

2020 – MINUTES AND SUMMARY OF MOTIONS

(2020:17) OPENING REMARKS - CHAIR

(2020:18) OPENING REMARKS - PRESIDENT

(2020:19) ACADEMIC PLAN FOR 2020-2021

(2020:19) FACTORS INFLUENCING ENROLMENT AND MEASURES BEING TAKEN TO MAINTAIN ENROLMENT

(2020:20) CURRENT STATUS OF BUDGET DEVELOPMENT

a) ESTIMATED DEFICIT SCENARIOS

b) INCREASED COSTS DUE TO COVID-19

c) REDUCED EXPENDITURES DUE TO COVID-19 OR EFFORTS TO REDUCE DEFICIT

(2020:21) GOVERNMENT POLICY LANDSCAPE AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR UNIVERSITIES

(2020:22) OTHER BUSINESS – ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

(2020:23) *IN CAMERA*

UNIVERSITY OF KING'S COLLEGE
MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS

The Executive Committee of the University of King's College Board of Governors met by web conferencing on Thursday, May 21, 2020, at 10:00 a.m.

ATTENDING: Ms. Katrina BEACH (Treasurer), Mx. Levi CLARKSON (King's Students Union President), Ms. Rosalie COURAGE (Board of Governors Representative), Dr. Gwendolyn DAVIES (Vice Chair), Mx. Jennifer GRAY (Secretary), Professor William LAHEY (President and Vice-Chancellor), Dr. Peter O'BRIEN (Vice-President), Mr. Douglas RUCK (Chair), Mr. Paul THOMSON (Alumni Representative), and Mr. Hugh WRIGHT (Diocesan Representative)

BY INVITATION: Ms. Adriane ABBOTT (Advancement Director), Ms. Julie Green (Registrar), Ms. Katie MERWIN (Dean of Students), and Ms. Bonnie SANDS (Bursar)

Regrets: Dr. Susan DODD (Faculty Representative)

STAFF: Mx. Janet HATHAWAY (minutes)

The Chair called the meeting to order at 10:01 a.m.

(2020:17) OPENING REMARKS - CHAIR

The Chair thanked everyone for being available for this meeting and spoke about Captain Jennifer Casey, who lost her life in the Snowbirds crash in Kamloops last weekend and was a graduate of King's Bachelor of Journalism program.

The members observed a moment of silence.

(2020:18) OPENING REMARKS - PRESIDENT

The President noted the outpouring of love and sadness from people who knew Captain Casey, especially from her time at King's, and those who worked with her.

The President discussed the plan for 2020-2021, speaking about challenges facing the University. Moving fully online is an incredible amount of work. The other big challenge is the enrolment situation. There is also a financial challenge. The Bursar is putting together a budget. There is no template for a budget in this situation.

It is important that the University does not abandon faculty renewal, equity and diversity, proper implementation of the Sexualized Violence Prevention Policy, and renewal of facilities. King's needs to be bold enough to believe that the pace of improvement on those priorities may have to change, but King's cannot allow this crisis to result in abandonment of the University's commitment to those priorities.

There are challenges that are more fundamental. One is the difficulty that prospective students must be wrestling with. That is a challenge to which King's needs to be responsive. The other challenge that people working in the University face is that people have been working relentlessly for two months, and it is going to continue. On one hand, that is not negotiable, but it is also not sustainable. This challenge needs to be kept at the forefront as King's focuses on what lies ahead.

(2020:19) ACADEMIC PLAN FOR 2020-2021

The Vice-President discussed the academic plan for the coming year. The University is planning for robust delivery of online curriculum in the fall, with some possibility of accommodating students on campus within guidelines of public health recommendations. The task is going to require people to make themselves aware of new pedagogies and adapt their present teaching techniques to new modes, while preserving a high level of student engagement and care. The atmosphere is “healthily skeptical” in certain respects. He noted that he had seen sacrifices of cherished plans and ideals in the teaching program.

