



**Victoria College Council
Minutes of the meeting of September 27, 2021
4 – 6 p.m. on Zoom**

Attendance: A. Esterhammer, Y. Ali, H. Barseghyan, K. Bartlett, C. Battershill, J. Berkovitz, C. Bruun, K. Castle, L. Colantoni, D. Cook, L. Dacome, R. Davidson, J. Forgie, P. Gooch, J. Hamilton-Diabo, E. Istrate, E. Jennings, E. Jones-Imhotep, A. Keith, P. Kutasi, J. LeBlanc, Sh. Lee, So. Lee, A. Moritz, H. Murray, J. Papayiannis, J. Raguindin, W. Robins, N. Rodriguez, S. Ross, L. Sherlock, A. Sol, M. Solovey, C. Sutton, M. Teramura, A. Urbancic, M. Vicedo, I. Wells, D. Wright, C. Yang

Regrets: Y. Fehige, K. Haberl, P. Klassen, C. Krmpotich, M. Nyquist, J. Ross

Guests: A. Bailey, H. Ulfig

The meeting was called to order at 4:07 pm by the Chair, A. Esterhammer.

1. Welcome and opening remarks (A. Esterhammer)

The Chair welcomed and thanked everyone for attending the first Victoria College Council meeting of the year.

The Chair introduced Harim Ulfig, the new Executive Assistant at the Principal's Office, who joined Victoria College from the U of T Centre for Entrepreneurship. She is attending VCC taking minutes.

Next, the Chair welcomed two student representatives, Catherine Yang and Sooyeon Lee, who are with VUSAC and continuing their VCC service from last year. She welcomed a new member of the Council, Jerico Raguindin, as the VUSAC President.

2. Minutes of the Meeting of April 19, 2021 (attached)

The minutes of April 19, 2021, were accepted.

MOTION – Moved by A. Urbancic, seconded by Sh. Lee. Passed *nem com*.

3. Report of the President (W. Robins)

The President reported the following to the Council:

W. Robins commented that it makes a difference to see people in person as the university community comes back to campus. There is much enthusiasm among students who are taking classes in person and wariness about where the pandemic will go and how long it will last. Victoria University is being careful, keeping traffic at a manageable level and trying to get that balance right. The Victoria University Reopening Committee (VURC) meets weekly to discuss these issues. VURC is continually adjusting the usage of spaces considering what the University of Toronto is doing, what the province is asking for, and best practices from a public health perspective. W. Robins thanked

the members for their patience, understanding, resilience, and creativity, as readjusting will continue throughout the term.

Most of the faculty are teaching their classes and dealing with the requirements for teaching in-person, or reaching out to students who cannot be here, where the Faculty of Arts & Science is setting the ground rules. W. Robins thanked the Principal's Office and the Registrar's Office for all they have done for students and faculty at Vic.

Aftershock of COVID-19

There is a noticeable change from the summer to the fall. Since the last meeting in April, the University has had no external users or students staying on campus, including any camps or conferences. The campus was empty, except for maintenance staff and crews that came in to help take care of some capital work on buildings.

The lack of people on campus and external users is a substantial financial hit for the university. In addition to other economic issues, the university will be dealing with the financial aftershocks of COVID-19 for a while.

Space & Traffic Management

Victoria College residences have about 75% of the standard capacity at around 600 students. The students are not allowed to congregate in the dining hall, so many are outside with food in the Quad. The University continues to get the balance right for the use of different spaces, ensuring that we can support the needs of our residence students and all the students taking classes here at Vic.

There are no external events due to prioritizing internal needs. Spaces continue to have stickers or decals for social distancing. All the filtration systems at the university have been upgraded in all the classrooms—at least six air exchanges per hour, the same level used at hospitals—working with U of T to ensure that we have the best ventilation system in our classrooms.

Vaccine Mandate

It is required for anybody coming to campus to be vaccinated. Now that federated universities can use the UCheck system, W. Robins encouraged all the members to use the UCheck system (<https://ucheck.utoronto.ca/>). If anyone asking for exemptions for students, the inquiry should be directed to U of T.

The U of T UTogether website for COVID-19 (<https://www.utoronto.ca/utogether/>) provides a great deal of information. Victoria University employees can ask the Vic HR team for any information.

W. Robins found this year more confusing than last year because of the quickly changing information government announcements. However, the fact that everybody on campus is under the vaccine mandates gives a lot more comfort return to the campus.

Strategic Framework

The Strategic Framework, discussed at the April meeting, went to the Board of Regents in June, where it was approved. The newly approved Victoria University Strategic Framework for 2021 to 2026 is available at <https://vicu.utoronto.ca/about-victoria/strategic-planning/>.

