



MINUTES

Victoria College Council Meeting

September 29, 2025, 4:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.
Alumni Hall

Attendance: Y. Ali, H. Barseghyan, K. Bartlett, C. Battershill, K. Castle, W. Cecil, M. Cichosz, J. Cochrane, D. Cook, R. Davidson, J. DeSilva, J. Duncan, L. Emrich, A. Furness, P. Gooch, H. Greenberg, A. Hernandez, E. Istrate, A. Kong, R. Kijima, G. Kim, C. Krmpotich, M. LaFosse, J. LeBlanc, S. Lee, C. Lewis, R. McGill, A. Motsch, J. Rogers, S. Ross, L. Xerri, A. Sol, M. Teramura, S. Velasco, A. Van Leeuwen, I. Wells, K. Wong, T. Wong

Guests: K. Chong, R. Kail

Regrets: J. Berkovitz, D. Chariandy, A. Esterhammer, B. Havercroft, C. James, A. Keith, M. Scarci, D. Wright

The meeting was called to order at 4:11 p.m. by A. Hernandez

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

Principal Hernandez started the meeting with greetings and a land acknowledgement.

2. Minutes of the Meeting of April 22, 2025

A. Hernandez made a motion to approve the minutes.

MOTION to accept the minutes without changes.

The motion was moved by E. Istrate and seconded by J. Duncan. The motion was passed *nem. con.*

3. Report of the Principal (A. Hernandez)

A. Hernandez reported on recent developments, priorities, and initiatives in the Office of the Principal:

- i. **Victoria College Council** – A. Hernandez noted that four meetings are planned for the 2025-26 academic year with the January meeting planned to be held virtually to promote accessibility and connection.
- ii. **Staff Updates** – Staff changes and role assignments within the Office of the Principal include Lila Carr as the Front-Line Office Administrator, serving as first point of contact and administrative support for meetings, initiatives, and the *Albert Memo*; Karen Wong remains Executive Assistant and supports the fellows and a number of priority projects; the Vic First-Year Programs Liaison Officer role transitioned to Lavinia Ford; and Emma Lailey joined as Academic Resources Coordinator, a new role supporting experiential learning and student enrichment. These changes will strengthen the office's capacity to enhance programming. A. Hernandez thanked the entire staff in the Office for their work and dedication.
- iii. **Academic Programs** – Vic One continues to show strong enrolment, with ongoing work on mentorship supports, recruitment, and application processes. An inaugural Vic One Instructors Retreat led by Professor Ira Wells was held in August, addressing challenges such as AI in seminars. A. Hernandez highlighted the upcoming plenary events, including the Pelham Edgar Lecture by novelist and two-time Giller Prize winner Esi Edugyan on November 26 and the Smithies Lecture in partnership with the Temerty School of Medicine by Nobel Laureate Jennifer Doudna on October 15. Victoria College alum, entrepreneur, philanthropist, and civilian astronaut Mark Pathy delivered a talk last week on his journey from Vic to the International Space Station. Planning is in progress for this year's Coxford and Judy LaMarsh lectures. Enrolments in upper-year programs remain strong, though growth in Creativity & Society and Education & Society is approaching capacity. To support program needs, recent faculty hires include Dr. Mona LaFosse and Dr. Molly Bronstein, with a search underway for a new teaching stream

- Assistant Professor in Education & Society. The Renaissance Studies program will begin a UTQAP review this year.
- iv. **Centre for Renaissance and Reformation Studies** – A. Hernandez congratulated Professor Misha Teramura on his appointment as Director of the Centre for Renaissance and Reformation Studies.
 - v. **Centre for Creativity** – A. Hernandez reported that a Memorandum of Agreement was signed with the Toronto International Festival of Authors for collaboration on cultural festivals over the next two years.
 - vi. **Northrop Frye Centre** – The Northrop Frye Centre will continue its programming this year with a review planned as Professor Bob Davidson concludes his term as Director.
 - vii. **Fellowship** – A report on the Victoria College Fellows program is being developed, with subcommittees formed to review fellowship roles, membership, and engagement. A. Hernandez expressed thanks to Professor Andreas Motsch who has taken this on alongside other members of the Fellows Committee. Engagement in the Faculty-Student Mentorship Program remained strong, with over 170 second-year applicants and nearly 70 matched with faculty mentors; notably, all 15 Opportunity Scholars received placements through newly implemented supports.

