

Nipissing University
Minutes of the Academic Senate Meeting
May 22, 2026
10:30 a.m.
Room F210 & Zoom Videoconference

Members Present:

K. Wamsley (Chair), C. Richardson, R. Hacquard, B. Law,
G. Raymer, D. Iafrate, N. Black

R. Davis, H. Earl, R. Gendron, K. Lucas, G. McCann, G.
Phillips (Deputy Speaker), T. Smith, S. Srigley, L. Thielen-
Wilson, R. Vernescu

A. Adler, J. Allison, C. Anyinam, S. Cairns, T. Horton, D.
Jarvis, A. Kociolek, A. Leblond, P. Maher, P. Millar, A.
Nkurunziza, C. Ricci, A. Schinkel-Ivy, J. Thornborrow, V.
Williams

C. Irwin, R. Kasperavicius

F. Couchie

R. Hehn

J. Martin, N. Botham

Absent With Regrets:

N. Colborne, A. Hatef, S. Kariuki, P. Nosko, M. Owens, K.
Srigley, T. Stewart, H. Texiera, H. Zhu, C. Greco, R.
Hoffman, M. Sullivan, I. Tavares,
O. Pokorny, O. Remillard, L. Lloyd, H. Konadu, D.
Lamirande

The Senate Speaker offered a Traditional Territory acknowledgement.

Adoption of the Agenda of the Senate Meeting of: May 22, 2026

Motion 1: Moved by J. Allison, seconded by N. Black that the agenda of the Senate
meeting of May 22, 2026, be adopted.
CARRIED

Adoption of the Minutes of the Senate Meeting of: April 24, 2026

Motion 2: Moved by S. Srigley, seconded by A. Kociolek that the minutes of the Senate
meeting of April 24, 2026, be adopted as amended to include the resignation
letter of the former Chair of the Senate Budget Advisory Committee.
CARRIED

Reading and Disposing of Communications

The Provost's Annual Tenure and Promotion Report 2025-26 was provided. The Provost extended congratulations to the faculty members that were awarded tenure and/or promotion and expressed appreciation to the Tenure and Promotion Committee.

Reports From Other Bodies

The President provided an oral report, highlighting a recent visit by the Deputy Minister of Colleges and Universities, David Wai, who toured the University campus, including all the buildings. This visit was part of a broader regional tour of postsecondary institutions in Northern Ontario, which also included stops at Canadore College and the colleges in Sudbury. Discussions focused on ongoing funding matters, including anticipated challenges for 2027–28 related to the conclusion of various streams of one-time or limited term funding. The Ministry is well aware of the progress toward financial sustainability over the past several years at Nipissing University. Transfer Payment Agreements have not yet been finalized and remain under development; updates will be provided as they become available.

The President also met with the Ontario Minister of Colleges and Universities, Nolan Quinn, Premier Doug Ford, and MPP Vic Fedeli, to discuss the funding model and the new Community Planning Program. The initiative has received strong support from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and is expected to generate hundreds of student placement opportunities over the coming years. Start-up costs will be fully supported through external funding, including resources for student support services. Further details and a formal announcement are expected soon, with the first cohort expected to enter in September 2027.

The search for a new Provost is progressing, with the selection committee moving closer to a decision soon. The hiring process is also underway for the new Director of Human Rights and Equity position.

Preparations for convocation are ongoing, and everyone was encouraged to attend. An official opening event for the Outdoor Classroom will be announced shortly.

The Provost and Vice-President Academic (PVPA) provided an oral report noting that significant work has been underway with APOP. A comprehensive presentation, including key summaries and identified challenges, will be delivered at the next Senate meeting. This presentation will also provide an opportunity for members to review progress and consider a potential reset moving forward.

Additionally, the PVPA advised that Faculty group photographs will be taken following each convocation ceremony. Further details regarding this initiative will be shared in the coming weeks.

The Vice-President, Finance and Administration (VPFA) presented the 2026-27 operating, ancillary, capital, and multi-year budgets, noting projected strong year-end results for 2025–26, with positive variances to be invested in reserve funds. A consolidated surplus of approximately \$1.7M is projected for 2026–27, providing a stronger financial foundation. The budget reflects conservative assumptions in response to ongoing provincial funding uncertainty, including reliance on one-time funding and the final year of sustainability top-up grants.

