

Defining Governance at St. Stephen's College

Ideology of Governance

St. Stephen's College's model of governance is one that incorporates collaborative and collegial decision-making, goal-setting, and problem-solving with various stakeholders in the organization.

Relevant Definitions

Delegated - that the Board has empowered the Principal to act with the backing of the Board's authority within broadly specified parameters, such as hiring faculty and staff.

Delineated - refers to more focused authority in particular areas, such as the faculty's responsibility for curriculum design.

Stakeholders in Governance

The Board of Governors. The final administrative authority of St Stephen's College is vested in the Board of Governors. They retain the fundamental and legal responsibility and ultimate authority for the institution's legal, fiscal, academic, and operational well-being. They are responsible for maintaining the purpose, viability, vitality, and integrity of the College; the achievement of institutional policies; the selection of chief administration leadership; and the provision of physical and fiscal resources and personnel.

The Academic Senate. The primary reporting authority to the Board of Governors for the institution's academic well-being.

The Principal and Dean. The Principal and Dean is the Chief Executive Officer, Chief Academic Officer, and Vice-Chancellor of St Stephen's College and is appointed by the Board of Governors to exercised general supervision over all the affairs of the College, including the academic division. The Principal and Dean assures that all actions and policies are in harmony with the institution's corporate and educational mission. The Principal and Dean delegates responsibilities to other members of the Faculty and Staff.

Faculty. The Faculty or Department Chairs (as a whole and individually) are responsible to the students within their department, the Principal and Dean and to the Academic Senate, and—through the Principal and Dean and Academic Senate— to the Board of Governors. The Board, Senate, and Principal have given delineated authority and responsibility to the chairs, as a whole, for matters related to the curriculum of the college and for all generated educational standing and program committees of the college.

Program Committees. The Program Committees are responsible to the Chairs of their Department and through them to the Academic Senate. They are advisors to the Department Chairs for matters related to the curriculum of their particular program, and when appropriate to the Students within the department.

The Staff. The staff are responsible to their direct supervisors, assigned department chairs, and ultimately to the Principal and Dean. In support of the college mission, staff members carry out many of the critical administrative processes of the college. They have delineated authority through their reporting structure to complete their tasks.

The Students and additional stakeholders. Students are the institution's main educational focus and have a legitimate interest in matters affecting their ability to complete their education. When appropriate, the Department Chairs, administration, and Board of Governors should initiate communication with students.

Associate Faculty, alumni, individual supporters, and supporting churches are constituent stakeholders whose perspectives and insights are valuable and should be considered when appropriate.

Roles in St. Stephen's College's Governance

The role of the Board

The Board of Governors acting as a whole—not as individuals—possesses the final authority for accomplishing the mission of the institution. The board's role is one of policy-making and oversight, not management or implementation of policy. The board is responsible for the financial soundness of the institution and, in consultation with the Principal and Dean, approve annual budgets.

Board members have rightful access to all information necessary for successful oversight relating to the institution. It shall be within their power to formulate policies and to authorize all legal and business matters necessary to carry out corporate policy. Board members delegate authority to the Principal and Dean, which delineates authority to faculty and staff.

Administrative and faculty decisions are subject to review by the Board of Governors as defined above. Board members normally concur with the administrative and faculty judgements except in rare instances and for compelling reasons. In cases when the Board of Governors has to veto an administrative or faculty decision, they will communicate the decisions and its rationale in an open, clear, and timely manner.

The Board is responsible for searching for and contracting with the Principal, Dean, and Vice-Chancellor. It is also the body ultimately responsible for reviewing the performance of that employee and terminating the contract when deemed necessary.

The role of the Faculty, Staff, and Student representatives within the Board of Governors is to act as representative to the collective decisions of their groups—not as individuals.

The role of Academic Senate

The Academic Senate acting as a whole—not as individuals—has been delegated by the Board of Governors with responsibility for approving all the matters pertaining to the programs of the College including the granting of degrees, both earned and honorary, and diplomas and certificates or other recognition for academic achievement. They are to report to the Board on all academic matters.

The Senate is responsible for conferring all degrees, diplomas and certificates upon the recommendation of the Program Committees.

The Senate shall be responsible for defining the terms of office, mandate, and membership of all its standing and ad hoc committees and for recommending to the Board programs appropriate to the mandate of the College only when fiscal implications are involved.

The Senate shall be responsible to set all academic policies and ensure that academic standards are maintained in the College. They are to insure academic integrity within the programming of the College, monitor academic policies and academic standards through ongoing evaluation, and help provide guidelines and support for consistency in programming.

The Senate, through rotating attendance by students from various departments, shall be responsible to engage Learners in an ongoing process of eliciting and responding to their academic needs and concerns—acting as their voice to the College.

The Senate shall respond, through the Dean, to initiatives and concerns of Faculty (including Associate Faculty) who administer academic policies and academic standards.

The Senate shall respond to student appeals to rulings made by the Principal and Dean. The decision of Senate is the final decision.

The Senate shall engage with representatives of the United Church of Canada and other ecumenical and interfaith partners in assessing the wider needs and concerns of theological education and ministry—acting as their voice to the College.