4. Report of the Registrar's Office (Y. Ali)

Y. Ali presented the results of the 2025 Victoria College Student Experience Survey (VCSES). The survey was distributed to 4,234 undergraduate students enrolled in the 2024–25 academic year, with 1,037 responses received (24.5%). Responses were collected between January 24 and February 9, 2025. The preparation of the student survey was a collaborative effort involving multiple departments at Victoria College and Victoria University, including the Office of the Registrar and Academic Advising, and the Dean of Students Office. Results were as follows:

- **Reasons for Choosing Vic:** Students cited campus beauty, scholarships/bursaries, and academic reputation as top reasons. Sense of community, residence options, and specialized academic programs were also influential.
- **Overall Results:** 93% of students indicated they would recommend Vic to a friend or family member.
- **Student Services:** High satisfaction with library services (82%), academic advising (79%), career/education support (70%), learning strategies (72%). Students noted challenges with appointment availability and expressed interest in more research and mentorship opportunities.
- **Campus Life & Residence:** 67% attended Vic-affiliated events; ~50% engaged in clubs, levies, or leadership. 79% of residence students reported a positive impact on belonging. Commuter students reported lower engagement levels compared to residence students.
- **Academic Programs & Research:** Vic One program highly valued with 85% found it improved academic experience. ~25% of students engaged in research; many requested more opportunities at entry-level.
- **Communications:** Students prefer email, but also value multiple channels (website, Quercus, posters). Top requested info: academic opportunities, financial aid, research/employment.
- **Building & Facilities:** 91% appreciate Vic's green spaces. 88% say buildings are well-kept. Areas needing improvement included accessibility, more study/workspaces, food affordability.
- **Inclusion & Belonging:** 78% of students felt comfortable being themselves at Vic; 66% felt a sense of belonging. No significant differences were observed between racialized/non-racialized and LGBTQIA2S+/non-LGBTQIA2S+ students.
- **Comparative Analyses:** Racialized vs. Non-Racialized - Differences mainly in residence and orientation experiences. Domestic vs. International - International students more likely to feel academic supports helped their success. Full-Time vs. Part-Time - Full-time students reported stronger feelings of support and wellbeing. Residence vs. Commuter - Residence students expressed stronger belonging, comfort, and feeling valued.
- **Areas for Enhancement:** Students identified needs for improved accessibility in buildings, better food affordability and options, more study and group spaces, reduced wait times for academic advising and Writing Centre, and increased supports for commuter students.
- **Student Reflections:** Positive feedback on staff support, advising, and Vic One. Appreciation for close-knit

community and welcoming campus. Areas for improvement includes better communication, more commuter opportunities, reduced advising wait times, food affordability, more wellness support.

- **Next Steps:** Administration to review survey results and identify priority areas for enhancement. Plans to share survey highlights and action steps with students to ensure transparency. The survey report will also be circulated to committee members along with the minutes.

The committee acknowledged the professional contributions of Clarissa Lau, Manager, Assessment & Analysis, Student Experience, University of Toronto. Appreciation was extended to Paul Kaita and Jasmine Amini (Office of the Registrar and Academic Advising) for their roles in the preparation, administration, and analysis of the survey, as well as their work on the report's writing and design. Thanks were also expressed to Victoria College students for their participation in the survey and for providing valuable feedback.

5. Report of the Fellows Committee (A. Motsch)

A. Motsch indicated that on September 9, 2025, the Fellows Committee met to review the list of Junior Fellows for renewals and new status (see Appendix A). A. Motsch 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. Motsch and seconded by A. Hernandez. The motion was passed *nem. con.*

Other events planned by the Fellows Committee will include a welcome reception for Junior Fellows, the Fellows Lunch Colloquium series, and a new Junior Fellows Dinner. A fellowship review has also been initiated by A. Hernandez and A. Motsch as part of efforts to strengthen the fellowship community at Victoria College. A fellowship review presentation by A. Hernandez will take place during the Vic Fellows Lunch Colloquia talk on February 24, 2026.

6. Report of the Northrop Frye Centre (R. Davidson)

R. Davidson, Director of the NFC, welcomed the new doctoral and undergraduate fellows. He confirmed the continuation of the pilot project in collaboration with the Centre for the Study of the United States (CSUS) at The Munk School. The NFC will host several events in the 2025-26 academic year, including the Doctoral Fellow Lecture Series and the NFC Annual Distinguished Lecture. On September 15, 2025, Professor Rory O'Bryen presented a lecture on the ecological, political, and cultural impact of African hippos in the Rio Magdalena, as explored through literature, film, and art. Upcoming events include the NFC Distinguished Lecture – "Salt, Stories, and Other Survival Skills" by cultural historian L. Sasha Gora, focusing on preservation, time, and environmental futures. The Dr. Sally L.D. Katary Memorial Lecture – "Death and Ritual in Statius' *Silvae*" by Professor Antony Augoustakis, examining grief, mourning, and ritual in Ancient Rome through first-century epic and lyric poetry is scheduled for November 25, 2025.

