



MINUTES

Victoria College Council Meeting

November 18, 2024, 4:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.
Alumni Hall

Attendance: Y. Ali, M. Barath, C. Bruun, L. Carr, K. Castle, A. Chucheong, L. Colantoni, D. Cook, J. DeSilva, A. Dhand, S. Dowling, J. Duncan, M. Cichosz, P. Gooch, J. Hamilton-Diabo, A. Hernandez (Chair), E. Istrate, R. Kail, A. Keith, G. Kim, A. Komaromi, J. Liou, R. McGill, D. Ng, J. Papayiannis, W. Robins, A. Sol, M. Solovey, M. Scarci, A. Van Leeuwen, D. Wright, J. Yun, E. Zhang

Guests: A. Barc. K. Chong, A. Kazimi, T. MacKay

Regrets: R. Davidson, C. James, S. Joy, M. Kavalier, R. McEwen, A. Motsch

The meeting was called to order at 4:12 p.m. by the Chair, A. Hernandez

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

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

2. Minutes of the Meeting of October 21, 2024 (attached)

Principal Hernandez noted that a correction was made to the minutes that were circulated prior to the VCC meeting. For the Report of the Academic Committee, the total enrolment was originally reported as 791. The total enrolment for this year is 827.

MOTION: To accept the minutes with minor revision.

The motion was moved by S. Dowling and seconded by E Istrate. The motion was passed *nem. con.*

3. Report of the Principal (A. Hernandez)

The Principal's Report included updates on current initiatives as well as changes to programming and staff:

- **Update on Review of CRRS** – The Office of the Principal, Victoria College, has launched a review of the Centre for Renaissance and Reformation Studies (CRRS). In consultation with CRRS Director, Matt Kavalier and his Assistant, Natalie Oeltjen, a timeline for the review has been created with a completion date late February, in time to launch a search for the Centre's next Director. CRRS-affiliated faculty and Prof. Emerita, Mary Nyquist and current CMS and English Prof. Sebastian Sobecki have graciously agreed to serve as reviewers in the process. Next steps include a self-study of the Centre, and a series of arrangements for the review. Notice for feedback will be sent out to all Vic and Centre affiliated faculty and students in the near future.
- **Centre for Creativity** – The Centre is exploring a number of additional partnerships that will provide opportunities for our students, underwrite research and creativity among university faculty, and support complementary community organizations. One way in which this has been developed is a submitted Critical Creativity Network proposal for Phase 1 support of an ISI (Institutional Strategic Initiative). So far, we were invited to apply for the grant and issue a Statement of Support on behalf of Victoria College and FAS, following a successful Notice of Intent. Were the proposal to succeed, funding would go towards extending this network through a series of Vic-sponsored events, initiatives, and a creativity summit in preparation for a Phase 2 application. Phase 2 is intended to create a

sustainable research group and possibly prepare for further grant-writing targeted towards the securing of dedicated space for the network and the Centre for Creativity. Principal Hernandez thanked Adam Sol and Kelly Baron for their work in developing this.

- **Vic Global** – The Vic Global program, which was designed to support outward-bound learning opportunities for students at our college and in our upper-year programs will come to a close in March of 2025. The program was made possible through generous support of the federal government's Global Skills Opportunity program. Victoria College's Office of the Principal disbursed over \$400K to support 87 students to study abroad between 2022-24 and allowed us to grow key programs like our Branksome Hall Asia internship course and to expand our experiential learning portfolio more broadly. Many thanks to Wanda Thorne for her administrative support.
- **Endowed Talks and Special Plenaries** – Shortly after our last VCC meeting in October, Anishinaabe writer and journalist, Waubgeshig Rice, delivered the 2024-2025 Pelham Edgar Lecture to a packed house of Vic One students at the Bader Theatre. The speaker for our 2025 Coxford Lecture will be journalist, writer, and historian Anne Applebaum, who will deliver the lecture on Wednesday, February 5th at 4pm. While this will be part of this year's Vic One plenary series, tickets will be available to the broader university community on a first-come, first-served basis.
- **Faculty and Staff Updates** – Principal Hernandez announced that Harim Ulfig, Executive Assistant to the Principal, has accepted a new position as Executive Assistant to the Chair of the Physics Department at UoFT. Her last day will be November 26th. She has been a vital part of the Principal's Office for over three years, and A. Hernandez stated he has been impressed with her problem-solving abilities, organizational skills, and initiative during his time as Principal. He thanked her and wished her all the best on this next phase of her career.

