



## MINUTES

### Victoria College Council Meeting

February 10, 2025, 4:00 p.m. – 6:00  
p.m. Zoom

**Attendance:** Y. Ali, K. Baron, K. Chong, A. Chu Cheong, D. Cook, Y. Fehige, J. Forgie, A. Hernandez, E. Istrate, E. Jones-Imhotep, S. Joy, I. Kalmar, M. Kavalier, G. Kim, A. Komaromi, C. Lewis, R. McEwen, A. Motsch, N. Naga, J. Papayannis, M. Scarci, A. Van Leeuwen, I. Williams, J. Yun

**Guests:** M. Cichosz, C. Deinhardt, R. Kail

**Regrets:** W. Cecil, R. Davidson, J. Duncan, A. Keith

The meeting was called to order at 4:05 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 Nov 18, 2024.

**MOTION:** To accept the minutes.

The motion was moved by E. Istrate and seconded by M. Kavalier. The motion was passed *nem. con.*

#### 3. Report of the President (R. McEwen)

The President's Report included updates on four main initiatives:

- 1) Hiring: R. McEwen noted that the President's Office is making great progress on two important hires. The search for the Bursar CAO was completed, pending one motion to come through the Board of Regents. R. McEwen thanked members of the VCC for advising and supporting the process of hiring a new Bursar CAO. The Chief Librarian job was posted and will close on Feb 28, 2025.
- 2) R. McEwen noted that the construction projects were going well, both in the chapel and in Birge Carnegie. For Birge Carnegie, a rooftop garden was being added, which will have a beautiful view of the city. The accessible ramp for Emmanuel College was already installed, and the Indigenous healing garden should be open in May.
- 3) R. McEwen noted that the Pecca Kucha research day for faculty was a tremendous success. She noted that Emmanuel College faculty were well-represented on the day, and implored Victoria College faculty to turn out in greater numbers in 2026.
- 4) Finally, R. McEwen provided an update on the most recent gathering of Universities Canada, which was primarily concerned with how EDI will be represented in the universities amidst the changing political landscape. Depending on changes to the federal government, EDI may fall under the umbrella of belonging. This maintains EDI as a central tenet of Victoria College's values while also providing freedom for the university to continue its EDI work amidst changing perspectives on EDI.

Discussion: Y. Fehige asked if there was legislation against EDI coming. R. McEwen responded that it will be

dependent on if there is a change in government, but that nothing is confirmed. E. Jones-Imhotep asked if we are making pre-emptive changes or preparing a response for if the request comes. R. McEwen warned against making pre-emptive changes, saying that her concern was with strategic foresight.

#### **4. Report of the Principal (A. Hernandez)**

The Principal's Report included updates on four main concerns:

- 1) Update on Review of CRRS: A. Hernandez was happy to report that the Review of CRRS was a success, having taken place on Jan 20, 2025. Reviewers Sebastian Sobacki and Mary Nyquist undertook a long day of meetings with various stakeholders in the CRRS, Vic, and broader early modern studies community here at the University and Toronto. Early reports from the reviewers have already made clear is a "gem" at Victoria and the University of Toronto, although the full report is still forthcoming.
- 2) Centre for Creativity: A. Hernandez gave an unfortunate update on a Fall 2024 project. Victoria College and the Centre for Creativity made a proposal for Phase 1 support of an ISI (Institutional Strategic Initiative) called the Critical Creativity Network. This was following a successful notice of intent and some early vetting and the signed support of FAS to go alongside a statement of Vic's willingness to house the project. A. Hernandez was sad to report that the application for Phase 1 was unsuccessful on the basis of two main concerns. The RABISI (Research Advisory Board of the Institutional Strategic Initiative) subcommittee had questions about the financial sustainability of the proposal, presumably beyond the initial phase of the program; and second, they noted that the proposal lacked a "clearly articulated grand challenge" to which the network of creative practitioners and researchers would respond.
- 3) Endowed Talks and Special Lectures: A. Hernandez expressed thanks to everyone who supported this year's Coxford Lecture. Anne Applebaum, author at The Atlantic and senior fellow at The Agora Institute at Johns Hopkins was at the Isabel Bader Theatre on Feb 5, 2025, at 4pm to talk about her new book, *Autocracy Inc.* at which a number of fellows were present. A. Hernandez expressed gratitude to Wanda Thorne in the Office of the Principal, Victoria College for her central role in planning and executing the lecture.

