



**OCAD UNIVERSITY REGULAR BUSINESS MEETING MINUTES OF SENATE
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 2026; 3:15PM – 6:00PM
HYBRID – ROOM 322, 230 RICHMOND STREET WEST**

Present: Julian Goss (Chair); Sandra Gabriele (Vice-Chair); Angela Bains; Sean Baker; Parantap Bhatt; Philippe Blanchard; Maggie Broda; Ross Bullen; Sophia Chaudhary; Ian Clarke; Peter Coppin; Maya Desai; Jim Drobnick; Melissa General; Nicholas Di Genova; Susan Ferguson; Deanne Fisher; Simon Glass; Bentley Jarvis; Simone Jones; Minjeong Ju; Tredegar Kennedy; Ian Keteku; Katherine Kiloh; Susan Kun; Fidelia Lam; Ashok Mathur; Riley Midroni; Michelle Miller; Angus Mok; Peter Morin; Amish Morrell; Suzanne Morrissette; Tannis Nielsen; Lesley-Ann Noel; Suharu Ogawa; James Olley; Maria-Belén Ordóñez; Ben Peto; Cindy Poremba; Neal Prabhu; Prakriti Pratijit; Helmut Reichenbacher; Angelika Seeschaaf-Veres; Nancy Snow; Vladimir Spicanovic; Suzanne Stein; Amy Swartz; Annie Tung; Emma Westecott; b.h. Yael

Regrets: Claire Brunet; JJ Lee; Ana Serrano; Sarita Srivastava; Jaime Watt

In Attendance: Natalie Nanton, Senate Secretary; David Wagschal, Associate Senate Secretary; and other members of the OCAD University community.

1. Remarks from the Chair

The meeting was opened with a Land Acknowledgement. The Chair thanked Senate members for their participation in the PhD new program consultation on February 17, 2026. Senate members were encouraged to attend the upcoming full Senate and Board session on March 23, 2026. Senate members were also reminded that the nomination period has begun for Faculty Area and Faculty At-Large seat in the Annual General Senate Election.

2. Senate Agenda for February 23, 2026

Motion to approve the Senate agenda for February 23, 2026, moved by Vladimir Spicanovic, seconded by Parantap Bhatt.

Motion carried.

3. Senate Minutes from January 26, 2026

Motion to approve the Senate minutes from November 24, 2025, moved by Susan Ferguson, seconded by Vladimir Spicanovic.

Concerns were raised that, in Item 12.2 “New Program Proposal: PhD in Creative Practice”, the minutes do not adequately convey that several Senate members contested the confirmation that adequate supervisory and facility resources exist to support the proposed program. It was agreed that wording would be added to make this more explicit.

Motion carried, as amended.

4. Consent Agenda Information Items

Motion to accept the consent agenda information items, moved by Susan Kun, seconded by Cindy Poremba.

The Vice-President, Academic and Provost, on behalf of the President, briefed Senate members on the funding announcement made by the provincial government on February 12, 2026. Senate members were informed that details of the new funding will remain embargoed until the new Strategic Mandate Agreements (SMA) are signed later this year, but that preliminary analysis suggests that the funds will assist in the stabilization of the sector. It was emphasized, however, that the additional funds are not expected to cover the University's budget shortfall, and that efforts will continue to address financial sustainability through the three-pronged strategy of increasing enrolment, strengthening government advocacy, and pursuing efficiencies identified by the Deloitte third-party report. Concerns were also expressed about the announced changes to the Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP), and it was confirmed that analysis is taking place to determine the impact on the University students and enrolment. It was observed that it will be beneficial for some students that the University is now rolling out new guaranteed one-year merit-based scholarships for incoming domestic Ontario high school students.

In the discussion that followed, concerns were raised about the pejorative comments made by the provincial government regarding traditional art and design crafts. It was confirmed that letters will be sent to incoming students and their families to highlight the employability rates of the University's programs and to outline the impacts of the changes to the OSAP program. It was further confirmed that information sessions will be offered for families to address any misperceptions about the viability of arts and design careers.

Concerns were expressed that changes to OSAP will materially impact enrolment at the University and a Senate member suggested that the University should both support student efforts to protest the changes and engage in advocacy with the government on students' behalf. It was also suggested that the Academic Colleagues of the Council of Ontario Universities (COU) should discuss the matter further.

With reference to the Deloitte report, it was clarified that recommendations do not specifically address decolonization, but that the development of the University's implementation plan would be informed by the institution's strategies and commitments.

It was confirmed that it is expected that updated budget assumptions will be presented to Senate later this term, as per normal practice, although the presentation may be delayed due to the recent funding announcement. It was observed that another financial townhall might be appropriate.

