

Senate Minutes

**December 19, 2025
CE339**

The Chair, F. Odartey-Wellington, called the meeting to order at 1:30 pm.

1. Roll Call and Declaration of Quorum and Land Acknowledgement

The Chair began with the acknowledgement that Cape Breton University is located in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq People. This territory is covered by the "Treaties of Peace and Friendship" which Mi'kmaq and Wolastoqiyik (Maliseet) people first signed with the British Crown in 1726. The treaties did not deal with surrender of lands and resources but in fact recognized Mi'kmaq and Wolastoqiyik (Maliseet) title and established the rules for what was to be an ongoing relationship between nations.

Present:

Harsimran Kaur Antaal, Tammy Bernasky, Matthias Bierenstiel, Melissa Bishop, Tanya Brann-Barrett, Linda Cavanaugh, Martin Chandler, David Dingwall, Shannon Ezzat, Virginia Gunn, Michael Henick, Angelica Bermudez Herrera, Enrique Hernandez, Karen Kennedy, Tracy Lillington, Doug Lionais, Ellyn Lyle, Jaxson MacDonald, Shauna MacDonald, Gordon MacInnis, Harkanwal Kaur, Emily MacLeod, Stephanie MacQuarrie, Chris McDonald, John Nadeau, Willena Nemeth, Rod Nicholls, Felix Odartey-Wellington, Marcia Ostashewski, Joe Parish, Andy Parnaby, Kinnon Pitcher, Sergiy Pysarenko, Timothy Rawlings, Karen Rowe, Quinn Rowe, Stefanie Ruel, Nathan Ryan, Nancy Samson, Rebecca Seymore, Nancy Spina, Laurianne Sylvester, Toyin Tade, Destiny Tobin, Karen Tobin, Jamie Tunnicliff, Tom Ue, Kellie White, Bilynda Whiting

Regrets:

Sahand Ashtab, Karen Butterworth, Sean Campbell, Jenny Kassen, Terry MacDonald, John Mayich, Kathleen Nash, Alex Paul, Ann Sylliboy

2. Consent Agenda:

2.1 Course proposal: COMM/PHIL 3XXX Critical Health Perspectives

2.2 Course proposal: ENGL 2XXX The Gothic

Motion:

Moved by J. Nadeau, seconded J. Parish, to approve the Senate Consent Agenda.

Motion Carried.

3. Take Note Debate: Academic Integrity Breach Levels

J. Parish introduced the issue and advised that the debate arose from matters brought to the Academic Committee and consultation with Stephanie Myles, University Council, regarding the lack of ability within the current policy to track breach patterns. It was agreed that a Take Note Debate would be the best format to address the issue with full Senate.

He discussed the two items to be addressed.

1. Lack of ability within the current policy for the breach levels to be tracked and to discover if there is a pattern for particular students. **Whether or not multiple breaches at level 1 should equal a Level 2 breach and if multiple level 2 breaches should equal a level 3 breach - Is this enough of a concern to change the policy?**
2. Central reporting system would be needed if pattern recognition at level 1 is agreed upon because students can make level 1 breaches in any course from any school and Deans and Schools cannot be expected to track. **Should Senate, via this policy, empower the Registrar's Office to maintain a list of Level 1 breaches as they already track level 2 and 3 breaches.**

J. Parish referenced the current Academic Integrity Policy and the breach levels within. He explained that the main difference is that currently Level 1 breaches are not reported to the Dean. He noted that the spirit of these is to allow a format for instructors to resolve breach issues with students without them being reported with a maximum penalty of zero for the assignment or exam.

He opened the floor for discussion:

During discussion, senators expressed differing views. Some emphasized the need to preserve instructor discretion at Level 1, noting the complexity of determining intent, particularly with emerging issues such as AI-generated errors, careless referencing, or group work. Concerns were raised that mandatory reporting could discourage instructors from addressing minor issues or push cases outside the formal process.

