



UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA BACKGROUNDER

June 2, 2026

Backgrounder: President and vice-chancellor, University of Victoria

Dr. Rhonda McEwen will be the next president and vice-chancellor of the University of Victoria (UVic). McEwen is a respected academic leader and globally recognized researcher, known for turning ambition into action—advancing the student experience, building partnerships that matter and leading through collaboration. With a strong commitment to place and community, she will position UVic for what's ahead across British Columbia, Canada and the globe. Her term begins Oct. 14, 2026.

Academic credentials

- PhD in Information from the University of Toronto, Canada
- MSc in Telecommunications from the University of Colorado, United States
- MBA in Information Technology from City University in London, England
- BSc in Sociology and Management at the University of West Indies, St. Augustine
- Additional details available in [Dr. McEwen's curriculum vitae](#)

Research

- Dr. McEwen is a Canada Research Chair in Tactile Interfaces, Communication and Cognition, studying human-machine interactions and the social and cognitive effects of technologies.
- Her interdisciplinary research spans technology, equity, governance and public impact, particularly in artificial intelligence (AI) and society.

Leadership

- She spent more than 15 years working in the private sector in digital communication and management consulting prior to working in higher education.
- She has more than 21 years of experience in the post-secondary sector, and brings a cross-sector perspective on strategy, execution and partnerships.
- She is currently the President and Vice-Chancellor, Victoria University at the University of Toronto.
- Previously, Dr. McEwen served as Vice-Principal Academic and Dean, University of Toronto Mississauga and Director, Institute of Communication, Culture, University of Toronto Mississauga.
- She brings a strong track record in university governance, post-pandemic recovery and data-informed decision-making.

Student experience

- She has a track record of championing equity and inclusion, having served as the University of Toronto's first special advisor on anti-racism and equity.
- Dr. McEwen has supported several initiatives to engage youth from marginalized communities in the fields of science, technology, engineering and math (STEM).
- Dr. McEwen has consistently mentored female researchers and has actively supported their parental leave.
- She has demonstrated leadership and the appreciation of accessibility research to advance inclusion at a time when universities everywhere are seeing record numbers of academic-accommodation requests.

Community engagement

- Dr. McEwen is currently working on a project with AIDE Canada, funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada administered by the Pacific Autism Family Network Foundation in BC, to better understand the possibilities and limitations of technology to support communication for students with disabilities.
- She worked with Sesame Workshop, the research arm of *Sesame Street*, to create Julia, a four-year-old with autism and the first character the beloved children's show has introduced in decades.
- She was appointed Honorary Captain, HMCS York for the Royal Canadian Navy.

Appointment process

- Over the past year, UVic's Board of Governors heard from many members of the community about what attributes and strengths they should look for in the next president and vice-chancellor.
- Dr. McEwen was appointed after a year-long search process led by a committee composed of representatives from the Board of Governors, Senate, faculties, staff, students and alumni.
- Dr. McEwen will be the ninth president in UVic's 63-year history.

Testimonials

"Dr. Rhonda McEwen is an energetic and approachable leader, with the ability to build authentic relationships across the campus, Vancouver Island and the globe. She is a student-centred leader, holding deep commitments to equity, experiential education and supportive learning environments. She is distinguished as a scholar and researcher who has a reputation for advancing knowledge and innovation through partnerships. The committee recognized Dr. McEwen as an inspirational advocate for higher education in Canada and beyond." — Erinn Pinkerton, Acting Chair, Board of Governors

"What stood out most to me was Dr. McEwen's genuine interest in students, her willingness to listen, and her thoughtful and creative approach to leadership. Her extensive professional and academic experience, combined with her ability to work constructively across differences, position her well to take on this role." — Sarah Roberts, Graduate Student, Appointment Committee

“I look forward to working with Dr. McEwen. She is a heart-centered leader with a strong reputation for fiscal responsibility, university governance, innovative strategy and partnership-building. At this critical moment for the post-secondary sector in Canada, I’m glad we have a leader in place who can work with us to maintain stability and support all the good work already underway at UVic.” — Marion Buller, UVic Chancellor

“I am thrilled that Dr. Rhonda McEwen has accepted the position of UVic’s president. Her innovative approach to research and program development, her drive for justice, equity and inclusion, and her dedication to the student experience make her a perfect choice for our university. She speaks with passion and leadership about the 'wicked' issues that we are facing as a society and as a sector — she is a leader who will bring us together to work across differences and help us further our priorities. I believe Rhonda is the leader that UVic needs now.” — Qwul’sih’yah’maht, Robina Thomas, Acting President and Vice-Chancellor