



## BOARD OF REGENTS

THURSDAY, APRIL 10, 2025

### MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF REGENTS

Thursday, April 10, 2025, 4:00 p.m.,  
in Alumni Hall, Victoria College Building (Old Vic Building), 91 Charles Street West

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#### PRESENT:

Keith Thomas (Chair), Robert Pemberton (Vice-Chair), Vas Rao (Treasurer), Nick Saul (Chancellor), Rhonda McEwen (President), Alex Hernandez (Principal, Victoria College), HyeRan Kim-Cragg\* (Principal, Emmanuel College), Cynthia Crysler\*, Brian Johnston\*, Deepak Bhandari\*, Kate Cassaday, Adam Kilner\*, Brandon Bailey, Ari Kopolovic\*, Valerie De Souza, Judith Newman, Julia Forgie, Jonathan Hamilton-Diabo, Mark Solovey\*, Christer Bruun, Rebecca Woods, Justin Liou, Amy Mann, Anemone Van Leeuwen, Shane Joy, Juhyung Yun, Julian Munro, Doug Houston

#### REGRETS:

Peter Politis, Ephraim Stulberg, Jane Huang, James Janeiro, Pamela Marchant, Jason Meyers, Lauren Hodgson, Nevin El-Tahry, Marga Vicedo, Mark Austin

#### IN ATTENDANCE:

Kelley Castle (Dean of Students), Anthony Yeung (Associate CAO, Financial and Revenue Services), Vikas Mehta (Associate CAO, Infrastructure and Sustainability), Ian Edelist\* (Eckler for item 16), Elva Liang\* (Eckler for item 16), Lindy Chan (Director, Office of the President), Yvette Ali\* (University Registrar), Jennifer Ankrett (Bursar & CAO), Leslie Shepherd (Interim Director, Communications), Louise Yearwood (Executive Director, Alumni Affairs & Advancement), Roma Kail (Interim Chief Librarian), Jessica Todd (Record Manager/Archivist)

#### SECRETARIAT:

Anwar Kazimi (Secretary), Kevin Chong (Governance Coordinator)

\* *participated remotely*

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## OPEN SESSION

### 1. Chair's Remarks

The Chair opened the meeting with a territorial acknowledgement and extended a warm welcome to members and guests to the third Board of Regents' meeting of 2024-2025 governance year, both attended the meeting virtually and on-site.

The Chair welcomed Jennifer Ankrett, who joined the University as Bursar & Chief Administrative Officer on March 10, 2025. The Chair also announced that Mark Austin had been re-elected as the administrative staff member to serve a second four-year term on the Board, effective July 1, 2025.

### 2. Report of the President

President McEwen's report to the Board highlighted the following:

#### Internal Matters

The President presented the institutional dashboard, highlighting the administration team's progress with positive trends.

President McEwen provided updates on strategic planning and *Vic Vision 2060*, highlighting key milestones such as ongoing senior leadership preparation and planned consultations involving internal stakeholders. The strategic plan for the University was set to cover the period from 2026 to 2031, aiming for Board approval by 2026.

*Vic Vision 2060* focused on campus space utilization, including analyzing current space utilization and identifying signature and revitalization capital projects. Phase one of the master plan was to be completed by January 2026. The procurement process for phase two—engaging consultants to develop strategies—was also expected to conclude by January 2026.

Current capital projects included the completion of phase one of the Birge-Carnegie Building Revitalization, which involved abatement, non-structural demolition, and removal of archive stacks, while preserving some heritage pieces. The renovation of the Victoria College Chapel was completed, with an open house planned. The Indigenous Healing Garden and accessible walkway community reveal was also scheduled.

The Student Experience Survey, launched in January 2025, saw a significant participation rate and provided comprehensive insights into students' experiences at the University, covering various aspects such as residences and meals.

Admissions had seen a significant number of prospective students who had listed Victoria College as their first choice, with an expected intake that reflected this interest. Emmanuel

College had also experienced a notable increase in applications, continuing a trend of impressive numbers from previous years.

### External Matters

President McEwen had attended a Universities Canada meeting with university presidents to discuss the impact of the federal election on campus operations.

A set of procurement guidelines for the University was being drafted in response to the US tariffs, and a new procurement restriction policy was received from the Ontario's Ministry of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence and Security. This policy required universities to use US-based contracts or services only if there was no delay in service use and no other choice available. This had resulted in a pause for some projects, such as the installation of digital signage, while alternative options were explored.

The University had formed new partnerships, including one with the Toronto International Festival of Authors (TIFA), which would bring high-profile and emerging authors to campus. A new partnership involved a Continuing Education Certificate in Cantonese at Emmanuel College, expanding Victoria University's micro-credentialing initiatives.

Stakeholder management strategies had been updated. The President had been involved in consultations for the Queen's Park North Revitalization project, which aimed to enhance the area with features like a skating rink, seating, and gardens. This project was expected to be completed within a year. The President had been building relationships with the City of Toronto, which resulted in opportunities for consultation and collaboration such as this one.