With reference to the Provost's Information Report, a question was asked about the status and scope of the University's AI Strategy, and the membership of the working group developing the strategy. In response, it was explained that the strategy is being developed on the basis of the foundational work of the AI Advisory panel that was chaired by Adam Tindale and Jutta Treviranus. It was emphasized that the strategy will seek to acknowledge and encompass the many and conflicting assessments of the value of AI at the University while remaining focused on ensuring that OCAD U graduands will be able to contend capably and ethically with the new technology.

In the discussion that followed, it was noted that the new AI Strategy will need to take account of issues such as students' unwillingness to use AI in some class settings, as well as emerging scholarship around AI and Indigenous knowledges.

Motion carried.

5. Student Matters

A student Senator updated Senate members on further conversations that had taken place with members of the academic administration on increasing upper-year fabrication studio offerings. It was noted that these conversations have been productive, and have surfaced several structural complexities, particularly around the need for more faculty contact-time in the studios.

Senator members were also briefed on efforts to bolster student participation in community-building events and workshops. It was noted that communicating these events to students remains a challenge, and it was suggested that more organized poster boards throughout the campus could positively impact student participation.

Discussion

It was confirmed that the University does have a Poster Policy, and that this policy will soon be undergoing review, at which time some of the concerns around student communication could be addressed. It was further suggested that student participation in community events would be enhanced if a reserved slot could be created in the class schedule dedicated exclusively to these activities. The role of faculty in proactively helping to connect students with community events was also highlighted.

With reference to the availability of faculty in the fabrication studios, it was suggested that an underlying issue is the ingrained theoretical division between teaching and fabrication, which might be mitigated by integrating the studios more closely into the Faculties.

6. Indigenous OCAD

Senate members were updated on the ongoing efforts to further develop and strengthen the Indigenous Educational Council (IEC). It was emphasized that consultations continue to affirm the importance of enhancing collaboration and communication with stakeholders across the University.

An update was provided on the Indigenous Student Advisory Circle. It was noted that students continue to request mandatory Indigenous cultural competency training for all faculty, especially in light of reports of racism being experienced by students within the classroom. Senate members were also informed that students have requested that provision be made for cultural and ceremonial leave. It was observed that both requests were recommendations in the Provost's Taskforce on Indigenous Learning in 2017-2018, and it was noted that these recommendations could be brought to a future meeting of Senate for further consideration.

Finally, it was reported that a new working group on the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation has been convened, which is supporting planning for events for this coming September.

Discussion

It was noted that information would be provided in the future about acknowledging the land on which videoconferencing infrastructure is based.

7. Senate Executive Committee (SEC)

Motion to move in camera, moved by Helmut Reichenbacher, seconded by b.h. Yael.
Motion carried.

IN CAMERA SESSION OF SENATE:

Commenced at 4:24 p.m.

7.1. Recommendations for Honorary Degree Recipients

The Senate approved the 2026 OCAD University Honorary Doctoral Degree recipients.

REGULAR BUSINESS MEETING OF SENATE:

Resumed at 4:33 p.m.

8. Senate Quality Assurance Committee (SQAC)

8.1. Design for Health IQAP Final Assessment Report and Implementation Plan

Motion to approve the Design for Health IQAP Final Assessment Report and Implementation Plan, moved by Vladimir Spicanovic, seconded by Fidelia Lam. Concerns were raised that the current leadership model, in which one Graduate Program Director (GPD) supervises all three MDes programs, may not be well-suited to addressing some of the concerns raised by the external reviewers, which instead imply greater resourcing for a dedicated GPD. It was further observed that the program has significant potential to raise the profile of the University within the province, given the government's priorities, but that this potential can only be realized through greater investment in the program's leadership and faculty complement. It was also suggested that some of the issues in the report might be best addressed through closer integration of the program with the Faculty of Design.

In response, it was noted that the current temporary leadership structure in the School of Graduate Studies (SGS) is attempting to address issues identified in the report by strategically leveraging existing resources across all three MDes programs. It was further emphasized that the curricular major modifications currently being considered by SGS will address several of the concerns noted in the report, for example by creating more shared courses across the MDes programs, and by instituting a new MRP structure in Design for Health. It was also noted that the program's leadership is working to activate already-existing partnerships and resources, for example partnerships with the University Healthcare Network (UHN) through the RBC Centre for Emerging Artists and Designers (CEAD).

Motion carried.

9. Senate Committee Information Reports

The Chair referred members to the consolidated Senate Committee Information Report which included reports from the following committees:

- Senate Executive Committee (SEC)
- Senate Academic Policy & Planning Committee (SAPPC)
- Senate Undergraduate Studies Committee (SUSC)
- Senate Graduate Studies Committee (SGSC)

The Chair highlighted discussion at SAPPC of a new honorary degree policy currently undergoing consultation and discussions at SUSC of a draft proposal for a new interdisciplinary BFA program in the Faculty of Art.

