Minutes of the Academic Senate of the University of Prince Edward Island

Friday, February 27, 3:00 – 5:00pm

Alumni Hall and via Teams

Present: W. Rodgers (Chair), K. Mears (Vice-Chair), A. Trowbridge, A. Hsiao, A. Weenie, A. Braithwaite, B. Linkletter, C. Campeanu, C. Chika, D. Magbanua, D. Griffon, D. Hardy Cox, E. Reid, G. Geraghty, G. Naterer, H. Sulman, H. Mady, J. McClure, J. Sentance, J. Ngobia, J. McIntyre, L. Quiroa Paredes, M. von Eccher, M. Pascal, M. Clapson, M. Sweeney-Nixon, M.A. McMahon, M. Arfken, N. Clark, N. Etkin, P. Drake, P. Bernard, P. Foley, P. Smith, R. Hoersting, B. Deziel, R. Dalton, S. Cassidy, S. Myers, S. Lloyd, S. Brown, S. Kresta, T. Mady, T. Jackson, T. Walker, W. Montelpare, W. Whelan

Regrets: I. Bhalesha, M. Buote, M. Turnbull, R. Hoersting, S. Hamilton, Y. Rashchupkina

Guests: None

Secretariat: P. Robichaud, K. Porter

OPEN SESSION

1. Call to Order, Welcome, Land Acknowledgement and Opening Remarks from Chair and Vice-Chair

The Chair calls the meeting to order at 3:01pm, welcomes Senators, and acknowledges the land.

Vice Chair welcomes new Senators.

2. Approval of Agenda

MOTION: MOVED by W. Montelpare and SECONDED by P. Drake that the agenda of Senate for February 27, 2026, be approved. CARRIED.

3. Approval of minutes of January 30, 2026

MOTION: MOVED by A. Braithwaite and SECONDED by T. Jackson that Senate approve the open minutes of January 30, 2026, as circulated. CARRIED.

Senate noted the quality and completeness of the minutes.

4. Business Arising from the Minutes of January 30, 2026

No business arising from the minutes was communicated to the Secretary prior to the meeting, and none arose from the floor.

5. Senior Administration Reports

a. President's Report

Congratulations

President Rodgers delivers her report to Senate. Congratulations are offered to Panthers for great performances across multiple men and women's sports, a sign of depth in our teams and athletic leadership.

As Svetlana Kochkina has been appointed the new University Librarian with a term starting next Monday, the President offers Senate's thanks to Simon Lloyd for his contribution to the institution on this, his last meeting of Senate and notes that he will be staying with the University in another capacity.

She extends thanks to Vice Chair Mears for chairing the January meeting of Senate in her absence.

Mission to India

Recently, the President was away on a mission, along with twenty other Canadian University Presidents and Universities Canada staff, to enhance Canada's relation with India; to convey that we are a welcoming country for international students. This was an opportunity to have prolonged and valuable engagement with other university presidents. From that engagement, it became clear that majority of Canadian Universities are not large research-focused institutions, while also not being small primarily undergraduate liberal arts universities. That middle ground needs to be defined; to clearly state what kind of institution we are. Participants heard that India would need to graduate a lot more people over the coming years, over 100 million, while it aims to pull 250M people into its active workforce. This is manifested in a desire to see some of the top 100 ranked universities in the World establish campuses in India. For us, there are many opportunities for exchanges with India. Al of this emphasizes the pressing need to build our international reputation. The experience gained and the information collected from this mission will enhance our strategies, as we aim to align with all the universities many strategies.

The unique role of UPEI

President Rodgers stressed that the University must continue the conversation about what kind of university we are. We have strength in research with a special mandate to serve our province. We have to work in partnership with our province.

Government relations

Recently, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia have taken strong steps to cut costs in the postsecondary education sector. They are keeping all options on the table, with discussions arising over amalgamations and cuts. Although the Government of New Brunswick has since walked back ideas of merging St Thomas University with UNB or privatizing Mount Allison University, this emphasizes the need for us to look to our position in the Province. University leadership had a positive first meeting with the new minister of Workforce and Advanced Learning. Our goal is to be a partner in the prosperity of the province, while maintaining our autonomy.

University Budget

Although the Province has not yet told us what is likely coming for us in the provincial budget, we are forging ahead with the best information available to us. The reduction in international student enrolment continues to hit our bottom line. We have done our best to offset this through attribution and savings and some fee increases. However, these strategies are not repeatable. We remain committed to limiting the human impact of these challenges. There is no cause for alarm at this time, but with a view to transparency, we continue to engage and share information.

