

University of Waterloo
SENATE RESEARCH AND INNOVATION COUNCIL
Minutes of the February 12, 2026 Meeting

Present: Hassan Baaj, Michael Beazley, Raouf Boutaba, Sarah Burch, Sue Ann Campbell, Trevor Charles, Rob de Loë, Charmaine Dean (Chair), Ana Ferrer, Peter Hall, Misha Khan, Tony Ly (Secretary), Ellen MacEachen, Ian Milligan, Marina Mourtzakis, Kirsten Müller, Amir Nazemi, Neil Randall, Jeffrey Wilson, Stan Woo, Alfred Yu

Resources/Guests: Melissa Benjamin, John Dick, Grace Gomashie, Jean-Pierre Hickey, Adrian Lupascu, Kate Mercer, Justin Nankivell, Fayaz Noormohamed, Pamela Braza Pitman, Siobhan Stables, Christopher Taylor

Regrets: Yasmeen Almomani, Steven Bednarski, Richard Cook, Tom Duever, Vivek Goel, Sara Hart, Alison Hitchens, Todd Holyoak, Suzanne Kearns, Sushanta Mitra, Nicholas Pellegrino, Justin Wan

Organization of Meeting: Charmaine Dean took the chair and Tony Ly acted as secretary. The secretary advised that a quorum was present.

1. Governance Resources

Dean informed council members that a link for SRIC online resources was included in the package.

2. Approval of the Agenda and Minutes

2.1 Conflict of Interest

Burch, Charles, and Randall declared a conflict of interest because of their association with the Centres and Institutes included for item 6. Dean confirmed that their votes will not be counted for item 6.

Charles declared a potential conflict of interest related to item 7 because of his membership with PAIR. Dean advised that item 7 is for information only and a declaration was not required.

No other conflicts of interest were declared.

2.2. Approval of the Agenda and Minutes

Council heard a motion to approve the agenda and the minutes of the October 16, 2025 meeting as presented. Campbell and Burch. Carried.

2.3. Minutes of the October 16, 2025 Meeting

Council approved the minutes of the meeting as distributed.

2.4. Business Arising from the Minutes

There was no business arising from the minutes.

3. Regular Agenda

4. Chair's Remarks

Dean thanked council members for attending the joint meeting with the Senate Graduate Council in January. The top 3 topics selected for the next joint meeting were: 1) Strategic priorities for graduate education and studies at the university; 2) Three-Year PhD completion timeline; and 3) Guidance on AI and new technology.

There is ongoing work for the Canada Impact+ Research Chairs program at University of Waterloo. Dean acknowledged members' efforts and contributions.

5. Defense Research

At the previous Senate meeting on January 26, 2026, there were discussions regarding whether the University of Waterloo should explicitly encourage or discourage defense-related research. The Chair of Senate requested that the Senate Research and Innovation Council undertake a more fulsome discussion and provide guidance.

John Dick (OVPRI), Jean-Pierre Hickey (MME), Adrian Lupascu (Physics & Astronomy/IQC), Justin Nankivell (OVPRI), and Siobhan Stables (IQC) provided a brief overview of the topic that included various strategic, ethical, governance, and reputational considerations for conducting defense-related research. Council members engaged in an extended and wide-ranging discussion that included the following key considerations: defense-related research at the University of Waterloo spans multiple Faculties; involves dual-use technologies with both civilian and defense applications; quantum computing; cybersecurity risks and the requirement of secure research spaces; national sovereignty; and compliance with evolving government restrictions on partnerships. Members emphasized the need for a holistic approach, interdisciplinary engagement, and consideration of societal impact. Stables noted that disengagement from defense-related research would not prevent such research from occurring; and as such, the projects and activities will only shift to other actors.

Council supports University of Waterloo researchers engaging in security, sovereignty, and defense-related research, and encourages the institution to continue its broad interdisciplinary efforts (e.g., encompassing technical work to global governance) to support researchers with clear guidance and support. This endorsement affirms broad support for interdisciplinary research occurring at the University of Waterloo. A follow-up discussion is anticipated in approximately one year to reassess the landscape and institutional positioning.

6. Research Centres and Institutes

Müller noted that the renewals had been temporarily paused and there is a recommendation for a staggered extension of the mandates for Waterloo Research Centres and Institutes across 2026 and 2027. Müller stated that this approach was approved by the Deans.

A motion was heard to approve the extensions for renewal of the Centres and Institutes as presented. Müller and Woo. Carried.

7. Pan-African Initiative for Research

Taylor presented a proposal for the Pan-African Initiative for Research (PAIR). This is a novel, interdisciplinary, and long-term initiative that aligns with Waterloo's strategic vision and the commitment to the Scarborough Charter. PAIR aims to secure sustainable funding and establish national and international partnerships to collaborate on interdisciplinary research projects. Council members expressed support for the PAIR proposal and its strategic plan to secure long-term funding and resources to ensure sustainability.

8. Global Futures

Noormohamed provided an updated timeline and progress of the Global Futures initiative. Funding is distributed over three years, and more than two-million dollars was awarded to interdisciplinary projects in its first year. There were 61 applications submitted in the second round. Noormohamed noted that marketing and communication support are available to help funded teams. Key discussions from council members focused on: 1) Global Futures role in shaping research priorities at University of Waterloo; 2) grassroots versus a more direct approach to determine institutional priorities; and 3) better alignment with Canada's strategic priority areas. Council is interested in having further discussions on this topic at a future meeting.

9. Other Business

No other items of business were identified.

10. Adjournment

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned. The next meeting of the Senate Research and Innovation Council will be held on April 9, 2026 from 10:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. in Needles Hall 3318.