



GRADUATE STUDENTS' UNION

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
LOCAL 19, CANADIAN FEDERATION OF STUDENTS

“Stepping Up: Academic Plan 2004-2010”

A Response to the White Papers

30 October, 2003

Introduction

The Graduate Students' Union is pleased to offer our feedback on "Stepping Up," the Provost's Academic Plan for 2004-2010. We have developed this response in consultation with our membership, and through discussions in our Executive and Focus Committee meetings. Furthermore, we have examined the entirety of the Academic Plan, with the perspective of "How will this affect graduate students?"

Overall, we are impressed with the scope, comprehensiveness and ambition of the Academic Plan, which contains many excellent initiatives. We found much of the background and research contained in the document to be illuminating and informative. We found many aspects of the plan to be exciting and of interest to our membership, including:

- ✓ Interdisciplinary programs and interdisciplinary positions
- ✓ A school of public policy
- ✓ Physical accessibility and learning disability recommendations
- ✓ Pedagogy training for graduate students
- ✓ Career planning as part of graduate curricula
- ✓ Undergraduate research opportunities
- ✓ Expansion of graduate programs and graduate enrolment
- ✓ Improvement to laboratory and computing infrastructure to better enable research
- ✓ Revamping the 1st year course curricula to better reflect U of T's nature as an excellent research institution
- ✓ Bringing the international experience to the university

We provide our comments by presenting and discussing several overarching themes relevant to graduate students that appear within the Academic Plan. As graduate students currently comprise almost 20% of the student population at the University of Toronto, and, along with post-doctoral fellows (PDFs), research associates, research assistants, laboratory technicians and faculty, make up the research environment of the University, we believe this perspective to be very important if U of T is to attain its goal of being a premier public research university.

We do offer one word of caution about the language used within the White Papers, in addition to our comments below: It is important to be

careful and selective with hyperbole, particularly in regards to science and scientific matters. One clause in the introduction referred to recent advances in genetic engineering leading to brain copies, hybrid cyborgs, etc. Why not use the recent and exciting advances in medicine as examples instead, in this context?

Graduate enrolment

The Academic Plan includes several recommendations on increasing graduate enrolment at the University of Toronto. This is linked to additional recommendations on the distribution of resources in graduate programs and departments, the creation of interdisciplinary programs, and ultimately must be tied into the expansion of departments and the hiring of additional faculty.

We support increasing graduate enrolment at the University, but this cannot be done without the expansion of the faculty base and careful consideration by the graduate department. The ideal research training environment must balance many factors, including student/supervisor ratio, research staff/faculty ratio, student/teacher ratio, available space, materiel, resources and finances, and the research being undertaken. Caution must be exercised to ensure that enrolment numbers aren't simply increased without consideration of what this means to the new students. In addition to recruiting and enrolling new students, we must be able to ensure their acclimatization and retention. More focus on graduate student orientation and a strong support network for new students would be helpful in this area.

Recommendation: *The School of Graduate Studies and graduate units develop, in collaboration with graduate students, a graduate student "support network" in individual graduate units, in order to best facilitate entry of increasing numbers of students into graduate school.*

Recruitment/exposure to graduate school

We applaud the expansion of undergraduate research initiatives proposed in the Plan, as well as the idea of "recruitment weekends"

for potential graduate students. Some departments in the sciences have a similar initiative already for recruiting potential summer students to their research labs.

However, we feel that a more formalized structure is required, and we return to one of the ideas contained within the green papers: The creation of “intergenerational cohorts” at the University of Toronto. We believe the idea should be refined at the departmental level to include undergraduate research/summer students, graduate students at all levels, and post-doctoral fellows. We envision a mentorship “chain” whereby PDFs and senior graduate students may mentor more junior graduate students and undergraduate and summer students. We are cognizant of the tension between such activities and graduate students retaining time for their own academic work, but these types of mentorship opportunities will provide valuable training for the academic and work environments.

