



MINUTES - **APPROVED**

BOARD OF GOVERNORS — OPEN SESSION

Thursday, February 6, 2025
2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.
Board Room D2315 and via Zoom

ATTENDANCE:

Board Members:	Parnian Anaa, Student-elected Board Member Don Avison, Board Chair Rebecca (Becky) Bair, Faculty-elected Board Member Brenda Crabtree, Board Member Gaye Fowler, Staff-elected Board Member Trish Kelly, President + Vice-Chancellor Steve Kinsey, Board Member Mary Macaulay, Board Member Eknoor Matharoo, Student-elected Board Member Lindsay McIntyre, Faculty-elected Board Member Lorcan O'Melinn, Board Vice-Chair and Audit + Finance Committee Chair Harv Phandal-Dhanda, Board Member Natasha Tony, Board Member Sung Van, Board Member
Regrets:	Carleen Thomas, Chancellor
Employee Resources:	Diyan Achjadi, Interim Vice-President, Academic + Provost Mark Douglas, Executive Director, Financial Services Natasha Himer, University Secretary Alexander Muir, IT Support Viktor Sokha, Vice-President, Finance + Administration Adrian Tees, Associate Vice-President, Human Resources
Guest Presenter:	Yan Wei Lu (Fourth-year Illustration), Emily Carr Student Union Chairperson (<i>item 5.2</i>)
Recorder:	Bessie Chow, Recording Secretary

1. CALL TO ORDER

With quorum present, Board Vice-Chair Lorcan O'Melinn, acting as Chair, called the meeting to order at 2:14 p.m.

Approved Minutes of ECU Board Meeting – Open Session

held Thursday, February 6, 2025

Page 2 of 8

2. LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT + WELCOME

The Vice-Chair acknowledged that Emily Carr University is situated on the unceded, traditional, and ancestral territories of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Nations.

3. DISCLOSURE OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Board members were invited to disclose any conflicts of interest related to the agenda items. No conflicts were disclosed.

4. CONSENT AGENDA

The following resolution was moved, seconded and **CARRIED**:

THAT, the Board of Governors approves the items included under the Consent Agenda.

4.1. Agenda

4.2. Minutes of the Board Open Session of November 28, 2024

4.3. Q3 Forecast

IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED that the Board, on the recommendation of the Audit + Finance Committee, ratify the Q3 Forecast for the fiscal year 2024/25 as submitted to the Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills.

5. BUSINESS + PRESENTATION

5.1. Vice-Chair's Remarks

L. O'Melinn, as Board Vice-Chair and Chair of the Audit + Finance Committee (AFC), provided a few opening remarks noting an important focus of the meeting is on tuition fee considerations.

5.2. Emily Carr Student Union (ECSU) Presentation

The Board welcomed Yan Wei Lu, ECSU Chairperson, who presented on the impact of tuition increases on international students.

The presentation addressed:

- Financial pressures on international students, including reductions in government grants and visa challenges.
- The consultation process undertaken by the Administration, with noted improvements and a commitment to ongoing collaboration.
- A suggestion for shared or joint advocacy efforts between ECSU and the University to address student concerns.
- A request to align the international tuition increase with the increase for domestic students, 2% instead of 10%.

Approved Minutes of ECU Board Meeting – Open Session

held Thursday, February 6, 2025

Page 3 of 8

Board members thanked Yan Wei Lu and the ECSU for the presentation and showed their support for the spirit of collaboration in addressing financial challenges and the potential for exploring innovative, student-centered solutions, including alternative revenue strategies beyond tuition adjustments.

Student groups were encouraged to engage in further opportunities for consultation prior to the March 27th Board meeting, where the 2025-2026 Budget will be presented.

5.3. Audit + Finance Committee (AFC) Updates

5.3.1. Tuition and Fee Increases

The Board was referred to materials included in the package on proposed tuition, and fee increases for 2025/26 in the context of financial pressures and sector-wide challenges.

In his role as AFC Chair, L. O'Melinn outlined key factors considered by the Committee, including the University's declining accumulated surplus, Ministry requirements for institutions to set international tuition at a level that fully covers educational costs, and sector-wide financial challenges, with eleven institutions facing serious financial challenges.

President Trish Kelly provided additional background on ECU's financial context to foreground the presentation on tuition and fee increases, noting:

- ECU is a relatively high-cost, practice-based institution.
- The University has been managing through a structural deficit, taking steps to actively address the deficit in more than one way while tuition and government grants remain the institution's primary revenue sources.
- ECU will not receive one-time funding from the Ministry for the coming fiscal year.
- ECU must also manage risks, including the risk of potential reductions in international student visa allotments/impacts on enrolment and recruitment.
- Tuition adjustments are considered annually by the Board.
- Tuition adjustments are necessary to sustain services, maintain high-quality academic and student support, account for inflation, and comply with new requirements and to come into compliance such as with the new framework on Education Quality Assurance Guidelines.

