

**MINUTES OF THE OPEN SESSION
OF THE MEETING OF SENATE**

Friday, February 7, 2025
At 2 p.m. in the Norman D. Hébert, LL.D. Meeting Room
(Room EV 2.260) on the SGW Campus
and via Zoom Videoconferencing

PRESENTVoting members:

Graham Carr (Chair)	Fabienne Cyrius	Christopher Moore
Duraipaandiyaaan	Alexandra Dawson	David Morris (zoom)
Anbumani Poongothai (zoom)	Niraj Dayanandan	Catherine Mulligan
Angelica Antonakopoulos	Mourad Debbabi	Xavier Ottenwaelder (zoom)
Gabriela Aragon	Effrosyni Diamantoudi	Véronique Pepin (zoom)
Ryan Assaker	Tim Evans (zoom)	Rosemary Reilly (zoom)
Matthew Barker (zoom)	Ariela Freedman	Ramin Sedaghati
Beverley Best	Annie Gérin	Anna Sheftel (zoom)
Theresa Bianco	Andrea Harland	Pascale Sicotte
Patrice Blais	Steve Henle (zoom)	Kamila Sobol (zoom)
Amy Buckland	Mar Ibrahim	Ahmed Soliman
Robin Chemtov	Asli Isaaq	Ayyappan Subramanian (zoom)
Roy Cross	Arnav Ishaan (zoom)	Sofiène Tahar
Anne-Marie Croteau	Michael Lecchino	Anne Whitelaw
	Maggie McDonnell (zoom)	

Non-voting members: Philippe Beauregard, Paul Chesser, Stéphanie de Celles, Michael Di Grappa (zoom), Nadia Hardy, Frederica Jacobs, Stefana Nita, Carlos Santana, Olivia Ward

Also attending: Caroline Baril, William Cheaib, Julie Fortier (zoom), Sandra Gabriele, Aaron Johnson, Melodie Sullivan (zoom), Aisha Topsakal

ABSENT

Voting members:

Mohamad Abdallah
Sabine Bergler
Maria Chitoroaga

Bonnie Harnden
Mia Kennedy
Mehdi Kharazmi
Moshe Lander

Vanessa Massot
Mireille Paquet
Kareem Rahaman
Ian Rakita

Non-voting members: Denis Cossette, Isabel Dunnigan

1. Call to order

The Chair called the meeting to order at 2:04 p.m.

1.1 Approval of the Agenda

R-2025-1-1 Upon motion duly moved and seconded, it was unanimously resolved that the Agenda of the Open Session be approved.

1.2 Adoption of December 13, 2024 Minutes

R-2025-1-2 Upon motion duly moved and seconded, it was unanimously resolved that the Minutes of the Open Session meeting of December 13, 2024 be adopted.

CONSENT

2. Committee reports (Document US-2025-1-D1)

The reports were provided for information only.

3. Committee appointment (Document US-2025-1-D2)

R-2025-1-3 Upon motion duly moved and seconded, it was unanimously resolved that the Committee appointment be approved.

REGULAR

4. Business arising from the Minutes not included on the Agenda

There was no business arising from the Minutes not included on the Agenda.

5. President's remarks

- Dr. Carr began by noting that many developments had occurred since the last Senate meeting in December.

- He welcomed the new Vice President, Research, Innovation and Impact, Tim Evans. T. Evans was joining today's Senate meeting remotely from Québec City, where he was attending both his first BCI meeting, and the launch of the *Réseau québécois de la recherche en immigration, en intégration et en relations interculturelles (RQ3i)*, which is being co-led by fellow Senator, Mireille Paquet, professor in Political Science, together with colleagues from Université Laval and Université de Montréal.
- Dr. Carr shared with Senate the news of the passing of a dear colleague and friend, Dr. Marc Lalonde, from the Department of Religions and Cultures, who passed away January 1, 2025, after a brief battle with cancer. Dr. Lalonde began at Concordia as a graduate student with the Department of Religion, going on to teach in the department for 27 years. Over the course of his career, he taught nearly 140 courses at both the undergraduate and graduate level. Dr. Carr extended condolences to Dr. Lalonde's family, noting that his passing was a big loss for the University community.
- He then congratulated the students from the Gina Cody School of Engineering and Computer Science and the John Molson School of Business who had organized successful *ConU Hacks* event last weekend, drawing more than 1000 students from across North America to what has become a must-attend event in the global hackathon circuit.
- Dr. Carr also extended congratulations to seven of the University's Stingers hockey players-- four from the men's team, three from the women's - who were part of Team Canada at the Federation of International University Sports World University Games in Torino, Italy, where Canada won gold in men's hockey and silver in women's hockey.
- He recognized Marion Thénault, an aerospace undergraduate student who recently won a bronze medal in the World Championships for aerial skiing.
- Dr. Carr went on to highlight this year's edition of the Wild Talks, an annual Faculty of Fine Arts speaker series named in honor of former dean, Catherine Wild, which invites acclaimed artists and performers to reflect on their work. Organized in collaboration with Advancement and Alumni Relations to celebrate the University's 50th anniversary, this year's event featured the acclaimed contemporary photographer and filmmaker, Ed Burtynsky, in conversation with Zoë Tousignant, a graduate and curator of photography at the McCord Stewart Museum, as this year's keynote for the annual in celebration. Dr. Carr encouraged community members to explore Burtynsky's work, for its expressivity and vividness of detail. He congratulated A. Gérin and P. Chesser and their teams for their work in organizing this event.
- As February marks Black History Month, Dr. Carr noted that a first of a kind academic program and a first for Québec - the Minor in Black and African Diaspora Studies in the Canadian Context - is set to begin in September 2025. The creation of the program flows from the recommendations of the President's Task Force on Anti-Black Racism.

