

ACADEMIC COUNCIL Minutes of the Meeting of January 28, 2025

2:36 p.m. - 4:17 p.m.

In Person

Bordessa Hall 55 Bond St. E, Oshawa Ont. DTB 524

Present:

Steven Murphy Ana Duff Robyn

Ruttenberg-Rozen Mikael Eklund (Chair) JoAnne Arcand Shanti Fernando Denina Simmons Robert Bailey Gillian Slade Jessica Hoque Ahmad Barari Mehdi Hossein Peter Stoett Mihai Beligan Joe Stokes Neiad Mary Bluechardt Les Jacobs Jemma Tam Toba Bryant Hossam Kishawy Dwight Thompson Krystina Clarke Lori Livingston Shannon Vettor Amanda Cooper Janet McCabe Ken Wilson

Amanda Cooper Janet McCabe
Nicola Crow Carolyn McGregor
Catherine Scott Nokleby

Davidson Carol Rodgers

Staff & Guests:

Kirstie Ayotte Brad MacIsaac Sarah Thrush (Secretary) Kimberley Lisa Townsend

Krista Hester McCartney

Regrets:

Asifa Aamir Mitch Frazer Breanne Mcalpin Scott Aquanno Brenda Jacobs Fedor Naumkin Wendy Barber Sayyeed Ali Oghenetega Nawal Elshamiy Hossseini (Tega) Ubor

1. Call to Order

The Chair called the meeting to order at 2:36 p.m. J. Stokes began by sharing his personal reflections and then reading the University's Land Acknowledgement.

Upon a request from the Chair, Peter Stoett, Shannon Vettor, Dwight Thompson, and representatives from the Centre for Institutional Quality Enhancement (CIQE) identified themselves on the teleconference line.



2. Agenda

Upon a motion duly made by H. Kishawy and seconded by K. Clarke the January 28, 2025 Agenda and the Consent Agenda were approved as presented.

3. Chair's Remarks

The Chair acknowledged the challenges of getting through January, particularly from a mental health perspective, and emphasized the importance of supporting faculty, staff, and students. He highlighted the global difficulties adding to stress and encouraged showing up for one another.

He expressed appreciation for those who attended the recent staff appreciation event, which had approximately five hundred attendees, and hoped to host similar events in the future.

4. Inquiries and Communications

a) COU Academic Colleague Report

R. Ruttenberg Rozen provided a verbal report. She reported that at the last Academic Council M. Ecklund had reported on day one of the last COU meeting, and for today she's reporting on day two. The meeting focused on preparing to meet University-representatives to discuss ideas and faculty concerns with a view to how best to situate ourselves as universities. Key topics included countering populist narratives by highlighting universities' economic contributions, the impact of funding cuts on student choice, and the benefits of university innovation to businesses. The importance of connecting to broader advocacy efforts was also stressed.

She clarified that the Annual Executive Heads' session that was being prepared for, is a forum for discussing key issues. She also noted a shift in COU's approach in that its research focus has been given over to a more strategic one in recent years and suggested that COU revive its research work. She advised that advocacy efforts focused on promoting the importance of universities and addressing funding cuts and challenges. She confirmed that COU is concerned about these issues and is reaching out to stakeholders to find solutions. She also mentioned a presentation on Ontario's financial situation and proposed presenting similar information at Ontario Tech. The Chair confirmed discussions would follow to determine the appropriate venue. In conclusion, R. Ruttenberg Rozen advised that the meeting with Executive Heads was very collegial and respectful.

A. Cooper noted that COU Finance had presented to the Ontario Association of Deans of Education on how universities' funding structure has changed. She found this presentation very valuable and so has invited COU to do a similar presentation to her Faculty and noted whether this would be of interest to other faculties.

It was noted that Ontario Tech's approach is both complimentary and unique to that of COU.



5. Provost's Remarks

L. Livingston recognized four individuals with strong ties to Ontario Tech for notable awards. Dr. Barbara Perry from the Faculty of Social Science and Humanities will receive the Order of Canada, the first such honour for Ontario Tech. Dr. Jacqueline Gahagan, President Steven Murphy, and Chancellor Mitch Frazer were awarded the King Charles III Coronation Medal, a prestigious recognition for their contributions to education, leadership, and community service. She announced that nominations for the Student Leadership Award and Celebrate Teaching Awards are open, with the latter closing on February 28th. The awards ceremony will take place on March 26th, following the Annual Teaching and Learning Conference. The keynote speaker, Dr. Jessica Riddell from Bishop's University, is an award-winning author and nationally recognized educator known for her work in system change in universities, governance, leadership, and student success.

a) Senior Academic Administrator Search Update

L. Livingston announced that the Renewal Advisory Committee for the Dean of Health Sciences is finalized and will meet next week to begin the renewal process, as Dr. Rodgers has expressed interest in a second term. She also noted that the Search Advisory Committee for the next Dean of the School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies was announced on January 7, 2025, and will commence work on February 10, 2025. Additionally, she congratulated Dr. Hossam Kishawy on his re-appointment for a second term as Dean of the Faculty of Engineering and Applied Science, beginning November 1, 2025, highlighting the strong support he received from the Board of Governors.