Vice-President, Finance + Administration, Viktor Sokha gave a presentation informing the proposed tuition and fee increases. The presentation included:

- Information on the cost per credit and the recommended increases, noting that ECU's costs differ from other institutions due to its studio-based, technology-intensive model.
- The proposed adjustments align with government caps for domestic students and support financial stability while responding to internal and external pressures.
- To support students, additional investments have been introduced, including:
 - increased bursary funding;

Approved Minutes of ECU Board Meeting – Open Session

held Thursday, February 6, 2025

Page 4 of 8

- case-by-case financial support;
- enhanced tuition communication and budgeting guidance for four-year planning; and
- an accessible annual engagement schedule to provide timely updates on budget planning and tuition adjustments.

There was discussion, and the following key questions and points were offered:

- A question was raised about the percentage of students receiving financial aid. Administration confirmed additional funding for international student support and will provide data on its usage.
- Clarification was provided that one-time funding referenced by a Board member in a government letter found online likely applies to capital projects, not operational support. ECU receives multiple one-time grants each year for special projects (e.g., AGP, work-integrated learning, micro-credentials) along with funding for capital projects. It was noted that the Administration was not provided with a copy of said letter but would be pleased to have a follow up meeting to discuss.
- It was noted that multiple sessions have been held to provide opportunities for public input and financial clarifications.
- Questions arose regarding the Learning Access Fee and LinkedIn Learning Fee. The Learning Access Fee, introduced in 2013-14, funds counseling, data governance, and digital access, increasing annually in line with domestic tuition. The LinkedIn Learning Fee covers student access to the platform, with incremental cost increases each year and has not increased since 2017. An increase is needed in 2025/26 due to increases to the cost of the platform. It was noted that the fee increase is \$0.30 per year per student.
- It was noted that annual operating costs are recurring, whereas fundraising is typically one-time. Donors are generally unwilling to fund operational expenses, though some support for student programs may be possible.
- Concerns were raised about increased operating expenses from 2023-2025 and their impact on the deficit. It was noted that faculty workload reductions, which were critical to introduce, contributed to cost increases, with some government funding offsets.
- Board members noted systemic underfunding at the federal and provincial levels and emphasized the financial pressures facing the post-secondary sector. It was acknowledged that ECU's specialized programming results in higher costs than at other institutions, further amplifying constraints.
- The Board recognized that the tuition adjustment is one of several steps required before the finalization of the 2025-2026 Budget. While the decision is difficult, Board members expressed a commitment to mitigating financial pressures where possible.

During the discussion Board member, Parnian Anaa moved to defer the tuition decision to a future Special Board Meeting, citing the lack of acknowledgement of ongoing protests during the Board's deliberation on this matter.

Don Avison raised a Point of Order, stating that the Chair had previously acknowledged the students who had gathered at the beginning of the Closed Session held earlier in the day.

Approved Minutes of ECU Board Meeting – Open Session

held Thursday, February 6, 2025

Page 5 of 8

P. Anaa revised the motion, citing the distraction posed by the ongoing protests during the Board's deliberation.

Vice-Chair L. O'Melinn ruled the revised motion out of order, noting that the Board had dedicated significant time to preparing for this matter and that proceeding with the vote was a necessary step in submitting the Budget within the required timeline.

[Secretary's Note: A copy of the proposed motion was provided following the meeting and is included as an addendum to the minutes.]

It was moved, seconded and **CARRIED:**

THAT, in light of the estimated operating deficit of approximately \$3.2M for 2025/26, IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED that, as recommended by the Audit + Finance Committee, the Board approves of tuition and fee increases for 2025/26 as follows:

- **Domestic undergraduate: 2% increase**
- **Domestic graduate: 2% increase for incoming Domestic graduates; 0% increase for returning Domestic graduates**
- **International undergraduate: 0% increase for International undergraduates registered in Spring 2023 or earlier; 10% increase for International undergraduates registered after Spring 2023**
- **International graduate: 10% increase for incoming International graduates 0% increase for returning International graduates**
- **Learning Access Fee: 2% increase**
- **LinkedIn Learning Fee: 2% increase**

which leads to a further reduction in the deficit of approximately \$1.28M.

