

University of Waterloo
SENATE
Minutes of November 24, 2025 Meeting

Present: John Abraham, Nasser Abukhdeir, Yasmeen Almomani, Veronica Austen, Michael Barnett-Cowan, Aubrey Basdeo, Jordan Bauman, Jean Becker, Raouf Boutaba, David Clausi, Martin Cooke, Cecilia Cotton, Ashley Day (Associate Secretary), Hans De Sterck, Laura Deakin, Charmaine Dean, David DeVidi, Michael Drescher, Thomas Duever, Andrea Edginton, Mark Ferro, Paul Fieguth, Bruce Frayne, Gen Gauthier-Chalifour (Secretary), Vivek Goel (Chair), Rob Gorbet, Vikas Gupta, Kevin Hare, Chris Houser, Nadine Ibrahim, Marc Jerry, Acey Kaspar, Misha Khan, Scott Kline, Jochen Koenemann, Sachin Kotecha, Christiane Lemieux, Ondrej Lhotak, Christopher Lim, Lili Liu, Jun Liu, Brad Lushman, Shana MacDonald, Carol Ann MacGregor, Blake Madill, Pendar Mahmoudi, Heather Mair, Peter Meehan, Damian Mikhail, Sushanta Mitra, Richard Myers, Carter Neal, Cathy Newell Kelly, Christopher Nielsen, James Nugent, Nicholas Pellegrino, 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, Sharon Tucker, Diana Vangelisti, Justin Wan, Johanna Wandel, Jeffrey Wilson, Stan Woo, Changbao Wu, En-Hui Yang

Regrets: Laith Alkhawaldeh, Andrew Chang, Helen Chen, Teresa Fortney, Murray Gamble, Peter Hall, Achim Kempf, Colleen Maxwell, Alex Pawelko, Jagdeep Singh Bachher, Alexie Tcheuyap, Katie Traynor, Bojana Videkanic, Mary Wells, Clarence Woudsma

Guests: Heather Bolton, Graham Brown, Tanya Daniels, Melanie Figueiredo, Jenny Flagler-George, Diana Goncalves, Lisa Habel, Diane Johnston, Andrea Kelman, John Lewis, Tony Ly, Nick Manning, Jon Mason, Christine McWebb, Ian Milligan, Kirsten Muller, Fayaz Noormohamed, Chris Read, Tim Weber-Kraljevski

1. Governance Resources

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

2. OPEN SESSION

The Chair welcomed members to the last Senate meeting of the 2025 calendar year and noted that nominations for faculty and graduate students will open on January 7, 2026. Members with expiring terms (August 31, 2026) will receive an email from the Secretariat in December. The Chair noted Tom Duever's interim term as Vice-President Academic & Provost and Charmaine Dean's second term as Vice-President, Research & International will both end on June 30, 2027. A call for nominations for both vice-presidential nominating committees will be made in January. The Chair announced that this was the last meeting of senators Jean Becker, Associate Vice-President of Indigenous Relations, and Cathy Newell Kelly, Registrar, as both will retire at the end of the year. The Chair thanked them for their service and dedication to the University.

3. Territorial Acknowledgement

The territorial acknowledgement was given by Lili Liu, Dean, Faculty of Health.

4. Approval of Agenda and Minutes

4.1. Conflict of Interest

No conflicts of interest were declared.

4.2. Approval of the Agenda and Consent Items

The Secretariat received a request from a senator to move item 5.3, Freedom of Expression Task Force – Guidelines for Collective Bodies, to the end of the regular agenda. Another request was received by the Secretariat from a senator to defer item 5.3 to a future Senate meeting. The Chair proposed moving item 5, Report of the President, to the end of the regular agenda, at which time the motion to defer could be heard.

A motion was heard to approve the agenda as amended and to approve or receive for information the items on the consent agenda, listed as items 9.1-9.10. Porreca and Wandel. Carried.

4.3. Minutes of the October 20, 2025 Meeting

The Chair noted that the Secretariat had received a few minor amendments to the attendance list, and minor editorial changes. A member noted the misspelling of Reitsma on page 6.

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

4.4. Business Arising from the Minutes

The Chair reported on two action items from the Annual Institutional Performance update, item 8.1, from the October 20, 2025 meeting. A student senator had been provided additional information by Chris Read, Associate Provost, Students, related to the University's student mental health services. Additionally, as requested, a link to more information about WATSpeed had been provided and included in the minutes of the October 20, 2025 meeting.

A member inquired about the status of the ongoing CUPE negotiations, to which Jacinda Reistma, Vice-President, Administration and Finance, responded that negotiations are ongoing with additional dates in place.

No other items of business arising were identified.

6. Institutional Priority Discussion – AI Enablement

6.1 Faculty of Science AI Strategy

Chris Houser, Dean, Faculty of Science, and Laura Deakin, Associate Dean (Teaching and Learning), presented an overview of the Faculty of Science AI Strategy. There are two working groups in place looking at how to prepare students, the barriers to instructors and researchers, and how to transform the Faculty of Science.

