



MINUTES

Victoria College Council Meeting

November 24, 2025, 4:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.
Vic Chapel (VC213)

Attendance: Y. Ali, H. Barseghyan, K. Bartlett, H. Barseghyan, C. Battershill, D. Bender, C. Bruun, K. Castle, M. Cichosz, Y. Cleovoulou, D. Cook, R. Davidson, J. DeSilva, J. Duncan, A. Furness, P. Gooch, A. Hernandez, E. Istrate, C. James, R. Kijima, G. Kim, A. Kong, S. Lee, R. McEwen, R. McGill, A. Motsch, J. Papayiannis, R. Patra, J. Rogers, S. Ross, L. Somigli, A. Sol, M. Solovey, M. Teramura, M. Vicedo, I. Wells, K. Wong, T. Wong, L. Xerri, A. Yip

Guests: R. Kail

Regrets: J. Berkovitz, W. Cecil, L. Dacome, A. Esterhammer, Y. Fehige, A. Keith, J. LeBlanc, M. Scarci, A. Van Leeuwen

The meeting was called to order at 4:11 p.m. by the Chair, 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 September 29, 2025

A. Hernandez made a motion to approve the minutes.

MOTION to accept the minutes without changes.

The motion was moved by I. Wells and seconded by A. Motsch. The motion was passed *nem. con.*

3. Report of the President (R. McEwen)

The President's Report highlighted both public perceptions of universities and key insights into undergraduate education. The report noted that 56% of Canadians now view universities positively—a six-point increase from 2024—with strong recognition of their role in providing relevant skills, supporting healthcare, and contributing to community well-being. It also emphasized that 85% of university attendees report significant personal value from their education, though affordability and student debt remain major concerns, driving strong public support for increased provincial and federal investment.

Additional data showed youth unemployment at 14.5% and persistent employer hiring challenges, with 59% reporting difficulty finding qualified candidates and 42% of youth-held tasks at risk of automation. University graduates continue to achieve strong outcomes, with a 4.7% unemployment rate and significantly higher lifetime earnings. Work-integrated learning remains a key priority, with nearly 98,876 enrolments in 2024—91% in co-op programs—and clear evidence of its impact on job readiness. R. McEwen emphasized the need to bridge communication gaps to better convey the personal and societal benefits of university education. Federal initiatives were also outlined, including the 2025 Federal Budget's four themes—Harnessing Our Strengths, Building Our Nation, Unifying Our Economy, and Diversifying Our Trade—and its plan to balance spending by 2028-29, positioning universities as central partners in innovation and talent development. Budget 2025 includes major investments in research and defense innovation, such as funding for BOREALIS, quantum technology adoption, and dual-use technology development across key sectors. The budget plan also introduces \$51B in community infrastructure funding over ten years, with universities newly eligible; \$17.2B of this total is directed toward housing, health facilities, and post-secondary institutions. Additional measures include youth employment

investments supporting over 150,000 work-integrated and summer placements, revised immigration targets reducing study permit allocations to 155,000 in 2026, and a \$925.6M investment in sovereign public AI infrastructure. Finally, access to Canada Student Grants for full-time students will be restricted to those attending public and eligible non-profit private institutions within Canada, while internationally, federal loans and grants will generally be limited to students enrolled in public institutions abroad, to ensure alignment with public interest and quality standards.

4. Report of the Principal (A. Hernandez)

A. Hernandez reported on the ongoing development and advancement of priority projects within the Office of the Principal:

- i. **Vic One Program** – Targeted refinements to the Vic One program continue, including the pilot introduction of interviews for two streams and early efforts to expand underserved streams—particularly Pearson, Chambers, and Stowe-Gullen. A new partnership with the Temerty Faculty of Medicine supported this year’s Smithies Lecture featuring Nobel Laureate Prof. Jennifer Doudna, with hopes to continue this collaboration. First-Year Programs Liaison Officer, Lavinia Ford, has strengthened mentorship across streams, and work is underway to enhance recruitment in collaboration with OFR Lisa Feng and the ORAA, including for Vic Opportunity Scholars. The Acting FAS Dean, Stephen Wright, has also announced a forthcoming review of the Ones programs. A. Hernandez highlighted the upcoming 2025 Pelham Edgar Lecture, which will be delivered by celebrated novelist and two-time Giller Prize winner Esi Edugyan.
- ii. **Experiential Learning Expansion** – Victoria College is progressing on its priority to broaden experiential learning opportunities for students. Academic Resources Coordinator, Emma Lailey, is mapping current activities to better scale programming. Key initiatives include pursuing donor-supported, needs-based funding for work-integrated learning and collaborating with the Reach Alliance—an organization that conducts case-study research on sustainable development goals—to support Vic students who are accepted into the program. Faculty were invited to bring forward additional ideas for experiential components in courses or programs.
- iii. **Fellows Program Review** – A. Hernandez reported that work is underway on a comprehensive review of the Fellows program. A historical report outlining the program’s context and evolution at Vic is nearing completion, after which subcommittees will examine fellowship policies and the associated rights and responsibilities. Consultations with Fellows will take place in the Winter term, including a fellowship consultation session during a Fellows Lunch Colloquium in the VUCR on February 24, and members were encouraged to participate and provide feedback. In parallel, the VUCR space is being refreshed with upgrades to the AV system, lighting, and furnishings to create a more welcoming environment for faculty and Fellows.
- iv. **Cyclical Reviews** – The inaugural review of the Northrop Frye Centre is underway, with a site visit scheduled for January 16. Members may have received invitations to meet with the reviewers, Profs. Alison Keith and Pamela Klassen—both Vic Fellows—and a general call for feedback about the Centre is expected. Following the review, the College will recognize Prof. Bob Davidson’s tenure before launching a search for a new Director. The UTQAP review of the Renaissance Studies program has also begun, with nearly twenty potential reviewers submitted. Profs. Shaun Ross, Ira Wells, and Alex Hernandez will meet with student representatives this week to coordinate undergraduate feedback. The self-study will be completed over the summer, with the site visit scheduled for the following academic year.
- v. **Hiring Updates** – The search for a teaching-stream Assistant Professor in Education, supporting the Education & Society program, is well underway, with invitations to candidate teaching presentations and meet-and-greets expected in the Winter term. The College has also submitted two hiring-line requests: a joint request with Woodsworth College for a teaching-stream scholar in Renaissance Studies, and a collaborative request with French and St. Michael College’s Book & Media History for a scholar of French early modernity. A. Hernandez noted that securing a hiring line remains highly competitive, with only 20 appointments available across FAS in this cycle.

