



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

May 20, 2026
2 p.m.

MINUTES

Present: J. Dickinson (Chair), J. Bail, E. Ballantyne, C. Barker, A. Benzaquén, G. Boulet, S. Brigham, R. Bursey, A. Card, E. Copeland Solas, P. Crouse, C. Dawson, N. Deal, T. Findlay, L. Francis, J. Gahagan, S. Hale Wills, T. Harriott, E. Henderson, S. Huntemann, K. Jones, M. Matthews, M. McGonnell, C. McLean, I. Nault, P. Otiora, L. Paul, M. Paul, D. Piccitto, S. Reddington, B. Russo, G. Sneddon, A. Thurlow, S. Trenholm, J. Valcke, K. Whitfield

Regrets: N. Davila, L. Sobey-Skinner, K. Schlieff

Observers: G. Batten, M. Caswell, J. Lamb, L. MacFarlane, M. Minocha, K. White, S. Zegarra

The meeting was called to order at 2:05 p.m.

Observers were identified and welcomed. Senators whose terms are ending were thanked: R. Bursey, C. McLean, G. Sneddon, A. Thurlow. New student Senators were welcomed.

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

1. Indigenous Land Recognition

J. Dickinson 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

Moved by B. Russo, seconded by S. Hale Wills, to approve the agenda as circulated.
CARRIED.

3. Approval of Minutes

3.1. April 24, 2026

Moved by B. Russo, seconded by S. Brigham, to approve the minutes of April 24, 2026, as amended. CARRIED.

4. Business Arising from the Minutes

4.1. Revisions to Bylaw 1.1

M. Paul highlighted that these revisions would add a seventh seat allocated to the Students' Union with the seat to be reserved for the Indigenous Student Representative or an Indigenous student at large and that the addition of this student seat necessitated an additional elected faculty seat.

Moved by M. Paul, seconded by B. Russo that Senate Bylaw 1.1 be revised as shown to add an additional Students' Union seat designated for an Indigenous Student Representative, and to accord with the Charter, an additional at-large Faculty Complement seat, effective July 1, 2026. CARRIED.

4.2. Clarification on vote results UCC Item 7.3.2.1.1

E. Henderson clarified the vote results regarding item 7.3.2.1.1 from the April 2026 Senate agenda. She reported on the breakdown of votes and confirmed that the motion passed by simple majority.

5. Administration Updates

5.1. President

J. Dickinson acknowledged the passing of two former faculty members, Judith Scrimger and Dr. Martha Westwater, recognizing their contributions to the University and its community.

J. Dickinson also acknowledged the recent layoffs and position eliminations, noting the hardship of these losses and the impact on members of the campus community. Despite these challenges, she noted many achievements and milestones worthy of recognition, including the success of Spring Convocation, which saw three inspiring valedictory addresses and the participation of honorary degree recipient Lisa LaFlamme. She congratulated the recipients of the Teaching Awards—Juliette Valcke, Andrea Fraser and Carolyn Birnie-Porter—as well as Mike Bowen, recipient of the Research Award.

J. Dickinson further recognized the organizers and participants of the recent Psychology Research Conference, commending them on a successful event.

Lastly, she congratulated the *Atlantis* journal on receiving a \$150,000 grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC).

5.2. Vice-President Academic and Provost

L. Francis highlighted several recent activities and initiatives. She noted her attendance at the Infographics Fair for second-year Nutrition students, commending the quality of the presentations and remarking that each student presentation offered valuable learning opportunities.

Among the highlights she identified were the hosting on campus of a representative from Bermuda College, a visit which provided an opportunity to meet with programs that currently have articulation agreements with Bermuda College, as well as those interested in exploring potential future partnerships; the securing of funding to support entrance scholarships for students in the inter-university PhD program, enabling the University to fulfill commitments made to students following the withdrawal of provincial funding; and the recent Celebration of Teaching and

Learning event for which she extended thanks to the Teaching and Learning Centre (TLC) and all participants.

L. Francis further noted that the external Quality Assurance Management (QAM) report was received through CAPP in May and has now entered the three-month review period. With respect to Schedule H, she indicated that the process is proceeding as intended, with proposed dates for campus engagement activities identified and plans underway to advertise these opportunities to the University community.

L. Francis also reported on ongoing challenges. She discussed the partnership with Jinshan College and the recommendation that the agreement be discontinued, noting that considerable efforts have been made over the past several years to sustain the partnership. In addition, she provided an update on the Kinu project, elaborating on the background of the program—a faculty-led initiative supported through a five-year federal grant in partnership with Indigenous collaborators; one year of bridge funding secured when the original funding concluded in 2025; and the current situation where, despite considerable efforts to identify sustainable funding sources, sufficient support was not secured to maintain the program and staffing levels established under the original grant.

