Yukon University

Briefing Note

Meeting:	Board of Governors		
Meeting Date:	June 1, 2026		
Agenda Item (as on the agenda):	President and Vice-Chancellor Report		
Purpose (1 of):	Information ☒ Discussion ☐ Recommendation (motion) ☐ Decision ☐		
Prepared by:	Shelagh Rowles	Approved by:	n/a

PRESIDENT & VICE-CHANCELLOR REPORT

I. **Reflection:**

As we approach the final stages of planning for the YukonU 2026 Convocation, I am looking forward to celebrating our students' achievements in a venue that accommodates their families and community partners. I am proud of all the work faculty and staff have done to guide and support our students through their studies. I am proud of our students for their courage and determination in their studies.

We had many challenges this year. Despite the challenges, I feel like we are ending the year on a high note. Our students were well served, we navigated the challenges that tried us, and we are embarking on a new journey with Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in (TH) through the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between TH and YukonU outlining our mutual commitment to shared governance of programs, services, research, administration and infrastructure on *TH* traditional territory. Grounded in the TH self-government agreement, section 17.7, and the Yukon Government's Yukon University Act, the MOU is an important step in Yukon University's reconciliation journey. It is an honour to serve a Board committed to fulfilling our obligations under the Umbrella Final Agreement.

II. **Key Updates:**

- Provost Bronwyn Hancock and I met with ADM for the Yukon Government's Continuing Care. The meeting was an opportunity to discuss how Yukon University can support the training required for the planned expansion of the Continuing Care Centre in Whistle Bend. We also discussed opportunities for education and training initiatives to support the expansion of Continuing Care in Watson Lake and other communities.

- I met with Mayor Kirk Cameron and two senior officials to discuss how the City and Yukon University can work together on common goals. Discussion topics included bike trail planning, campus land use, Polaris, busing, and our collaboration with the Waste and Water Operator program. We agreed to keep meeting every two months to ensure continued progress.

- Aisha Montgomery and I met with the Minister of Economic Development, Jen Gehmair, to discuss shared priorities and provide a tour of the Ayamdigut campus.

- Through discussions with Melanie Bennett, the Executive Director of the Yukon First Nation Education Directorate (YFNED), YukonU will host the YFNED Education Conference in April 22027. The conference's themes will be trades training and transitions.

- We have also agreed to partner with the YFNED to host a national science camp at the University in August 2027. The YFNED has secured several university partners and Science World for this initiative.

- I met with the Chief of Canada's Navy Reserves and Canadian Armed Forces Employer Support to explore collaboration as the Department of National Defence advances its plans to establish a Whitehorse Naval Reserve. I was invited to visit the Naval Reserve in Vancouver and, in April, had the opportunity to visit the Naval Reserve in Stanley Park. The reserve personnel invited me there because they wanted me to see what a reserve looked like, though they confirmed several times that no other reserve in Canada mirrors the Vancouver Naval Reserve's location. The reserves are all designed to mirror a ship's setup so that reservists have an easier time transitioning from land-based training to ship operations. The facilities are designed to accommodate training, host meetings, and provide meals and accommodation.

- The President's Executive met with the Yukon Government Deputy Ministers as part of our strategy to build relationships within the Yukon Government. As a part of our next steps, we have invited the deputies to meet on campus, and we will host an informal lunch with the senior leadership and deputies to explore opportunities for collaboration.

- I was pleased to attend the graduation celebration for the Community Safety Guardian micro-credential program in Mayo. Ten students graduated from the program.

- In April, I met with Grand Chief Alatini and Kim Stavert, CYFN's new Director of Government Relations. In addition to updates on recruiting for Yukon University's Vice-President Reconciliation and President, the conversation primarily focused on Arctic and Northern Security. We shared what we were hearing and our respective perceptions of our organizations' roles in Arctic and Northern Security. We agreed that it is important to keep Arctic and Northern Security a priority in our future discussions.

- In late April, I went to Vancouver to attend a Universities Canada President meeting. The theme of the two-day meeting was *Rethinking sustainability and value of universities.* This was a sobering session outlining the state of many universities across Canada. The conversation was hard as many universities have been devastated by the federal changes in issuing student visas in January 2024. Universities Canada shared a publication, *Building resilient universities: Leading on financial sustainability,* jointly written by Universities Canada and the Canadian Association of University Business Operators (CAUBO).

- The Yukon government re-convened the Health and Human Resources Steering Committee (HHRSC). The committee will convene to strategize on its priorities and approaches to address the shortage of health care workers in the territory. Currently, one social work faculty position and the medical office assistant program are funded through this strategy. I will continue to advocate for resources for Yukon University to offer a nursing degree. I will provide updates as more information is clarified.

- On April 28, Board Chair Mahar and I were called as witnesses to the Legislative Assembly. We were questioned by the opposition for two hours straight on topics ranging from campus housing to community campuses. I appreciate the work of University Relations and the executive team in preparing us. We were able to answer all the questions and, fortunately, it was an opportunity to highlight the great work happening across the university. I was proud to highlight the value of the work of the university's faculty, staff, and students.

