Faculty of Science
Office of the Dean
St. John's, NL, Canada A1B 3X
T: 709 864 8154 Fax: 709 864 3316
deansci@mun.ca www.mun.ca/science

FACULTY OF SCIENCE
FACULTY COUNCIL OF SCIENCE
Minutes of Meeting of Decemer 10, 2025

A meeting of the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Science was held on Wednesday, December 10, 2025, at 1:00 p.m. using a hybrid model of WebEx and in-person (C-2004).

FSC 3142 **Present**

Biology
A. Chaulk, H. Marshall, M. Rise

Human Biosciences
R. Bertolo, M. Berry, J. Brunton, S. Harding, S. Mayengbam, A. Todd

Chemistry
C. Bottaro, H. Grover, M. Katz, J. Stockmann, H. Therien-Aubin

Computer Science
S. Bungay, D. Churchill, A. Fiech, M. Hatcher, J. Henderson, C. Hyde

Earth Sciences
G. Dunning, C. Farquharson, A. Malcolm

Mathematics & Statistics
J. Alam, I. Booth, C. Cigsar, D. Dyer, R. Haynes, M. Kotchetov, M. Merkli, K. Nirmalkanna, D. Pike, T. Sheel, T. Stuckless, S. Sullivan, Y. Yilmaz, N. Zheng

Ocean Sciences
P. Gagnon

Physics & Physical Oceanography
D. Coombs, S. Curnoe, M. Evstugneev, E. Hayden, H. Neilson, I. Saika-Voivod, L. Zedel

Psychology
S. Blandford, D. Hallett, K. Hourihan, C. Thorpe, D. Wilson

Dean of Science Office
J. Blundell, J. Bowering, J. Ceha, M. Fitzpatrick, S. Garasym, J. Gauld, C. Hussey, G. Jackson, J. Kavanagh, T. Mackenzie, R. Newhook, N. Squires

Representatives from other Faculties
K. Chu (Economics)

Student Representatives
E. Chirinos, E. Gramm, A. Hammond, M. Kocela, K. Parsons

FSC 3143 Approval of the Agenda

Moved: Approved. (*Dyer, Berry*) **Carried**

Moved: Minutes of the meeting of November 19, 2025, be adopted. (*Sullivan, Hayden*) **Carried.**

FSC 3144 Business Arising: No Business

FSC 3145 Correspondence: No Report

FSC 3146 Reports of Standing Committees:

A. Undergraduate Studies Committee:

Presented by Shannon Sullivan, Chair of the Undergraduate Studies Committee:

(a) Department of Biology

(i) New special topics course, BIOL 4918 Microbiology and Human Society, for information only.

(ii) New special topics course, BIOL 4919 Special Topics in Mycology, for information only.

(b) Department of Computer Science

(i) Proposal to amend course – COMP Concentration in Artificial Intelligence

(ii) Proposal to amend course – COMP1001, COMP1003

(iii) Proposal to amend course – Admission to Honours Program

(iv) Proposal to amend course – Minor in computer Science

(v) New Special Topics Course Proposal – COMP 4802 Explainable Machine Learning, for information only

(vi) Proposal to amend Computer Science and Geography Joint Honours,

(vii) Proposal to amend Computer Science and Geography Joint Major

(Sullivan, Churchill) **Carried.**

(c) Department of Earth Science

(i) Proposal to amend course - EASC 3905: Field Methods in Structural Geology and Stratigraphy

(ii) New program proposal - Minor in Geophysics

(*Sullivan, Malcom*) **Carried.**

(d) Department of Mathematics and Statistics,

(i) Proposal to amend- STAT 2500 Statistical Foundations for Data Analytics and STAT 2550 Statistics for Science Students

(Sullivan, Kotchetov) **Carried.**

(e) Department of Physics and Physical Oceanography

(i) Proposal to amend supplementary exam regulations - PHYS 3000 Physics of Device Materials

(ii) New course proposal - PHYS 3055 Introduction to Health Physics

(iii)New course proposal - PHYS 399W Physics Co-operative Internship

(Sullivan, Saika-Voivod) **Carried.**

B. Graduate Studies Committee:

Presented by Adrian Fiech, Chair of the Graduate Studies Committee:

a) Department of Mathematics and Statistics

I. Request for Approval of a Special Topics Course, MATH 6114 Scientific Machine Learning as a special topics course, approve by the Faculty of Science Graduate Studies Committee and brought to Faculty Council for information only

II. Request for Approval of Graduate Course, STAT 6450 Reinforcement Learning

III. Request for Approval of Graduate Course, STAT 6486 Neural Networks and Deep Learning

IV. Request for Approval of Graduate Course, STAT 6502 Applied Stochastic Processes

V. Request for Approval of Graduate Course, STAT6504 Biostatistics

VI. Request for Approval of Graduate Course, STAT 6511 Bayesian Data Analysis

Items ii-vi *(Dyer, Cigsar)* **Carried.**

VII. Request for Approval of Graduate Course, STAT 6541 Statistics of Financial Markets

(*Fiech, Cigsar*) **Carried.**

VIII. Course list calendar changes

(Fiech, Dyer) **Carried.**

IX. Motion to reduce the courses in the MSc Statistics

(Fiech, Yilmaz) **Carried.**

b) Department of Physics and Physical Oceanography, Request for Approval of a Special Topics Graduate Course; PHYS 6914 Graduate Introduction to Astrophysics II: Galaxies & Cosmology, approved by the Faculty of Science Graduate Committee and brought to Faculty Council for information only.