### Discussion

A member inquired about the applications for the current year's class at Emmanuel College. The President confirmed that the incoming class was being selected and mentioned that the application numbers were healthy across both colleges, including international applicants.

A member raised concerns about the systemic defunding of universities in the US and asked about scenario planning. President McEwen acknowledged the situation, shared experiences with university presidents in Universities Canada, and emphasized the importance of stakeholder management and political lobbying. The President also highlighted the need for universities to align with job market demands and explore new revenue models, as increased funding from the Ontario government was not expected.

## **3. Strategic Presentation – Dean of Students**

Kelley Castle, Dean of Students, presented a strategic overview of the Office of the Dean of Students.

## New and Noteworthy Updates

The Office expanded student support services, including personal counselling for Emmanuel College students, tailored career advising for graduate students, and enhanced international student support. A partnership with Regent Park provided tutoring for students in need. Wellness initiatives were integrated into campus life, with two personal counsellors from Emmanuel College's Master of Psychospiritual Studies (MPS) program appointed to serve Victoria College students (increasing to three counsellors next year). A new Associate Dean for Community Engagement and Wellness was appointed, focusing on Emmanuel College.

## Core Functions

The Humanity's for Humanity and Theatre for Thought programs engaged participants through community outreach, supported by endowments. Lunch sessions discussed diverse topics such as trans people in sports, the Israel-Palestine conflict, US elections, cancel culture, and AI guardrails. The Campus Reconciliations event marked the 10th year of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action, while the Minding Our Minds Conference focused on screen time and mental health. The *Vic Ready* program assisted students in transitioning through university, emphasizing skill-building and self-awareness, and was extended to Emmanuel College. New beds were added to the residence, including an economy option to meet the demand for affordable housing, with a high occupancy rate and increased interest from upper-year students.

## **4. 2025-2026 Academic Operating Budget**

Anthony Yeung, Associate CAO, Financial and Revenue Services, was invited to present the Academic Operating Budget for the year 2025-2026.

The administration provided an overview of the budget for the upcoming fiscal year, covering May 1, 2025, to April 30, 2026, which represented an increase from the current year's budget. The balanced Academic Operating Budget was funded by mainly by revenues with the remainder from carry-forward reserves and inter-fund transfers.

Combined with the ancillary operating budget approved by the Board at its February 2025 meeting, the overall consolidated budget for operating expenditures reflected an increase from the current year's budget and included additional support for academic departments and student-facing offices.

Anthony Yeung also highlighted that the upcoming draw from the endowment for the next academic year, approved by the Investment Committee in its November 2024 meeting, would amount to an increase from the current fiscal year and would be used to support the University's operations as well as to fund higher amounts for scholarships and bursaries.

These investments, from the administration perspective, aimed to support and enhance services for students, faculty, and staff. Despite the increase in spending, the University anticipated a modest budget surplus.

Vas Rao, Chair of the Finance, Pension and Audit Committee (FPA), informed the Board that the proposed budget had received support of the FPA. The FPA Chair had also reminded the Board the importance of applying conservatism in budgeting in these uncertain economic times.

On motion duly moved, seconded, and carried,

IT WAS RESOLVED

THAT the Academic Operating Budget for 2025-2026 be approved as presented.

#### **5. Highlights of the 2025-2026 Capital Budget for Non-Deferred Maintenance Projects for Academic Buildings**

Vikas Mehta, Associate CAO, Infrastructure and Sustainability, and Anthony Yeung were invited to provide an overview of the proposed Capital Budget for Non-Deferred Maintenance Projects for Academic Buildings.

Vikas Mehta highlighted several proposed projects, including refurbishing the reception area of the Victoria College Principal's Office, purchasing furniture for the revitalized Victoria College Chapel, acoustically improving classrooms at Emmanuel College, and installing a built-in projector screen and improving lighting at the Victoria University Common Room in Burwash Hall.

#### **CONSENT AGENDA**

The Chair noted that of the items listed on the Consent Agenda, three were for approval – items 6, 8 and 9. No questions or requests to place these consent items on the regular agenda were received by the Secretary to the Board before the meeting.

A member raised a question about new fees for certain courses in the academic year 2025-2026. HyeRan Kim-Cragg, Principal of the Emmanuel College, responded with details about the associated fees on a new Hindu course titled "Christian Encounter with Hindu Traditions".

On motion duly removed, seconded, and carried,

IT WAS RESOLVED

THAT the consent agenda be adopted and that items 6, 8, and 9 be approved.

**6. Minutes of the Previous Meeting on February 13, 2025**

On motion duly moved, seconded, and carried,

IT WAS RESOLVED

THAT the minutes of the Board meeting held on February 13, 2025, be approved.

**7. Business Arising from the Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

There was no business arising.

**8. Emmanuel College Tuition Fee Schedule for 2025-2026**

On motion duly moved, seconded, and carried,

IT WAS RESOLVED

THAT the Emmanuel College Tuition Fee Schedule for 2025-2026, be approved.

**9. Emmanuel College Incidental and Service Fees for 2025-2026**

On motion duly moved, seconded, and carried,

IT WAS RESOLVED

THAT the Emmanuel College Incidental and Service Fees for 2025-2026, be approved.