- Finally, with the support of Jaime Joe and Brooke Bunce, and Nicole Percival, Bronwyn Hancock, and I hosted two sessions for faculty, staff and students to reflect on Yukon University's role in Arctic Security. We compiled the feedback to build a framework framing Yukon University's role in Northern and Arctic Sovereignty. Bronwyn Hancock, Aisha Montgomery and I used the framework to engage

several federal departments in Ottawa. On May 11, 12, and 13, we met with more than 10 federal agencies to explore opportunities for YukonU to play a more formal role in Arctic Security.

Staffing Updates

- I want to thank Aisha Montgomery for her work in strengthening the university's communications and marketing, government relations and development unit. After three years of service, Aisha is joining her husband in consulting services. I am grateful for having the opportunity to work with Aisha and wish her the best in her new adventures!

- Peter Johnston has accepted a two-year appointment at the university as the Associate Vice President, Strategic Initiatives. He will be working with the president's office to advance strategic planning, the Yukon First Nations Post-Secondary Education Summit, campus land planning, Elders circles for degree development and other key initiatives, including his new feature: *In the Pit with Peter.*

- Paolo Gallina has accepted an appointment as the Director of Development. He will work with the President's Office and the Yukon Foundation Board to advance philanthropic opportunities at the university.

Office of Reconciliation Updates

First Nations Initiatives

- The FNI team is in the process of hiring a Facilitator to continue to support the bi-weekly instruction of the YFN 101 course.
- The team has been working on updating the information in the online YFN 101 course. This work is nearing completion and it is anticipated that the updated course will be available in the next 2-3 months

Elders on Campus

- The Elders team traveled to BC at the end of March to visit Elders Programs at other universities. They visited UBC Okanagan, Thompson Rivers University, University of Victoria and Camosun College. The YU Elders team recently hosted a Tea to share information with colleagues and show pictures of the trip. It was an impactful trip that highlighted the importance of having Elders involved in university campuses and the opportunities for program growth.

EleV

- The EleV Admin team had projects develop 26-27 work plans and budgets. These were then consolidated and submitted to Mastercard Foundation for approval.
- In March and April, the team conducted one-on-one discussions with all projects to gather stories and capture lessons learned. Insights from these conversations informed the mid-year report to the Foundation, submitted May 2026.
- The team is also working with a communications contractor to gather and share stories, lessons, and impacts from EleV-supported work more broadly.
- This spring, the team has contracted IRP Consulting and is currently coordinating reconciliation-related learning opportunities for faculty and staff.
- The team is having early conversations about the process for developing a third proposal, including gathering YFN input and governance and decision making.

III. **Report on Senate:**

Motions – The following motions were carried*:*
March 18 Senate

- MOVED and SECONDED to approve the meeting agenda. CARRIED

- MOVED and SECONDED to approve the consent agenda items and Feb Senate minutes. CARRIED
- MOVED and SECONDED to approve Scholarly Activity Grant Revisioning proposed package of changes to the SAG program to better support the research community of YukonU. CARRIED
- MOVED and SECONDED to appoint the following faculty members to the President's Recruitment Committee: Jared Gonet and Jeanelle Julien. CARRIED

April 15 Senate

- MOVED and SECONDED to approve the meeting agenda. CARRIED
- MOVED and SECONDED to approve the consent agenda items and March Senate minutes. CARRIED
- MOVED and SECONDED to approve that the Registrar and Associate Vice-President, Student Life shall serve as a member of Senate, effective immediately. Membership is attached to the office, not the individual, such that the individual holding the office from time to time, including any interim office holder and any successor, shall serve for so long as they hold that office. This appointment remains in effect until amended or revoked by Senate. CARRIED
- MOVED and SECONDED to approve that the Vice-President, Reconciliation – and until that position is filled, the Acting Associate Vice President Reconciliation – shall serve as a member of Senate, effective immediately. Membership is attached to the office, not the individual, such that the individual holding the office from time to time, including any interim office holder and any successor, shall serve for so long as they hold that office. This appointment remains in effect until amended or revoked by Senate. CARRIED
- MOVED and SECONDED to approve the proposed changes to the Housing Maintainer Program course titles: CARP 108, ELEC 103, PIPE 109, PLMB 100, effective Fall 2026. CARRIED
- MOVED and SECONDED to recommend to the Board of Governors the approval of the program outline changes and title change from "Housing Maintainer Program" to "Construction Trades Foundations", effective Fall 2026. CARRIED
- MOVED and SECONDED to move into in-camera session. CARRIED