In terms of immediate challenges:

- All programs have common requirements for transitioning to online modes. Instructors need training in online pedagogy and course design, and programs need adequate computing and equipment to fulfill those goals. With respect to online pedagogy, there are meetings every day across the campus. King’s is in the process of finalizing an agreement with the Centre for Learning and Teaching (CLT) at Dalhousie, which provides dedicated advice and techniques in this area. CLT has already expanded their complement to meet the need. King’s will have a dedicated CLT employee available at King’s three days a week. In addition to that, there are a number of student employees dedicated to assisting with the transition to online teaching.
- King’s has consulted with Academic Technology Services at Dalhousie through Ian Wagschal, whose duties have expanded into the realm of teaching in this crisis. Mr. Wagschal has proven his mettle yet again in helping ascertain what is needed for lecture capture, streaming capabilities, and helping instructors do teaching from home if necessary. That process is ongoing and is dovetailing (where necessary) with plans for equipping Alumni Hall and Prince Hall with better technology for sound and video technology to provide state-of-the-art capture of lectures. Pedagogy experts will advise that in accessibility situations, good audio is better than almost anything else, for many learners.
- The contracts of a couple of Journalism staff, which are usually nine months, have been expanded to the summer to address technology capability, specifically in the area of video.

The upper year programs fall under the umbrella of Dalhousie Senate and Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, so their expectations are tethered to Dalhousie’s expectations of online teaching in the fall. Journalism is also moving its programs online. There are software requirements for the online setting, and equipment needs are being explored so they have what they need for high quality online learning in the fall.

The Foundation Year Program is of particular concern because of its hallmarks of student engagement and close contact of faculty and students. Current planning is focussed on online tutorials in a synchronous mode, which means students log in at a particular time of day and have the live experience, whereas lectures will be recorded and available asynchronously. Tutorial sizes will be a ratio of one to eight to boost the level of attention students receive.

Board members asked if there was any sense of how many students might come on campus (e.g., how big a component day students in Halifax might be).

The Registrar advised that she is aggressively focused on the Halifax Regional Municipality applicants in the applicant pool; however, there is no template for projecting what will happen in this scenario. Deposits are lower than usual as compared with this time last year.

The President advised that the University is trying to take a compatible approach with online and living on campus.

Board members asked about synchronous tutorials for FYP students, noting that some students might be in different time zones, and some might have to work full time. The Vice-President responded that it is on the agenda of the fall planning committee and is being actively considered.

Board members noted issues of accessibility and how good audio will be vital, as well as captioning and transcribing lectures. The Vice-President indicated that captioning will be considered. The current standard for asynchronous lectures usually involves a visual component like PowerPoint. In addition, they are looking at “chunking” lectures into smaller sections to make them digestible, which is a huge change for the two-hour FYP lecture.

(2020:19) FACTORS INFLUENCING ENROLMENT AND MEASURES BEING TAKEN TO MAINTAIN ENROLMENT

The Bursar suggested that the Registrar present the enrolment update before the Bursar’s report because this forms the scenario for the budgeted deficit.

The Registrar noted that she can usually predict what the FYP class will look like at this point, but this year King’s cannot use those traditional forecasting models. Her office has moved to a scenario approach. Her team is forecasting that there will be more applicants from HRM who will attend, and have decreased the out-of-province applicants because the tendency is people may want to stay closer to home in light of this. She is estimating King’s will get 130 students enrolling in FYP this fall. Looking at returning students, she will be lowering the conversion rate slightly and is still working on the projection. The scenario administration has gone with is the middle one, not the extreme one in which it is projected that King’s will not get any out-of-province students.

Currently, King’s is now sitting at 134 students – down 60 applicants from last year. The University is taking forward-looking steps to try to mitigate anxiety seen in the applicant pool and with their parents. The planning committee for fall 2020 is working on a communications plan of letting students know how different things will be and that there are many advantages in having this unified approach to the first year. FYP faculty have been coming up with videos. Her office has been working with KSU and the Dean of Students so the University can be thoughtful in how it talks to incoming applicants. King’s has relied heavily on webinars in the last while. The President has done those by region in the last weeks. King’s is going to do a FYP 101 online session so students can get an idea of what FYP will look like in the fall. Alignment of expectations and experience leads to positive outcomes, so the University is trying to let students know what to expect.

