# MINUTES

**University Council**
**Date**: September 24, 2026
**Time**: 2:30–4:30 pm
**Location**: Convocation Hall (PMB 120) and Zoom
**Presiding Officer:** Dr. Ralph Deters
**Recording:** Danielle Rudulier

The meeting was called to order at 2:33 pm.

No members of the media identified themselves.

The Chair reminded members there are no unauthorized recordings of Council meetings.

## 1. Chairs Opening Remarks

Dr. Ralph Deters began with a Land Acknowledgement. The Chair encouraged participation in Council business through submitted questions, direct communication with Council Executive members, and discussion during Council meetings. In addition, the Chair noted a new initiative whereby agendas from all Council committees are now included in the Council meeting package, allowing members greater visibility into committee activities and providing opportunities to engage with committee chairs regarding agenda items and committee work.

## 2. Agenda

**Motion**: (Augusta/Dobson): That the agenda be approved as circulated.

**CARRIED**

## 3. Minutes

A correction was brought forward for item 10.1 in the Vice-President Research Annual Report.

**Motion**: (Jones/Patrick): That the minutes of June 11, 2026 be approved as amended.

**CARRIED**
2 Abstentions

## 4. Council Welcome and Refresher

Secretary Demkiw provided members with brief overview of the governance structure and resources available to members.

**Slides are attached**.

## 5. Reports

### 5.1. President

President Bruni-Bossio provided an overview of the ongoing strategic planning process and consultation timeline, noting that a formal presentation will be brought forward in October, followed by a period for review and feedback before Council is asked to consider endorsement in November. He highlighted the university's strong reputation and financial position and described the emerging identity for the new plan.

Chief Financial Officer Deidre Henne provided additional information on the university's bond financing strategy, explaining that the initiative is intended to support critical capital and infrastructure needs without diverting operating funds from academic and administrative priorities. She noted that the university's improved financial stability, including a four-year provincial funding agreement, strategic enrolment planning, and a transparent resource allocation model, has created a favourable environment for pursuing external financing. Planned investments in foundational systems include upgrades to key student, payroll, and financial systems. Capital projects include expansions associated with the Edwards School of Business, the College of Engineering, and the Western College of Veterinary Medicine to address growing enrolment and student learning space needs that all students will benefit from. She also highlighted an investment in a second cyclotron at the Sylvia Fedoruk Centre, supported through external partnerships and intended to generate future revenue for the university.

### 5.2. Interim Provost and Vice President Academic

Interim Provost Patti McDougall began with responding to a question submitted in advance regarding the Learning, Teaching and Student Experience (LTSE) Plan, noting that the completion of the new university plan will be followed by the development of a new Academic Plan. She explained that the Academic Plan will serve as an implementation framework for the university plan and will build on recent consultation efforts while providing additional opportunities for engagement. The plan will replace the LTSE Plan and is expected to address areas such as student experience, strategic enrolment management, and academic programming.

Dr. McDougall also provided an update on the closure of the Canadian Hub for Applied and Social Research (CHASR), scheduled to be wound down by July 2027. She explained that CHASR operated as a cost-recovery, fee-for-service model but had accumulated a significant deficit, making the current model financially unsustainable. She emphasized that the decision was not a reflection on the quality of CHASR's staff or the value of social science research at USask, but rather a matter of responsible financial stewardship. She acknowledged feedback received from faculty and confirmed that their concerns and suggestions will inform future planning discussions.

Greg Fowler, Vice- President Administration, provided an update on two major infrastructure projects affecting the university: the City of Saskatoon's College Drive Link Rapid Transit project and the campus Bowl renewal project. He acknowledged the short-term disruptions associated with both initiatives and thanked the university community for its patience.

### 5.3. Graduate Students Association (GSA)

President Sunny Bui reported on a successful welcome week, with more than 1,000 graduate students participating in four days of events. He highlighted the GSA's key priorities for the year, including advocating for a summer extension to the U-Pass program to address perceived inequities in access and cost for graduate students. Members were encouraged to promote participation in the GSA's student experience survey, which includes questions related to transit use and will support ongoing discussions with Saskatoon Transit and City Council.

