



**BOARD OF GOVERNORS  
DOCUMENT 2023-05-03**

NOVEMBER 3, 2023  
BISHOP'S UNIVERSITY  
MCGREER 100 AND VIDEOCONFERENCE  
MINUTES

***Chair:*** Robert Hall

***Present:*** Mark Caduc, Kent Carson, Pierre Cossette, Daniel Fournier, Chris Gokiert, Sébastien Lebel-Grenier, Murielle Lortie, Heather McKeen-Edwards, Suzie O'Bomsawin, Junior Sirivar, Sophia Stacey, Calin Valsan, Tova White

***Regrets:*** Abel Bosum, Jessica Riddell

***Senior Administration:*** Nick Andrews, Reena Atanasiadis, Julie Desjardins, Kerry Hull, Stine Linden-Andersen, Jean Manore, Matthew Peros, Jacqueline Scott, Andrew Webster

***Secretary:*** Sarah Haddon

**ITEM 1: CHAIR'S WELCOME**

Chair Robert Hall called the meeting to order at 3:05 p.m.

**ITEM 2: APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

The Chair requested changes to the order of the agenda, such that the report of the Vice-Principal Academic and Research be moved to the beginning of the meeting and Business Arising and the Principal's Report be moved to the end. The amended agenda was approved.

Moved by: Kent Carson

Seconded by: Tova White

**Motion carried.**

**ITEM 3: APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

The minutes of the September 22, 2023 meeting were approved as presented.

Moved by: Kent Carson

Seconded by: Tova White

**Motion carried.**

**ITEM 4: BUSINESS ARISING (MOVED TO ITEM 7)**

**ITEM 5: ACADEMIC REPORT**

Vice-Principal Academic and Research Dr. Andrew Webster began his report with an update on enrolment.

The Spring/Summer terms are treated in operational terms as being situated at the end of the current academic year (September to August) but in financial planning terms are treated as coming at the beginning of the next academic year (May to April). For the 2023 Spring/Summer terms - the University had a shortfall of 42 full-time equivalent (FTE) on our target figure.

Dr. Webster also noted that we are behind on our target for the Fall 2023 semester by 16 FTE. This shortfall is explained almost entirely by a lower number of international students commencing with us; a number of these students are in fact deferrals to a Winter 2024 start date, due to visa issues.

Vice-Principal Webster next shared that the Senate Planning Committee (SPC)'s work was underway with the process of evaluating submissions from academic departments for new tenure-stream appointments for the 2024-25 academic year. The committee received a total of eleven new requested appointments from eight departments. The current faculty complement is 115.5, which takes into account two faculty roles that were vacated as of June 30, 2023. The current budgeted envelope is for a faculty complement of 117.5. SPC will present its report and recommendations at the November 17, 2023 meeting of Senate.

Vice-Principal Webster said that he had directed SPC to continue with 'business as usual' in terms of its assessment of the academic quality and the robustness of forward planning in each of the submissions received, despite the government's announced tuition increase. SPC's role is to assess the academic needs and resources of the University's academic programs and it will not make any pre-emptive judgements about potential impacts of the announced tuition reform.

Senate has struck an Ad hoc Committee on Program-specific French Terminology to advise on the implementation of requirements in the Charter of the French Language to ensure that graduating students have appropriate knowledge of French terminology specific to their programs/disciplines.

Finally, Vice-Principal Webster noted that the Senate Program Academic Review Committee (SPARC) will oversee four program reviews during the coming academic year:

Biology & Biochemistry and Music (Fall 2023) and Politics & International Studies and Philosophy (Winter 2024).

The Chair inquired about faculty reaction to the Quebec government's tuition announcement. Vice-Principal Webster noted that faculty he has spoken with have had a similar reaction to the news to that of the community at large, but have also been having conversations about what may be done to mitigate the effects of these measures if they are implemented as announced. Faculty have been appreciative of the level of communication that has been shared to date by the Principal. The Chair further inquired whether there has been dialogue with faculty from other universities. Dr. Webster replied that there has, including anecdotal concerns that collaborations between Quebec universities and other Canadian universities will be adversely affected if student mobility is reduced as a consequence of these measures.

