



Senate Meeting
Alice Egan Hagen Board Room (Rosaria 312)/MS Teams

October 24, 2025
2 p.m.

MINUTES

Present: L. Francis (Chair), J. Bail, E. Ballantyne, G. Boulet, S. Brigham, R. Bursey, E. Copeland Solas, P. Crouse, C. Dawson, J. Dickinson, G. Durepos, T. Findlay, J. Gahagan, S. Hale Wills, E. Henderson, S. Huntemann, K. Jones, M. Matthews, C. McLean, M. Minocha, D. Piccitto, S. Reddington, B. Russo, J. Sawler, C. Schneider, G. Sneddon, A. Thurlow, S. Trenholm, J. Valcke, O. Wokoma, S. Zegarra

Regrets: C. Barker, A. Card, M. McGonnell, I. Nault, J. Ryuzaki, K. Schlieff

Observers: G. Batten, M. Caswell, S. Kunto, J. Lamb, B. Reyner, J. Smith III, K. White

The meeting was called to order at 2:02 p.m.

Observers were identified and welcomed. Procedures to be used during the meeting and while voting on motions were outlined.

1. Indigenous Land Recognition

L. Francis provided an acknowledgement that the Mount is built on traditional, unceded Mi'kmaq territory and paid respect to the Indigenous peoples of the land on which Senate meets.

2. Approval of Agenda

An additional slate of nominations was added under the existing 7.4.1 - Nominations for Senate Committee Vacancies.

Moved by B. Russo, seconded by S. Hale Wills, to approve the agenda with the additional slate. CARRIED.

3. Approval of Minutes

3.1. September 26, 2025

Moved by B. Russo, seconded by R. Bursey, to approve the minutes of September 26, 2025, as amended. CARRIED.

4. Business Arising from the Minutes

No business arising from the minutes was identified.

5. Administration Updates

5.1. President

J. Dickinson reported on Fall convocation, noting that the valedictorians' remarks were well received, and welcomed A. Divine as the newest honorary doctorate recipient.

J. Dickinson acknowledged the ongoing labour disruption, noting that the significant disruption policy could come into effect after 3 days.

Regarding recent incidents of anti-hate graffiti and vandalism targeting student areas, J. Dickinson confirmed that investigations are underway and that the University continues to work closely with the MSVUSU to address impacts on students.

Lastly, she noted that calling a full membership meeting of the EDIA Committee is facing logistical challenges, as the committee's Terms of Reference and membership require updates, but work on these matters is ongoing.

5.2. Vice-President Academic and Provost

L. Francis reported that overall undergraduate enrollment and billing units have declined compared to last year, while graduate enrollment (but not billing units) has increased. She reported that Education program numbers remain relatively stable and have shown some growth. She noted shifts in student composition, with a decrease in international enrollment and a modest increase in domestic students at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

L. Francis shared that similar trends are being observed across Nova Scotia, with declines in both domestic and international enrollment and lower application rates. While MSVU continues to process PALs (Provincial Attestation Letters) efficiently, ongoing challenges with the visa process and reduced confidence among international students in studying in Canada remain key concerns.

L. Francis reported that the Board of Governors held its first meeting of the academic year, along with a retreat. She noted that discussions focused on strategies to achieve stable and sustainable enrollment, highlighting Senate's role in supporting program excellence, development and new program growth.

Regarding Quality Assurance, L. Francis reported that our MPHEC site visit, scheduled for early December, will include meetings to discuss the internal program review experience at the Mount and that Departments required to participate in these discussions will be selected by the external reviewers and notified in November.

Regarding the government's Quality Assurance requirements under Schedule H of the bilateral agreement, she noted that the templates have not yet been released and that the October 2026 deadline remains in place.

5.3. Vice-President Administration

No report as I. Nault was not present.

6. Question Period

B. Russo noted that the Canada First movement is planning a protest at Citadel Hill, with a counter-protest also expected, and offered counter-protest details to Senators who may be interested in attending.

B. Russo raised concerns about microcredentials and wondered whether they might impact traditional degree programs. In response, L. Francis clarified that at MSVU, microcredentials are primarily designed for professional development in partnership with employers and employees, and they do not replicate or replace existing for-credit programs. She further noted a reduction in the number of courses students are taking is influenced by factors such as delays in study permit approvals, financial pressures leading students to work more hours and the University's per-course tuition model, which offers flexibility. She also highlighted that the definition of full-time student status has evolved in recent years.

D. Piccitto raised concerns about a report that some coaches have advised student athletes not to post about the ongoing labour disruption on their personal social media accounts, noting that this infringes on freedom of expression. J. Dickinson clarified that no such direction was issued by the Executive Leadership Team and confirmed that Management Forum will be reminded that individuals are free to use their personal social media as they choose.