It has four main pillars:

- 1) Strong and inclusive community.
- 2) Inspiring sense of place.
- 3) Outstanding academic offerings.
- 4) Signature learning experiences.

It explains the level of commitments and how the council sets representative directions. The next step is to think about how the council can advance those different commitments and set milestones for implementing the great work in the strategic framework.

The Last Year of Presidency

W. Robins noted that this is his last year of his presidency at Victoria University. The Strategic Framework has Victoria University in a great place with the directions in which it is going. So it is an opportune time to make a transition; because most of the things laid out in the Presidential Priorities have been checked off.

4. Report of the Principal (A. Esterhammer)

The Principal provided updates on ongoing projects and dates for important events coming up:

Return to campus: It's very good to be able to greet students, colleagues, and staff in person once again. At the same time, the tagline for the Fall semester has to be: it's complicated. Activities that used to be part of the everyday routine are now taking place under strange conditions, and many individual issues are arising to which we just need to find the best solutions possible under the circumstances. My heartfelt thanks to everyone who has been working hard to resolve pandemic-related problems as they arise – among others, the staff of the Registrar's Office who are dealing with an incredible number of student issues, and the staff in physical plant, my office, and Arts & Science who have been working together to ensure that instructional and study spaces are available and safe, even if classes have to be moved on short notice. Vic faculty who may need help or advice about classroom technology can turn to Emanuel Istrate, who continues to serve this year as Teaching with Technology Coordinator, and for on-the-spot classroom assistance to technician James McAdams (james.mcadams@utoronto.ca, 416-585-4521 ext 3410, or the mailroom in the basement of Old Vic). Thanks to everyone's patience, resilience, and goodwill, the semester has started off reasonably well.

Academic programs: Planning for programs and course offerings for 2022-23 is already underway. This includes regular course offerings, about which my office will soon be in touch with Vic faculty, as well as curriculum changes. Currently, the most significant curriculum project we're working on is the proposal for a new Major program in Creativity and Society, building on the popular Minor in Creative Expression and Society which has its highest enrolment ever this year. Another positive development related to the CES program is the presence of our inaugural **Shaftesbury Creative Writer-in-Residence**, Canisia Lubrin. We are honoured and delighted to have Canisia with us for this academic year to mentor students in creative writing, and to help foster creative citizenship among the Vic community with activities such as readings and a Vic One plenary lecture scheduled for November 17.

International Work-Integrated Learning: At the start of this semester, we learned that Victoria University was successful in obtaining a major grant we applied for during the summer from the Global Skills Opportunity program offered through Universities Canada. The title of our grant is **Vic International**, and the funds, which are available from now until 2025, are intended to facilitate and

increase students' ability to travel abroad and participate in work-integrated learning opportunities such as internships and placements that can range in length from a week to an academic year. Some of this funding will go to experiential learning in Victoria College programs, such as the Beijing teaching exchange in Education & Society and the Cross Cultural College program offered with our partner Kansai Gakuin University in Japan. Vic International funds will also be available to Vic students to support any opportunity in any academic program that qualifies as work-integrated or experiential learning outside of Canada; my office will be working with the Registrar's Office to implement that part of the program. This initiative is just getting underway and is of course contingent on the resumption of international travel, but please help get the word out and feel free to get in touch with me directly if you have any ideas or questions.

5. Report of the Academic Committee (I. Wells) (all items for information)

The Chair reported the following to the Council:

Victoria College will not take any major or minor curriculum proposals through the Arts and Science governance process in the Fall round this year.

The Academic Committee Chair expressed his gratitude to our Events team. It's been an unusually complicated start to the term, with many moving parts and logistical challenges. And our Events Team has been very responsive and helpful in sorting out spaces for our Victoria College courses. Thanks to Devonnia Miller, Ray De Souza, Lyndon Nobre, Vikas Mehta, and the VURC for their assistance in this challenging term.

We are now formulating our potential new program in Creativity and Society, which takes off from our existing Creative Expression and Society Minor program. The prospect of a Major was spurred by growing student demand and external evaluations in a recent UTQAP report that emphasized the capacity for expansion. Our prospective program is distinguished from similar programs, and especially creative writing programs, by an intermedial emphasis and a broader consideration of the category of creativity across the arts, sciences, and social innovation space.

There are still many steps ahead—including external appraisals in 2022 and subsequent approval at the Decanal and Vice-Provostial levels. If successful, we hope to admit our first cohort to begin courses in the Fall of 2023.

Discussion:

No questions were asked, but A. Esterhammer recognized many thumbs-ups from the members for the Creativity and Society Program Proposal.

6. Report of the Fellows Committee (R. Davidson)

The Chair reported the following to the Council:

The Fellows Committee has recommended that a new faculty member in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese, Carolina Sa Carvalho Pereira, be named an Associate, as per normal protocols when someone at one of the resident units joins the department and becomes part of the college. She has expressed eagerness to become a member.