Kent Carson inquired whether prospective students have been contacting the University with questions about the proposed measures. Dr. Webster replied that the Registrar's Office has received quite a few; the fundamental challenge is that for out-of-province students, for the 2024-25 academic year, some damage has already been done. He noted that even if the policy measures were to be completely reversed, some out-of-province students may already have decided to attend another university. The announcement was made the day before the Fall Open House, which did provide an opportunity to answer questions from concerned prospective students and parents on the day, but also resulted in a significant number of cancellations of registrants from Ontario, for instance.

Students' Representative Council (SRC) President Sophia Stacey inquired whether students who had applied to Bishop's before the October 13<sup>th</sup> tuition increase announcement would be subject to the new fees. Dr. Webster confirmed that students who had applied or indeed accepted their offer of admission before the announcement would be subject to the new tuition rates. Students who have accepted and paid their tuition deposit, but who ultimately decide not to attend Bishop's due to the announced measures, will be refunded their deposit fee.

Tova White inquired how many students had already accepted and paid their tuition deposit. Dr. Webster did not have the exact number, but he and the Principal noted that a number of offers of admission have already been sent; some students are hesitant to confirm their acceptance.

Ms. White further noted that in some of her conversations with parents of university-age children, beyond the financial implications of a tuition increase, parents are concerned about their child attending university in a province in which their presence does not seem welcome or where their child may be in a very small minority of out-of-province students.

[Vice-Principal Webster departed the meeting at 3:26 p.m.]

**ITEM 6: REPORT OF THE STUDENTS' REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL PRESIDENT**

Before the President of the Students' Representative Council (SRC), Sophia Stacey, presented her report, the Chair stated his admiration for her presentation to the community at the October 31<sup>st</sup> press conference rallying business and community leaders as well as her recent media interviews on the tuition increase file.

The President noted that the SRC has been working on various aspects of a strategic response plan since the October 13<sup>th</sup> announcement.

The SRC wrote an open letter on behalf of students which was published in French and English on October 24<sup>th</sup>. Over 450,000 students and members are represented by the 32 co-signatories of the letter.

The President noted that she has been meeting on a weekly basis with her counterparts in the Concordia and McGill student associations to develop a cohesive response. One of the initiatives arising from these discussions is a joint petition calling for the cancellation of the tuition increase, launched on October 27<sup>th</sup> and sponsored by MNA Marwah Rizqy, official opposition critic for higher education. The petition needs to reach 30,000 signatures by November 27<sup>th</sup> in order to be presented on the floor of the National Assembly. The petition was formally launched by the SRC, along with representation from the Quebec Student Union and the Quebec Liberal Party, at a press conference on campus.

On October 30<sup>th</sup>, approximately 130 Bishop's students travelled to Montreal to participate in a protest with students from Concordia and McGill. Faculty, staff and alumni also attended.

The President noted that there was a strong student presence at the October 31<sup>st</sup> business and community leaders' press conference in Centennial Theatre. This demonstrated not only students' commitment to the issue but also served to emphasize the support that our students have from the local community, which the President noted is important for students.

The President noted that this has been the SRC's top priority and they have been in regular communication with students via email and video updates since the announcement. She has spoken to approximately 200 students one-on-one during her office hours and by email. She stated that although there is a lot of uncertainty, students seem to feel well supported by the SRC and the University.

The President highlighted other items in her report, including the activities held during Truth and Reconciliation Week in the last week of September. The SRC Executive team has since been discussing other commitments they can take throughout the year to remain engaged with this topic on a more continuous basis.

At the Fall Open House, SRC representatives spoke with many prospective students. They also hosted the 'Fall Fest' event on the same day, which is an event that attracts hundreds of students. Many of the prospective students and their guests also attended.

Finally, Ms. Stacey noted that she and the SRC Vice-President Academic Affairs Christina Lépine would be travelling to Ottawa in November to attend the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations' Advocacy Week on Parliament Hill, where they planned to continue advocating on the tuition increase file, among other priorities.

#### **ITEM 7: BUSINESS ARISING**

Principal Lebel-Grenier noted that the recruitment firm has been selected to support the hiring process for an Associate Vice-Principal, Recruitment, Marketing and Communications and that the processes for the Ad hoc Search Committees for the Secretary General and for the Vice-Principal Student Affairs are underway.

