

University of Waterloo
Senate
Minutes of the January 27, 2025 meeting
[in agenda order]

Present: John Abraham, Nasser Abukhdeir, Bilal Ahmed, Avery Akkerman, Marc Aucoin, Veronica Austen, Aubrey Basdeo, Jordan Bauman, Jean Becker, Judy Castaneda, Martin Cooke, Cecilia Cotton, Hans De Sterck, Laura Deakin, Charmaine Dean, David DeVidi, Catherine Dong, Paul Fieguth, Teresa Fortney, Bruce Frayne, 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, Chris Houser, Natalie Hutchings, Marc Jerry, Acey Kaspar, Veronica Kitchen, Scott Kline, Sachin Kotecha, Christiane Lemieux, Ondrej Lhotak, Lili Liu, Brad Lushman, Jennifer Lynes, Stephanie Maaz, Ellen MacEachen, Carol Ann MacGregor, Blake Madill, Colleen Maxwell, Peter Meehan, Kristiina Montero, Kirsten Muller, Richard Myers, Cathy Newell Kelly, Christopher Nielsen, James Nugent, Troy Osborne, Nicholas Pellegrino, Nicholas Pfeifle, David Porreca, Neil Randall, Jacinda Reitsma, Mary Robinson, James Rush, John Saabas, Beth Sandore Namachchivaya, Rida Sayed, Mark Seasons, Marcus Shantz, Sivabal Sivaloganathan, Siva Sivoththaman, James Skidmore, Christopher Taylor, Alexie Tcheuyap, Katie Traynor, Sharon Tucker, Diana Vangelisti, Johanna Wandel, Mary Wells, Stanley Woo, Clarence Woudsma, Changbao Wu, En-Hui Yang

Guests: Graham Brown, Rebecca Butler, Aldo Caputo, Ashley Day, Bernard Duncker, Donna Ellis, Becky Elming, Melanie Figueiredo, Jenny Flagler-George, Anne Galang, Jennifer Gillies, Diane Johnston, Andrea Kelman, Jennifer Kieffer, Nick Manning, Cameron McCordic, Norah McRae, Christine McWebb, Ian Milligan, Bessma Momani, Fayaz Noormohamed, Chris Read, Karl Schuett, Nadia Singh, Kathy Smidt, Allan Starr, Kerry Stryker, Brandon Sweet, Caitlin Vaux, Tim Weber-Kraljevski, Sarah Willey-Thomas, Katy Wong-Francq

Regrets: Jagdeep Singh Bachher, Andrew Chang, Kim Cuddington, Mark Ferro, Murray Gamble, Nadine Ibrahim, Achim Kempf, Shana MacDonald, Asher Scaini

OPEN SESSION

The chair welcomed members to the meeting. The chair acknowledged that senators Narveen Jandu and Everett Patterson have stepped down from Senate since the last meeting and thanked them for their service. It was noted that nominations for elections to Senate have opened. The Chair advised that following the disruption that occurred during the November Senate meeting, feedback was received by the Secretariat from several senators and was brought to the Senate Executive Committee for discussion.

1. Territorial Acknowledgement

Jennifer Lynes provided a territorial acknowledgement and a 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 11.1-11.7 of the Senate agenda. Myers and Porreca. Carried.

2.3 Minutes of the November 25, 2024 Meeting – open and confidential.

A motion was heard to approve the minutes of the November 25, 2024 meeting (open session), and to approve the minutes of the November 25, 2024 meeting (confidential session), as distributed. Skidmore and Robinson. Carried.

2.4 Business Arising from the Minutes.

There were no items of business arising.

3. Report of the President

President and Vice-Chancellor Vivek Goel opened by offering a sincere thank you to all those who assisted in the relocation of students from the student residence, UW Place, following the failure of the boilers and to those that worked on making the temporary repairs. Appreciation was expressed for the patience demonstrated by the students who were disrupted by this event. Note was made that the

University has hired its ombudsperson and welcomed Whitney Barrett to the role earlier in January, and that an announcement to the UW community would follow.

