

**University of Waterloo**  
**SENATE**  
**Minutes of the January 26, 2026 Meeting**

**Present:** John Abraham, Nasser Abukhdeir, Yasmeen Almomani, Veronica Austen, Michael Barnett-Cowan, Aubrey Basdeo, Jordan Bauman, Andrew Chang, Helen Chen, David Clausi, Martin Cooke, Cecilia Cotton, Hans De Sterck, Laura Deakin, Charmaine Dean, David DeVidi, Michael Drescher, Thomas Duever, Andrea Edginton, Mark Ferro, Paul Fieguth, Teresa Fortney, Bruce Frayne, Gen Gauthier-Chalifour (Secretary), Vivek Goel (Chair), Rob Gorbet, Vikas Gupta, Peter Hall, Kevin Hare, Chris Houser, Nadine Ibrahim, Marc Jerry, Misha Khan, Scott Kline, Sachin Kotecha, Christiane Lemieux, John Lewis, Ondrej Lhotak, Christopher Lim, Jun Liu, Lili Liu, Brad Lushman, Shana MacDonald, Carol Ann MacGregor, Blake Madill, Pendar Mahmoudi, Heather Mair, Colleen Maxwell, Peter Meehan, Sushanta Mitra, Carter Neal, Christopher Nielsen, James Nugent, Alex Pawelko, Nicholas Pellegrino, David Porreca, Neil Randall, 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, Ian VanderBurgh, Diana Vangelisti, Bojana Videkanic, Justin Wan, Johanna Wandel, Jeffrey Wilson, Stan Woo, Clarence Woudsma, En-Hui Yang

**Regrets:** Laith Alkhalwaldeh, Raouf Boutaba, Murray Gamble, Acey Kaspar, Achim Kempf, Jochen Koenemann, Damian Mikhail, Richard Myers, Arya Razmjoo, Jagdeep Singh Bachher, Katie Traynor, Mary Wells

**Guests/Resources:** Amy Bender, Heather Bolton, Benoit Charbonneau, Tanya Daniels, Ashley Day, Nenone Donaldson, Melanie Figueiredo, Jennifer Gillies, Diana Goncalves, Sarah Hadley, Tony Ly, Nick Manning, Christine McWebb, Kirsten Muller, Mike Pereira, Mat Thiessen, Caitlin Vaux, Tim Weber-Kraljevski, Katy Wong-Francq

**Organization of Meeting:** Vivek Goel took the chair and Gen Gauthier-Chalifour acted as secretary. The secretary advised that a quorum was present. The meeting took place fully online due to a weather-related closure of the campus.

**1. Governance Resources**

This item was provided for information only.

**2. OPEN SESSION**

The Chair welcomed two new ex-officio members of Senate, Ian VanderBurgh, Interim University Registrar, and John Lewis, Interim Associate Vice-President, Indigenous Relations. A new Registrar was recently announced, Ray Darling, who will begin on March 30, 2026.

The Chair reminded Senators that the current Senate elections are underway. Faculty and graduate student senator nominations will close on January 28, 2026. Voting will begin on February 3 and will close February 10. Any questions can be sent directly to the Secretariat.

The Chair thanked those who were able to attend the January 21, 2026 Operating Budget Development Education Session. A second joint session with the Board of Governors is planned for March 24<sup>th</sup>, where the 26/27 Operating Budget will be previewed.

### **3. Territorial Acknowledgement**

The territorial acknowledgement was given by Charmaine Dean, Vice-President, Research & International.

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

#### **4.1 Conflict of Interest**

No conflicts of interest were declared.

#### **4.2 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 11.1-11.7 of the Senate agenda. Porreca and Skidmore. Carried.

#### **4.3 Minutes of the November 24, 2025 Meeting**

Minor editorial amendments were received by the Secretariat. Additional comments from a Senator related to the minutes will be addressed under business arising.

A motion was heard to approve the open and confidential minutes of the November 24, 2025 meeting, as amended. Jerry and De Sterck. Carried.

#### **4.4 Business Arising from the Minutes**

The Chair noted that the Guidelines for Collective Bodies have been posted online since the last Senate meeting. The Secretariat has received additional comments from Faculty of Mathematics Senator, Hans De Sterck, related to this item including addition of footnotes which were not included in the version initially posted, and the addition of the vote count to the November 24, 2025 Senate meeting minutes, which will be amended.

With respect to the Statement and Procedures on Institutional Partnerships, the Chair affirmed that the ad hoc working group contemplated in the procedures will be responsible for determining whether a partnership should be reviewed and also carry out the review (to pause, end, or continue the partnership).

