



UNIVERSITY OF REGINA ALUMNI ASSOCIATION (URAA) ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Tuesday, October 23, 2024 Hybrid Meeting
MINUTES

Present In-Person and Virtually: Donna Ake-Farden, Danette Andrews, Cheryl Bergen, Margaret Dagenais, Dan Danforth, Marc Butikofer, Patricia Davidson, Monica Deters, Robert Ellis, Dawn Gaetz, Eden Gaetz, Helga Hein, Ginika Ibeabuchi, Gordon Mah, Rina Mah, Shirley Miller, Christine Niemczyk, Chris Pasterfield, Ron Podbielski, Deb Roberts, Rowan Roberts, Amir Said, Florence Shalley, Florence Shalley, Terry Shalley, Kerrie Strathy, Dianne Swanson, Gregory Swanson, Glenys Sylvestre, Hannah Tait, William Wells, Karen Woolley, Ralph Carl Wushke, Philomina Eklo, Scott Carson, Charlie Baldock, Gwen Keith, Bert Yakichuk, Heather West, Holger Kreek, Jeff Keshen, Dean Biesenthal.

Land Acknowledgement: The University of Regina is situated on Treaty 4 lands with a presence in Treaty 6 territory. These are the territories of the Nêhiyawak (Cree), Anihşināpēk (Saulteaux), and Dakota, Lakota, and Nakoda, and the homeland of the Métis. Today, these lands continue to be the shared territory of many diverse peoples from near and far.

Call to order for the 2023-2024 Hybrid URAA AGM at 6:00 p.m. CST

1. **Zoom Etiquette: Scott Carson, President URAA**

As this is a Hybrid AGM, show of hands is required onsite. For those alumni joining us virtually, we ask that if you agree with the motions, that you remain silent. If you are in opposition, please motion via a hand wave and recording is in progress as well.

2. **Call to order and opening remarks: Scott Carson (SC), President URAA**

We have worked with the dedicated team at the University Advancement and Communications to ensure accurate registration of our alumni members assembled today. We also have emailed advance copies of the agenda and supporting documents. If you are still not sure where the agenda, previous minutes and other materials are, they can be located on the website at alumni.uregina.ca. Thank you to then ACE team for the organization and roll out of today's URAA AGM.

3. **Adoption of Agenda: Philomina Eklo, Secretary**

MOTION: To adopt the agenda as presented
MOVER/SECONDER: Philomina Eklo/Karrie Strathy
CARRIED

4. Adoption of Minutes of 2023 AGM (Philomina Eklo)

MOTION: To adopt the minutes of the 2023 Annual General Meeting as presented this evening.

MOVER/SECONDER: Philomina Eklo/Robert Ellis
CARRIED

5. Guest Speaker: Dr. Jeff Keshen, President and Vice-Chancellor, U of R

Jeff thanked URAA for their work and also acknowledged the university's location on Treaty lands. He shared the following key updates:

- ❖ Record student enrollment: 17,288, including 4,500 international students.
- ❖ Introduction of International Scholars of Distinction program (full housing & meals for high-achieving students).
- ❖ Chancellor's Community Scholarship (up to \$50K for students with 95% plus average & leadership record).
- ❖ Student experience initiatives: to expanded food options and enhanced wellness services.
- ❖ On Academic updates: The Journalism program reimagined into "Journalism, News Media & Communications."
- ❖ Vanier graduate scholarship awarded to doctoral student Alicia Potsuma.
- ❖ Revitalized Centre for Teaching & Learning.
- ❖ He touched on the following upcoming events that U of R will host the 2025 Vanier Cup and planning for the URAA's 50th Anniversary (March 12, 2025).

6. Introduction of special guests, Gwen Keith by Monica Deters, who praised Gwen as a mentor and former Senate representative.

Gwen's Speech

Gwen Keith, a 1974 graduate and part of the University of Regina's first graduating class, reflected on her 50-year career in education and her long-standing connection to the university. As a former URAA President and Senate Representative, she shared personal stories about her educational journey, her discovery of the Regina Indian Industrial School cemetery, and her passion for Indigenous education and lifelong learning. Gwen reminisced about student life in the 1970s with humour, describing the fashion, culture, and activism of the time.

