



**ACADEMIC COUNCIL
MINUTES OF MEETING
January 28, 2026**

The meeting was held in Labatt Hall, Room 103, and via Zoom.

COUNCILORS:

Aidan Bobkowicz
Graham Broad
Arashdeep Chahal
John Dool *
Russell Duvernoy
Jordan Fairbairn
Josephine Gemson
Eunice Gorman
John Grant
Tom Gray
Chaya Halberstam
Erin Hannah
Joe Henry
Peter Ibbott

Lynne Jackson
Liam Kennedy
Allyson Larkin
Miriam Love
Braedan Lovie
Krista Lysack
Donna Maynard
Alison Meek
Laura Melnyk Gribble
Eleni Nicolaides
Brian Patton 🌐
Jeff Preston 🌐
Felipe Rodrigues
Patrick Ryan

Jane Sanders
Jennifer Silcox
Derek Silva
Natalie Spruce
Karen Thomson
Renfang Tian
Paul Tufts *
Joseph Turnbull
Robert Ventresca
Corinne Walsh
Ruth Wilson
Paul Wilton
Mark Yenson

* Regrets
🌐 Zoom

INVITED GUEST: Carri Rodgers-Rowley, Director, Institutional Planning and Finance
Vishal Kothari, Associate Director of Finance

OBSERVERS: Terra Ahrens, Emily Carrothers, Amy Casson, Tiffany Chisholm, Anisha Datta 🌐,
Nadine Deeb 🌐, Julia Estabrook, Karen Gingrich, Ginger Hegedus, Cynthia Lessard,
Sonya Lobsinger, Kristin Lozanski, Rodney Parker, Dom Perreault, Ian Rae,
Emma Swiatek, Danielle Teeter, Estelle Van Winckle 🌐, Erin Wilson.

MINUTE TAKER: Ann Hoffer

1.0 Call to Order

R. Ventresca, Chair, called the meeting to order at 2:32 p.m.

1.1 Land Acknowledgment

B. Lovie offered a personal land acknowledgment, drawing on Dr. Niigaan Sinclair’s teaching that Indigenous Peoples are “And” people; those who hold relationships, responsibilities, and connections at the centre of their worldview.

1.2 Opening Prayer

J. Henry offered the opening prayer, with a special acknowledgment of the Jubilee of Saint Francis.

The Chair welcomed E. Nicolaidis and L. Jackson as new members of Academic Council (Council), along with observers. R. Ventresca noted that the meeting would focus on the budget, with regular business to follow on February 11, 2026. He reminded members that the Planning and Priorities Committee provides budget advice to Council and that Council recommends the annual budget to the Board for approval. Members were asked to hold questions until the end of the presentation and to reference slide numbers when raising them.

2.0 Report of Planning and Priorities Committee

M. Yenson, Committee Chair, thanked C. Rodgers-Rowley for preparing portions of the Committee Report and the advance slide deck to support members in organizing their questions. Mark noted that she would present the budget timeline, which began earlier than in previous years. He highlighted that the Planning and Priorities Committee had to respond to evolving information, including the January 8 PAL allocation (84 instead of 125), which required revised enrolment projections on January 9. He thanked committee members for dedicating 1.5+ days to reviewing the material, as well as the Finance Department and all contributors to the budget process. He emphasized that although the report comes from one committee, it reflects input from several others, including the Cardinal Carter Library Committee, Scholarship and Bursary Committee, Strategic Enrolment Management Committee, and Educational Policy Committee. He added that EPC had approved the Hiring Plan and continues discussions on course planning. Mark then invited C. Rodgers-Rowley to present.

2.1 FY 27 Budget Approval

Motion: That, on the advice of Planning and Priorities Committee, Academic Council recommend the draft 2026–2027 budget for approval by the Board of Directors, including the strategic initiatives as recommended by the committee.

Moved and seconded by the Planning and Priorities Committee

C. Rodgers-Rowley, Director, Institutional Planning and Finance, thanked all contributors to this year's expedited budget process. Carri reported that the Board approved the budget parameters and outlook in November, including a projected deficit over the next four years and a directive to identify savings to achieve a modest surplus by 2029-2030. The budget process began in December, with Budget Unit Heads asked to identify a 7% reduction in their forecasts and to submit strategic initiatives by January 9, 2026. Carri reported that while the cash position has improved since the November forecast, current reserves will only sustain operations in the short term and require careful monitoring. She highlighted on the: revenue variances from FY26 to FY27, noting increases in all but tuition revenue; enrolment projections; a financial summary and strategic initiatives.