5.3. Vice-President Administration

I. Nault thanked Senators for their patience regarding the budget update, which is scheduled to be presented next week.

She also provided an update regarding tree removal along Seton Road, clarifying that the affected land is not owned by the University and is part of the Seton Ridge development. She reported that, as part of the development plans, the road will be widened, a streetlight will be installed, and new trees will be planted post-development.

6. Question Period

G. Boulet raised concerns regarding the cancellation of the Jinshan 3+1 agreement and departments being asked to remove courses from their timetables, questioning why these matters were not brought to Senate, but instead decided at CAPP and brought to Senate after the fact.

L. Francis clarified that the Jinshan arrangement is an articulation agreement between two institutions, which includes provisions allowing for its discontinuation, emphasizing that it is not a stand-alone program. K. Jones emphasized that the action in question pertains to the discontinuation of a delivery mode and the termination of a partnership with another institution, rather than the discontinuation of the Bachelor of Tourism and Hospitality Management program or its constituent courses. She further noted that no new courses are

being delivered through this arrangement and that existing courses continue to be offered on campus and remotely.

N. Deal echoed G. Boulet’s concerns about course cancellations, noting that their department had been asked to reduce its timetable beyond previously approved reductions, referencing historical patterns of soft enrollment in spring/summer terms. He questioned the timing of these decisions given that the spring term is still in its early stages and that the enrollment report projects an overall increase of 1.2%. L. Francis responded that current data shows weaker-than-usual metrics in enrollment, application and conversion rates, and given the current budget constraints, we must carefully assess enrollment at the individual course section level as it is no longer feasible to sustain multiple low-enrollment sections. She clarified that these cancellations are of specific course sections in a given term. I. Nault added that projected enrollment increase reflects combined domestic, international and graduate enrollment and does not necessarily translate into budget growth, particularly given the decline in international undergraduate enrollment.

S. Huntemann asked about returning student registration patterns and efforts to encourage earlier registration. K. Jones noted that the Summer Melt group is continuing to contact eligible students who have not yet registered.

Referencing G. Boulet’s earlier question, B. Russo clarified that CAPP did not make decisions to cut classes or programs. She emphasized that the issues relate to transparency in decision-making and the need for a more collaborative approach—key factors contributing to current concerns and dissent.

Senators expressed concern that, if the current financial situation is as severe as being indicated, it has not been the subject of prior substantive discussion and raised concern that Senate has not been sufficiently engaged in these conversations. (D. Piccitto, A. Benzaquén)

D. Piccitto requested clarification regarding the budget report reference to a potential “Phase 3” involving organizational restructuring, asking what this would entail and what role Senate would play in that process. I. Nault clarified that this would not involve restructuring academic programs, but rather consideration of how to maintain essential services and improve efficiency in the event of workforce reductions. J. Dickinson added that MSVU is currently operating across elements of all three phases outlined in the report and referenced the role of the University Budget Advisory Committee in budget discussions.

T. Findlay referenced ongoing concerns regarding budget transparency at MSVU, noting previous efforts to apply an equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility (EDIA) lens to budget planning in collaboration with the EDIA Advisor. I. Nault expressed her openness to revisit the current budget reporting cycle to Senate, acknowledging that the work on the budget is not done in a silo; she works closely with the Office of People and Culture, who oversees the Equity Office.

C. Barker, as FA President, presented two documents on behalf of faculty members outlining concerns regarding the discontinuation of the Jinshan 3+1 agreement and the Kinu Tourism Project. Regarding Kinu in particular, he noted that the concerns largely relate to the conclusion of grant-funded initiatives and associated transitions and further raised the question of the sustainability of funding for the PsyD program, noting that it is currently structured as a five-year, grant-supported program.

Moved by G. Boulet, seconded by S. Brigham, to extend question period by 10 minutes.
CARRIED.

A. Thurlow noted that MOUs and 2+2 agreements are approved by Senate and suggested that any cancellation of such agreements should similarly be brought forward to Senate. She emphasized the importance of greater Senate involvement in academic decision-making and participation in related discussions. She acknowledged the emotional labour associated with these types of decisions and affirmed that MSVU is not wasteful in its spending; however, she cautioned that the University cannot “cut its way out” of the current financial situation given the number of external constraints involved. J. Dickinson acknowledged these comments and indicated she would reflect on them as the next budget is developed.