The President noted pending elections at both the provincial and federal levels, and that postsecondary education was not anticipated to be a major theme of either election. The sector has work ahead of it to raise its profile and engage with the public. The President also advised the University had received its allocation of provincial attestation letters in the past week and will not be severely inhibited in comparison to the previous year, and that in general universities have retained more of this allocation than the college sector. It was noted that the many recent rules changes and haphazard communications from the government have caused confusion amongst prospective international students considering Canada for their studies.

The President closed by noting the University continues to prepare for financial sustainability challenges, and while decisions related to international student permits represent a future risk the most significant impact to the current situation has been provincial policy decisions to freeze tuition and grant funding. Note was made of the recent Senate and Board of Governors joint education session pertaining to the operating budget, and that a second joint budget session will be held in March ahead of consideration of the 2025-26 operating budget.

Questions were invited.

A senator noted that the University has engaged a consultant to investigate operational efficiencies for three academic support units, and asked what the defined scope of the consultant's work is and why they were unable to obtain a copy of the agreement between the consultant and the University. Vice-President Academic and Provost James Rush noted a general communication to the community on related work was issued earlier in the day and a website has been set up to continue these communications, and that recommendations from the engagement in question are anticipated in March 2025. It was noted that the contract is not a public document, and that provisions for freedom of information have exclusions which apply in this case and the vendor's consent to share the contract would be required.

Another senator noted that the same consultant has had significant engagements at other universities, with resulting reforms to academic programming and to governance. The President highlighted that the engagement at Waterloo is for three administrative functional reviews, and that any academic reviews would be led by academic colleagues and with the normal engagement of deans, Senate, etc., and that the consultant in question has not been engaged for such reviews.

4. Report of the Vice President, Research and International

Vice-President Research and International Charmaine Dean provided a presentation and highlighted major points from the report provided in the meeting material. Dean noted the opening of the Innovation Arena in November 2024, support for startup ecosystems, and trends in research funding including funding sources, and ongoing competitiveness and success of Waterloo for Tri-Agency funding. Dean noted activity to diversify research partnerships and significant activity in research security mitigations.

Dean went on to highlight key priorities for 2025-26 including change management with respect to impending elections, safeguarding research, and consultations for the Research Strategic Plan for the 2025-30 period. Within an environment of fiscal restraint, Faculties and AFIWs will be engaged to review service needs and devote attention and support efficiently. Dean thanked senators who attended the luncheon sessions and affirmed that those discussions were formative and insightful.

Senators discussed the report. The uptick in student startups follows from a strategic change in 2023 to focus on student entrepreneurship. Tracking of venture capital successes is done ascertaining which ventures secure external funding, though the University is examining other potential metrics.

5. Report - Senate Graduate & Research Council

5.1 Senate Graduate and Research Council: Faculty of Engineering – Major Modifications

Acting Co-Associate Vice-President Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs, Clarence Woudsma, provided an overview of the report and recommendation. A question was posed on whether the emergence of several new plans related to quantum might cause confusion. Dean of Engineering Mary Wells noted that it would be useful to look at that concern broadly. For the quantum plan under consideration, this would be reflected as a specialization on the student's transcript.

A motion was heard to that Senate approve the following major modifications for plans in civil engineering, electrical and computer engineering, and mechanical and mechatronics engineering, as presented and effective May 1, 2025. Woudsma and Wells. Carried.

5.2 Senate Graduate and Research Council: Faculty of Environment – Major Modifications

Woudsma provided an overview of the report and recommendation. A question arose as to how the plan could be reduced by four courses with the same learning outcomes. Cameron McCordic, academic director of the MDP program, indicated that electives are being restructured to allow specializations and to capture the learning outcomes from the old core courses.

A motion was heard that Senate approve the major modifications to the Master of Development Practice Plan, effective May 1, 2025, as presented. Woudsma and Frayne. Carried.

6. Report - Senate Undergraduate Council

Associate Vice-President Academic David DeVidi provided an overview of the report. A student senator observed that the prospective changes have been well-received by students in the department, with kudos for student engagement in developing this recommendation.

A motion was heard that Senate approve the major modification for a new specialization plan in applied mathematics, effective 1 September 2025, as presented. DeVidi and Giesbrecht. Carried.