The next evening, the Victoria University community celebrated the official launch of our Dr. Jean Augustine Professorship in Transformative Education by honouring Dr. Jean Augustine as part of our Black History Month celebrations. From the announcement: "[the] professorship is the first endowed professorship named after a Black Canadian woman across all 3 U of T campuses and will support the Education & Society program and the Vic One Education stream at Vic. The \$2.5M endowment will support the appointment of a professor who will specialize in Transformative Pedagogy and will drive progressive curriculum development, introduce new course offerings, and forge new community partnerships." Dr. Augustine was on hand to speak to her legacy and did so movingly for a highly engaged audience.

A. Hernandez called attention to a few exciting upcoming Victoria College related events. The first occurred on Feb 13, 2025, at 7pm in Alumni Hall and featured author Colum McCann and Diane Foley in conversation about McCann's new book, *American Mother*. Then, on Feb 26, 2025, the 2024-2025 Shaftesbury Creative Writer-in-Residence, Leila Aboulela, gave her Vic One plenary at the Bader Theatre. On Feb 27, 2025, at 6pm, "An Evening with Author Zalika Reid-Benta," was hosted alongside colleagues in the Caribbean Studies program. Reid-Benta is a graduate of both Vic and Caribbean Studies and this event celebrated her debut novel, *River Mumma*.

- 4) Faculty and Staff Updates: A. Hernandez noted that the longtime Vic Upper Year Programs Liaison Officer, Chris De Barros, took up a new position in the Department of East Asian Studies. Hiring for his replacement

was underway. A. Hernandez welcomed a new Executive Assistant to the Principal, Karen Wong, who came to Victoria College from St. Michael's College. A. Hernandez also noted that Victoria College was nearing the close of a search for a joint hire with Emmanuel College in New Testament and Sacred Literatures, which will be a one third appointment at Victoria College.

## **5. Report of the Writing Centre (M. Cichosz)**

M. Cichosz began the report by noting that the Writing Centre has moved to their permanent space on the second floor of Goldring (GSC 230), and that students have expressed gratitude for the new space. The Writing Centre's longtime instructor, Susan Riggs, retired last winter, and Dr. Michael Lapointe began in Fall 2024 to fill her place. Dr. Lapointe came to Victoria College with experience at a number of the writing centres across campus, including the Woodsworth Academic Bridging Program, Woodsworth One, and the Health Sciences Writing Centre.

M. Cichosz then provided statistics on Writing Centre usage. The Writing Centre had 161 more appointments in Fall 2024 than Fall 2023. With the fourth instructor in place, there is a 97-100% usage rate on any given week, which means that of the 70 hours of weekly, 50-minute appointments available, they are 97% filled. During the midterm exam season, the Writing Centre has had up to 25 students on a daily waiting list. In the five weeks of the winter term prior to the VCC meeting, the Writing Centre had seen 233 appointments, vs 228 the year before. M. Cichosz also noted a rise in online appointments, up to 78% from 70% the year before. M. Cichosz ended the report by noting the Writing Centre's outreach tactics from the last year, which included in-class visits, a Vic One plenary, targeted emails and social media, and word-of-mouth.

Discussion: A. Hernandez inquired about the rate of no-shows to appointments and if the Writing Centre is then able to fill the missed appointments. M. Cichosz responded that when there are no-shows, the waitlist is notified, and those appointments are filled. K. Castle noted that the Office of the Dean of Students has heard a great deal of positive feedback on the Writing Centre's work, and requested M. Cichosz to hold off on any focus groups or feedback surveys on the Writing Centre's work, as the Office of the Dean of Students had recently finished a student experience survey, and that it would be helpful to stagger the release of such surveys to the student body.