The operating budget includes modest revenue growth from domestic enrolment increases and approved tuition adjustments, alongside targeted government grant increases. Expense growth

is driven primarily by salaries and benefits, approved instructional and non-instructional positions, and prioritized investments in academic renewal, systems modernization, and space optimization. The budget includes defined contingencies and in-year allowances to address identified risks, emerging needs, and initiatives aligned with APOP and related reviews.

The ancillary budget reflects improved financial performance, supported by refined cost allocation, pricing adjustments, and operational efficiencies, with continued efforts to move all ancillary units toward break-even or surplus positions. The proposed capital budget of approximately \$4.7M includes workspace renovations, energy monitoring investments, classroom and washroom upgrades, and ongoing infrastructure maintenance, funded primarily through grants and donations.

A multi-year forecast was presented for planning purposes, indicating potential future deficits under conservative assumptions, largely related to expiring one-time funding and funding-formula uncertainty. Financial accountability ratios continue to improve, with spendable reserves projected to exceed prior targets, and cash flow projections confirm no anticipated need for additional borrowing. Our reserves are at a good level as we go forward with the refinancing of our long-term debt, and this should be favourable with the banks.

The VPFA expressed appreciation to the Integrated Budget and Planning Committee, as well as to the following individuals for their contributions: Karen Charles, Interim Director of Finance; Bojan Alimovic, Manager of Financial Reporting; Heather Daoust, Manager of Data Analytics and Reporting; and Stephen Tedesco, Director of Institutional Planning and Analysis. The VPFA welcomed questions and feedback from members. The full 2026–27 Budget Report is available on the website.

A report from the Board of Governors was provided. The report is appended to the minutes.

A report from the Council of Ontario Universities Academic Colleague was provided. The report is appended to the minutes.

Question Period

In response to a question regarding how much salary and benefits make up of our budget, and whether this amount is typical of other universities, and how much we have in our reserves and how much we are spending on, the VPFA requested that the question and calculations be forwarded to her for response. She advised that our reserves will be reaching the \$22 million mark with our 2025-26 budget results, and it is too early to tell for the 2026-27. Further information will be disclosed at the Audit and Finance Committee in the fall once the budget has been finalized.

In response to a question regarding expenditures on capital costs and renovations, the VPFA clarified that the capital budget does not include items such as painting, as these are considered maintenance and minor renovation expenses and are therefore accounted for within the regular operating budget. The VPFA further explained that capital expenditures are typically reserved for more significant projects, such as major repairs and upgrades (e.g., roof repairs, etc.).

In response to a question regarding the University's reserve goals and the proportion of the budget allocated to renovations, it was noted that the current reserve target is approximately \$22 million to meet financial accountability ratios. Updated targets will be developed and communicated in the fall.

The importance of maintaining adequate reserves to support the long-term financial health of the University was emphasized, and a request was made for ongoing transparency from Senior Administration regarding how reserves are allocated and the goals associated with them. It was further noted that the University's expenditures are largely driven by salaries and benefits, which are in line with sector norms. While the province has suggested a reserve level of \$50 million, the current \$22 million level is considered to provide stability, particularly in managing potential in-year deficits.

The University's goal over the coming years is to achieve balanced budgets and avoid additional long-term debt. Significant progress has been made in reducing our long-term debt, which currently stands at approximately \$30 million. Maintaining reserves is also important for negotiations of the renewal of the long-term debt.

It was also noted that, within a consolidated budget exceeding \$100 million, funds have been set aside for specific projects such as residence renovations. Further discussions will continue as part of developing a comprehensive reserves strategy aligned with financial ratios and institutional needs.

In response to a question regarding the University's credit standing, the VPFA advised that the institution currently holds a BBB (stable) credit rating and is projected to maintain this standing. The VPFA also noted that for a smaller university to achieve an AAA rating, significantly higher reserves would be required. The province has indicated that it is satisfied with the University's current BBB (stable) rating.

A question was raised regarding transparency around administrative salary adjustments and whether additional changes are anticipated following the current budget. It was noted that while fair compensation is supported, clearer communication of budget-related changes is important to support informed academic planning and avoid unexpected disclosures.

