



# Senate Orientation

Lauren Sergio, Chair of Senate  
Sarah Willey-Thomas, Secretary of Senate

2025

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YORK 

# University Governance Overview

- YorkU has a bi-cameral governance system: Board of Governors and Senate
  - established by 1959/1965 York University Act (Ontario legislation)
  - Similar to most Canadian public universities, but they do not have identical governance structures
- Universities are not-for-profit, charitable corporations that are independent of government – while they have powers of self-determination, they are supported by government grants and are responsible for reporting to the provincial and federal governments on a variety of matters
- Collegial governance a hallmark of academic decision-making
- Collegial governance depends heavily upon the participation of colleagues to establish and realize a shared purpose

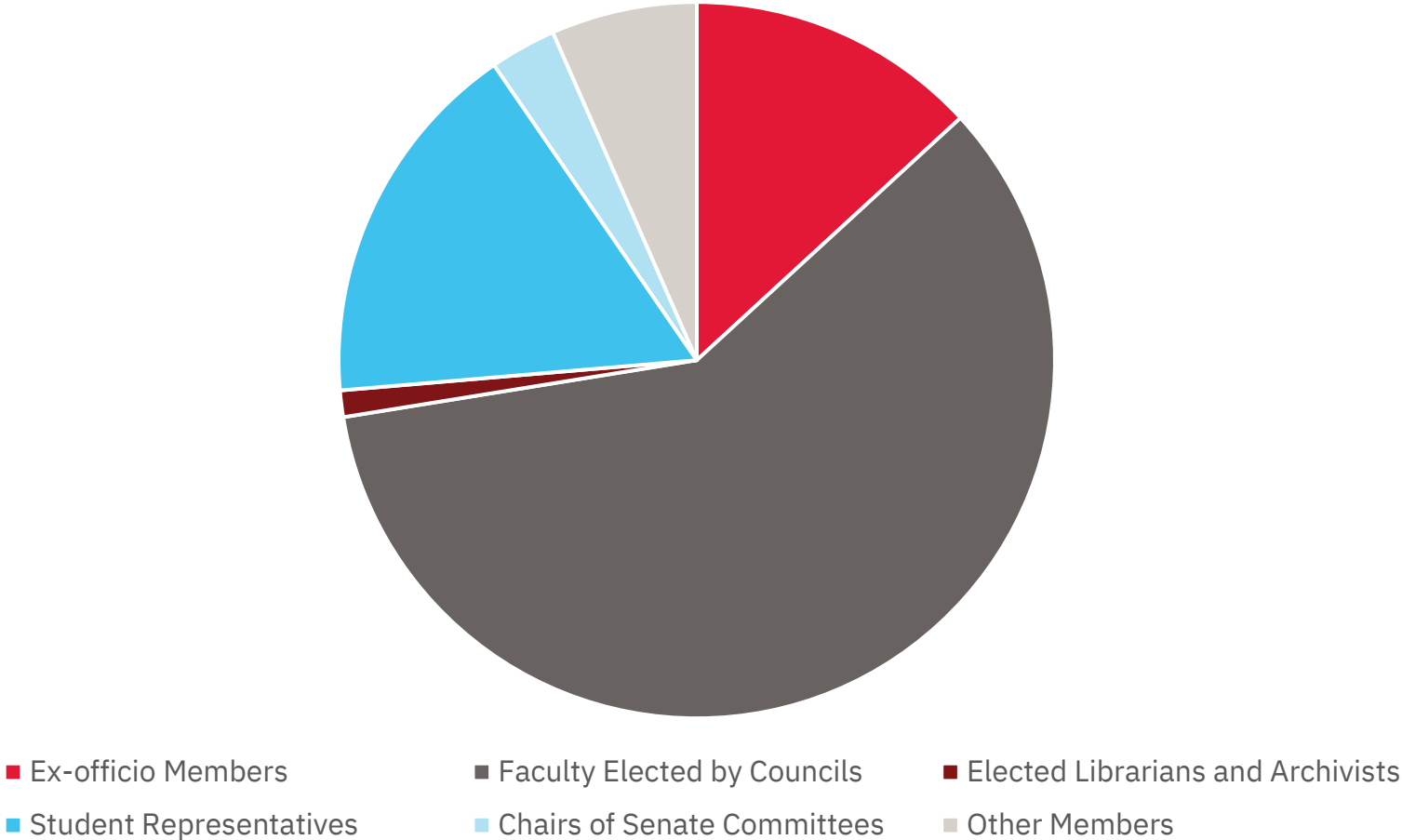
# From the York U Act: Senate Responsibilities

