



**BOARD OF GOVERNORS**  
**Approved Minutes of the Meeting held on**  
**Tuesday, February 9, 2021, 3:00 p.m.**  
**via 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

**NON-MEMBERS PRESENT:**

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

**GUESTS:** Leanne French-Munn (Assistant Vice-Provost, Planning & Strategy), Susan Spence (Vice-Provost, Planning & Analytics), Susan Robertson (Assistant VP Financial Services), Mary-Ann Rowiston (Director, Budgets and Financial Analysis), Emily Marshall (Student Minute Taker)

**REGRETS:**

Michele Williams

**1. Approval of Agenda**

The agenda was approved as presented.

**2. Consent Agenda**

All items were adopted by consent.

**2.1 Approval of Minutes of Meeting of November 24, 2020**

**THAT the Board of Governors approve the minutes of the meetings of November 24, 2020 as presented.**

**Approved by CONSENT.**

**2.2 Board Appointments**

**THAT the Board of Governors, on the recommendation of the Governance and Human Resources Committee, approve the nomination of Catherine MacPherson for recommendation to the Governor-in-Council for appointment to the Board of Governors of Dalhousie University for a three-year term from July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2024.**

**AND**

**THAT the Board of Governors, on the recommendation of the Governance and Human Resources Committee, approve the nominations of Cassandra Dorrington and Joyce Hoeven for recommendation to the Governor-in-Council for reappointment to the Board of Governors of Dalhousie University for a three-year term from July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2024.**

**Approved by CONSENT.**

### **2.3 Board Committee Appointments**

**THAT the Board of Governors, on the recommendation of the Governance and Human Resources Committee, approve the appointment of Kristan Hines as Chair of the Board Community Affairs Committee for a term to run from the date of Board approval to June 30, 2021.**

**AND**

**THAT the Board of Governors, on the recommendation of the Governance and Human Resources Committee, approve the appointment of Jay MacIsaac to the Board Finance, Audit, Investment and Risk Committee for a term to run from date of Board approval to June 30, 2021.**

**Approved by CONSENT.**

### **3. Business Arising from the Minutes**

There was no business noted.

### **4. Chair's Report**

R. Hanf thanked K. Hines for agreeing to chair the Board Community Affairs Committee, noting that he will remain a member of the Committee until the end of this Board year. R. Hanf noted that K. Hewitt will be stepping down as Chair of Senate as of June 30, 2021 and thanked him for his leadership and years of dedicated service to the University, particularly in relation to advancing equity, diversity and inclusion at Dalhousie.

### **5. President's Report**

D. Saini began his report by congratulating Fatima Beydoun (BA'21) and Caroline Merner (BA'17) on being named finalists for the inaugural McCall MacBain Scholarships at McGill University.

D. Saini noted that almost a year has passed since the arrival of COVID-19 and the move to online learning, and he expressed gratitude to students, staff and faculty for their resilience, hard work and continued commitment to Dalhousie. He reported on the return to campus, noting the likelihood that the spring and summer semesters will remain largely online, with in-person instruction focused on experiential learning and accreditation needs. The Return to Campus Committee is cautiously optimistic that in-person instruction for small-to-medium sized classes as well as labs may be allowed as early as fall 2021, with a more normal return to operations as early as winter 2022. Multiple factors including vaccine rollout, health impacts of the emerging COVID-19 variants, and travel restrictions will inform decision-making. He reported that despite the challenges of the past year, the latest enrolments numbers for 2020-21 indicate a 4.5% increase relative to the same time last year; this is a testament to the exceptional work of faculty and staff in building high-quality online courses and the commitment of students to their education. He further indicated that application numbers for 2021-2022 are strong: relative to last year, undergraduate applications are up 9.5%, graduate applications are up 16.7%, and the number of applications from all domestic markets have increased or are stable. There has been a significant decrease in applications from international markets, due in large part to visa processing delays, travel restrictions and financial challenges related to the pandemic.

D. Saini reported that he and F. Harvey have been distilling information provided through an extensive consultation process and drafting an ambitious strategic plan for Dalhousie, which will be presented to the Board at the April

meeting. In addition to F. Harvey, D. Saini thanked those who have contributed to the preparation of the strategic plan for their hard work.