By way of a general update, L. Livingston noted that the University received inquiries about the migration to a cloud-based email system, first announced in December 2024 and followed by a campus-wide update in January 2025. She invited B. MacIsaac to provide an update.

B. MacIsaac explained that he will provide information on the privacy consideration aspect of the migration as he did at October's Academic Council. He confirmed that the General Counsel conducted a Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA), as outlined in the January campus-wide update, and that all recommendations such as breach protocols and enhanced storage training, are either completed or in progress. He reassured that Microsoft server hosting will remain in Canada, addressing a key concern.

Regarding the PIA, he clarified that its scope limits cloud-based systems to instructional delivery and assessment purposes, with further review underway. The University is also examining effective approaches used by other institutions to enhance transparency and plans to make relevant information publicly accessible.

In relation to the Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA) and health-related data, he noted additional details are required, but guidelines and standards



will be reviewed to ensure proper management of sensitive information. He emphasized that the University follows strict protocols for handling sensitive information in compliance with privacy regulations. He confirmed IT will post further updates related to the migration process.

6. 2025-2026 Tuition Framework (D)*

- L. Livingston reminded attendees that this report comes forward annually every January and invited S. Thrush to present the report.
- S. Thrush reported that domestic undergraduate tuition remains frozen, with exceptions for three program areas, including Engineering and Computer Science, which are gradually increasing by up to 7.5% until they reach the provincial median. Other professional undergraduate programs are seeing a 5% increase, though these represent a small portion of the student body.

For international undergraduates, tuition increases are capped at 5% annually, with a 3% increase this year, except for a 5% increase in a specific IT program due to market comparisons.

Domestic tuition for graduate programs (research-based and course-based master's, PhD) remains frozen, while international tuition for research-based graduate programs stays frozen for another year. Course-based master's programs and graduate diplomas will see a 5% increase for both domestic and international students. Co-op fees will rise by 2% to match the ancillary fee increase. Entrance scholarships and funding for both undergraduate and graduate students will continue.

In response to concerns about tuition increases, it was noted that Ontario Tech stays below the provincial median for international tuition fees, though fiscal realities require adjustments. She confirmed the University is committed to supporting international students, including through financial assistance, and acknowledged that year-over-year increases can feel burdensome.

S. Thrush explained that the 7.5%, 5%, and 3% increases are dictated by provincial regulations aimed at bringing programs in line with the provincial tuition median. International tuition increases remain below the median, with set limits. She advised that the University does a lot of comparative analysis and noted that not all institutions are committed to stay within the median. She also noted that the University is well below the median in certain IT programs. S. Thrush acknowledged the concerns raised.

A suggestion to lock in tuition rates for all four years for students who wished to pay all tuition up front was acknowledged as complex, though it could be considered with careful evaluation.

Regarding bursaries, S. Thrush noted that the University provides resources to help international students calculate expenses before arrival. While a portion of tuition is



set aside for bursaries, it may not fully meet all students' needs. The University is monitoring rising costs and competition and continues to allocate funds for those with the greatest need, typically offering about \$4,000 per year. Adjustments will be made to ensure financial support reaches students who need it most.

A. Cooper noted that the outcome of an environmental scan she had conducted on international student tuition costs showed the University was the cheapest across Canada.

R. Bailey also noted that the percentage of students from the USA was small and whether increasing recruitment efforts specifically in the northeast of the USA would be a consideration. In response, S. Thrush reported that recruitment efforts had been increased last year with no noted change in student enrollment.

7. Undergraduate Studies Committee (USC)

M. Bluechardt provided the USC update for the November 19, 2024 and December 17, 2024 USC meetings noting that decisions were made to improve undergraduate programs with a focus on inclusivity and accessibility and are reflected in this month's Academic Council agenda.

a) Major Program Modifications* (M)

(i) Faculty of Health Sciences: Health Studies Minor* (M)

M. Bluechardt noted that a new Health Studies minor is being created for Social Science and Humanities (FSSH) students to enhance their ability to apply health and law knowledge. This collaboration with the Faculty of Health Sciences responds to student interest in healthcare and health systems courses. She confirmed that the minor is currently being offered for FSSH students as a starting point, but that there may be plans to expand it in the future.