King’s is working closely with colleagues at Dalhousie. There is a real spirit of collaboration. King’s has also committed strongly to bursaries for students. The University offered short-term bursaries for students to help students get home, and now King’s has announced that there will be academic year 2020-2021 COVID-19 bursaries on top of the regular bursaries offered. It is intended that King’s will have had grading options that will be supportive of students. Faculty have supported students in getting them through this time.

The Registrar also reported that she is continuing to work on what came back from Academica and incorporating that advice. Her office is also working with the Enrolment Management Committee for next year. Academica’s research advice is helpful in making the message clear during this time. The Registrar has also been consulting with the new Equity Officer on campus to make sure the University is recruiting in an equitable way.

The President noted that small residential universities across the country are hearing from their students a desire to come back on campus. One strategy is the Mount Allison and St. Francis Xavier strategy to boldly say everything will be on campus, but that was never a strategy available to King's because of the University's alignment with Dalhousie, which has known for some time they would not take that approach. It is not a majority of students across the country who want online, but it is not a majority of students who want to be on campus, and their parents do not want them on campus. King's will be saying the residences will be available. The online experience will not be a generic experience - it will be a King's experience. King's is trying to appeal to students' desire to be attached to a university but also make it possible for students who are motivated by their anxiety for their safety to register at King's to make it possible not to go to a mega-university. That's the choice made. It is risky.

The Registrar advised that the University's advertising is now saying the online option will be available for the entire year.

(2020:20) CURRENT STATUS OF BUDGET DEVELOPMENT

The Bursar noted that the 2020-21 budget is unlike any she has ever done.

a) ESTIMATED DEFICIT SCENARIOS

In terms of deficit scenarios, the best-case scenario would have been the balanced budget that went to the Board in March. The Bursar advised that she is currently using the middle scenario where the University is more focussed on the HRM area. The budget assumes only 20 returning international students. A headcount of 723 with 132 FYP students results in a \$2,000,000 deficit.

Residences will need social distancing. The Bursar indicated that she is assuming an occupancy of 52 students out of 252 beds. The University will need to allow for one student per room, the proper number of bathrooms, and isolation spaces. Having only 52 students increases the deficit by \$1,200,000.

b) INCREASED COSTS DUE TO COVID-19

The Bursar reported that work being done to convert to online learning from traditional learning has increased costs. There is a \$500,000 COVID-19 emergency response fund in the budget to cover such things as consulting costs, human resources costs, computing needs, audio-visual expenditures, return-to-work safety renovations to install Plexiglas barriers in the Registrar's and Bursar's office, costs of personal protective equipment such as masks and gloves, increased sanitation services, and increased marketing costs.

There are negative financial implications of over \$900,000 related to: the refunded a portion of winter residence fees for April, which falls in this fiscal year; the cancelled conference season this year; volatility in the stock market; cancelled Study Abroad in Berlin and Humanities for Young People summer program; and cancelled gym fees.

There have been some expense reductions relating to COVID-19, including deferral of some hires planned this year; and reduced summer employment for students who would have worked in the gym, Facilities, and the Library. There has been increased enrolment in some online summer courses. Shifting the Master of Fine Arts residences in Halifax and New York City to online platforms has resulted in some savings. Finally, the Bursar advised that she has spoken with the University's lender and arranged to have principal payments on long-term debt deferred, which freed up over \$800,000 in cash and reduced the deficit.

c) REDUCED EXPENDITURES DUE TO COVID-19 OR EFFORTS TO REDUCE DEFICIT

Reductions in spending related to travel, varsity sports, etc. are not fully known, but will be applied to a central reduction of spending in the budget, rather than being allocated to individual departments. The Bursar is assuming about \$700,000 in reduced spending in these areas. The President noted that an additional rationale for centralizing savings is that if it is expected there will be very little travel, that will be a saving to the College generally.

The President indicated that they are thinking about the surplus amounts from the two previous fiscal years, previously allocated to the Tri-Bays project. In light of this situation and the awkwardness of looking to the government for assistance when the University is spending on capital costs, they are reconsidering how these surplus amounts may be repurposed.

