

Board of Management

Date of Meeting	10 December 2025
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Agenda Item	4.2
Subject of Paper	Chair's Report: December 2025
FOISA Status	Disclosable
Primary Contact	Chris Deery Chair of the Board
Date of production	01 December 2025
Action	For Discussion & Noting

1. Recommendations

- 1.1. To discuss the Chair's quarterly report to the Board of Management.

2. Purpose

- 2.1. To update the Board of Management on the Chair's activities since the last meeting of the Board.

3. Consultation

- 3.1. In progressing the matters outlined in the Chair's report, colleagues across the College and across the sector have been engaged.

4. Key Insights

- 4.1. The Chair is responsible for the leadership of the Board of Management as the College's governing body. The Chair works in partnership with the Board and the Principal to set the strategic direction of the College, monitor performance and ensure high-quality learning and outcomes are delivered for students. The Chair also has an ambassadorial role for the Board within the College, and for the College with external stakeholders.

5. Impact and Implications

- 5.1. The Chair's report ensures that Board members remain informed of the Chair's recent activities and other key developments and activities of interest to members.

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Chair's Report

Chair's Report to the Board of Management: December 2025

1. Introduction and Reflections

Five months into my tenure as Chair, this is my second report to the Board. These initial months have been invaluable in deepening my understanding of the College and the wider sector. Through internal meetings, one-to-one onboarding conversations, and participation in external forums, I have gained a clear sense of both the opportunities and the challenges we face. Engagements at various sector events have reinforced the importance of strong advocacy and collaboration as we navigate a period of significant financial change. My focus remains on building strategic connections, listening actively, and partnering with the Executive to ensure strong governance and strategic support as we navigate the challenges ahead.

2. Delivering Results in a Challenging Landscape

As we reflect on 2024/25, I want to commend the Executive, Finance Team, Faculties, and Directorates for delivering an adjusted operating surplus of £0.1m, outperforming a budgeted deficit of £0.5m in one of the most challenging financial climates the sector has faced. This achievement was underpinned by disciplined cost control, targeted savings, and a relentless focus on efficiency - all while maintaining a high-quality student experience.

Our procurement team deserves recognition for maintaining 100% compliance, delivering £1.1m in cash savings, and embedding sustainability and Fair Work principles across all regulated tenders. Their success was nationally acknowledged through four GO Awards, positioning City of Glasgow College as a leader in governance and value-for-money practices.

Commercial and international income streams continue to play a vital role in our financial resilience, underpinned by strong partnerships and the College's reputation as a global leader in maritime education and skills development.

Audit Scotland's unmodified opinion on our accounts reinforces confidence in our governance and financial stewardship. I want to commend the auditors for a constructive and transparent process and a very clear audit report. The accounts and audit report will come to the Board for approval at our upcoming Board meeting.

3. Strategic Engagement

Looking ahead, the five-year financial plan signals cautious optimism. Progress will depend on disciplined prioritisation and a balance between aspiration and realism.

Our recent Strategy Day, held on 5 November 2025, gave the Board and Executive an opportunity to reaffirm the College's vision and explore the next phase of transformation. The Development Committee discussions reinforced ambitions to strengthen income diversification, accelerate digital innovation, and embed sustainability across all operations.

These conversations have been complemented by my engagement with the wider sector. In the past quarter, I joined a Colleges Scotland conference call focused on the draft budget and manifesto and joined the Principal and members of the Executive for a meeting with the Chair and Chief Executive of the Scottish Funding Council to understand their perspective on funding reform and infrastructure investment.

The external environment demands vigilance. The Scottish Funding Council's latest report and insights warn that most colleges are not financially sustainable under current funding assumptions, and Colleges Scotland has highlighted the risk of insolvency for 11 institutions by 2026/27 if flat-cash funding persists. The current funding model is unsustainable, and we must not rely on system-wide solutions to safeguard our future.

What does this mean for us? It means we must stay sharply focused on the strategic levers that protect the college's long-term strength: income diversification, targeted growth, capital investment clarity, and a realistic understanding of our cost base.

These position City of Glasgow College to continue leading in a changing sector and will frame the next phase of the strategy refresh.

4. Sector Engagement

As we near the Scottish Parliamentary elections next year, the sector is at a critical juncture. Colleges Scotland's campaign for a "Budget to Save Scotland's Colleges" sets out four funding scenarios, ranging from decline under flat cash to sustainability through a £100m uplift restoring investment to 2021/22 levels. The message is clear: without significant intervention, the sector faces contraction, job losses, and reduced opportunities for learners — outcomes that would undermine Scotland's economic and social priorities.