**REPORTS TO THE BOARD**

**10. Report of the President of Victoria University Students' Administrative Council (VUSAC)**

Juhyung Yun reported that the ongoing Student Office Reorganization Project aimed to increase student access to office spaces at Goldring Student Centre. This involved gathering information through surveys and consulting with stakeholders to plan and reorganize spaces, including making some areas bookable meeting rooms.

A constitution change was made to reduce the percentage of levy funding allocated to honoraria. This change aimed to benefit the broader student body and promote values of service, commitment, and hard work.

The Spring 2025 Elections saw candidates running for all open positions, an improvement from the previous year. The VUSAC President expressed pride in the newly elected president and reflected on their own experience, emphasizing the learning and growth gained from the role as a Board member.

## **11. Report of the Chair of Emmanuel College Student Society (ECSS)**

Julian Munro highlighted the collaboration of the ECSS with the Office of the Dean of Students to address various needs at the Emmanuel College. This included installing period product dispensers, providing facilities for ritual washing for Muslim students, and updating bathroom signage. These initiatives had sparked conversations about the importance of a diverse community. The ECSS had also held its first formal event in a long time, which was well-received. The ECSS Chair expressed pride in the team's efforts and excitement about future collaborations.

## **12. Report of the Committees**

### **a. Finance, Pension and Audit Committee (FPA)**

Vas Rao, the FPA Chair, provided several key updates on matters as discussed in the last FPA meeting on March 27, 2025. The FPA Chair highlighted the approval of Non-Deferred Capital Projects and the Actuarial Cost Certificate for the transfer of pension assets to UPP (University Pension Plan Ontario). Additionally, the renewal of auditors for the year and the safe disclosure update were reported. It was noted that the administration was performing a Request for Proposal (RFP) for audit services.

### **b. Governance and University Affairs Committee (GUA)**

Cynthia Crysler, the GUA Chair, provided a report on matters as discussed in the last GUA meeting on March 26, 2025. The GUA had received reports from the offices of the Dean of Students, Registrar, and Alumni Affairs and Advancement. The committee had discussed governance changes, setting the scope of preliminary changes. A working group was constituted to review these changes before the next GUA meeting, aiming to present them to the Executive Committee and the Board. There was a high degree of consensus on the nature of the changes, which included updates and streamlining governance processes and structures.

### **c. Property Committee (PC)**

Brian Johnston, the PC Chair, provided a report on matters as discussed in the last PC meeting on March 25, 2025. The report included the status of the Lillian Massey Building, ongoing space utilization audits, and restoration work on historic buildings like Birge-Carnegie Building. Progress reports were received on various capital projects, including air conditioning installations, Goldring Student Centre renewals, and the Indigenous Healing Garden. The 2025–2026 Capital Budget for Non-Deferred Maintenance Projects for Academic Buildings was reviewed, highlighting office renovations, while Brian Johnston also noted the approval of an elevator modernization project at Rowell Jackman Hall and the potential impact of tariffs on construction work.

#### **d. Investment Committee (IC)**

Robert Pemberton, the IC Chair, provided a report on matters as discussed in the IC's meetings on March 13, 2025, which included a review of the Fourth Quarter 2024 (Q4) performance report from the investment consultant. The endowment fund achieved notable returns in Q4 and throughout 2024, supporting student bursaries and operational needs. The committee conducted its annual ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) review, with all investment managers being signatories to the UNPRI (United Nations Principles for Responsible Investment). In-depth discussions were held regarding the ongoing RFP for the investment consultant, with the committee hoping to present a recommendation to the Board in June 2025 for the next fiscal year.

#### **13. Other Business**

There was no other business.

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#### ***IN CAMERA SESSION***

The Board moved *in camera*.

#### **14. 2025-2026 Capital Budget for Non-Deferred Maintenance Projects for Academic Buildings**

On motion duly moved, seconded, and carried,

IT WAS RESOLVED

THAT the proposed 2025-2026 Non-Deferred Maintenance Capital Projects for the Academic Buildings as listed in the memorandum dated April 10th, 2025, be approved.

#### **15. 2025-2026 Project for Rowell Jackman Hall Elevator Modernization**

On motion duly moved, seconded, and carried,

IT WAS RESOLVED

THAT the proposed 2025-2026 Rowell Jackman Hall Elevator Modernization Project as described in the memorandum dated April 10th, 2025, be approved.

#### **16. Actuarial Cost Certificate for UPP Transfer – Funded Position at January 1, 2025**

On motion duly moved, seconded, and carried,

IT WAS RESOLVED



THAT the Actuarial Cost Certificate as at January 1, 2025 for the Victoria University General Pension Plan as presented be approved.

#### **17. Question Period**

There was no further question.

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The meeting returned to *open* session.

#### **18. Next Meeting**

The next Board meeting was scheduled for Thursday, June 19, 2025, at 4:00 p.m.

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**The meeting adjourned at 5:52 p.m.**

/s/ Keith Thomas

**Keith Thomas**

Chair of the Board of Regents

/s/ Anwar Kazimi

**Anwar Kazimi**

Secretary to the Board of Regents