She praised early university presidents John Archer and Lloyd Barber for their humble and student-centered leadership. Gwen likened the university's growth to the steady strength of a tortoise and celebrated its current beauty, energy, and resilience. She emphasized the pride in community, convocation, and alumni services, and closed with a heartfelt tribute to the university's motto, "As One

Who Serves,” encouraging continued legacy through humility, service, and shared purpose.

7. URAA Annual Report 2023/2024:

i. President's Report: Scott Carson

Scott the outgoing President reflected on recent campus events, emphasizing the strong spirit of collaboration between the University of Regina and its alumni. He encouraged members to think big and dream boldly, echoing the inspiring message from Gwen Keith’s earlier keynote, and concluded his remarks with the thought-provoking question. When asked by Hannah Tait that what was his favorite part as president during his service, he said seeing the association as a hub. He highlighted the important role of the URAA as a central hub for alumni engagement, reminding everyone that convocation marks not the end, but the beginning of a lifelong connection with the university. Speaking with emotion, he acknowledged the legacy of past URAA presidents and expressed his deep commitment to representing the university’s 92,000 alumni with energy, pride, and dedication.

ii. Governance: Christine Niemczyk, Committee Chair

Christine presented virtually from Victoria, B.C., expressing admiration for the passion and dedication of University of Regina alumni and volunteers. She provided several key updates, including that Monica successfully completed her first year serving as the URAA’s University Senate Representative. She also announced that Tracy Muggli, who had previously served as the University of Saskatchewan Senate Representative, resigned in September 2023 following her appointment to the Canadian Senate by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. Christine noted that the URAA Board plans to appoint a replacement based in Saskatoon. Finally, she confirmed that no changes had been made to the URAA bylaws, which remain available for review at uraa.ca

iii. Communications & Public Relations : Robert Ellis, Director:

Bob provided an overview of the committee’s efforts in promoting the Association’s outreach. He highlighted several key developments, starting with the launch of the URAA website at the last AGM, which continues to evolve. The website features alumni news, with a business directory forthcoming, as well as a career section and alumni testimonials. Communications efforts have supported numerous events, convocations, and university-community partnerships.

Update on Ongoing Commitments

The URAA also continues to manage affinity partnerships with TD Insurance, Manulife, and Milburn Universal Designs for degree frames. Scholarships funded

by the URAA but administered by the University remain active. Bob also noted that the former BMO Mastercard partnership has ended, and a new affinity credit card provider is being sought through a Request for Proposals (RFP) process expected early next year.

iv. Finance: Nse Ekong & TonBari Menegbo, Committee Co-chairs

a.

Nse presented the draft audited financial statements, prepared by the Virtus Group, which were circulated in advance of the meeting.

Summary of Audit Findings:

No significant issues were identified during the audit.

Per the auditor's judgment, no action is required by the Board at this time.

Concerns Regarding "Draft" Status

A member inquired why only a draft version of the financial statements was presented.

It was explained that despite repeated follow-ups, the final version had not been provided by the auditing/bookkeeping firm.

Scott expressed frustration regarding ongoing delays from the firm.

It was acknowledged that although the Board had previously approved the draft, concerns were raised that approval should only occur after receipt of the finalized audit.

Board Consensus:

There was agreement that clearer expectations and deadlines must be communicated to the bookkeeping and auditing teams to avoid such procedural issues in the future.

Discussion and Motions

A participant expressed strong discomfort with approving draft financial statements and questioned the re-appointment of auditors who had failed to deliver finalized documents on time.

Nse Ekong clarified that the financials, although labeled "draft," had been signed off by the auditor. No changes were anticipated in the final version, apart from the removal of the "draft" watermark.

A former alumni shared his professional perspective, advising that draft statements should not be approved or presented at Annual General Meetings. He recommended conditional approval.

Motion:

"That the Alumni Association Board vote on the approval of the financial statements, provided they are consistent with the numbers in the draft."