D. Saini acknowledged the retirements of several key members of leadership: Colin Spinney, who retired as University Treasurer in December; Susan Spence, Vice-Provost Planning and Analytics, who will retire at the end of the month, and Nancy Hayter, Assistant Vice-President Research Services, who will retire later this spring. He noted their invaluable contributions to Dalhousie and thanked them for their many years of dedicated service.

Following the report, D. Saini responded to questions related to efforts to increase scholarship opportunities for international students, noting that although scholarship program funding is directly related to the health of the University's overall financial position, the development of an international strategy will consider supports for international students, including scholarship opportunities. He also spoke to efforts underway to increase student retention, noting that the increase in enrolment numbers is largely related to returning students. F. Harvey added that full-time enrolment credits – a good indicator of retention - increased for the 2020-21 fall and winter semesters by 4.8% compared to last year, perhaps due to expanded student supports as well as the implementation of a PASS/ILL grading option for students.

## **6. Dalhousie Student Union President's Report**

M. Stinson referred members to her report included in the meeting materials. She reported on the DSU's revised 2020-21 budget that includes funding allocations for emergency bursaries for students, sponsorship of local community organizations and advocacy groups, and \$15,000 for a Mental Health bursary. M. Stinson highlighted several other items, including Winter Pride Week, the continuing DSU governance review, 2021 DSU elections, and planning for fall 2021 orientation.

Highlighting current student issues and advocacy efforts outlined in her report, M. Stinson noted DSU concerns related to the treatment of returning international students by the provincial and federal governments and encouraged the University to take a more proactive approach in offering assistance to them. She also spoke to the recent reports of sexualized violence on campus, noting that the DSU was the only body to respond and encouraged the University to not remain silent. Lastly, M. Stinson spoke to the provincial funding of \$9.5 million received by Dalhousie, noting that efforts should be made to report to the Dalhousie community on how this funding will be allocated.

Following the report, D. Saini offered several points of clarification, noting that the funding received from the Province is not a "windfall", but will be used to offset the \$9.8M in reserves that were required to balance the 2020-21 budget, due to the decline in revenue and increase in expenses realized as a result of the pandemic; details of how this money is allocated is outlined in the 2020-21 operating budget report which is available to the Dalhousie community.

D. Saini noted that the recent reports of sexualized violence are of utmost concern and outlined the steps taken by the University to actively manage these situations. F. Harvey provided additional context, noting that for reasons tied to risk and liability there are limits as to what can be communicated publicly.

F. Harvey spoke to shared frustrations related to differences in the government regulations applied to domestic and international students but noted that the University must follow the federal and provincial policies in place. He highlighted the significant funding that has been invested to assist returning and new international students; these include covering 50% of all costs incurred, or more if financial need is demonstrated; \$200,000 to cover hotel costs for quarantine purposes; \$100,000 for commissionaires to monitor students and provide supports; full coverage of transportation costs; and an additional \$100,000 in reserve to address further requests related to financial need.

A. Mohan spoke to the importance of bridging the gap between domestic and international students noting the need for long-term investment in international students, particularly at the outset of their university careers.

M. Stinson acknowledged the work completed by the University to date and noted that although responses related to sexualized violence may be limited by personnel and legal constraints, she restated her belief that there is more that can be done, as sexualized violence is an ongoing issue.

R. Hanf thanked M. Stinson for her presentation and advocacy.

## **7. Items for Information**

### **7.1 Budget Advisory Committee Process and Timeline for 2021-2022 Operating Budget Development – Update**

F. Harvey provided an update on the Budget Advisory Committee's (BAC) planning for the 2021-22 operating budget, noting that given the continuing uncertainties related to the pandemic as well as the compressed timeline, the basic parameters in place from the 2020-21 budget plan will be carried forward. This approach will allow Faculties and units to plan for their operations with known budget allocations, and students will be aware of tuition and fee rates. It will also provide flexibility related to revenue and expenditure fluctuations. He noted that the BAC is currently exploring ways to engage students in substantive consultations and spoke to the budget gap related to increasing operating costs which needs to be addressed on a yearly basis.