MOTION to accept the recommendation of the Fellows Committee for the appointment of Prof. Carolina Sa Carvalho Pereira as an Associate. Moved by B. Davidson, and seconded by C. Battershill. Passed *nem con*.

We will try to do as much as we can this year to build on the momentum of the last couple of years with **Fellows Lunch Colloquia**. Hopefully, it will be a mix of some in-person, some hybrid, or just online sessions. It will start next Monday with Matt Kavalier giving a talk, "Sex and Death in Renaissance Kassel: The Remarkable Tomb of Philipp the Magnanimous." The list of other speakers will be forthcoming in a few days, including Julia Forgie, Mohammad Jamali, Sherry Lee, Gordon Rubinfeld, and myself.

Victoria University Book Launch will be on January 24, 2022, 4 – 6 p.m. to celebrate everyone's recently published books.

We will also be confirming the **Fellows Committee Welcome Reception** shortly, which will be a virtual event, open to Fellows, Junior Fellows, and Associates, like last year but a little broader.

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

K. Castle reported to the Council:

Orientation was online this year; we had 800 people registered and 600 people engaging in interactive activities, and it was terrific. We did notice more challenges than we did last year because now students can also be in-person. I am anxious about some of the things that have happened at other institutions happening at U of T. Fortunately we pride ourselves in being more likely to engage in co-curricular activities than we are to engage in massive parties.

Ideas for the World will be held online this year. We have community partners already lined up, and student mentors are signing up now. We have a **transition program** that mirrors last year's but has been expanded. We have 48 Transition Mentors, 17 International Mentors, and every single first-year student is assigned a mentor starting in June and continuing throughout the whole year. This is a huge feat in terms of its workload, but it has been great for students to have one person to connect with throughout the year. So, if students are asking about how to join and get involved, either peer level or at the staff level, you can certainly let them know that there are transition mentors that they all have access to.

The **residences** are currently at about 75% capacity. That is 600 out of our 800 beds filled plus dons. With the continuing COVID-19 situation, but in person, the management of residence has been tricky. We are happy that students in residence are vaccinated, but the side effect of having a mostly vaccinated population an unfearful population.

We have people in and out of isolation constantly. With quicker testing, we have a shorter isolation period. It is a lot of day-to-day management and emails going all over the place. Food Services, building staff, and grounds staff have been excellent trying to accommodate.

We have **mental health services** online now, which will stay online at least for this term. We have two full-time Vic-specific counsellors, a personal counsellor specifically for BIPOC students and our regular counsellor, available to students on top of the typical services from the Health and Wellness office. So, if anybody is interested, they can certainly contact our office or go directly to the Health

and Wellness office and ask for a referral.

8. VUSAC activities and initiatives update (J. Raguindin)

J. Raguindin reported to the Council:

The first-year students are eager to get involved and apply to VUSAC and clubs, levies, and different commissions. Students are coming out of this pandemic fully ready to socialize, to make friends and connections, which they have been deprived of for one and a half years. VUSAC is there to provide that, and we are eager from our end as well. The elections will wrap up tomorrow. We will have new student members to this Council and in other activities.

In terms of programs, September is starting slow, but we are excited to plan events and programs for students launching in October. In addition, we are working with the Dean's Office and levies such as the Cat's Eye Lounge and Caffiends to open in a safe and controlled way to provide more space for students to study and hang out.

In terms of advocacy, we are always taking feedback and concerns regarding our bureaucracies and what students would like to see from the Vic community and U of T.

9. Report of the Chief Librarian (L. Sherlock)

The Chief Librarian gave a report to the Council:

We reopened the doors to both the Pratt and Emmanuel Libraries on September 13 to students. A check-in process at both libraries requires library users to show us a green UCheck screen or provide us with a paper copy of the UCheck form to enter. We also ask users to tap or swipe into a unit using their T-card, which allows us to keep an eye on building capacity that we are limiting to just under 200 users at Pratt to allow for social distancing. Emmanuel Library has a much smaller limit of 15. For those without T-cards, we accept proof of registration through ACORN or confirmation of a T-Card appointment. In addition, we are limiting library entrance to U of T students, staff, and faculty. Masks must be worn at all times inside both libraries, and we will provide masks or visors to those who do not have one.

Our reference and instructional librarians are working both onsite and at home currently. All instruction and research consultations are happening online although quick reference is available on site. The Personal Librarian program, which I've reported on before at this meeting, is continuing this year – last year we supported 900 first year Vic students through the program, and I expect we will either maintain those numbers or surpass them this year. We experienced a 30 percent jump in the numbers of students taking part in the Co-Curricular Record research and writing workshops offered jointly by the writing workshop and the library last year, suggesting that perhaps online is the preferred mode for students to access these.