Student Mixer

Yesterday, the second Student Mixer was held, which is a great opportunity to have face-to-face time with students. We hear some concerns from students and some unexpected elements that point to a need to improve our communications about our policies, fees, etc. They are looking for more opportunities to engage on campus.

b. Vice-President Academic and Research Report

Vice President Naterer speaks to some updates on research initiatives. He notes several new research grants received by members of faculty.

He provides an update on the *Curricular Coherence Initiative*, which is part of the University's *Strategic Enrolment Management Plan* and aims to improve student retention and remove unnecessary obstacles to student progress to graduation. The Teaching and Learning Center has developed curriculum coherence indicators from various sources, including the University Calendar, over the past five years. Units are asked to reflect on their program maps and to plan to improve curricular coherence and ease of student movement through their programs.

A new research funding program from the Federal Government called *Impact + Research Chairs* was announced in December with an aim to attract researchers form outside of Canada who are active in areas of importance to Canada. Several of these areas align well with UPEI's strengths. UPEI has been granted up to three Impact Chairs valued at up to $8M each at a rate of $1M per year over eight years.

The *ROMEO* research grant administration platform has reached the end of its life. After a request for proposal to replace the system, we have determined that the option is *Endpoint IQ*. It offers more flexibility, reduces administrative burden for both researchers and managers and meets all requirements for research funding in Canada. The plan is to transit all the research data over to the new system in the coming months. Thanks to the team for moving this forward.
The *Senate Committee on Teaching Evaluations* has been meeting monthly. It is considering several alternative holistic approaches for teaching evaluation, with several groups being struck to consult with the University Community. The Committee is considering inviting speakers to provide an overview of teaching evaluation methods in higher education; tentatively at the end of March.

Vice President Naterer reminds Senators of the many *Lunch and Learn* sessions hosted by the *Teaching and Learning Center*. He also notes the coming of the Annual Teaching Community Conference to be held on April 28, 2026. Information about the conference is posted on the conference website. Those who wish to submit a proposal to present at the conference have until March 9, 2026, to do so.

c. Vice-President People and Culture Report

Vice President Ngobia reports on the implementation of the Action Plan, noting the latest article – UPEI Governance 101 – which may be of interest to Senators.

Preparations for the Year 2 audit to start on May 1, 2026, are underway. To assess the cultural impact of the Action Plan, researchers have been invited to apply for a grant to develop a validated UPEI-specific cultural assessment instrument.

She notes that the University has reached an important milestone with the completion of the work of the *Fair Treatment Replacement Policy Committee* after 15 months. She noted the committee's commitment in discussing complex and contentious issues to come up with two new policies to replace the *Fair Treatment Policy*; a *Policy on Harassment* and a *Policy on Sexual Violence*. The next step is to obtain the consent of the *Faculty Association* and, when obtained, the policies will proceed to the Board of Governors for approval. Documentation outlining the process to review the Fair Treatment Policy and to develop the two replacement policies is posted on the University's website.

On March 9, an Administrative Services Fair will conclude the final phase of the Listening Tour. It is anticipated that this will become an annual event.

A key theme from the listening tour was the need for alternative approaches to conflict resolution. Community members expressed frustration with an over-reliance on rights-based processes and requested capacity-building in alternative methods. This feedback aligns with my vision for a people-centric UPEI that places community at the center of how we address challenges and celebrate success. Recent sessions have included training in navigating difficult conversations. Intensive restorative justice training for managers and supervisors will roll out over the coming months.

Vice President Ngobia indicated that collective bargaining is upon us. Management is taking a transparent approach to planning and communication about bargaining. Regular updates will be provided through established communication channels.

6. Question Period

a. Questions and Answers from Placemats

None. Chair reminds members to submit their questions using the placemat

b. Questions Received in Advance

None

c. Questions from the floor

Research Support

Q: As per the new research grant management solution, was there consideration of the US ownership of solution? **A:** M. Sweeney-Nixon: The two solutions considered are not from the US. The one chosen is from Australia. We will be the first in Canada to use it, but it is used by many universities around the world. We avoided US companies and the data will not be stored in the US.

Q: How will the new research grant management solution reduce administrative burdens? **A:** M. Sweeney-Nixon: The user interface is much more friendly. The reduction in burden is both for the researcher, for managers and those assuring compliance. This system should link to *Colleague* and help track our progress and the evolution of our graduate students.

Q: We currently use a Romeo number and a grant number. Will that change? **A:** We will have a single grant number going forward.

Q: With the new Research Grant Management System, are we using AI to mine research data? **A:** M. Sweeney-Nixon: UPEI followed a national RFP that included a privacy screening and considered AI in these systems. The information is confidential. We may want to take offline a discussion on the security of data and come back with a response at a subsequent meeting.

