



GRADUATE STUDENTS' UNION

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
LOCAL 19, CANADIAN FEDERATION OF STUDENTS

Ms. Rose Patten, Chair & Members
Presidential Search Committee
Office of the Governing Council
Room 106, Simcoe Hall
University of Toronto
Toronto, ON M5S 1A1

4 December, 2004

Dear members of the search committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the formation of the position profile for the next President of the University of Toronto. In forming these answers to the questions put forth by the committee, we have taken into consideration the GSU responses to the Green and White papers on the Academic Plan ("Stepping Up"), as well as the GSU submission to the Review of Post Secondary Education in Ontario ("Rae Review"), and the comments of GSU members from all graduate departments, given during a GSU Annual General Meeting session dedicated to this topic.

In each section of our submission, you will find points of specific importance to graduate students, corresponding to the categories of inquiry laid out in your memorandum to the University community. We acknowledge that there are many other important challenges, strengths, and priorities that will be important to the entire University community, including graduate students. In the interest of brevity, we have focussed on only those issues specific to our constituency.

We hope you find these comments helpful in your deliberations. Thank you from the members of the GSU for taking the time to sit on this important committee.

Roberta Tucci
VP Internal

Christopher Collins
Secretary

Strengths of University of Toronto

- Guaranteed graduate funding
- Outstanding faculty & graduate student research activity including interdisciplinary research
- Strong commitment to equity and diversity
- Good relations between administration and student representatives
- Student services & support
 - Services increasingly tailored to graduate students
- Evaluation & benchmarking (Performance indicators for Governance)
- Collaborative institutional planning
- Recruitment and retention of outstanding faculty

Challenges Facing the University of Toronto

- Low & Declining public funding
 - Deferred & major maintenance
 - Academic technology & research equipment
 - Increased reliance on private funding for research, and the associated need for attention to academic standards
- Student experience
 - Inconsistent delivery of information (too many sources)
 - Student perception of being “just a number”
- Graduate funding
 - There exists a great deal of inequality between divisions
 - The real time-to-completion and funded period are different
 - Funding does not always reflect cost-of-living and tuition increases
 - Maintaining the program while meeting demands of increasing graduate student enrollment may be difficult
- Accessibility
 - Exceeding the requirements of the Ontarians with Disabilities Act with scarce resources
- Equity
 - Reaching our equity goals, especially on LGBTQ, in the often challenging framework of federated colleges
- Departmental Budgets vs. Administrative Salaries
 - There seems to be a growing disconnect at the University – graduate department budgets are being cut while senior administrators and faculty are being paid more and more.
- Recruitment
 - It may become difficult to attract international students with increasing differences in domestic and international tuition fees
 - Large number of faculty will be retiring over the next ten years.
- Rapid growth of UTM / UTSC may complicate administration, policy development, graduate department organization, etc.
- High turnover in senior administration affects campus morale, efficiency of implementation of Academic Plan.

Implications of Strengths & Challenges: Personal Priorities for the Next President

- Work to increase public funding base
 - FTE-transfers to greater than national average
 - Academic & research infrastructure (not just new buildings)
 - Maintaining & improving student financial support (decreasing tuition fees)
- Manage growth in enrollment & research activity
 - Accessibility for students from all areas of society
- Commit to equity and excellence in recruitment of staff, faculty, and students
- Maximize strengths of tri-campus model
- Work with student groups to champion the cause of higher education provincially & nationally
- In response to high faculty retirement rates, ensure universal transparency in the hiring processes

Implications of Strengths & Challenges: Priorities for the Next President to Set for Others

- Graduate student experience
 - Bring funding period & time-to-completion to the same realistic length
 - Ensure continued improvement of provision of information & sense of community
- Diversity & equity
 - Ensure continued & increased support for equity initiatives and the equity initiatives advisory group
- Help the Provost strike a balance between competitive salaries, needed for recruitment, and recognition of how budget cuts (in the light of increasing administrative salaries) affect the morale of the students, staff, and faculty
- Implementation of goals in “Stepping Up”

Desirable Strengths & Characteristics of the Next President

- Academic & scholarly achievements
- Demonstrated leadership excellence in a University setting
 - Seeks out student input, maintains ongoing relationship with student leaders
 - Earns respect & confidence of community
 - Recognizes importance of diversity of viewpoints
- Recognizes academic & financial obstacles facing graduate students
- Energetic; ability to encourage others
- Profound understanding of academic values and traditions, and the passion to communicate and defend them inside and outside the university
 - Defends these values in a rapidly changing political environment, and in the face of increased private involvement in research
- Recognizes the need for long-term stable leadership to reach these goals
- There was a mandate under President Birgeneau: equity, excellence, and outreach. We need someone who will be in support of outreach programs

- Experienced in the political arena, who will know who to ask and what to ask from the different levels of government
 - Someone who has experience working on developing the relationship between their institution, other institutions, and the government
 - Someone who has a track record of success on securing stable public funding; perhaps someone who, as president of another institution, has turned around a situation of chronic under-funding
- Experience at a Public University
 - Someone who has experience in a large institution.
 - An understanding of the special circumstances of public vs. private post-secondary education; will run the University as a public institution, not as a business
- Acknowledges the benefits of all the types of programs (not just undergraduate at PhD, but also “professional” masters, research masters, etc.)

A Note on Process

While recognizing the need for confidentiality in the search process, the Executive of the Graduate Students' Union (with noted abstention of Mahadeo Sukhai) unanimously encourages a change in policy: *we believe the short list of candidates should be public*. In the public sector, there exists precedent for public short-lists, from faculty hiring at University of Toronto to appointment of Supreme Court Justices in Ottawa, to public acknowledgement of former President Birgeneau's consideration of Berkeley.

The privacy of the individuals under consideration for the long list must be respected, as a breach of this could have consequences for them in their current positions. However, there needs to be a balance of rights – the University community and the public as a whole have a right to participate in the selection of the next President of a very influential public institution such as the University of Toronto. We believe this balance rests with publication of the short list candidates, and inviting them to address the University community. Those willing to stand for the presidency of Canada's largest public university should be willing to meet with their potential community, to ensure a good fit for both the candidate and the University community.