Others stressed that without tracking, repeated Level 1 breaches across courses may go unnoticed, allowing students to avoid consequences and limiting the ability of Deans and chairs to make informed decisions. Several senators supported exploring a mechanism to identify patterns while still preserving flexibility for instructors.

A. Parnaby provided background on the development of the current policy, noting that Level 1 breaches were intentionally designed as a distinct category not a step toward Level 2 or 3. It was to avoid over-penalizing minor mistakes and to reduce reporting burdens. He cautioned that tracking Level 1 breaches could undermine their educational purpose and become punitive.

Senators also raised concerns about inconsistent interpretation of breach levels across faculties and suggested that clearer examples or guidelines would support more consistent decision-making. The Academic Integrity Committee confirmed that it is considering developing such guidance.

Equity considerations were discussed, including the potential for disproportionate impacts on international students, multilingual learners, and students unfamiliar with North American academic conventions. Tracking patterns could help identify systemic issues and inform institutional supports.

In response to a question, the Registrar clarified that level-2 academic infractions are recorded internally but are not shared with potential employers. Employers typically only receive a transcript, and only with the student's approval. Academic integrity violations do not appear on the transcript unless the student is expelled. The Registrar noted that a student who commits three breaches would be expelled, and expulsion would then be recorded on the transcript.

4. Reports and Items for Information

4.1 President

President Dingwall reported the following:

- He thanked senators for efficiently approving recent special programs and noted that more will come before the Senate in 2026, encouraging continued timely action.
- He announced leadership changes at the Cape Breton University Medical School: Dr. Jennifer Hall has stepped down, and Dr. Stephanie Langley, a long-time family-medicine expert has been appointed as the new dean.

4.2 Vice President Academic and Provost

Senators observed a moment of silence in honor of the late Dr. Sylvia Burrow.

R. Nicholls reported the following:

- Total enrolment for the Winter term is just under 3700 with only 38 new international students registered.
- New Masters programs and the BET proposal are with MPHEC. The deadline for comment from other universities has passed, comments will be reviewed in January with a goal of Sept 2026 for admission to those programs.

- A group, led by Associate Dean Erna MacLeod, is examining the infrastructure for graduate programs, existing masters' programs, and the perspective new master's programs. The Complexity of the graduate programs translates into the need for different infrastructure work is ongoing with stakeholders. Senate will likely see the results of the process in the winter term.
- A draft of the required Online Learning Framework will be brought to Senate in the Winter term.
- CBU continues to work on the required Bilateral Agreement with the Province of Nova Scotia, in collaboration with Advanced Education, MPHEC, and an external consulting firm. A major focus for Senate will be the Academic Program Review, a central component of the Agreement. Financial holdbacks are tied to the successful completion of this review, and a preliminary classification of all programs is due by the end of January 2026. Programs will need to be revitalized, modernized, or rationalized, with an additional category for those deemed satisfactory. In recent meetings with the Province and MPHEC, CBU raised concerns about the evaluation approach and shared its rubric, noting that it incorporates a range of measures with different priorities. Feedback from the Province and MPHEC was positive, and they noted that CBU was cooperative and ahead. On December 17, a new "costing of programs" process was presented, with the expectation that institutions will eventually integrate academic evaluation rubrics with financial costing information. As familiarity with the system grows, the two processes will need to align. Senate will continue to receive updates and will be asked for feedback once more concrete material is available.

After the VPA's report, discussion included the following:

A question was raised about whether government considers future jobs when evaluating academic programs, since many emerging AI-related roles didn't exist a decade earlier. It was noted that the government mainly relies on CIP and NOC codes, which reflect existing job classifications, and does not attempt to predict or map programs to future or hypothetical occupations. It was emphasized that universities excel at preparing students for uncertain futures, but the government's process is more administrative and rooted in current labour categories.