In response, it was clarified that individual salaries and contract details are confidential and not reported to Senate. Administrative salary adjustments were conducted by the Board of Governors in accordance with collective agreements and established processes, with required disclosures shared with unions in advance. It was emphasized that the University does not publicly report individual salary increases and that all employees are treated consistently in this regard. It was further clarified that the intent was to address overall budget transparency and the awareness of broader compensation-related processes rather than specific individual salaries.

The Deputy Speaker reiterated the importance of discernment in distinguishing between appropriate inquiries related to Senate business and those concerning individual financial matters. While individual salaries are not considered appropriate for Senate discussion, it was emphasized that budget information is essential for informed decision-making. Senators are encouraged to consider financial constraints in academic planning, and it is appropriate for Senate to ask probing questions about budget priorities and allocations, given their direct impact on academic programming.

Question submitted by Senator Susan Srigley:

I'd like to start by thanking my colleagues from the Ad Hoc Committee on the Use of Artificial Intelligence in Instructional Settings and their report to this Senate.

As someone whose research and teaching are in the Humanities, I am encouraged to see that across the reports coming out concerning AI and the university, there is:

"Strong consensus that certain elements of education must remain "irreducibly human,"

including ethical reasoning, creativity, and relational learning.” (May 22nd COU Report to Senate)

So, while I look forward to seeing Nipissing’s response to our ad hoc committee’s recommendations in their report, I would like to address something quite relevant to this discussion, and more immediately on our horizon, namely the Dean of Arts and Science’s recommendation to suspend enrollments in the Philosophy program at Nipissing.

The COU report in the documents for today’s Senate notes the need for an emphasis on: “the importance of **arts, humanities, and social sciences** in contextualizing technological change.” (COU Report)

If Nipissing’s response to some of these very critical concerns about AI in the university sector are going to have real substance and meaning, and we are going to take the threats to the future of education by AI seriously, how can we even consider closing one of the fundamental programs in the humanities whose very purpose is to ask the question of what it means to be human?

The Provost responded on behalf of the Dean of Arts & Science, who was not present, noting that she could not provide a fulsome response at this time. She advised that the matter had not yet come forward to the Provost or Senate, but indicated that if it does, Senate would be an appropriate forum for further discussion.

A Senator expressed support for Senator Srigley and stated that, to her knowledge, the majority of faculty support maintaining the Philosophy program.

The Associate Dean of Arts and Science advised that this item is scheduled for discussion at the upcoming Arts & Science Faculty Council meeting on May 29.

Questions submitted by Dr. Sarah Winters, Associate Professor of English Studies:
I have two questions about the Knowb4 "Cybersecurity Training: AI Chatbots Module" which I completed on Wednesday.

The module begins by asking how we feel about AI and offering us some options. I chose "Concerned" and received a response that told me I should find AI inspiring in my work and personal life. Why we are being told how to feel about AI in both our work and personal life under the guise of mandatory security training?

The second attached screenshot is a list of Dos and Don'ts that includes "Do rewrite or paraphrase AI-generated information into your own words to avoid plagiarism." Why we are being trained to do something in direct contradiction to our own Academic Integrity Policy that defines plagiarism as:

"Claiming, submitting, or presenting the words, ideas, artistry, drawings, images, or **data** of another person, or **by Artificial Intelligence (AI)**, including information found on the Internet and unpublished materials, as if they are one’s own, **without appropriate acknowledgment or citation**"?

<https://www.nipissingu.ca/sites/default/files/policies/academic-integrity-policy.pdf>

The VPFA thanked Dr. Winters for submitting her questions in advance and explained that University Technology Services (UTS) selects cybersecurity and AI training content from a broad library, tailored to a university context. Feedback regarding references to policies and

training will be reviewed, and efforts will be made to address the concerns raised and to improve the training, with updates expected. The VPFA expressed appreciation for the feedback from faculty, staff, and UTS.

