

MOUNT ALLISON UNIVERSITY
SPECIAL MEETING OF THE UNIVERSITY SENATE

September 16, 2025, 4:00 pm
Windsor Grand Room & Microsoft Teams (hybrid format)

Present: I. Andrea, B. Annear, F. Antonelli, L. Beck, A. Beverley, F. Black, Y. Bourgeois, C. Brett, G. Brooks, P. Brown, E. Doukas, S. Fanning, D. Fleming, C. Forstall, M. Grant, D. Hamilton, M. Hamilton, A. Horwood, R. Inglis, R. Isnor, B. Jewett, K. Johnston, L. Keliher, H. Lane, C. Langlais, M. LaPointe, C. MacDougall, T. MacNeil, D. Mawhinney, C. McLaughlin, V. Meli, K. Morse, R. Moser, W. Paluch, C. Pringle-Carver, N. Robinson, J. Ropson, T. Reiffenstein, S. Ruckenstein, R. Rubin, R. Schellenberg, L. Schwartz, I. Sutherland, D. Thomas, J. Tomes, V. St. Pierre, K. Vail

Guests: A. Inkpen, E. Millar, J. Mullen, A. Nurse, L. Pearse, C. Pomare, L. Ricker, J. Rourke, G. Sandala

01.09.16 Territorial Acknowledgement

I. Sutherland read the official territorial acknowledgment written by Elders and the Indigenous Advisory Circle as follows:

We would like to acknowledge that we are located within the territory of Mi'kma'ki, the unceded, ancestral territory of the Mi'kmaq. Our relationship and our privilege to live on this territory was agreed upon in the Peace and Friendship Treaties of 1752. Because of this treaty relationship it is to be acknowledged that we are all Treaty people and have a responsibility to respect this territory.

02.09.16 Approval of agenda

Motion (R. Moser / C. McLaughlin): that Senate adopt the agenda as presented.

Motion carried

C. Brett shared that he would not serve as Secretary and asked that the agenda be modified so that the next item be the election of a Secretary *pro tem*.

03.09.16 Election of Secretary *pro tem*

Motion (L. Beck and V. St. Pierre/C. McLaughlin): that Senate elect a Secretary *pro tem*.

Motion passed unanimously.

04.09.16 Presentation of MtA Strategic Plan

C. Brett gave an introduction of the Strategic Plan. The introduction included an overview of its aims and the process of its development, noting that MtA faculty, staff, and students wrote the Strategic Plan. Brett discussed key elements of the Strategic Plan.

05.09.16 Discussion and Consideration of the Strategic Plan

Motion (C. Brett/R. Rubin): that Senate endorse the Mount Allison Strategic Plan, 2025.

K. Vail Inquired about the pathways and personalized programs of study referenced in the Strategic Plan. Vail asked for further details related to this topic.

C. Brett shared some possible ways personalized learning pathways might look (referencing, for instance, timetable flexibility and extended learning offerings).

R. Rubin stressed that the Strategic Plan leaves decisions about “how” to bring the plan to life to experts across the MtA community.

D. Thomas thanked C. Brett for the presentation. Thomas expressed gratitude to everyone who worked on the Strategic Plan. Thomas conveyed surprise about the prominence of AI in the document and what he viewed as an uncritical embrace of it. Thomas stated that for this reason alone he cannot endorse the document. Thomas expressed readiness for a more fulsome discussion of AI.

I. Sutherland thanked Thomas. Sutherland noted that the Strategic Plan is not intended to enforce how AI will be used and referenced the importance of its responsible, ethical use.

R. Moser expressed gratitude for the work that went into the Strategic Plan and for the consultation it entailed. Moser observed that the document seems, at once, broad and oddly specific with, for example, faculty and teaching receiving less emphasis as priorities. If we are focusing on some issues (for instance, AI), Moser wondered, what aren’t we focusing on (and devoting money and time to) going forward. Moser identified a section on liberal arts and sciences formatted incorrectly in the materials shared.

I. Sutherland reflected on Moser’s comments.

K. Morse indicated that faculty thriving, research, and teaching are not prominently featured, and questioned whether the document might benefit from greater clarity and specificity.

I. Sutherland called attention to some sections of the Strategic Plan concerned with these topics.

K. Morse suggested that lived experience outside the classroom might be receiving more attention than academic experience in the classroom in this document.

R. Rubin spoke to the breadth of issues that they heard raised in the process of creating the Strategic Plan. There is lots to do and moving forward will entail choices about how to implement the Strategic Plan.

A. Beverley inquired as to whether the document could be revised.

I. Sutherland confirmed that it could be edited.

P. Brown thanked everyone for the work they did on the Strategic Plan. Brown then raised the topic of how citizenship is represented in the document and pointed to the way critical thinking does (or doesn't) figure in the document.

C. Brett reported that the Strategic Planning Committee opted to use contributors to society. Brett voiced his curiosity about what critical thinking entails.

R. Moser returned to the topic of the Senate's endorsement of the Strategic Plan, questioning how this endorsement would function if the document might be further revised.

I. Sutherland expressed hope that the Senate could endorse the Strategic Plan, which was completed with university input in a consultative and iterative process. Sutherland expressed openness to editing the Strategic Plan in light of Senate feedback, as had happened earlier in the process. Sutherland suggested Senate might endorse the Plan with the condition that subsequent edits would be made.

F. Black thanked R. Rubin, C. Brett, and the Strategic Planning Committee for their work. Black stated that one thing she appreciated about the document is its breadth. She raised the topic of alignment, something that gives Black pause. Black cited the examples of the parking policy and the future of the university club, noting that we can see in these contexts different sets of principles and philosophies at work simultaneously. Black asked for assurance that the issue of alignment—particularly among senior leadership—would be addressed.