Such initiatives need to be implemented in consultation with graduate students and faculty, in order to ensure that these mentorship opportunities do not detract from research tasks. It is important to ensure that neither graduate students, nor undergraduate students seeking research experience, are exploited in the research environment.

Recommendation: *The School of Graduate Studies and graduate units develop, in collaboration with graduate students, a mentorship program for undergraduate research/summer students, in order to develop their research skills, and as a potential recruitment tool.*

Recommendation: *The School of Graduate Studies and graduate units should create a mentorship program that includes undergraduate/summer research students, graduate students in the junior and senior years, and post-doctoral fellows, so as to create a stronger departmental support network that may exist and function independently of the supervisor and thesis advisory committee.*

Graduate supervision

Here, again, we address the student/supervisor ratio: While the ratio of undergraduate students to faculty was discussed at length in the Papers, the graduate student/faculty or grad student/supervisor ratio was not. In many disciplines in the sciences, the grad student to supervisor ratio may be 2:1 or 3:1. But, because these researchers also have other research staff – post-doctoral fellows, technicians, clinical residents, etc. – the actual “researcher/supervisor” ratio may be 10:1 or even 15:1 or higher. While it is true that the larger the research group is, the more research gets done, larger research groups make for less effective training environments. This is an issue that should also be addressed in the graduate supervision section of the White Papers.

Recommendation: *The School of Graduate Studies, in conjunction with graduate units, and graduate students, should investigate the student/supervisor and researcher/supervisor ratios in each unit, as well as means of compensating for situations where said ratios are high.*

The quality of graduate supervision is affected by the availability of the supervisor, and, indeed, by the very presence of the supervisor within the University community. A supervisor’s absence could be temporary – parental leave, injury, sabbatical – or permanent, if he or she were let go by the department or University. In this situation, the department, SGS and the University has an obligation, indeed a responsibility, to ensure that the graduate students under that faculty member’s supervision are provided for, accommodated and given adequate supervision and guidance **in the research discipline their thesis focus resides**. This point is critical, as there are many faculty at the University engaged in unique areas of research, and on their departure from the University, their graduate students should not be penalized for having chosen to work with them. This issue – and, indeed, the issue of a faculty member leaving for any reason, and for any period of time – needs to be addressed within the context of graduate supervision within the White Papers.

Recommendation: *The School of Graduate Studies, in conjunction with graduate units, should establish a clear set of guidelines to cover graduate supervision of those students whose supervisors are unable to continue their supervision duties, for reasons including death, retirement and departure from the University. Such guidelines must place the welfare of the student, and the student's interests, as the paramount concerns.*

Graduate student funding

Throughout the White Papers, the phrase “full funding guarantee” is mentioned with respect to graduate students. We would like to seek clarification on what is meant by this, as the current guarantee is not applicable to many students. Currently, many research Master's and Doctoral stream students do not have a guaranteed funding package. Furthermore, those departments that do have guaranteed funding do not all implement the funding package in the same way. We applaud allocation of additional resources toward graduate student funding, and indeed, we encourage an increase to the basic funding package, but of greater priority we feel is the consistent implementation of a guaranteed funding package for all graduate students, in all research stream programs.

For many graduate students, an integral part of their research consists of gathering data outside the Toronto area, in field work which takes them out of province and often overseas for extended periods of time. In addition to incurring significant financial costs above and beyond tuition and basic living expenses to finance their field work, many graduate students bear the added burden of the loss of the TA component of their guaranteed funding package while they are away. It is therefore a serious concern that the current funding arrangements do not systematically support such an integral part of the dissertation process for many graduate students. While departments related to the natural sciences (such as anthropology) are better able to systematically provide full funding for all their graduate students while away on field work, other departments (such as political science) in the social sciences are unable to do so, and students are left to find ad hoc solutions such as combining

minimal/inadequate SGS travel grants, uncertain external funding (depending on area of research) and supplementary employment hours while in Toronto, impacting negatively on their time to completion and limiting their ability to carry out the research necessary to be leaders in their respective fields.

