

ACADEMIC COUNCIL

**Minutes of the Public Session of the November 25, 2025 Meeting
via Videoconference
2:32 p.m. - 4:18 p.m.**

Academic Council Committee Agendas, Materials and Minutes 2025-2026

Present:

Scott Nokleby, Acting Chair	Mikael Eklund	Pejman Mirza-Babaei
Asifa Aamir	Mitch Frazer	Fedor Naumkin
Scott Aquanno	Shahram Heydari	Gabby Resch
Rachel Ariss	Jessica Hogue	Carol Rodgers
Laura Banks	Mehdi Hossein-Nejad	Robyn
Wendy Barber	Hossam Kishawy	Ruttenberg Rozen
Mihai Beligan	Sayyed Ali Hosseini	Gillian Slade
Mary Bluechardt	Brenda Jacobs	Peter Stoett
Rupinder Brar	Les Jacobs	Joe Stokes
Toba Bryant	Venuga Kariharan	Jemma Tam
Krystina Clarke	Hossam Kishawy	Dwight Thompson
Amanda Cooper	Lori Livingston	Shannon Vettor
Catherine Davidson	Janet McCabe	Ken Wilson
Ana Duff	Carolyn McGregor	

Regrets:

JoAnne Arcand	Steven Murphy, Chair
Ahmad Barari	Aliza Rizwan
Shanti Fernando	Denina Simmons

Staff:

Kirstie Ayotte (Secretary)	Jennifer MacInnis	Sarah Thrush
Nicola Crow	Brad MacIsaac	
Krista Hester	Andrew Sunstrum	

1. Call to Order and Land Acknowledgement

The Acting Chair called the Public Session of the Academic Council (AC) meeting to order at 2:32 p.m. and J. Tam provided their personal Land Acknowledgement.

2. Agenda (M)

Upon a motion duly made by H. Kishawy and seconded by J. Tam, the Agenda was approved as presented, including approving and receiving the Consent Agenda and its contents.

3. Chair's Remarks

The Acting Chair welcomed Members to the final Academic Council Meeting of the 2025 year and wished everyone a restful break and encouraged Members to attend the upcoming National

Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women on December 5, 2025 in the ERC Atrium.

4. Inquiries and Communications

4.1 COU Academic Colleague Report* (I)

R. Ruttenberg-Rozen noted that the October COU meeting focused on civil discourse and academic freedom in relation to Bill 33, with additional details provided within the meeting materials.

She reported that the discussion highlighted growing concerns regarding public perceptions of universities and the broader challenges of sustaining constructive dialogue. R. Ruttenberg-Rozen also advised that the University of Toronto's Working Group on Civil Discourse has offered recommendations to strengthen capacity for productive dialogue, beginning with faculty support, while acknowledging ongoing concerns regarding how civil discourse should be approached.

In response to a question regarding the potential impact of Bill 33 on Ontario Tech's admissions, J. Stokes explained that the effects are still uncertain. He noted that current policies do include equity-based and Indigenous admissions and that legal guidance is being sought to ensure compliance with expectations under Bill 33. He also highlighted that mid-cycle changes are complicated due to procedural fairness, and the University is coordinating with Ontario's admissions council while reviewing its own practices.

5. Provost's Remarks

The Provost thanked the University community for their efforts over the last term and wished everyone a safe and restful holiday break.

She highlighted the AI literacy resources available through the Teaching and Learning Centre (TLC) and encouraged Faculty and Staff to explore the growing range of tools and learning supports that they offer. She also noted the active programming of the Women in Research Council, pointing to its upcoming events, speakers, and mentoring opportunities as valuable supports for Faculty, Staff, and Students.

The Provost concluded her remarks by congratulating the Faculty of Engineering and Applied Science (FEAS) on its standing in the recently released Shanghai Rankings, which emphasizes its strong international reputation in Energy Science and Engineering and the national recognition of its Mechanical Engineering program. The Provost further noted that these accomplishments reflect the Faculty's sustained excellence, research strength and growing global impact.

In response to a request to bring back the weekly report, the Provost clarified that the University app serves as the primary and more up-to-date source for event and activity information, offering broader coverage than the Weekly Report. She noted that she would convey the request to Communications and Marketing but emphasized that decisions regarding the Report's format or future resides within that office.

6. 2026-2027 Budget Approach* (D)

B. Maclsaac opened by outlining the purpose of the budget assumption presentation, noting that preliminary assumptions were shared now and a full budget would return in the Spring.

S. Thrush reviewed enrollment planning, highlighting current trends, projected scenarios, and the balance between conservative budgeting and aspirational growth. She emphasized the need to offset international enrollment caps and declines by increasing market share for traditional high school students and pursuing new student markets and program innovations. It was also noted that AC will receive an enrollment report in February or March.

