

**University of Waterloo
Senate
Minutes of the November 25, 2024 meeting
[in agenda order]**

Present: Nasser Abukhdeir, Marc Aucoin, Veronica Austen, Jagdeep Singh Bachher, Jordan Bauman, Aubrey Basdeo, Jean Becker, Andrew Chang, Martin Cooke, Cecilia Cotton, Hans De Sterck, Laura Deakin, Charmaine Dean, David DeVidi, Mark Ferro, Paul Fieguth, Teresa Fortney, Genevieve Gauthier-Chalifour (Secretary), Mark Giesbrecht, Vivek Goel (Chair), Rob Gorbet, Mike Grivicic (Associate Secretary), Vikas Gupta, David Ha, Peter Hall, Kevin Hare, Neela Hassan, Natalie Hutchings, Nadine Ibrahim, Marc Jerry, Acey Kaspar, Achim Kempf, Veronica Kitchen, Scott Kline, Sachin Kotecha, Christiane Lemieux, Ondrej Lhotak, Lili Liu, Jennifer Lynes, Ellen MacEachen, Carol Ann MacGregor, Blake Madill, Colleen Maxwell, Kristiina Montero, Kirsten Muller, Cathy Newell Kelly, Christopher Nielsen, James Nugent, Troy Osborne, Everett Patterson, Nicholas Pellegrino, Nicholas Pfeifle, David Porreca, Neil Randall, Jacinda Reitsma, Mary Robinson, James Rush, John Saabas, Beth Sandore Namachchivaya, Rida Sayed, Asher Scaini, Mark Seasons, Marcus Shantz, Sivabal Sivaloganathan, James Skidmore, Christopher Taylor, Alexie Tcheuyap, Sharon Tucker, Diana Vangelisti, Johanna Wandel, Mary Wells, Clarence Woudsma, Changbao Wu

Guests: Graham Brown, Aldo Caputo, Katie Damphouse, Randy Dauphin, Ashley Day, Nenone Donaldson, Bernard Duncker, Donna Ellis, Becky Elming, Melanie Figueiredo, Jenny Flagler-George, Anne Galang, Diana Goncalves, Diane Johnston, Karim Karim, Andrea Kelman, Jennifer Kieffer, Nick Manning, Eleanor McMahon, Kelly McManus, Bessma Momani, Fayaz Noormohamed, Chris Read, Allan Starr, Brandon Sweet, Nickola Voegelin, Tim Weber-Kraljevski, Esther Wingate, Katy Wong-Francq

Regrets: John Abraham, Bilal Ahmed, Avery Akkerman, Judy Castaneda, Kim Cuddington, Catherine Dong, Murray Gamble, Chris Houser, Narveen Jandu, Brad Lushman, Stephanie Maaz, Shana MacDonald, Peter Meehan, Richard Myers, Siva Sivoththaman, Katie Traynor, Stanley Woo, En-Hui Yang

OPEN SESSION

The chair welcomed senators to the meeting. He noted that nominations for Senate elections for faculty and graduate students will open on January 7, 2025. Senators received invitations for informal lunch discussions of the 2023/24 Annual Report of the Office of the Vice-President, Research and International, the first of which was held earlier that day, and the second December date was postponed due to illness and was rescheduled to January.

1. Territorial Acknowledgement

Rida Sayed provided the territorial acknowledgement and a personal reflection.

2. Approval of the Agenda and Minutes

2.1 Conflict of Interest.

No conflicts of interest were declared.

2.2 Approval of the Agenda, and Approval of the Consent Agenda.

A motion was heard to approve the agenda as presented, and to approve or receive for information the items on the consent agenda, listed as items 6.1-6.5 of the Senate agenda. Hare and Pfeifle. Carried.

2.3 Minutes of the October 21, 2024 Meeting – open and confidential.

A motion was heard to approve the minutes of the October 21, 2024 meeting (open session), and to approve the minutes of the October 21, 2024 meeting (confidential session), as distributed. Porreca and Bauman. Carried.

2.4 Business Arising from the Minutes.

There were no items of business arising.

3. Report of the President

3.1 General Update

Goel noted the recent announcement that the provost intends to step down from his role on June 30, 2025, and a search for his successor will commence in short order. An announcement of an interim provost will be forthcoming. Senators were invited to provide any input on this matter via email, following the meeting.

It was noted that Ian Vanderburgh was recently named special advisor to the provost on strategic enrolment management with a term to June 30, 2025, where he will oversee the development of a robust SEM framework that will link a data-driven approach to the cycle of activities related to outreach, recruitment, admissions, retention, and student satisfaction.