Reports of Standing Committees and Faculty or University Councils

Senate Executive Committee

Motion 3: Moved by C. Richardson, seconded by D. Iafrate that the Report of the Senate Executive Committee dated May 14, 2026, be received.
CARRIED

Academic Curriculum Committee

Motion 4: Moved by C. Richardson, seconded by N. Black that the Report of the Academic Curriculum Committee dated May 7, 2026, be received.
CARRIED

Faculty of Arts & Science

Computer Science and Mathematics (*Proposal #FAS-2526-00099*)

Substantive

Motion 5: Moved by C. Richardson, seconded by G. Raymer that Senate approve the creation of MATH-4066 Topology as outlined in the template.
CARRIED

Non-substantive

That the prerequisite MATH-3166 be removed from MATH-5066.

Non-substantive

That MATH-3166 Topology be deleted.

Non-substantive

That the prerequisite for MATH-1267 Applied Health Statistics be changed as outlined in the proposal.

By-laws and Elections Committee

Motion 6: Moved by C. Richardson, seconded by F. Couchie that the Report of the By-laws and Elections Committee dated April 30, 2026, be received.
CARRIED

Senate Research Committee

Motion 7: Moved by B. Law, seconded by N. Black that the Report of the Senate Research Committee dated April 27, 2026, be received.
CARRIED

Teaching and Learning Committee

Motion 8: Moved by G. Raymer, seconded by J. Martin that the Report of the Teaching and Learning Committee dated February 26, 2026, be received.
CARRIED

Motion 9: Moved by G. Raymer, seconded by N. Botham that the Report of the Teaching and Learning Committee dated March 26, 2026, be received.
CARRIED

Ad Hoc Committee on the Use of Artificial Intelligence in Instructional Settings

The Chair of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Use of Artificial Intelligence in Instructional Settings thanked committee members for their contributions over a process spanning more than a year. The work, initiated through the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) benefited from diverse perspectives on AI, which enriched the discussion and informed the report's recommendations. The report reflects a balance between safeguarding pedagogical foundations and recognizing the potential of AI to support teaching and learning, as well as the importance of AI literacy for faculty, staff, and students.

The report is being brought forward to Senate for initial review, with further discussion scheduled at the upcoming TLC meeting on May 28. Implementation planning will follow, involving multiple committees and administrative units, with governance shared across the institution. Further discussions are expected at the June Senate meeting and throughout the next academic year. Questions and feedback were welcomed.

Senators strongly endorsed the report, describing it as thorough and timely, noting the significant implications of AI for universities and the broader knowledge landscape. Senators were encouraged to read and share the report widely across the university community. In response to a question regarding implementation, it was noted that responsibility now rests with Senate and its committees, supported by the CTL. As an ad hoc committee, its work transitions into ongoing efforts across multiple bodies, reflecting the evolving nature of AI. A key recommendation includes developing a university-wide framework to guide consistent approaches.

The Deputy Speaker reiterated that this report originated from Senate and will return to Senate for consideration and action. Responsibility for advancing and implementing the recommendations is shared across the institution, as the report has implications for all areas of the University. Congratulations were extended to the Ad Hoc Committee for its work.

Motion 10: Moved by G. Raymer, seconded by J. Allison that Senate receive the Final Report and Recommendations of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Use of Artificial Intelligence in Instructional Settings dated May 11, 2026.
CARRIED

Amendment of By-laws

- **Notice of Motion that Article 1.1 of the Senate By-Laws be amended as outlined below (*revisions in bold*):**

1.1 General Definitions

- (y) **“non-voting” means a committee member appointed for their expertise in relation to the Committee’s Terms of Reference. They are permitted to speak but are not permitted to vote or make motions.**
- **Notice of Motion that Article 2.1 of the Senate By-Laws be amended as outlined below (*revisions in bold and strikethrough*):**

2.1 *Ex Officio* Senators

- (a) The following shall be *ex officio* voting members of Senate:
- (i) the President;
 - (ii) the Provost Vice President Academic;
 - (iii) The Vice President responsible for Finance and Administration;
 - (iv) The Associate Vice-President Research, Innovation and Graduate Studies;
 - (v) the Deans;
 - (vi) the Registrar;
 - (vii) the Executive Director, Library Services; and
 - (viii) the Director, Office of Indigenous Initiatives;**
 - (ix) the Director of Teaching and Learning.**

- **Notice of Motion that Article 9.4 of the Senate By-Laws be amended as outlined below (*revisions in bold*):**

