



Association of Canadian College and University Ombudspersons (ACCUO)
Minutes of the ACCUO Annual General Meeting
June 19, 2025

The 2025 ACCUO Annual General Meeting (AGM) was held on June 19, 2025, at 1:00 p.m. (EST). The meeting was virtual.

Voting Membership present at the meeting:

Kemi Oke (President), Emma Thacker (AGM Secretary), Firas Ayoub, Whitney Barratt, Norma Barrett, Stephanie Bolingbroke, Julie Boncompain, George Cole, Elizabeth Garofalo, Tiffany Haraguchi, Tanny Marks, Shirley Nakata, Edmun Natkunarajah, Annette O’Hara, Carmela Parzanese, Karen Quinn, Megan Rego, Laura Reid, Jacky Rivas, Natalie Sharpe, Jeff Stransky

Other Membership present at meeting (either institutional or associate)

Chinyere Chisom, Jemmy Erhiaganoma, Haeyeon Cho, Maureen Helt, Cindy Pearson Leonard, Jada McGillivray, Jessica Shabtai, Remonia Stoddart-Morrison, Laurel Wilkie

1. Welcome and Opening Remarks

The ACCUO President, Kemi Oke (York University), welcomed members to the meeting. She invited Edmun Natkunarajah (Toronto Metropolitan University) to provide a Land Acknowledgement.

2. Approval of Agenda

On motion duly made, seconded, and carried, the AGM agenda for June 19, 2025, was adopted.

3. Report of the President

Kemi presented her President’s Report for 2024-25, highlighting the key activities of the organization over the past year.

The year 2024–25 was marked by growth, reflection, and strategic realignment with ACCUO’s mission and values. Despite sector-wide challenges, the organization remained committed to promoting awareness of the Ombudsperson’s role in post-secondary education and strengthening its community of practice. Member engagement and volunteer participation had increased significantly, reinforcing the organization’s core mandate.

The year had also presented challenges, including financial constraints across institutions and shifting attitudes away from equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) frameworks. These pressures impacted Ombuds practice through increased demand and limited resources. Nevertheless, the importance of the Ombudsperson's role in promoting fairness, accountability, and institutional trust remained clear.

ACCUO experienced continued growth in membership, particularly in Associate memberships. Members contributed meaningfully to various initiatives, and the Executive invited member involvement on a flexible basis.

The Executive Committee had been actively managing organizational affairs, including governance, communication, professional development planning, membership intake, and financial oversight. Notable activities included:

- Holding seven Executive Committee meetings and supporting ad hoc groups like the Constitution Working Group;
- Managing administrative functions such as membership applications, website updates, and email communications;
- Launching a communications refresh initiative, including a member survey on logo preferences;
- Advancing constitutional review in response to RTF Report recommendations;
- Initiating plans for the 2025 ACCUO Conference;
- Enhancing outreach through media engagement and partner collaboration; and
- Supporting sub-committee projects and ongoing member engagement through Bulletins, emails, and Water Cooler Chats.

The President expressed deep gratitude to the Executive Committee for their professionalism and dedication, as well as to all ACCUO members for their contributions. Their collective efforts continued to strengthen the organization and its role in advancing Ombuds practice in Canadian higher education.

4. Report of the Treasurer

Kemi invited Remonia Stoddart-Morrison (ACCUO Co-Treasurer, University of Alberta) to present the financial report. She noted that Rob Thompson (Co-Treasurer, Camosun College) had sent his regrets. The Report provided an overview of the ACCUO Financial Statement for 2024-25, highlighting income (e.g., membership fees) and expenses such as the website.

A member asked about fees to support translation. Remonia responded that there were funds set aside for translation, and that Edmun Natkunarajah was working on a project to upgrade communication channels and options, which may include Google Workspace, which offered many tools to support the organization's goals, including translation.

A member asked if the bank balance was higher than usual, and if that presented a vulnerability. Remonia responded to say that the balance was slightly higher, but not significantly. The Executive Committee was considering and assessing how best to spend funds in the context of providing value to members.

On motion duly made, seconded, and carried,

IT WAS RESOLVED,

THAT the 2024-2025 Treasurer's Report, dated June 9, 2025, be approved.

