

Senate Minutes

**November 21, 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, Sahand Ashtab, Tammy Bernasky, Matthias Bierenstiel, Melissa Bishop, Karen Butterworth, Martin Chandler, Shannon Ezzat, Virginia Gunn, Michael Henick, Angelica Bermudez Herrera, Jenny Kassen, Karen Kennedy, Doug Lionais, Ellyn Lyle, Shauna MacDonald, Terry MacDonald, Gordon MacInnis, Emily MacLeod, John Mayich, Chris McDonald, John Nadeau, Kathleen Nash, Willena Nemeth, Rod Nicholls, Felix Odartey-Wellington, Joe Parish, Andy Parnaby, Alex Paul, Kinnon Pitcher, Timothy Rawlings, Karen Rowe, Quinn Rowe, Nathan Ryan, Nancy Samson, Rebecca Seymore, Nancy Spina, Toyin Tade, Karen Tobin, Jamie Tunnicliff, Tom Ue, Bilynda Whiting

Regrets:

Tanya Brann-Barrett, Sean Campbell, Linda Cavanaugh, David Dingwall, Enrique Hernandez, Harkanwal Kaur, Tracy Lillington, Jaxson MacDonald, Stephanie MacQuarrie, Marcia Ostashewski, Sergiy Pysarenko, Stefanie Ruel, Laurianne Sylvester, Ann Sylliboy, Destiny Tobin, Kellie White

2. Orientation Brief:

Chair F. Odartey-Wellington delivered a brief orientation on Senate proceedings and noted that a more comprehensive session would be provided by Tom Urbaniak during the winter term.

3. Consent Agenda:

3.1 Approval of the October 17th, 2025 Confidential Senate Minutes

3.2 Updates to List of Fall 2025 Graduates

Motion:

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

Motion Carried.

4. Reports and Items for Information

4.1 President

No Report.

4.2 Vice President Academic and Provost

R. Nicholls reported the following:

- He clarified recent media reports regarding federal government limits on international students. The distinction between application caps and visa issuance caps was explained, noting that current budget figures reflect visas issued rather than applications. Despite theoretical benefits for universities, the execution of earlier caps has damaged Canada's reputation, and institutions will continue to feel the effects of reduced enrolments through 2024–2026.
- Three new Master's programs approved by Senate in October have been formally submitted to MPHEC. To ensure consistency across submissions, edits were made with the consent of proponents and the Academic Committee. MPHEC has assigned one primary reader to coordinate feedback.
- A virtual site visit by external reviewers for the proposed Master's in Community, Sport & Health is scheduled in two weeks.
- Work is underway on the Self-Study and External Reviewers' Quality Assurance report for the Bachelor of Arts program.
- Progress continues on Bilateral Agreements between Nova Scotia universities and the province, though delays in receiving provincial criteria have slowed work. At CBU, preliminary analyses are being conducted, including:
 - Review of recent Quality Assurance findings
 - Documentation of curriculum reforms
 - Enrolment analyses supporting SEM policies
 - Alignment of programs with MPHEC labor market data
 - Integration with CBU and provincial strategic directions
- Faculty and staff have been using Microsoft 365 Co-Pilot over the past year. Beginning in January, CBU will extend access to students, joining other NS universities. Training sessions have been offered through CTL, with ongoing support planned to encourage responsible and creative classroom use.
- Faculty will soon receive information on students deregistered for financial reasons. These students may complete December exams but will not receive grades or be eligible for May convocation.
- The Students' Union and Registrar's Office successfully hosted the Honors Society Celebration. Dr. Mary Keating medals were awarded to one student from each Academic School. Photo opportunities with Deans were well received.
- A new in-course scholarship has been established in memory of Dr. Scott Moir, a respected faculty member and former Senate colleague.

Discussion:

In response to a question regarding updated numbers for winter semester, it was advised that current registration for Winter 2026 is approximately 3,100–3,162 students (including full-time and part-time). This represents a decline from Fall 2025 enrollment of an estimated 4,900 students, largely due to postgraduate students completing their programs in December and not returning for winter. Numbers are expected to continue rising as some students register late or clear outstanding fees. SEM analysis tools are helping project enrollment more accurately, reducing the likelihood of surprises. Final winter enrollment is anticipated to reach the low 4,000s, but still below fall levels.

4.3 Unama'ki College

No Report.

4.4 Students' Union

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

- Rebecca, Destiny, and Simi attended the Students' Nova Scotia Advocacy week in Halifax from November 8th-15th. Each year, Students Nova Scotia gathers in Halifax where they get to meet MLA's, stakeholders, and government to chat about the visions and views of students. She highlighted their advocacy document and the various recommendations they proposed.
- Students Nova Scotia also ran a campaign that R. Seymour and their VP Student Services, D. Tobin, participated in.
- They hosted the Honours Reception again this year in collaboration with the Registrar's office.
- On October 25th, the executive team attended the Open House with some other university folks.
- Coastline hosted a graduation event in the Pit on the night of Convocation that was very well attended. The Students' Union contributed \$2000 toward this event.

