

University of Waterloo
SENATE
Minutes of the October 20, 2025 Meeting
[in agenda order]

Present: John Abraham, Nasser Abukhdeir, Yasmeen Almomani, Veronica Austen, Michael Barnett-Cowan, Aubrey Basdeo, Raouf Boutaba, David Clausi, Martin Cooke, Cecilia Cotton, Laura Deakin, Charmaine Dean, David DeVidi, Michael Drescher, Thomas Duever, Andrea Edginton, Mark Ferro, Paul Fieguth, Murray Gamble, Gen Gauthier-Chalifour (Secretary), Vivek Goel (Chair), Rob Gorbet, Vikas Gupta, Peter Hall, Kevin Hare, Chris Houser, Nadine Ibrahim, Marc Jerry, Acey Kaspar, Misha Khan, Scott Kline, Sachin Kotecha, Christiane Lemieux, Ondrej Lhotak, Christopher Lim, Lili Liu, Jun Liu, Brad Lushman, Shana MacDonald, Carol Ann MacGregor, Pendar Mahmoudi, Heather Mair, Colleen Maxwell, Peter Meehan, Damian Mikhail, Sushanta Mitra, Richard Myers, Carter Neal, Cathy Newell Kelly, Christopher Nielsen, James Nugent, Alex Pawelko, David Porreca, Neil Randall, Arya Razmjoo, Jacinda Reitsma, Jessica Rindlisbacher, Sharon Roberts, Meray Sadek, Beth Sandore Namachchivaya, Rida Sayed, Mark Seasons, Marcus Shantz, James Skidmore, Karen Sunabacka, Su-Yin Tan, Christopher Taylor, Alexie Tcheuyap, Sharon Tucker, Diana Vangelisti, Bojana Videkanic, Justin Wan, Johanna Wandel, Mary Wells, Stan Woo

Regrets: Laith Alkhawaldeh, Jordan Bauman, Jean Becker, Andrew Chang, Helen Chen, Hans De Sterck, Teresa Fortney, Bruce Frayne, Achim Kempf, Jochen Koenemann, Blake Madill, Nicholas Pellegrino, Jagdeep Singh Bachher, Katie Traynor, Jeffrey Wilson, Clarence Woudsma, En-Hui Yang

Guests: Graham Brown, Ashley Day, Nenone Donaldson, Melanie Figueiredo, Jenny Flagler-George, Diana Goncalves, Diane Johnston, Andrea Kelman, John Lewis, Tony Ly, Nick Manning, Christine McWebb, Kirsten Muller, Fayaz Noormohamed, Jodene Pretti, Daniela Seskar-Hencic, Nadia Singh, Ian VanderBurgh, Caitlin Vaux, Tim Weber-Kraljevski, Katy Wong-Francq

1. Governance Resources

A link to the governance resources for Senate was provided for information.

2. OPEN SESSION

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting and noted that as a result of the recent Senate by-election, four new faculty senators have begun their terms. The Chair welcomed Michael Barnett-Cowan and Heather Mair from the Faculty of Health, Bojana Videkanic from the Faculty of Arts, and Andrea Edginton from the Faculty of Science.

3. Territorial Acknowledgment

The Chair provided the territorial acknowledgment along with a brief a personal reflection.

4. Approval of the Agenda and Minutes

4.1 Conflict of Interest

The Chair advised that a question had been received from a senator about a potential conflict of interest related to item 7.1 and their appointment to the Senate Engagement Working Group. It was confirmed that such matters are not considered conflicts and a declaration was not required. No other conflicts of interest were declared.

4.2 Minutes of the September 20, 2025 Meeting

The Chair noted that the Secretariat has received a few minor amendments to the attendance list, and clarification of language under item 6.1 and discussion of Policy 42.

A motion was heard to approve the minutes of the meeting, as amended. Porreca and Deakin. Carried.

4.3 Approval of the Agenda and Consent Items

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 11.1-11.6 of the Senate agenda. Porreca and Skidmore. Carried.

4.4 Business Arising from the Minutes

There were no items of business arising from the minutes.

5. United Way Presentation

5.1 United Way Presentation Memo

The Faculty Deans and some special invited guests carried on the tradition of showing their support for the United Way Campaign taking place this month by giving a special presentation. Nenone Donaldson, Vice-President Advancement and External Relations spoke to the importance of the campaign and how funds raised by UWaterloo staff, faculty and students directly support nearly 130 local agencies and charities that are on the front lines, addressing critical issues such as poverty, food insecurity, mental health challenges, and housing instability. The Chair added that our contributions play a vital role in ensuring that these essential services can continue to operate and provide a safety net for those who need it most in our community. More information can be found at uwaterloo.ca/united-way

6. Report of the President

6.1 General Update

The President and Chair of Senate provided an update to Senate on matters of interest. It was noted that convocation events were scheduled for the following week, marking the addition of new graduates to the University's growing alumni community of 255,000 members.