D. Piccitto also inquired about the consultation process on affirming Indigenous identities. J. Dickinson reported that the L'nu Advisory Circle has recommended adopting a Mi'kmaq-led approach and that updates can be shared following the next Association of Atlantic Universities (AAU) meeting. Additionally, J. Dickinson reported that efforts are ongoing to recruit new L'nu Advisory Circle members, update the committee's Terms of Reference and recruit an L'nu Senate representative. Responding to a question regarding timelines for the Senate representative recruitment, J. Dickinson offered to follow up with the interested candidate. (D. Piccitto, J. Dickinson, T. Findlay)

G. Boulet raised concerns about the financial context of the part-time instructors' labour disruption, noting that she had reviewed University compensation information and identified a significant disparity between the remuneration of senior administrative positions and the stipends received by CUPE members, who perform core teaching functions of the University. On that basis, she asked the Administration to justify the

situation. L. Francis responded that it would be inappropriate to discuss active labour negotiations outside the bargaining table.

T. Findlay asked what measures are being taken to repair the University's reputation following two labour disruptions in the past two years. J. Dickinson acknowledged no specific campaign has been undertaken but emphasized ongoing efforts to strengthen both the MSVU and broader Canadian education brand as viable study options for international students. She also noted continued engagement with all labour groups and a commitment to respectful dialogue across the University community.

B. Russo expressed concern about the lack of meetings of the L'nu Advisory Circle and the EDIA Committee. J. Dickinson agreed that the delay in convening the EDIA Committee is unacceptable but noted work is underway to re-establish it properly. She added that efforts are being made for the L'nu Advisory Circle to transition to a community-led Chair, with ongoing individual outreach to community members on specific initiatives such as the Kinu program. J. Dickinson committed to organizing the next L'nu meeting and improving communication with the full committee.

S. Brigham requested updates on the Students of African Descent Advisory Committee (SADAC), the EDIA Committee's Terms of Reference and the timeline for the EDIA Action Plan. J. Dickinson reported that efforts continue to expand community membership on SADAC; that new member recruitment will follow once the EDIA Committee's Terms of Reference are finalized; and that I. Nault will provide an update on the EDIA Action Plan timeline at the next Senate meeting.

7. Committee Reports (Standing and Ad Hoc)

7.1. Senate Executive

7.1.1. Revisions to Senate Award for Service in University Governance D. Piccitto outlined the revisions, noting their rationale.

Moved by D. Piccitto, seconded by S. Hale Wills, that Senate approve the revisions to the Senate Award for Service in University Governance, effective immediately. CARRIED.

7.2. Academic Policy and Planning

7.2.1. Schedule for External Reviews

L. Francis presented the schedule of external reviews for information. Senators noted two edits to department names. These were noted and will be edited in the document. (T. Findlay, C. McLean, L. Francis)

R. Bursey inquired about the separation of Business and Tourism & Hospitality Management in the review schedule, to which L. Francis clarified that MPHEC is moving toward individual program review rather than department reviews.

7.3. Information Technology and Services

E. Ballantyne reported that M. Lin was elected Chair of the committee and that K. Smith confirmed her willingness to convene the first meeting in future years if a Chair has not yet been appointed. The committee's discussions focused on the Terms of Reference (particularly its advisory role to Senate on technology for teaching and research and on communication of IT&S changes) and several operational and strategic topics, including MSVU's survey platform; integrated research management; IT procurement; IT&S service delays and communication; faculty computers and software configuration; and the current IT&S priority project: the admissions portal.

J. Sawler asked about the committee's recommendation to move from LimeSurvey to Qualtrics. E. Ballantyne explained that while there is interest in exploring an alternative platform, there are no security concerns with continuing to use LimeSurvey, which is a free, open-source tool; however, Qualtrics would involve a cost.

D. Piccitto asked if IT&S now provides support for Mac computers and if laptops can be connected to campus printers. E. Ballantyne will bring these topics forward on the next SCOITS agenda and report at the November Senate meeting.

7.4. Nominations

7.4.1. Nominations for Senate Committee Vacancies

Moved by B. Russo, seconded by S. Trenholm, that Senate elect the members listed on the October 15 and 23, 2025, slates to the respective committees for the indicated terms. CARRIED.

Committee	Nominee	Term Begins	Term Ends
Senate Discipline Appeals	Dr. Martha Walls	When elected	June 30, 2028
Writing Initiatives	Dr. Ian Tian	When elected	June 30, 2028
Executive	Dr. Tammy Findlay	January 1, 2026	June 30, 2028

Moved by S. Brigham, seconded by R. Bursey, that Senate approve Dr. Henderson's term on Senate Executive begin immediately instead of January 1, 2026, as previously approved. CARRIED.

7.4.2. Ratification of Chair of Student Discipline Appeals Committee

Moved by R. Bursey, seconded by S. Trenholm, that Dr. Jeff Young be ratified as Chair of Student Discipline Appeals Committee, effective immediately. CARRIED.