4. Report of the Registrar (Y. Ali and T. MacKay)

Y. Ali reported on enrolment statistics:

- 1,111 was reported in the official November 1, 2024, count of new students
- 4,234 was the total number of first-degree students, representing 13.4% of the FAS population
- Victoria College represented 18.5% of the FAS students on outbound exchanges during 2023-2024
- International students came predominantly from the USA (n=61), China (n=57), and Türkiye (n=13)
- Largest numbers of domestic out-of-province students (n=350) came from BC (n=199), Alberta (n=71)
- The top two academic programs were Statistics minor (n=283) and Economics major (n=228)
- 38.3% of the Vic degree student population who registered in Fall 2024 are on the FAS Dean's List
- Most students last year completed their degrees in four years (68.5% Vic compared to 60.4% FAS)
- For the June and November 2024 convocation, 53.9% of Vic students and 73.9% of Vic One students, compared to 40.9% FAS, graduated with High Distinction (graduation CGPA of 3.50 or higher)
- The full Registrar's Report on Enrolment will be circulated to VCC members

T. MacKay, Manager of Student Success & Academic Advising, provided an overview of advising activities:

- Over 2,000 drop-in appointments were made from September 2023 to August 2024
- More than 10,000 emails, 4,000+ phone calls, and close to 1,200 walk-ins as of November 8, 2024
- One-on-one advising (drop-ins and appointments) in 2024 will likely surpass 2023 numbers
- Student preference appears to be approximately 1/3 in-person and 2/3 online
- Open Vic, an on-site welcome of new students hosted every June, exceeded space capacity for the first time this summer and necessitated two different sessions
- Other advising activities hosted were lunch time seminars and targeted outreach to academically vulnerable students (i.e. low GPA and placed on probation)
- A new initiative this year involved our Learning Strategist contacting students on suspension
- Also new this year is an Academic Advisor Equity & Outreach role to plan recruitment and transition events for BIPOC students, including the VOLT (Victoria Opportunities for Leaders of Tomorrow) program with enhanced supports for Black and Indigenous students
- The full Academic Advising report will be circulated to VCC members

Discussion: W. Robins asked how many students are participating in the VOLT program. T. MacKay indicated there are 19 students, 14 of which received Opportunity Awards.

5. Report of the Dean of Students (K. Castle)

K. Castle announced a new program called Vic Volunteers in partnership with Daniels Spectrum in Regent Park. This year, 23 Vic students worked with 94 Regent Park students as part of a community-based initiative. The Office of the Dean of Students also strived to strengthen the bridge between Emmanuel College and Victoria College with counselling interns, which provides students in Emmanuel College's Master of Psychospiritual Studies with in-house placements at Victoria College. Through this partnership, one-on-one appointments for personal counselling are made available to Vic students. Sessions for civil discourse on difficult issues on Tuesdays in November allow students to discuss the U.S. election, Israel-Palestine crisis, and gender identity. Campus (Re)Conciliations will occur on March 20, 2025, and will mark the 10th anniversary of the TRC Commission report. Jacqueline Ottmann, President of First Nations University of Canada, will be the guest speaker for the event. Other upcoming events include January re-orientation for students who are neurodiverse and for students who missed the fall orientation. This year, UofT will participate in the NSSE (National Survey of Student Engagement) survey to collect data on student involvement and academic engagement. Additional data will be collected for the SERU (Student Experience in the Research University) and MSL (Multi-institutional Study of Leadership) surveys. Results to be reported as they become available.

6. Report of the Academic Committee (E. Istrate)

E. Istrate provided a brief report on behalf of the Academic Committee, as there have been no meetings of the Academic Committee since the previous VCC meeting. The Faculty of Arts and Science Curriculum Committee meeting will take place later in the week, and proposals by our Academic Committee will be considered.

7. Report of Research Committee (A. Hernandez on behalf of C. James)

C. James, chair of this year's Research Committee, sent his regrets. Principal Hernandez provided the Fall 2024 Report of the Research Committee. This fall, there were a record number of grant applications. All seven conference travel grant applications were awarded funds with some receiving partial funding. The total amount requested for research grants was over \$32K and approximately half the amount was awarded. All three publication grants were awarded the full requested amounts. A total of \$19,114.84 remain for conference travel and research grants and \$31,020 for publication grants to be awarded in the second round of grant competition next semester. Summary charts are provided below:

Conference Travel Grants	
	Fall 2024
Grants Requested	7
Grants Awarded	7
Amount Requested	\$10,248.16
Amount Awarded	\$ 9,985.16

Research Grants	Fall 2024
Grants Requested	11
Grants Awarded	7
Amount Requested	\$32,360.00
Amount Awarded	\$15,900.00

Publication Grants	Fall 2024
Grants Requested	3
Grants Awarded	3
Amount Requested	\$18,980.00
Amount Awarded	\$18,980.00

TOTAL GRANTS Fall 2024	
All Grants Requested	21
All Grants Awarded	17
Amount Requested	\$ 61,588.16
Amount Awarded	\$ 44,865.16

TOTAL GRANTS Remaining 2024-2025	
Conference and Research Grants	
Amount Available	\$ 45,000.00
Amount Granted	\$ 25,885.16
Amount Remaining	\$ 19,114.84
Publication Grants	
Amount Available	\$ 50,000.00
Amount Granted	\$ 18,980.00
Amount Remaining	\$ 31,020.00