Recommendation: *The University should systematically ensure that all graduate students, regardless of area of research, have adequate opportunity to carry out field research where it is deemed necessary, by guaranteeing them access to the full funding package while they are conducting their field research component.*

Graduate programs

The Academic Plan's focus on the research doctoral program coincides with the proposal by the School of Graduate Studies' proposal for a new, in program, M.Phil. degree. We at the GSU understand the basis behind the elimination of the research Master's programs at U of T, but we are also cognizant of the benefits to such programs. Doctoral students with previous Master's experience are able to operate with less direct supervision, and are greater assets to their research environments – indeed, there are some supervisors who deliberately seek direct-entry Ph.D. students with prior experience – as Master's students, or, in the sciences, technicians – in research. A separate Master's degree offers students a taste of research, and an opportunity to develop (on a small scale) the skills necessary to successfully complete a Ph.D.: study design, research, write-up and defense. A free-standing Master's program effectively provides for academic variety, allowing students to easily change their topic, discipline, supervisor or school, greatly expanding the student's graduate academic experience. Moreover, particularly in the sciences, research masters students make a major contribution to laboratory productivity, commonly publishing one or more first-author papers en route to their M.Sc. In short, the research masters serves as a valued terminal degree and excellent preparation for further study.

The GSU remains committed to the importance of the research Master's program, recognizes that it plays a significant role in graduate training, and believes that it should not be eliminated. Within the Academic Plan, no direct statement is made about the fate of the research Master's programs: **if the intent is to eliminate them, then this should be clearly stated within the Plan.** We fear that with the emphasis being placed within this Plan on Doctoral programs, the fate of Master's programs may well be implicitly or unintentionally decided. It may be that the research Master's degree may soon have no place in the University of Toronto, but such a proposal must be debated openly and across this University. The Plan as written does not offer this opportunity. Furthermore, if the University is indeed to eliminate the research Master's program, steps should be taken to ensure that "in program" degrees (e.g., the model utilized by Columbia University, encapsulated by a 6-year Ph.D., with in program M.A./M.Sc. after 2 years and M.Phil. after 4) are developed that take into account the undeniable benefits of a separate Master's program.

Recommendation: *A full and open consultative debate process should be undertaken to discuss the fate of the research Master's program at the University of Toronto.*

Graduate research environment

The White Papers (Companion Papers 2 and 3) state that new faculty hiring should reflect the academic plan of the department. This suggests a control of research being conducted by way of controlling the faculty hired. How is this in agreement with the University's mission of providing academic freedom?

A section on post-doctoral fellows should be added to Companion Paper 2, as they are an often-ignored facet of the University, and one of the integral parts to its research programs. No longer graduate students, but not yet faculty, PDFs frequently fall through the cracks during academic planning. We commend the initiative of the School of Graduate Studies in filling some of this void with the creation of the SGS PDF Office, and would recommend a strengthening of this office. Especially in the sciences, PDFs are increasingly becoming

mentors and teachers for graduate (and undergraduate) students, yet they find themselves all too often unprepared for such duties. Recognizing that there are no English language or teaching requisites for PDFs (and finding such requisites undesirable), the University must provide resources for learning and/or improving their language, writing, presentation and teaching skills. As PDFs frequently and increasingly find themselves teaching graduate courses, we would also recommend teaching support for PDFs.

Recommendation: *Unified services and benefits for post-doctoral fellows should be developed by the University of Toronto, particularly in English language and writing support and pedagogical training.*

With the drastic expansion of graduate enrolment, graduate courses are becoming too large in some departments. We suggest that departments consider this matter as part of their academic planning and enrolment planning processes, and that the University provide adequate resources to expanding departments to ensure the quality of graduate education does not suffer.

Recommendation: *The School of Graduate Studies, and graduate units, considers capping graduate class sizes, and the University provide adequate resources to expanding departments to ensure the quality of graduate education does not suffer.*

The space and facilities for graduate students is widely variable between departments. Even closely related departments have vastly different capabilities to provide adequate space and quality of facilities. Many students find themselves without any office, study, research or social space, and many more have inadequate or low quality facilities. These deficiencies have a direct impact on the efficiency of graduate work and the quality of student experience, two major issues this University is currently addressing.

