



VICTORIA COLLEGE  
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

## MINUTES

### Victoria College Council Meeting

September 26, 2023, 4:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.  
VC 101

**Attendance:** Y. Ali, M. Barath, K. Castle, M. Cichosz, D. Cook, B. Davidson, J. Duncan, A. Esterhammer (Chair), J. Hamilton-Diabo, E. Istrate, M. Kavalier, G. Kim, A. Komaromi, K. Kumar, S. Lee, C. Lewis, A. Meng, C. Miranda-Radbord, A. Moritz, J. Papayiannis, C. Ponce, S. Ross, L. Sherlock, A. Sol, M. Solovey, N. Terpstra, H. Ulfing, A. Urbancic, A. Walkden, D. Wright

**Regrets:** K. Bartlett, S. Cui, B. Havercroft, A. Hossein, S. Joy, R. McEwen, M. Scarci

The meeting was called to order at 4:10 p.m. by the Chair, A. Esterhammer.

#### 1. Chair's Welcome and Opening Remarks (A. Esterhammer)

Principal Esterhammer greeted VCC members and began the meeting with a land acknowledgement.

#### 2. Minutes of the Meeting of April 24, 2023 (attached)

**MOTION:** To accept the minutes without changes.

The motion was moved by A. Sol and seconded by E. Istrate. The motion was passed *nem. con.*

#### 3. Report of the Principal (A. Esterhammer)

Principal Esterhammer provided the following report:

**Faculty and Staff Updates** – A. Esterhammer informed VCC members of staff changes in the Principal's Office. Hayley Birss, who completed her Master's in the Institute for the History and Philosophy of Science and Technology, has been hired as a Special Projects and Events Coordinator. She will support the Northrop Frye Centre and the Scholars-in-Residence Program. Additionally, Chris De Barros, who is in the role of Program Liaison Officer for Vic's upper-year programs, has returned from a one-year leave. Wanda Thorne, who was covering for Chris, has now moved over to the role of Special Projects and Events Coordinator supporting Vic Global Internships and academic events. Ira Wells is on research and study leave this semester. Thank you to Emanuel Istrate for serving as Acting Academic Programs Director from July to December 2023. We also welcome a new faculty member, Noor Naga, who will be joint appointed between the Department of English and Victoria College. Noor is a Victoria College alumna who received her BA in English Literature and Religion and her MA in English in the Field of Creative Writing. She is an Alexandrian writer whose poetry and fiction have won numerous prizes. Most recently, her novel "If an Egyptian Cannot Speak English" won the Graywolf Press African Prize and was shortlisted for the Scotiabank Giller Prize and the 2023 PEN/Jean Stein Book Award. At Vic, she will be teaching in the Creative Expression & Society program.

**Notice of the 2023 Review of Victoria College** – A. Esterhammer stated that a review of the college was planned for this fall as it is the end of the Principal's term. The draft Terms of Reference for the upcoming

review was sent to VCC members before the meeting; the final version will be circulated to VCC in October, once the external assessors are confirmed. There will also be an announcement to the broader Vic community with details on how community members can provide input to the review process should they wish to do so.

**Victoria College Enrolment Update** – A. Esterhammer briefly noted incoming and overall enrolments, which were 986 current incoming students and a total Victoria College enrolment at 4,115. As usual, the Registrar will give a fuller report on enrolment patterns at the November VCC meeting.

**Working Group on Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in Victoria College Academic Programs** –

A. Esterhammer reported that the Working Group was established and began meeting last academic year. It will continue this year with returning and new membership under the co-facilitation of Grase Kim, Jonathan Hamilton-Diabo, Shane Joy, and Lesa Williams-George. Lesa joined Victoria University at the end of August in the new role of Director of Equity, Inclusion & Transformative Practices, reporting to the President's Office and working with all units at Vic U. One outcome from last year's Working Group discussions was to develop new webpages on EDI initiatives and resources in Victoria College programs. Some of the program webpages were added to the website during the summer; they will continue to be updated going forward.