B. Maclsaac provided a high level overview of revenue assumptions, emphasizing the longstanding frozen government grants and tuition, and noting that ancillary revenues have a limited impact overall on the budget as there is normally an offsetting expense. He indicated that provincial funding and domestic tuition are expected to remain flat, while international tuition may see modest increases. He further stressed the structural deficit arising from expenses rising faster than revenues.

L. Livingston noted that the University's revenue is closely tied to enrollment and highlighted pressures from rising costs and intensified competition for domestic students. She stressed that traditional models are insufficient and not sustainable, and so the University must adopt a "Differentiated Growth 2.0" model to accelerate its shift to new learner markets and more flexible program delivery, including virtual, asynchronous, and non-traditional formats, with pathways connecting micro-credentials to larger credentials. L. Livingston reported that this equates to students having the opportunity to access learning opportunities and supports 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days of the year. She further emphasized the importance of attracting new students while strengthening retention supports.

A fulsome discussion followed on revenue generation strategy and growth plans. Members asked about alternative revenue sources and L. Livingston and S. Thrush described opportunities to expand online and in person offerings, develop modular and condensed programs, and provide micro-credentials for non-traditional learners. They also noted ongoing efforts to secure competitive government grants and emphasized flexible, accessible program delivery.

Questions arose regarding funding for graduate programs, labour costs, and the impact of enrollment growth on library resources such as licensing. L. Livingston, B. Maclsaac and S. Thrush noted that baseline funding for graduate programs is under review, labour costs are being monitored with projections for salary growth, and preparations were underway to address increased demands on licensed resources. AI integration in administrative functions and the performance of micro-credentials was also discussed, with examples provided along with emphasizing continued data collection requirements.

Members raised questions regarding managing workload and implementing new programs without upfront resources. L. Livingston and B. Maclsaac clarified that additional supports and funding were being provided, growth will not rely solely on existing staff, and quality remains a priority. However, with flat revenues and growing expenses the current ratios will not be maintained. We must look at how to do things differently, what to stop doing to ease workloads. Members also highlighted the importance of updating policies and systems to enable innovative programming while supporting sustainable, well managed expansion.

7. Understanding Human Rights: Training Initiatives at Ontario Tech University (I)

A. Sunstrum and J. MacInnis gave a presentation on the work being undertaken by the Human Rights Office to strengthen understanding of how Human Rights legislation applies within a university context. They noted that the Office is focusing on deepening the community's practical

understanding through education, training, and proactive research, with the goal of embedding Human Rights principles into everyday practice with an emphasis on continued dialogue. This includes upcoming scenario-based modules addressing common areas of misunderstanding around harassment and disrespect. A. Sunstrum emphasized the importance of helping the campus community distinguish harassment from broader conflict and disrespect, promoting direct communication where appropriate, and strengthening a proactive, informed culture surrounding Human Rights.

J. MacInnis noted that new training modules are in beta testing and asked for additional student members of Academic Council to volunteer to review the modules. Interested members were invited to contact the Human Rights Office.

A discussion centred on how the Human Rights Office handles reports, supports early resolution, distinguishes disrespect from harassment, and helps supervisors, staff, faculty and students navigate a range of power imbalances. A. Sunstrum explained that the Office assesses each report to determine whether it falls under the policy and then guides it toward consultation, mediation, or investigation. J. MacInnis acknowledged the importance of clear expectations for supervisors and added that the Office often assists individuals, especially students, who may not feel comfortable addressing concerns directly, and noted ongoing work to strengthen training for managers and others of authority.

8. Undergraduate Studies Committee – No Report

The Chair clarified that there was no October USC meeting, therefore, no report or business for discussion at this Academic Council meeting. He advised that the November USC meeting update will be presented at the January Academic Council meeting.

9. Graduate Studies Committee – No Report

10. Research Committee

L. Jacobs highlighted opportunities arising from the recent federal budget, which included significant research and talent investments, notably funding to attract leading researchers and support new labs in Canada. He emphasized that Ontario Tech will need to act quickly to identify potential candidates for these positions and encouraged members to consider researchers with strong profiles who might be interested.

He then shared that the University will again be recognized as Canada's Research University of the Year amongst smaller universities, highlighting that the University rose to 34th place Nationally which is a ten place jump since 2019, reflecting the impact of strategic investments in Faculty and Graduate Students.

11. Consent Agenda:

The Chair confirmed that contents of the Consent Agenda were approved and received under Agenda Item # 2.

11.1 Minutes of the Meeting of October 28, 2025* (M)

12. Other Business

No other business noted.

13. Termination

There being no other business, and upon a motion to terminate by T. Bryant, the AC Meeting terminated at 4:18 p.m.

Kirstie Ayotte, Assistant University Secretary