

March 11, 2025

Johanna Weststar
President, UWOFA

Via email: president@uwofa.ca

cc: Western Senators and Official Observers

Re: Incorrect information regarding governance in UWOFA Navitas FAQs

I am compelled to write in response to troubling information contained in UWOFA's *Navitas FAQ Updated March 6, 2025* and respectfully request that you correct it.

There are two items at issue in the answers to questions 15 and 20:

15. "Are there concerns regarding transparency and governance?"

The ongoing concerns around transparency and governance at Western University, particularly in relation to the partnership with Navitas, mirror broader issues of accountability and open communication...

- Deans were notified about the plan before it was announced at Senate...

These actions highlight ongoing challenges regarding governance at Western, undermining trust and fostering skepticism around how decisions are being made."

20. "What can I do? ..."

- Work with your colleagues to bring a motion opposing the Navitas partnership to your Faculty or Council or Librarian and Archivist Forum. Call for a special meeting if there is not one scheduled. Make sure that you have enough people attending the meeting to win the vote. ...
- Ask your Senator BEFORE March 14 to oppose any motions to partner with Navitas. They must represent their constituency – you."

The answers provided demonstrate an apparent misunderstanding of governance at Western and the roles that various members of Western's community play in that governance. They also interfere with and undermine the authority of the Senate.

At the outset, it is important for me to establish that as University Secretary, my role is to be impartial with respect to decisions to be made by Western's governing bodies. I am responsible to foster and advocate for the exercise of good governance in how Western's governing bodies make those decisions.

Role of the Senate, the Board of Governors, and the Administration in Western's Governance System

Western's governance system consists of the Board of Governors and the Senate, whose respective responsibilities are set out in the *University of Western Ontario Act* (1982, as amended) (the [UWO Act](#)).

Under the UWO Act, the government, conduct, management and control of the University and of its property and affairs are vested in the Board, except in such matters as are assigned by the UWO Act to the Senate or another body (sections 5-7, 18 and 19).

Under the UWO Act, the Senate has responsibility for the academic policy of the University, which includes determining all courses of study, including standards for admission in the University and qualifications for degrees, among other things, and Senate may make recommendations and give advice to the Board on certain matters, including entering into affiliation agreements with other institutions (sections 20, 29 and 30).

Governing bodies such as the Board and the Senate, do not operate the University. They establish the policies that guide and, in the case of the Board, grant the authority that may be exercised by the Administration (the President and University's senior leaders). The Administration is accountable for how they carry out their work in accordance with the policies and delegated authority.

The Board of Governors has delegated the day-to-day management and operation of the University to the [President via the Powers and Duties of Senior Officers](#) and through the President, to the University's senior leaders and beyond.

Addressing the FAQs

FAQ #20 is particularly troubling on two accounts:

- Calling on faculty and the broader Western community to oppose something that hasn't been formulated and before it can be considered by Western's Senate circumvents the responsibility and authority of the Senate.
- Calling on faculty and the broader Western community to influence their elected Senators' vote on any matter demonstrates a lack of understanding of the role of Senators and, again, circumvents the exercise by Senators of their responsibilities to the University.

I cannot emphasize enough that members of the University community are elected to the Board and the Senate not to "represent their constituents," but to bring their constituent perspective to the governance table. **They are obligated to exercise their own judgment in making decisions in the best interests of the University.**

The [Responsibilities of a Senator and Senate Committee Members](#) were established by Senate and you are encouraged to make yourselves familiar with these responsibilities.

The very first responsibility of a Senator listed is to "**act in good faith in the best interests of the university.**" Not, as your FAQ #20 indicates, in the interest of their constituents.

Number 4 is to "**understand and respect the distinction between the role and responsibilities of the Senate, the Board of Governors and the Administration.**"

Number 6 is to **“engage in meetings with thoughtful consideration and with a view to foreseeing the probable consequences of each proposed course of action.”**

Number 7 is to **“exercise critical judgment when coming to decisions or providing advice to the Senior Administration.”** This requires approaching matters brought to Senate with an open and curious mind, asking questions, understanding fully the decisions they are required to make, and exercising independence of thought and decision-making, not voting as directed by their constituents.

Number 9 is to **“communicate with constituents about the issues before Senate and raise any issues of concern.”** Once again, this does not mean vote as directed by their constituents.

The concern with FAQ #15 is the demonstrated lack of understanding of the role of Administration in relation to the Senate and the Board.

One of the many responsibilities of the President is to make recommendations to the Board and/or the Senate on any undertaking the President considers advantageous to the University. Another is to fulfil the strategic plans approved by the Board and Senate.

It would be highly inappropriate for Administration to make any recommendation to the Board or the Senate without having identified an issue, done their research and explored the issue with their senior leadership teams. In this case, the Provost consulted with the Deans in their role as senior leaders.

There is nothing improper in that process from a governance perspective and it would, in fact, be highly problematic had the Deans not been consulted in advance of any information coming forward to the Senate.

UWOFA's inaccurate communications actively undermine the proper governance processes of the University rather than advance good governance. As stated on your website, UWOFA's purpose is to negotiate collective agreements [with the University], advise members on employment matters, handle workplace disputes and grievances, and advance the professional interests of faculty and academic librarians and archivists.

Governance is the purview of the Board and the Senate.

I cannot overstate how problematic it is for UWOFA to appear to be interfering with the governance processes of the University and spreading incorrect information that threatens to circumvent or prevent Senate from doing its work. If the goal with these FAQs is to ensure good governance, I implore you to support that very outcome by encouraging faculty and the broader Western community to educate themselves on the issues and support Senators in seeking information and exercising their responsibility to make independent, informed decisions in good faith in the best interests of the University.

Sincerely,



Amy Bryson
University Secretary
LL.B., ICD.D., ISO Governance 37000:2021