

University of Waterloo
Senate
Minutes of the September 23, 2024 Meeting
[in agenda order]

Present: John Abraham, Nasser Abukhdeir, Marc Aucoin, Veronica Austen, Jordan Bauman, Jean Becker, Judy Castaneda, Andrew Chang, Martin Cooke, Cecilia Cotton, 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, Neela Hassan, Chris Houser, Natalie Hutchings, Nadine Ibrahim, Narveen Jandu, Marc Jerry, Acey Kaspar, Achim Kempf, Veronica Kitchen, Scott Kline, Sachin Kotecha, Christiane Lemieux, Ondrej Lhotak, Lili Liu, Brad Lushman, Jennifer Lynes Murray, 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, Beth Sandore Namachchivaya, Rida Sayed, Asher Scaini, Mark Seasons, Marcus Shantz, Jagdeep Singh Bachher, Siva Sivoththaman, James Skidmore, Anita Taylor, Alexie Tcheuyap, Sharon Tucker, Diana Vangelisti, Mary Wells, Stanley Woo, Clarence Woudsma, Changbao Wu

Guests: Graham Brown, Catherine Burns, Aldo Caputo, Ashley Day, Nenone Donaldson, Bernard Duncker, Melanie Figueiredo, Jenny Flagler-George, Anne Galang, Jennifer Gillies, Diana Goncalves, Rob Hill, Michelle Hollis, Diane Johnston, Andrea Kelman, Jon Mason, Eleanor McMahon, Christine McWebb, Ian Milligan, Bessma Momani, Fayaz Noormohamed, Mary Power, Chris Read, Alisa Sivak, Diana Skrzydlo, Allan Starr, Brandon Sweet, Evan Taylor, Nickola Voegelin, Tim Weber-Kraljevski, Sarah Willey-Thomas, Katy Wong-Francq

Absent: Bilal Ahmed, Avery Akkerman, Aubrey Basdeo, Kim Cuddington, Mark Ferro, Murray Gamble, Stephanie Maaz, Shana MacDonald, Peter Meehan, Richard Myers, John Saabas, Sivabal Sivaloganathan, Katie Traynor, En-Hui Yang

OPEN SESSION

The chair welcomed all in attendance to the meeting.

The secretary provided a brief overview of the new meeting room technology and recently implemented governance portal.

1. Territorial Acknowledgment [James Skidmore]

James Skidmore provided the territorial acknowledgement and a personal reflection.

The chair invited those senators who are interested in providing the territorial acknowledgement at a future meeting to communicate with the Secretariat.

The chair offered opening remarks including a welcome to new senators including Chancellor Jagdeep Singh Bachher, Renison University College President and Vice-Chancellor Marc Jerry, and Dean of Arts Alexie Tcheuyap. Christopher Taylor, Johanna Wandel and Clarence Woudsma were also welcomed in their respective returning and acting roles. Upcoming by-elections to fill vacant seats were also noted.

The chair made note of recent homecoming events and events upcoming including the joint Board of Governors and Senate retreat, National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, Fall convocation ceremonies and the Chancellor's installation, and the planned opening of the Innovation Arena.

2. Conflict of Interest

No conflicts were declared.

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

A senator expressed concern at the process for developing the Senate agenda, noting that for recent meetings they have submitted items for the agenda which have not been included in the agenda. The secretary observed that the Senate Executive Committee is responsible to prepare the Senate agenda and in so doing will scrutinize items and supporting materials submitted to ensure that said items fall within the mandate of Senate and will adequately support Senate's consideration of the item. The chair noted that Senate's bylaws speak to the general requirements, and that agenda items may normally be brought through Senate's committees and councils or may be raised from the floor. Senators may liaise with the secretary for any concerns and to obtain advice on bringing items of business to Senate.

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 11-17 of the Senate agenda. Gupta and Deakin. Carried.

4. Minutes of the June 10, 2024 Special Meeting

It was observed by a senator that several senators and visitors could have potentially been involved in international partnerships, and asked whether Senate is satisfied with its process given no conflicts were declared respect to the item pertaining to the motion on institutional partnerships. The chair noted that senators are invited to declare conflicts at the outset of each meeting. It was also noted that those providing representations to Senate would not be expected to declare conflicts given they are not voting members of Senate, and would be expected to be a proponent for a specific outcome. Separately, a senator suggested that providing a transcript or recording of meetings could be regularly provided, and this could be considered for future meetings.

A motion was heard to approve the minutes of the June 10, 2024 Special Meeting as presented. Deakin and Porreca. Carried.

5. Minutes of the June 10, 2024 Meeting

A motion was heard to approve the minutes of the June 10, 2024 meeting as presented. Muller and Bauman. Carried.

6. Business Arising from the Minutes

Items 6.1 and 6.2 were received for information.

7. Report of the President

The president provided his report, first expressing concern and compassion for those impacted by armed conflicts around the world. The president noted the actions taken over the summer months to foster campus safety and to work towards a peaceful resolution to the encampment, with recognition that not all members of the community agree with the steps taken to bring about the resolution. The University has always upheld the right to protest and to free expression and did not take action to hinder the right to express views; however, those rights are understood within the limits defined by law and in the context of University policies where such activities shall not unduly interfere with the study, work, or working environment of other members of the University, nor pose safety risks.

