

Carleton University professor silenced for promoting board transparency

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I asked ChatGPT to provide me with rare information about Carleton.

2) A rare near-censure over governance: secrecy rules on Carleton's Board triggered national action

What happened: In 2015–2016, Carleton's Board replaced its "Statement of Duties" with a new **Code of Conduct** and bylaws that, critics said, **muzzled** elected board members by restricting post-decision commentary and expanding confidentiality for closed sessions. The university framed the move as "clearer transparency rules," but the rules also emphasized that governors should not **"reopen and criticize Board decisions after they have been taken."** Carleton Newsr...

Why it mattered: The **Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT)** publicly warned it would **censure** Carleton unless the Board revised the code (deadline **Jan 31, 2018**), an unusually serious sanction in Canadian academia. Around the same period, elected biology professor **Root Gorelick** was **"invalidated"** from the Board for refusing to sign the new code—his faculty association filed a grievance. CAUT +1

Why this is "deeper": It's not a headline you'd find in a prospectus: a public university's governance practices drew **national censure threats** and led to the removal of an elected governor over a **speech/confidentiality** dispute. The episode is documented across Board communications and faculty-association records but is **not widely known outside governance circles.** Carleton Newsr... +2

Extracts (few of many) from Professor Root Gorelick's website (<https://rootgorelick.com/>) on board misconduct and financial mismanagement:

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As usual, public documentation from Carleton University's Board of Governors was fascinating, worthy of a short summary. This blog post represents my opinions based on reading open-source documents from the board's 637th meeting.

University finances

Quoting from the executive summary:

The university's operating budget ended the 2022-2023 fiscal year with a **surplus of \$12.8 million** as compared to an opening break-even budget. Lingered pandemic effects on enrolment and the government's delay in issuing international student visas had a negative impact on tuition revenue, however the university was able to find efficiencies and reduce discretionary expenditures to offset this \$15.3 million revenue shortfall. The majority of the operating surplus was due to strong returns on the investment of available operating cash, which exceeded budget by \$12.6 million.

By contrast, at department and faculty levels, everything seems to be fiscal doom and gloom, with talks of yet another 2% decrease in funding for this coming year. Yet the administration reports to the board a surplus of 1.7% of the budget. I have zero accounting expertise, but something seems awry here.

Another good financial sign is that research funding increased from \$92 million to \$116 million this past year. But it is not at all obvious where the extra overhead is going. It certainly does not seem to be going to infrastructure or graduate student support. So long as there is no commingling of tri-council funds with other funds, as happened at Laurentian, maybe we shouldn't be too worried?

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Pandemic Contingency Fund

Buried deep in the board's consent agenda, was this tidbit:

The Pandemic Contingency Fund was established in April 2020 with an opening balance of \$26.8M. To date, \$17M in funding has been provided for additional cleaning, student support, transition to online learning, and other pandemic related costs. A provision for Bad Debts (students non-payment of fees) of \$2M has been earmarked. Approximately \$10M remains in the Pandemic Contingency Fund.

This is the first I ever heard that a pandemic contingency fund even existed, let alone has existed for over a year, has spent \$17 million, and still has \$10 million unspent. Such a fund is a great idea. What can it be spent on?