It was also noted that governments generally struggle with long-term labour projections in areas such as healthcare and education, and there doesn't appear to be much forward-looking planning built into the current evaluation framework. The more complex issue arises when financial program costing is layered on top of this workforce mapping, which could become time-consuming and potentially signal future government decisions around funding or operating grants. Overall, the conclusion was that there is no evident process for looking ahead to future labour needs within the current model.

4.3 Unama'ki College

Laurianne reported the following:

- Indigenous Student Success and Retention position was eliminated by the government, raising concerns about their priorities and commitment to Truth and Reconciliation.
- Brady Doucette, a master's graduate from Potlotek First Nation, hired as Student Development Officer, starting January 5.
- Selection Committee met for the Scholarships and Awards. A low number of applicants was noted with plans to improve the application process to increase participation.
- In-Business Opening Conference launched in December which runs until March with students from various communities in Unama'ki.
- Potlotek First Nation is starting an in-community program in January, bringing total to five in-community programs across Mi'kma'ki.
- Dean completed the TRC progress survey requested by Universities Canada. Plans to expand TRC discussions and committees in SSOB and Nursing in the new year.
- May 2026 will be the 40th anniversary of Mi'kmaq Student Graduation Banquet, planning is underway.

In response to a question, Dean Sylvester advised that the BACS program is being offered in Potlotek First Nation.

4.4 Students' Union

R. Seymour, Executive Vice President, presented the CBUSU Executive Report, with full details included in the Senate Meeting Package.

- In partnership with Student Affairs' Career Services Department, the Vice President Student Services, Destiny Tobin, held a resume competition.
- The Students' Union has recently signed on to the anonymous portion of REES so that students have an anonymous space to report sexualized violence on campus. With this, REES does a number of campaigns throughout the year for promotion, and they have been participating in their 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence.
- To help students de-stress heading into final exams from December 8th-11th they held movie nights in the Pit Lounge with free popcorn for attendees.
- During exam time, they gave out free vouchers for students to receive a free coffee or hot chocolate at Caper Convenience Store or the Caper Café.
- The Drive home program has winded down for the fall semester, she noted that usage has been relatively low this semester.
- They are finalizing their Students' Union events for Week of Welcome, and have begun to plan for their upcoming Multicultural Week in March.

4.5 Board of Governors

N. Samson advised that the CBU Board of Governors met on December 5 and reported the following:

- Students' Union provided their report
- It was announced that Board member, Michael Cleaner was awarded the Meritorious Service Medal (Civil Division) by the Right Honourable Mary Simon, Governor General of Canada.
- Gordon MacInnis provided a Treasures Report and highlighted the following items
 - Fall enrollment totals were below budget
 - IRCC student permit targets are declining
 - Planned deficit is likely to increase
 - Work is underway to reset CBU's 3-year financial plan
 - Forever CBU Campaign has reached 82% of its goal
 - Fall Convocation
 - Annette Verschuren's Retirement and Honorary Degree
 - President Dingwall's visit to Beijing, China - aimed at strengthening the renewed CBU longstanding relationship
 - the President delivered the keynote address at the Elevate Cape Breton, a tourism. Conference hosted by Destination Cape Breton
- The next BOG meeting is scheduled for March 6th, 2026

4.6 Executive Committee

K. Rowe reported the following updates from the Executive meeting:

- The agenda was set for today's session including the "Take Note" debate on Academic Integrity Breach Levels.
- Committee chairs provided updates on the reports scheduled for today.
- K. Rowe advised that she will be leaving Senate which will leave the Secretary position vacant.

The Chair thanked Karen Rowe for her work on Senate and as Secretary. Senators also shared their appreciation for her hard work.

F. Odartey-Wellington called for nominations for the position of Senate Secretary. Martin Chandler was nominated but declined, followed by Quinn Rowe, who also declined. Harsimran Kaur Antaal was nominated and accepted. With no further nominations, Harsimran Kaur Antaal was declared Senate Secretary.

