking at intersectionality, and that trends over time are being investigated in more detail.

8.2.1 African Nova Scotian Data and Strategy

M. Williams and Q. Adams presented on this item. M. Williams noted that the conceptual foundation for the strategy is the understanding of African Nova Scotians as a distinct people recognized both internationally and by Dalhousie. She highlighted the room for growth of African Nova Scotian representation at Dalhousie, particularly in comparison to the percentage of African Nova Scotians within the Nova Scotia population. Q. Adams spoke to the origins of the strategy, noting that it incorporates and builds upon several reports including the Breaking Barriers Report, as well as guiding principles of successful programming at Dalhousie under the four pillars of the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion strategy.

Q. Adams highlighted emerging themes out of a review of Dalhousie's equity related policies and wide consultation, noting on-going barriers in the secondary school system that continue into the post-secondary system such as curriculum that does not reflect African Nova Scotian experiences and a lack of African Nova Scotian research areas. M. Williams noted that the group developing the African Nova Scotian Strategy is a volunteer group that is actively engaged in bridging silos at Dalhousie and with African Nova Scotian communities and organizations. She highlighted several of the accomplishments to date including welcoming Jalana Lewis as the first Director of African Nova Scotian Community Engagement. Q. Adams spoke to areas of focus and next steps being actioned in the areas of research, curriculum and teaching; recruitment and retention; and community engagement.

Following the report, questions and discussion focussed on a variety of issues including outstanding recommendations from the Breaking Barriers report; consideration of expanding the Advisory Council membership across the Province; and additional reports utilized in the development of the strategy not mentioned in the presentation. M. Williams noted that ideally African Nova Scotian representation at Dalhousie would increase to a level greater than the representation in the general population in order to effect critical change, and highlighted the benefits realized by the implementation of the Indigenous Blacks & Mi'kmaq Initiative at the Schulich School of Law. She also noted that work on initiatives is underway in the Faculty of Management with additional interest identified among various departments in the Faculty of Health.

8.3 Board Standing Committee Reports

R. Hanf referred Board members to the Committee reports contained within the meeting materials. There were no questions on the reports.

9. *In Camera* Session

The Board moved to the *in camera* session.

10. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 6:00 p.m.