**Vic Global** – A. Esterhammer provided an overview of the international internships supported by the Vic Global program. Over 60 Vic students and students in Vic-sponsored academic programs have received funds. In the past summer and the past academic year, students completed international experiential learning courses in destinations that included South Korea, New Zealand, Japan, England, Germany, France, and Greece. Thanks go to the program's coordinator throughout last year, Maral Attar-Zadeh, for her work liaising with students and with the Registrar's Office to help Vic Global achieve its goal of supporting students, especially those from underrepresented groups who might otherwise not have been able to go on an international internship, and raising awareness about international opportunities for Vic students more generally. Wanda Thorne has taken on responsibility for coordinating the program as it continues to support outbound students and also enters a new phase with the appointment of returning students as "Vic Global Ambassadors." The Ambassadors will help to publicize the program and international opportunities more generally by connecting with their peers and sharing their experiences.

**Scholars-in-Residence** – A. Esterhammer reported that in May 2023, the SiR program was its largest to date with 38 research projects. The Call for Proposals from faculty supervisors for the May 2024 program will be circulated by the beginning of October, with a deadline of November 15 for faculty to propose projects.

**Academic Program Updates** – A. Esterhammer shared two program updates related to an upcoming University of Toronto Quality Assurance Process (UTQAP) review and a new major program proposal.

- (a) A regular UTQAP review of the Literature and Critical Theory program will occur this year. As with the last review of 2015-16, LCT is being reviewed together with the graduate program in Comparative Literature. Thank you to Program Coordinator Shaun Ross for drafting the bulk of the self-study document and to Grase Kim for support of the entire process. A UTQAP review involves an in-person site visit by a panel of three external reviewers, which will take place on Wednesday and Thursday, February 7-8, 2024. The review panel members are Prof. Patricia Badir, English, University of British Columbia, Prof. Ayesha Ramachandran, Comparative Literature, Yale University, and Prof. Krzysztof Ziarek, Comparative Literature, University at Buffalo;
- (b) Creativity & Society Major Program proposal: VCC members will recall that the proposal to expand the Minor in Creative Expression & Society to a Major in Creativity & Society was unanimously and enthusiastically approved by Council in April 2022; it was supported by Memoranda of Agreement

with several Arts & Science departments and the Faculty of Music. On its way through the lengthy governance approval process at the University of Toronto, the proposal passed through many stages of consultation and received positive responses from tri-campus Chairs and Deans, and supportive feedback from the Office of the Vice-Provost Academic Programs. Unfortunately, a few weeks ago the Dean’s Office in the Faculty of Arts & Science reconsidered its priorities and withdrew its support for the Major. Given the substantial faculty resources and infrastructure that Victoria University has committed to the program, as well as continuing strong demand from students and support from program faculty in Victoria College and several other units, Creativity & Society remains Vic’s highest academic priority. Creative thinking will be called for in the next phase of development, which might include working with new partners and/or developing further Vic-only initiatives in this area.

**Discussion:** Several members of Council expressed concern about the FAS decision, and questions were asked regarding what may have led FAS to withdraw their support of the new Creativity & Society Major. It was noted that the original proposal outlined valid and legitimate reasons to pursue a Major in Creativity & Society. Suggestions for next actions included organizing a brainstorming session to generate new approaches, establishing a series of new Minors that in the future could eventually be consolidated to form a new Major, appealing the FAS decision, and sending a formal request to FAS for a further explanation on why their support for new programs has changed.

**4. Report of the Academic Committee (E. Istrate)**

E. Istrate announced the Creative Expression & Society Minor has been renamed Creativity & Society, and now includes one core, required course: CRE201, *Introduction to Creativity and Society*.