Upon a motion duly made by R. Ruttenberg Rozen and seconded by J. McCabe, pursuant to the recommendation of the Undergraduate Studies Committee, Academic Council hereby approves the Major Program Modification to add a minor in Health Studies available to students in programs from within the Faculty of Social Science and Humanities.

(ii) Faculty of Social Science and Humanities, Communications and Digital Media Studies; New Minor – Al and Content Creation* (M)

M. Bluechardt noted that this new minor will focus on AI content generation, leveraging unique expertise within the faculty. It aims to equip students with skills that employers across Canada are seeking, helping them stand out. Students have expressed interest in the AI-focused option, with many already using AI tools in their current jobs.



P. Stoett acknowledged concerns about the title and emphasized the importance of ensuring the minor's relevance to both AI content creation and its social context. While not all courses directly focus on AI, many incorporate AI elements. The title was chosen to align with industry terminology, but there is consideration that reordering the words could better reflect the emphasis. The overall goal is to generate energy and interest around the minor, ensuring its value to both students and employers.

It was clarified that no new courses are being created, and that the content of several existing courses was modified and processed previously through Faculty Council and USC.

Upon a motion duly made by R. Ruttenberg Rozen and seconded by M. Bluechardt, pursuant to the recommendation of the Undergraduate Studies Committee, Academic Council approves the Major Program Modification to add a minor in AI and Content Creation

8. Graduate Studies Committee (GSC)

J. Stokes reported that the November 26, 2024, GSC meeting included updates and approvals, with no substantive items beyond the consent agenda. The discussion focused on challenges with international student recruitment, including study permits and visa approvals. Efforts to improve the visa process through collaboration with the legal company Border Pass were highlighted, along with topics related to student onboarding, supervision capacity, and scholarships. No meeting was held in December 2024.

9. Governance and Nominations Committee

a) Elections Key Dates and Open Positions* (I)

L. Livingston highlighted that the Governance and Nominations Committee (GNC) is responsible for advising on governance structure, nominations, elections, and Academic Council's performance. At their meeting on January 21, 2025, the committee discussed and approved the key dates for the 2025 elections for Academic Council and its Committees. She noted that nominations will open on February 10, 2025, and emphasized that this will be the second year of an extended nominations and election period, providing ample time for faculty, staff, and students to express their interest.

K. Wilson noted that Academic Council membership and members' respective terms are available on the Ontario Tech website.

10. Research Committee

a) Strategic Research Plan

L. Jacobs noted that the Strategic Research Plan (SRP) consultations are progressing, with feedback from faculty, and consultation with the Board of Governors and Academic Council being worked on within the March to June time period. The



final plan is expected by June, with a record of consultations shared. He highlighted that the process has seen greater consensus compared to the last SRP development process.

b) Advanced Manufacturing Research Centre (AMRC)* (M)

L. Jacobs presented the AMRC proposal noting that the University's SRP emphasizes advanced manufacturing and battery research as a key priority. This initiative aims to formalize a research group focused on predictability, agility, sustainability, and intelligence, bringing together a diverse group of researchers. It also serves as a central point for industry partners to explore collaboration and showcases the University's world-class research facilities in this area.

A detailed discussion emphasized the importance of offering faculty opportunities to contribute, especially in material science and production-related research. A key concern was the reliance on grant funding to establish staff positions, which can be unstable due to unpredictable grant approvals. The use of "soft money" (grant funds) for staffing and resources is a common model at Ontario Tech and other Ontario universities. This model involves using indirect costs from grants to support staffing, but these positions are term-based, not permanent, and depend on continued funding through successful grant writing.

The discussion also clarified that the research cluster already occupies office space in the ACE building, so the proposal does not request new space. Instead, it formalizes the use of existing space for the Centre, ensuring the space is strategically allocated to support an organized research unit rather than individual researchers. This approach offers stability and enhances the recognition of the space allocation process.

A concern was raised about the absence of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) aspects in the proposal and whether the Research Office requires Research Centres to include EDI in their plans. L. Jacobs clarified that the application policy, in place for some time, does not mandate EDI components. He acknowledged this as a potential gap in the policy and suggested that revisiting it may be necessary.

Positive feedback and kudos was also received from AC members on this Centre finally coming to fruition.