12. **The Senate is responsible for the academic policy of the University** and may recommend to the Board the establishment of faculties, schools, institutes and departments, and the establishment of chairs, and may establish councils in the faculties, schools or institutes established, and may enact by-laws, rules and regulations for the conduct of its affairs, and, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, has power,

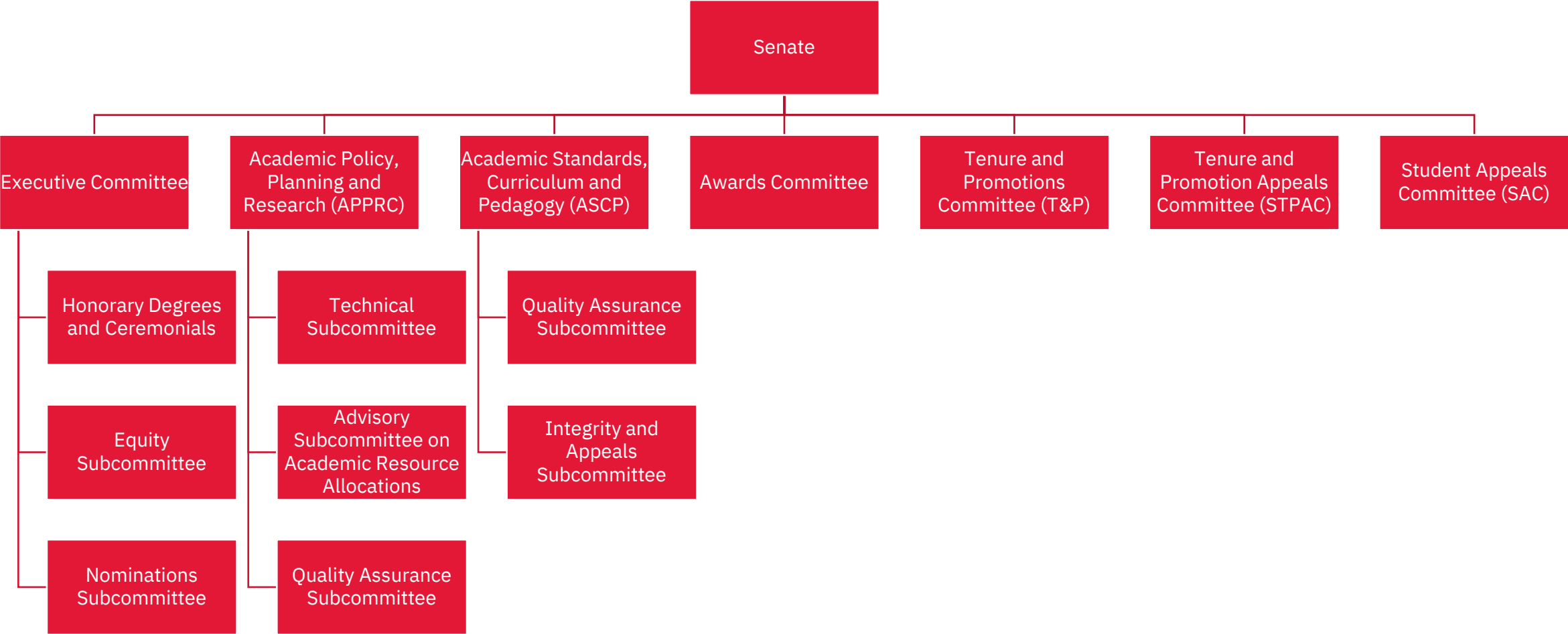
- (a) to consult with the Board and to make recommendations as to the appointment of the Chancellor and the President;
- (b) to determine and regulate the standards for the admission of students to the University, the contents and curricula of all courses of study, and the requirements for graduation;
- (c) to conduct examinations and appoint examiners;
- (d) to deal with matters arising in connection with the award of fellowships, scholarships, medals, prizes and other awards for academic achievement;
- (e) to confer the degrees of Bachelor, Master and Doctor and all other degrees, diplomas and certificates in all branches of learning that may appropriately be conferred by a University;
- (f) after consultation with the Board, to confer honorary degrees.