E. Istrate also presented an update on program enrolments showing growth in the number of students in upper-year programs. Overall enrolment increased from 525 students in 2022 to 708 students in 2023. This is a growth of almost 35%. The following is the breakdown by program:

- Literature & Critical Theory (Specialist, Major, Minor) has grown from 104 to 108 students
- Renaissance Studies (Specialist, Major, Minor) is almost steady, going from 24 to 23 students
- Creativity and Society (Minor) has grown from 183 to 223 students
- Education and Society (Minor) has grown from 110 to 156 students
- Material Culture and Semiotics (Minor) has grown from 35 to 62 students
- Science, Technology, and Society (Minor) has grown from 69 to 136 students (growth of +97%)

See table below for more details:

Program	Type	2023			2022
Literature & Critical Theory	Major	55	Comp Lit: 22	Cultural Theory: 33	60
Literature & Critical Theory	Specialist	8	Comp Lit: 3	Cultural Theory: 5	5
Literature & Critical Theory	Minor	45			39
Renaissance Studies	Major	8			7
Renaissance Studies	Specialist	4			0
Renaissance Studies	Minor	11			17
Creativity & Society	Minor	223			183
Education and Society	Minor	156			110
Material Culture & Semiotics	Minor	62			35
Science, Technology & Society	Minor	136			69
Total		708			525

E. Istrate reported First-Year programs enrolments were also going strong, with Vic One enrolment growing from 204 last year to 217 now and most of the Vic One Hundred courses were full.

The Academic Committee will be planning for this year's course additions and minor program modifications including five new courses, on topics such as "Social Justice in Education," "Art from the Archive," "How to be Creative," and "Race and Power in the Renaissance."

**5. Report of the Fellows Committee**

A. Komaromi indicated that on September 8, 2023, the Fellows Committee met to review the list of Junior Fellows for renewals and new status. A. Komaromi presented the following motion for approval:

**MOTION** to accept the recommendation of the Fellows Committee for the appointment of Junior Fellows as presented.

The motion was moved by A. Komaromi and seconded by A. Urbancic. The motion was passed *nem. con.*

**Discussion:** A question was asked about whether Junior Fellows were asked to renew their status or if the renewal is automatic each year. A. Komaromi stated that each individual was approached to confirm their interest in a renewal prior to their nomination to VCC.

Other events planned by the Fellows Committee will include a welcome reception for Junior Fellows, the Fellows Lunch Colloquium series, and a new event called "Pecha Kucha" to occur in January 2024.

**6. Report of VUSAC (C. Miranda-Radbord)**

VUSAC offered office hours (25-30 hours per week) this summer. Approximately 630 students visited the office from May to August, demonstrating the importance of VUSAC services and resources to Victoria College students. Hiring in May was competitive with 18 applications for five staff positions and 36 applications for five co-chair positions. Following difficulties encountered during the Spring 2023 elections, the VUSAC President formed a working group. VUSAC plans to transition to a ranked voting system and have increased control over the voting platform with all elections functions transferred to the website. Additional working groups were formed to amend the Budget Steering Policy and Equitable Hiring Policy, both of which had not been reviewed in over two years. At the end of the summer, VUSAC ran several successful events as part of the Orientation Week programming – Commuter Orientation in mid-August, two Club Fairs, an Open House, VUSAC Social. The VUSAC Pub Night was the first pub night held by Victoria College students since the pandemic and about 160 students attended. The Fall elections cycle involved a total of 15 students running for nine councillor positions. All VUSAC elected and ex-officio positions have been filled. Although slightly lower than last year, voter turnout remained high at 11.5% of the student body.

**7. Report of the Dean of Students (K. Castle)**

K. Castle reported high student engagement this year for orientation. Most notably, international student orientation saw the highest attendance ever. There were 175 applications for 16 vacancies for Residence and Commuter Dons. The Instagram account increased from 1500 followers last year to 3000 followers this year. Ideas for the World is a program that has been running for 15 years and this year there were 98 applications for 30 student mentorship positions. Humanities for Humanity will be offered this fall and Theatre for Thought will be offered in the winter. Residences have a 99.5% occupancy. This year, new programming includes meal offerings 24/7 as a "Ned's-to-Go" option and the Goldring Student Centre will have two on-site counsellors. Other programming will involve the Vic Ready program and in-person boot camps. On October 26, 2023, the Office of the Dean of Students will host the Minding our Minds conference. This year's theme is "Supporting Student Neurodiversity and Student Wellness."