S. Brigham raised concerns regarding the recent layoffs and the broader considerations of the process, including the impact on student health and well-being, available supports and the additional workload placed on remaining staff following layoffs. She also referenced the importance of applying an equity lens to these impacts. J. Dickinson acknowledged the question and noted that I. Nault would provide a more detailed response at the Special Budget meeting the following week.

R. Bursey, noting her role on the budget committee, expressed uncertainty regarding the transition from earlier projected deficit figures to the current budget position. She indicated that greater engagement in the budget development process for the upcoming year would be beneficial.

7. Committee Reports (Standing and Ad Hoc)

7.1. Senate Executive

7.1.1. Announcement of Senate Master Graduation List approval

J. Dickinson announced that the May 2026 Senate Master Graduation List was approved by Senate Executive, comprising 618 names cleared to graduate and an additional 4 names on the enabling list, of whom 3 were subsequently moved to the approved list, resulting in a total of 621 graduates.

7.2. Academic Policy and Planning

7.2.1. Addition to Language Tests for Undergraduate Admissions

Moved by L. Francis, seconded by B. Russo, that Senate add the Oxford International Digital Institute English Language Test to the list of approved English Language Tests for Undergraduate Admissions, with the overall score requirement of 7.0 and no sub score below 6.0. CARRIED.

7.2.2. Revised Academic Calendar Dates 2026-2027

L. Francis noted that CAPP approved two changes to the 2026-2027 Calendar dates presented to Senate January 2025: a change to Fall Reading Week, which students had requested be considered, and a change to the spring convocation dates after confirming the Victoria Day date. She also outlined changes to the Fall Reading Break for the Bachelor of Education (BEd) program, indicating that an October break created conflicts for the program.

Feedback was provided that earlier notice and possibly consultation about the Reading Week change would have been appreciated. Discussion followed regarding the timing of a fall reading break, including reasons for November having been selected initially (student teacher placement in schools; alignment with other NS institutions and AAU athletic schedules; and first-year student retention) and more recent research suggesting that an October reading break may be more beneficial in supporting student wellness. (D. Piccitto, N. Deal, G. Boulet, L. Francis)

7.3. Graduate Studies Program and Policy

7.3.1. Applied Human Nutrition

7.3.1.1. Changes to Existing Program

7.3.1.1.1. Internship Education Program admission requirements

Moved by S. Trenholm, seconded by B. Russo, to approve the revision to the internship education admission requirements for GAHN. CARRIED.

7.3.2. Aging & Family Science and Communication Studies

7.3.2.1. Changes to Existing Program

7.3.2.1.1. Requirements for Certificate in Health Communication & Aging

Moved by S. Trenholm, seconded by A. Thurlow, to approve the revision to the requirements for the Certificate in Health Communication & Aging. CARRIED.

- 7.3.3. Communication Studies
 - 7.3.3.1. Changes to Existing Courses
 - 7.3.3.1.1. New course title and description for GPRL 6107
Moved by S. Trenholm, seconded by A. Thurlow, to approve the revisions to GPRL 6107. CARRIED.
- 7.3.4. Changes
 - S. Trenholm presented the following change for information.
 - 7.3.4.1. Communication Studies
 - 7.3.4.1.1. De-crosslisting of GPRL 6511 and new prerequisite
- 7.4. Undergraduate Curriculum
 - 7.4.1. Biology
 - 7.4.1.1. Deletion of Course
 - 7.4.1.1.1. BIOL 3260 – Advanced Neuroscience
Moved by A. Card, seconded by S. Hale Wills, that Senate approve the deletion of BIOL 3260. CARRIED.
 - 7.4.2. Communication Studies
 - 7.4.2.1. Changes to Existing Program
 - 7.4.2.1.1. Addition of Health Communication minor in BA (Communication)
Moved by A. Card, seconded by A. Thurlow, that Senate approve the addition of a Health Communication minor in BA (Communication). CARRIED.
 - 7.4.3. Sociology & Anthropology
 - A. Card presented items 7.4.3.1.1 and 7.4.4.1.1 as an omnibus motion.
 - 7.4.3.1. Changes to Existing Program
 - 7.4.3.1.1. Requirements for major, combined major, combined major with honours degree, honours degree
 - 7.4.4. Women and Gender Studies
 - 7.4.4.1. Changes to Existing Program
 - 7.4.4.1.1. Requirements for major, combined major, combined major with honours degree, honours degree
Moved by A. Card, seconded by S. Hale Wills, that Senate approve the change in requirements for the major, combined major, combined major with honours degree and honours degree in Sociology & Anthropology and in Women and Gender Studies. CARRIED.