The role of the Principal and Dean

The Principal and Dean is the Chief Executive Officer, Chief Academic Officer, and Vice-Chancellor of St Stephen's College and is appointed by the Board of Governors to exercise general supervision over all the affairs of the college, including the academic division. The Principal has final delegated authority as described below:

The Principal and Dean, as the chief administrative officer, is responsible for the execution of the policies of the Board of Governors, and for the administration of the entire institution.

The Principal and Dean, as the chief academic officer, is responsible for the academic enterprise of the institution in its entirety and assures the quality of educational services of the institution, overseeing the support, orientation and accountability of the Department Chairs and Associate Faculty; carries forward the work of academic accreditation; and is responsible for the planning and implementation of all academic outcomes as approved by Senate.

The Principal and Dean, as the Vice-Chancellor, acts on behalf of, and with the authority of, the Chancellor as needed.

The Principal and Dean, by virtue of office, shall be a non-voting member of the Board of Governors and ex officio non-voting member in all its committees.

The Principal and Dean shall uphold the mission of the institution and its distinctive educational aims and objectives.

The Principal and Dean shall delegate responsibility and authority to faculty and staff as appropriate to form an efficient organization that advances the institution's mission.

The Principal and Dean is responsible for the hiring, promotion, and termination of faculty and staff of the institution, delegating as appropriate those decisions to faculty or staff administrators and retaining veto power over faculty and staff recommendations.

The Principal and Dean, like the Board and Senate, has a responsibility to engage both the St. Stephen's community and the broader community.

The Principal and Dean serves in three roles: Board member, chief administrator, and faculty member. They will delegate appropriate levels of authority and responsibilities to others so they can effectively participate in the fulfillment of St Stephen's College's educational mission.

The role of the Faculty

Faculty, as in any institution of higher learning, plays a significant role in the oversight of St Stephen's College. Under the final authority of the Board of Governors, Academic Senate, and the Principal and Dean, the faculty collectively exercise delineated authority over instruction and curriculum and will share responsibility for many standards and policies. The recommendation of major changes in policy or the provision of advice to the Principal and Dean, Academic Senate, and Board of Governors on central issues of concern rests with the faculty as a whole.

The Faculty has delineated authority through the administration, Academic Senate, and Board of Governors for the development of curriculum, subject matter, methods of instruction, research, associate faculty recruitment and status, and many aspects of student life that relate directly to the educational process — including the assignment of grades. Faculty members, in consultation with the Program Committees, set requirements for the courses offered in degrees, determine when the requirements have been met, and through the Program Committee authorize the Academic Senate to grant the degrees achieved.

The faculty exercises three distinct roles:

A decision-making role. Faculty assumes a decision-making role in all aspects of the academic division as outlined above.

An advisory role. The faculty has an advisory role in some areas of College governance. This would include the selection of leadership within administration, policies related to admissions requirements, and faculty standards. In an advisory role, the faculty participates with the administration, Academic Senate, and Board of Governors in the decision-making process. This role gives the faculty voice in key decisions while the Board retain final authority.

A consulting role. The faculty has a consulting role in some areas. Faculty input may come in the form of representation on committees and task forces, surveys, open forums, focus groups, etc.

The role of Faculty Council

The Faculty Council will oversee the curriculum planning process for each academic year.

The Faculty Council coordinate efforts so as to maximize resources in academic matters, fostering creativity in educational methods and developments.

The Faculty Council assess and respond as needed to student or instructor concerns. If the students are not satisfied, they can appeal to the Principal and Dean, and then if necessary to the Academic Senate.

The role of Program Committees

The Program Committees shall advise the Department Chairs regarding the curriculum and functioning of the programs and any specializations within those programs.

The Program Committees develop program policies, ensuring they are in line with professional standards as may be set forth by accrediting bodies for their programs, and recommends policy changes to Academic Senate through Faculty Council.

The Program Committees are the program admissions regulators and recommend graduands to the Academic Senate for the conferring of degrees, certificates, and diplomas.

The Program Committees ensure that their Department programs operate in a manner consistent with the standards for the College's degrees, certificates, and diplomas that fall within the purview of the Department and that adequate reporting of their activities to the Academic Senate occurs.

The Program Committee provides creative energy and vision for the ongoing development of initiatives relevant to the Departments' mandate.

The Program Committee provides members in student advisory or mentor programs as established by the individual programs.

The role of staff

The staff has delineated authority through the administration and the Board of Governors for the development and implementation of logistic processes critical to the success of the College. Supervisors will outline the scope and principles to guide staff decision making. Matching appropriate levels of authority with responsibility boosts morale by ensuring that staff members have freedom to lead in their areas. Staff members possess valuable expertise and firsthand information about how best to serve the students and potential students. When possible, faculty, the Board of Governors, and administrators should seek input from the staff when considering college changes and new initiatives.

The role of students and additional stakeholders

Students, alumni, individual supporters, and supporting churches are constituent stakeholders who have valuable perspectives and insights. While they have no primary initiating implementing function, these constituencies have opinions that Board members, administration, and faculty will wisely factor into long-range planning, assessment, and decision making.