

Approved minutes for Meeting 97 of the Athabasca University General Faculties Council held on March 9, 2026 via Microsoft Teams.

**Present:** Alex Clark (Chair), Carrie Anton, Walid Belassi, Shauna Bryce, Kia Buchanan, Priscilla Campeau, Andrew Chiarella, Martha Cleveland-Innes, Liam Connelly, Alexa DeGagne, Ali Dewan, Richard Dixon, Elaine Fabbro, Glen Farrelly, Osire Glacier, Lisa Gray, Ramses Ilarraza, Stuart Johnston, Dietmar Kennepohl, Anshuman Khare, Jan Lehmann, Michael Lithgow, Denver Ma, Manijeh Mannani, Rebeccah Nelems, Marc Nesca, Amy Neumann, Kristin Petrovic, Adnan Qayyum, Diana Ramirez, Ann Reynolds, Simon Sigué, Serita Smith, Ian Stephenson, Catherine Swindlehurst, Norin Taj, Tyler Tollefson, Eric Wang, Harris Wang, Ray Welshman, Krystal Zahara, Shauna Zenteno

**Regrets:** Derek Briton, Caroline Buzanko, Joel English-Dubois, Stella George, Steven Johnson, Candy Khan, Angela Kuzyk, Hugh Notman, Cori Paul, Frédérique Pivot, Adrienne Weare

**Guests:** Sabine Graf

**Governance Staff:** Tyler Tollefson (Chief Governance Officer and General Counsel and Acting Vice President University Relations), Eileen Hendy (Governance Coordinator), Allison Strydhorst (Recording Secretary)

The Chair delivered the AU Land Acknowledgement and provided opening remarks.

### Call to Order

The Chair called the meeting to order at 9:04 a.m.

#### 1. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

- 1.1 **Motion 97-01 That General Faculties Council approves the agenda and thereby approves the consent agenda, as presented.**

Zahara/Khare

Carried

#### 2. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

- 2.1 Subject to the [Code of Conduct for Members of the University Community](#) and the Conflict of Interest provision (clauses 11.1 and 11.2) of the [General Faculties Council Rules](#), members will be asked to declare any conflict they may have with respect to particular agenda items contained within the meeting agenda.

No conflicts declared.

#### 3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- 3.1 **Motion 97-02 That General Faculties Council approves the minutes of Meeting 96 held January 29, 2026, as presented.**

Dewan/Neumann

Carried

#### 4. REPORTS

##### 4.1 Report of the Chair

The Chair presented this item noting GFC will receive a written copy of the Report of the Chair at each meeting and reminded staff of the importance of staying alert for cybersecurity threats.

Discussions held on:

- Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) at the university noting:
  - inclusion of equity statements and policies in recruitments, and publications
  - how EDI is a part of the DNA of the university community, and threaded in our Like no Other Strategic Plan
  - EDI updates at GFC
- the process to submit an agenda item for consideration of GFC, noting the process is noted in clause 9.3.4 of the GFC Rules

#### 5. ACTION AND DISCUSSION ITEMS

##### 5.1 2026-27 Institutional Budget Update

The Chair, the Provost and Vice President Academic, and the Vice President Finance & Operations and Chief Financial Officer jointly presented this item.

Discussions held on:

- impact of increasing scholarships and bursaries on student fees, and the importance of reducing barriers to access by increasing funding for scholarships and bursaries
- increasing enrolments resulting in the need for more tutors and academic experts

##### 5.2 Motion 97-03 **That General Faculties Council approves the Doctor of Philosophy – Computing and Information Systems (PhD CIS), effective July 1st, 2027, or thereafter at the discretion of the Provost and the Vice President Academic, subject to the approval by the Board of Governors and Alberta Advanced Education.**

###### **Fabbro/Khare**

The Provost and Vice President Academic, the Dean, Faculty of Science and Technology, and the Professor, School of Computing and Information Systems jointly presented this item.

Discussions held on:

- careers that the program can generate including data scientists, cybersecurity careers and web development careers
- revenue projections indicated the program to be self-sustaining
- the ability of the program to support research impact

**Carried**

Break: 10:32 – 10:37 a.m.

**5.3 Elevating Excellence: Academic, Service, and Institutional Awards**

The Chair, the Provost and Vice President Academic, and the Chief Human Resources Officer jointly presented this item noting the importance of recognizing and celebrating excellence and the good work done at AU, while reducing barriers and increasing opportunities.

Discussions held on:

- how policy change could help in encouraging team members to apply for awards
- increasing awareness of the variety of awards available for learners and staff
- recognizing the diversity of learners and reducing barriers for non-traditional learners
- improved communications, policies and required systems

**5.4 Academic Plan**

The Provost and Vice President Academic presented this item noting work is continuing on Academic Plan consultation further noting phase 3 is commencing and drafting of the plan will commence in May.

**5.5 Convocation Update**

The Chief Governance Officer and General Counsel and Acting Vice President, University Relations presented this item noting convocation to take place June 11 and 12, 2026 in Athabasca, planning has been launched, including the recruitment of volunteers and noted volunteers will also be required for set up and tear down.

**6. BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE CONSENT AGENDA**

None

**7. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 11:17 a.m.