9.4 Academic Quality Assurance and Planning Committee (AQAPC)

- (a) *Ex Officio* and Student Members:
- (i) the PVPA, or designate (Chair);
 - (ii) the AVPRIGS or designate;
 - (iii) all Deans, or designates;
 - (iv) the Registrar, or designate;
 - (v) the Director of Institutional Research and Planning;
 - (vi) the Executive Director, Library Services;
 - (vii) the Director, Office of Indigenous Initiatives;**
 - (viii) the Director of Teaching and Learning;**
 - (ix) the Manager of Quality Assurance and Program Innovation (non-voting)
 - (x) one (1) representative chosen by and from the Board of Governors;
 - (xi) one (1) student Senator from the NUSU Executive or designate;
 - (xii) one (1) undergraduate student representative;
 - (xiii) one (1) graduate student representative.

- **Notice of Motion that Article 9.12 of the Senate By-Laws be amended as outlined below (*revisions in bold and strikethrough*):**

9.12 Teaching and Learning Committee

- (a) *Ex Officio* and Student Members:
- (i) the Director of Teaching and Learning **(Chair) (non-voting)**;
 - (ii) the Dean of Education and Professional Studies*;
 - (iii) the Executive Director of Library Services, or designate;
 - (iv) two (2) undergraduate student representatives; one elected from each Faculty;
 - (v) one (1) graduate student representative.
- ~~*The Dean of Education and Professional Studies will serve as pro tem Chair and call the first meeting of the Committee in September to elect a Chair and Vice-Chair.~~
- (b) Members Elected by Faculty Council:
- (i) four (4) Faculty Senators, with at least one (1) from each Faculty; ~~one of whom shall be elected to serve as Vice-Chair;~~
 - (ii) two (2) non-Senator Faculty; one elected from each Faculty;

Elections

- Elect three (3) faculty Senate representatives to serve on the Senate Budget Advisory Committee for three (3) year terms effective now to June 30, 2029.
No nominations were received for the above positions. The Deputy Speaker emphasized the importance of faculty representation on Senate and Senate Standing Committees

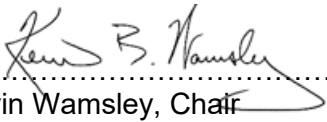
and encouraged Senators to consider putting their names forward for these roles. The elections will be included in the June 12, 2026, Senate meeting agenda.

New Business

Motion 11: Moved by D. Iafrate, seconded by G. Raymer that Senate grant approval to graduate the students who have completed their degree requirements prior to June 12, 2026.
CARRIED

Adjournment

Senate was adjourned at 11:42 a.m.


.....
Kevin Wamsley, Chair


.....
Sandy Landriault, Secretary to the Senate

Provost's Annual Tenure and Promotion Report 2025-26

In accordance with the Tenure and Promotion Procedures of Nipissing University, I am forwarding this report to the next meeting of Senate and the next meeting of our Board of Governors for information.

Article 26.32 (a) of the Collective Agreement states that, "Every year by May 20, the Provost of the University will prepare a Report on Tenure and Promotion which will be appended to the September Senate agenda and submitted to the Board around the same time". Article 26.32 (b) defines the dimensions of the report as follows:

TENURE				
Applications	Granted	Denied	Deferred	Withdrawn
2	1	0	1	0
Applicants Awarded Tenure (Tenure & Promotion Process): Dr. Marc Pilon, Faculty of Education and Professional Studies				

PROMOTION TO ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR				
Applications	Granted	Denied	Withdrawn	URAC
1	0	1	0	0
Applicants Awarded Promotion to Associate Professor:				

PROMOTION TO PROFESSOR				
Applications	Granted	Denied	Withdrawn	In Progress
7	5	1	0	1
Applicants Awarded Promotion to Professor: Dr. Natalya Brown, Faculty of Arts and Sciences and Faculty of Education and Professional Studies Dr. Logan Hoehn, Faculty of Arts and Science Dr. Kirsten Greer, Faculty of Arts and Science Dr. Alison Schinkel-Ivy, Faculty of Education and Professional Studies Dr. Karey McCullough, Faculty of Education and Professional Studies <i>One application remains in progress at the time of reporting</i>				

No. of Applications heard by the University Review Appeals Committee	0
No. of Grievances heard by the University Review Appeals Board	0

No. of Job Candidates awarded Tenure upon appointment	0
No. of Job Candidates awarded Promotion to Associate Professor or Professor upon appointment	0

The University extends congratulations to the individuals who were awarded tenure and/or promotion during the 2025 – 2026 cycle, including those awarded through the regular Tenure and Promotion process or through the Tenure and Promotion for Academic Administrators process. These achievements represent important milestones in everyone's academic career and recognize their contributions to teaching, research/scholarly activity, service, and academic leadership.



