

University of Waterloo
SENATE RESEARCH AND INNOVATION COUNCIL
Minutes of the May 14, 2026 Meeting

Present: Hassan Baaj, Michael Beazley, Steven Bednarski, Sarah Burch, Sue Ann Campbell, Trevor Charles, Rob de Loë, Charmaine Dean (Chair), Ana Ferrer, Peter Hall, Todd Holyoak, Chris Houser, Suzanne Kearns, Tony Kongly (Secretary), Marina Mourtzakis, Kirsten Müller, Justin Wan, Stan Woo, Alfred Yu

Resources/Guests: Angelica Asis, Roy Brouwer, Diana Goncalves

Regrets: Yasmeen Almomani, Raouf Boutaba, Richard Cook, Tom Duever, Vivek Goel, Sara Hart, Alison Hitchens, Misha Khan, Ellen MacEachen, Ian Milligan, Sushanta Mitra, Amir Nazemi, Nicholas Pellegrino, Neil Randall, Jeffrey Wilson

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

1. Governance Resources

This item was provided for information only.

2. Approval of the Agenda and Minutes

2.1 Conflict of Interest

No conflict of interest was declared.

2.2. Approval of the Agenda and Minutes

Council heard a motion to approve the agenda and the minutes of the April 9, 2026 meeting as amended. Campbell and Burch. Carried.

2.3. Minutes of the April 9, 2026 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.

2.5. SRIC Annual Review

Council members were invited to send their comments and feedback about SRIC membership composition, mandate, and responsibilities to the Secretariat.

3. Regular Agenda

4. Chair's Remarks

The Chair thanked members for their contributions at council meetings this year. The Chair noted that several Senators remain interested in continuing discussions related to defense research, particularly there are concerns regarding weapons related research. There was general consensus that the University of Waterloo's current approach to defense research is appropriate. Council members agreed that defense research is not synonymous with weapons research.

5. Water Institute

Bouwer and Houser presented a proposal to transition the Water Institute from university-level to faculty-level status within the Faculty of Science. The Water Institute was established in 2009 to facilitate cross-faculty collaboration with researchers from across the six faculties. The proposed overhead funding model is intended to support long-term sustainability for the Water Institute.

Houser confirmed that the Faculty of Science is committed to ensuring the institute retains its interdisciplinary focus. Discussion from council members focused on broader concerns about overhead funding, the proposed funding model, and cost-sharing approaches. de Loë noted that similar concerns were previously examined in a 2013 report.

A motion was heard to recommend that Senate approve that the Water Institute becomes a Faculty-level Institute, effective May 1, 2026, as presented. Holoyak and Yu. Carried.

6. CREATE Grants

Asis provided an overview of the Collaborative Research and Training Experience (CREATE) program, which is a federally funded program to support training and career readiness for graduate students and postdoctoral fellows in strategic areas. In the past, four CREATE grants were secured, but recent applications have been unsuccessful. Currently, there are five applications that were shortlisted to move forward from an initial group of nine applications. There is a need to better align CREATE proposals with federal priorities. Submissions should include graduate training initiatives, career readiness, entrepreneurship, industry partnerships, and interdisciplinary collaboration.

Council members expressed concerns regarding declining success rates and emphasized the need to gather additional agency feedback to strengthen future applications. Yu noted that unsuccessful proposals fail to clearly distinguish the CREATE trainee experience from traditional graduate training. Dean mentioned that the CREATE program is intended to address federal priorities and noted that repeated low success rates could threaten the continuation of the program.

7. Other Business

No other items of business were identified.

8. Adjournment

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned. The next meeting of the Senate Research and Innovation Council will be held in Fall 2026.