





ACADEMIC COUNCIL
MINUTES OF MEETING
APRIL 2, 2025

The meeting was held in South Annex, Room 151.

COUNCILORS:

Laura Béres
Nonie Brennan 
Graham Broad *
Claudia Clausius
Adrienne Co-Dyre
Thomas Gray (for T. Cunningham)
John Dool 
Russell Duvernoy
Jeannette Eberhard
Jordan Fairbairn
Josephine Gemson
Eunice Gorman
Chaya Halberstam
Erin Hannah

Joe Henry
Peter Ibbott
Jen Jeffrey
Liam Kennedy
Allyson Larkin
Miriam Love
Kristin Lozanski
Donna Maynard
Alison Meek
Laura Melnyk Gribble
Jacquie Newman
Loretta Norton (for M. Penner)
Brian Patton
Jeff Preston

Pat Ryan
Jane Sanders
Steve Shajimon
Jennifer Silcox
Ridley Smith
Ricardo Soto
Natalie Spruce
Thomas Tieku
Joseph Turnbull
Robert Ventresca
Corinne Walsh
Paul Wilton
Mark Yenson

 Virtual
* Regrets

OBSERVERS: A total of 39 faculty, staff and students were in attendance.

MINUTE TAKER: Ann Hoffer

R. Ventresca, Chair, called the meeting to order at 2:37pm. President (Interim) R. Ventresca welcomed members of Academic Council and observers, and reminded all of the rules of order.

1.0 Land Acknowledgment

L. Melnyk Gribble offered a land acknowledgement.

2.0 Opening Prayer

J. Henry led the prayer.

3.0 Committee Reports

3.1 Planning and Priorities Committee

M. Yenson, Chair of the Planning and Priorities Committee, introduced the committee's report thanking committee members for their engagement throughout the budget process including over three days of recent deliberations which informed the budget recommendation provided to Academic Council.

R. Ventresca, President (Interim), thanked the Finance Office and Planning and Priorities Committee for their work and careful and judicious deliberations, and spoke of the respective roles of the Academic Council and Board in the budget process. R. Ventresca highlighted the Board's budget parameters set in February to have administration work with Academic Council to prepare a budget for FY26 which includes a realistic path to King's financial sustainability within five years. R. Ventresca highlighted key environmental factors putting financial pressures on Ontario's universities.

K. Thomson, Chief Operating Officer, provided a high-level overview of the process for developing the budget and presented the draft FY26 budget, highlighting the impact on revenue or international student caps, and the diverging paths of King's revenues and expenses, and that for the first time in ten years the draft budget reverses the trend on expenses. K. Thomson acknowledged the trade-offs involved when reducing expenses and that these were carefully considered by administration and the Planning and Priorities Committee. K. Thomson also gave an overview of the new Strategic Initiatives process which invests in projects that can help King's increase revenues or decrease expenses over the coming years.

A one hour and thirty-minute discussion ensued.

- A council member sought and was provided clarification on items related to the location and amounts of commitments to marketing, teaching resources, board expenses, and Catholic school board relationships in the budget. M. Yenson also clarified that research center funding is proposed to be paused for the year.
- In response to a question from a council member, K. Thomson outlined some strategies in development to optimize resource utilization including changes to parking operations, and a land-use analysis. Another Council member asked about the relationship with Honk Mobile. K. Thomson clarified that the Honk is a service provider who provides additional revenue, and reduced operating and infrastructure costs compared to the prior mode of parking operations.
- A council member asked about the marketing budget for advertising in contrast to reductions in the library's budget. K. Thomson responded that King's needs to invest in its revenue generating activities specifically for student recruitment because enrolment makes up so much of King's revenue. K. Thomson explained that King's recruits a substantial amount of its students from the London area school boards, and the demographic projections show the number of graduates from these boards decreasing in the coming years. Therefore, King's needs to invest in efforts to increase King's brand awareness outside of the local area. Huron spends 4% of their operating budget on marketing.
- In response to Council member's question, R. Ventresca clarified the Board set a parameter of a 15% reduction in expenses for FY26, but that King's administration and Planning and Priorities were recommending a more incremental approach with a 9% reduction in expenses for FY26.
- A Council member requested clarification on what happens if the draft budget motion is not passed by Academic Council. R. Ventresca responded the budget would go back to Planning and Priorities Committee. The Council member followed-up with another point highlighting the need to ensure strategic and capital plans are linked. R. Ventresca agreed that the Strategic Plan indicates the need to renew the Campus Master Plan, and that the land-use analysis will

inform this work, and that the campus master plan should be developed within considering the priorities in the Strategic and Academic Plans.