- He acknowledged the work of Dave Mackenzie and the Community Service Initiative in the John Molson School of Business for a new initiative, a calendar highlighting Montreal's black entrepreneurs. Of the twelve featured entrepreneurs, six are Concordia University graduates.
- After more than a year-long community consultation and assessment, the University recently released the findings from a Voluntary University Review examining how the University aligns with the United Nations's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and how we can maximize our impact and engagement going forward. Concordia is one of the first Canadian universities to conduct such a comprehensive exercise, which documents the University's current activities related to the 17 SDGs and identifies pathways to deepen contributions to global efforts to promote equity, security, well-being and respect for planetary limits. Dr. Carr thanked everyone who participated in gathering information for the review, but especially to Jason Ens from the Office of the Provost, Monica Mulrennan from the Office of the VPRII, Sabrina Lavoie from the Office of the VP, Services and Sustainability, and William Cheaib from Concordia International, who led the steering committee.
- Finally, Dr. Carr made note of Forbes naming Concordia as Canada's third best employer among institutions with 500+ employees. Evaluation criteria included salary, work flexibility, training programs, opportunities to advance, and likeliness of employees or recently departed employees to recommend the employer. It is the second year consecutively that the University has placed near the top of a list that included hundreds of both private and public sector institutions and businesses.
- Dr. Carr provided an update on legal proceedings:
 - Just before the holiday break, the Québec Superior Court heard simultaneously the cases that Concordia and McGill brought against the Government of Québec with regard to the changes it implemented in tuition policy for rest of Canada students and the associated changes to the funding formula;
 - the oral presentations by Concordia, McGill, and the Attorney General of Québec lasted five days;
 - regardless of the outcome, the University was very well represented by its lawyers at Power Law; and
 - the judge demonstrated very great familiarity with the case and the matter is now in his hands. The judgement is not expected before spring 2025.
- Then, moving to the financial outlook, Dr. Carr began by highlighting the Winter Open House, which is taking place next Saturday, February 15, 2025. This is a very important recruitment event, and recruitment is at the core of the efforts the University needs to make given the current financial situation.
- D. Cossette, A. Whitelaw and D. Therrien have been holding a series of budget conversations with the community over the last few weeks to share information about our current situation and the path ahead. The University remains on track to achieve the target deficit of \$34,5M for this current fiscal year. Dr. Carr acknowledged that this

is a painful exercise, mostly involving a continued hiring freeze on full-time faculty, cuts of close to 70 staff positions, non-renewals of contracts, reduction in some services, reductions in course sections, and so on. He also acknowledged that faculty and staff across the University are making important and necessary sacrifices under these circumstances.

- As the University looks to the future, more needs to be done to address the persistent financial difficulties. For the next fiscal year (FY 2025-26), the University needs to land at a \$31.6M deficit to meet the University's obligations under the recovery plan that was approved by the Board of Governors and the Government of Québec, which will require additional cuts of between 4.6-7.2%.
- He then spoke to the key variable to meeting the deficit targets: student registration. 87% of the University's revenue comes from student tuition and associated government grants. An overwhelming majority of the University's budget goes to *masse salariale*. Given the concluded collective agreements in the previous year, salary costs are expected to increase between \$20-\$25M every year.
- The University wants international students because they bring diversity and talent to the student body and are instrumental to our research mission. However, successive government policies, most recently Bill 74 in Québec, have had a chilling effect on international applications to Québec and Canada. When put in the context of the University's financial situation, in 2023-24 (the last year of registrations before the introduction of the Québec government's new tuition policies), the University derived \$54M from international students through tuition and grants. For 2025-26, the projection is \$18M, which constitutes roughly one third of what it was only two years ago. The financial consequences of this are grave and compounded by the steep decline the University has seen in registrations from the Rest of Canada.
- As noted at previous Senate meetings, Dr. Carr reiterated that the impact is not unique to the University, as the whole higher education sector in Québec and Canada is struggling because the government is not injecting new funding into universities and is also impeding capacity to generate funds by other means.
- The previous evening, it was also reported in the francophone media that the Government of Québec will eliminate the *bourses perspectives* program it created two years ago to incentivize undergraduate recruitment in strategic areas, including engineering, computer science and education. The program provided scholarship incentives to students as well as funds to universities to hire faculty and teaching faculty. The University benefitted, particularly the Gina Cody School of Engineering and Computer Science. The program was intended to run for one more year; however, it looks like it will now be abandoned.
- Given the above, the Provost, the faculties, department chairs and program directors, plus the University's recruiters and the staff in the Registrar's office are being asked to make a massive push on recruitment as the University tries to stop the decline in absolute number of students (3.2%) at the University that was experienced this year

