

**University of Waterloo  
Senate  
Minutes of the March 3, 2025 meeting  
[in agenda order]**

Present: John Abraham, Nasser Abukhdeir, Bilal Ahmed, Avery Akkerman, Marc Aucoin, Veronica Austen, Aubrey Basdeo, Jordan Bauman, Jean Becker, Andrew Chang, Martin Cooke, Cecilia Cotton, Kim Cuddington, Hans De Sterck, Laura Deakin, Charmaine Dean, David DeVidi, Mark Ferro, Paul Fieguth, Teresa Fortney, Bruce Frayne, Murray Gamble, 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, Nadine Ibrahim, Marc Jerry, Acey Kaspar, Achim Kempf, Veronica Kitchen, Scott Kline, Sachin Kotecha, Christiane Lemieux, Ondrej Lhotak, Lili Liu, Brad Lushman, Jennifer Lynes, Shana MacDonald, Ellen MacEachen, Blake Madill, Colleen Maxwell, Peter Meehan, Kristiina Montero, Kirsten Muller, Richard Myers, Cathy Newell Kelly, Christopher Nielsen, James Nugent, Troy Osborne, Nicholas Pfeifle, 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, Siva Sivoththaman, James Skidmore, Christopher Taylor, Alexie Tcheuyap, Sharon Tucker, Diana Vangelisti, Johanna Wandel, Mary Wells, Stanley Woo, Clarence Woudsma, Changbao Wu, En-Hui Yang

Regrets: Judy Castaneda, Catherine Dong, Natalie Hutchings, Stephanie Maaz, Carol Ann MacGregor, Nicholas Pellegrino, Jagdeep Singh Bachher, Katie Traynor

Guests: Graham Brown, Aldo Caputo, Randy Dauphin, Ashley Day, Nenone Donaldson, Bernard Duncker, Donna Ellis, Melanie Figueiredo, Jenny Flagler-George, Anne Galang, Jennifer Gillies, Diana Goncalves, Michelle Hollis, Trevor Holmes, Diane Johnston, Andrea Kelman, Jennifer Kieffer, Nick Manning, Jon Mason, Norah McRae, Christine McWebb, Ian Milligan, Bessma Momani, Carter Neal, Chris Read, Daniela Sesar-Hencic, Savannah Sloat, Allan Starr, Brandon Sweet, Jodi Szimanski, Caitlin Vaux, Tim Weber-Kraljevski, Roly Webster, Meghan Whitfield, Sarah Willey-Thomas, Katy Wong-Francq

## **OPEN SESSION**

The chair offered condolences on the recent passing of senator and professor Sivabal (Siv) Sivaloganathan on March 2, 2025, and invited Mark Giesbrecht, Dean of the Faculty of Mathematics, to offer remarks. Giesbrecht spoke of Prof. Sivaloganathan's outstanding contributions to the academic life of his department, Faculty and the University while also reflecting on the personal connections and impacts he had with colleagues and students. Giesbrecht noted there would be an opportunity forthcoming for the community to come together and honour the memory of a beloved friend and colleague.

### **1. Territorial Acknowledgement**

The territorial acknowledgement was provided jointly by Kirsten Muller, Savannah Sloat and Marina Mendonca through the reading of a poem, and reflection.

The chair offered thanks to Muller, Sloat and Mendonca, and invited other senators to consider offering the territorial acknowledgment at an upcoming Senate meeting.

### **2. Approval of the Agenda and Minutes**

The chair also noted the conclusion of recent elections to Senate and the subsequent report provided in the meeting book, and that nominations for student and faculty senators to sit on the Board of Governors would open later in the week. The upcoming call for honorary degree nominations was also noted.

#### **2.1 Conflict of Interest.**

No conflicts of interest were declared.

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

A senator asked that an item be added to the agenda to discuss Senate considerations for the operating budget. The chair noted this matter would be raised as part of their report and could be raised at that time. The senator agreed.

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 10.1-10.7 of the Senate agenda. Porreca and Abukhdeir. Carried.

#### **2.3 Minutes of the January 27, 2025 Meeting – open and confidential.**

A senator expressed their concern that instances where criticism is raised in Senate meetings do not appear to be reflected in the minutes, notwithstanding the understanding that the record isn't meant to be verbatim. University Secretary Gen Gauthier-Chalifour noted that potential guidelines for minutes are being developed and would provide clarity around minute-taking principles and what information is

captured for the record. A motion was heard to approve the minutes of the January 27, 2025 meeting (open session), and to approve the minutes of the January 27, 2025 meeting (confidential session), as distributed. Deakin and Porreca. Carried.

