

**Victoria College Council**  
**Minutes of meeting of October 5, 2020**  
**4-6pm on Zoom**

**Attendance:** A. Esterhammer (Chair), P. Kutasi, A. Bailey, J. LeBlanc, I. Wells, R. Davidson, T. Thiele, J. Forgie, M. Vicedo, N. Gray, N. Rodriguez, A. Ferryanto, S. Luttrell, S. Rupp, W. Gotlib, J. Berkovitz, A. Sol, M. Mercuri, L. Sherlock, S. Antebi, E. Jones-Imhotep, E. Jennings, W. Robins, W. Dobias, M. Scarci, A. Alves dos Santos Rato, A. Keith, C. Battershill, M. Zhao, K. Haberl, C. Bruun, Y. Ali, S. Lee, M. Mukhtar, E. Istrate, S. Lee, A. Wong, C. Yang, M. Kavalier, A. Urbancic, K. Castle, J. Hamilton-Diabo, A. Komaromi, D. Wright, H. Murray, K. Bartlett, V. Rivas, D. Cook, L. Dacome

**Regrets:** P. Gooch, S. Ross, M. Solovey

**Guests:** A. Slater, A. Hernandez

The meeting was called to order at 4:05 pm by Chair, A. Esterhammer

**1. Welcome and Opening Remarks (A. Esterhammer)**

Angela Esterhammer welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced new and returning student members, including the new VUSAC President Michelle Zhao, as well as Nerija Gray, Katherine Haberl, Catherine Yang, Ananta Ferryanto, Taylor Thiele, Soo Yeon Lee, Will Gotlib, William Dobias, Aloysius Wong, and Mehr Mukhtar.

The Chair also welcomed colleagues appointed to Vic Fellow status earlier this year: Julia Forgie, Jonathan Hamilton-Diabo, Christer Bruun, Edward Jones-Imhotep, and Victor Rivas.

**2. Approval of minutes of the Meeting of February 10, 2020 (attached)**

The minutes of February 10, 2020 were accepted.

**MOTION** – Moved by E. Istrate, and seconded by M. Kavalier. Passed *nem con*.

**3. Business arising from the Minutes**

No additional comments regarding last minutes and are approved.

**4. Report of the President (W. Robins)**

Will Robins reported on several items for the Council: The President welcomed the members of the council both new and returning.

COVID-19 Update: The President thanked everyone for stepping up during the creative time of COVID-19, and provided three principles to follow while working under new conditions.

1. Help U of T succeed by shifting most things online and be remote, but some still in person. Some classes, residences, and research for research projects that take place on campus.
2. To decrease the density of people on campus. Employees are not on campus unless it is required, will keep numbers down. All external and internal events are cancelled, to keep traffic at a minimum.
3. To start cautiously and open in a staged way. A review of measures is in preparation for release after Thanksgiving. The Vic Reopening Committee was created to help review on a weekly basis. Special thanks to students who participated to orientation online, as it was a great success.

Planning for Winter term is currently underway for course options, mapping out different scenarios, opting for digital solutions to balance between online and in class learning. Spaces will be checked

appropriately to be in accordance with rules, and summarization of the financial implications the virus on Victoria University and the University of Toronto is being undertaken.

#### University Priorities:

W. Robins summarized what current University priorities are underway.

1. *Strategic Plan*: The Strategic Plan was in process before COVID-19, but was paused in April 2020. There is no current timeline for the Strategic Plan but there is a need to restart development, whilst learning about COVID-19 and its impact.
2. *Scaling up the Vic Ready Program*: Working with the efforts of the Dean of Students' Office, Registrar's Office, Alumni Affairs to help students prepare after University. There was a pilot in 2019-20 with 60 students and are now in a place to scale up and transition to an online format for accessibility.
3. *Develop anti-racism resources at Vic*: This is a priority at Victoria University throughout all departments, with a focus on anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism.
4. *Mental Health Support availability*: Increasing the awareness and availability of mental health resources for students. The President's office is working in conjunction with the Dean of Students' Office in addressing the inequalities of access to resources and additional stressors given the isolation of schooling from home due to COVID-19.