Q: With arising financial pressures, some researchers are looking to find their own sources of funding. However, with the current state of *Research Services,* things aren't getting done in a timely manner. There are faculty who are trying to bring in this funding from external companies, but it's taking months, if not years, for contracts to be approved. As we are transitioning from ROMEO to a new platform, what additional supports are we providing for *Research Services* so that we don't belabor this process even more? **A:** We have seen research increase significantly over the past three years. In turn, this has increased our funding through the *Indirect Cost of Research Program*. Those funds have been invested in additional resources.

Assessing the culture impact of the Action Plan

Q: After the Rubin Tomlinson Report was published, the University engaged a company to develop a survey tool to scan the community. Why not use that tool again instead of developing a new one so that comparisons over time can be made? **A:** J. Gobia: We may or may not create a new tool. We are looking to identify the right tool, which might include that from RT.

International Student Recruitment

Q: What is on the horizon for international students? **A:** Universities Canada had a few missions like the one to India. The intent is to create entry points for us in other countries. We are looking at joint programs, degrees, 2+2 programs, etc. PEI has a strong international brand that we can develop over and beyond the Canadian brand. That implies that we can market ourselves abroad, which requires more thought. Some may have noted that there has been a tightening on the granting of *Provincial Attestation Letters* (PAL). However, the number of PALs granted is still greater than our needs. Some restrictions for graduate students were lifted, but not yet for undergraduates.

7. Reports from Standing Committees

a. Senate Steering and Nominating Committee

i) Report to SSNC

The Chair directs members to the report in the meeting materials. The report is received.

ii) Report on Elections

The Chair brings Senators' attention to the report of the *Senate Steering and Nominating Committee* on the conduct of elections to Senate and committees of Senate.

The Chair reminds Senators that there remain vacancies on committees as stated in the report.

iii) Report and recommendations of the Working Group on the Composition of Senate

MOTION: MOVED by K. Mears and SECONDED by W. Montelpare that the Processes and Procedures of Senate be amended as presented.

Discussion arises over service during leave.

There is consensus that the provisions on medical leave are acceptable as presented. However, there is debate about service during sabbatical leave.

As a friendly amendment, it is agreed to remove from the proposed provisions on sabbatical leave, the text drawn from the collective agreement on the definition of sabbaticals. Arguments in favour of the modification are focused on a desire to offer flexibility to Senate who may choose to continue to engage during the sabbaticals, while arguments against speak an established practice of requiring Senators to stop service during sabbaticals, to unfairness to colleagues if some are allowed to serve while others cannot and to a simpler process of electing replacements. In the end, it is important to understand whether sabbatical leave is compatible with service as collectively bargained. To that end a motion to table the provisions dealing with sabbatical leave was put forth.

MOTION: MOVED by N. Etkin and SECONDED by J. Sentance that section 5 f) be postponed. CARRIED

Discussion follows on the seat attributed to the Faculty of Medicine. Senators noted that the Faculty of Medicine may not currently have faculty and asked about the timeline for having faculty at the FoM. The Deans of the FoM indicated that there are currently three cross-appointed faculty at the FoM. The question then becomes whether these cross-appointed faculty can serve in the Senate for the FoM. It was noted that it is important to understand who is the Dean to which these faculty members report, which is likely stated in the letters of cross appointment. Senate notes a need to clarify the status of cross-appointed faculty and to understand how those faculty members can serve in Senate.

Senators also discussed the staggering of terms. It was noted that, through the years, with some unplanned departures, the terms at Senate have become desynchronized such that there is a significant cohort of Senators due to step off at the same time. As Senators' term is for three years, a normal pattern would see roughly a third of faculty members of Senator step off each year.

The Chair called the vote on the motion, noting that it has been amended to table section 5 f). The remaining provisions are, therefore, the ones up for approval.

On the amended version of the motion: CARRIED

b. Academic Planning and Curriculum Committee

i) Sixth Curriculum Report

The Vice President Academic and Research presents the sixth curriculum report of the Academic Planning and Curriculum Committee.

<u>For the Faculty of Business, items 1 and 2 in the report</u>.

MOTION: MOVED by G. Naterer and SECONDED by T. Mady, modifications to the University Calendar and prerequisites. CARRIED

<u>For the Faculty of Sustainable Design Engineering, items 3 to 8 in the report.</u>

MOTION: MOVED by G. Naterer and SECONDED by A. Hsiao, modification to cross listing of courses and course deletions. CARRIED

Q: Can this affect resources and class size? **A:** We considered this carefully from the perspective of program strength. We believe that PhD programs should have courses at the appropriate level that provide opportunities to engage in research and "spread their wings". We believe this will improve the programs and set us up to win.

