



**ACADEMIC COUNCIL
MINUTES OF MEETING
November 19, 2025**

The meeting was held in Labatt Hall, Room 103, and via Zoom.

COUNCILORS:

Aidan Bobkowicz
Graham Broad
Arashdeep Chahal
Adrienne Co-Dyre
John Dool *
Russell Duvernoy
Jordan Fairbairn
Josephine Gemson
Eunice Gorman
John Grant
Tom Gray
Chaya Halberstam
Erin Hannah
Joe Henry
Peter Ibbott

Liam Kennedy
Allyson Larkin
Miriam Love
Braedan Lovie *
Krista Lysack
Donna Maynard
Alison Meek
Laura Melnyk Gribble
Brian Patton
Marcie Penner
Jeff Preston
Felipe Rodrigues
Patrick Ryan
Jane Sanders

Jennifer Silcox
Derek Silva
Natalie Spruce
Karen Thomson
Renfang Tian *
Thomas Tieku
Paul Tufts
Joseph Turnbull
Robert Ventresca
Corinne Walsh *
Ruth Wilson
Paul Wilton
Mark Yenson

* Regrets
 Zoom

OBSERVERS: Karen Gingrich, Carri Rodgers-Rowley, Emma Swiatek, Ramanpreet Grewal

MINUTE TAKER: Cynthia Lessard

R. Ventresca, Chair, called the meeting to order at 2:34 p.m.

He reminded members of the meeting timeframe (2:30–4:30 p.m.), the expectation to speak once for or against a motion, and the importance of avoiding duplication in discussion.

1.0 Land Acknowledgment

R. Duvernoy, offered the land acknowledgment.

2.0 Opening Prayer

Janet Loo provided the opening prayer.

3.0 Minutes of the Meeting of October 22, 2025

Motion: To approve the minutes of the October 22, 2025 meeting as written.

Moved by: Laura Melnyk Gribble and Brian Patton

CARRIED

4.0 Committee Reports

4.1 Educational Policy Committee

Chair Mark Yenson provided a high-level overview of and rationale for the recommendation out of the special meeting of EPC.

Motion: To recommend that KUC's Board of Directors approve the formation of a School of Policy, Law, and Social Change (SPLSC) constituted by the Departments of CYS, DS, History, PIR, and SJPS according to the specific terms outlined in the "Proposal for a School of Policy, Law, and Social Change," excluding reference to restructuring of Academic Advising and the Office of the VPAD and reference to a Program Manager hire.

Moved by: Educational Policy Committee

CARRIED (23 in favour, 4 opposed, 2 abstentions)

Highlights from a 25-minute discussion:

- Members discussed the absence of start-up and personnel costs in the proposal. It was clarified that no new budget request is included, and existing stipends and space allocations would be managed within current resources.
- Concerns were raised about the zero-sum nature of the current financial environment, though it was noted that the proposal may create efficiencies through increased integration and cross-teaching.
- Strong faculty support for the proposal was noted. Members highlighted potential benefits, including sustaining smaller programs, enhancing collaboration, supporting innovative cross-disciplinary programming, improving enrolment management, and strengthening outreach and brand alignment. Potential cost efficiencies, particularly for low-enrolment courses, were also identified.
- Questions regarding governance and representation were addressed, with assurance that current structures would remain, and a hybrid model would preserve program identities. It was confirmed that the proposal does not anticipate staff reductions.
- Some reservations were expressed about impacts on departments outside the proposed school and the need for broader discussions about resourcing and sustainability. Others emphasized the proposal's potential to generate revenue, reduce structural barriers, and support long-term institutional evolution.

4.2 Scholarship and Bursary Committee

Chair J. Gemson provided a high-level overview of and rationale for the recommendation out of the Scholarship and Bursary Committee.

Supplementary information was shared regarding the addition of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) to align with the Analytics and Decision Science program, given its potential to attract students with ICT backgrounds.

Motion: That the Specialist High Skills Major Entrance Award be revised in the Automatic Entrance and Continuing Scholarship policies for both domestic and international fee-paying students to include the SHSM in Information and Communications Technology as an area of concentration that qualifies a student for the award, effective July 1, 2026.

