



MINUTES - **APPROVED**

BOARD OF GOVERNORS — OPEN SESSION

Thursday, March 27, 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 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 Carleen Thomas, Chancellor* Natasha Tony, Board Member* Sung Van, Board Member
Regrets:	Gaye Fowler, Staff-elected Board Member Harv Phandal-Dhanda, Board Member
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
Recorder:	Bessie Chow, Recording Secretary

1. CALL TO ORDER AND TERRITORIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

With quorum present, Board Chair Don Avison called the meeting to order at 2:14 p.m.

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

2. DISCLOSURE OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

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

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3. CONSENT AGENDA

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

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

3.1. Agenda

3.2. Minutes of Board Open Session held on February 6, 2025

4. BUSINESS

4.1. Chair's Remarks

The Chair acknowledged the student gathering and demonstration taking place outside the Boardroom. He commented on recent events across North American campuses, including threats to core values underpinning higher education such as academic freedom, and emphasized the importance of protecting student voices and maintaining institutional autonomy.

The Chair also reported on recent Order-in-Council reappointments to the Board: Don Avison, Brenda Crabtree, and Harv Phandal-Dhanda re-appointed for three-year terms; and Steve Kinsey, and Natasha Tony reappointed for two-year terms.

He reminded participants and observers that the primary purpose of the March Board meeting is to consider the 2025/26 Budget. He made note of financial challenges facing ECU and the broader sector, including inflationary pressures, unresolved structural funding issues, and the potential impact of new tariffs.

4.2. 2025-26 Budget Presentation

Audit + Finance Committee (AFC) Chair Lorcan O'Melinn introduced the item, noting the Committee was interested to see that as part of the 2025/26 Budget there was careful consideration of cost-saving measures, balanced with ensuring the integrity of academic programming and student experience. Appreciation was expressed for the improved consultation process and for alignment of the budget timeline with sector norms.

President + Vice-Chancellor Trish Kelly acknowledged the efforts of the team that lead out on budget development, and the consultative nature of the budget development process. As a practice-based institution working with a roll-forward budget, limited new investments are possible. The 2025/26 Budget represents a one-year snapshot within a longer-term view towards a more sustainable financial state and with modest investments towards strategic priorities.

Vice-President, Finance + Administration Viktor Sokha and Executive Director, Financial Services Mark Douglas presented the 2025/26 Budget. The projected all-funds deficit is \$1.13 million, and the operating deficit is \$1.88 million—both reduced from earlier projections through

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targeted mitigation strategies. The presentation covered financial context, guiding principles, key investments, emerging risks, and mitigation strategies, including tuition adjustments, program growth, and operational efficiencies.

Board members raised questions and comments on:

- Provincial approval requirements for deficit budgets and the projected timeline for returning to a surplus; confirmation was provided that the Ministry is aware, and that the goal is to return to an accumulated surplus position by 2027/28.
- The implications of accumulated deficits for ECU's financial standing and classification as a going concern.
- Comparisons of faculty and administrative salaries with peer institutions, and associated cost pressures for art and design schools in Canada.
- Structural funding challenges for smaller practice-based institutions and teaching universities required to have administrative services at a level comparable to larger universities.
- Broader concerns about sector-wide funding models and the implications of institutional growth and university designation.

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

THAT, the Board, on the recommendation of the Audit + Finance Committee, approve the 2025/26 all funds budget, as presented by management, with a \$1,130,179 deficit.

5. REPORTS

5.1. President + Vice-Chancellor's Report

President T. Kelly highlighted the following recent and upcoming events:

- A public performance and collaboration between 15 ECU students and acclaimed artist Tadasu Takamine at the Vancouver Art Gallery, held on March 2, 2025.
- The Master of Fine Arts (MFA) Graduate Exhibition, with an opening reception scheduled for March 27, 2025, from 6:00 to 9:00 p.m.

No questions or comments were raised on this report.

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

Interim Vice-President, Academic + Provost, Diyan Achjadi, reported on the following recent and upcoming academic activities:

- The annual graduate exhibition, The Show, featuring both undergraduate and graduate student work, will open on May 7, 2025.
- The Spring Break Teen Program was a success and reached full capacity.
- On April 25, 2025, ECU will host photographer Edward Burtynsky for a public talk as part of the Capture Festival.

A question was raised regarding the NSERC equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) Capacity-Building Grant concluding this month, with concern about losing momentum if the work does not continue. T. Kelly that a committee involving staff and the broader community will proceed.

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D. Achjadi added that survey data will inform continued efforts focused on policy development and systemic action, with a first meeting of the committee anticipated in Fall 2025.

6. OTHER BUSINESS

6.1. Acknowledgement of Outgoing Board Member

The Chair recognized Gaye Fowler, whose term as a Board member concludes at the end of April and who is also retiring from ECU. G. Fowler's contributions to the institution since joining in 1992—particularly her leadership in the Foundation Program—were highlighted. The President acknowledged G. Fowler's long-standing impact on student experience and the campus community, including service as a CUPE Chief Steward.

6.2. Community Questions

The Chair opened the floor to comments from community members observing the Open Session.

A student raised concerns about the approved budget and its impact on the student experience and broader post-secondary life. The student also remarked on the isolating experience of being the only student present in the boardroom to raise these issues.

The President reiterated that the Administration welcomes student engagement.

The Chair acknowledged the comments and emphasized the Board's ongoing interest in addressing student concerns, particularly regarding the effects of underfunding across the sector.

7. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Board of Governors is scheduled for June 5, 2025.

8. CONCLUSION

With no further business, the open session of the March 27, 2025 Board of Governors meeting concluded at 3:09 p.m.