#### Discussion:

M. Mercuri asked how the Reopening Committee was formed and offered to help if needed. W. Robins highlighted that the Reopening Committee brings together the Head of the Human Resources department, the Head of the Physical Plant, the Chief Financial Officer, the Director of Communications, the Dean of Students, and the Victoria College Principal,, but thanked M. Mercuri and may follow up on his input.

M. Mukhtar asked to expand on the topic of developing anti-racism resources at Vic. W. Robins highlighted that all departments are thinking creatively and are reaching out to communities to receive input in development of resources on campus. He noted that Dean Castle will expand on this point during her report. He also noted that this initiative is not limited to Victoria College but involves all colleges at the University of Toronto, and any additional ideas or comments can be sent to Dean Castle.

A.Wong requested an expansion of ideas on the Mental Health Initiative, and how the pandemic plays into the initiative. K. Castle highlighted current initiatives, and noted there is now a third group of students that are impacted due to pandemic. There are now on-campus students, off-campus students, and distant students who are not even in the country who may need resources, and the Dean of Students' staff are working to connect students to resources as much as possible.

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

A.Esterhammer reported to the Council:

##### a. Fall term overview:

Enrolment at Victoria College, as at A&S and across U of T, is almost exactly on target; domestic enrolment is slightly down, but international enrolment is slightly up. A significant number of students are not in Toronto due to travel restrictions or for other reasons, and they are taking U of T courses from their home country or province.

U of T-wide, fewer than 10% of students are registered in an in-person course in the Fall semester. Across Arts & Science, 20% of courses have an in-person component; the rest are online only. At Vic, the number of in-person/hybrid courses is over twice that percentage: over 40% of our courses this term are in "dual delivery" mode. This format is especially common in Vic One and Vic One Hundred first-year seminars, where Vic faculty are making special efforts to give incoming students an in-person

learning experience. It is evident how important this experience is to students; for a significant number of first-years, their Vic One or Vic One Hundred seminar is the only in-person class they have.

b. UTQAP review of VIC Minor programs:

On 27-28 February 2020, three external reviewers came for a site visit to review the VIC Minor programs in Education & Society, Creative Expression & Society, Material Culture, and Semiotics. Their report is due to be tabled at the Vice-Provost's Academic Programs and Policy Committee later this month.

The report was overall very positive and supportive. It noted that "the programs in the College provide a supportive and dynamic learning environment with interdisciplinary critical and creative engagement" and that "all [the programs] are highly respected within and beyond the University of Toronto."

The reviewers made a number of recommendations for larger and smaller changes. On the whole, these recommendations are supportive of discussions that were happening at Vic already; rather than containing anything unexpected, the UTQAP review provides an opportune moment to move forward with exciting program developments.

c. Future directions: Major in Creativity and Society:

The current Minor in Creative Expression and Society, launched in 2014, is Vic's largest academic program. Students often express the desire for more courses in this field, especially Creative Writing courses, and for a Major program. The UTQAP reviewers wrote that "there is both capacity and demand for expanding this program to a major"; we have had initial discussions with FAS about the process for introducing a Major program, and we expect to work on this proposal during the coming year together with Program Coordinator Adam Sol and Academic Programs Director Ira Wells.

Like the existing Minor, a Major program would allow students to combine workshop-style courses in Creative Writing and other art forms with interpretative and analytic seminars on the relationship between creative expression and social forces. As the reviewers noted, the program "provides a distinctive interdisciplinary and intermedial emphasis": along with courses in creative writing, music, and visual arts, it addresses other forms of creative enterprise such as social innovation and creativity in the sciences.

For this reason, a name change for the proposed Major and the existing Minor to "Creativity and Society" is under consideration to reflect the program's broad, interdisciplinary interpretation of creativity. More information will be coming to Council at future meetings.

d. Future directions: Material Culture and Semiotics:

Currently, both Material Culture and Semiotics are relatively small Minor programs with about 40-50 students enrolled in each. Both programs received positive UTQAP reviews that highlighted the unique learning opportunities they provide to students, including experiential learning, as well as their engaged student communities and the relevance and applicability of the subject matter to other fields.

There are many existing intersections between Material Culture and Semiotics: the study of objects and the study of signs are complementary, as are the theoretical approaches by which they are studied. Both programs focus on processes of sense-making and meaning-making; both, as taught at Vic, have a strong orientation toward cultural studies and visual culture. In fact, most Semiotics courses currently count toward the Minor in Material Culture. Thus, there is substantial interaction and cooperation between these programs and a strong foundation for bringing them together more formally into a larger Minor in Material Culture and Semiotics.