by recruiting 1,000 new students. Dr. Carr added that he has received questions from individuals on how they can help – it is not easy to follow through on such a big goal in the current context. However, one thing that Dr. Carr is proud of is the increase in research income over the past 10 years, which has seen the University’s research budget triple. Yet, there is still a gap in the amount of PhD supervision that Concordia does in comparison to other Québec universities, and there is work to do to close this gap. Increasing supervision capacity is just one way to impact the budget at the faculty and departmental level. Decisions by individual sectors and faculties are also important and, while there is no magic bullet, Dr. Carr reemphasized how critical enrolment is.

- Going back to the discussion about Open House, Dr. Carr reminded Senate that, as in fall 2024, the winter 2025 Open House was being jointly organized with other Montréal universities. There had been an uptick in participation in the fall owing to this joint approach, so the hope was that this positive trend will continue.
- He then noted that Moody’s had released its credit rating, and the University’s rating remains the same. Essentially, Moody’s credit opinion gives a favorable assessment of the University’s overall financial health, brand and strategic positioning, strength of market position and quality of management. However, it is very clear that government policies are having a disruptive impact on the high education sector, and the report makes it clear that the University will need to pivot and adapt to the new realities.
- Dr. Carr added that, over the last two year, the focus has been on how the University reacts to disruptive government policies, but from now forward, it will be important to course correct and find a new way ahead. He underscored the importance of developing a new, multi-year approach to financial planning, one that simultaneously works back from 2028-29 to today and ensures that over the next four years the University is taking all the necessary steps to meet the deficit reduction commitments, but that also looks beyond 2028-29 to articulate what will essentially be a new business plan for the University.
- In conclusion, he reiterated the University’s history and strength and that in looking at the future, the community must consider how it envisions Concordia as a truly next-generation university.

6. **Academic update** (Document US-2025-1-D3)

There were no additional updates on the report that was provided.

7. **Report of the Office of Rights and Responsibilities (ORR)** (Document US-2025-1-D4)

A. Topsakal presented the report, which was included in the Senate documentation. She apologized for the slight delay in bringing the report to Senate, given that the ORR has a small team that continues to deal with a large volume of requests.

In summary, she noted that the previous year was a difficult year for the University given campus tensions stemming from the conflict in Middle East. The ORR has been working closely with Dean of Students Office and Equity Office regarding campus climate.

To illustrate the work of the Office, A. Topsakal provided an example of a complaint received from one student about another student who had threatened to hurt them at a student protest. After consulting with the ORR, the complainant opted to make a formal complaint. A hearing was held, the panel listened to both students, and ultimately, the defending student was sanctioned.

Student of concern files represent the most difficult cases as they involve serious mental health issues and threats to personal safety. In one case, a student in residence had threatened suicide. The Office helped the student contact their parents (who reside in a foreign country), helped the student make arrangements for a leave of absence, and connected them to other support resources.

There has been an increase in incidents of incivility over the previous year. This trend is not unique to the University. The number of consultations has gone up to 442 compared to 404 in previous year – an increase of 10%. However, the data collection doesn't include a measure of complexity of the consultations – one file could involve only one phone call, while another file could involve multiple meetings over several months.

A. Topsakal then responded to questions from Senators. One of the questions concerned wearing masks on campus and whether individuals can be questioned for wearing face masks. A. Topsakal responded that wearing a mask for health reasons is appreciated; however, if it appears that an individual is wearing a mask to conceal their identity, Campus Security could ask them a question to ensure that this is not the case, as concealing one's identity on campus is not permitted under the *Code of Rights and Responsibilities*.

Another Senator recommended that it would be important to have data about the types of groups that are making complaints. A. Topsakal noted the suggestion and mentioned the limitations of working with a small team.