Recommendation: that the minimum requirements for graduate student space at U of T be reviewed and updated to take into account the current needs of the student population and COU space guidelines.

The White Papers also devote some time to discussing the lengthening of the tenure clock from five years to seven. This should also be evaluated in the context of its effects on graduate supervision. Can non-tenured faculty members serve as the primary supervisor on doctoral thesis research, for example? Non-tenured faculty also may not pursue controversial research, instead choosing to play it safe by vetoing a potentially “risky” line of inquiry in order to maximize their chances of getting tenure. Furthermore, particularly in the sciences, recently hired faculty need lead time in setting up their laboratories – a process that could take anywhere from 6 months to 2 years.

Finally, there is discussion within the Academic Plan about the preservation of academic freedom at the University of Toronto. Given the discussion in “Stepping Up” around facilitating technology transfer (or “knowledge transfer” in areas of more basic research, and in the humanities and social sciences), we at the GSU strongly believe that a statement on the preservation of academic freedom, clearly outlining the rights and responsibilities of researchers at U of T, be developed. Such a statement must be enforceable.

Recommendation: The University, in consultation with its research community, develop a clear and enforceable statement on academic freedom, including the rights and responsibilities of all members of the University community.

Pedagogy in graduate training: Preparations for the academic and job markets

We commend initiatives to better prepare graduate students for life outside of and after graduate school. This includes the pedagogical

training mentioned in the Academic Plan, as well as the student-led career seminar series initiative currently being planned by SGS Division IV, in conjunction with the Faculty of Medicine. However, we urge further, clear, discussion of how pedagogical training will be implemented, as we feel this goal is not highlighted nor explained clearly. It should be noted that graduate school is, first and foremost, about developing and applying research and critical thinking skills, but we do recognize that this is within the context of becoming contributing members of our respective fields. It is therefore necessary to develop a flexible approach to pedagogy and career development, one that allows for a broad range of possible career choices and goals, depending on the discipline and the graduate student's own interests.

Current pedagogical training at the University of Toronto is woefully inadequate to meet the demand posed by graduate students. The Teaching in Higher Education course offered by Woodsworth College has limited enrolment, with priority given to graduating students, while the Teaching Assistants' Training Program is not considered useful in developing basic teaching/presentation and communication skills. There is also no formal training at the departmental level; while the Institute for Medical Sciences once offered a "Teaching in the Biomedical Sciences" course, this was discontinued upon the departure of the course coordinator. As has been recognized within the White Papers, it is in the best interest of the graduate student to develop presentation/teaching, training and mentorship skills, regardless of his or her chosen career. Perhaps a solution could be developed in conjunction with the Faculty of Education and the Office of Teaching Advancement?

Recommendation: *The School of Graduate Studies and graduate units, in conjunction with the Faculty of Education and the Office of Teaching Advancement, develop a comprehensive, flexible training program on teaching and presentation skills for graduate students. Such a program should be designed to accommodate career paths within and outside of academia.*

Some excellent discussion about the potential for restructuring the undergraduate teaching method was included in the White Papers. Particularly in the sciences, a shift away from currently accepted teaching practice toward a more innovative, cutting-edge method incorporating recent discoveries from research allows for the generation of excitement among undergraduate students about the course material, and about research opportunities. Should this be developed further, graduate students serving as teaching assistants will need to be included in the discussion and development process.

The White Papers discuss linking the principles of information technology and classroom instruction and research. We note that the two centres where this is already an advanced concept – the Resource Centre for Academic Computing and the Adaptive Technology Resource Centre – are not mentioned in the White Papers, nor included as part of this initiative. Furthermore, they are not entrenched as members of the University community, and are not provided funding from the University operating budgets. Given the high quality of work RCAT and the ATRC do, and the international prestige they bring to the University of Toronto, it seems wrong for this situation to be allowed to continue.