## **2.4 Business Arising from the Minutes.**

The chair noted two items of information arising from the previous meeting, those being approvals by the Board of Governors of the amendments to Policy 33 as well as the reappointment of Mary Wells as Dean of Engineering for an additional three-year term.

A senator questioned whether the sole-sourcing of the contract with Nous Group for consulting services violated legislative requirements for procurement. Jacinda Reitsma, Vice-President, Administration and Finance, indicated that in the context of the urgency of the matter and having utilized the vendor of record list furnished by Supply Ontario in following the sole source guidelines, the procurement in question is compliant with legislative requirements. The senator urged that the University should exercise caution before acting on recommendations received from the consultant. The chair emphasized that any decisions will be made by the University, not by the consultant, and with due consideration.

A senator offered comment in follow-up to the chair's reference on recent elections to Senate, and those upcoming for the Board of Governors. The senator noted that approximately twenty-five percent of senators are women and encouraged fellow senators to help to foster participation from underrepresented groups. The chair noted that the recommendation in the President's Anti-Racism Task Force Report regarding the 50/30 challenge to have gender parity and significant representation of other equity deserving groups at governance tables has not been met. This presents a particular challenge in the case of the Board of Governors if diversity considerations are not addressed through elections to Senate, given faculty and student governors are drawn from Senate.

## **3. Report of the President**

President and Vice-Chancellor Vivek Goel observed that Waterloo has entered the top 100 in the Times Higher Education (THE) reputational rankings for 2025, along with being recognized as Canada's top research university in the comprehensive category for the 17<sup>th</sup> consecutive year. Waterloo also recently received the STARS Gold rating for sustainability achievements. The appointment of Thomas Duever as interim provost was recently announced, and he will serve a two-year term. The report of the task forces on responsible investing and on institutional partnerships have been released, with implementation to be led by Sarah Hadley (Chief Financial Officer) and Ian Milligan (Associate Vice-President, Research Oversight & Analysis), respectively. As part of the announced functional review of specific academic support units, the expertise of the Nous Group will be engaged to obtain a variety of views in relatively short order. Internal expertise will be leveraged in the formation of working groups to foster innovation in both the academic and non-academic spheres of Waterloo's activities, and which may be supported by external expertise where appropriate. Waterloo is partnering with UniForum, a program of Nous Cubane and multi-year benchmarking initiative which brings a data-driven approach widely used by U15 peer institutions.

The president went on to highlight the recent provincial election and return of a PC majority government, noting the party's platform did speak to funding for STEM education. The federal Liberal leadership race will be completed on March 9, and a federal election is expected to be forthcoming. Funding and policy changes in the United States (US) are having impacts in Canada, with tariffs likely to affect both federal and provincial funding for the sector. The impact of US government policies targeting EDI initiatives was also noted, including the potential for similar policies to be adopted in Canada.

Finally, the president noted that with respect to Senate's forthcoming consideration of the operating budget, a more substantial package of information is being developed. It was noted that several requests for information to support budget discussions have been received from senators to various offices. Senators are encouraged to communicate with the Secretariat to relay requests for specific budget information ahead of the joint Board-Senate budget preview session on March 28. There is significant amount of information posted to the budget website. It was also noted that requests have been received for meeting agendas and minutes of governance bodies whose records have been treated as confidential, and the Secretariat is actively exploring more transparent practices around governance records.

Questions were invited.

Regarding THE rankings, a senator asked whether a shift in the academic offerings of Waterloo might jeopardize the university's status as a comprehensive university. The chair indicated that the category broadly includes those universities without a medical school and with a breadth of offerings and observed that other universities are reviewing their program and course offerings.

A senator noted that while most operating budget expenses relate to people and employment, a significant portion does not. It would be useful for Senate to understand the status of Waterloo's various reserve funds, salaries and benefits, and other major expenses including capital projects and deferred maintenance. Internal debt figures and information on ancillary operations would also be useful. The timing of materials being released was also noted in that one week prior to the Senate meeting will not

be sufficient time for senators to review in-depth material. The chair indicated that as part of a comprehensive budget package there will be a comprehensive report on capital projects that will address much of what has been raised, and that expanded budget materials are under development. The budget documents will be released on or about March 24, as part of the material for the upcoming Senate Finance Committee meeting.