Moved by: Scholarship and Bursary Committee

CARRIED

Highlights from a 5-minute discussion:

- Members sought clarification on the consistency of expanding the award given previous recommendations to reduce other student awards. It was noted that the ICT alignment may generate enrolment beyond the cost of the award.
- Additional clarifications included a correction to the award name, “Specialist High Skills Major.”
- Members noted the limited applicability to specific SHSM streams, and sought explanations regarding funding considerations. It was noted that the award is aligned to non-profit programs.
- Procedural context was provided regarding how SOC proposals are routed for information through EPC and Academic Council.

4.3 Governance and Nominations Committee

Chair M. Yenson presented the report from the Governance and Nominations Committee, thanking P. Wilton for his work on the draft, models, and rules of order, etc.

There was a 5-minute discussion in which A. Meek sought clarification on the draft Meetings Policy. M. Yenson noted that the policy will be referred back to the Governance and Nominations Committee with feedback for further review.

5.0 Reports

5.1 President

R. Ventresca provided an update on upcoming events, highlighting the Feast of Christ the King Lecture, *“Walking Together in the Age of Artificial Intelligence: Relationality, Community, and the Culture of Encounter”*, to be delivered by Dr. Cory Labrecque on Thursday, November 20 at 5:30 p.m.

He also reminded members of the Mass for the Feast of Christ the King on Sunday, November 23 at 10:00 a.m., with the academic procession gathering at 9:30 a.m. All members of the King’s community, including Board members, are invited to participate.

Academic Council was further invited to attend the Student Excellence Awards Ceremony on Sunday, November 23 at 12:00 p.m. in Labatt Hall 105, celebrating student achievements and donor support.

Finally, members were informed of the concluding lecture in the Veritas series, scheduled for February 26, 2026, featuring Dr. Benjamin Muller and Dr. Allyson Larkin on *“Catholic Social Responsibilities to Refugees and Migrants: A Global Research Perspective.”* The lecture aligns with King’s involvement in the international initiative Refugees and Migrants in Our Common Home, led by Villanova University, supporting Pope Francis’ call for universities to advance understanding and action on migration and refugee issues.

Highlights from a 3-minute discussion:

- C. Halberstam asked about the Mission Leadership Initiative. It was noted that the initiative is in early development and is intended for senior administration, inspired by a similar program at St. Joseph's. Its purpose is to deepen understanding of mission language and strengthen integration of mission across the institution, addressing the current lack of shared vocabulary.
- The pilot will include guests from St. Joseph's who will share how their program was developed. The initiative aligns with the strategic plan and may evolve over time, drawing on internal expertise where appropriate.

5.2 Vice-President Academic Dean (Interim)

M. Yenson provided an update from the Vice-President Academic Dean Office, noting the Teaching Excellence Awards and Christopher Perrin Beatty Lecture on Wednesday, November 26th. Dr. Claudia Clausius, Professor Emerita of English, and Dr. Lucas Andersen, part-time instructor in the School of Social Work, will be celebrated as the recipients of the 2025 King's Awards of Excellence in Teaching.

It was reported that student retention results are the strongest on record since internal tracking began in 2005. Year 1–2 retention stands at 86.2% for domestic students, 80% for international students, and 85.3% overall. These rates represent the highest domestic and overall retention levels since tracking began, and one of the highest international retention outcomes, with only 2022–23 to 2023–24 exceeding it.

Highlights from a 5-minute discussion:

- P. Ibbott asked whether students who transfer to Ivey or main campus are considered retained. M. Yenson clarified that the retention metric reflects students who remain at King's, though graduation rates will be tracked within Western's broader cohort system, including students who began at King's.
- R. Duvernoy asked about retention from Years 2–3 and 3–4; this data will be shared with Council.

Motion: That Academic Council recommend to the Board of Directors approval of the Policy on Affirmation of Declarations of Indigenous Citizenship/Membership at King's University College.

