



Annual General Meeting of the University of King's College Alumni Association Wednesday, June 11, 2025

5:00p.m. AST

[Virtual meeting on Zoom](#)

RSVP on AGM 2025 webpage to receive meeting link

Present: William Lahey (President), Adriane Abbott (Director of Advancement), Daniel Konopelski, Nevin French, Cynthia Pilichos, Lesley Steeleworthy, Nicholas Graham, Eunice Abaga, Alexander Long, Andrew Soren, Geoff Davies, George MacLean, Jenn Thornhill Verma, Marco Oved, Owen Parkhouse, Nick Harris, Nerissa Zhang, Jasmine Ashfield, Victoria Foley, Tim Rissesco, Mike Peters, Candice MacDonald (Alumni Relations Manager)

Regrets: Samuel Ramos, Stephanie McGrath, Mihira Lakshman, Lois Miller, Ian Whytock, Andrew MacDonald

1. Call to Order and Welcome

The meeting was called to order by Nevin French, who served as emergency chair. A warm welcome was extended to all participants.

2. Land Acknowledgement

Nevin French delivered the land acknowledgement, recognizing the traditional and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq people as well as the African Nova Scotian community's legacy and presence.

3. Necrology List

Cynthia Pilichos read the necrology list, honouring alumni who had passed

away in the past year.

Joan (Caines) Anthony, BA(Hons)'56
Eric Beresford, DCL'06
Jordan Breen, BA'09
William Burchell, BA'69
Nancy (Ellis) Burchill, '49
Steven Burns, (former faculty member)
Eldon Colley, (friend of the college)
Stephen Cook, BA(Hons)'67
Harrington "Harry" Critchley, BA(Hons)'15
Elizabeth Day, (friend of the college)
Thomas Forrestall, DCL'80
Peter Godsoe, DCL'93
Elizabeth (Stayner) Gruchy, BA'55, MSW'57
Kevin Harris, '84
Annette Hayward, BA(Hons)'66
Erik Hillgard, (King's staff member)
Rodney Ives, BA'65, LTh'65
William Johnston, BA'66
Allison (Lynch) Kearley, BA'00
Danford Kelley, '48
David MacDonald, '54
John Ian MacKenzie, BA'57, LTh'59, BDiv'60
Patricia Martinson, (friend of the college)
Ian McKee, (friend of the college)
Jacqueline Nicholl, BA'66
Kenneth Niles, (friend of the college)
Susan (McCulloch) Richardson, BA'68
Anna Ruth (Harris) Rogers, BA'52
Alexander Ross, BA(Hons)'87
Andy Sherwood, BSc'70
Jill Tasman, (friend of the college)
Valerie (Bowditch) Teed, BA'65
Alister Thomas, MFA'24
Ian Urquhart, (friend of the college)
James Walker, (friend of the college)

Chantal Walsh, '03
Mary Wilcox, (friend of the college)
Alexandria Wortman, '23
Gretchen (Pierce) Ziegler, '66

4. Approval of 2024 AGM Minutes (June 19, 2024)

- Motion: Nick Harris moved to approve the 2024 AGM minutes.
- Seconded by: Cynthia Pilichos.
- Outcome: Motion carried unanimously.

5. University of King's College President's remarks

President William Lahey provided a comprehensive update on university developments:

President William Lahey then offered remarks on the current state of the university. He began by reflecting on Encaenia and the Alumni Day brunch, emphasizing these events as key markers of the strength and spirit of the King's community. He noted that although enrolment in the Foundation Year Program (FYP) had declined, overall student enrolment at King's had risen significantly. The university now has over 1,000 students, largely due to the expansion of graduate programs such as the MFAs. He indicated that the upcoming university budget would involve financial restraint, including a freeze on hiring and a pause on creating new positions. These measures are intended to balance the need for fiscal responsibility with the university's commitment to maintaining a high-quality student experience and stable enrolment.

President Lahey also provided insight into recent changes in provincial government policy. The Government of Nova Scotia is seeking to increase its influence over universities through bilateral agreements, which now tie portions of institutional funding to specific performance metrics. The university's operating grant, already the lowest proportional grant in the province at 35% of overall revenue, is now subject to holdbacks. For example, if 95% of residence beds are not filled, the university could face a 3% reduction in funding. Additionally, new program review processes are being implemented to assess how programs align with provincial employment goals. These reviews could also result in a 3% reduction if standards are not met. The province has introduced Bill 12, which permits the Minister of Advanced

Education to restructure university boards to include up to 50% government-appointed members. These developments have created considerable uncertainty, particularly for smaller liberal arts institutions like King's, NSCAD, and the Atlantic School of Theology, whose program offerings may be at risk under these new frameworks.

In response to these challenges, King's is advocating for the continued value and relevance of liberal arts education. The university has invited the Minister of Advanced Education to campus and is working with advisors to communicate King's distinct contributions to public life and the economy. President Lahey expressed confidence in King's ability to demonstrate the importance of its programs and affirmed that King's will continue to make the case for liberal arts education.