5. Proposed Budget 2025-26

Kemi invited Remonia Stoddart-Morrison (ACCUO Co-Treasurer) to present the proposed budget, for information. Remonia noted that funds had been earmarked to support the rebranding refresh and to improve communications. Edmund Natkunarajah provided additional details on the plan to implement Google Workspace, with a target launch in the fall. Members discussed the potential of Google Workspace tools to strengthen communications, facilitate records retention, role transition, and better support the work of committees.

Remonia informed members that requests to submit 2025–26 membership fees would be issued in the coming weeks, with no changes to the fee amounts. Kemi thanked the Co-treasurers for their work and invited any members interested in supporting enhanced communications initiatives to reach out.

6. Committee Reports

Kemi noted for members that the following ACCUO Standing Committees (EDI Committee; Communications Team; International Relations Committee, and Professional Development Committee) had submitted their annual reports, with a summary of activities, membership, and several highlights of planned initiatives. The reports were included with the agenda package. Members were encouraged to join, should they be interested.

Julie Boncompain (Chair of the EDI, and International Relations Committee, Polytechnique Montréal) invited members to join the committees. Edmun Natkunarajah (Chair of the PD Committee) thanked Natalie Sharpe (University of Alberta) for her assistance with professional development and invited members to become involved.

7. Update – Constitutional Working Group

Kemi invited Emma Thacker (University of Toronto) to provide an update from the Constitutional Working Group. Emma reported that the ACCUO Constitutional Working Group had been formed in January 2025 following the recommendations of the ACCUO Renewal Task Force report from Fall 2024.

Its mandate was to review the constitution and membership fees for 2025–26. The group met regularly between February and April 2025.

The Working Group reviewed membership classifications and benefits, fee structures, Executive Committee roles, quorum and voting procedures, and clarified responsibilities for key roles such as the elections officer and conference coordinator.

The proposed amendments focused on modernizing membership classifications and clarifying associated benefits, strengthening the governance structure through clearer roles and increased representation on the Executive Committee, and introducing quorum and voting thresholds to support more inclusive, transparent, and effective decision-making. Next steps included translating the proposed amendments into French, consulting with members through virtual sessions and other feedback methods and convening a special AGM in Fall 2025 to vote on the proposed amendments.

A member asked about the strategy for the consultation period, emphasizing the importance of reaching all groups. The member suggested that Associate members could have a separate feedback session. Emma agreed with the suggestion and assured members that there would be multiple opportunities to provide feedback.

8. Update – ACCUO Branding Refresh

Kemi invited Edmun Natkunarajah to provide an update on the ACCUO branding refresh. Edmun provided an overview of the branding refresh initiative and presented feedback results for the new logo design. The results indicated that the tree logo was preferred by membership. He also noted that App integration was under consideration.

A member asked if the logo would also be produced in French. Edmun confirmed that the website and new logo would be presented in both English and French. Members discussed the use of Google Workspace, which would provide space for the organization's files and transition documents. Edmun thanked those members who had worked on the previous communications plans, as they had paved the way for these upgrades.

9. Minutes of the Previous AGM – November 28, 2024

The minutes of the previous AGM, held on November 28, 2024, were approved. Members had no questions.

On motion duly made, seconded, and carried,

IT WAS RESOLVED,

THAT the minutes of the previous meeting, dated November 28, 2024, be approved.

10. Business arising from the minutes of November 28, 2024

There was no business arising from the report of the previous meeting.

11. Member Recognition Awards

Kemi invited Jacky Rivas (Norquest College) to share the member recognition award presentation. Jacky acknowledged all the hard work of each Committee (Communications, EDI, Professional Development, Awards, International Relations), noting all members and contributions. She noted that in the following year, other awards may be considered (i.e., Distinguished Service, Special Contribution).

12. Other Business

Emma Thacker reported that Rose Padacz, Ombudsperson at Fanshawe College, had recently retired and that Rose had contacted ACCUO to extend her warm wishes to ACCUO members. The vacant position would not be posted, as Fanshawe had restructured its equity offices. Members discussed whether a letter from ACCUO would be helpful in keeping the office open.

13. Question Period

Members had no questions.

Adjournment

Kemi thanked the members for their attendance.

Meeting adjourned at 2:20 pm (EST)

Secretary

President/Chair

June 24, 2025
/ejt