The Chair highlighted the recently announced research collaboration between Google and the University of Waterloo that will look at the impacts of artificial intelligence (AI) in education and how it will shape career readiness in the future. The \$1 million collaboration will focus on the future of work and learning, advancing innovation and interdisciplinary engagement in artificial intelligence research. Professor Edith Law from the Faculty of Mathematics has been appointed Executive Director for the initiative, overseeing the creation of design tools and learning environments to support this evolving area. It was noted that at the end of September, a federal AI Strategy Task Force was launched to shape Canada's approach to artificial intelligence. The Dean of Engineering, Mary Wells, has been named to this national task force, contributing expertise in safe AI systems and broader applications of learning technologies. The University of Waterloo is developing its own AI enablement strategy, engaging the campus and community in determining how best to equip faculty, staff, and students with appropriate AI tools for teaching and research in a safe and responsible manner.

At the federal government level, attention is focused on the upcoming November 4th budget announcement. Early signals indicate government interest in talent development and research investment, particularly in fields such as AI and quantum. However, it was acknowledged that the federal government faces pressures from a growing deficit and will need to balance priorities across multiple areas. At the provincial level, ministry (MCURES) consultations on the funding formula and governance continue, with significant input being gathered from institutions and stakeholders to inform future policy and funding directions.

The Chair spoke to upcoming Senate items including the Statement and Procedures on Principles for Institutional Partnerships and the Freedom of Expression Guidelines for Collective Bodies, both slated to come forward at the November meeting.

Discussion followed. A member requested an update on the ongoing CUPE Local 5524 negotiations. Jacinda Reitsma, Vice-President Administration and Finance, responded that negotiations were ongoing and updates would be provided to Senate in the future, as appropriate. Another member requested whether presentations on how AI is being used by faculty members could be provided at future meetings. The Chair noted that such presentations could be arranged at future meetings.

7. Report of the Senate Executive Committee

7.1 Senate Engagement Working Group – Proposed Membership

The Chair introduced the item and spoke to the expressions of interest received for the working group. During the October 6th Senate Executive Committee (SEC) meeting, members appointed co-Chairs Laura Deakin (Elected Faculty Senator, Science) and Marcus Shantz (President, Conrad Grebel University). SEC also appointed two members of SEC, Carol Ann MacGregor (AFIW Faculty, St. Jerome's University) and Damian Mikhail (WUSA President).

All those that expressed interest in the faculty and student seats have been included in the proposed membership slate. The proposed membership slate is as follows:

6 Faculty Senators

- Arts – James Skidmore
- Health – Martin Cooke
- Engineering – David Clausi
- Environment – Rob Gorbet
- Mathematics – Hans De Sterck
- Science – Stan Woo

1 Undergraduate Student Senator

- Alex Pawelko

1 Graduate Student Senator

- Jessica Rindlisbacher

A motion was heard that Senate approve the proposed slate of Senate-appointed members of the Senate Engagement Working Group (items 2.1-2.3 within), as presented. Skidmore and DeVidi. Carried.

8. Report of the Senate Planning and Finance Committee

8.1 Annual Institutional Performance Update 2024-2025

The Chair provided a brief overview of the report received by the Senate Planning and Finance Committee at their recent meeting, on the Annual Institutional Performance Update for 2024-25. Each Fall, an update is provided as a way to capture metrics and stories of impact organized around our four goal areas emerging from Waterloo at 100. This year, the main report includes both qualitative and quantitative aspects and includes three pieces including the KPI dashboard, a narrative report with stories of impact, and the annual insights report on international students.

Questions were invited and discussion followed.

A member inquired about various parts of Waterloo's mental health services, and whether the improvements in wait times for counselling might have adversely affected other areas, such as the Impact Team. It was noted that a follow-up response will be provided to the member after the meeting.

Members discussed how initiatives are identified and prioritized at the institutional level. It was noted that the University has traditionally identified priorities through five-year strategic plans. With the new integrated planning and budget process, a more systematic and transparent approach for determining institutional priorities has been developed to ensure alignment with strategic objectives and measurable outcomes.

In response to a question about indicators related to student experience it was noted that forthcoming this year would be the Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE), which is complementary to the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and that a presentation on this could be provided to Senate at a future meeting.

In response to a question about how the University measures progress toward its goal of being recognized as a top employer, Reitsma explained that employee engagement surveys have been used to identify focus areas and inform improvement strategies, noting that progress continues despite fiscal constraints.

Questions were raised about WATSpeed and its role in driving non-traditional revenue streams, and how data related to co-op employer ratings can be quantified and tracked as performance indicators.

The Chair noted that additional information and reporting is available on the University's website and that the link would be circulated (<https://uwaterloo.ca/about/accountability-and-reports/additional-reports>).

8.2 Q1 Budget Update

The Chair provided a Q1 Budget Update which focuses on the impact of expense reductions and enrolment performance. It was noted that while the Senate Planning and Finance Committee has not previously received such detailed quarterly updates, new financial reporting processes now enable more timely and effective reporting. Following the November 1 counts, more accurate data will be available as part of Q2 reporting.