The president reiterated the University's position on institutional neutrality as recommended in Final Report of the Task Force on Freedom of Expression and Inclusive Engagement, and that Senate will be engaged in related policy work and through transparent communications and updates on this and other task force recommendations. A brief update was provided on the two task forces struck following the June Senate meeting, one on institutional investments and the second pertaining to institutional

partnerships, noting the work of those task forces is underway and the aim is to have reports brought forward to both the Board of Governors and the Senate in early 2025.

The president closed with an update on government relations activities including the impact of caps on international student and recent announcements by the federal government about further reductions and limits on spousal work permits, upcoming negotiations for Strategic Mandate Agreement (SMA) 4 with no new funding or changes to the corridor, recent ministerial directives in relation to Bill 166 resulting in increased compliance requirements, and the recent provincial cabinet shuffle resulting in a new Minister of Colleges and Universities, Nolan Quinn.

Discussion followed. A senator queried the percentage of international undergraduate vs graduate students. The vice-president and provost advised that this information is brought forward as part of the fall enrollment report.

A senator expressed concern about language and reference to the conflict in Gaza without mention of the people impacted and that it does not reflect the position of institutional neutrality.

Senators raised concerns about institutional autonomy in light of recent provincial directives under Bill 166 including that a focus on the cost of course materials may eventually be leveraged to impact funding for unrelated activities that are important to students.

A senator questioned the long-term impact of the lawsuit related to the student encampment, stating this may have reverberations on academic freedom and could potentially have a chilling effect on future protests, and that for some the encampment was an opportunity to learn more about the issues and to demonstrate one's respect for different opinions. Some senators expressed that the University's actions with respect to filing a lawsuit were appropriate. A senator noted that members of the encampment should not be conflated with those individuals who might cause undue disturbance with their protesting activity.

The president noted that the right to protest does not include the right to break the law, that the lawsuit was a measure of last resort, and that no member of the University community would have cause to worry about protesting or expressing views recognizing the limits he articulated under his report; those defined by law and in the context of University policies where such activities shall not unduly interfere with the study, work, or working environment of other members of the University, nor pose safety risks.

A senator suggested that Senate form a subcommittee to review the response of administration to the encampment, or potentially have the same review as part of the two task forces. It was noted that the Board of Governors appoints and supervises the president, and concerns should be directed through to that body and not the Senate.

8. Presentation - Waterloo Accessible Education Project

David DeVidi, Rob Hill and Diane Skrzydlo provided a presentation on the Waterloo Accessible Education Project, noting the project originates from the 185 recommendations of province's AODA Postsecondary Education Standards Development Committee. These recommendations are implemented at Waterloo through the University's Disability Inclusion Steering Committee (DISCo) which has placed a strong focus on accessibility in the classroom and its actions are predicated on the principle that more accessible education is better education, with the aim of not simply ensuring compliance but to imbue quality and excellence in learning.

Discussion followed. Senators noted the variety of ways to bring about accessible design, with universal design being just one option. In response to a question about instructors expressing that compliance with requirements is leading to burnout, it was noted the aim will be to provide supports that bring the highest impact for the effort required, and that the project is ongoing and will evolve and adapt with time.

9. Report - Senate Undergraduate Council

Senate took the three items together and DeVidi provided an overview of the recommendations. A motion was heard to move the three items, as below:

9.1 Major Modification - Anthropology

Motion: To approve the proposed major modifications to Anthropology (Bachelor of Arts – Four-Year General and Bachelor of Arts– Honours), effective September 1, 2025, as presented.

9.2 Major Modification - Religious Studies

Motion: To approve the proposed major modifications to Religious Studies (Bachelor of Arts – Four-Year General, Bachelor of Arts– Honours, and Bachelor of Arts – Three-Year General), effective September 1, 2025, as presented.

9.3 Major Modification - Sexuality, Marriage and Family Studies

Motion: To approve the proposed major modifications to Sexuality, Marriage, and Family Studies (Bachelor of Arts – Four-Year General, and Bachelor of Arts– Honours), effective September 1, 2025, as presented.

DeVidi and Tcheuyap. Carried.

10. Reports - Senate Executive Committee

10.1 - Elections to Senate Committees & Councils on Behalf of Senate

The chair provided a short overview of the recommendation. In response to a question, it was noted that in the case of the new Committee on Academic Quality Enhancement, per its terms of reference the majority of members will be drawn from membership of the Senate Undergraduate Council and Graduate and Research Council, and that the aim will be to fill vacancies for the October cycle of meetings. A motion was heard to delegate authority to the Senate Executive Committee for the approval of all Senate committee/council appointments pertaining to vacancies on those bodies, for the period from September 24, 2024 to October 14, 2024, with reporting of all such appointments to the Senate meeting on October 21, 2024. Dong and Skidmore. Carried

10.2 - Meeting Guidelines for Visitors

By consensus, this item was deferred to the October Senate meeting, and Senators were asked to relay any comments to the Secretariat by the end of the week.

CONSENT AGENDA

11. Senate Work Plan – received for information.

12. Report - Senate Graduate & Research Council – received for information.

13. Report - Senate Undergraduate Council – item 13.1 received for information, item 13.2 approved as presented.

14. Report - Vice-President, Research & International – received for information.

15. Report of the Vice-President, Academic & Provost – items 15.1, 15.2, and 15.3 all received for information.

16. Report of the President – received for information.

17. Report on Spring 2024 Convocation – received for information.

18. Other Business

There was no other business.

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

September 26, 2024

Mike Grivicic
Associate University Secretary