MOVER/SECONDER: Charlie Baldock/Chris Pasterfield

CARRIED

b. *Appointment of 2024/2025 Auditor*

- Nse Ekong moved to reappoint Virtus Group as auditor for the next fiscal year, citing continuity and their familiarity with URAA's finances.
- This motion was seconded by Deb Roberts.

Before voting, concerns were raised by Charles Baldock about delays and whether the issue lay with the auditor or with internal delays in providing documentation.

- Nse explained that delays were mainly due to:
 - The volunteer nature of the board;
 - Difficulty in tracking sponsorship documentation;
 - Lack of immediate access to certain documents;
 - Time-consuming follow-up with university departments and sponsorship committees.
- It was clarified that Virtus Group likely received documents in early summer, but additional clarification requests prolonged the audit.
- A consensus emerged that the issue was internal, not due to auditor shortcomings.

Discussion on Full Audit vs. Financial Review

- Margaret Dagenais suggested considering a financial review instead of a full audit, citing potential cost savings and her experience with another nonprofit.
- It was questioned by Holger Kreek whether URAA's bylaws require a full audit or if a review engagement would suffice.
- Christine Niemczyk responded:
 - She was not certain offhand but confirmed that URAA has been following existing practice.
 - Holger Kreek recommended the board investigate alternatives and review bylaw requirements. She proposed this issue be made a priority topic at the November 6th Board Meeting.

Action Points & Key Decisions

1. Approval of Financial Statements:

- Approved conditionally (must match draft figures; "draft" label to be removed).

2. Auditor Appointment:

- **Virtus Group reappointed** for 2024–2025.
- Concerns about delays noted, but board acknowledged issue lay more with internal processes.

3. **Future Review of Audit Requirements:**

- URAA will **review bylaws and cost-benefit** of continuing with a full audit vs. a review engagement.
- **To be addressed at the November board meeting.**

Auditor Appointment and Discussion

- **Issue Raised by Nse Ekong:**

- The challenge with sponsorship audit documentation is due to a lack of centralized storage. Documents like sponsorship letters often get lost or are not easily retrievable during audits, especially if sent to past board members.
- Ekong emphasized the need for intentional document retention practices to streamline audits.

- **Audit Appointment Motion:**

- The motion was introduced to appoint Virtus Group as the URAA auditor for 2024–2025.
- A suggestion was made to amend the motion to allow for either a full audit or review, to avoid being locked into an audit unnecessarily.

- **Bylaw Requirement Noted:**

- Christine Niemczyk clarified that the URAA bylaws require an audited statement at the AGM.
- Consequently, the proposed amendment allowing for a “review” instead of an audit was withdrawn.
- It was agreed that the audit requirement stands unless the bylaws are changed in the future.
- The motion was carried: Virtus Group was officially appointed auditor for 2024–2025.

MOTION: That Virtus Group LLP be appointed as auditor for the fiscal year 2024-25.

MOVER/SECONDER: Nse Ekong/Kerrie Strathy

CARRIED

v. Partnership & Sponsorship: Bert Yakichuk, Director & Robert Ellis

Bob summarized a wide range of URAA sponsorships and initiatives over the past year, beginning with the Alumni Crowning Achievement Awards. URAA provided a \$25,000 sponsorship for the event, which took place last Saturday as part of Alumni Week. The event saw a high turnout and received positive feedback from attendees, highlighting its continued significance within the alumni community.

Another major highlight was URAA's role as the presenting partner for the 50th Anniversary Alumni Week, also supported with a \$25,000 contribution. This milestone celebration included a variety of engaging events such as ghost tours, Green & Gold Night with the Rams, a Darke Hall open house, Rider game activities, and the popular "Howl at the Owl" concert. The wide array of programming reflected URAA's commitment to celebrating alumni and university heritage in meaningful ways.

URAA also made a strong showing at the Inspiring Leadership Forum. Two corporate tables were purchased for the March 2024 event, which featured journalist Lisa LaFlamme. Looking ahead, the March 2025 forum is set to include high-profile guests Roberta Bondar and Jully Black, demonstrating URAA's continued investment in thought leadership and alumni engagement.