# Senate Composition

Membership by Category



# Senate and Senate Committees



# Role of the Chair at Meetings

➤ Assisted by the Vice-Chair and Secretary, the Chair:

- Opens proceedings
- Determines what is in order (motions, interventions, documents etc.)
- Recognizes speakers (no one may speak until recognized, and must halt or pause when the Chair intervenes)
- Makes definitive rulings as necessary to ensure that rules are properly followed, that speakers are focused on the matters at hand, and are respectful to others
- Promotes judicious use of Senate's time
- Maintains decorum and civility



# Rights and Obligations of Senators

## ➤ Principles from The Rules of Senate

- All have the same rights and obligations
- Right to **receive due notice of matters** to be decided and responsibility to **read documentation ahead of meetings**
- **Right to bring forth motions** in respect of the Rules
- Duty to **attend meetings and to vote on resolutions**
- Obligation to **act with respect and decorum**
- Obligation to **debate issues** under consideration

## ➤ Additional considerations:

- Place the University's overall interests at the forefront
- Advance academic planning objectives
- Help connect Senate with the collegium and communities Promote pride in governance and York
- Act with respect and in collegial manner
- Confidentiality, as noted in Senate committee materials (where applicable)

# Nominations and Elections

- Nominations and elections are critical for Senate
- Senate Executive presents recommendations
- Some elections are conducted by **e-ballot** (a secure, accurate and anonymous process)
- Balloting requires a Passport York account
- Provide your Passport York Username to **Elaine MacRae**, University Secretariat (**emacrae @yorku.ca**)



# Senate Cycle



# Before Senate Meetings

- Notice of meetings (agendas) are issued **approximately a week prior to meetings**. Please set aside time to review the agenda and materials.
- For in-person meetings, notice on **Senate-L**. In-person meetings are open to the Community. Virtual option offered to those who cannot attend due to extenuating circumstances.
- For virtual meetings, notice on **Senate-R**, a link to the agenda package on the Senate Website will be embedded in the notice. Virtual meetings are webcast, but not recorded.
- NOTE: Watch for additional notices just before meeting – with supplementary items from committees or presentations.
- **Senate-D** listserv is used to pose questions and share information in advance of a Senate meeting. Senate debate and discussion intended to take place at the meeting, and Senate-D does not replace deliberation intended for the Senate “floor” (in person or virtual) or Senate processes.

# Mode for Senate Meetings

## IN PERSON SENATE MEETINGS

- In-person meetings are held in the *Dr. Robert Everett Senate Chamber*, N940 Ross Building, Keele Campus.
- Meetings of Senate held in-person or in hybrid mode are open to members of the University community to participate in-person, subject to the availability of physical space; these meetings are not live-streamed.


## VIRTUAL SENATE MEETINGS

- Virtual meetings are delivered through Zoom.
- Meetings of Senate held exclusively in virtual mode will normally be restricted to Senators to ensure the integrity of voting. Virtual meetings are live-streamed for members of the University community to observe the proceedings; the livestream link is posted on the Senate website in advance of the meeting.

# Senate Agenda

➤ Agenda normally contains three parts:

- 1. Opening Items** (Chair's remarks, Business Arising from the Minutes, President's Items, Communications and Inquiries)
- 2. Committee Reports**
- 3. Consent Agenda:**
  - Routine items for approval or receipt by Senate
  - Deemed to be approved or received without a vote
  - Can be moved to the regular business agenda upon request
  - Consent agenda items include: minutes of the previous meeting, minor modifications to academic programs, Board of Governors

	<b>Notice of Meeting</b>
	<b>Thursday, 25 September 2025, 2:30pm-4:30pm</b>
	<b>Dr. Robert Everett Senate Chamber, N940 Ross Building</b>
	<b>AGENDA</b>
	<b>An orientation for new and continuing Senators will precede the meeting at 1:00pm</b>
	<b>Page</b>
	1. Chair's Remarks (L. Sergio)
10min	2. Business Arising from the Minutes
	3. Inquiries and Communications
	4. President's Items (R. Lenton)
25min	a. Fall 2025 University updates
	b. 2025-2026 Priorities in Focus
	c. Fall 2025 convocation and honorary degree recipients
	<b>Committee Reports</b>
	5. Executive Committee (P. Burke Wood) ..... 1
30min	a. Election of Members of Non-Designated Senate Committees (For approval)
	b. Principles Governing a Presidential Search: Discussion of Joint Board-Senate Working Group summary report (Appendices A and B) ..... 5
15min	6. Academic Policy, Planning and Research (M. Herbert).....44
	7. Academic Standards, Curriculum and Pedagogy (J. Thienpont) .....54
10min	a. Addition of Philosophy of Law Honours BA Major, Department of Philosophy, LA&PS (Appendix A) .....59
	8. Academic Policy, Planning and Research / Academic Standards, Curriculum and