May 20 Senate

- MOVED and SECONDED to approve the meeting agenda, as presented. CARRIED
- MOVED and SECONDED to approve the consent agenda item, Senate minutes, April 15, 2026, as presented. CARRIED
- MOVED and SECONDED to recommend to the Board the development of a partnership between YukonU and the University of Calgary to advance the potential delivery, in Yukon, of law degree cohort starting in September 2027. CARRIED
- MOVED and SECONDED to approve an extension of the suspension of Honorary Credential nominations until the call for Convocation 2028, with the revision of AW 5.0 Honorary Credential Policy and Procedures to be completed prior to the next call for nominations. CARRIED
- MOVED and SECONDED to approve the Senate Planning and Meeting Calendars for the 2026-27 Senate year with understanding that they are subject to changes. CARRIED
- MOVED and SECONDED to approve the appointment of Melani Adams as a member of the Academic Appeals Committee, effective immediately, with the term to expire upon resignation from the Committee or cessation of Senate membership, whichever occurs first. CARRIED
- MOVED and SECONDED to approve the Applied Arts School Chair Appointment Procedures (2026). CARRIED
- MOVED and SECONDED to move into in-camera session with the Office of the Registrar representatives to remain. CARRIED
- MOVED to move out of in-camera session and adjourn at 4:59pm. CARRIED

IV. **President's Key Engagements (March 6 to May 29):**

Meetings in Advancement of Government Relations

- March 11 – Meeting with Nordic Ambassadors

- March 18 – Meeting with Minister Scott Kent
- March 20 – Post Budget Address with Premier event
- March 20 – Meeting with Cathy McNeil, YG Health and Social Services
- March 27 – Meeting with Kirk Cameron, Mayor of Whitehorse
- March 27 – Meeting with Minister Jen Gehmair
- March 31 – Meeting with Deputy Ministers Roundtable Council
- April 7 – Meeting with Eric Salter, Michelle Dunlop, and Frederick Godwin of the Canadian Armed Forces, Canada's Reserve Force
- April 13 – Meeting with Math'ieya Alatini, CYFN Grand Chief
- April 14 – Meeting with Zeng Zhi, Acting Consul General of the People's Republic of China in Vancouver
- April 23 -Surface Rights Board
- April 27 - Meeting with Jeff Labonté, Associate Deputy Minister of Natural Resources Canada
- April 28 – Called as witness into Legislative Assembly
- May 11-13 – Government Affairs trip to Ottawa, met with:
    - The Director General, Sectoral and Employer Engagement Directorate with Employment Skill Development Canada (ESDC).
    - The Assistant Deputy Minister, Emergency Management and Programs Branch with Public Safety Canada
    - The Director of Policy & Manuela Tomic, Senior Policy Advisor with Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada (ISED)
    - The Director of Policy with Public Transport Canada
    - The Senior Regional Advisor, Department of Finance
    - Director of Policy to the Minister, Office of the Minister of Emergency Management and Community Resilience
    - Director of Parliamentary Affairs & Issues Management and West and North Regional Advisor for Department of National Defense
    - President of CanNor
    - Executive Director of Policy and Senior Policy Advisor for ESDC
    - Director of Operations for PCU
    - Chief of Staff to Minister Chartrand with CIRNAC
- May 19 – Meeting with Math'ieya Alatini, CYFN Grand Chief
- May 22 - Meeting with MP Brandon Hanley
- May 25 – Meeting with Minister Kent
- May 28 – YG Education Review Consultation (invited to participate)

Meetings & Engagements in Advancement of Yukon University Programs & Research

- March 9 - Meeting with Jeff Zabudsky, PACIU President
- March 16 – Meeting with Mary Cameron, prior DM Education
- March 17 – Meeting with Peter Johnston, prior CYFN Grand Chief
- March 19 – Meeting with Jimi Onalik, CanNor President
- March 23 – Meeting with Paul Genest, Senior Vice-President of Power Corporation
- March 25 – Meeting with Walter Siqueira, Dean of College of Dentistry, Uni of Saskatchewan
- April 1 – Meeting with CYFN Digitization Project team
- April 13 – Meeting with Jennifer Brennan, Sr Dir Canadian Programs, Mastercard Foundation
- April 27 – HHR Steering Committee
- April 27 – Meeting with Stefani Ralph, Yukon Hospital Corp, Executive Director, Patient Care, Access & Flow
- May 8 – Meeting with Dr. Elizabeth Cannon, CLaS alum, President Emeritus of the University of Calgary, and RCN Honorary Captain
- May 19 – Meeting with CYFN Digitization Project team
- May 19 – Meeting with Caitlin Onalik and David Lawson, CanNor

- May 26 – Meeting with Dena Nezziddi Development

Engagements as Representative of Yukon University

- March 19 - Arctic Inspiration Prize Selection Committee Meeting
- April 7 – EleV Network Gathering Breakout Session Planning Meeting
- April 16 – Speaker at opening of Territorial Skills Canada event
- April 16 – Meeting with CBC/Radio-Canada
- April 17 – Speaker at the Awards Reception of Territorial Skills Canada event
- April 21-22 – Universities Canada Spring Membership Meeting
- May 7 – Arctic Indigenous Investment Conference
- May 21 – Speaker at Yukon Mining & Geology Week Lunch & Learn at YukonU CNIM
- May 217 – EleV Network Gathering Breakout Session Planning Meeting
- May 22 – Indigenous Postsecondary Graduation Ceremony

Yukon Community Visits

- April 8 – Mayo: Community Safety Guardian Celebration
- May 31 – June 2, Dawson: YU BoG Retreat, Meeting and TH MOU signing

Submitted May 27, 2026

Shelagh Rowles, PhD
Interim President & Vice-Chancellor,
Yukon University