Domestic intake reached 109% of the projected level, exceeding expectations. However, it was emphasized that the University has admitted approximately 500 additional domestic students beyond the number for which provincial grants are provided. International intake reached 94% of projections, affected primarily by visa processing delays. There were 186 student deferrals due to late visa approvals, and it is believed that some top international candidates may have chosen other institutions as a result. It was acknowledged that achieving these enrolment outcomes required significant effort and coordination across units. The Chair expressed appreciation to all faculty and staff for their continued hard work and dedication in navigating these challenges.

8.3 Campus Plan Update

John Lewis, Associate Professor, School of Planning, and Director, Indigenous Faculty Relations, gave a brief presentation on the Campus Plan development. It was noted that over the course of the planning process, multiple consultations have taken place. In response to feedback received, the project's vision statement has been revised and simplified. Referring to the material provided in the meeting package, several key components of the conceptual plan were highlighted. The overall plan is intended to function as a living document that is flexible, regularly reviewed, and open to future opportunities.

Discussion followed. A member inquired about integrating public art and creative spaces into the plan, to support a STEAM-focused approach that values both innovation and artistic expression. Lewis responded that the proposal contained discovery and innovation zones with the potential to add creation zones to showcase creativity on campus.

Updates were provided on the development of separate plans for the R+T Park, North Campus, and satellite campuses. Members encouraged embedding local and Mennonite history into future planning and raised concerns about potential building demolitions and deferred maintenance. Reitsma noted that these plans will help prioritize investment and space planning. Members noted the importance of aligning campus development with creativity, heritage, and sustainability.

9. Academic Innovation Initiatives

Tom Duever, Interim Vice-President Academic and Provost, provided an overview of the topic which aims to explore how the University can deliver academic programs more efficiently, leverage technology to enhance teaching and learning, and create new revenue streams through program development. The previous Vice-President Academic and Provost made a commitment in June 2025 to keep Senate informed of the progress of the working group. This is the first update to Senate.

Dave DeVidi, AVP Academic, spoke to the previous discussions at Senate and the communications provided over the last several months to instructors and the larger university community. DeVidi provided an overview of the university's existing structures and policies that support teaching and academic program development. DeVidi referred to the Academic Innovation Working Group (AIWG) whose mandate is to enhance the quality and sustainability of academic programming, with an adaptable structure that responds to emerging institutional priorities. It was noted that although the AIWG does not make decisions, it provides informed advice and recommendations that would in turn advance through appropriate governance pathways. DeVidi provided examples of the working group's early efforts, its membership, and areas where recommendations are expected to be made.

Discussion followed. Members noted the fast pace at which AI is evolving and the need to support students to be workforce ready. DeVidi elaborated on the work of AIWG relative to AI and that a

recommendation is expected regarding a major project to support instructors in this space. A member asked for clarification on why the AIWG's website is housed under the Waterloo Budget Plan site. DeVidi clarified that the AIWG's website placement under the University of Waterloo's Budget Plan site is historical, and that while rooted in efficiency discussions, the AIWG is now driven by academic effectiveness and program delivery priorities.

A member inquired about AIWG's reporting process to Senate, noting the importance of defining deliverables and milestones to ensure accountability and transparency. DeVidi noted that some matters fall under other decision-making or logistical bodies which will be kept informed of the work as appropriate. Clearer milestone updates will be provided as part of future reports to Senate and he confirmed that end dates have been set for the subgroups.

10. Report of the Senate Undergraduate Council

10.1 Faculty of Science

Dave DeVidi, Chair of the Senate Undergraduate Council, introduced the proposed major modification for the Doctor of Optometry program. This modification will add an extra instructional term which can be completed within the four-year time period of the program. It also proposes the development of two new streams and a restructuring of courses.

A motion was heard that Senate approve the proposed major modifications to the Doctor of Optometry program, effective September 1, 2026, as presented. DeVidi and Abukhdeir. Carried.

11. Consent Agenda

The following items were received for information.

11.1 Senate Work Plan 25/26

11.2 Report of the Senate Executive Committee

11.2.1. Senate By-Election Update

11.2.2. Senate Executive Committee – Summary of the October 6, 2025 Meeting

11.3 Report of the Senate Graduate Council

11.4 Report of the Senate Undergraduate Council

11.5 Report of the Vice-President, Academic and Provost

11.5.1. Faculty Appointments and Leaves

11.6 Report of the Vice-President, Research and International

11.6.1. Awards, Distinctions, Grants, Commercialization Activity, Waterloo International Engagements

12. Confidential Consent Agenda

12.1 Confidential Minutes of the September 20, 2025 Meeting

The confidential minutes were approved as part of item 4.2.

13. Items removed from the Consent Agenda

There were no requests to remove items from the consent agenda.

14. Other Business

No other business was identified.

15. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 5:36 p.m. It was noted the next meeting of Senate will be held on November 24, 2025.