## **6. Report of VUSAC (J. Yun)**

J. Yun began by noting that the Fall 2024 caucus was a success. In a departure from previous years, it was organized as a conversation circle and focused on specific conversation topics of the student spaces at Goldring and increasing student participation at VUSAC events. J. Yun expressed gratitude to all the students and administrators who attended the caucus.

J. Yun then provided an update on winter events and projects. VUSAC's largest event of the year was the Gardiner Gala for VUSAC's Arts and Culture Commission, which was a huge success. Approximately 170 students attended the event and enjoyed the different exhibitions at the Gardiner with free food and drinks. J. Yun expressed gratitude to the Office of the Dean of Students, without whom the event would not have been possible. Upcoming winter events included the Life After Vic event, spearheaded by the Academic Commission in collaboration with Vic Ready, which discusses diverse career paths available for students after graduation. Another upcoming event is the Highball, which occurred at Dasha on Mar 21, 2025. VUSAC expected around 300 students to attend.

Finally, J. Yun noted that there are three main projects that VUSAC is working on. The first is a student event

calendar on the VUSAC website. The second is renovating the VUSAC office to do a rearrangement of the space and make it more welcoming. The third is providing office spaces to more student groups on campus, as a number of student groups were willing to share their office spaces.

## **7. Report of the Academic Committee (I. Wells)**

I. Wells expressed gratitude to E. Istrate for filling in during leave. I. Wells described one new course: a 200-level course called Science, Technology and Society: Methods and Approaches, which will be an introductory course for students to learn concepts and theoretical tools used by STS scholars, including actor network theory, the sociology of scientific knowledge, technopolitics, and the social construction of technology as well as feminist and post-colonial approaches to STS. The purpose here is to provide students with a new pathway into the STS minor program and to ensure a certain level of methodological and conceptual familiarity within the broad intellectual field of STS. I. Wells also noted that one course was retired, MCS 224Y, as it was the old approaches to material culture course which has since been replaced within the MCS program and will not be taught again.

## **8. Report of the Centre for Renaissance and Reformation Studies (M. Kavalier)**

M. Kavalier began the report by noting that he had two main discussion topics to address: first, the state of the CRRS library, and second, the upcoming events.

State of the library: the CRRS has been working on culling the standing collection of reference works, as many are out of date and can be moved to Downsvue, as they'd no longer be referred to by visitors of the Centre. Next, M. Kavalier noted that the CRRS has been working to replenish their rare book collection. He noted there are four library acquisitions that the CRRS is targeting for the 2024-2025 academic year:

- a. A Second Edition of Book of Proverbs by Erasmus, taken from Homer. The CRRS has one of the top four or five collections of Erasmus publications in the world, and they're happy that international scholars come and use the CRRS library for their research.
- b. A Catholic Bible, published by the Antwerp publisher, Christophe Plantin, in 1566. It was the first generally accredited Catholic Bible published in the Netherlands.
- c. Two architectural books on Gothic and antique architecture in North Europe: Diego de Sagredo's *Raison d'Architecture Antique* and Pieter Coecke's *General Rules of Architecture*.

Upcoming events at the CRRS: M. Kavalier noted that the CRRS is continuing their workshops, with speakers such as Lee Emrich and Mairi Cowan. Timothy Harrison and Elizabeth Harvey were both scheduled to speak about their new books. Finally, the CRRS international conference was scheduled for the end of March.

## **9. Other Business**

A. Hernandez noted that a flexible approach to the VCCs may be helpful and solicited discussion. Others noted that the online meetings weren't as great for community building but were helpful with the weather. K. Castle recommended an approach of having the first and final meetings in person, with the middle two meetings online. A. Hernandez then noted that he is exploring an end of year reception for the VCC to offset the lack of community building while the VCC is online.

E. Istrate motioned to adjourn. The motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 5:30 p.m.