This idea was raised in the self-study document for the UTQAP review and it was supported by the reviewers' recommendations, especially in light of changes to the discipline of Semiotics since the program was introduced some 50 years ago, and of changes to staffing, especially the retirement of the only core faculty member in Semiotics as of this year. The learning objectives of the Material Culture program would be expanded by including aspects of Semiotics such as theories of signification,

interpretation, and meaning-making that are relevant to signs and objects, including their use in symbolism, ritual, and art.

Initial consultation has taken place with program faculty and FAS about details of program modifications in preparation for moving forward with a formal proposal. Comments are welcome, now or by e-mail to me or Material Culture Program Coordinator Michael Chazan, about other factors to take into account when developing a proposal for a Major Modification to the existing Material Culture program combined with a closure of the separate Semiotics program. Students who are enrolled in the existing Minors will have the choice of transferring to the Minor in Material Culture and Semiotics or of completing their current program under the current requirements.

Related to this development: faculty who are currently teaching Semiotics have proposed to revitalize the Toronto Semiotic Circle, an informal research and discussion group that has been in existence for nearly 50 years, and to expand its activities to include Material Culture as well as other related fields. An online brain-storming session is planned, followed by presentations or colloquia that will be held online for now. If you are interested in becoming involved with the revitalized Toronto Semiotic Circle, please contact Angela Esterhammer.

*e. May 2021: Scholars in Residence:*

The SiR program in May 2020 pivoted very successfully to an online format involving 17 projects and 85 students. Based on strong student demand for in-person experiential learning opportunities and the uniqueness of Scholars-in-Residence as a residential research experience, planning has begun for an in-person SiR program in May 2021 (circumstances permitting). The call for faculty supervisors is open until November 25; the Principal's Office will be circulating it to Vic Fellows and to all relevant U of T departments in Humanities and Social Sciences. The student application period will begin in January.

**6. Academic Programs Director Update (I. Wells)**

Ira Wells updated the Council on the College's recent curriculum developments.

- a. Combined Degree Proposal – OISE - MA Child Study and Education: Any undergraduate major or specialist within the Faculty of Arts and Sciences is acceptable for the new Combined Degree Program. The critical element in the combination is Victoria College's Minor in Education and Society.

Once approved by both Faculty Councils, the proposed Combined Degree Programs will allow students interested in the teaching profession to apply to OISE's MA in Child Study and Education program in Year 3 of undergraduate study, and permits the completion of both degrees in six years.

The proposed Combined Programs will provide an excellent foundation in educational issues at the intersection of child study, education, and human development, alongside opportunities to develop as teachers ready to engage in classrooms and/or continue their academic career through doctoral study.

First date students will apply to the proposed Combined Degree Program: fall 2021, with the first registration in the program in September of 2022.

- b. Modification to admission requirements for Education & Society: As part of our recently completed UTQAP review--one of the insights brought forward by external reviewers involved the program's exclusive reliance upon PSY100H1 as a "gatekeeping" course. The reviewers noted that the field of education was once tightly aligned with psychology, but that the field has gravitated in other disciplinary directions (and notably toward sociology) in recent decades. So our proposed modification is to add SOC100H Intro to Sociology, as well as our own VIC150Y (School and Society),

to the existing PSY100H, as optional alternatives in the program's admissions requirements. The other requirement of 3.0 credits with a minimum average of 73% will remain unchanged.

c. New course proposals in Education & Society and Creative Expression & Society:

i. *Education and Society: Education in a Global Context (300 Level)*

This course provides a historical overview and contemporary analysis of perspectives and practices of international education, with a focus on international development and policy.