In terms of career development, URAA sponsored professional photographers at student career fairs to provide LinkedIn profile photos. These contributions approximately \$1,500 per fair helped students present themselves professionally online and reinforced URAA's support for career readiness initiatives.

Athletics also remained a key priority, with \$16,000 in total sponsorships. This included \$6,000 for Cougar teams, and \$2,500 each for the Rams, United Varsity Sports, Cougar Slam Dunk swag items, and a new Women's Soccer Homecoming event. Additionally, URAA provided an \$800 green-level sponsorship for the Cougars Women's Hockey Alumni Golf Tournament, showcasing its commitment to supporting both competitive and alumni-driven sports initiatives.

In the academic and cultural sphere, URAA sponsored the Faculty of Engineering's Project Day 2024 with a \$750 contribution, serving as a presentation room sponsor. They also supported the "Rekindle Spaces" exhibition at the 5th Parallel Gallery with a \$3,500 sponsorship. This event featured the work of 39 alumni artists, including graduates as far back as 1976, and served as a powerful reminder of the creativity and diversity within the alumni community.

Bob concluded by emphasizing that while URAA remains committed to core initiatives like sports and signature events, it is also actively working to expand its support to include a wider range of university and alumni-led programming. This shift reflects the Association's broader vision of inclusivity and community impact.

vi. Presentation by ACE: Marc Butikofer, Executive Director - Advancement, University Advancement and Communications

Team Introductions

Mark Butikofer, Executive Director of Advancement, opened the session by introducing members of the University Advancement and Alumni Engagement team. Notably, all members are University of Regina alumni, underscoring their deep connection to the institution. The team includes Vivian Dawson, Alexis McEwen, Emily Lintz, Brandon Sprutt, and Vonda Schmockel.

Program Highlights

Mark outlined several ongoing programs and initiatives. Among them are affinity partnerships that continue to offer services such as frame sales, Manulife insurance, and TD Insurance. Although the partnership with BMO Mastercard was recently lost, the team is actively exploring new insurance and financial service alternatives to fill the gap.

The **Alumni Crowning Achievement Awards (ACAAs)** remain a signature event, with the most recent ceremony held the previous Saturday. Nominations for the next round will reopen in January. The Alumni Effect Series, another flagship initiative, features monthly virtual events that highlight alumni success stories, boost alumni visibility, and foster student engagement. These sessions are recorded and archived on YouTube to maximize accessibility and impact.

Regional Engagement and Career Support

Post-COVID, regional chapter events have resumed in person, engaging over 350 alumni across Canada. The UR Linked and Career Development platform continues to grow, with 180 new participants joining in the past year. The Office Hours Speaker Series has been rebranded and hosted three successful sessions covering topics such as personal finance and public speaking. Both students and alumni are encouraged to volunteer as guest speakers.

In collaboration with the URAA, free LinkedIn headshots were offered during university career fairs to support professional development.

Survey and Feedback

An alumni survey conducted from May to June garnered over 17,000 responses an increase of 600 from the pre-COVID period. The results revealed that URAA engagement levels exceed the national average, and the findings will play a key role in guiding the incoming URAA board's planning and priorities.

Alumni Week and Upcoming Events

A new initiative in 2024, Alumni Week, brought together various alumni events into a single, cohesive celebration. Highlights included ghost tours, a Rider game night, and the “Howl at the Owl” concert. As a gesture of appreciation, free concert tickets were distributed to attendees at the AGM. Looking ahead, the University will host “Taste of Research” on November 6, 2024, a showcase of impactful, long-term research projects conducted at the University of Regina.

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Presentation

To conclude, the URAA President presented a proposed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the URAA and the University. This MOU aims to formalize and strengthen the ongoing working relationship between the two entities. The discussion included the presentation and adoption of this new agreement, marking an important milestone in institutional collaboration.