R. Ventresca thanked M. Yenson and C. Rodgers-Rowley for their presentations, opened the floor for questions, and suggested starting with clarification questions before moving to questions on the motion. He reminded members not to repeat points to ensure efficient use of time.

Highlights from a 58-minute discussion:

- Carri clarified that the fiscal year begins in May so the 2026 summer enrolments are part of the proposed FY27 budget and the non-allocable line is where department/schools have no control over RRSPs, benefits as they sit in the central budget
- The report identifies funds over five years to advance AI. In response to questions, D. Perreault noted that the funding will support institutional licenses for AI platforms for staff and faculty, and the creation of a committee to guide AI adoption and evaluate effective practices. King's is also collaborating with Western's AI Officer, one of the first such roles in Canada.
- It was noted that prior year meal plan budgets were underestimated and have been adjusted accordingly.
- Carri explained that the projected increase in summer tuition revenue is a conservative estimate based on planned course offerings, expected enrolment from other campuses, anticipated restrictions, and information from Western's forthcoming summer timetable and expected course availability.
 - o In response to a question about compensation for summer overload teaching, M. Yenson explained that MEM's plan to expand to 27 summer courses (up from 16) was reviewed by P&P as part of its budget oversight. Compensation matters are governed by collective agreements and equitable workload issues are matters to be discussed with a Director/Chair. The VPAD's office will provide \$150K to MEM to support delivering the courses in the summer.
- A member requested clarification on two budget items: rising legal costs, which CRR confirmed align with actuals, and reduced Physical Plant casual salaries related to the \$140,000 reduction to security staff, which CRR and J. Henry explained reflect current-year security staffing costs.
- The VPAD explained that the increase in outside services in the Academic Dean budget reflects a two-year pilot contract with EAB to support unit managers through micro-research on program innovation and development. This initiative will strengthen King's capacity to assess and respond to growing pressures and inquiries around new program proposals.
- The shuttle service is being discontinued after Western declined to share costs, ridership had dropped since COVID, students can use city transit at Waterloo and Huron with their student card, and sustainability was considered. J. Henry confirmed students with disabilities are not affected, noted that KUCSC, USC, and Western were consulted, and added that Mustang on Demand remains available to for after-hours transportation.
 - o A member asked about course crossflow given open-house messaging; J. Henry responded that impact will need to be reviewed.
- In response to a question about the approach to the Foundation-funded classroom modernization strategic initiative, the VPAD noted that a classroom modernization committee has been in place for several years. The Wemple 147/148 model classroom serves as a proof of concept, and with Foundation support, further modernization will build outward from that starting point.

- It was noted that rather than dedicated Chamber Choir funding, its expenses could fall under Staff Casual Salaries and/or Outside Services. J. Henry confirmed that the Choir continues to be supported, and added that listening sessions within the parish are underway.
- A member asked whether the salary savings on page 10 relate to not replacing early retirees or non-renewed contracts. The VPAD noted that this wording is descriptive and reflects decisions already made and incorporated into budget.
- In response to a question about evidence linking advertising spending to enrolment, K. Thomson noted that campaign concepts were pre-tested with prospective students and showed increased intention to apply, though actual enrolment will be the key indicator. Ongoing tracking is in place, and current results are the strongest seen in decades. The VPAD added that advertising also supports name recognition in high schools, helping recruitment efforts.
- In response to a question about return on investment on past and current strategic initiatives, M. Yenson noted that Foundation support generated \$10M for priorities such as campus modernization and student support; some initiatives, like residence upgrades, focus on reputation and reducing attrition; and the Marketing initiative measures ROI through recruitment targets, particularly domestic enrolment and conversion.
- It was noted that the Academic Dean's Office had used the Truth and Reconciliation Commission initiatives funds to collaborate across departments through curricular, experiential learning, and course-support activities, and noted additional related initiatives such as the Veritas lecture and a panel on repatriation of Indigenous artifacts.
- A member noted the need for clearer information to support decision-making, including the absence of unit-level salary details provided in past years.
 - o It was noted that salaries were included as a total given that some units are so small that identifying per unit may identify a faculty member's salary.