Board of Governors Report to Senate – May 2026

Board of Governors Meeting April 28, 2026

The Board of Governors met on Tuesday, April 28, 2026, In the President's Boardroom and via Zoom remote conferencing.

The Board of Governors is responsible for appointing Nipissing University Research Ethics Board (NUREB) members through a fair and impartial process and accepted the recommendation of the Provost to appoint Triana Ortiz to an initial three-year term effective July 1, 2026.

John D'Agostino was appointed as Board Chair to a one-year term beginning July 1, 2026.

Janet Stockton was appointed as Board Vice-Chair to a one-year term beginning July 1, 2026.

Ravil Veli was appointed as Board Vice-Chair Pro Tem to a one-year term beginning July 1, 2026.

The Vice-President, Finance and Administration summarized tuition increases, including a 7.5% increase for student enrolled in Business programs and a 2% increase for all other undergraduate, graduate, and education programs for Ontario residents and international students, and a 5% increase for out-of-province students enrolled in those programs. The resolutions were passed.

The Ancillary fee changes were reviewed and approved by the Compulsory Ancillary Fees Committee and resulted in an estimated average impact of approximately \$85.00 per year per student based on a typical course load. Both the Nipissing University Ancillary Fees and the Nipissing University Student Union Ancillary Fees were approved as presented.

The VPFA also presented the budget in detail, which projects a consolidated surplus. The Board was pleased to unanimously **pass the 2026/27 Budget as presented.**

The Provost and Vice-President, Academic presented the Cost of Educational Materials directive, which is required of institutions to report on the availability and transparency of textbook and course material costs for students.



Board of Governors Report to Senate – May 2026

The Board of Governors received the Proposal for the Bachelor of Community Planning Program, designed to prepare graduates for professional planning practice across Canada, with areas of specialization in Northern planning, rural planning, and Indigenous community planning. The program has received all required approvals, including from the Quality Council, the Province, and University Senate, with a public announcement forthcoming. Admissions are anticipated to begin in Fall 2027, supported by dedicated start-up funding sufficient to support initial staffing, program development, and marketing, without drawing on existing departmental budgets.

The program is planned to launch with an initial cohort of 60 students per year, scaling to approximately 240 students, subject to demand. It was noted that the program is expected to generate tuition revenue, with confidence expressed regarding its competitiveness. The program was described as addressing a significant labour-market need, particularly in Northern Ontario, and aligning with federal, provincial, municipal, and Indigenous priorities.

Members discussed workforce demand and the program's unique positioning as the only planning program in Canada focused specifically on Northern, rural, and Indigenous community contexts. The importance of ongoing engagement with Indigenous communities and the Nipissing University Indigenous Council on Education (NUICE) was affirmed as part of program development and implementation.

Following discussion, the Board unanimously passed the following resolution:

That the Board of Governors accept the recommendation of the Audit & Finance Committee to approve the creation of the Bachelor of Community Program with admissions to begin in 2027/28.

Members identified a need to improve Board–Senate communication on budget matters, including clearer reporting, earlier Senate engagement, and clarification of the Senate Budget Advisory Committee's role, with administration indicating alignment with ongoing governance review efforts.

**Report to Academic Senate
Council of Ontario Universities (COU)—Academic Colleagues Meeting
April 14–16, 2026**

Overview

I attended the Council of Ontario Universities (COU) Academic Colleagues meetings held April 14–16, 2026. The meetings brought together representatives from across Ontario universities to discuss sector-wide priorities, with a primary focus on the evolving role of higher education in the context of artificial intelligence (AI).

Discussions were conducted under Chatham House principles; therefore, this report summarizes key themes and insights without attributing comments to specific individuals or institutions.