8. New business: Scott Carson

Background & Purpose of the MOU

The University of Regina Alumni Association (URAA) and the University have historically shared overlapping goals, demographics, and administrative functions, which has at times resulted in duplicated efforts. To address this, a new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) has been developed with the aim of formalizing collaboration between the two parties. This agreement seeks to enhance efficiency and improve alumni engagement by streamlining administrative responsibilities. While this is not the first MOU between the URAA and the University, this version marks a significant step forward by replacing previous informal arrangements with a more comprehensive and formalized document.

Section 1: Objectives

The MOU begins by emphasizing the shared commitment of the University of Regina and the URAA to fostering strong alumni engagement. While both parties have distinct responsibilities, the agreement acknowledges their mutual interests in supporting alumni, reinforcing the value of collaboration.

Section 2: Responsibilities

Under the agreement, the University agrees to continue supporting alumni by offering access to various perks such as library privileges, providing staff assistance, and helping with event logistics. On the other hand, the URAA will maintain control over the funds it raises particularly through affinity programs while working collaboratively with the University's Alumni Engagement office on spending decisions. Importantly, the URAA retains the autonomy to independently fund initiatives that align with its mission.

Section 3: Financial Management

Financially, the URAA will continue to manage its own bank account and retain revenues from affinity partnerships. It will provide the University with an annual financial report, a practice already in place. To improve transparency and planning, a collaborative budgeting process will be introduced. The University's Alumni and Community Engagement (Ace) team will assist with bookkeeping, thereby easing administrative burdens on URAA volunteers. These measures aim to reduce redundancy, enhance financial accountability, and support better audit readiness.

Section 4: Communications and Collaboration

The MOU also strengthens communication and cooperation by ensuring that the URAA is included in all alumni-related communications and planning efforts. The University has consistently demonstrated support by offering practical resources such as parking, mail acceptance, and storage for event materials. The document recognizes the positive, ongoing partnership between the URAA and the University's Ace team.

Section 5: Strategic Planning

Strategic planning under the MOU is encouraged to be a joint effort to prevent duplicated initiatives and maximize impact. Although each party retains the right

to conduct independent planning when needed, collaboration is promoted due to their aligned priorities. The existing structure that includes university ex-officio members on the URAA Board will remain unchanged. Additionally, the University has agreed to provide liability insurance to the URAA, which helps lower costs and reduce administrative workload for the association.

Sections 6 - 7: Duration, Termination, and Dispute Resolution

The MOU is set for a five-year term, with discussions on renewal to begin six months prior to its expiration. In the event of disagreements, both parties commit to resolving issues amicably through a partnership-focused approach. The agreement becomes effective upon signing, following its formal approval at the Annual General Meeting.

Discussion & Clarifications

During the discussion, a member inquired about Section 3.3 of the MOU, seeking confirmation that the requirement to submit an annual financial report to the URAA is not a new obligation. It was clarified that this reporting practice is already in place and simply formalized in the agreement.

Members were also invited to share their thoughts on the overall direction the URAA is taking by entering into this formal agreement. The invitation underscored the importance of transparency and engagement as the Association evolves its relationship with the University.

Additionally, it was clarified that the MOU was not self-authored by the URAA Board. Instead, the document was professionally drafted and vetted by legal counsel to ensure that the terms are sound and in the best interest of both parties.

MOTION: To adopt the MOU.

MOVER/SECONDER: Robert Ellis/Bert Yakichuk

CARRIED

Discussion:

Charles Baldock pointed out that section 3.1. of the MOU needs to be corrected to 3.1.1.

The agreement is now officially in effect as of October 23, for a five-year term.

9. Election of Officers for 2024/2025: Christine Niemczyk, Immediate Past President

Christine Niemczyk, the outgoing Past President, officially opened the election process and took a moment to reflect on her seven years of service on the board. She expressed heartfelt gratitude to her fellow directors and the Advancement, Communications, and Engagement (ACE) team for their ongoing dedication and support during her tenure.

Under the URAA bylaws, between six and ten directors are elected by the membership to serve two-year terms.

In accordance with these rules, several appointments and elections were confirmed during the meeting.