4.5 Board of Governors

M. Henick provided an update on behalf of the Board of Governors meeting. The following was highlighted:

- Discussion centered on enrollment declines and contributing factors
- Review of the current financial situation, deficit planning, and related measures
- Discontinuation of post-baccalaureate programs and progress toward launching new master's programs
- Announcement of Annette Verschuren's retirement as Chancellor after 21 years of service, with recognition through a special convocation and honorary degree

- Extension of MNP's engagement for review purposes, focusing on operating surpluses since 2018 and the reasonableness of projections, with a report expected by mid-December
- Positive feedback on recent convocation ceremonies, both the main event and the special ceremony for Dr. Verschuren.

Discussion:

In response to an ask for a fuller update on the MNP process, G. MacInnis clarified that it is not an audit but rather a review of the operating surpluses of CBU from 2018 until now. Work is underway with the committee and a report should be available mid December.

4.6 Executive Committee

K. Rowe reported on the following:

The group met on November 7 to set the agenda for today's meeting and determine how to address the Senate orientation. They decided on a brief introduction provided by Felix. Updates were also received from committees on their current work and upcoming initiatives.

5. Approval of the Minutes

➤ Senate – October 17, 2025

Motion:

Moved by N. Spina, seconded by J. Tunnicliff, that Senate approve the minutes from the October 17th Senate meeting.

The following amendments were suggested:

- Attendance updated to record Shauna MacDonald, Doug Lionais, and Shannon Ezzat under regrets.
- The words "check audio" be removed
- Title to be added on page 9.

Motion Carried. (8 abstentions)

6. Business Arising from the Minutes – N/A

7. Report from Senate Committees:

7.1 Quality Assurance

S. Ashtab reported on the following items for information:

The QA Committee met and confirmed the external reviewers for the MBA in Community Economic Development and the Master of Education in Sustainability, Creativity, and Innovation. The committee also endorsed recommendations previously made and deliberated on external reviewers' comments regarding the Bachelor of Arts self-study. A formal response was prepared on behalf of the QA Committee and forwarded to the VP Academic's office for consideration and inclusion in the VP Academic's report.

7.2 Teaching, Learning, and Evaluation

No Report.

7.3 Bylaws and Procedures

J. Tunncliff introduced the following recommendations to Senate:

1. Approval of the SST Engineering Department revised by-laws.

Motion:

Moved by J. Tunncliff, that Senate approve the SST Engineering Department revised by-laws.

Motion Carried.

2. Approval of the SST Biology Department revised by-laws.

Motion:

Moved by J. Tunncliff, that Senate approve the SST Biology Department revised by-laws.

Motion Carried.

3. Approval of the SSOB School revised by-laws.

Motion:

Moved by J. Tunncliff, that Senate approve the SSOB School revised by-laws.

Motion Carried.

Discussion took place regarding the role and participation of part-time and sessional faculty in departmental and school life. The following points were highlighted:

- Concerns were raised regarding the role of part-time faculty in departmental and school life. Part-time faculty are assumed to be non-voting members, admitted either by application or, in one case, by secret ballot, with the scope of their participation determined afterward. A question about how many part-time faculty actually apply for admission, how active they are in deliberations, and whether such restrictions are unduly limiting or appropriately safeguard against sessionals or ICAs dominating procedures was discussed.
- Broader inconsistencies across departments were noted and some exclude students entirely, while others allow “any person” to be admitted; some grant only non-voting membership, while others extend full voting rights, which may not be contractually permissible. It was emphasized that departments are radically at odds on these important governance issues and reviewing all departmental bylaws to understand the full spectrum of practices was suggested.
- It was noted that while the bylaws committee provides comments, departments ultimately decide their own rules, which are then brought to Senate for review. The committee acknowledges these inconsistencies but generally defers to departments and schools to govern themselves, noting that variations are common and expected.
- The issue of conflicts between departmental bylaws and collective agreements was raised and it was confirmed that collective agreements always take precedence over departmental bylaws, even if passed by Senate.
- The conversation raised concerns about confidentiality in departmental voting processes. Questions were asked about how votes are recorded, stored, and communicated, with clarification that departmental secretaries record votes and chairs report outcomes, though individual voting details are not disclosed. It was acknowledged that there is a procedural gap in records management, and the need for clearer policies may be addressed through the university secretariat.
- The role of part-time and sessional faculty was discussed and while they often carry a heavy teaching load, sometimes delivering the majority of courses, they can feel excluded when not invited to departmental meetings. While collective agreements already provide meeting rights for those teaching above certain thresholds, participants stressed the need to go further in fostering inclusion and belonging, both within and beyond the bylaw’s framework.

7.4 Research

M. Bierenstiel reported the following:

- The approved Strategic Research Plan has been forwarded to the Office of Research and Graduate Studies.
- Membership for the Research Ethics Board and Research Assistance Committee is being filled, with good progress made through volunteer recruitment.
- The deadline for research award submissions is November 23, and the RISE grant announcements will be released in December.

7.5 Planning and Review

No Report.

7.6 Academic Committee

J. Parish reported the following:

- The committee has met three times since October, including this morning.
- Work continues on reviewing course proposals, departmental and institutional policies.
- The Online Exam Policy is nearly ready to be forwarded to the Teaching, Learning and Evaluation Committee.
- The Academic Integrity Policy has undergone final review, with one issue on breach levels to be brought to Senate in December for debate before finalization in January.
- The Appeals to Academic Decisions Policy is expected to be ready for December, and the Decision Matrix has been circulated to the Deans and BPAS office for feedback, also anticipated by December.

8. Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:44 p.m.

Karen Rowe
Secretary to Senate