Through the Glasgow Colleges Leadership Group, the Principal and I have engaged in discussions on funding inequities, regional collaboration, and the need for a unified advocacy strategy. The forthcoming Colleges Scotland manifesto and the Scottish Government's draft budget will be pivotal moments. Our Board must remain proactive in influencing these debates, ensuring that City of Glasgow College's voice is heard on issues of funding, skills planning, and infrastructure investment.

5. Board & Governance

This quarter has seen important changes within our Board and its committees.

First, I am pleased to confirm that Dr Thora Hands has joined the Board as the nominated EIS-FELA member. Thora brings valuable experience and perspective, and I look forward to her contribution to our discussions and decision-making. On behalf of the Board, I would also like to acknowledge contribution of the previous post holder, David Green, who stood down from the Board last month.

We also acknowledge the departure of May Miller, a co-opted member who has sat on both People & Culture Committee and the Learning, Teaching & Student Experience Committee. May's commitment and insight have been greatly appreciated, and I have personally expressed my thanks for her significant contribution to the Board and the College.

More broadly, my focus as Chair is on strengthening the capability, diversity of thought and strategic depth of the board. A forthcoming recruitment to fill two vacant non-executive positions on the Board will be undertaken over the coming months. A verbal update on the skills and experience sought and the proposed appointments process will be provided at the Board meeting on 10 December 2025.

6. College Celebrations and External Advocacy

On 6 November, I attended the College's inaugural Thanksgiving Dinner at Scholars' Restaurant, celebrating our 15th anniversary and the strong international partnerships that enrich our College. The event showcased the depth of our global connections, with contributions from the Culinary Institute of New York at Monroe University and SUNY Maritime College. Outstanding speeches from the Principal and the Lord Provost reinforced the College's reputation internationally, while our hospitality students delivered a world-class experience alongside Scotland's National Chef and our American partners.

Later in the month, I had the privilege of attending the Graduation Ceremony at the Royal Concert Hall, a truly inspiring occasion that brought together graduates, families, and friends

to celebrate an important milestone. The breadth of qualifications represented highlighted the scale and diversity of the College's impact. Guest speakers, including former student, Hadi Al Attar, delivered powerful messages about ambition and opportunity, and the atmosphere throughout the evening reflected the pride and achievement of our students and staff. It was an honour to present special commendation awards, including a Fellowship award to Dave Anderson, and witness first-hand the transformative role the College plays in shaping futures. It is also a powerful reminder behind our financial and strategic decisions.

I would also like to congratulate Flora Irvine-Hall, our Student President, who graduated at the ceremony with a HND in Journalism.

On 27 November, I joined members of the Board and Executive in attending the Scottish Chambers of Commerce Annual Dinner, an event that brought together party leaders and business representatives from across Scotland. It was particularly encouraging to hear Liz Cameron, Chief Executive of the Chamber, highlight the critical role Scotland's colleges play in supporting businesses and driving economic growth. Her remarks on the need for appropriate funding to sustain this contribution resonated strongly with the audience and our own advocacy efforts. This reinforces the importance of our continued engagement with industry and government to ensure that the College remains a key partner in Scotland's skills and economic strategy.

7. Looking Ahead

In the coming weeks, key engagements include the College Chairs Group meeting on 9 December and the Glasgow Colleges Leadership Group on 17 December.

Looking to the coming quarter, our priorities will include:

- Non-executive recruitment: Further strengthening the Board's non-executive membership and creating greater capacity and diversity of thought.
- Financial resilience: Supporting the Executive in implementing the five-year financial plan and monitoring progress against key milestones.
- Advocacy and influence: Strengthening our voice in national debates on funding and skills planning, ensuring the College's interests are represented.
- Strategy refresh & priority initiatives: Progressing the work done in October and implementing the strategic initiatives agreed by the Development Committee.

These priorities will require active Board engagement, and I look forward to working with you to ensure that our governance and strategic oversight remain robust and forward-thinking.

8. Closing Remarks

The sector is facing into a difficult and uncertain period, but City of Glasgow College has major strengths that position us well: strong leadership, a committed workforce and the discipline and agility to make the right choices. Our job is to stay focused, on what matters, make clear and deliberate choices and support the Executive with the right level of challenge and backing. If we do that, we will navigate the period ahead with purpose and continue to deliver the opportunities our students and communities rely on.