Discussion followed. Members inquired about AI ethics and how to prepare students for the use of AI in the classroom and the workforce. The Chair noted the development of an AI Enablement Framework for the institution that would be brought forward at a future Senate meeting.

7. Report of the Senate Graduate Council

7.1 Faculty of Engineering

Justin Wan, Chair of the Senate Graduate Council, introduced the proposed major modifications to the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Electrical and Computer Engineering and the Master of Applied Science (MASc) in Electrical and Computer Engineering programs.

A motion as heard that Senate approve the major modifications to the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Electrical and Computer Engineering and the Master of Applied Science (MASc) in Electrical and Computer Engineering programs, effective January 1, 2026, as presented. Wan and Neal. Carried.

8. Report of the Senate Undergraduate Council

8.1 Faculty of Arts

David DeVidi, Chair of the Senate Undergraduate Council, introduced the proposed major modifications for the double degree programs for Social Development Studies and the Bachelor of Social Work.

A motion was heard that Senate approve the proposed major plan modifications for the Faculty of Arts and Renison University College double degree programs for Social Development Studies and Bachelor of Social Work, effective September 1, 2026, as presented. DeVidi and Jerry. Carried.

5. Report of the President

5.1 General Update

The President and Chair of Senate noted the University recently celebrated a transformational gift of \$20 million from alumnus Frank Baylis and the Gloria Baylis Foundation. The gift supported the renaming of Engineering 7 to the Pearl Sullivan Engineering Building, honouring the late Dean Pearl Sullivan, whose leadership and vision helped shape the Faculty of Engineering and strengthen Waterloo's global reputation for excellence.

On November 4th, Minister of Finance Francois-Philippe Champagne delivered the 2025 Budget. There are a number of programs relevant to the sector such as the Defense Industrial Strategy which is expected to include significant support for research and development. While most federal departments are facing an expense reduction of 15% over 3 years, the granting councils and key research agencies are facing only a 2% reduction, with largely only defense and security related areas at the same level, which is a positive signal on how research investments are perceived by government. Furthermore, \$1.7 billion is allocated for research and innovation to recruit international talent to Canada. This includes \$1 billion over 13 years for the granting councils to launch an accelerated research chairs initiative, and \$133 million over 3 years for top international doctoral and post-doctoral fellows. The budget also includes \$400 million over 7 years for new research infrastructure through the Canada Foundation for Innovation (CFI) to support recruited chairs with research equipment; and \$120 million over 12 years to support universities recruiting international assistant professors.

The Chair spoke to anticipated changes to international student numbers for 2026-27. Although the government has indicated a 50% reduction in Provincial Attestation Letters (PALs), it was noted that the reduced total still exceeds the projected number of actual international student arrivals in 2025-26. An important note is that graduate and postgraduate students will be exempt from the lower cap, and the government is committing to a 14-day turnaround for processing doctoral-level study permits. Although positive, it will take time to turn around negative messaging, including global headlines that Canada is reducing international students by 50%.

On November 6th, Ontario Finance Minister Peter Bethlenfalvy delivered the 2025 Ontario Economic Outlook. It mostly included measures to shield workers and businesses from US tariffs, economic uncertainty, and measures to enhance competitiveness, attract investment, strengthen supply chains, boost affordability and expand infrastructure and health care across the province.

The Chair provided an update on the status and potential implications of Bill 33, which passed its second reading last week. The legislation, once fully enacted, will grant the provincial government expanded authority over several aspects of university operations, particularly in relation to student ancillary fees, admissions standards, and research security planning. It was emphasized that although the bill has advanced in the legislative process, its provisions will not take effect until the government develops and approves the accompanying regulations that will determine how Bill 33 is to be implemented and enforced. If implemented, the bill could have significant impact on university operations, create new costs, and be a significant intrusion on university autonomy.

The Chair announced that on November 25th, the University would be sharing an update with the community on the progress of the 3-year budget plan. As we enter the second year of our 3-year plan, the focus remains on achieving long-term balance while preserving the University's academic and research excellence. There will be a Budget Information Forum for all staff in January and education sessions in March on the 26/27 Budget Package in advance of Senate and Board meetings in April.

5.2 Statement and Procedures on Principles for Institutional Partnerships

The Chair introduced the Statement and Procedures on Principles of Institutional Partnerships which is the response to the recommendations from the Task Force on Principles for Institutional Partnerships. The Task Force was established to provide a framework for how Waterloo establishes, manages and reviews institutional partnerships. The Task Force articulated nine proposed principles for institutional partnerships and also made five recommendations for the university to consider for implementation. The emphasis of these recommendations were on the "partnership activities" as opposed to the "partner" itself. The Principles and Recommendations were brought to Senate in May for consultation and then to other consultative bodies, incorporating feedback along the way. The Statement and Procedures outline a unified approach around the initiation/renewal of institutional partnerships, an oversight mechanism, and how concerns will be handled and received.