Q: There are many cross-level listed graduate courses. Where do we see this going for other programs? **A:** This is driven by an MPHEC decision that came down in the Fall, which will affect all programs. There has been a collective response to the MPHEC from Atlantic Deans of Graduate Studies indicating that we disagree. The MPHEC will allow case by case consideration but wish to have students learn in an academic environment designed for their level.

Q: In some cross-level courses, we have two syllabi being delivered in the same classroom. Have we considered that option? **A:** MPHEC will agree to this for the master's programs, but not the PhD.

Q: What about students who transit from maters to PhD programs? **A:** That is issues were are aware of. This will likely come back to the Senate soon.

<u>For the Faculty of Graduate Studies, items 9 to 13 in the report.</u>

MOTION: MOVED by G. Naterer and SECONDED by E. Reid, modification to Academic Regulation around transcript abbreviations and calendar modifications. CARRIED

<u>For the Faculty of Science</u>

Members reported that the Faculty of Science motions were not in the meeting materials. The Chair indicated that these motions will be brought back to the next Senate.

ii.) Notice prior to Assessment

MOTION: MOVED by G. Naterer and SECONDED by G. Geraghty that Senate amend the Course Registration regulation to identify expectations for documented feedback prior to the last day for course discontinuation in a semester.

Vice President Naterer reports that the committee felt that it important to provide feedback to students before the discontinuation date, while not being as prescriptive as was first proposed.

A discussion arose during which the following was raised:

- Agreement on the principle of providing meaningful feedback to students before the discontinuation date; that it is a reasonable expectation by students to receive feedback before deciding to keep or drop a course.
- The nature of the required feedback from professors is unclear, and this lack of clarity may give rise to challenges and appeals.
- A concern that this is misleading if the feedback is not tangible or quantitative.
- A sense that students should be responsible for seeking feedback from professors, as not all students need feedback; that there is pedagogy in having students come forth and engage.
- In larger groups, providing feedback to all could be time-consuming and possibly impossible before the discontinuation date.
- Some wonder if this measure should be accompanied by a discussion of the consideration of relevant dates, including discontinuation. To provide time for adequate feedback, the date could be moved back.
- What is the enforcement mechanism in implementing this? Could this lead to disciplinary measures?
- The question comes down to whether this is responding to a real problem. Are there members of faculty who refuse to provide feedback to their students; who are not available are normal consultation hours?
- Some courses might be backloaded because of their difficulty. The notion of entitlement might be removed from the proposed regulation as not to make it too prescriptive, while some believe that level of prescription is necessary for the regulation to be enforceable.

The Chair notes that there is consensus on the fundamentals, but not on the specifics. It was also noted that the Teaching and Learning Center is available to support any faculty member and instructor who may wish to engage with providing timely feedback to students.

MOTION: MOVED by N. Etkin and SECONDED by A. Braithwaite that the motion be tabled until the next meeting of Senate. CARRIED

iii) Draft UPEI Academic Plan

Given the lateness of the hour, the Chair suggests that the discussion of the Academic Plan be adjourned till the next meeting of Senate.

MOTION: MOVED by W. Montelpare and SECONDED by M. A. MacMahon that the discussion of the Academic Plan be adjourned to the next meeting of the Senate. CARRIED

The Chair noted that the allotted time is coming to an end, while there is still important business pending, namely the conferment of honorary degrees and suggests extending the meeting.

MOTION: MOVED by G. Naterer and SECONDED by N. Etkin that the meeting of Senate be extended by 15 minutes. CARRIED

8. Shout outs

- To Simon Lloyd for being a great University librarian and welcome back to faculty.
- To the Senate, as we recently have had more substantive discussions.
- Lilly MacVicar, who won gold at the Indoor Championships & University Invitational Atlantic competition in Moncton.
- To all the partners in the AVC Strategic Plan.

9. Closed Session – Conferment of Honorary Degrees

MOTION: MOVED by N. Etkin and SECONDED by S. Myers that Senate move to a closed session. CARRIED

Senators asked to have the bios of the honorees before taking a decision.

The Bios of prospective honorees will be shared with Senators, with an aim to have an electronic vote sent out on Monday and to be concluded by Friday.

MOTION: MOVED by N. Etkin and SECONDED by S. Myers that Senate move to an open session. CARRIED

10. Adjournment

There being no further business, the Chair adjourned the meeting at 5:15pm.