

Student Societies Summit

Meeting #8 – Feb 10, 2014 Governing Council Chamber, Simcoe Hall

Attendance:

Faculty Summit Members: Prof. Joe Desloges (Chair), Prof. Donald Ainslie, Prof. Linda White, Prof. Graham White

Student Participants: Yolen Bollo-Kamara (UTSU), Agnes So (UTSU), Melissa Theodore (UTMSU), Raymond Noronha (UTMSU), Mauricio Curbelo (EngSoc), Thomas Santerre (EngSoc), Ashkan Azimi (NCSC), Craig Maniscalco (NCSC), Anthony O'Brien (PHEUA), Alex Zappone (SMCSU), Benjamin Crase (TCM), Nishi Kumar (UCLit), Ryan Phillips (UCLit), David Bastien (MedSoc)

Administration: Prof. Jill Matus (Vice Provost, Students & First-Entry Divisions), David Newman (Director, Student Life), Sarah Burley (Office of the Vice-Provost, Students & First-Entry Divisions)

Regrets: Meredith Strong, (Director, Office of the Vice-Provost, Students & Student Policy Advisor), Teresa Maida (STU), Mary Stefanidis (ICSS)

Welcome

UTMSU requested that they make a statement at the onset of the meeting and circulated a written submission to participants, along with a copy of the constitution for the University of Toronto Engineering Society (ENGSOE). The Chair allowed space for the statement, noting that future submissions need to be submitted in advance and then discussed within the context of the discussion items in the agenda. The details of the statement are in the letter provided (now posted to the Portal). Following the statement, UTMSU participants left the meeting.

Finish discussion on all of #2, #3 and #4 questions

The Chair noted that good time was spent on addressing the previous questions and the aim is to get through as much of the content as possible. The following key items were raised:

2. Electoral processes and Student Society leadership:
 - a. What is the appropriate form of oversight (arms-length election overseers)?

- In many cases, the CRO of divisional student societies came from their respective membership, except where this was not logistically possible.
 - The composition of appeals committees varied among student societies, including some cases where external and university administration are involved in the decision processes.
 - The idea of providing a University-wide manual on the selection processes and training for CROs and composition of appeals committees was supported by participants.
 - Participants also agreed that it might be useful to have a University-wide pool of experts for appeals as long as the experts did not receive guidance from the University.
- b. What counts as fairness in terms of openness and competition in election?
- The following points were raised by participants:
 - Good voter turnout
 - Running for election should be available to all members
 - Clear information on election standards and what constitutes an infraction
 - Voting should be completely accessible to all members
 - A strong system for validation of voting
 - Independence of appeals committee from CRO
- c. Should executive or non-executive candidates be allowed (or encouraged) to run in slates?
- Although still diverse opinions exist on whether or not slates should be allowed, participants were also asked to consider restrictions on the number of consecutive terms an individual can hold.
 - The rules vary among student societies, including having no rules, having rules that apply for some executive positions, having rules that apply to Board members.
- d. Should non-U of T students play a role in campaigns?
- Participants who commented on this item indicated that non-members of their respective student society should not play a role in campaigns. Some have specific rules around this practice. Concerns are dealt with on a complaints basis.
- e. How should candidates be funded or otherwise supported?
- Divisional student societies indicated campaign spending limits ranging from \$0 to \$50, some also indicating limits on use of resources and “in kind” values attached to certain

activities. Participants were asked to share these details with the Summit.

- UTSU has a \$1200/person limit.
- f. What is an appropriate campaign length?
- Participants indicated campaign lengths that ranged from four days to three weeks. In some cases, campaigns need to be completed before elections while in others campaigns are allowed until the end of the voting period.
- g. Should student leaders be actively enrolled in academic programs?
- To run for executive positions in all student societies, members must be actively enrolled during the nomination and election processes.
 - In the case of UTSU, an executive member does not necessarily have to be actively enrolled as a student during the member's term of office.
 - Other divisional participants indicated that the expectation to reduce course loads during executive terms of office in UTSU limits the ability of members enrolled in specific programs from participating.

3. Structural links between Student Societies

- a. How can SS's ensure accountability to students when Board members do not have direct/strong structural links to the constituencies they are meant to represent?
- Most divisional societies have structured their respective boards so that the board includes representation from disciplines, years of study, gender, and executives.
 - UTSU indicates that the relationship with Board members sometimes works very well with divisional societies.
 - Some student societies also highlighted significant focus on widespread consultations and surveys.
- b. What would/could a different UTSU Board structure look like to ensure constituency representation?
- Generally it was agreed that student societies should determine the processes of selecting their respective boards.
 - There could be strengthened and more formalized relationships between UTSU and the divisional student societies.

- c. Should there be, in addition, some kind of mechanism to ensure accountability between different societies?
- The following possibilities were provided by participants:
 - University to provide a common set of requirements that would be adhered to by all student societies
 - Provide a mechanism for groups to share best practices
 - Consider other mechanisms, for example the St. George Round Table

Proposed next meeting dates/times

Friday, March 7, 1:00-3:00pm

Friday, March 14, 1:00-3:00pm