C. Library Committee: No business

FSC 3147 Dean's Report

Trudy Pond-Curtis will present the VPFA New Budget Model for Faculty and Staff on December 15 at 3:00 p.m. in EN4003. Due to limited seating, please email **deansciassistant@mun.ca** if you plan to attend in person.

The 3MT competition was recently held and featured outstanding presentations. Congratulations to all involved.

Departmental Highlights

Biology

PhD student Amin Afshari, an exceptionally strong MUN Biology Honours graduate and former Lee Wulf Scholarship recipient, has begun his doctoral studies under the supervision of Dr. Leithen M'Gonigle in Simon Fraser University's Department of Biological Sciences.

Biology PhD student Ishraq Rahman led a recently published paper reporting the first detections of the H5N5 avian influenza virus strain—the same strain involved in the recent human fatality in Washington State. (Link to publication included below.)
https://academic.oup.com/ve/article/10/1/veae111/7926332

PhD Student Valentin Kokarev participated in a research cruise in the St. Lawrence Estuary investigating pockmarks. During the expedition, he discovered populations of symbiotic clams exhibiting an unusual behaviour—living on the sediment surface rather than beneath it.

Tori Cable had her abstract accepted for an oral presentation at the upcoming Phage Canada Symposium, an excellent recognition of her research trajectory.

Dr. Andrew Lang was awarded the distinction of University Research Professor.

Dr. Julissa Roncal successfully brought the Canadian Botanical Association Conference back to Newfoundland for the first time since 1978, hosting it in St. John's from June 10–14, 2025.

"The Indian Institutes of Technology (IIT) network is considered one of the best technical institutions in the world. IIT Roorkee, which is part of this network, was founded 178 years ago and is currently ranked 335th globally as an academic and research institution. Dr. Tahlan from the Department of Biology has maintained a close working relationship with the Department of Biotechnology at IIT Roorkee, which led to the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the two Institutions that was renewed last year. These interactions have resulted in high-impact research collaborations in microbiology and metabolism, as well as training opportunities and symposiums/workshops focused on antibiotic resistance and drug discovery."

Human Biosciences

Sherri Christian was featured on CTV News with respect to her Terry Fox Institute work on establishing a cancer research biobank. - https://www.ctvnews.ca/video/2025/11/28/ctv-national-news-terry-fox-institute-sets-a-milestone-for-cancer-research-in-canada/

Sukhinder Cheema and some of her trainees were interviewed by CBC radio about the impact of food insecurity in NL on health outcomes

HuBi students placed 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th at the FoS 3-minute thesis, Ihechi Marcus (MSc student with Rob Brown) taking 1st place; Fatema Elgammal (MSc student with Mark Berry) 2nd; Jacob Hearty (MSc with Zahra Farahnak) 3rd; Narmadaa Weerakkody (PhD student with Sukhinder Cheema) 4th.

Kate Kelly and Joelle Vokey (undergraduate students) have completed a successful semester abroad at the University of the Arctic in Tromso, Norway. Kate will be starting a Fellowship at University of Arizona next semester, Joelle will be returning to regular HuBi programming.

Dr. Rashmi Panigrahi started in the Department on a tenure track position on December 1st.

Physics

We had our Awards Lunch last week, where we gave out departmental undergraduate scholarships. All 22 of our scholarship-eligible students received a total of nearly $27K.

The Physics and Physical Oceanography Society (PAPOS) continued bi-weekly Wednesday breakfast fundraisers and is planning an honours research mixer this Friday.

Zedel was awarded an NSERC I2I grant for his research project developing an acoustic system for remotely profiling ocean sound speed.

FSC 3148 Questions

A question was raised regarding the process for submitting a new undergraduate course when it is deemed not to be a sufficient course. The Dean indicated that he was not familiar with the specific process but would look into the matter further.

There was an extensive discussion regarding the new budget model, including how the graduate baseline will be distributed across departments, offers to incoming graduate students, and TA funding. The Dean explained that commitments to current students will be honored, and that teaching plans will be reviewed in January to determine TA allocations. The Dean also noted that the Faculty will follow up with SGS to obtain further clarification.

There were discussions regarding ARC and Technology Services; however, the Dean indicated that no further details or information are available at this time.

FSC 3149 Adjournment:

Meeting adjourned at 2:21 p.m.