7. Report of the Centre for Renaissance and Reformation Studies (M. Teramura)

M. Teramura began by thanking the members of the Victoria College community who support the work of the CRRS, including staff in the Office of the Principal, Pratt Library, Events and Space Management, and the Office of Alumni Affairs and Advancement. The CRRS began the academic year by hosting a number of events, including a concert of seventeenth-century songs; the annual Erasmus Lecture, delivered by Prof. Yannis Hadjinicolaou, on representations of falconry across the early modern world; and a colloquium on Antwerp Mannerism. Upcoming events include a series of faculty research workshops, the Early Modern Interdisciplinary Graduate Forum, and the biannual Early Modern Celebration, which will bring together scholars and students across Toronto to share research across disciplines and geographic areas of focus with presenters from History, Spanish, English, South Asian Cultures, Architecture, Political Science, Art History, the Institute for the History and Philosophy of Science and Technology, and Old Books New Science. The CRRS is also hosting two working groups throughout the academic year, including one on the subject of "Northrop Frye's Renaissance."

8. Report of the Centre for Creativity (A. Sol)

A. Sol reported that the Centre is ramping up activities with some exciting news for the 2025-26 academic year. Thanks to the efforts of the Development Office (with special thanks to Mary Heinmaa and Louise Yearwood), funding has been secured from Sheelagh Whittaker to establish new undergraduate fellowships. These fellowships, modeled on those currently offered by the NFC, will support students working on research-creation projects. The Faculty Reading Series event, featuring, professors Camilla Gibb and Daniel Scott Tysdal, will take place on October 8, 2025, at 6:30 p.m. A major highlight for the Centre this year is a new partnership with the Toronto International Festival of Authors (TIFA). TIFA programming will take place on campus from October 29 to November 2, 2025 (during Reading Week) and will include faculty panels and a robust student volunteer program. Faculty members interested in receiving free passes to TIFA events may contact A. Sol directly at a.sol@utoronto.ca. The Centre also continues to strengthen its partnership with TIFA through the annual MOTIVE event, focused on crime and mystery novels, held on campus each summer. This initiative offers students opportunities to engage with editors and publishing professionals. A large team of volunteers will be supporting this year's TIFA events, and the full schedule is currently being finalized.

9. Other Business

A. Hernandez opened the floor for other business. R. Davidson thanked Grase Kim in the Office of the Principal for her outstanding support in helping with the NFC events during a period of reduced staffing.

A. Hernandez motioned to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 5:12 p.m.

**Appendix A
Fellows Committee Report Sep. 9, 2025 – For Information and Approval**

First Name	Last Name	Department	Nomination/Renewal
Paul	Patton	Institute for the History and Philosophy of Science and Technology	Current JF Candidate
Eva	Plesnik	Centre for Medieval Studies	Current JF Candidate
Kyle	Kinaschuk	Department of English	Current JF Candidate
Andrew	Jones	Institute for the History and Philosophy of Science and Technology	Current JF Candidate
Caleb Labbe	Phelan	Department of Music	Current JF Candidate
Christina	Pasqua	Department for Study of Religion	Current JF Candidate
Eyal Sagie	Pundik	Department of Art History	Current JF Candidate
André	Flicker	Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures	Current JF Candidate
Georgia	Ferentinou	Department of Classics	Current JF Candidate
Sophie	Feng	Centre for Comparative Literature	Current JF Candidate
Talia	Isaacson	Centre for Comparative Literature	Current JF Candidate
Jamie St. Clair	Collings	Dept. of History	Current JF Candidate
Myriam	Iuorio	Institute for the History and Philosophy of Science and Technology	Current JF Candidate
Noah	Khan	Victoria University, OISE	Current JF Candidate
Donald	McCarthy	Victoria University, JHI, Classics	Current JF Candidate
Joseph	McLaughlin	Dept. of English	Current JF Candidate
Sarina	Simmons	Dept. for the Study of Religion	Current JF Candidate
Lucas	Simpson	Dept. of English	Current JF Candidate
Heather	Smith	Dept. of History	Current JF Candidate
Teresa	Valentini	Dept. of Italian Studies	Current JF Candidate
Hannah	Volland	Dept. of French	New JF Candidate
Matthew	McLaughlin	Institute for the History and Philosophy of Science and Technology	New JF Candidate
Aosheng	Gu	Victoria College	New JF Candidate
Jacob	Burtenshaw	Dept. of Music	New JF Candidate
Ami	Xherro	Centre for Comparative Literature	New JF Candidate
Benjamin	Meyerson	Centre for Comparative Literature	New JF Candidate
Josiah	Lamb	Dept. of English	New JF Candidate