7. Report - Senate Executive Committee

7.1 Proposed Amendment to Senate Bylaws - Governance Year

The chair provided a short overview of the report, which proposed to adjust the Senate governance year to begin annually on September 1. University Secretary Gen Gauthier-Chalifour observed that the report includes amendments to Senate bylaws 2 and 3 for housekeeping and alignment with the proposed amendment. It was noted that graduating students can serve out the remainder of the Senate year, according to the *University of Waterloo Act*.

Questions were invited. Senators expressed general support and one senator expressed concern that it would be inappropriate for the current Senate to effectively extend its own term by four months.

A motion was heard that Senate give first reading to the amendments to Senate Bylaws 1, 2, and 3 as presented in the report. Lynes and Porreca. Carried.

8. Update on Government Legislation and Policy Requirements

8.1 Reporting on Government Directives – Bill 166: Anti-Racism/Anti-Hate Directive – Amendment to Policy 33, Ethical Behaviour

Associate Vice-President Faculty Planning and Policy Christine McWebb spoke to the report. It was noted the directives were issued, and deadlines set unilaterally by the province and that a working group to address the directives was struck. The report aims to meet provincial compliance requirements with a focused amendment to Policy 33 to ensure compliance with the directive. Ongoing broader work for that policy that was previously underway will continue. McWebb noted that consultation and engagement with key stakeholders was undertaken on the policy amendments in a short time, to meet the compliance deadline.

Members discussed the report and clarified matters of concern, around provisions for anonymous complaints, and consultation process. It was noted anonymous complaints can be made in the current processes, and a minimum of information needs to be provided for the decision maker to determine whether to proceed with further investigation. Complaints may be filed in a variety of venues on campus and thereon triage of the complaint occurs and a decision is made to forward to the appropriate decision-maker as appropriate. Senators expressed concern that frivolous complaints could be weaponized. A preliminary assessment is the first step to evaluate whether there could be a violation of policy. The consultations that were undertaken occurred under time pressure due to the deadline for compliance. The time pressures associated with these amendments and the threat of non-compliance makes it difficult for Senate to have thoughtful consideration of this issue, and this represents an intrusion on institutional autonomy.

A motion was heard that Senate approve the amendments to Policy 33 – Ethical Behaviour, as presented in the attached report, for recommendation to the Board of Governors for approval. Gupta and Deakin. Carried.

The chair indicated that a broader update on policy work will be brought to the next Senate meeting in March.

8.2 Bill 166 and Bill 185 - Report on Compliance Activity

This report was received for information.

9. Faculty Constitutions

9.1 Proposed amendments to the Constitution and By Laws of the Science Faculty Council and Assembly

Dean of the Faculty of Science, Chris Houser, provided a short overview of the report and recommendation, and acknowledged student senator Jordan Bauman for raising the issues addressed through the proposed changes. Bauman commended the changes, noting the increased support for student engagement in the Faculty.

A motion was heard that Senate approve the amendment to the Constitution and By Laws of the Science Faculty Council and Assembly, as presented. Houser and Bauman. Carried.

10. Report - Vice President Academic and Provost

10.1 Undergraduate and Graduate Admissions Update – Briefing Note

This report was received for information.

CONSENT AGENDA

The following items were received for approved / received for information.

11.1 Senate Work Plan

11.2 Report - Senate Graduate and Research Council

11.2.1 Senate Graduate and Research Council: Graduate Studies Academic Calendar Changes

That Senate approve the following Graduate Studies Academic Calendar changes, effective 1 January 2025, as presented.

11.2.2 Senate Graduate & Research Council

11.3 Senate Undergraduate Council

11.4 Senate Long Range Planning Committee

11.5 Report - Vice President, Research and International

11.5.1 Awards, Distinctions, Grants, Waterloo International Engagements

11.6 Report - Vice President, Academic and Provost

11.6.1 Report of the Provost - Faculty Appointments, Leaves

11.7 Committee Appointments – Teaching Awards

To approve the committee appointments for the Distinguished Teacher Awards and for the Amit & Meena Chakma Award for Exceptional Teaching by a Student, as presented in this report.

12. Items Removed from the Consent Agenda

No items removed from the consent agenda.

13. Other Business

There was no other business.

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

February 3, 2025

Mike Grivicic
Associate University Secretary