

Hello,

I am writing to you in the hope that you will take action regarding the current selection process for the St. FX Chancellorship. As you may or may not know, the chancellorship is filled automatically by the sitting Bishop of Antigonish. The chancellorship has been vacant since the arrest of Bishop Lahey in October. The Chancellorship of St. FX will be filled by Brian Dunn when he assumes the office of Bishop on January 25th.

The Xaverian Weekly has been a key player in beginning a debate on this issue, but unfortunately the debate does not seem to have moved beyond a few columns and letters written by me and others. At this point I believe it is time to move the debate to the next level. I would like to outline the main points of contention which have arisen in connection with the university's Chancellorship appointment policy.

- 1) The Issue of Merit: It is no secret that there is a crisis of leadership in the Catholic Church. Laity and non-Catholics alike have wondered why it takes so long for church leaders to act on the many alleged and verified abuses of power that historically plague the church. Furthermore, Bishop Dunn was interviewed on the CBC recently and admitted to not knowing much about our area or even knowing much about the mess Raymond Lahey left behind. Not surprisingly, I am uneasy with this appointment as are many others. I am not sure what merit Dunn brings to the position. Indeed, it is hard to say how merit can even be considered in the appointment process when the position of chancellor automatically goes to the Bishop, regardless of his qualifications. This is undemocratic and does not represent the spirit of community at St. FX. Clearly, this is not only an issue of merit, but possibly also an issue of reputation, as the arrest of Lahey clearly exemplifies.
- 2) The Issue of Gender Equality: Because the Bishop of Antigonish will arguably never be a woman, the university will never enjoy the leadership of woman. While this point is easily made, it may be the most critical issue of all.
- 3) The issue of Religious Representation/Equality: St Francis Xavier University has a strong history with the Catholic Church. This is a history of great accomplishment and honour which no one can deny. Nevertheless, the current policy of appointing the local leader of the Catholic Church to the chancellorship of St.FX is not fair to non-Catholic or the non-religious and does damage to the spirit of inclusion at St. FX. Frankly, the Bishop is not a universally recognized authority and as such has no place in a non-denominational school such as St.FX.

I hope that you will devote careful attention to this matter. I have started a facebook Cause page for this issue which you can (hopefully) view at the following URL:  
<http://apps.facebook.com/causes/42793...>

I hope my letter conveys the deep concern I have for this issue, the reputation of St.FX and the preservation of our spirit of inclusion, democracy and community. I am hoping that this is just one step in making St.FX a better place for everyone-

students, faculty and alumni alike. I am requesting that, as my representatives on the Board of Governors, you will address this issue in a timely manner. If Dunn is appointed to the position before action can be taken (January 25th), I will, shortly thereafter, be circulating a petition for the removal of the Bishop from the Chancellorship until a democratic method for choosing a chancellor based on gender equity and merit can be devised.

Here's to a successful winter term and happy New Year for all!

Sincerely,

Kurt Andresen