### **5. Report of the President**

#### **5.1 General Update**

The President and Chair of Senate, Vivek Goel, noted the significant global unrest, and that many community members are affected by these events. Access to support is available for members of our community and the Registrar's Office is working closely with impacted current and prospective students.

Last week there was an event to launch Global Futures, featuring presentations from several first-round funded initiatives. Through shared resources and services coordinated by the Global Futures Office, we are streamlining efforts while seeding internal and external collaborations designed to unlock new opportunities for philanthropy, corporate partnerships, and large-scale grants.

Members were reminded of the President's Forum taking place tomorrow, January 27<sup>th</sup> where updates on our three-year plan to return to a balanced operating budget, benchmarking data informing some of our changes, progress on our functional reviews and a look ahead to what we can expect for this year, will be discussed.

On December 9, 2025, the federal government launched the Canada Impact + Research Chairs program to attract world-leading international researchers addressing national and global challenges. A complementary Canada Impact + Emerging Leaders competition was also launched to support early-career researchers in Canada's strategic priority areas. While most federal departments are facing a 15% expense reduction, granting councils and key research agencies were exempt, reinforcing the government's view of research as critical to national security and sovereignty.

In December, the Government of Ontario allocated Provincial Attestation Letters (PALs) for undergraduate international students. With master's and PhD students exempt from reductions, Waterloo's overall PAL allocation for undergraduate students remains similar to last year. The need to improve PAL utilization was noted, following approximately 100 PALs issued to students who did not enroll last year. A data review is underway, and UWaterloo remains committed to using PALs efficiently.

Members may have noticed recent significant attention in the media to funding advocacy with many news publications calling for the tuition freeze to end. COU's pre-budget submission strategy hopes to draw greater public attention to the financial challenges faced by universities and the critical role we play in society and the economy and calling for increased base operating funding. The most important advocacy will come from our community partners, and people outside the sector vocalizing to the government why our work is so important.

A member inquired about potential projects, partnerships or research related to defense or weapons development. Goel responded that we are not restricting the areas in which faculty choose to work in. Broader scale discussions on dual use technologies are happening with various government agencies. Many faculty members participate in the Innovation for Defence Excellence and Security (IDEaS) Program through the Government of Canada. Goel noted that the Senate Research and Innovation Council (SRIC) would be an avenue for these discussions in the future. Dean, as Chair of SRIC, will report to a future Senate on considerations regarding this area.

## **6. Report of the Senate Planning and Finance Committee**

### **6.1 2025-26 Mid-Year Budget Update**

Tom Duever, Vice-President, Academic and Provost, spoke to the impacts from grant and tuition constraints due to the lack of inflation increases in grant funding, and the freeze on domestic tuition fees. Since 2019, a number of efficiency and deficit mitigation responses have been implemented. The internal operating budget reductions respond to a series of environmental factors and pressures such as the effects of Bill 124 being overturned, PAL constraints, multi-year tuition freezes, and budget erosion due to inflation.

Duever spoke to the operating budget as of November 2025 and the multi-year plan to return to a balanced budget. It was noted that changes to the 25/26 operating budget between April and November 2025 were due to a corridor re-alignment (STEM Funding) and an increase in domestic undergraduate intake, partially offset by lower international student numbers.

Jacinda Reitsma, Vice-President, Administration and Finance, spoke to the status of ongoing employee group agreements, including the timing and process for negotiations across each employee group. Reitsma noted that salary and benefits represent a significant portion of the operating budget and remain a key consideration in planning. The expense drivers that are currently being reviewed are the cost of benefits changes, annual salary increases and headcount changes, and strategic areas of new budget investment.

There were no questions.

### **6.2 Undergraduate and Graduate Admissions and Enrolment Update**

Ian VanderBurgh, Associate Vice-President, Strategic Enrolment Management and Interim University Registrar, provided a high-level overview of the materials as presented in the meeting package. The overview included a summary of the enrolment funnel, differences in admissions for graduate and undergraduate programs, geopolitical challenges for international students, and the outlook for 2026/2027.

There were no questions.

### **6.3 Campus Plan**

Goel provided an overview of the governance pathway to date for the Campus Plan, including a presentation at Senate in October 2025 and the Senate Planning and Finance Committee who on January 22, 2026, recommended its endorsement to Senate. The Campus Plan will be presented to the Board of Governors on February 3, 2026, for final approval in principle. It was noted that the motion before Senate is specific to endorsement in principle of the vision, principles and design framework of the Campus Plan.

Reitsma noted that the plan and framework will be used for key decision making and planning. Reitsma, in response to questions, clarified that the plan is not speculative, but dependent on funding, planning and growth models and that there is uncertainty on timing and implementation as it is highly reliant on funding opportunities.