7.5. Research and Publications

7.5.1. Revisions to President's Award for Research Excellence

Moved by J. Gahagan, seconded by A. Thurlow, that Senate approve the following changes regarding the President's Award for Research Excellence: (1) make effective immediately the change in deadline (move to March 1) that was approved during the Senate meeting on September 26 and (2) approve effective immediately the proposed change to presentation (Spring or Fall convocation to be decided with the awardee). CARRIED.

7.6. Teaching and Learning

7.6.1. Revisions to Teaching Excellence Awards

Moved by E. Ballantyne, seconded by G. Durepos, that Senate approve the proposed revisions to the *Teaching Excellence Awards* document, effective immediately. CARRIED.

E. Ballantyne explained that the proposed revisions aim to address ongoing challenges in evaluating applications, specifically encouraging candidates and referees to demonstrate rather than merely state evidence of achievement. The changes also seek greater consistency through the addition of a new teaching evidence component, better alignment with AAU (Association of Atlantic Universities) teaching award criteria and a shift from numbered to bulleted lists to avoid implying prioritization of criteria. B. Russo expressed concern that the process might disempower students, but E. Ballantyne clarified that connecting with TLC staff or departments is encouraged but not required. S. Hale Wills suggested that "alumnae" be changed to "alumni" to match a recent decision by the Alumni Association. D. Piccitto recommended monitoring application uptake this year to assess whether further adjustments are needed. (E. Ballantyne, D. Piccitto, B. Russo)

8. Other Reports

8.1. FA President's Report on Board of Governors' Meeting

A. Thurlow reported that the recent Board of Governors retreat included fulsome discussions on budget and enrollment trends, followed by a joint reception with Senators and Board members. The subsequent regular Board meeting focused primarily on the evolving post-secondary landscape, government developments, enrollment challenges and budget matters. J. Bail expressed appreciation for the opportunity to meet and engage with Board members during the reception.

8.2. Students' Union

S. Zegarra reaffirmed the Student Unions' commitment to fostering an inclusive, hate-free campus and plans to engage faculty in supporting related initiatives.

S. Zegarra updated Senators on several items, including progress on filling committee vacancies, proposed adjustments to Academic Appeals Committee membership and ongoing gaps in SU elected representation. S. Zegarra also highlighted recent events and services: the successful Connecting Through Food event supported by Chartwells; The Rook's new menu and 15+ hosted events; revitalized Pride Centre programming; the Fountain Play Centre's high enrollment but limited volunteers; the soup kitchen's weekly service using campus-grown produce; ongoing testing of Taste of Home cookbook recipes; and new food bank partnerships with KFC, Cobs Bread and Lawtons.

In response to a question from B. Russo, S. Zegarra clarified that The Rook is not declining politically affiliated bookings but that concerns remain following a past incident, which will be discussed internally.

8.3. Continuing Education and Microcredentials

J. Smith III presented a report to Senate regarding Microcredentials and Continuing Education. Topics presented included:

- Ready to Lead (R2L) pilot delivery and 2025-2026 delivery
- Current and upcoming programming: SHIFT 2026, Case Management Fundamentals
- Programming in development/discussion
- Ongoing priorities and recommendations

A. Thurlow inquired about the development of a microcredential with National PR and how it differs from existing offerings in the Communication Studies program. J. Smith III clarified that discussions are ongoing and not yet formalized, with module topics still to be determined and, to avoid unnecessary work, departments are typically not consulted until partnerships are formalized.

In response to questions about microcredentials and CVs, J. Smith III explained that completed microcredentials can be listed on a CV or LinkedIn under a "Microcredentials" section, verified through a myCreds badge containing details such as hours, assessments and outcomes. He also explained that the badges are issued under the name "MSVU – Microcredentials." (J. Sawler, J. Smith III)

In response to J. Sawler's question about the organization and selection of instructors for microcredentials, J. Smith III explained that formats vary, with subject matter experts typically serving as facilitators and that microcredential proposals are often initiated by external partners.

Senators emphasized the importance of establishing an oversight committee to protect the Mount's reputation and ensure accountability in collaborative initiatives. Senators underscored the need for formalized, flexible processes when pursuing new projects, with discussion also occurring around the role of the

oversight committee in determining appropriate campus consultation and concerns about external educational ventures operating separately from academic programming. It was noted that oversight may vary depending on the type of partnership, but commitment to forming an oversight committee was affirmed. (D. Piccitto, J. Smith III, L. Francis, B. Russo, T. Findlay, G. Boulet)

J. Bail commented that library resources could be utilized for the SHIFT 2026 microcredential and requested library representation on an oversight committee, if established.

9. New Business

No new business was identified.

10. Items for Communication

Senate approved:

- Minutes of September 26, 2025
- Revisions to Senate Award for Service in University Governance
- A slate of nominees for Senate committee vacancies and revised start date for one elected member
- Ratification of Chair for the Student Discipline Appeals Committee
- Revisions to President's Award for Research Excellence
- Revisions to Teaching Excellence Awards

Senate received for information:

- Schedule for External Reviews

11. Adjournment

As the agenda was exhausted, the meeting adjourned at 4:14 p.m.