In response to a question about Senate discussion of the task force reports, the chair noted that Senate would likely have a role in implementation of the recommendations from the task force on institutional partnerships. Recommendations related to investments would appropriately go through the Board of Governors. The opportunity for exchange on shared topics as the University works through implementation was noted.

In response to a question about EDI/DEI policies in the US and supporting researchers in the community, the chair noted that conversations are happening with members of parliament. Christopher Taylor, AVP EDI-R noted that certain terms related to EDI have become polarizing but that people largely support the core principles and so a revised approach to those issues is prudent.

On UniForum, a senator asked whether the value for money in joining the consortium was comparable for analysis that could potentially be conducted internally and noted that a key concern of utilizing that consultant is that data is not accessible and cannot be potentially scrutinized by experts on campus.

#### **4. Annual Report – Co-operative and Experiential Education**

##### **4.1 CEE 2024 Annual Report**

Norah McRae, Associate Provost, Co-operative and Experiential Education, provided a presentation to highlight elements of the report. McRae spoke to the focus on supporting students to become future-ready, and the multifaceted portfolio of CEE with many linkages to other parts of the campus community. Waterloo has global leadership in these portfolios, as evidenced by international awards and recognition. CEE undertakes advanced research in areas such as work-integrated learning and pioneering the use of AI tools. McRae highlighted key priorities for 2025 and beyond, to expand on existing strength and build out new capabilities. McRae noted that co-op employment is currently seeing headwinds and that any leads related to employment are encouraged.

Questions were invited.

A senator recommended against utilizing AI for advising as this seems to disrupt existing models while introducing new risks. Students are focused on the quality of co-op job opportunities, and if job quality is a concern, then perhaps the University could examine reducing the number of placements to steer more toward higher-quality opportunities. Unrelated to the report, it was suggested that there be discussions on the use of the Tatham Centre as a facility funded by the student levy. McRae noted that the AI project saw Waterloo develop its own large language model and is entirely optional for students.

#### **5. Association Annual Updates – Report of the Presidents of FAUW, WUSA, GSA**

David Porreca, President of the Faculty Association of the University of Waterloo (FAUW) provided a presentation. Porreca noted that FAUW is now fully staffed and is embarking on work around strategic planning for the association, a governance review is underway, and offered highlights of new initiatives and activities for members engagement. Other comments included the naming of FAUW Equity Fellows, advocacy work on behalf of members including the March 2024 salary settlement, a childcare working group to identify needs towards supporting recruitment and retention and engaging in a variety of University policy processes.

Nicholas Pfeifle, President of the Waterloo Undergraduate Student Association (WUSA) provided a presentation. Pfeifle noted WUSA investments in the Student Life Centre and other student spaces, along with detail on WUSA's commercial operations. Other comments included support for orientation activities, advocacy related to transit and housing, supporting student life through events and clubs, and support for the establishment of the Ombuds Office.

Neela Hassan, President of the Graduate Student Association (GSA) provided a presentation. Hassan noted the GSA's role and wide range of services, positions taken towards advocacy for students, and events to promote wellbeing within the graduate student community. Other comments included achievements in 2024-25 toward a multi-year strategic plan, standardization of department-level associations, renovations of the Grad House, and other student-focused programming.

#### **6. Report - Senate Graduate & Research Council**

##### **6.1 Faculty of Engineering – New graduate program proposals**

## **6.2 Faculty of Environment – Major modifications**

## **6.3 Faculty of Health – Major modification**

## **6.4 Faculty of Science – Major modifications**

Woudsma provided an overview of item 6.1, noting engagement with Arts and Co-op. A senator questioned the rationale for only having a co-op option for the program, given that there are instances in current programs where graduate students cannot find placements. Mary Wells, Dean of the Faculty of Engineering, indicated that Engineering aims to capitalize on co-op offerings and can examine co-op equivalents for situations where students don't have co-op placements.

The following motion was heard:

That Senate approve the proposed new graduate academic programs of MEng in Chemical Engineering - Health Technologies (Co-op); MEng in Mechanical and Mechatronics Engineering - Health Technologies (Co-op); MMSc - Health Technologies (Co-op) as presented; and, that the effective date be either May 1, 2025 or September 1, 2025.

Woudsma and Wells. Carried.

Senate agreed to take items 6.2-6.4 together, and the following motions were heard.