Members discussed the details of the plan, such as the use of flex buildings and plans for student housing, the relationship between the operating budget and the capital plan, and the involvement of plant operations during consultations.

A motion was heard that Senate endorse in principle the University of Waterloo Campus Plan's vision, principles and design frameworks. Vangelisti and Sunabacka. Carried.

## **7. Report of the Senate Executive Committee**

### **7.1 Appointment of Chancellor Review Committee**

Goel spoke to the long-standing practice that the Senate Executive Committee traditionally serves as the Chancellor Nominating/Review Committee. Current Chancellor Jagdeep Singh Bachher's first term concludes on June 30, 2027 and he is eligible to serve a second term. The motion is being brought forward to Senate now so the review may take place with ample time to reappoint Bachher, should the committee nominate him for a second term.

A motion was heard that Senate appoint the Senate Executive Committee to serve as the Chancellor Review Committee. Gupta and Woo. Carried.

### **7.2 Senate Engagement Working Group Update**

Laura Deakin, Co-Chair of the Senate Engagement Working Group, and Faculty of Science Senator, provided an overview of the mandate and discussions of the working group during its first three meetings. The working group has reviewed an environmental scan of comparator Senate's in the U15, past Senate effectiveness survey results, and is consulting with stakeholders in key areas, including the Office of Indigenous Relations, and Equity, Diversity, Inclusion & Anti-Racism (EDI-R).

Marcus Shantz, Co-Chair of the Senate Engagement Working Group, and President of Conrad Grebel University College, spoke to the areas of focus of the working group including roles and responsibilities, and rules of order. Initial discussions have indicated that Senate would benefit from having these types of guidelines, without hindering participation.

Members discussed the ex-officio membership on Senate, as described in the University Act, who are appointed under Class A policies. In response to a query regarding ex officio members it was noted that all academic administrator appointees maintain the protection of academic freedom as tenured faculty members. A member requested written follow-up and confirmation of such on this matter.

The co-chairs acknowledged that the timeline for the working group is aspirational and it may not be able to address everything, but the goal is to accomplish as much as possible by June and provide a roadmap for any longer-term recommendations.

## **8. Report of the Senate Graduate Council**

### **8.1 Faculty of Engineering**

Justin Wan, Chair of the Senate Graduate Council, spoke to the materials provided in the meeting package. The major modifications include adding three new graduate specializations in Control and Autonomy, Sustainable Energy and Materials, and Machine Learning.

A motion was heard that Senate approve the major modifications to the Master of Engineering (MEng) in Chemical Engineering and the Master of Engineering (MEng) in Electrical and Computer Engineering programs, effective May 1, 2026, as presented. Wan and Neilson. Carried.

### **8.2 Faculty of Health**

Wan spoke to the materials provided in the meeting package. The major modification includes changing the name of the coursework study option from Master of Arts (MA) in Recreation and Leisure Studies to Master of Arts (MA) in Sport and Recreation Leadership.

A motion was heard that Senate approve the major modifications to the Master of Arts (MA) in Recreation and Leisure Studies program, effective May 1, 2026, as presented. Wan and Liu. Carried.

## **9. Report from the Faculties**

### **9.1 Faculty of Mathematics Constitution Amendments**

Cecilia Cotton, Associate Professor and Faculty of Mathematics Senator, presented the Faculty of Mathematics Constitution Amendments as presented in the meeting materials and recently passed at the Mathematics Faculty Council on January 8, 2026. The amendments aim to bring the constitution into alignment with changes to policy 76 and 77, and update committee memberships to reflect current roles and titles.

Members discussed the raising of quorum from 25 to 35 and the reduction of graduate student members in response to the creation of the Math Graduate Student Association. It was noted that the total number of graduate student representatives was unchanged.

A motion was heard that Senate approve the amended Constitution for the Faculty of Mathematics at the University of Waterloo, as presented. Cotton and Maxwell. Carried.

## **10. Report from the Senate Research and Innovation Council**

### **10.1 Annual Report of the Vice-President Research and International**

In the interest of time, Dean did not provide a fulsome presentation. Dean thanked those that participated in recent engagement sessions for their time and questions. The planned presentation material would be circulated to Senators in the coming weeks.

## **11. Consent Agenda**

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

11.1. Senate Work Plan 2025-26

11.2. Committee Appointments – Teaching Awards

11.3. Report of the Senate AQUE Committee

- 11.4. Report of the Senate Executive Committee
- 11.5. Report of the Senate Graduate Council
- 11.6. Report of the Senate Undergraduate Council
- 11.7. Report of the Vice President, Academic and Provost

**12. Items Removed from the Consent Agenda**

There were no items removed from the consent agenda.

**13. Other Business**

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

January 30, 2025

Ashley Day  
Associate University Secretary