Discussion

A discussion took place on the draft proposal for a new interdisciplinary BFA. Participants in the discussion at SUSC noted that the proposal will require careful scrutiny through governance since it represents a significant change for the Faculty of Art and contains curricular ideas that will be completely new to the University. It was also reported that concerns have been raised that the proposal may not yet be sufficiently interdisciplinary in content.

It was observed that the University has a long history of introducing and iterating upon innovation, and it was confirmed that the proposal has already undergone an extensive consultation process. It was noted that the proposal's co-chairs would be willing to bring an information update on the proposal to Senate

10. Discussion on Senate Discussion

Motion to amend the agenda to discuss Item 11: Enrolment Presentation in advance of Item 10: Discussion on Senate Discussion, moved by Parantap Bhatt, seconded by Helmut Reichenbacher.

Motion carried.

It was later decided that, due to lack of time, discussion of Item 10 would be deferred to a future meeting.

11. Enrolment Presentation

The Vice-Provost, Students and International provided an update on the University's enrolment. A presentation was screened that reviewed the University's total enrolment from 2014 to the present; trends in undergraduate applicants and intake for the last eight years; admission offer, acceptance and retention rates for undergraduate applications; trends in graduate enrolment/applicants for the last twelve/seven years; the Strategic Enrolment Management (SEM) process; current enrolment challenges and opportunities; the University's enrolment funding corridor; trends in enrolment growth in Ontario by fields of study; and the breakdown of international undergraduate applications and registrants by source country.

It was emphasized that the University had been experiencing increasing enrolment until the federal visa limitations were announced in January 2023, at which time numbers began to

trend down. It was confirmed that this year's numbers continue to show a decline, although not by as much as anticipated. Undergraduate applications for 2026 were noted to be low on both the domestic and international side, and it was emphasized that one year of lower applications ultimately translates into lower enrolment for the next four years. Efforts to improve applicant conversion through advertising campaigns, portfolio workshops and other means of outreach were outlined. Several positive enrolment factors were noted, including positive demographic trends over the next few years. It was also noted that student demand for fine and applied arts has held steady over the last fifteen years, in contrast to declines for general arts and science and humanities. Finally, it was confirmed that the University is developing a new five-year SEM strategy.

Discussion

It was clarified that the favourable demographics trends over the next several years are being driven largely by immigration, and that their long-term sustainability will depend on government immigration policy. It was also confirmed that these trends stand in contrast to the situation in the United States, where a significant "demographic cliff" is now forecast for post-secondary institutions. Possibilities for optimizing American enrolment were discussed, but it was noted that investment in this market has not historically been fruitful, given the highly competitive art & design landscape in the US, the historically low conversation rate of US applications, high tuition-discounting practices in most American schools, and challenges with the American federal loan system. It was suggested, however, that further attention could be devoted to recruiting in nearby American high schools, for example schools in upstate New York, and particularly among queer people, people of colour, or others who may feel at risk under the current American administration.

It was observed that, while demand for fine and applied arts remains comparatively low, many of the University's programs could be positioned as STEM, Engineering or Applied Sciences programs, where demand is much higher. It was suggested that more efforts should be made to situate the University's programs in these fields, particularly in the context of the expansion of AI, where the institution's strengths in designing at the intersection of human empathy and perceptual experience will take on increasing prominence.

It was confirmed that Indigenous enrolment has grown significantly over the past several years, and that a full-time Indigenous recruitment position is being developed. Several further ideas for marketing to prospective Indigenous students were offered.

It was confirmed that the SEM plan, now in development, will model growth potential on a program-by-program basis. It was noted that market intelligence is being sought to inform strategies for both current programs and possible new ones.

A discussion took place on optimal offer rates and admission requirements. It was observed that a higher offer rate can be acceptable as long as the first-to-second year retention rate is also high. The importance of portfolios in gauging students' intentions and capabilities, as well as determining appropriate program placement and advanced standing, was affirmed.

12. Other Business

Senate members were informed that Ontario College of Art graduate and long-serving faculty member Chinkok Tan recently passed away, and that a retrospective of his work is currently showing at the Papermill Gallery at Todmorden Mills. Senate members were also encouraged to visit the third annual studio class assistant exhibition, *Faceted*, in the Great Hall.

13. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn, moved by Susan Ferguson, seconded by Maria-Belén Ordóñez.

Meeting adjourned at 5:57 pm.

[Originally signed]

Julian Goss, Senate Chair

[Originally signed]

Natalie Nanton, Senate Secretary