# Senate Motions

- Senate acts by resolution – that is, by passing motions.
- There are also many information items – you can always ask questions or make suggestions.
- There are four types of motions that Senate may consider:
  1. **Substantive** motions – the most common type, sometimes called “regular motions”, deal with a substantive matter at hand.
  2. **Statutory** motions – infrequent, establishment of Faculties and Faculty Councils, revisions to Senate Rules, creation of Committees of Senate, etc.
  3. **Procedural** motions – frequent, motions related to process and not substance (adjournment, motion to divide, refer, calling the question, etc.).
  4. **Hortative** motions – rather rare, Senate expresses an opinion on a matter outside its jurisdiction.

# Substantive and Hortative Motions

1. Motions for Senate should be sent to the Chair of Senate for approval by the Executive Committee (usually 12 days before Senate) to be added to the Senate meeting agenda (“due notice”).
  1. Motions can still be added without due notice, if they are sent to the Chair at least 24 hours before a Senate meeting. They will then require 2/3 approval of voting members present to be considered.
- Chair may seek advice of the Executive Committee to determine if the motion is in order. A ruling that a motion is not in order is reported to Senate, as it can be appealed. Motions on the agenda are in order.
- Motions must be in order: they must fall under Senate authority and their intent must be clear.
  - Hortative motions are those which consider issues falling outside of Senate authority but relevant to its interests

# Procedural Motions

## ➤ **Procedural motions:**

- Motion to adjourn the meeting
- Motion to extend the meeting (specify end time)
- Motion to put the question,
- Motion to adjourn debate
- Motion to refer...

➤ **Point of order:** Made when it is alleged that there has been a breach of the rules of Senate.

➤ **Point of privilege:** Made when it is alleged that the integrity of Senate or a Senator has been compromised.



# Amendments and Sub-Amendments

- Amendments **alter the main motion without substantially changing its intent**. Any amendment that negates or substantially alters the intent of the motion is out of order.
  
- Senators can move an amendment to a motion:
  - Motion to amend must be seconded
  - The amendment must be resolved before resuming discussion on the main motion
  - An amendment may be further amended by a sub-amendment (only once).

# Participating in Senate Meetings

## ➤ When to engage:

- A report is presented and feedback is sought
- A motion is on the floor
- There is business arising from the minutes or there are inquiries and communications
- You have a point of order
- You have a point of privilege

## ➤ Wait until:

- Your name is called by the Chair – “Senator...”
- For in-person meetings, move to the microphone
- For virtual/hybrid meetings, wait a second or two for your microphone to be activated
- You may speak just **once** to an item for no more than **five minutes**
- The Chair may permit additional interventions if time permits and **new, brief** thoughts will assist Senate

# Tips for Effective Participation

- Review The Rules of Senate
- Review the agenda package in advance, note your questions or comments
- Discuss items with others
- Amendment to a motion written out in advance for Secretary
- When you begin, indicate why you are speaking (have a question, in support of or opposed to something, in need of clarification or additional information, wish to suggest some action by a committee)
- Address the Chair but speak to the plenary – the Chair will determine who should respond and when
- Be succinct. Keep your remarks brief and pointed
- Speak with respect – a key collegial value