5. Approval of the Minutes

- Senate – November 21, 2025

Motion:

Moved by E. Lyle, seconded by N. Samson, that Senate approve the minutes from the November 21st Senate meeting.

Friendly amendments to the minutes were suggested as follows:

- Karen Tobin to be marked in attendance and the correction of Annette Verschuren's name.

Motion Carried. (10 abstentions)

6. Business Arising from the Minutes – N/A

7. Report from Senate Committees:

7.1 Academic

J. Parish reported on the following:

The committee met twice since Senate last met in November and they continue to review policies from departments and schools. The Academic Integrity Policy will come to the January meeting of Senate with consideration of the input and information received today from the take-note debate. Work continues on the Appeals to Academic Decisions Policy and the Decision Matrix. He hopes to have those reach their final form for presentation to Senate in January.

At their last meeting, Vice-Provost Andy Parnaby provided an update on the Shannon School of Business graduate program proposals, noting that revisions were made to meet MPHEC's quality assurance standards. He also reported on updates to the Bachelor of Engineering Technology (BET) proposal, which focused on streamlining technical components, incorporating industry recommendations, and clarifying articulation pathways for diploma graduates. Both sets of proposals are now finalized and ready for submission to MPHEC.

Items for Information:

- Articulation Agreement: CNA Diploma in Environmental Engineering Technology (Co-op) to CBU Bachelor of Health Sciences (Public Health)
- Programme Suspensions:
 - Graduate Diploma in Educational Technology
 - Occupational Health and Safety Management Post Baccalaureate Diploma
 - Bachelor of Education concentrations in Sustainability and L'nu Education and Decolonisation

Recommendations:

The Embedded Certificate in Foundations for Health Professions

J. Parish advised that the Embedded Certificate in Foundations for Health Professions was brought forward to Senate for a vote at the June 2024 meeting. He referenced an error in the vote and advised that the vote should be 7/0/0. He explained that after having received concerns on the floor of Senate regarding the approval of certificates with undeveloped courses the motion was postponed. That course was COMM/PHIL 3XXX: Critical Health Perspectives, was brought forth in the consent agenda today and therefore they are recommending the following motion:

Motion:

Moved by J. Parish that Senate approve the proposal for an Embedded Certificate in Foundations for Health Professions.

Discussion:

During the discussion Senators were asked to review page 80 of the package, a proposal was made to shift the course *Communication 3139: Issues in Health Communication* from the “Health, Culture and Society” block to the “Health Promotion and Preventative Practices” block. The rationale is that the course aligns more closely with health promotion rather than cultural aspects, and this change would provide students with more options while ensuring equity across blocks. The suggestion was framed as a friendly amendment, with the understanding that proponents should be consulted. If they decline after review, the original placement will remain unchanged.

Motion Carried.

Inter-related minor programme changes

J. Parish advised that two courses (MGSC 2104 and Legal 2501) are being moved into the BBA core, shifting them from elective or major/concentration requirements, with all four submitted forms addressing the same change. The change responds to evolving business needs and external quality assurance recommendations—particularly highlighting the importance of supply chain management training identified during and after the pandemic.

Motion:

Moved by J. Parish that Senate approves the following inter-related minor programme changes:

- a. BBA core
- b. BBA – Accounting major
- c. BBA – Legal studies concentration
- d. BBA – Supply chain management major

Motion Carried.

7.2 Bylaws and Procedures

J. Tunncliffe put forward the following motion:

Motion:

Moved by J. Tunncliffe that Senate approve the SST Psychology Department revised by-laws.

Motion Carried.

7.3 Research

M. Ostashewski reported the following:

- The committee has finalized the long-developed Research Centres and Institutes Policy which will be brought to Senate for approval in the new year.
- The committee adjudicated 14 submissions for the three President's Research Awards using newly revised guidelines that now allow self-nominations and the resubmission of files from previous years. The pool of applicants was larger and exceptionally strong, reflecting the growing research activity at CBU. Recommendations have been forwarded to the President, and the committee expressed appreciation for his continued support of research excellence.
- This year's adjudication process used a consensus-based, talking-circle approach, which made deliberations smoother, faster, and more collaborative than in past years. The method aligns with CBU's commitment to Indigenous values and fostered a supportive, respectful committee culture.