**8. Report of the Library (L. Sherlock)**

Chief Librarian, L. Sherlock reported in the Pratt library foyer an exhibition of books on the history, culture and language of Belarus was on display. The books belonged to a 2<sup>nd</sup> year student. Many books published were banned under the current government in Belarus, with many publishers setting up shop in Poland. An exhibition in November will display new items that have been added to special collections over the last few years. L. Sherlock described a recent acquisition to the Virginia Woolf/Bloomsbury collection – a copy of Virginia Woolf's 1919 book, *Kew Gardens*. What sets this copy apart is the inclusion of endpapers pasted in with a floral design, believed to be wallpaper, which complements the text of the book as an interesting example of book design happening at the Hogarth Press during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. L. Sherlock informed VCC members that Research and Writing seminars "Developing your Scholarly Voice," in collaboration with the Vic Writing Centre, would be available as online sessions for students.

**Discussion:** A query was made on how the students' book collection came to be on display in the library. The student was the winner of this year's Hoeniger Book Collection Prize. L. Sherlock indicated a call is made every year for students to identify their own collections. The winner is also awarded \$500.

**9. Report of the Northrop Frye Centre (B. Davidson)**

B. Davidson, Director of the NFC, stated his pleasure to return from his leave and recognized the excellent work of Sherry Lee as Acting Director while he was away last year. On September 15, 2023, Prof. Yairen Jerez Columbié from Dublin discussed the climate crisis and hurricane culture. On September 22, 2023, Prof. Ilaria Porciani from the University of Bologna presented on creating food heritage. B. Davidson also noted that the NFC will be hosting events in mid-October: On October 10, 2023, Prof. W. George Lovell from Queen's University will be reading from his book about conflict in Guatemala during the 1960s to the 1990s; on October 13, 2023, Prof. Siera Vercillo from UTSC Culinary Research Centre will be presenting "Participatory Action Partnership in Ghana for Global Food Sovereignty"; and on October 19, 2023, Prof. Michael Hardt from Duke University will be speaking about political movements of the 1970s (to take place in the Victoria College chapel). Public seminars on the doctoral research of this year's NFC Doctoral Fellows will occur with two in the fall and two in the winter. On January 8, 2024, UBC English professor, Dr. Mary Chapman will speak on works by author Edith Eaton, who was one of the first writers of Asian American literature. Prof. Chapman also will facilitate a workshop on online archive research. Additionally, Prof. Guillem Colom-Montero from the University of Glasgow will present on the cultural trauma resulting from mass tourism on the island of Majorca. Finally, plans have been discussed to have a post-doctoral fellow in Sociology lead a talk on ceviche.

**10. Report of Centre for Renaissance and Reformation Studies (M. Kavalier)**

M. Kavalier described a new acquisition of *Virga Directionis Ecclesiasticoru*, a conduct manual for priests, written in 1508. Priests would carry this in their pockets as a guide on what they should and should not do. This acquisition was annotated from one of its owners and provides insight on the history of reading and how people read and received these books. Another recent acquisition is *Catholicum precatationum selectissimarum enchiridion*, a book of devotional prayers for Catholics. The first edition was printed in 1565 and the CRRS acquired a last edition from 1594. The author was an advisor to a nunnery and this publication is the only edition in Canada. M. Kavalier also provided highlights from the CRRS Conference – Worlds of Conflict: Violence in the Early Modern Period, which occurred September 21-23, 2023. Prof. Stuart Carroll from the University of York discussed his book *Enmity and Violence in Early Modern Europe* on September 21, 2023, as the conference plenary keynote speaker.

**11. Other Business**

There was no other business.

The meeting adjourned at 5:17 p.m.