Rationale: The aforementioned UTQAP review recommended further emphasis on the internationalization of the program and expanding course content on global perspectives. This new course will respond to the reviewers' recommendation while drawing on the expertise of a specialist in International Education Policy.

ii. *Emerging Genres in Creative Writing (200 Level)*

This course would join existing 200-level, workshop-based creative writing courses in the program on poetry, short-fiction, and creative non-fiction. The rationale emerges from a strong student demand for a greater diversity of creative writing genres represented within the program—more creative approaches to creative writing, if you will. As essentially a “topics” course, this would give us the opportunity to regularize a particularly successful iteration as its own course down the line, or attract new instructor-practitioners with particular areas of interest.

iii. *Cultural Encounters: Identity and Transformation in the Arts. (300 Level)*

This course focuses on specific instances of cultural cross-pollination and on how these encounters are reflected in the arts. Areas of investigation might include the Harlem Renaissance, French Surrealism in the Caribbean, Bollywood / Hollywood, or the literature of contemporary Toronto.

This is a 300-level seminar course in CES, where it would find a home among courses on literary communities, and responds to a recommendation by the external evaluators – one that has taken on greater urgency and cultural heft since then – that our program curriculum adapt to reflect a heightened attentiveness to cultural diversity, especially in ways that engage with the multicultural creative communities of the GTA. The proposal further responds to the Faculty of Arts and Science's commitment to curriculum innovation in the context of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion.

iv. *Documenting Reality (300 Level)*

This is in fact not a new course, but a revision of the existing VIC371 Documentary Journalism. In this case we are proposing to update the title and calendar copy to allow more flexible and contemporary approaches to the subject matter in ways that might include, but not be limited by, journalism. An updated and more adaptable course framework will allow the program to mount the course with greater frequency going forward.

d. Program-specific course codes: Victoria College programs are coded with a common 3-letter VIC designator that appears on Acorn and on student transcripts. This change will provide a more specific 3-letter designator to appear in our program's course codes. For example, VIC346 The Idea of the Renaissance would become REN346 The Idea of the Renaissance.

Creative Expression and Society courses would assume the CRE designator.  
Literature and Critical Theory courses would become LCT courses.

Education and Society would become EDS courses  
 Material Culture MCS  
 Science and Society STV (to be confirmed)  
 Renaissance = REN.

**7. Report of the Fellows Committee (A. Esterhammer)**

A.Esterhammer, Chair of the Fellows Committee, reported to the Council on the following items.

The following Junior Fellows will be renewed for the 2020-2021 academic year.

Name
Kate Brennan
Judith Brunton
Jessica Copley
Kyle Derkson
Emily Gilbert
Gary Graham
Angela Nyhout
Paul Patton
Joel Vaughan
Hillary Walker Gugan

**MOTION** to approve the following new nominations for Junior Fellows to Victoria College:

Name	Home Department	Name of Nominator
Mohammad Jamali	Department of Italian Studies	Anne Urbancic
Brenna MacPhee	Department of History	Ken Bartlett
Eva Plesnik	Centre for Medieval Studies	Will Robins
Filippo Sposini	IHPST	Mark Solovey

Moved by A. Esterhammer, and seconded by A. Urbancic. Passed *nem con*.

A. Esterhammer then provided an update of future events with the Fellows to be determined.

**8. VUSAC activities and initiatives update (M. Zhao)**

M. Zhao provided key updates on VUSAC activities and initiatives:

- a) VUSAC elections occurred during mid-September, for positions including 8 Councillors, Equity Commissioner, and International Councillor, which is a new position. Results have been shared socially and elected members are now ratified.
- b) VUSAC is moving a majority of clubs online for the fall term. Events moved online include virtual trivia nights, documentary viewings, coffee chats, movie nights, online game nights, talent shows, *Home for the Holidays from Home*, and *The Bob (Virtual)* in November.
- c) VUSAC is currently encouraging the development of council wide, long-term advocacy projects, including the development of a BIPOC scholarship, and developing an internal VUSAC archive, with annual review of governing documents.
- d) The results of a fall 2020 survey amongst students highlighted student concerns that include: struggles in online learning and greater need for academic support, concerns and issues with WiFi connection and trying to find quiet spaces at home to attend classes, connecting with other

students online and the fear of feeling isolated, concerns about the university's plan regarding residence, campus services and in-person classes if COVID-19 escalates, and concerns about finances, particularly international student fees.