Context: M. Yenson reminded members that Dr. Christy Bressette previously presented Western's Indigenous-led policy and King's outlined its intention to align closely with it. The policy was developed by Indigenous leaders and representatives from local First Nations. At King's, the VPAD's role will not involve decision-making; instead, an implementation plan, including workshops for leaders, Chairs, and units across faculty relations, HR, research, and student-facing areas, will ensure consistency and respect. The policy will apply broadly, including to staff, faculty, students, vendors, guest speakers, and contractors, and aligns with Tri-Council expectations.

M. Yenson noted that the appeal process and timelines were drawn from Western's policy and reviewed in advisory committees, typically taking up to three weeks. Any guest speaker or vendor receiving material or intangible benefit must complete the policy, though many local speakers are already known and likely vetted by Western, so new consultation may not be required. Students are not included, as they are not in positions of authority.

Highlights from a 22-minute discussion:

- Members raised concerns about the limited consultation at King's, the need for deeper engagement with Indigenous faculty, staff, students, and especially the Métis community, and the clarity and practicality of several policy sections.
- Questions were raised about potential barriers for volunteers, guest speakers, and contractors, fairness and appeal processes, and alignment with collective agreements.
- Members also noted possible unintended effects on relationships with local Indigenous partners if the policy is applied rigidly.
- The conversation emphasized both the moral imperative of the policy and the need for careful language, trust-building, and continued relational accountability.

A motion to adopt the policy was introduced but ultimately deferred, following a separate motion by Derek Silva (seconded by Liam Kennedy), to allow for broader consultation.

Amended Motion: That approval of the Policy on Affirmation of Declarations of Indigenous Citizenship/Membership at King's University College be deferred until broader consultations take place.

Moved by: D. Silva, L. Kennedy

CARRIED (1 abstention)

6.0 Report from the Chair of Presidential Selection Advisory Committee

P. Tufts reported that the Presidential Selection Advisory Committee completed a rigorous, thorough, and confidential search process. The committee considered a wide pool of qualified candidates, engaged in thoughtful debate, and openly challenged assumptions throughout deliberations. The advisory committee ultimately submitted two ranked candidates to the Board, with overwhelming support for R. Ventresca as the top choice.

The Board undertook its own careful review of the recommendation, engaged in substantial discussion, and asked clarifying questions before voting. The Board ultimately approved R. Ventresca's appointment to a five-year term with overwhelming support.

Chair Tufts thanked Academic Council members who served on the committee—Thomas Tiekou, Felipe Rodrigues, Graham Broad, Braedan Lovie, and Joe Henry—as well as all who participated in the broader consultation process.

Highlights from a 4-minute discussion:

- There was a request that the committee's report be shared, and P. Tufts confirmed that it will be.
- It was noted that past searches included meeting shortlisted candidates. P. Tufts clarified that this is not required in current Board policy, and the decision to run a closed process reflects sector best practices. KBRS advised that open processes can deter candidates, and reduce the diversity of the applicant pool.

- There was a question regarding the role of Academic Council in performance evaluation, and P. Tufts explained that renewal and performance evaluation processes are outlined in existing policies. P. Wilton added that there are defined timelines and consultation points in the executive search policies.

Action:

P. Tufts to circulate committee report.

7.0 The Unanimous Consent Agenda

Motion: To received the reports from the Cardinal Carter Library Committee and the Strategic Enrolment Management Committee.

Moved by: J. Preston, J. Henry

CARRIED

8.0 Items Removed from the Consent Agenda

None.

9.0 New Business

T. Tieku inquired about whether Academic Council will receive a response from the Board regarding the motion passed in April concerning the hiring policies for the VPAD and Academic Dean. P. Wilton confirmed that the matter is currently with the Board, which will review the feedback and determine whether to recommend the item for Board consideration.

A. Meek asked about the formal process for bringing items forward to Academic Council, noting interest in a self-study of Academic Council. M. Yenson responded that he will take the question to the Governance and Nominating Committee for discussion and will bring the matter back to Academic Council.

10.0 Adjournment

Motion: To adjourn the meeting at 4:13 p.m.

Moved by: P. Ibbott and T. Tieku

CARRIED



Robert Ventresca,
Chair



Paul Wilton,
University Secretary