Questions were invited. Members discussed the materials provided as it related to time limits on partnerships, how the principles will be used with related policies that govern partnerships, and the review process.

A member requested a minor amendment that the word *paused* in the third last paragraph be changed

from *paused* to *reviewed*, such that the end of the sentence read "...whether the partnership should be reviewed."

A member requested a minor amendment for clarification, in that the membership of the ad hoc working group mentioned in the second last paragraph be drawn from the Board of Governors and *elected members* of the Senate.

A motion was heard that the Senate endorse the proposed Statement and Procedures on Principles for Institutional Partnerships, as amended. DeVidi and Kline. Carried.

5.3 Freedom of Expression Task Force – Guidelines for Collective Bodies

The Chair noted that Senate first reviewed the Guidelines for Collective Bodies on May 5, 2025. Feedback has been incorporated into the revised statement as presented in the meeting materials. The Guidelines considered comments and concerns raised by Senators and other consultative bodies, as well as additional feedback from the President's Advisory Committee on Freedom of Expression to make the statement less prescriptive. Key updates include that the publication process be less dependent on the Office of the AVP Communications and provides for templates for increased clarity, and the paragraph *Guidance on Social-Media* has been amended to allow department-level social media sharing with a disclaimer.

A member spoke to their request to defer the motion to a future meeting, stating that several senators have concerns with the wording and that the text was not yet ready for approval. The request to defer would allow time to compose a Senate working group to review final language.

Members supporting the request for deferral cited concerns with not taking time to gain consensus on language, and potential impacts on students and student groups.

Members in supporting the guidelines as presented cited confidence in the guidelines to add clarity for maintaining individual rights to not speak publicly on matters. It was noted that the guidelines will be helpful to provide guidance for unit heads and chairs to communicate with faculty on what the process may be when making a statement.

The Chair reminded members that this was the third time the guidelines have been brought forward to Senate and clarified that the guidelines are meant to help departments when units or faculty are seeking to make statements.

A motion was heard to remove the last paragraph of the guidelines so it could be reviewed by the Faculty Relations Committee. Nugent and Porreca. The motion did not carry.

A motion was heard to add *non-binding* to the title of the guidelines. Nugent and Porreca. The motion did not carry.

Through discussion, it was agreed to add a footnote to make it clear the guidelines would not apply to individual social media channels held by students, faculty members, or staff. It was also agreed that footnotes would be added to describe clearly what is meant by "digital assets" and "web pages" and, if possible, a link to where digital assets are defined by the University.

A motion was heard to defer consideration of this item until a Senate working group composed of elected and ex-officio Senators has been constituted and has formulated guideline language that would address concerns. De Sterck and Abukhdier. The motion did not carry.

A motion was heard to remove reference to "Institutional" within the guidelines. De Sterck and Porreca. The motion did not carry.

Discussion continued with members opposed to the motion to endorse the guidelines citing concerns with the guidelines not being policy or having gone through a formal policy development process, and members in favour of the motion citing support due to the extensive consultations and workshops to ensure wide input from the community, and a desire to move forward.

A member asked for clarification of language in the fifth paragraph and reference to units using *transparent mechanisms to ensure unanimity* and whether units are permitted to make statements where there is no unanimity. The Chair responded that the guidelines give colleagues within a unit a process to follow, but do not mandate a process given the non-binding nature of the document.

A motion was heard that Senate endorse the Institutional Neutrality, Institutional Restraint and Communications Guidelines for Collective Bodies (Faculties, Schools, Departments, and Academic Support Units), as amended. Kline and DeVidi. Carried. Members Mikhail and Sayed requested that their votes be recorded in the minutes as opposed to the motion.

9. Consent Agenda

The following items were received for approved / received for information as part of the consent agenda motion for approval under item 4.2.

9.1 Senate Work Plan 2025-26

9.2 Policy 68 Amendments

9.3 Report on Convocation 2025

9.3.1 Report on Fall 2025 Convocation

9.3.2 Convocation Overview 2025

9.4 Report of the Senate Executive Committee

9.5 Report of the Senate Graduate Council

9.6 Report of the Senate Research and Innovation Council

9.7 Report of the President

9.7.1 Tenure and Promotion Report

9.8 Report of the Vice-President, Academic and Provost

9.8.1 Faculty Appointments and Leaves

9.9 Report of the Vice-President, Research and International

9.9.1 Awards, Distinction, Grants, Commercialization Activity, International Engagements

9.10 Appointment to the University Committee on Student Appeals

10. Items Removed from the Consent Agenda

There were no items removed from the consent agenda.

11. Other Business

With no other business identified for the open session, Senate proceeded into the confidential session.

November 25, 2025

Ashley Day
Associate University Secretary