President Bui also provided updates on the proposed graduate student childcare centre, which is advancing through the university's project development process as well as progress toward an Anti-Racism Memorandum of Understanding, acknowledging the support of university leadership in that work. In addition, he outlined plans to expand professional development opportunities for graduate students through partnerships with Library Services, the Gwenna Moss Centre, and Career Services. He concluded by encouraging members to direct graduate students to GSA communications and available student supports and services.

### 5.4. University of Saskatchewan Students Union (USSU

USSU President Abtin Safaeian reported that student affordability remains the students' top concern and highlighted several initiatives aimed at reducing financial barriers. The USSU recently launched uExchange, a student-to-student used textbook marketplace, and uSAVE, a student discount program designed to help students reduce everyday expenses. President Safaeian noted that these initiatives are intended to address rising costs associated with textbooks, tuition, housing, and food.

He also recognized the work of the USSU executive team in leading welcome week activities, academic awareness programming, student advocacy, and support for student groups. The USSU participated in national student leadership discussions and continues to advocate for tuition payment plans, increased scholarships and bursaries, and a need-based approach to student awards. Safaeian reaffirmed the organization's commitment to reconciliation, highlighting recent engagement activities and the development of a new land acknowledgement. He concluded by noting that the USSU looks forward to contributing student perspectives to the development of UPlan 2035, with affordability remaining a key priority.

## 6. Nominations Committee

Carolyn Augusta, Chair of the Nominations committee, presented the committee's items as outlined in the agenda package.

### 6.1. Request for Decision: Council Committee Vacancies

The full report is in the agenda package.

There were no questions.

**Motion**: (Augusta/Jones): It is recommended by the Nominations Committee that Council approve the nominations described in the attached report, effective September 24, 2026.

**CARRIED**
1 Abstention (Burshtyn)

### 6.2 Request for Decision: Chair of Research, Scholarly and Artistic Work Committee

The full report is in the agenda package.

There were no questions.

**Motion**: (Augusta/Makarova): It is recommended by the Nominations Committee that Council approve the nomination for the Chair of the Research, Scholarly and Artistic Work Committee, effective September 24, 2026.

**CARRIED**

### 6.3 Request for Decision: Nomination for the University Review Committee

The full report is in the agenda package.

There were no questions.

**Motion**: (Augusta/Sarjeant-Jenkins): It is recommended by the Nominations Committee that Council approve the nomination for the University Review Committee, effective September 24, 2026.

**CARRIED**

### 6.4 Item for Information: Standing Committee Update

Chair Augusta provided an update on the work of the Nominations Committee, noting that the committee has met three times during the current academic year. She reminded members of recent changes to tenure and promotion requirements approved by University Review Committee, which now recognizes university-level service as a requirement for promotion from Associate to Full Professor.

In reviewing applications for committee appointments, the committee considers disciplinary representation first, followed by equity, diversity, and inclusion considerations, and then the potential value of committee service for tenure and promotion purposes. Chair Augusta noted that the committee's recommendations were reflected in the membership decisions approved by Council during the meeting.

## 7. Executive Committee

### 7.1. Item for Information: Executive Committee Standing Update

Chair Ralph Deters provided an update that the Executive Committee, consisting of Council committee chairs, recently met with President Bruni-Bossio and received an update on the development of the University Plan (UPlan). He noted that the President provided a comprehensive overview of the plan and its ongoing development through consultation and engagement across the university community.

## 8. Academic Programs Committee

### 8.1 Item for Information: Academic Programs Committee Standing Update

Chair Roy Dobson reported that the committee's workload is expected to increase later in the academic year. He highlighted a committee-level approved change to the Certificate in Catholic Studies, which reduces the required elective credits from 18 to 15. The change is intended to improve accessibility and student interest in the certificate while maintaining the integrity and learning outcomes of the program.

Dr. Dobson also provided members with an update regarding the expansion of undergraduate medical education enrolment from 108 to 128 students. The additional 20 seats will increase enrolment targets to 76 students in Saskatoon and 52 in Regina and form part of broader provincial efforts to strengthen healthcare workforce capacity in Saskatchewan.