The following members requested that their opposition be formally recorded in the minutes:

- Parnian Anaa
- Rebecca (Becky) Bair
- Eknoor Matharoo
- Lindsay McIntyre

5.3.2. Student OneCard Replacement Fee

V. Sokha presented on and clarified that the briefing note included details on the proposed fee for student OneCard replacements; it does not apply to replacements of cards for employees.

It was moved, seconded, and **CARRIED:**

THAT, on the recommendation of the Audit + Finance Committee, the Board approve the implementation of a non-refundable \$15 fee for student OneCard replacements.

Approved Minutes of ECU Board Meeting – Open Session

held Thursday, February 6, 2025

Page 6 of 8

During discussion, the following key questions and points were offered:

- A question was raised regarding the annual financial impact of OneCard replacements. Administration confirmed that the University loses approximately \$8,500 per year due to replacement costs, with each card costing \$16 and approximately 100 cards lost annually.
- It was noted that name change replacements will be provided at no cost, and a student must return their old card before a replacement card will be issued.
- A question was raised regarding whether staff should be charged a OneCard replacement fee. It was clarified that, legal advice indicated employees cannot be charged to replace items essential to their job functions, such as a damaged/lost One Card.

Proposed Amendment:

Lindsay McIntyre proposed an amendment to reduce the fee from \$15 to \$8.50, based on the breakdown of card production costs.

The amendment failed.

The University Secretary raised a Point of Order, advising that as much as possible Board members bring proposed amendments to the Chair in advance of the meeting, particularly those with financial implications. This also allows the Administration sufficient time to assess the impact and provide the Board with the relevant data to support informed decision-making.

6. REPORTS

6.1. President + Vice-Chancellor's Report

T. Kelly reported on recent engagements and upcoming events, including:

- A visit from The Honourable Anne Kang, Minister of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills, and Sunita Dhir, Parliamentary Secretary for International Credentials, where the ECU community made a strong impression.
- A visit from Trevor Hughes, Deputy Minister, Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills.
- A reminder of the Bead Soup exhibition opening at 5:00 p.m. today.

There were no questions on the report.

6.2. Interim Vice-President, Academic + Provost's Report

Interim Vice-President, Academic + Provost Diyan Achjadi provided an update on undergraduate admissions, reporting that 1,242 applications have been received. While overall undergraduate applications are slightly lower than last year, they remain consistent with previous years. Additionally, 262 applications have been received for graduate programs.

There were no questions on the report.

Approved Minutes of ECU Board Meeting – Open Session

held Thursday, February 6, 2025

Page 7 of 8

6.3. Vice-President, Finance + Administration Report

V. Sokha highlighted key items from the Finance + Administration report included in the agenda package, noting that the auditor's report was presented and accepted by the AFC.

There were no questions on the report.

7. OTHER BUSINESS

No other business was raised.

The Vice-Chair opened the floor to questions and comments from the community members attending and in particular students who had joined the Open Session as observers.

- A student expressed concerns about the lack of student involvement in decision-making, stating that they only learned of the tuition increase that day.
- Administration noted that multiple sessions had been offered. Since September, five sessions had been held to gather student input, but were not well attended.
- A student shared their view that they would have liked to see the Board to defer the tuition decision to a later time.
- Additional comments and questions from students were shared on a range of matters including to express frustration they experience participating in financial discussions; a suggestion that communications on budget and tuition could be made more accessible; a question to clarify the LinkedIn Learning Fee; comments on the perceived effectiveness of student support strategies, as well as comments on studio access; and, comments on waitlists for counseling services and the need for improved mental health support generally.
- The Board acknowledged the various comments shared by the students.
- It was reiterated that tuition decisions are made carefully and not taken lightly. The Board values hearing student perspectives, and noted it is important to continue to engage students and potentially increase engagement through more accessible points of information for students.
- Students were invited to meet with President Kelly and/or Interim Vice-President Academic + Provost Achjadi, to further discuss and dialogue on concerns raised.

8. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Board of Governors is scheduled for March 27, 2025.

9. CONCLUSION

With no further business, the open session of the February 6, 2025 Board of Governors meeting concluded at 3:48 p.m.

Approved Minutes of ECU Board Meeting – Open Session

held Thursday, February 6, 2025

Page 8 of 8

Addendum to Minutes – Failed Motion

Whereas:

There has been no acknowledgment or consideration of the protest that has been ongoing since lunchtime on our campus and throughout our closed board session.

This disruption has significantly impacted our ability to focus, engage in meaningful discussion, and exercise the careful deliberation required for responsible decision-making.

The university continues to develop techniques and process on best practices.

Be it resolved that the decision to vote on the proposed tuition fee increase be postponed to a further special meeting.

Be it further resolved that a future meeting be scheduled to include deliberation and a decision on the tuition fee increase.