- vi. **Acknowledgements and Other Business** – Thanks were extended to staff and colleagues supporting the Office of the Principal, including Grase Kim, Karen Wong, Ira Wells, Wanda Thorne, Lavinia Ford, Emma Lailey, and Lila Carr.

5. Report of the Registrar’s Office (Y. Ali)

The Registrar, Y. Ali, presented the November Stats and Advising Report for 2024-25. Key highlights included the launch of the VOLT Scholars Program to support underrepresented communities, particularly Black and Indigenous students, and the successful pilot of the STAR Program (Skills Towards Academic Recovery) for suspended students returning to studies. Bursary funding increased significantly, with 727 bursaries awarded—more than double the previous year—due to targeted top-ups for UTAPS-supported students. Advising services saw growth in in-person traffic (2,483), while phone and email inquiries remained stable. The trial of 15-minute specialized one-on-one advising appointments was well received. Open Vic 2025 expanded its programming to strengthen connections with community resources. Enrollment remained stable with a 69%/31% domestic/international split, and the top programs (Statistics, Economics, Mathematics, and Computer Science) were largely unchanged, except for a decline in Immunology. Admissions saw increases in Social Sciences (10.4% to 16.1%) and decreases in Computer Science (15.5% to 11.3%). For the 2025-26 academic year, 1,027 new students were enrolled, bringing total enrollment to 4,370. Vic One admissions decreased, from 239 in 2024 to 201 in 2025, with corresponding declines in applications. Enrollment in Victoria College academic programs increased from 224 to 247, with the Creativity & Society and Education & Society Minors making up 61% of program enrollments. A total of 112 Vic students graduated in 2024. The report also introduced a new data point tracking the number of Vic students who completed a Vic program.

6. Report of the Academic Committee (I. Wells)

I. Wells began by thanking program coordinators and members of the Academic Committee for their work this term, noting that two new course proposals were recently approved by the Arts & Science Council curriculum committees. Both courses will support the College’s growing Creativity & Society Minor program. The first new course is a 200-level course, Writing About Music, which examines how critics and listening communities use language to interpret the non-representational artform of music. The course integrates musical history, listening, criticism, and analytical writing, and provides students with opportunities to explore the history of music writing and engage in their own field-based music criticism. The second course is a 300-level offering, Creativity and Artificial Intelligence, which critically examines emerging questions around AI-generated creative work, including artistic legitimacy, ethical and legal concerns, and copyright implications. The course combines research-based study of generative AI with guided experimentation and creative projects, offering an additional way to explore the intersection of science and creativity. Along with the proposed Writing About Music course, it aims to help alleviate long waitlists for program students in upcoming semesters.

7. Report of the Research Committee (A. Hernandez on behalf of Y. Fehige)

A. Hernandez provided the report of the Research Committee on behalf of the committee Chair, Prof. Yiftach Fehige who sent his regrets. This fall, there was a record number of grant applications. All four conference travel grant applications were awarded funds. The total amount requested for research grants exceeded \$20K, and approximately half of that amount was awarded. Most noticeable was the demand for publication grants with a total of \$34,375.00 funds requested. Unfortunately, the committee was only able to allocate \$30,000.00 to support publication grants for faculty and fellows. Summary charts are provided below:

Victoria College Grants Fall 2025

Conference Travel Grants	
	Fall 2025
Grants Requested	4
Grants Awarded	4
Amount Requested	\$5,772.25
Amount Awarded	\$5,772.25