I. Sutherland stated that the President's Council has been discussing the issue of how to come to alignment. Sutherland referenced an implementation team that would iteratively and consultatively guide the implementation of the Strategic Plan.

M. Hamilton noted the prevalence of AI in the document and asked where this came from, acknowledging that, as a faculty member, he brings one perspective to the Strategic Plan.

B. Annear explained how the use of AI improves efficiency and quality of work in his part of the university. AI is critical for our competitiveness and highly valuable in the area of the university in which he works. Annear acknowledged that, as the Registrar, he brings one perspective to the Strategic Plan.

I. Sutherland communicated that AI came up repeatedly in the process of creating the Strategic Plan.

M. Hamilton shared that the number of mentions of the word AI in the present version meant that he could not endorse it.

C. McLaughlin reported that during the Strategic Plan consultations process many individuals stated that they did not have the tools (including those related to AI) necessary to do their work.

R. Isnor reflected on the way McLaughlin's comments on AI and the improvement in organizational efficiency permitted further nuance in our conversation of this topic. Isnor concurred there is a need for a robust discussion of AI, including academic perspective on the topic that would advance our thinking on this rapidly evolving area.

I. Sutherland noted that the inclusion of AI in the Strategic Plan was intended to generate conversation of the very type in which senators were currently engaged.

C. Forstall invited senators to consider what, if anything, would be lost by using technology, rather than AI, in the Strategic Plan.

I. Sutherland wondered if not referencing AI in the Strategic Plan would be like not referencing the internet in the 1990s.

R. Rubin spoke about our peer institutions' engagement on this topic (AI).

I. Sutherland pointed out that the Senate had yet to hear from students.

T. MacNeil shared the valuable experience of learning from a Mount Allison University professor about the ways AI can support research.

L. Schwartz referenced the value of an AI statement a professor requires all students submit with their work and spoke about creating a safe space in which students can learn about the topic.

E. Doukas raised the topic of the Strategic Plan's audience, including parents of prospective students. Doukas stressed that how AI is presented in the document is important and stated that the language could be improved.

A. Horwood reflected on the ways AI can be both helpful and harmful using their current IR course as an example.

W. Paluch shared their perspective as a History and English major and indicated that the Strategic Plan as a whole is very good.

H. Lane asked a procedural question about if or how the conversation would continue beyond the present Senate meeting. Lane shared that a colleague (an expert in this area) had drafted more cautious language for the AI-related sections. Several minutes later, Lane shared these with members of the Strategic Plan team.

K. Johnston expressed concern about an (or the) overly optimistic reference(s) to AI. Johnston stated that there is need for a policy on AI. Johnston shared that AI need not be central in the Strategic Plan. They asked for clarity as to what senators were being asked to sign off on and asked when the document could be shared more widely.

I. Sutherland explained that the implementation would be as consultative and collaborative.

K. Johnston raised concern that with such a broad document, any two or three things might be picked up on and that the Strategic Plan could be used as a blank cheque.

I. Sutherland stated that this is not the intention.

T. Reiffenstein expressed his gratitude to T. Roberts for leading a nuanced conversation on campus about AI and referenced B. Robertson's recent presentation on closed AI. Reiffenstein recommended dialing back the overenthusiastic embrace of AI in the Strategic Plan.

C. BRETT requested H. Lane share the language related to AI that her colleague (D. Inkpen) drafted.

R. Schellenberg recommended accentuating the critical use of AI in relevant sections of the Strategic Plan and advised including a statement about the different parts of the university using AI differently. Schellenberg advocated making choice in the area of AI plain in the Strategic Plan.

A. Beverley observed that sections of the Strategic Plan related to AI (and the editing of these sections) seemed to be a dealbreaker for some senators. Beverley addressed the layered relationship between dimensions of the Strategic Plan and spoke on the reference to Indigenization principles (on page 14) and the way decolonization, reconciliation, and Indigenization figure in the Strategic Plan—something that would have been at the forefront of our minds if we were completing the Strategic Planning process immediately after the Truth and Reconciliation Commission delivered its report and published its calls to action.

I. Sutherland shared that he has heard the feedback regarding AI in the Strategic Plan and raised the possibility of endorsing the Plan pending an update of the document with revised language on AI.

D. Thomas stated that he would not endorse something he had not seen.

R. Moser asked why there seemed to be an urgency about securing this Senate endorsement.

I. Sutherland spoke about the Strategic Plan's development over 12 months and the commitment to hearing voices from across the university in the process of its creation. Sutherland then spoke about challenges facing the university (and higher education more broadly) and the need to come together to navigate a perfect storm.

R. Moser raised the possibility that returning to the Strategic Plan again would convey to the Board of Governors that the senators are highly engaged. Moser suggested that the room of assembled senators was not yet ready to endorse the plan.

R. Rubin (when asked above the timeline for revisions by I. Sutherland) indicated it would take 1 week to revise the document so that Senate could reconvene to reconsider the Strategic Plan.

K. Johnston asked if we needed a motion to table the discussion.

Motion (K. Johnson / R. Moser): that Senate table the discussion.

Motion passed with 1 abstention (B. Annear)

06.09.16 Other Business

I. Sutherland expressed gratitude. Sutherland referenced a social event on Thursday. There was a brief discussion of the room layout (in a circle formation).

07.09.16 Adjournment

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Andrews¹
Secretary

¹ Because I am not a Senator, I have never seen the Strategic Plan. Preparing these materials, I was sometimes confused by my notes and/or unfamiliar with the topic under discussion. I was unable to turn to the document to better understand Senators' contributions or/and to quote from material. Thank you for your patience with my many mistakes.