- A council member expressed concern that the draft budget includes over \$1 million in outside services and asked if some of these functions could be performed by employees. R. Ventresca responded that outside services means different things in different units, and that in some context these allow King's to engage outside expertise King's does not have in-house. K. Thomson added that sometimes outside services are lower cost than an in-house solutions. K. Thomson acknowledged the spirit of the feedback and indicated that this was being actioned currently through a review of all existing contracts to identify potential efficiencies.
- The council member followed-up by expressing concern about a decrease in Teaching Assistant funds affecting pedagogy. M. Yenson indicated there were tough tradeoffs for him to consider in putting together the Academic budget, and that one of those choices was to raise the thresholds for teaching assistants. M. Yenson noted he advocated for reinvestment of a portion of teaching assistant funds through the Strategic Initiatives process with Planning and Priorities Committee.
- In response to a Council member's question, M. Yenson clarified that he had changed course from a recent meeting of the Educational Policy Committee from cutting or freezing international experiential learning funds to asking academic units to work within the ceiling of the funds they had available for experiential learning in FY25. M. Yenson indicated his thinking evolved based on new information presented to him on experiential learning trips that were already planned for early in FY26 and the potential loss of relationships if the funds were cut.
- Additionally, a council member expressed concern about the impact of restructuring of administrative units on King's community ethos. They asked about the status of the operational review. R. Ventresca clarified that findings were received earlier in the academic year and shared at community assembly and these are available on the website. R. Ventresca clarified the board is in receipt of a draft final report which is being finalized and noted that community members should consider the report as an input for administration in preparing the budget and King's path to financial sustainability. R. Ventresca noted that the budget presented today presents a gradual approach and a credible path to get King's back to financial sustainability within five-years. He encouraged community members to focus on the plan presented today which was endorsed unanimously Planning and Priorities committee.
- Several council members contributed to a discussion advocating for increased Teaching Assistant funding.
- A council member highlighted that King's has a structural problem and deficit that is caused by domestic students generating less revenue than they cost. K. Thomson acknowledged the structural challenge and the need for further engagement to address this.

- A council member asked for clarification on where funding for Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Decolonization and Truth and Reconciliation are now embedded. It was clarified that the funds have been moved to the President's Office budget. R. Ventresca affirmed that these remain part of King's values and that he believes better integration of these functions across the units of the college will better serve these goals.
- A council member asked for clarification on what we are voting on today. V. Kothari, Associate Director of Finance, provided a broad overview of the draft budget documents provided to Academic Council. R. Ventresca clarified the three motions presented to Academic Council from Planning and Priorities Committee.

MOTION #1:

That Academic Council recommend the annual budget as reviewed by the Planning and Priorities Committee to the Board of Directors.

M/S Planning and Priorities Committee

K. Lozanski and J. Newman proposed an amendment to the motion:

MOTION TO AMEND:

That Academic Council recommend the annual budget as reviewed by the Planning and Priorities Committee to the Board of Directors contingent on restoring FY25 teaching funds drawn from strategic initiatives.

The Motion to amend and revised motion were CARRIED.

MOTION #2:

That Academic Council approve and recommend to the Board of Directors for approval the Strategic Initiatives as endorsed by the Planning and Priorities Committee, of \$1.4M for the fiscal year 2025–2026.

M/S Planning and Priorities Committee

In response to a question on the process of identifying the strategic initiatives, a council member who is a member of Planning and Priorities Committee spoke to the process of ranking and eliminating proposed strategic initiatives.

A council member proposed that the motion be tabled. There was no seconder.

CARRIED

MOTION #3:

That Academic Council recommend to the Board of Director that the Research Excellence Award funds be unrestricted subject to current commitments.

M/S Planning and Priorities Committee

E. Hannah, Associate Dean of Research, noted that King's Research Excellence Fund was an initial investment of \$1 million to support research at King's. Presently the fund sits at \$880 000 but has been restricted by the Board. If the funds become unrestricted, they can become liquid assets to help fund deficits.

CARRIED

8.0 Adjournment

MOTION:

To adjourn and table the remaining agenda items to the April 23rd meeting.

M/S by J. Henry/P. Ryan

CARRIED (5:05pm)

Robert Ventresca,
Chair

Paul Wilton,
University Secretary