The Principal went on to emphasize, within the main areas of focus for the coming year, the importance of the role of English-language higher education institutions in Quebec, particularly in light of the present context. He also noted the continued importance of the review of the funding formula for universities in Quebec. The newly announced measures are having a significant impact on discussions around this topic.

The Principal stated that the newly merged Sustainable Development and Campus Landscape and Built Environment Committee would be holding its first meeting on November 22<sup>nd</sup>.

The Principal provided an update on the University Statutes, particularly with respect to the status of Senators. He confirmed that, as Senators were named by their respective nominating bodies before the changes to academic structures, which have not yet been formally adopted as part of the revisions to the Statutes, current Senators have validly held their powers with respect to voting. A second Senator from the School of Education will also be named by the Senate Nominating Committee to participate in Senate meetings as a non-voting member until such time as the revised Statutes are adopted.

Nonetheless, it continues to be the case that under the existing Statutes, only a single vote on Senate is accorded to the Dean of Arts and Science—a role which was divided between two deans for 2020-23, with a single vote on Senate being designated to the Dean of Arts, and which is now planned to be divided among three deans covering three new faculties (Humanities, Social Sciences, and Natural Sciences and Mathematics).

#### **ITEM 8: PRINCIPAL'S REPORT**

The Principal highlighted some of the items in his November written report. He said that was pleased to have been able to share with the Governors photos of the current state of the renovations to Divinity House during its transformation to Kwigw8mna.

He also spoke about the Fall Open House, noting that there were many visitors from outside the province who had concerns about the Quebec government's announcement. In his remarks to prospective students and their parents at the welcome session, the Principal underscored the fact that students from out of province are still encouraged to apply as we are working hard to address this issue with the Quebec government. The University has also been sending out the message that we will strive to be flexible (for example, not penalizing anyone who has paid the tuition deposit fee and ultimately changes their mind due to this announcement).

Principal Lebel-Grenier noted the University's continued emphasis on the message that this government policy does not reflect the actual lived experience of students who come to Bishop's. The welcome from both the internal community at Bishop's as well as the wider community will be warm, which was emphasized by the October 31<sup>st</sup> business and community leaders' press conference held in Centennial Theatre. Nonetheless, the government's announcement has resulted in a lot of uncertainty for prospective students.

The Principal next highlighted the recent visit to Bishop's by a delegation of Ainu Indigenous representatives from the Hokkaido region in Northern Japan. This group welcomed eight Bishop's Indigenous students to their community in May 2023 and we were very fortunate to be able to host them in turn this fall. Following their day on campus, Bishop's students and staff travelled with the Ainu delegation to Odanak and Kahnawake where they met with community members and Elders. The Principal will be travelling to Hokkaido in January 2024 and said he looked forward to visiting the Ainu representatives.

Another item the Principal wished to highlight was that starting in Fall 2024, Bishop's will offer a new Doctoral Program in Clinical Psychology, a collaboration between Bishop's University and l'Université du Québec à Chicoutimi. This program will support the training and professional development of future students and practitioners as well as provide much-needed community impact at a time when such services are critically needed. The new graduate program will welcome bilingual students, including prospective applicants from systemically underrepresented backgrounds, who intend to practice clinical psychology. Importantly, it is accredited by the Ordre des psychologues du Québec (OPQ), thus making program graduates eligible for OPQ membership and employment opportunities in clinical psychology. The program will also make possible the creation of a University Clinic, increasing the local availability of essential and affordable mental health services in English and French for our community.

The Principal next summarized the recent Western Canada alumni tour he undertook with the Alumni Relations and Philanthropy Office. He said that he appreciated the experience very much and noted particularly how timely and reassuring it was to witness the dedication of alumni, not only as ambassadors for Bishop's but also through their willingness to speak to their positive experiences studying in Quebec. This perspective has been helpful in the Principal's discussions with the government.

Finally, the Principal congratulated the Men's Golf Team on their provincial championship, their first in 30 years.

#### **ITEM 8.1: UPDATE ON TUITION REFORM**

Principal Lebel-Grenier provided an update on the tuition reform issue since the extraordinary meeting of the Board of Governors that was held on October 20<sup>th</sup> 2023.

The general strategy was first to put maximum pressure on the Quebec Government, through media as well as the community and ensure that the impact of the announced measures on Bishop's was at the forefront of media attention. While the story has mostly cycled out of daily coverage, there are still some in-depth pieces being done both inside Quebec and with pan-Canadian outlets.