G. Kulczycki reported that the BAC expects to present the Board with a balanced budget. Given the uncertainty of the impact the pandemic will continue to have, student supports will be maintained, and it is expected that there will be reduced ancillary revenues in the fall, with possibly a more normal return to operations in the winter 2022 term. She reported on engagement to date including a meeting with the DSU executive and an emailed questionnaire to staff, faculty and students. While a return to a more normal budget planning schedule for 2022-23 is expected, the pandemic has informed the need for reserve funding to address future challenges as they arise.

Following the report, G. Kulczycki responded to questions related to modelling at varied enrolment numbers, noting that it is very early in the admissions cycle and while the increase in applications is positive, these do not represent confirmed registrations. Given the numerous uncertainties related to the pandemic, it is prudent to take a cautious approach to budget planning. She clarified that cuts to faculty budgets will be maintained at 1.5% should enrolment levels stay the same as those in the 2020-21 year, but this may be adjusted as numbers are confirmed.

Responding to a question related to potential risks to government funding post-pandemic, G. Kulczycki noted that although the Province has pledged that operating grant funding will be maintained, the long-term financial impacts of the pandemic are as yet unknown, reinforcing the need to exercise caution when budget planning. F. Harvey spoke to the challenges of modelling based on a single variable such as tuition, as there are many factors that inform budget planning, and reiterated that the positive application numbers reported today are not confirmed registrations.

### **7.2 Dalhousie's Accessibility Plan**

F. Harvey provided a brief introduction to this item, noting that in 2017 the Province passed the Accessibility Act with the goal to make Nova Scotia barrier-free by 2030. Shortly after the legislation was enacted, Facilities Management undertook an accessibility audit of all buildings across the Halifax and Truro campuses, with their innovative approach earning them the 2020 Quality and Productivity Award recognizing excellence in equity, diversity and inclusion by the Canadian Association of University Business Officers. F. Harvey introduced S. Spence, Vice-Provost, Planning & Analytics, and Chair of the University Accessibility Advisory/Steering Committee to speak to the specifics of the planning currently underway.

S. Spence provided an overview of Dalhousie's Accessibility Plan, which is designed to address the barriers as outlined by the Province: attitudinal, organizational or systemic, architectural or physical, information or communications, and technological. Within the Act, universities are defined as public sector bodies with initial requirements to establish an advisory committee and develop an accessibility plan by April 2022. The steering committee is comprised of individuals with declared disabilities—both visible and invisible—and individuals from units responsible for addressing many of the improvements needed, including Human Resources and Facilities Management. S. Spence highlighted various elements and goals of the Accessibility Plan and noted that students are a vital part in its development. Current activity is focused on broad consultations across the University and other Canadian universities to better understand accessibility

challenges. She provided an overview of the timeline, noting that a first draft of the plan is expected to be ready for review later this fall. She noted there is also a website dedicated to the Dalhousie Accessibility Plan.

Following the report, S. Spence responded to questions related to the need for improvements on the Sexton Campus, acknowledging that many of the aging buildings are not fully accessible and do not reflect gender equity standards. She reported that a 125-seat classroom will soon be completed in the D building and as part of that project a female washroom is also being added. Work is underway to address the deficiencies noted in the accessibility audit, but this is a slow process requiring time, resources and consultation. She noted that the addition of a representative from the Sexton Campus to the steering committee is a welcome suggestion.

In response to a question related to the digital strategy planning as it pertains to accessibility, S. Spence noted that she also sits on the Digital Strategy Steering Committee and reported that the Accessibility Committee has already engaged with that committee regarding accessibility issues. She highlighted the importance of integrating these two initiatives.

### **7.3 Board Standing Committee Reports**

S. Porter reported on results of a workplace survey completed pre-COVID that were presented to the Governance & Human Resources Committee, as well as a Pulse Check follow-up survey of employees undertaken in July 2020 to assess how employees were coping and adapting through the pandemic. She also advised that Board members should expect to receive an updated Board member skills matrix document to complete in the coming weeks; the information will be helpful to the Committee as they consider Board and committee membership going forward.

There were no further comments on the reports.

### **8. *In Camera* Session**

The Board moved to the *in camera* session.

### **9. Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 6:15 p.m.