TOTAL GRANTS Fall 2025	
All Grants Requested	17
All Grants Awarded	16
Amount Requested	\$ 60,397.25
Amount Awarded	\$ 52,272.25

Research Grants	
	Fall 2025
Grants Requested	8
Grants Awarded	7
Amount Requested	\$20,250.00
Amount Awarded	\$16,500.00

TOTAL GRANTS Remaining 2025-2026	
Conference and Research Grants	
Amount Available	\$ 45,000.00
Amount Granted	\$ 22,272.25
Amount Remaining	\$ 22,727.75
Publication Grants	
Amount Available	\$ 50,000.00
Amount Granted	\$ 30,000.00
Amount Remaining	\$ 20,000.00

Publication Grants	
	Fall 2025
Grants Requested	5
Grants Awarded	5
Amount Requested	\$34,375.00
Amount Awarded	\$30,000.00

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

B. Davidson, Director of the NFC, thanked everyone for attending the series of talks this fall. He expressed gratitude to the staff at the Office of the Principal, including Principal Alex Hernandez, Grase Kim, Kelly Baron, and work-study student Biew Biew Sakulwannadee, for their continued support. He highlighted the upcoming Dr. Sally L.D. Katary Memorial Lecture, "Grief, Mourning, and Ritual in Ancient Rome," to be delivered by Prof. Antony Augoustakis on November 25 at 4:00 p.m. in Alumni Hall. B. Davidson also noted that the NFC will host a Doctoral Fellows Lecture on December 2 at 4:00 p.m., titled "I Call to the Earth and Sea: Self-in-Relation and Calls to Ecological Conscience in Whitman, Oliver, Harjo, and Graham," by NFC Doctoral Fellow Bill Kroeger. He encouraged members to attend and to stay tuned for events next semester.

9. **Report of the CRRS (M. Teramura)**

M. Teramura reported on the events hosted by the CRRS in Fall 2025, including a collaborative symposium with Yale University's Early Modern Studies program, the Early Modern Celebration, and a series of faculty and graduate-student presentations. This year's international conference, "Early Modern Asexualities" will take place on January 5-7, 2026, and the annual Distinguished Visiting Scholar, Prof. R. Bin Wong of UCLA, will deliver a lecture and lead a seminar in March. The newest volume in the Essays and Studies series titled *Family Matters: Spiritual and Maternal Connections in European Art and Patronage* has just been published. The CRRS has begun collaborations with both Canadian HSS Commons and TSpace to make some of its publications open-access and with Internet Archive to host digitizations of selected rare books, an initiative led by Anna Lewis, Rare Books Digital Archivist. M. Teramura thanked staff at the Office of the Principal, Pratt Library, and Events and Space Management for their assistance throughout the semester.

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

A. Sol reported that TIFA's event during the Fall reading week was a success, with over 100 events and 90+ volunteers, focusing on experiential learning and student engagement with publishers and writers. Work-study student, Emma Ward, assisted with the Romance Festival. Special thanks were given to Princess Famaran in the Events Office, Isabel Trono (who filled in for Kelly Baron), and work study student Emma Ward. Panels were run by Victoria College, with more engagement opportunities planned for next reading week. A. Sol also reported on two recent events: the "Shelter in Text" book launch on November 12, hosted by the Centre for Creativity, which explored themes of dwelling and housing inequality through essays and creative nonfiction, and the Portfolios and Practicalities panel on November 13, which featured Creative Writing faculty (Profs. Nancy Lee, Chris Bachelder, and Richard Greene) discussing graduate school applications. The final event of the term, the Alumni Reading Series, will take place on December 2 at 6:30 p.m. in VC102. Vic alumni-authors Alex Pugsley and Lindsay Zier-Vogel will share their recent publications with the community. More events are planned for next term.

11. Report of VUSAC (R. Patra)

VUSAC President R. Patra reported progress on enhancing food security, community engagement, and VUSAC's visibility. Key initiatives include launching the \$5.50 Meal Program at Ned's Café, reallocating student organization spaces to provide dedicated offices for Vic Pride and Vic Black and hosting the first Back to School Carnival to promote wellness and community reintegration. Cultural programming expanded with Diwali celebrations, with plans for Lunar New Year and Eid, and R. Patra is working with the Alumni Office to establish a Vic Pride 2SLGBTQIA+ Student Award. Additional efforts aim to increase student access and engagement at the Goldring Centre, creating a hub for academic, social, and wellness activities in partnership with wellness dons and VUSAC's Mental Wellness Commission.

12. Other Business

A. Hernandez acknowledged the contributions of two long-standing faculty members: Prof. Ken Bartlett, who first arrived at Victoria College as an undergraduate in 1967, joined the faculty in 1979, and later received a cross-appointment in History; and Prof. Manuela Scarci, a specialist in Italian Studies and valued instructor in the Renaissance Studies program. A. Hernandez expressed appreciation for their many contributions to the College community. Members were also reminded that, as previously noted at the September VCC meeting, the January Council meeting will be held online via Microsoft Teams.

A. Sol motioned to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 5:33 p.m.