The second phase of Bishop's strategy involved garnering public support from dozens of community and business leaders from the Eastern Townships, driven by a small volunteer mobilization committee who led the organization of the October 31<sup>st</sup> press conference event that was held on campus.

Messaging for the second phase has focused not only on the catastrophic financial implications the measures would have on the University but also, importantly, on the impact on our identity if students from out of province and around the world are no longer able to afford to come to Bishop's.

In a matter of days, the mobilization committee gathered close to 200 signatures from community and business leaders on an open letter to the Premier and the Minister of Higher Education in support of Bishop's University. Close to 100 of these influential leaders were present at the October 31<sup>st</sup> press conference event.

This message was important not only for the government to receive, but also for the internal Bishop's community to hear how much the University is valued in the local community. The Principal reiterated how much this support was appreciated.

In addition to signing the open letter, municipal and community organizations were encouraged to take resolutions in support of Bishop's being exempt from the announced measures. The Board of Université de Sherbrooke took such a resolution and the Principal expressed his gratitude, noting that Bishop's has a true friend in Université de Sherbrooke.

Pierre Cossette stated that many members of the Université de Sherbrooke community have expressed directly to him their support for Bishop's.

The Principal explained that he has been speaking with elected officials to share Bishop's reality and explain our position, as have other allies of the University. He noted that there

is pressure within government to find a solution for Bishop's. The local Member of the National Assembly (MNA), Geneviève Hébert, has been a solid advocate for Bishop's.

The Principal also noted that the Liberal Party, as the official opposition, have come out strongly in opposition to these measures. The MNA for Sherbrooke, Christine Labrie of the Québec Solidaire party, also spoke at the National Assembly in support of Bishop's.

The Chair noted that there had been a significant degree of misinformation in the public and in the media, initially, about the issue of how out-of-province students are funded in Quebec. He noted that the consistent sharing of facts that Bishop's has been doing, through individual outreach, through mobilization efforts and in the media, has been helping to chip away at these misconceptions.

Ms. Tova White inquired if the government had provided any timelines for further discussions. The Principal shared that he, along with the presidents of Concordia and McGill, would be meeting with the Premier on November 6<sup>th</sup>.

Dean Jean Manore mentioned that she had been approached by individuals outside of the Bishop's community who have asked what they can do to help.

The Principal responded that the fact sheet shared with the University community as well as with the mobilization committee is a useful tool to help people understand the proposed measures and their expected consequences for Bishop's. Individuals in Quebec are also encouraged to contact their local MNA to express their concerns, as these calls and letters are recorded by politicians and do help to inform their understanding of constituents' concerns.

It is important to reiterate that Bishop's is not opposed to the promotion and protection of the French language – Bishop's is an ally in that respect. The message is that this is a misguided policy that will have adverse effects for all of Quebec but especially for Bishop's. For those outside of the province, particularly alumni, we have asked them to send in testimonials of their experience studying and living in Quebec, which will be shared on our website. We have been getting many meaningful testimonials from graduates from across the country and around the world.

Chris Gokiert inquired about marketing messaging and how the University is measuring the impact of its communications around this policy. The Principal noted he would make reference to further planning in the closed session.

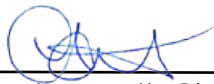
The Chair noted that the Quebec university community did not respond immediately to the announced measures, and that while an open letter was signed by Université de Sherbrooke, Université de Montréal, Université Laval, Polytechnique Montréal and HEC Montréal, there did not seem to be a unified approach. A discussion ensued in which



Pierre Cossette and the Principal both remarked on the challenges of bringing together such a diverse group of post-secondary institutions with varying student populations and academic mandates, all of whom are also trying to understand the implications of the announced measures on their own realities. However, it does now seem that most understand that the measures will not address the fundamental objectives the government has noted in terms of protection and promotion of the French language and will not be beneficial for post-secondary education in Quebec.

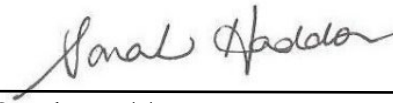
The open session ended at 4:25 p.m.

The meeting ended at 5:41 p.m.



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Robert Hall, Chair



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Sarah Haddon  
Secretary to the Board Meeting