That Senate approve the major modifications to the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Planning – Water, MA in Geography, MES in Geography, MSc in Geography, PhD in Geography, MES in Sustainability Management effective 1 May 2025, as presented.

That Senate approve the major modifications to the PhD in Public Health Sciences and Master of Health Informatics (MHI), effective 1 May 2025, as presented.

That Senate approve the major modifications to the PhD and MSc in Biology Graduate research fields, effective 1 May 2025, as presented.

Woudsma and Frayne. Carried.

## **7. Report - Senate Undergraduate Council**

### **7.1 Faculty of Arts – Major modifications**

### **7.2 Faculty of Engineering – Major modifications**

### **7.3 Faculty of Environment – Major modification**

### **7.4 Faculty of Math – Major modifications**

### **7.5 Faculty of Science – Major modifications**

### **7.6 Course Outline Working Group Report**

Senate agreed to take items 7.1-7.5 together. The motions of those five items were heard together—DeVidi and Frayne. DeVidi noted that the reports of this council and that of the previous item demonstrates the routine but very important business of the Senate and the University in reviewing and renewing curricular offerings.

Senators discussed the fifth motion under item 7.1, specifically on regulation changes for Bachelor of Arts degree requirements and assessments, which provide the option for weekend midterm examinations. Some senators expressed concerns about the impact on students, noting other approaches could be taken to utilize classrooms outside of scheduling on weekends. It was emphasized that the regulation enunciates that midterms are to be primarily scheduled Monday-Friday with weekends only as a last resort.

Senate voted on the motion of item 7.1, motion 5, separately. The following motion was carried:

5. That Senate approve the regulation changes for the Bachelor of Arts Degree Requirements, Assessments: Scheduling Parameters, and Arts: Courses and Classes, effective September 1, 2025, as presented.

The chair asked the Alexie Tcheuyap, Dean of Arts, to convey the content of the discussion back to his Faculty and to the unit in question.

Senate voted on the remaining motions 7.1 to 7.5. The following motions carried:

[Item 7.1]

1. That Senate approve the major modifications for Conrad Grebel University College, including retiring two specializations and creating three new specializations, as part of a larger program revision, effective September 1, 2025, as presented.

2. That Senate approve the major modifications for the Department of Fine Arts: Three-Year General Visual Culture, Honours Visual Culture, and Visual Culture in a Global

Context Minor, effective September 1, 2025, as presented.

3. That Senate approve the deletion of the Digital & Public History Specialization, and major plan modifications for the International Studies Minor, effective September 1, 2025, as presented.

4. That Senate approve the major plan modifications to the Financial Leadership Specialization, effective September 1, 2025, as presented.

[Item 7.2]

1. That Senate approve the new Diploma in Society, Technology and Values, effective September 1, 2025, as presented.

2. That Senate approve the two new specializations and major plan modifications within Environmental Engineering, effective September 1, 2025, as presented.

3. That Senate approve the regulation changes for Averages and Academic Standings, and Courses and Classes for the Faculty of Engineering, effective September 1, 2025, as presented.

[Item 7.3]

That Senate approve the new plans for the Knowledge Integration Diploma and Sustainable Finance Specialization, effective September 1, 2025, as presented.

[Item 7.4]

That Senate approve the major modifications to the Applied Mathematics with Scientific Computing and Scientific Machine Learning (Bachelor of Mathematics - Honours) and new CS-Game Design Specialization, effective September 1, 2025, as presented.

DeVidi provided an overview of item 7.6, noting that Senate has had requirements around course outlines since 2008 and that this report's recommendations would seek to amend those requirements. Also proposed are changes to boilerplate language that is otherwise dated.

Discussion followed. Senators discussed whether, instead of boilerplate language, course outlines could direct students to a website which can be updated. DeVidi noted there is a history of students successfully appealing issues where the information was not included in the course outline.

In response to a question, it was noted the element for inclusion in course outlines pertaining to "Any other element required by the program/department/faculty, including Administrative Policy (if applicable)" is there because some Faculties require specific elements related to their external accreditations, and those elements are approved by departments, schools or faculty councils.

A senator noted that some instructors utilize alternate grading schemes which may not detail certain elements at the outset such as allowing students to determine parameters for group work. DeVidi noted that not including any such detail on a course outline could lead to students appealing successfully on the basis of arbitrariness, and that the course outline can indicate that students will be consulted in determining elements as in the example to mitigate an appeal.