8. Report of the President (A. Hernandez on behalf of R. McEwen)

President McEwen sent her regrets. A. Hernandez read the President's Report on her behalf:

- **Staff Introductions** – The President's Report highlighted new staff this year, including A. Hernandez as the new Victoria College Principal. Other announcements included Keith Thomas as the new chair of the Board of Regents and Roma Kail as the Interim Chief Librarian. The President's Office will initiate the search process for a new Chief Librarian with the hope to have the person in place by summer 2025. A. Hernandez also expressed gratitude on R. McEwen's behalf to Vikas Mehta and Anthony Yeung for stepping in as interim leaders while searching for a new Bursar/Chief Administrative Officer. The posting for the position has been advertised and will close in early December.
- **Campus Developments** – The recently renovated 2nd floor of the Goldring Student Centre opened in time for the start of the new academic year. New spaces were introduced, including spaces for academic advising, the Writing Centre, Wellness Counselling, and seating for students. The Office of the Registrar & Academic Advising has moved from Northrop Frye Hall to the 3rd floor of Goldring Student Centre. This completes a centralisation of student service supports – a goal planned for many years. Currently Alumni Affairs & Advancement, Communications, Capital Projects, and Equity, Inclusion & Transformative Practices staff are located in Northrop Frye Hall.
- **Ongoing Construction Projects** – The Indigenous Healing Garden, scheduled to open in May 2025, will coincide with centennial celebrations for the United Church of Canada. An accessible, heated walkway to Emmanuel College will be part of the construction. Other projects include a new Holography Lab in the basement of Emmanuel College (completed November 2024), the Vic Chapel renovation with completion targeted for summer 2025, and Birge Carnegie completion targeted for 2027.
- **Future Plans** – A comprehensive campus capital plan, called Vic Vision 2060, will detail the philosophy

and plan for the entire campus, including all of Vic U's buildings. The Victoria University's transition to the University Pension Plan will occur in January 2025.

Questions regarding any of the items of the President's Report can be directed to vic.president@utoronto.ca.

9. Report of VUSAC (J. Yun)

VUSAC President J. Yun provided an update on VUSAC activities, including the addition of Sunethma Munasinghe as the new VUSAC Communications Coordinator, the Fall 2024 Semi-Annual VUSAC Report, a Diwali dinner co-hosted by the Equity Commission, Arts & Culture Commission, and Scarlet & Gold Commission, a "Petals for a Purpose Event" organized by the Sustainability Commission, a Wellness Walk to Casa Loma planned by the Mental Health Commission, and a Home for the Holidays event sponsored by the Commuter Commission. Additionally, students had opportunities to talk to VUSAC executive members with themed office hours such as "Talk about Caucus with the VUSAC Execs" and a "Do-nut Stress with the VUSAC Execs." The Fall Caucus on November 22, 2024, will discuss student spaces in the Goldring Student Centre and reports from student organizations. The National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women on December 6, 2024, is also the first day of exams. Programming will be planned the week leading up to the 6th to allow more students to be involved. With the help of Dean of Students Office, VUSAC will make white ribbon pins for students to wear, have cork boards where students could write notes, and collaborate with Gather in the Goldring to hold white paper rose-making workshops. Other activities include reviewing Council policies, creating a Vic Student Leadership Resource Guide, and securing a venue for their Highball event.

10. Report of the Library (R. Kail)

R. Kail reported on the Victoria College annual book sale, one of the largest annual volunteer fundraisers on campus raising significant funds for a library. Funds are used to pay for restoration or books, student scholarships and bursaries, and some student positions. The book sale would not be possible without the hard work of librarians, Nancy Ruhnke as book sale manager, a group of dedicated volunteers, and generous donors (faculty, staff, alumni, and families with a connection to Victoria College). This year lineups started at 7 a.m. on the first day and included over 5,000 transactions, resulting in the highest total sales to date of \$122,000. This year's book sale was dedicated to former Chief Librarian Lisa Sherlock. The library also supports students in at least five ways: course specific research instruction; research consultations; reference assistance; personal librarian program; and workshops on developing a scholarly voice (in collaboration with the Writing Centre).

11. Other Business

A. Sol highlighted Centre for Creativity events, including a recent Faculty Reading Series event with John Reibetanz and Kate Cayley on November 6, 2024, a panel discussion "Doing Good and Making Good: Creativity, Celebrity and Purpose-Driven Advertising" on November 21, 2024, with Sunil Johal as member of the panel, and a workshop on handmade bookmarks in the Bibliography Room at Massey College on November 27, 2024. K. Castle noted that on November 25, 2024, Pamela Cross, author of "And Sometimes They Kill You – confronting the Epidemic of Intimate Partner Violence" will be in conversation with Farrah Khan, award-winning human rights and gender equity educator.

E. Istrate motioned to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 5:24 p.m.