

February 10<sup>th</sup>, 2014

Prof. Jill Matus, Vice-Provost, Students and First-Entry Divisions  
Prof. Joe Desloges (Chair)  
Prof. Donald Ainslie  
Prof. Graham White  
Prof. Linda White

**RE: Position of College Councils, EngSoc, and KPEUA**

Faculty Summit Members,

We are writing to state our position on specific questions of governance that have been discussed at the Summit. We are pleased that discussions at the Summit have become more concrete, and we would like to outline the key elements of what we believe would be an acceptable solution to the ongoing disputes which led to the Summit's creation last year:

**1. The outcome of the Summit must be a recommendation to change University policy.**

Collectively, we believe that a voluntary agreement among student societies is not an acceptable resolution to the Summit process initiated by the University. The Summit itself was initiated because of clearly articulated dissatisfaction - validated by referenda - within certain constituencies, resulting from numerous failed efforts to improve transparency, accountability, and electoral fairness at the UTSU, as well as to make its operations more useful and efficient.

While we have all learned a great deal regarding best practices for the democratic governance of student societies, and have agreed on a number of common challenges to face and essential improvements to make, a purely voluntary agreement will not resolve the disagreements that resulted in the Summit process. We have spent a great deal of time discussing the UTSU's structure, but it would be difficult for the University to force specific bylaw or structure changes to the UTSU, and it would not be an acceptable solution to constituencies which no longer wish to be part of the UTSU in the first place. However, the University does have the authority to set the requirements all student societies must follow in order to charge a compulsory fee, or to determine from whom those fees should be collected, and to whom they should be distributed to.

The most meaningful requirements of "open, accessible, and democratic" operation of student societies must be specified and enforced as a matter of University policy, to ensure that the University is justified in collecting compulsory fees from students on student societies' behalf.

**2. The University's *Policy for Compulsory Non-Academic Incidental Fees* must be changed to include a more specific definition of what it means for a student society to function in an "open, accessible, and democratic" manner.**

The *Policy* does not outline what constitutes "open, accessible, and democratic" conduct, and needs to be updated with more rigorous requirements that reflect what we have learned at the Summit to date.

Given the scale and complexity of the University of Toronto, and the persistent disagreements that led to the Summit, the current vagueness of the *Policy* must be recognized as being insufficient to hold student societies accountable to their members. The administration must take responsibility to ensure that the best practices of governance identified by the Summit are implemented by all student societies. Specifically, we believe the following changes to the *Policy* are absolutely essential:

1. Every student society must have a mechanism by which changes to its constitution, bylaws, and policies may be initiated and determined solely by the membership – without the Executive or Board vetting proposals beforehand.
2. Non-U of T students must be banned from formally or informally participating as campaign volunteers in U of T student society elections.
3. Every student society must have an election appeals committee, and the majority of the committee's members must be non-society members of the University of Toronto, including faculty and administration.
4. The maximum number of proxies any member may hold at an Annual General Meeting must be limited to (5), including the vote of the proxyholder if they are a member of the student society.

**3. The fee arrangement between the UTSU and the UTMSU must either be terminated, or offered to every divisional student society that requests it.**

Currently, UTM students' UTSU fees are *returned* to the UTMSU, so that the UTMSU can run services which the UTSU would run if it were able to operate an office at UTM. In essence, this is a fee diversion arrangement between the two organizations. In spite of having their fee returned to their local student society, UTM students have full voting rights in the UTSU. It is undemocratic that students whose fees are diverted to another organization have an equal say in the UTSU as students on the St. George campus whose fees actually fund the Union.

The Engineering Society (EngSoc) asked for a similar fee arrangement in 2010 and was rebuffed. It is not appropriate that the UTSU arbitrarily decides which constituencies are better-served by a divisional student society, rather than allowing students themselves to decide via referenda.

As long as the UTSU continues to allow fee diversion arrangements for one constituency, the same arrangement must be open to any constituency that requests it via a referendum.

Further, if a constituency's fees are transferred by the UTSU to another student society, the constituents of that student society must no longer be able to participate in the UTSU's democratic processes. The University cannot continue to allow student societies to privilege certain constituencies with disproportional representation, given that their fee is transferred to another organization.

#### **4. Compulsory student society fees must reflect the will of students.**

The most important function of student societies is to represent the views and interests of their membership to various levels of the University administration, and provide student input on matters of policy and governance which shape the University's future. For student societies to adequately serve this function, the University must have full confidence in the ability of student society leaders to represent the will and view of their membership.

As a fundamental principle of student governance, campus-wide and university-wide student societies should not be empowered to hold distinct constituencies as members against their will. When it is clear that a constituency wishes to cease its affiliation with a campus- or university-wide student society, the University administration should work with the divisional student society to determine alternative structures of representation to University's ventral governance processes, and issue a recommendation to Governing Council to implement a more suitable structure for those students to be represented.

Sincerely,

**Jelena Savic**  
President  
Victoria University Students'  
Administrative Council

**Nishi Kumar**  
President  
University College Literary and Athletic  
Society

**Mauricio Curbelo**  
President  
University of Toronto Engineering Society

**Ben Crase and Maha Naqi**  
Heads of College  
Trinity College Meeting

**Mary Stefanidis**  
President  
Innis College Student Society

**Ashkan Azimi**  
President  
New College Student Council

**Alex Zappone**  
President  
St. Michael's College Student Union

**Anthony O'Brien**  
President  
Kinesiology and Physical Education  
Undergraduate Association