7.4.5. Changes

A. Card presented the following changes for information.

7.4.5.1. Biology

- 7.4.5.1.1. New description for BIOL 1114
- 7.4.5.1.2. New course title and description for BIOL 1152
- 7.4.5.1.3. New course title and WebAdvisor title for BIOL 1153
- 7.4.5.1.4. New description for BIOL 3322
- 7.4.5.1.5. New prerequisite and description for BIOL 3999

7.4.5.2. Communication Studies

- 7.4.5.2.1. De-crosslisting of COMM 4511/GPRL 6511

7.4.5.3. Women and Gender Studies

- 7.4.5.3.1. New prerequisite for WOMS 3301 and 3302
- 7.4.5.3.2. New prerequisite for WOMS 3310
- 7.4.5.3.3. New prerequisite for WOMS 3330/CULS 3330/GWGS 6330
- 7.4.5.3.4. New prerequisite for WOMS 3361/POLS 3361
- 7.4.5.3.5. New prerequisite for WOMS 3371/SOAN 3371
- 7.4.5.3.6. New prerequisite for WOMS 3391/POLS 3391
- 7.4.5.3.7. New prerequisite for WOMS 3401/SOAN 3401

7.5. Information Technology and Services

G. Sneddon reported on preliminary work being undertaken by IT&S and a sub-committee of SCOITS regarding Collaborate Ultra, noting considerations around migrating away from the platform before it becomes obsolete, as it has been acquired by a new company that has not yet provided a clear roadmap for future development.

Concerns and questions were raised regarding the implications of this potential change to the virtual classroom platform, with confirmation provided that Moodle would continue to serve as the University's learning management system. Questions were also raised regarding programs being considered, data security and the potential for consortia pricing arrangements. It was noted that such pricing models are already in use through ISI (Interuniversity Services Inc.). (D. Piccitto, B. Russo, I. Nault, G. Sneddon, E. Ballantyne, S. Huntemann, J. Dickinson)

Broader concerns were raised regarding functionality trade-offs, virtual classroom software vs. virtual meeting software, faculty consultation, integration with Moodle and the increasing presence of artificial intelligence features in some platforms that may not be fully configurable or removable. (P. Crouse, J. Gahagan, C. Barker, N. Deal)

7.6. Nominations

7.6.1. Report on Elections by the Faculty Complement

M. McGonnell shared the report on elections by the Faculty Complement for information.

7.6.2. Nominations for Senate-Elected Committees

Moved by M. McGonnell, seconded by B. Russo, that Senate elect the following list of faculty members to the designated Senate-elected committees, for the designated terms. CARRIED.

Committee	Nominee	Term Begins	Term Ends
Academic Appeals	Dr. Mary Jane Harkins (Regular)	1 July 2026	30 June 2029
	Dr. Christine Doe (Alternate)	1 January 2027	30 June 2029
	Dr. Douglas Whitaker (Alternate)	1 July 2026	30 June 2029
Graduate Studies Program and Policy	Dr. DeNel Rehberg Sedo	1 July 2026	30 June 2029
	Dr. Melissa McGonnell	1 July 2026	30 June 2029
Undergraduate Curriculum	Dr. Normand Gendron	1 July 2026	30 June 2029
	Dr. Matthew Roby	1 July 2026	30 June 2029
Information Technology and Services	Dr. Larry Steele	1 July 2026	30 June 2029
Library and Archives	Dr. Meredith Bessey	1 July 2026	30 June 2029
Research and Publications	Dr. Zixian Liu	1 July 2026	30 June 2029
	Dr. Deborah Norris	1 July 2026	30 June 2029
	Librarian Denyse Rodrigues	1 July 2026	30 June 2029
	Dr. Will Shead	1 July 2026	30 June 2029
Teaching and Learning	Dr. Shane Theunissen	1 July 2026	30 June 2029
Undergraduate Admissions, Scholarships, and Awards	Dr. James Sawler	1 July 2026	30 June 2029
	Dr. Ellen Shaffner	1 July 2026	30 June 2029