On a question of recruiting more staff to respond to the Office's growing workload, it was noted that this is always welcome. However, given the budgetary situation, a lack of resources is impacting all sectors alike.

On a question related to disruption of classes during student strikes, A. Topsakal noted that the ORR is available to receive invitations to do outreach in departments, as needed, to talk about the obligations that were under the *Code of Rights and Responsibilities*.

8. SRC recommendation: Revisions to the *Policy on Research Chairs (VPRGS-7)*
(Document US-2025-1-D5)

T. Evans presented the policy revisions and A. Johnson responded to some questions related to the changes specific to the impact on Concordia Research Chairs and the achievement of EDI objectives that are being proposed by the new policies. On the internal research chairs,

it was clarified that the suspension of the program in the previous year was more a budgetary decision, and the policy related thereto was still effective.

On the question of EDI, it was clarified that, pursuant to a Canadian Human Rights Tribunal decision from a few years ago, the University is obligated to report on meeting EDI targets, which are based on the make up of the larger Canadian population and as such the targets need to be achieved and reported on periodically.

R-2025-1-4 Upon motion duly moved and seconded, on recommendation of the Senate Research Committee, Senate approve the revisions to the Policy on Research Chairs and approve the Policy on External Research Chairs (VPRII-14) and the Policy on Internal Research Chairs (VPRII-15) as provided for in the attached documentation.

9. Strategic Directions

- Dr. Carr noted that at the October Senate meeting, it was announced that the process of refreshing the University's Strategic Directions would be undertaken. Since then, the Strategic Directions have been discussed at Senate meetings, and a summary of points raised and discussed was included in December 2024 Open Session Senate minutes.
- With this backdrop, the main point that has come through is that it is difficult to work on Strategic Directions when there isn't enough certainty around budget projections for the future. There needs to be a better alignment between the financial forecasting and the ability to assess the Strategic Directions. Therefore, there is more work to be done before more fulsome conversations on Strategic Directions can occur.
- As such, going forward, the University will need to find a way to align the nine Strategic Directions with a more sustainable business plan for the University. The recommendation is to pause discussions at Senate until there has been more of an opportunity to develop a multi-year budget.
- Senators recommended that any revisions to the Strategic Directions and the work on the multi-year budget should include a discussion on the University's identity and the core values it stands for. Dr. Carr affirmed that this is part of the broader discussion in the community of what it means to be a "Next-Gen University." Dr. Carr also noted that any discussion on the budget will involve all the key sectors and the reason for bringing the discussion on Strategic Directions to Senate was to be transparent with Senate and the larger community about the challenges that the University is facing.

10. Question period

- During the question period, a few questions were raised on student participation in governance, to which Dr. Carr explained that existing governance structures at the

University provided for student participation at various levels. He also noted the regular meetings between the student groups and the Dean of Students.

- To a question on the health-related protocols for wearing masks on campus, Dr. Carr clarified that the University follows public health directives on health-related protocols. Under the current public health directives, the advice is clear that wearing masks is strongly advised for those who are immunocompromised, who have relatives who are immunocompromised, or who are symptomatic.
- A Senator commented on the fact that the DNE date falls on the same day as the add date, which can be somewhat confusing and can limit the number of additional recruitments in specific programs. The Provost noted that her office would look into this and report back.
- Dr. Carr took the opportunity to comment on the mention of every dollar making a difference, as the University is in the midst of a capital campaign. Last year, all donations made to Concordia of \$250 or less added up to \$1M – a real demonstration of the power of community participation.
- On a question of focusing on local knowledge and using internal resources to solve problems, Dr. Carr responded by emphasizing the need to balance internal expertise with seeking outside expertise through benchmarking and comparisons with other universities, as needed.
- A question was raised about applicant portfolios with double majors not being listed in some programs, which could potentially slow down the recruitment process. To this, Dean Sicotte noted that she would be able revert to the Senator with more information.
- A Senator commented on the perception of discrimination and divisiveness at Concordia, noting that it is a special responsibility for the University community to keep fighting for a favourable perception of Concordia.
- One Senator asked if there is material that can be made available to assist in sharing program and other recruitment information within and outside the community. N. Hardy responded that a new recruitment webpage was being created to this end and the same would be available very shortly.
- On a question related to international student recruitment and diversification to different counties, Dr. Carr clarified that there is a recruitment pipeline that is developed over years, given the interest of students from certain counties in programs at the University and that there is continued discussion around diversifying to different countries. However, it is important to note that new markets and forming collaborations take time, and that dependence on certain countries for recruiting international students was an issue across Canadian universities.

11. Other business

There was no other business to bring before the Open Session.

12. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 3:45 p.m.

K. Singh
Karan Singh
Secretary of Senate