## 9. Governance Committee

### 9.1. Item for Information: Governance Committee Standing Update

Chair Paul Jones provided an update on the Governance Committee's ongoing review of the composition and appointment process for University Appeal Boards. The committee has been examining ways to better support and nominate members for these important decision-making bodies, including the potential expansion of eligibility beyond University Council members to include GAA members. Discussion has focused on addressing challenges related to training, continuity, institutional knowledge, and preparedness for handling complex and often contentious cases. The committee expects to bring a more detailed proposal forward as an information item at the October Council meeting, with a recommendation for decision anticipated in November.

## 10. Planning and Priorities Committee

### 10.1 Item for Information: Standing Committee Update

Chair Angela Lieverse reported that the committee met twice since the start of the term. At its first meeting, members received an update from Chief Financial Officer Deidre Henne on the university's 2025-26 year-end financial results. At its second meeting, held the previous day, the committee reviewed first-quarter financial results for 2026-27 and heard that the university remains on track to achieve its approved $12.6 million surplus. The committee also received updates from the CFO on portfolio priorities and achievements, as well as from

Interim Provost Patti McDougall on academic portfolio priorities for the coming year.

## 11. Teaching, Learning and Academic Resources Committee

### 11.1 Item for Information: Standing Committee Update

Chair Marguerite Koole outlined TLARC's mandate to address issues related to teaching and learning, promote the Learning Charter, and make recommendations to Council and the Planning and Priorities Committee. She reported that the committee held its first meeting of the year and identified several priority areas, including generative artificial intelligence (GenAI), accessibility and inclusivity, learner engagement, student well-being, classroom environments, and the intersection of technology and teaching. The committee anticipates establishing working groups to explore GenAI and accessibility-related issues in greater depth.

A member raised questions regarding the university's promotion of AI tools and the broader ethical, social, environmental, and educational implications of AI adoption. The member highlighted issues related to data privacy, copyright, bias, sustainability, equity, and the potential impact on critical thinking and learning. It was suggested that TLARC and RSAW consider ongoing examination of the ethical use of AI and report back regularly to Council. Chair Koole acknowledged these concerns and noted that many of these issues are already under discussion within TLARC and indicated that the committee would continue to engage with them. Additional comments emphasized the value of a broader Council-wide discussion on AI and cautioned against characterizing AI solely negatively, recognizing that it is also an important area of scholarship and research.

## 12. Joint Committee on Chairs and Professorships

### 12.1 Item for Information: Joint Committee on Chairs and Professorships (JCCP) Annual Report 2025-2026

Chair Deters mentioned that this item will come forward next month.

## 13. Other Business

There was no other business.

## 14. Question Period

Pre-submitted Question:

*"Every day when I enter or leave campus I pass by the old stone barn on the corner of College Drive and Campus Drive. I know that the barn has been a building of concern for a number of years - for people both on and off campus. In fact, a few years ago the Saskatoon Heritage Society submitted a report to the university outlining how other North American universities have renovated similar barns so that they return to being vibrant and active parts of their campuses.*

*According to the USask Board of Governors' minutes, the Board recognizes "the building's heritage value and reputational risks of demolition" and has encouraged university management to explore future uses and fundraising opportunities. In the interim they approved an emergency stabilization investment for the barn in September 2005; that work was reported as complete in December 2025.*

*I am not sure what the current status is of discussions about our stone barn. Despite the stabilization work, the numerous shingles missing from the roof are noticeable from College Drive. As a homeowner, I know the importance of shingles to protect a roof and the building below it! I am concerned that such issues will lead to the building falling further into disrepair.*

*The stone barn is an iconic building, recognizable and recognized by all who attend (and attended) the university as well as most people in Saskatoon.*

*The neglect of this building is visible to all who go by.*

*If nothing is done to protect, preserve, renovate, and reuse the barn it will certainly end up being demolished and a key part of the university's history and link to its place in the agricultural development of the province will be gone.*

- *What is the university doing to protect the stone barn from further disrepair?*
- *What are the plans for the barn's future?"*

Greg Fowler explained that the building had previously been deemed structurally unsound and unsuitable for occupancy, requiring significant rehabilitation. Following a structural assessment completed in 2025, the university undertook repairs including replacing pilasters and footings, tightening support cables, securing structural supports, and rebuilding portions of the stone walls. A follow-up engineering assessment indicated that the building can remain standing in its current condition until at least 2030, when a further review is recommended.