#### 9. Report of the Dean of Students (K. Castle)

Kelley Castle provided a summary from the Power-Point *Anti-Racism Consultations, Conversations and Initiatives with Students, Staff and Faculty through the Office of the Dean of Students at Victoria University*, with a focus on anti-black racism, anti-racism training, and new clubs and consultation with student groups and staff. Highlights include:

- The Dean's Advisory Committee (DAC) brings together student government, levy heads, student leaders, randomly selected students from particular groups (i.e. commuter, international, first generation, first and upper years) and selected student-facing staff (Office of the Dean of Students staff and Associate Registrar). A standing agenda item since George Floyd's death in May (and subsequent international conversations) has been Anti-Black Racism, with an emphasis on the manifestations, effects, and responses to racism on campus. This group normally meets 2-3 times per year; since March 2020, the committee has met 21 times;
- Weekly anti-black racism meetings held between the Dean's office and the Victoria Black Student Network;
- The Senior Residence and Commuter Dons had a follow-up conversation with staff in the Office of the Dean of Students to share concerns on behalf of the Don Team and to inquire about Vic responses, including incorporating more anti-racism training for dons and student-staff for the 2020/2021 school year;
- Vic BLCK and the Office of the Dean of Students will co-host an anti-racism book club during 2020/2021 academic year;
- Victoria University to hold a *Racism and Anti Racism* conference virtually this year ;
- Victoria University has created a position for an onsite BIPOC counsellor at Vic. The counsellor will provide counselling services for Black, Indigenous, and Racialized students at Victoria University in accordance with and within an anti-oppressive and anti-racist framework. Once the BIPOC counsellor is announced, the Dean of Students will provide the necessary information so that faculty and staff can refer to students to our Office to access appointments;
- Anti Racism Don Training, with changes implemented this year to better address issues of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI). Extra streams were added for New and Returning Dons. New dons focused on foundational EDI issues and equity offices on campus (ARCD, SGDO, Multi Faith, AODA), and Returning Dons did core work on current topics (this year focused on Indigenous Initiatives, history, and ways to supports Indigenous students on campus);
- Had a "Vic Talks Anti-Racism" panel discussion chaired by a student government (VUSAC) executive and our Campus Life Coordinator during orientation week. Had excellent attendance and participation, with approximately 160 students. Topics included micro-aggressions, academic hurdles and presumptions, police brutality, financial supports, intersectional oppression and mental health needs and supports;
- There is a significant focus on anti-Black racism and anti-racism more broadly in the lectures offered through programs like the Humanities for Humanity and Theatre for Thought components the Ideas for the World. *Ideas for the World* will host guest speakers and will be recorded and asynchronously available to members of the Vic community for broader viewership;
- Preliminary discussions and consultation in creating Student Mentoring with BIPOC and Alumni BIPOC, as well as scholarships for BIPOC students and looking to respond to these requests involving the President's Office, Alumni Affairs, the Dean of Students and the Registrar's Office; and
- Anti Black Racism staff training through the Victoria University Office of Human Resources, with developing training modules available to all staff with help from the Anti-Racism and Cultural

Diversity Office (ARCD) at the University of Toronto who will be leading many of the workshops and training sessions for staff at the Federated Universities.

**10. Report of the Chief Librarian (L. Sherlock)**

Lisa Sherlock provided an update on the current essential services offered by the library. The library is currently closed to visitors but are providing curbside pick up and delivery of books. Research consultations and library instruction are being provided virtually by librarians remotely. The Library program now supports over 900 VIC students. Special collection materials and manuscript collections will be made available by appointment.

The annual book sale was cancelled for 2020 due to COVID-19. The Library is currently developing a new library services platform, and an update to the library catalog starting January 7, 2021.

**11. Northrop Frye Centre update (B. Davidson)**

Bob Davidson updated the Council on the following:

- a. Northrop Frye Annual Report 2019-2020: VCC members received the Annual report. B. Davidson highlighted the work done to produce the document, and highlighted NFC events coming up in October 2020, including a talk on Gertrude Stein's *Tender Buttons*.

**12. Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies update (M. Kavalier)**

Matt Kavalier provided an update on the Centre. The new name for the Centre is now **The Centre for Renaissance and Reformation Studies**, to actively represent the activities of members in their city centres since the centre was founded in 1964. The Early Modern Interdisciplinary Graduate forum is continuing online, with over 40 participants. The Centre hopes to hold its symposium later on in the year. Two new additions to the library were highlighted, books that were heavily annotated by Early Modern readers, which complements study of reading practices in the early modern world.

The meeting ended at 5:34 pm. Moved by J. Forgie; adjourned.