

St. Stephen's College

Pilot Project for Students to Engage in the Governance of St. Stephen's College

Approved by Board (18 October 2021)

To: SSC Board, SSC Senate, and SSC Student Body

Regarding: Pilot Project for Students to Engage in the Governance of St. Stephen's College

As part of its ongoing governance review, the Board of Governors of St. Stephen's College is launching a 2021–2022 Pilot Project to identify and implement the best and most appropriate ways to engage students in the governance of the College. This pilot project is an extension of the governance review currently being conducted by the board, and it is also complimented and informed by the student petition/letter submitted to the Principal in April 2021.

Rationale:

The presence of students in governance structures engenders transparency and trust between the College and the student body, and it also facilitates student input/influence in the College's operations.

Aim, Goals, and Review:

After several months of discussion in the 2020–2021 year, the Board commits to engaging the student body in a pilot project during the 2021–2022 year to find the best and most appropriate ways to engage students in the governance of St. Stephen's College. The goals of this pilot project are listed below; successful achievement of these goals will be determined through mutual review by the Board, Senate, and Student Body:

- a) To identify and implement strategies for engaging students in the governance of the College, in ways that are appropriate given the size of the College and the function of governance bodies,
- b) To establish an independent student council, run by students and appropriately engaged with the College's governance, and
- c) To create better overall channels of communication between students and the governance bodies of the College.

Guiding Principles of the Pilot Project:

- We are committed to dialogue, open communication, and nurturing a consultative ethos.
- We are committed to adopting best practices, and to integrating those practices in ways that are well-suited to the St. Stephen's context.
- We are committed to understanding the distinct and overlapping needs of the Board, Senate, Faculty/Staff, and Students, and to finding solutions that sufficiently engage and meet those needs.

Components and Timeline:

Pilot Project Component	Who	Timeline and Targets	Description and Rationale
Open Board and Senate Meetings for Student Attendance as Observers	Board and Senate, with open invitation to entire student body	Implement November 2021, for the duration of the 2021–2022 year	Open Board and Senate meetings will increase transparency and collegiality at the College. This will (a) allow students to engage these governing bodies, and (b) allow the governing bodies to pilot student engagement in their governance work, with review throughout the year. Key components are as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All Board and Senate meeting dates will be openly published online All Board and Senate meeting will be open for student attendance, with the understanding that students may be asked to leave when matters of confidentiality are being discussed. Students must register in advance to attend Students can participate as observers in accordance with “Guidelines for Student Participants at 2021–2022 Board and Senate Meeting”.
Identify Best Strategies for engaging Students in Governance at SSC	Board (through its Governance Working Group), Principal, and student body	Begin Fall 2021, with aim to finalize by June 2022 (or sooner if possible) Outcome: Recommendations to the Board by May 2022 (at the latest) for their decision	Commitment to engage in a series of conversations that will strategize the engagement of students in the governance of the College. This work will be achieved through: (a) meetings between the student body and the Board’s ad hoc Governance Working Group, (b) online survey(s), and (c) any other methods of engagement deemed necessary. Key aims include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify current needs within the student body, particularly with respect to governance engagement and student support Gauge student interest in—and commitment to—participating in governance at the College Identify how best to integrate students into governing bodies (e.g., [a] voting/non-voting seats for students on the Board and Senate, and/or [b] students invited as observers to Board and Senate, and/or [c] a series of standing meetings between the student council and the Board/Senate, and/or [d] other governance configuration) Identify potential limits to student engagement in governance, and review current working practices of SSC governing bodies The Board will continue to develop “Expectations for Governors/Senators of St. Stephen’s College”
Support Development of a Student-Led Body for Governance Involvement and Peer-Support	Dean’s Office working together with the student body	Begin Summer 2021; ongoing work over the 2021–2022 year. Outcome: Establish Student Council by June 2022 (or sooner if possible)	The student body will work with the Dean to create a body composed of and led by students that can contribute to the College’s governance and provide students with opportunities for peer-support. The character, design, and nature of this body will be informed by the Best Strategies noted above.
Lunches and Coffee with the Dean	Dean’s Office, with a standing and open invitation to the student body, the Board, and the Senate	Implement Summer 2021; lunches occur once every 6 weeks, in perpetuity	Commitment from the Dean to host a standing, open, online forum for students to gather and converse with the Dean. These gatherings can also be informative about governance practices and policies at the College. These will increase transparency and collegiality at the College.