The President then updated attendees on the university's \$15 million major gifts campaign. To date, over \$11 million has been raised, thanks to the efforts of Adrienne Abbott and the Advancement Office. The campaign is on track to reach its goal in the coming months. In terms of capital development, the university continues to plan for the redevelopment of the southeast corner of campus. The proposal includes a new gymnasium, a new home for the journalism school, and additional residence floors. The design aims to complement King's historic architecture and preserve the integrity of the campus. On June 26, the Board of Governors will be asked to endorse the design. If approved, the university will move to the next stage of architectural development and begin community outreach and fundraising for the construction phase.

Nevin French opened the floor for questions.

Cynthia Pilichos asked about responses from other universities to the provincial government's increased oversight. President Lahey responded that most universities have not gone public with criticism, fearing increased pressure from government. He indicated that King's had signed the bilateral agreement due to financial necessity but included a letter articulating the university's unique mission and value. Nevin French asked about the Minister's recent visit to King's. The President described the meeting as very positive, highlighting discussions about future investment in two new programs: a new MFA in Screenwriting and a proposed program in podcasting, at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. These proposals build on the success of King's existing MFA programs, which have outperformed government expectations and garnered interest from the film and media sectors.

Owen Parkhouse inquired whether the Minister of Education and Minister of Advanced Education were the same individual. The President confirmed that they are. Daniel Konopelski asked how caps on international students affect King's. President Lahey expressed disappointment in the federal government's approach to capping international students, calling it a blunt, one-size-fits-all solution that echoes the policies of the Trump administration. He noted that the new Carney government has not reversed this approach. For King's, the underlying issue is chronic underfunding of universities and the need for greater government investment in higher education.

Eunice raised concerns about the use of standardized metrics that fail to account for the unique cultures and mandates of different universities. She emphasized that institutions like King's require different evaluation tools and asked whether there was any avenue to dispute these metrics. The President strongly agreed and noted that King's is working with communications and government relations experts to convey these points strategically within government processes. He emphasized that it is a collective responsibility to advocate for liberal arts education—not just in terms of its economic value, but also its broader contributions to society.

Alexander Long reflected on his time at King's, noting how his liberal arts education shaped his leadership approach. He urged the university to continue building on its leadership legacy, even as it introduces programs like video game design and screenwriting. President Lahey responded that the MFA in Screenwriting will include a focus on game scripting and emphasized the rigorous process of creating new academic programs, which requires approval from Dalhousie and the MPHEC. King's has had particular success in this area, currently hosting approximately 130 students in its two existing MFA programs. He reinforced the importance of continuing to grow these programs, which attract a distinct and expanding student demographic.

Andrew Soren asked whether the university has data on the career outcomes of its graduates. The President acknowledged that the data is not as robust as

they would like and noted that this is an area of interest for the provincial government. Demonstrating the career relevance of a King's education will be an important part of future planning.

Nevin French then invited the President to comment on his experience working with Stephanie McGrath, the current Vice-Chair of the Board of Governors and a longtime contributor to the alumni community. President Lahey praised Stephanie's leadership and confirmed that while she will formally take over as Chair of the Board this summer, she has effectively served in that role since January due to the current Chair's illness. He expressed gratitude for her ongoing dedication.

6. Treasurer's remarks

The financial statements were reviewed, with a note that the watermark would be removed prior to publication on the website. The statements reflect the health of the alumni association's finances and include a contingency fund to support upcoming initiatives. Alexander Long moved to approve the statements, seconded by Daniel Konopelski, and the motion passed unanimously.

Andrew Soren then moved to reappoint KPMG as the association's auditors, with Owen Parkhouse seconding. This motion also carried unanimously.

7. Search committee

a. Expression of appreciation of retiring members of UKCAA

Jenn Thornhill Verma extended thanks to outgoing alumni board members, including Stephanie McGrath, Andrew MacDonald, Ian Whytock, Victoria Foley, and LA Steeleworthy.

LA offered a brief message of thanks to the Alumni Association for the opportunity to serve.

b. Motion to accept the Slate of Officers 2025-26

Jenn then moved to approve the slate of officers for 2025–26, seconded by Daniel Konopelski. The motion passed unanimously.

8. Announcements & New Business

During announcements and new business, Adrienne Abbott encouraged alumni to stay engaged and to reach out to Candice for volunteer opportunities. Candice expressed appreciation for everyone's contributions to Alumni Day, and thanked both President Lahey and Nick Harris for their support. Daniel Konopelski noted that this is an excellent time to get involved in the Alumni Association, while Nicholas Graham thanked the Advancement team for making participation meaningful and rewarding.

9. Adjournment

Jenn Thornhill Verma moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Alexander Long. The motion passed unanimously, and the meeting concluded.