Friendly Amendment - Motion: That, on the advice of Planning and Priorities Committee, Academic Council recommend the draft 2026–2027 budget for approval by the Board of Directors, including the strategic initiatives as recommended by the committee **“and the recommendation that future budget proposals to Academic Council contain the total discretionary and non-discretionary spending including salaries per unit and a new budget line in each unit for TRC and EDI initiatives. The budget shall be provided to Council members no later than one week prior to council meeting in which budget is on the agenda.”**

Moved by L. Jackson, D. Silva

WITHDRAWN

- A member emphasized that we need to align the budget with King's mission, highlighting difficulty identifying investments in equity and decolonization, and observing that TRC funding appears lower than allocations categorized as miscellaneous. A proposal was made to add a TRC and EDID budget line to each unit. Some members raised concerns about reallocating existing funds, noting that miscellaneous lines currently support related activities. Discussion focused on whether the amendment was substantive and required separate notice. Others argued it was simply a reporting

change that supports good governance. As an aside, the Chief Operating Officer noted that Equity Pathways fundraising is underway through the Foundation, though not reflected as a budget line. The Chair of Planning and Priorities advised considering the main motion first and addressing any amendment separately. R. Ventresca asked the mover and seconder if they were willing to proceed in that order which they both agreed.

- A member raised concerns about student fees, noting the \$45 Friday make-up test fee and the \$75 special exam fee. The Registrar explained that these align with Western's fee structure, which charges \$75 for both and waives fees for religious accommodations. Another member asked whether the changes had been discussed with KUCSC; the VPAD noted that Western's fees are published annually through Senate with student representation, and that adopting these fees would redirect revenue to King's, where many fees remain lower than sector norms.

The Chair re-read the motion and called for a vote

Motion: That, on the advice of Planning and Priorities Committee, Academic Council recommend the draft 2026–2027 budget for approval by the Board of Directors, including the strategic initiatives as recommended by the committee.

Moved and seconded by the Planning and Priorities Committee

CARRIED (3 opposed, 1 abstention)

Returning to the earlier discussion, R. Ventresca agreed to accept a motion from the floor.

Motion: That Academic Council recommends that future budget proposals to Academic Council contain the total discretionary and non-discretionary spending including salaries per unit and a new budget line in each unit for TRC and EDID initiatives. The budget shall be provided to Council Members no later than one week prior to the Council meeting at which the budget is on the agenda.

Moved by L. Jackson, L. Melnyk Gribble

CARRIED (2 opposed, 4 abstentions)

Highlights from an 11-minute discussion

- Members expressed support for adding a TRC budget line, noting its alignment with King's mission.
- Some members cautioned that EDID initiatives often draw on multiple functional lines and suggested that defining a dedicated EDID line could have unintended consequences; a committee review of spending and mission alignment was proposed.
- Another member suggested departments may need guidance on appropriate EDID spending.
- The VPAD supported greater visibility for EDID work but recommended a separate reporting tool to avoid creating silos and to better capture broader program costs.
- From a governance standpoint, the Council Chair asked whether members were open to referring the matter to P&P with clearer direction.
- Acknowledging overlap between EDID activities and existing work—and that TRC needs differ—the mover and seconder agreed to remove EDID from the motion and supported enhanced reporting on both TRC and EDID initiatives.

Amended Motion: That Academic Council recommends that future budget proposals to Academic Council contain the total discretionary and non- discretionary spending including all salaries per unit and a new budget line in each unit for TRC initiatives. The budge shall be provided to Council Members no later than one week prior to the Council meeting at which budget is on the agenda.

Moved L. Jackson, L. Melnyk Gribble

CARRIED

The Chair reminded members of the faculty and staff mixer on Thursday evening at the King's Pub, noting the musicians are King's alumni.

3.0 Adjournment

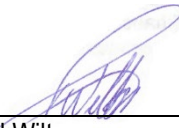
Motion to adjourned at 4:22 p.m.

Moved by B. Lovie, L. Melnyk Gribble.

CARRIED



Robert Ventresca,
Chair



Paul Wilton,
University Secretary