Directors appointed on October 24, 2023, for terms ending in October 2025 include Robert Ellis, TonBari Menegbo an Edmonton-based alumnus and Jennifer Murray, who was unable to attend the meeting due to a family matter.

The Past President position is not elected but appointed; therefore, Scott Carson will assume this role by virtue of being the outgoing President.

Meanwhile, directors originally elected in 2021 for one-year terms, whose terms were extended in 2022 for an additional two years ending in 2024, include Bert Yakicut and Cheryl Bergen. Both directors sought re-election and were successfully re-elected for another two-year term, now ending in October 2026.

Two individuals previously appointed by the board after the 2023 AGM Philomina Eklo, serving as Secretary, and Nse Ekong, Chair of Finance were formally elected to one-year terms ending in October 2025, thereby solidifying their roles through official membership support.

Executive positions for the 2024–2025 term were also filled during the election process. Jennifer Murray was elected President for a one-year term, and Robert Ellis was elected Vice President, also for a one-year term, ensuring continuity in leadership and board operations.

Regarding university senate representation, Monica Dieters will continue in her role as the University of Regina Senate representative, with her term set to end in October 2025. The University of Saskatchewan Senate seat remains vacant following the resignation of Tracy Muggli, leaving an opportunity for future appointment or election.

Two director vacancies were successfully filled during the election. Ron Podbielski, a journalism and communications alumnus with a strong background in volunteerism and professional service, was elected. He is joined by Amir Sayd, a Calgary-based alum, active volunteer, and former student union vice president, further diversifying the board's expertise and regional representation

Summary of Motions Made

The following directors have agreed to let their name stand for executive positions.

- President: Jennifer Murray
- First Vice-President: Robert Ellis
- Past President: Scott Carson (appointed)

Note: The past president position is not an elected position which means that Scott Carson by virtue of being the past president will retain this position for one year ending October 2025.

Motion: To elect the Executive officers as presented for one-year terms.
MOVER/SECONDER: Christine Niemczyk/Gwen Keith
CARRIED

Motion: To elect Nse Ekong as the VP Finance and Philomina Eklo as Secretary.
MOVER/SECONDER: Christine Niemczyk/Bob Ellis
CARRIED

Motion: To elect Jennifer Murray as President.
MOVER/SECONDER: Deb Roberts/Gwen Keith
CARRIED

Motion: To elect Robert Ellis as Vice President.
MOVER/SECONDER: / Christine Niemczyk/Ron Podbielski
CARRIED
Motion: To elect Ron Podbielski as a board member.
MOVER/SECONDER: / Christine Niemczyk/Bert Yakichuk
CARRIED

Motion: To elect Monica Deters as Senate for U of R.
MOVER/SECONDER: / Christine Niemczyk/Bert Yakichuk
CARRIED

Motion: To elect Amir Syed as a board member.
MOVER/SECONDER: / Christine Niemczyk/ Robert Ellis
CARRIED

The following individuals are ex-officio directors:
Monica Deters, Senate Representative, University of Regina
Senate Representative, University of Saskatchewan
President of University of Regina Student Union, Associate Director, Alumni & Community Engagement, University of Regina

Christine's closing remarks
Christine Niemczyk formally closed the election proceedings, bringing a sense of ceremony and completion to the transition.

10. Closing Remarks: Scott Carson

Outgoing President Scott Carson offered closing remarks. He expressed deep appreciation for the board's collective efforts and shared his pride in the progress made by the URAA. He highlighted key accomplishments, including the strengthening of the association's infrastructure, the launch of new branding and a digital presence, and the upcoming celebration of the URAA's 50th anniversary in the spring. He also reaffirmed the board's ongoing commitment to alumni engagement and advocacy, ending on a note of optimism for the future under incoming President Jennifer Murray and the continuing board.

11. Adjournment

MOTION: To adjourn the 2024 URAA Annual General Meeting.

MOVER: Kerrie Strathy.

CARRIED

2023-24 URAA AGM adjourned at 9:00 p.m. CST

The minutes were recorded by Philomina Eklo