Board members asked what the highest deficit had been before the current situation. The Bursar advised that \$2,200,000 was the largest deficit she had budgeted at King's, but it was turned around when the government gave the University a grant. She estimates it might be \$2,000,000 now without applying prior year surpluses.

The President noted that borrowing might be required for the Tri-Bays project.

Board members observed that the plan for the academic year that is being put forward is attractive because it minimizes the chance King's will have to tell everyone to go home. In British Columbia, Provincial Health Officer Bonnie Henry has said there has never been a pandemic without a second wave. It would be more challenging if the University pushed the limits on public health now and then in the fall had to tell the students there would a disruption for the second year in a row. Board members indicated agreement with the proposed plans.

(2020:21) GOVERNMENT POLICY LANDSCAPE AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR UNIVERSITIES

The President reported on the government policy landscape and its implications for universities. He commented about how worthwhile it is to be a member of Universities Canada. All presidents have been doing Zoom meetings almost weekly. King's has received very helpful information on what students and parents are thinking about this fall. Universities Canada and student leaders had a lot to do with the student benefit and it is now focussed on institutional stability. It continues to lobby for universities to be allowed to qualify for the wage subsidy program, to top up employment insurance benefits for employees who are laid off, which is important. The remaining Universities Canada activity is to lobby the Federal government to compensate universities for one year for the loss of international students. If successful, that will give some help to Atlantic universities, who are dependent on international students.

Provincially, CONSUP is working with the Provincial government through the Department of Labour and Advanced Education. The Department of Finance is also helping the Provincial government understand the financial crisis universities could face. Right now, universities are in relatively good shape compared to municipalities. Some universities could be in a liquidity crisis come September and unable to pay bills. The government is inviting more conversation. The Provincial government's fiscal capacity is constrained and many other sectors are being hard hit right now. It is a challenging situation, but CONSUP is reasonably optimistic, talking about government grants to help with deficits caused by COVID-19.

The President reported that he is chairing a subcommittee that is trying to identify options CONSUP can present to government that government might be able to handle from a fiscal and political point of view. It is a certainty that the Province will have an expectation that universities will be working to solve their own financial crises and that means cuts in expenditures. The Province will have its own idea of what areas need to be cut to show universities are serious. That involves human resources impacts.

In respect of reopening campus, the President reported that Christine Penney of the Department of Labour and Advanced Education will be meeting with Ian Wagschal and Dean of Students Katie Merwin. She is the lead on occupational health and safety in the Province. Dr. Strang thinks of this as an occupational health and safety measure. The concept is that each university would develop its own plan to allow students, employees and others back on campus in a way that would keep everyone safe.

Board members asked about who makes the decisions about laying people off. The President responded it is the employer, which is the University. The process and mechanism, if it comes to that, are not clear yet. The burden will fall on staff primarily but not exclusively, because professors have tenure and the University is locked into the Dalhousie collective agreement by the concept of parity. That is not the case on the staff side of the University.

(2020:22) OTHER BUSINESS – ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

Board members inquired about the Tri-Bays project. The President reported that the project is close to being half finished. It is going smoothly. That was a decision to proceed that had risks associated with it, including that King's might become a centre of a COVID-19 outbreak, but precautions have been taken and the project is on track. The contractor is in the process of changing the plumbing. The interiors of the buildings are unrecognizable.

Board members noted that if funding for international students comes through, it allows the Province to look at funding other areas, which could provide greater benefit to King's. The President agreed.

The President reiterated that it was not his objective for King's to reduce the size of its complement, and he noted that the University is already under-resourced regarding the immensity of work facing King's. He indicated that his objective would be to come to an understanding with the Province that reflects the reality of what King's needs to do and what the Province wants universities to do.

(2020:23) IN CAMERA

At 11:31 a.m., the meeting attempted to enter an *in camera* discussion, which did not proceed, due to an accidental termination of the web conference.

The meeting of the Board of Governors' Executive Committee was adjourned at 11:32 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Douglas Ruck

Jennifer Gray