With respect to government relations, Goel noted the University's work is ongoing to meet the requirements of Bill 166, and that consultations will be carried out by the responsible bodies with a view to any policy approvals coming forward at upcoming meetings and to the Board of Governors meeting on February 4. Goel noted that negotiations with the province regarding the University's strategic mandate agreement are upcoming, and the province has signaled that universities can expect new accountability requirements and no changes to grant funding or the domestic enrollment corridor over the first years of the new agreements.

The recent budget town hall (Nov 18) was highlighted, in addition to recent communications to the campus community on the status of the operating budget and the potential for financial restraint entering into the next budget year.

3.2 Statement on Institutional Neutrality and Communications

Goel observed that there have been several conversations around such a statement at Senate over the past year, which will assist in setting a framework for deciding when the University administration will issue statements on a particular matter. Parallel work is being done to provide guidance on instances where units within the University may take an official position, along with directions on the use of University resources such as websites, social media resources, email etc. Related to this statement, senators will have seen the call for expressions of interest for the Presidential Advisory Committee on Freedom of Expression and Inclusive Engagement, and that committee will also review this statement as part of its mandate. Comments and suggestions are welcome and may be routed directly to Christine McWebb, AVP Faculty Planning and Policy, or through the Secretariat.

Members discussed the statement, providing a variety of observations and sentiments. It was noted that similar statements at comparator universities are perceived to be narrower in their scope, and institutional neutrality is a controversial topic within academia. It was suggested that a statement of institutional restraint may be better suited to avoiding contributing to a negative dynamic, and that substantial consultation and input from the community ought to be sought on this statement. A senator noted that certain student clubs may be unnerved and question the effects of putting such a statement in place. It may be impossible for the University to remain neutral in all cases when some moral/societal issues may compel taking a position, and a position of principled neutrality would be prudent in those cases. It may be sensible to slow down on the pace of activity for the various task forces to allow conversations to occur among faculty, staff and students and allow that time for considered discussion before moving forward. This statement arises from considerable discussion/consultation, and the issues where this statement would apply are not going away. The statement supports institutional neutrality to allow instructors to teach on topics that may be controversial without being seen to be pressured in any one direction, which supports academic freedom. It is impossible for the University to enunciate the values of all members of the community uniformly, and making such enunciations would jeopardize the working and learning environment. It was noted that consideration be given to the role of the university in training critical thinkers. The objective should be to facilitate groups of professors and students in their own debates on the topics of the day. Goel reiterated that the statement is intended to guide senior administration and is not a policy, and that input will continue to be received to support the advisory committee in its work.

A group of visitors disrupted the meeting.

4. Report - Senate Graduate & Research Council, and Senate Undergraduate Council

4.1 Joint Report – Senate Graduate & Research Council and Senate Undergraduate Council: Academic Calendar Dates for 2025-26

DeVidi provided a short overview of the item, noting that the recommendation follows the guidelines included as an appendix to the report and also observing that in some cases exceptions were required to create a workable calendar of dates for the upcoming year. A motion was heard to approve the 2025-2026 academic calendar dates and calendar guidelines for establishing academic dates, as presented. DeVidi and Newell Kelly. Carried.

5. Report of the Vice-President, Academic and Provost

5.1 University Committee on Student Appeals Annual Report (Policy 72)

DeVidi gave an overview of the report, noting that good progress has been made on the new campus incident system and that the data in the report has been expanded to include the past 10 years. Members discussed the report. Regarding academic offenses, faculty would benefit from recommendations to assist in students' ethical formation. The data also points to cultural issues within the campus community, and the University needs to support students thriving at Waterloo. Some offences may be mitigated by adjusting the pedagogical approach and selecting appropriate instruments for assessments. One element to leverage is that repeated surveys show that students dislike the cheating of other students. Honour codes are implemented at some other institutions. There may be issues of data quality as this data may not reflect the actual incidence of offences. It may be useful to anonymously survey students and instructors on these topics to gain insights. The focus on cheating offences diverts the focus from student

learning, and with so much emphasis on student success it may be sensible to take a more holistic approach in engaging students.

Goel noted that Senate can invite Marlee Spafford, special advisor to the provost on student experience, to a future meeting.

CONSENT AGENDA

The following items were received for information.

6.1 Senate Work Plan

6.2 Report - Senate Graduate & Research Council

6.3 Reports - Fall 2024 Convocation

6.3.1 Report on Fall 2024 Convocation

6.3.2 Degrees Awarded Report

6.4 Report - Vice President, Research and International

6.5 Report of the Vice President, Academic and Provost - Faculty Appointments, Leaves

7. Items Removed from Consent Agenda

No items removed from the consent agenda.

8. Other Business

There was no other business.

With no other business, the committee convened in confidential session.

December 2, 2024

Mike Grivicic
Associate University Secretary