A motion was heard [item 7.6]:

1. That Senate approve the requirement of the inclusion of course materials costs directly into course outlines.

2. That Senate approve the list of required and recommended elements to be included in a course outline, as presented in this report.

3. That Senate approve an update to the boilerplate text below for Accessibility and Mental Health Supports.

DeVidi and Woudsma. Carried.

## **8. Report - Senate Executive Committee**

### **8.1 Proposed Amendment to Senate Bylaws - Governance Year**

Goel provided a short overview of the report, noting that this change would align with the Board's governance year and that with approval of the bylaw amendments the term of senators would be extended by four months, of which two are the summer months where Senate usually does not meet.

A motion was heard:

That Senate gives second reading to the amendments to Senate Bylaws 1, 2, and 3 as presented in this report.

And, that Senate approve that the current year be extended to end on August 31, 2025 to facilitate a transition year, with provisions for the transition year as described in this report;

And, that Senate approve the extension of the terms of elected senators and of members of Senate committees and councils to be congruent with the revised year, as appropriate.

Skidmore and Porreca. Carried.

## **8.2 Guidelines for Visitors to Senate Meetings**

A motion was heard that Senate amend section 4.7 of the Guidelines for Visitors to Senate Meetings as follows:

4.7. An individual or group may request to bring a representation to Senate on a given subject normally once in a Senate year ~~meeting cycle (May 1 to April 30)~~.

Skidmore and Muller.

A motion was heard to amend the main motion, to strike section 4.7 entirely from the guidelines. Abukhdeir and Pfeifle. Senate discussed the amending motion, with some senators questioning the need for such an element in the guidelines. The secretary noted that the guidelines will be reviewed after one year's time to assess efficacy and whether any amendments are needed.

The question of the amending motion was called, and it was defeated.

The question of the main motion was called, and it was carried.

## **8.3 Delegation of Authority for Editorial Amendments to Senate Bylaws and Senate-Approved Guidelines**

The secretary affirmed that the recommended delegation of authority would provide a tool to more efficiently revise bylaws and guidelines for changes to titles, revising pronouns, and ensure that governing documents interact well. The recommendation provides Senate with transparency on the use of the delegation, and Senate may override those editorial amendments if the body so decides. A motion was heard:

That Senate delegate its authority to the Secretary of Senate for the execution and approval of editorial amendments to Senate bylaws and to Senate-approved guidelines for a fixed period from the date of approval to March 31, 2026 inclusive;

And, that for all such amendments executed by the Secretary of Senate there shall be a report made to the next Senate meeting;

And, that Senate reserves its authority to rescind amendments so executed through majority vote at a properly constituted meeting.

DeVidi and Frayne. Carried.

## **8.4 Appointment of the COU Academic Colleague 2025-28**

A senator observed that, notwithstanding the suitability of the nominee, the process could benefit from a broader call for nominations. The chair agreed that a clear process for this and other similar nomination processes is needed and under consideration by the Secretariat. The chair called for nominations from the floor. None were received.

A motion was heard that Senate approve the reappointment of Dr. Scott Kline as the Council of Ontario Universities (COU) Academic Colleague for the University of Waterloo for a three-year term to June 30, 2028. Woudsma and Porreca. Carried.

## **9. Report of the University Secretary**

### **9.1 2025-2026 Senate Election Results**

The secretary noted that this item is for information and expressed thanks to Melanie Figueiredo, Governance Officer in the Secretariat, for her excellent work in guiding these elections. Communications to new senators on the revised Senate year will be forthcoming.

### **9.2 Update on Policy Activity**

The secretary noted that this item is for information and acknowledged the effort of Graham Brown,

Associate University Secretary, since joining on the Secretariat in 2024 and taking on the policy portfolio. She noted that the next phase of activity of Policy 33 will be forthcoming.

## **CONSENT AGENDA**

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

### **10.1 Senate Work Plan**

### **10.2 Report - Senate Graduate and Research Council**

### **10.3 Senate Undergraduate Council**

### **10.4 Senate Finance Committee**

### **10.5 Academic Quality Enhancement Committee**

### **10.6 Report - Vice President, Research and International: Awards, Distinctions, Grants, Waterloo International Engagements**

### **10.7 Report of the Provost: Faculty Appointments, Leaves**

## **11. Items Removed from the Consent Agenda**

No items removed from the consent agenda.

## **12. Other Business**

There was no other business.

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

March 8, 2025

Mike Grivicic  
Associate University Secretary