# After a Senate Meeting

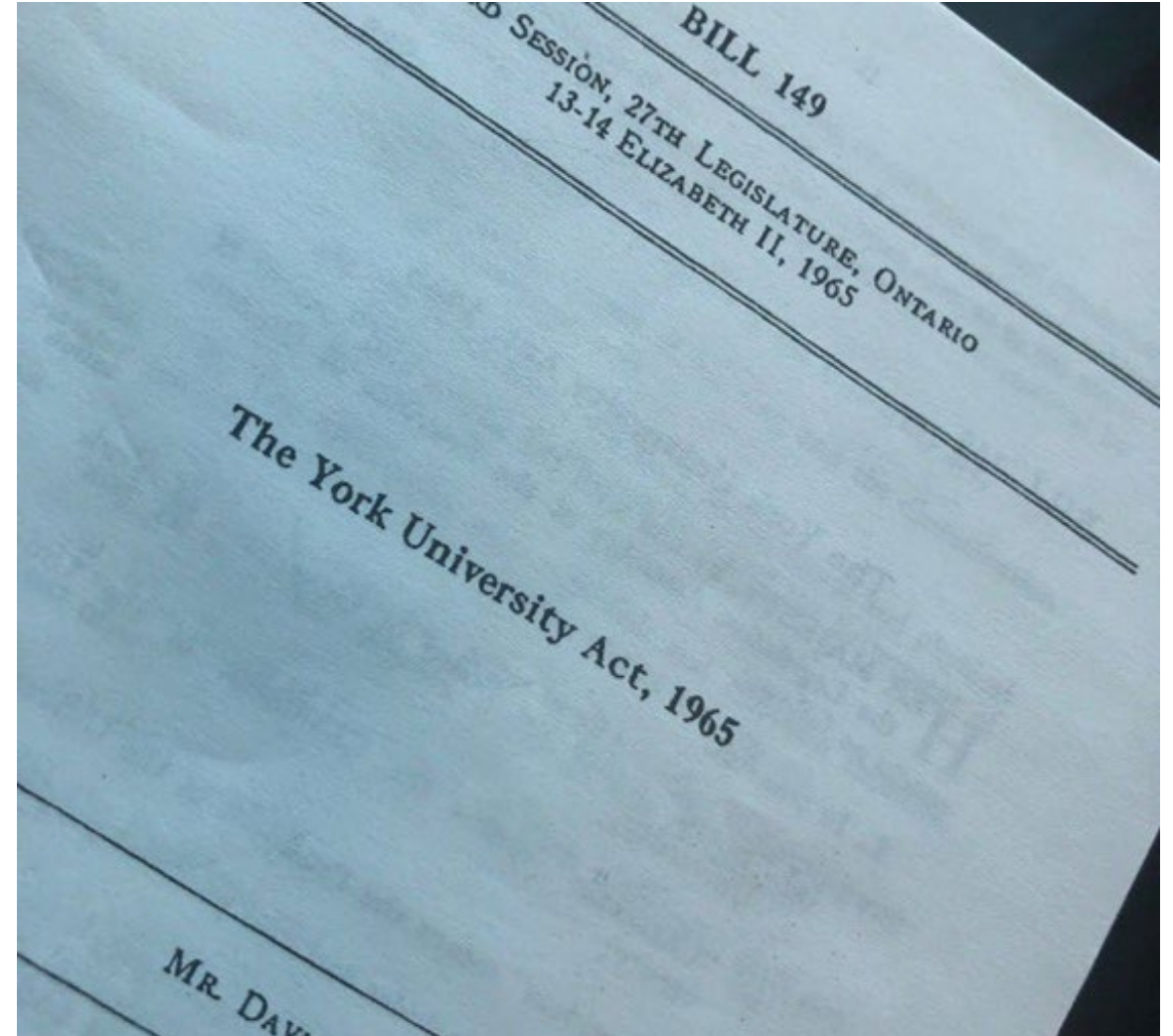
- A synopsis is issued by the Secretary following the meeting.
- Synopses are not minutes, but they are an accurate report of actions taken by Senate, including decisions.
- Senators are informed on the listserv when synopses have been posted on the Senate Website – Y-File also announces availability.
- Faculty Councils reprint the synopses or link to them.
- Senators let others know about Senate initiatives and encourage them to share their views

# The Secretariat

- **Sarah Willey-Thomas**, University Secretary, Secretary of Senate and Executive
- **Cheryl Underhill**, Senior Assistant University Secretary, Secretary of APPRC, supports Senate and Senate Executive
- **Pamela Persaud**, Assistant University Secretary, Secretary of ASCP, JSQA
- **James Pratt**, Assistant University Secretary, Secretary of Tenure and Promotions Committee, Tenure and Promotions Appeals Committee, Student Appeals Committee, Awards Committee and Sub-Committee on Honorary Degrees and Ceremonials
- **Leikha Bisera**, Assistant University Secretary, Board support
- **Michael Pogorzelski**, Senior Policy Advisor
- **Elaine MacRae**, Governance Coordinator
- **Sarah Millington Lockwood**, Administrative Officer
- **Michelle Roseman**, Administrative Assistant

## For further study: University Governance Primer

- Self-directed module on the fundamentals of Governance at York available on [YU Learn](#)





# Questions?

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