Fowler noted that the building currently lacks a defined long-term use. The university is working with the Western College of Veterinary Medicine, the College of Agriculture and Bioresources, and other potential stakeholders to develop a broader Farmstead Renewal Strategy and identify appropriate future uses for the facility. He indicated that additional planning work is underway and that a further update is expected to be brought back to Council in December.

Questions and Discussion from the Floor:

A member referenced a recent report from the Legislative Council of New South Wales concerning university governance and the role of consulting firms, including allegations related to the NOUS Group. The member asked whether Council could be informed about the university's relationship with the organization and whether the findings of the report would be considered in future decisions regarding engagement with the firm.

Greg Fowler responded that USask's involvement is limited to participation in the UniForum benchmarking system, which was later acquired by NOUS Group. He noted that the university uses the benchmarking service solely to compare administrative and support services with peer institutions and to identify opportunities for improvement and resource allocation with strict regulations around the data. Fowler stated that the university has no other contracts or consulting arrangements with NOUS and has no plans to engage the firm in a consulting capacity. He added that the university continues to monitor developments related to the organization.

Feedback was shared regarding the decision to close the Canadian Hub for Applied and Social Research (CHASR), noting that numerous faculty and community members had expressed concerns about both the decision itself and how CHASR's value had been assessed. The member emphasized that CHASR's contributions extend beyond fee-for-service revenues and questions were posed about whether a broader institutional value analysis had been conducted prior to the decision. A question was also posed about whether information regarding institutional expenditures could be made available to provide greater context for decisions involving research infrastructure.

In response, Provost Patti McDougall reiterated that CHASR had been established as a cost-recovery operation and that its accumulated deficit made the current model financially unsustainable. While acknowledging the value of the work performed by CHASR and its staff, she emphasized the university's responsibility to ensure sustainable use of resources. McDougall noted that a forum will be convened to discuss future research support needs and potential alternatives. President Bruni-Bossio added that the concerns raised were important and would be considered as part of broader discussions about how best to support research activity at the university. He affirmed that the administration is committed to exploring solutions that sustain research capacity while addressing the challenges associated with the existing model.

Questions were raised about delays in graduate student payroll payments, noting that some students, particularly in mathematics, would not receive funding until mid-October and could face financial hardship as a result. The member asked whether the university could provide any accommodations or remediation, particularly regarding tuition and residence-related charges.

In response, Provost Patti McDougall advised that the issue had already been brought to the university's attention by the relevant union and that the matter was being actively reviewed. She indicated that university officials were working to understand the cause of the delay and explore ways to expedite payments. Dr. McDougall emphasized that the university does not wish to disadvantage students and committed to taking the issue seriously while working toward a timely resolution.

A member commented that the new master's programs in Occupational Therapy and Speech-Language Pathology were an important achievement for the university and province; however, these programs have significantly affected feeder disciplines, particularly Linguistics, which is the province's only linguistics program. The member reported enrolments in Linguistics have doubled since the SLP program was announced and indicated that the department is facing capacity challenges. The member asked how the university and province plan to support feeder programs that are experiencing increased demand as a result of these institutional priorities.

In response, Dr. McDougall acknowledged the importance of the concern and agreed that the new OT and SLP programs represent major contributions to the province. She indicated that the issue would need to be considered within the broader context of the College of Arts and Science and committed to pursuing further discussions and consultations regarding the impacts on feeder programs and their capacity needs.

A member raised questions about the proposed revisions to academic misconduct policies and procedures that had been discussed at a faculty council meeting, particularly the introduction of a "designated decision-maker" role with authority to determine how cases proceed through the misconduct process. The member emphasized the significance of the proposed changes and expressed the importance of broad consultation and careful consideration before implementation, noting the potential implications for academic programs and governance.

In response, it was clarified by Secretary Demkiw that the Academic Misconduct Policy is a Council policy under the responsibility of the Governance Committee. Any proposed revisions will therefore be reviewed through the Governance Committee and subsequently brought forward to University Council for consideration and approval. This process will provide opportunities for discussion and input before any changes are finalized.

There were no further questions or comments.

**10. Adjournment**

Motion (Jones): The meeting was properly adjourned at 4:38 pm.