1. Key Theme: Academic Delivery in an AI Context

A central component of the meetings was a sector-wide discussion on how AI is reshaping teaching, assessment, and research. Institutions across Ontario are at varying stages of response, but several common trends emerged:

a. Teaching and Learning

- Universities are actively exploring how to integrate AI into curriculum design while maintaining academic rigor.
- There is a shift toward emphasizing higher-order skills such as critical thinking, interpretation, and synthesis, rather than rote knowledge production.
- Overall, there is ongoing efforts to provide training, resources, and policy guidance.

b. Assessment Practices

- Traditional assessment models are being reconsidered due to the accessibility of generative AI tools.
- Emerging approaches include:
 - Increased use of in-person and experiential assessments
 - Scaffolded assignments that emphasize process over product
 - Oral and applied demonstrations of learning
- Institutions are balancing academic integrity concerns with the recognition that AI will remain embedded in future professional environments.

c. Student Learning and Support

- Concerns were raised about student over-reliance on AI tools and the potential impact on skill development.
- At the same time, there is recognition that equitable access to AI tools is a growing issue.
- Universities are working to define appropriate use while supporting student success in an AI-integrated environment.

2. Small Group Discussions: Strategic Framing

Participants engaged in structured discussions across five thematic areas, which will inform ongoing COU work and broader sector conversations:

Group 1—Purpose & Survival

- Explored the fundamental role of universities in a context where AI can perform many knowledge-based tasks.
- Emphasis was placed on universities as spaces for critical inquiry, social development, and ethical reasoning, rather than solely knowledge transmission.

Group 2—Students, Pedagogy & Academic Freedom

- Key tension identified between encouraging exploration of AI tools and preventing dependency.
- Strong support for maintaining academic freedom while developing institutional guidelines.
- Discussion included the need to redefine the concept of an “educated graduate,” with greater emphasis on adaptability, judgment, and interdisciplinary thinking.

Group 3—Future Institutional Model

- Considered scenarios involving enrolment and constrained funding.
- Highlighted the need for more flexible delivery models, potential restructuring, and increased collaboration across institutions.

Group 4—Research in the University

- AI is transforming research methodologies and outputs across disciplines.
- Concerns were raised about research integrity, reproducibility, and reliance on proprietary AI systems.
- Opportunities include accelerated discovery and interdisciplinary collaboration.

Group 5—Human Core, Ethics & Society

- Strong consensus that certain elements of education must remain “irreducibly human,” including ethical reasoning, creativity, and relational learning.
- Emphasized the importance of arts, humanities, and social sciences in contextualizing technological change.
- Noted risks of external influence, particularly from private AI companies, on knowledge production and academic priorities.
- Discussions also highlighted the importance of Indigenous knowledge systems and equity-deserving groups in shaping inclusive and ethical AI integration.

3. Sector-Wide Considerations

Across discussions, several cross-cutting issues emerged:

- **Policy Development:** Institutions are rapidly developing policies on AI use in teaching, assessment, and research, though approaches vary widely.
- **Equity and Access:** Unequal access to AI tools may exacerbate existing inequities among students and institutions.
- **Academic Integrity:** There is a shift from prevention-based approaches toward adaptation and integration.
- **Long-Term Planning:** Participants were encouraged to consider longer-term scenarios to guide strategic planning.

4. COU Updates and Governance

The meeting also included updates from COU leadership regarding:

- Ongoing sector advocacy efforts
- Preparation for the COU Members' Meeting
- Upcoming appointments to boards and committees

Further discussion on AI in academic delivery is scheduled to continue at future meetings, including upcoming virtual sessions in May.

5. Implications for Our Institution

While approaches differ across the sector, the discussions suggest several areas for continued attention:

- Ongoing review and adaptation of assessment practices
- Expanded support for faculty navigating AI integration
- Development of clear, principled institutional guidelines on AI use
- Consideration of long-term academic and structural planning in response to technological change
- Reinforcement of the role of human-centered education, including ethics and critical inquiry

Conclusion

The COU meetings underscored that AI is not a temporary disruption but a structural shift in higher education. Institutions are moving from reactive responses toward more strategic, values-driven approaches. Continued engagement at both the institutional and sector level will be essential as policies, practices, and academic models evolve.