Library hours will be reduced somewhat from previous years. Pratt will start opening into the evening until 10 pm Monday to Friday and on Saturdays from 11 am to 5:45pm during the week of October 18th. Sunday openings will be added as of November 14. Emmanuel Library will be a 9 to 5, Monday-to-Friday operation due to online Emmanuel College classes. Currently Emmanuel's main users are undergraduate students looking for study space. The hours for both libraries can be found on their websites.

The Vic Book Sale will not be happening this fall for reasons of health and safety. We are looking at alternate ways to start selling the many donated books that have accumulated over the past two years and we're considering a pop-up shop in the front of the Pratt Library nearer to the holiday season. In the meantime, the Friends of the Library continue to arrange speakers for the Friends lectures, now online and held four times each year. On November 24 from 2-3 pm, President Emeritus Paul Gooch will be speaking on the topic "Who Can You Trust These Days? Listening to Politicians, Scientists, and Other Would-be Experts in the Information Age," an event that is jointly sponsored by the Friends and the Victoria Women's Association.

The staff of both libraries are happy to be open again and so gratified by the response of our users who seem equally pleased that they can resume borrowing books in person and sitting in the reading rooms of both libraries. It's been a long eighteen months!

10. Northrop Frye Centre update (R. Davidson)

R. Davidson reported to the Council:

It has been a pleasure as always putting together the year-end report which you all received with the agenda.

There will be two **Doctoral Fellow Lectures** this fall:

- November 16, 2021 - Dur-e-Aden, will be speaking on "The Recruitment of Individuals within Radical Right-wing Groups in Canada"
- November 30, 2021 - Marina Dumont-Gauthier, topic to be announced.

With the **Brian Merrilees lecture** as we continue to remember Brian as a fantastic scholar, a great administrator, and a wonderful guy. On November 19, John McClelland will give the Brian Merrilees lecture online on "the anatomy of writing spo"t."

NFC Annual Lecture in spring 2022 will feature Ursula Hyson from the University of California Los Angeles.

Please read **Northrop Frye Centre Annual Report 2020-2021** to get to know our Fellows better. It is great to see everybody here. I hope to see you around this upcoming semester.

Discussion:

No question was asked. The Chair thanked Amelia Bailey for supporting the NFC as the Events Coordinator.

11. Other Business

M. Solovey asked about the status of the Northrop Frye Hall redevelopment plan and how many students are doing minors in Creative Expression & Society. A. Esterhammer answered that there are 183 students in the Creative Expression & Society program this year.

Northrop Frye Hall Redevelopment Plan

W. Robins answered the question regarding the Northrop Frye Hall redevelopment plan. The building was built 55 years ago, but expected to last only 50 years, so its internal functions are past

their sell-by date. We have been thinking about what to do on the site and want to keep open the option of developing a new building.

We submitted a rezoning application to the city to see if that could be allowed. We thank you for many comments from Vic community regarding that rezoning application. The application went to the City of Toronto staff and then to the Community Council in the spring. The application was well received by the city councillors and the local community. In October, it should go to the Toronto City Council to approve the rezoning plan, allowing the redevelopment possibility.

The Board has not decided on what direction to go. In part, it has to do with negotiations with the Faculty of Arts & Science to see what kind of space needs they would have. Also, we need to understand where we are postCOVID concerning our budgetary assumptions. Finally, the city has been delayed in getting through the process of this kind of rezoning application. Once we hear from the city, we will start having discussions at the Board level about what the university would be doing, whether we keep the shell of the building and redo the interior or tear down and rebuild or something in between.

K. Castle addressed a faculty question regarding the drop-in spaces for students:

Extra Drop-in Spaces

Faculty members have been asking about places for students to go before, after, and during breaks between classes. Goldring Student Centre is open for drop-in spaces. One particularly pressing question is where people will go to eat once when the weather cools down. We are arranging for spaces around the University for that purpose. Burwash is currently for resident students only for the foreseeable future, but we will be opening a couple of other spaces: one in the Goldring Student Centre and potentially one elsewhere for students to go and eat in limited numbers and for limited amounts of time to make sure that all students have access to space.

Truth and Reconciliation Project

Lastly, we have a project going on that you can tell your students about. It is an origami project making orange flowers in recognition of Truth and Reconciliation. We will display it throughout the year. In the Goldring Student Centre, we already have 350 of them hanging down. We are expecting around 1000. It is a nice way to have students familiarize themselves with the campus and recognize reconciliation.

The Chair thanked all members for engaging in the Zoom community and for hearing about what has been happening at Victoria College and what is coming up in the coming weeks and months.

MOTION to adjourn – Moved by A. Sol and seconded by R. Davidson.

Meeting adjourned at 4:58 pm.