F. Odartey-Wellington expressed gratitude to co-chairs Marcia and Matthias, committee members, ORGS staff, and all contributors for their dedication and collegiality throughout the year.

7.4 Planning and Review

M. Bishop reported that the committee met five times between September and November 2025. Faculty were invited to contribute to the development of pre-budget recommendations for Senate. The committee also consulted with the Vice-President Finance and the Vice-President Academic and Provost on the status of the CBU Academic Plan. In addition, two "take-note" Senate debates, the 2026–2030 Strategic Research Plan, and current CBU enrollment data informed the committee's work.

The committee is bringing forward the following Pre Budget-recommendations.

1. Preamble: Establishment of a University-wide Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers Fund.

M. Bishop advised that a motion from the Education Department builds on a 2022 commitment to support engagement with Indigenous knowledge and holistic educational practices. While the previous budget provided modest resources for Unama'ki College and related initiatives, consultations with school Deans revealed inconsistent financial support for Indigenous knowledge

keepers across the university. As a result, the motion proposes that Cape Breton University make a formal budgetary commitment to establish an Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers Fund.

Motion 1:

Moved by M. Bishop that Cape Breton University make a budgetary commitment and establishes an Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers Fund.

Discussion:

The discussion focused on how a proposed Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers Fund might be structured and administered. Questions were raised about whether the fund should be managed centrally through the Provost's Office or decentralized within individual schools under the Deans.

It was clarified that the fund is intended primarily to support Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers from the community who serve in advisory roles, such as participating on thesis or program committees for undergraduate and graduate students, rather than Elders formally affiliated with the university.

Motion Carried.

2. Preamble: Update/Upgrades to the Multiversity Room and Manson Lounge

M. Bishop advised that the Manson Lounge is currently being used primarily as a storage area. The committee is recommending that Cape Breton University commit to cleaning, decluttering, and reinvigorating the space by relocating stored items and janitorial equipment, with the goal of restoring the Manson Lounge as a functional and welcoming space for use by the university community.

Motion 2:

Moved by M. Bishop that Cape Breton University commits to cleaning up and reinvigorating the Manson Lounge. Find new places for janitorial equipment and clean out the various items that have been stored in the area.

Discussion:

It was noted that the motion is being brought forward as a pre-budget request to renew momentum on an issue that had been discussed previously. Participants agreed that the Manson Lounge is currently underutilized and largely functioning as a storage space, particularly since COVID-related space pressures shifted its use.

There was broad support for restoring the lounge as a faculty-focused space that encourages informal interaction, interdisciplinary collaboration, and a stronger sense of community. Several senators noted that the lounge had historically been well used and played an important role in connecting faculty across disciplines. Reinvigorating the space was seen as less about major renovations and more about modest investments, cleaning and decluttering, and clearly communicating that the space is available and intended for use.

Suggestions included making small, practical improvements, such as installing a sink or whiteboard, and encouraging faculty to actively use the space for informal meetings, coffee breaks, and lunches. Overall, the lounge was viewed as a valuable asset whose revitalization could strengthen collegiality and collaboration across the university.

Motion Carried.

M. Bishop expressed sincere appreciation to Karen Rowe for her invaluable contributions, dedication, and guidance during her service on the Committee.

7.5 Quality Assurance

No Report.

7.6 Teaching, Learning, and Evaluation

S. Pysarenko reported the following:

The committee met twice and elected a new chair. They are currently working on the Teaching Leadership Awards and also are continuing their collaboration with the Academic Committee on online examination policies.

8. Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:09 p.m.

**Karen Rowe
Secretary to Senate**