Committee	Nominee	Term Begins	Term Ends
Graduate Scholarships, Assistantships, and Awards	Dr. Christine Doe	1 January 2027	30 June 2029
	Dr. Michael Land	1 July 2026	30 June 2029
	Dr. Sarah Reddington	1 July 2026	30 June 2029
University Research Ethics Board	Dr. Everton Ellis	1 January 2027	30 June 2029
	Dr. Arron Fraser	1 July 2026	30 June 2029
	Dr. Daniel Séguin	1 July 2026	30 June 2029
Student Judicial	Dr. Will Shead (Alternate)	1 July 2026	30 June 2029
	Dr. Safura Syed (Alternate)	1 July 2026	30 June 2029
Student Discipline Appeals	Dr. Will Shead (Alternate)	1 July 2026	30 June 2029
	Dr. Safura Syed (Alternate)	1 July 2026	30 June 2029
Joint Board/Senate Liaison	Dr. Adriana Benzaquén	1 July 2026	30 June 2029
Advisory Committee for Chair in Learning Disabilities	Dr. Krista Ritchie	1 July 2026	30 June 2029

7.7. Writing Initiatives

E. Ballantyne presented preliminary findings from a survey conducted in the 2024-2025 academic year on student writing at MSVU, outlining key results, recommendations and proposed next steps.

B. Russo offered feedback, recognizing the work of the team, alongside concern about perceived disconnects between the findings and broader institutional realities, including budget constraints and changes to class caps. K. Jones clarified that no reductions occurred in the Writing Centre and noted that, in addition to individual appointments, the Centre has been delivering group sessions in areas where students commonly gather, such as the Black Student Support Office and International Education Centre.

Questions were raised regarding strategies to support faculty in responding to challenges associated with the rapid evolution of generative artificial intelligence as well as on student engagement with the WIC. E. Ballantyne noted uncertainty regarding prior student engagement but was open to surveying students. K. Jones indicated she would explore whether relevant survey data exists within the Office of Student Experience, and M. McGonnell offered to share an existing set of research

survey questions about student writing that could be used as a starting point for further work. (M. Matthews, E. Ballantyne, L. Francis, K. Jones, M. McGonnell)

Additional comments highlighted concerns about incoming students' writing preparedness and, to support the development of foundational writing skills, the value of sharing these insights with Education students early in their programs. It was also noted that future survey efforts should consider collaboration with Accessibility Services and address appropriate use of artificial intelligence tools in academic writing. (M. McGonnell, J. Dickinson, L. Paul)

8. Other Reports

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

C. Barker provided a brief report on the two recent Board of Governors meetings held since the last Senate meeting, noting that one focused on the budget and the other on the presidential review report.

8.2. Students' Union

M. Paul reported that the new Students' Union team and manager are settling in well.

She provided updates on several ongoing projects, noting that the technology assistance program is now operational, with over 20 laptops available for extended student loans and additional devices pending. She also highlighted student participation in the Three-Minute Thesis competition, with representatives from MSVU advancing to the Atlantic Regional event at Saint Mary's University.

M. Paul updated regarding staffing changes, including the resignation of the SU's CFO, noting that a transition plan is in place and that the hiring process is progressing; the hiring of an administrative assistant; and plans to complete student appointments over the summer to ensure that SU and Senate committees are fully staffed for the upcoming academic year.

Lastly, she shared updates regarding summer services, including continued operation of the food bank and the Fountain Play Centre.

It was also noted that GEO (Getting Everyone Online) Nova Scotia provides laptops, smartphones, and internet services to low-income students and rural Nova Scotians and that MSVU is a registered partner in this initiative. (J. Gahagan, K. Jones, M. Paul)

9. New Business

9.1. Library and Archives

J. Bail presented the Library's annual report to Senate for the 2024–25 academic year, highlighting library services, resources, and staff contributions.

D. Piccitto commended the Library on the report and the range of services provided. Concerns were raised regarding the perceived lack of support related to course packs and changes to their previous use, with an expressed hope that a collaborative and mutually agreeable resolution could be reached. J. Bail responded that she remains open to exploring possible solutions. (D. Piccitto, J. Bail, A. Benzaquén)

10. Items for Communication

Senate approved:

- Minutes of April 24, 2026
- Revision to Senate Bylaw 1.1 (Membership)
- Addition to language tests for undergraduate admission
- Graduate and undergraduate curriculum changes
- A slate of nominees for standing committees of Senate

Senate received for information:

- Revision to Academic Calendar dates for 2026-27: Fall Reading Week and May convocation
- Graduate and undergraduate curriculum changes
- Report on elections by the Faculty Complement
- Report from Library and Archives

Senate thanked Senators whose terms end in June: R. Bursey, C. McLean, G. Sneddon, A. Thurlow.

11. Adjournment

As the agenda was exhausted, the meeting adjourned at 4:55 p.m.