Upon a motion duly made by A. Barari and seconded by H. Kishawy, pursuant to the recommendation of the Research Committee, Academic Council hereby recommends the establishment of Advanced Manufacturing Research Center (AMRC) for approval by the Board of Governors, as presented.

c) Centre for Interdisciplinary Nutrition Research & Innovation* (M)

The Chair noted that the name of the Research Centre was discussed and changed at the December and January Research Committee meetings and the materials provided to Academic Council reflect the correct name – *Interdisciplinary Centre for Preventative Nutrition & Technology (ICPNT)*.



L. Jacobs emphasized nutrition as a critical research area, supported by a vibrant student community and numerous researchers in related fields. The Centre leverages innovative technology, especially in public health, positioning it as a natural fit for a Research Centre. He noted the Centre's goal to achieve global recognition as a leader in interdisciplinary research, creating innovative policies and practices. It aligns with the University's strengths in applied AI research and broader EDI goals. He also highlighted that the Centre is a key initiative in the University's SRP, marking a significant step in the final phase of the current plan.

Upon a motion duly made by A. Cooper and seconded by L. Livingston, pursuant to the recommendation of the Research Committee, Academic Council hereby recommends the Establishment of Interdisciplinary Centre for Preventative Nutrition & Technology (ICPNT) for approval by the Board of Governors, as presented.

11. Policy Face to Face Consultation

In response to a question raised regarding policies not included within the Agenda items, but noted for written consultation, the Chair reminded attendees that discussions remain focused on scheduled business items and encouraged members to send in written remarks for any items noted for written consultation.

a) Procurement of Goods and Services Procedure* (C)

B. MacIsaac explained that the Procurement of Goods and Services procedure, mandated under the Building Ontario Act, prioritizes Ontario suppliers for purchases under \$121,000. Procurement rules apply to all purchases, including those made through Personal Development (PD) funds.

A key discussion focused on balancing sustainable procurement – considering environmental, social, and economic impacts, with financial value. B. MacIsaac emphasized trust in individuals to make ethical purchasing decisions, weighing Environmental, Social, Governance (ESG) factors against cost. Questions were also raised about the definitions of "social value" and "accountability" in procurement, with the response noting that these principles provide general guidance without overly restricting decision-making.

The meaning of "fairness and transparency" in procurement was also questioned, with B. MacIsaac noting that the language comes directly from Government policy. He also recommended that if individuals have any questions about purchasing in this regard to reach out to the Finance Department.

b) Signing Authority and Approval of Expenditures Procedure* (C)

B. MacIsaac advised that Deans are being removed from the approval process for all University funds, including research and PD funds, to improve efficiency and reduce duplication with Accounts Payable, Research Accounting, and Principal Investigators (PI's). Concerns arose about potential workload increases for staff managing



reimbursements and some concerns were raised regarding issues with the lack of the Dean's oversight, as it helps prevent invalid claims and ensures appropriate spending, especially for new faculty unfamiliar with spending guidelines. Suggestions included creating a reporting mechanism between Finance and Deans to review flagged expenses periodically.

It was recommended to remove the policy consultation from the Academic Council agenda for further discussion, pending the Provost's direction.

12. Consent Agenda

The Chair confirmed that the Consent Agenda and the items in the Consent Agenda were approved and received in the approval of the Agenda at the start of the meeting.

- a) Minutes of the Meeting of November 26, 2024* (M)
- b) Minor Program Adjustments from USC* (I)
 - (i) Faculty of Social Science and Humanities: Bachelor of Arts Liberal Studies; Science, Technology and Society Specialization* (I)
 - (ii) Faculty of Social Science and Humanities: Diploma in Public Policy* (I)
 - (iii) Faculty of Science; Bachelor of Science in Computer Science, Data Science and Digital Media Specializations* (I)
 - (iv) Faculty of Science: Bachelor of Science in Integrated Mathematics and Computer Science* (I)
- c) Cyclical Program Review from GSC and USC* (I)
 - (i) MSc and PhD in Modelling and Computational Science Final Assessment Report and Program Learning Outcomes* (I)
 - (ii) Bachelor of Science; Physics 18 Month Follow-Up Report* (I)
- d) Academic Policy Instruments from USC* (I)
 - (i) Undergraduate Advanced Standing and Transfer Credit Procedures*(I)

13. Other Business

a) A. Cooper volunteered to provide the Land Acknowledgement for the February 2025 Academic Council meeting.

14. Termination

Upon a motion duly made by S. Nokleby, the January 28, 2025 Academic Council meeting was terminated at 4:17 p.m.

Kirstie Ayotte, Assistant University Secretary