

MEMORANDUM

To: Faculty of Arts and Humanities, President's Leadership Team, Senate, Campus Council, SOGS and USC Executive, Affiliate University College Presidents

Cc: Decanal Selection Committee

From: Florentine Strzelczyk, Provost & Vice-President (Academic)

Date: May 13, 2026

Re: Leadership Appointment: Dean, Faculty of Arts and Humanities

I am pleased to share that President Alan Shepard has approved the appointment of Brett Buchanan as the next Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Humanities, effective August 15, 2026, for a five-year term.

An accomplished scholar and academic leader, Professor Buchanan comes to Western from Concordia University of Edmonton where he has served as Dean of Arts since 2022 and, for the past year, also as Interim Dean of Science. Alongside his decanal leadership experience, Brett brings a strong interdisciplinary research and teaching background in contemporary continental philosophy, ethics, environmental humanities and animal studies.

A Western graduate, Professor Buchanan earned his master's degree through Western's Centre for the Study of Theory and Criticism, one of the oldest and most established programs of its kind in North America. He returned to the Centre during the 2021-22 academic year as a visiting fellow.

Throughout more than two decades in postsecondary education, Professor Buchanan has demonstrated a collaborative leadership style and a strong commitment to building community among faculty, staff, students and academic leaders. During his time at Laurentian University, where he taught for 15 years and served as Chair of Philosophy and inaugural Director of the School of the Environment, Brett helped establish interdisciplinary connections across academic units while advancing innovative programming and public engagement initiatives.

As Director of the School of the Environment, he organized a landmark symposium on species extinction that brought together scholars, artists and writers, including Margaret Atwood, and hosted public discussions featuring environmentalist David Suzuki. Beyond the university, he served for seven years on the board of the Cinéfest Sudbury International Film Festival and participated in numerous public outreach initiatives focused on science, culture and community engagement.

Brett's research as an environmental humanities scholar has earned support through SSHRC and NSERC grants as well as research fellowships in Australia, France and Scotland. His work bridges the humanities and environmental sciences to examine questions related to climate change,

biodiversity, ethics and the human relationship with the more-than-human world. He has also contributed extensively to the growing international field of environmental humanities and served as past president of the Association for Literature, Environment and Culture in Canada.

A passionate advocate for the arts and humanities, Brett brings a deep appreciation for the role of critical thinking, creativity and human inquiry in addressing contemporary challenges. His leadership experience, interdisciplinary perspective and commitment to academic community-building position him well to lead the Faculty of Arts and Humanities into its next chapter.

I would like to acknowledge and thank the members of the Selection Committee for their thoughtful contributions and collaborative efforts throughout the search process: **Penny Pexman**, Vice-President (Research); **Manina Jones**, Professor, Department of English & Writing, Faculty of Arts and Humanities; **Elizabeth Greene**, Associate Professor, Department of Classical Studies, Faculty of Arts and Humanities; **Chris Smeenk**, Professor, Department of Philosophy, Faculty of Arts and Humanities; **Sylvia Kontra**, Graduate Assistant, Department of Languages & Culture, Faculty of Arts and Humanities; **Ashar Mobeen**, graduate student; **Jaydn Smith**, undergraduate student; **Donna Kotsopoulos**, Dean, Faculty of Education; **Andrew Nelson**, Professor, Department of Anthropology, Faculty of Social Science; and **Zoë Sinel**, Associate Dean, Faculty of Law.

I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to Ileana Paul for her leadership and contributions while serving as Acting Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Humanities since July 2024. Her dedication and steady leadership during this period have put the Faculty on stable financial footing and have been greatly valued by our university community. I am grateful that Professor Paul has agreed to extend her term as Acting Dean until August 14, 2026, to support a smooth leadership transition.