Thesis preparation and defense

We recommend the inclusion of a strategy around adequate external examiner resources in the White Papers. The external examiner brings an outside perspective, and sometimes international flavour, to the critical review process during a Ph.D. student's thesis. At times this external perspective is an unfortunate necessity to recognize the full value of a student's work, and provides a valuable check on the appropriateness of the standards demanded by this University. We feel that in the long run this rigorous examination process provides better training and a more prestigious degree to the doctoral student, and encourage its continuance. This University periodically reaffirms the value of external appraisals, yet the necessary financial resources are no longer being provided by the School of Graduate Studies.

Recommendation: *The School of Graduate Studies maintain an external examiner fund at sufficient levels such that graduate supervisors do not have to pay for external examiners to come to the University of Toronto.*

The international experience in graduate school

We also recommend the creation of a conference presentation travel fund, for those graduate students whose supervisors cannot afford to send them to conferences, but who are accepted to make a presentation. The international learning experience afforded by academic conferences should be a part of every graduate student's learning experience, regardless of the wealth of one's supervisor. In addition, the University of Toronto benefits by having its graduate students display the academic talent of the University to the community abroad, nationally and internationally. Other major research universities already have such funds, and we must move to remedy our deficiency.

Recommendation: *The School of Graduate Studies, in conjunction with graduate units, create and maintain a travel fund for graduate students who have been invited to present at international academic conferences, based on the merit of their work.*

The White Papers have a stated goal to increase diversity at the University of Toronto, but also present a contradictory statement in the recruitment of students with the best academic records *in Canada*. What about international students?

Graduate student housing

Stepping Up (in the "values" section) mentions "modest but technically "smart" and efficient" residences as necessary for improving both student learning and the student experience. This is an important statement, because it is an acknowledgement that living space plays a key role in one's academic success and experience.

The White Papers state: “We have built new graduate student housing and our students report a significantly higher level of satisfaction with the availability and cost of housing than do those in our peer groups within the HEDS (Higher Education Data Survey) Graduate Student Survey.” This statement is misleading in that while the university has built new graduate student housing, it has also torn down the old graduate student housing. The result is that we still have a huge unsatisfied demand for graduate housing on the St. George campus. For this year alone, there were over 600 applications for under 50 available spaces in Graduate House. Though the HEDS survey showed some degree of satisfaction, it is clear that we still have an extraordinary amount of work to do before attaining laudable goals. The statement quoted above must be qualified in this light.

Most of the responsibility for residence life on the St. George campus appears to have been assigned to the Colleges. Additionally, there is much discussion of the high proportion of first year students in campus residences. With 89 Chestnut and new residences at Woodsworth, Innis, New and University Colleges, there will be enough residence space to satisfy demand. This section does not mention graduate student demand. When will graduate student demand be satisfied? What about student family housing demand?

Grad House has provided much needed facilities for single grad students. The White Papers talk about developing 89 Chestnut to include significant numbers of grad students and mention the “critical need” for more family housing, which currently has 760 units, and a waiting list of 1800. We support the development of 89 Chestnut to include significant numbers of grad students. Grad students should be housed together on the same floors, and in single rooms. We do not feel that 89 Chestnut should use grad students as dons on primarily undergraduate floors unless those students are hired specifically as dons. A target of 200-300 beds should be reserved for grad students. A more transparent waiting list/selection process for Family Housing would help to ease some of the tension caused by such a long list. A rent payment scheme tailored to the graduate student population should be developed.

p. 34 Companion paper 1 also mentions exploring possibilities with co-ops and other Toronto housing initiatives, particularly as this relates to Family Housing. This is good. The GSU is willing to assist in this initiative. The more affordable housing geared towards students in the GTA, the better. It may also be efficacious to lobby the various levels of government for affordable housing near campus.

p. 6 of the companion paper on Equity/Diversity mentions the high cost of living in the GTA as a barrier to diversity on campus. This is the only mention that the cost of living is extremely high in the GTA. Certainly it would be great to see the White papers acknowledge that high costs of living adversely affect students' academic progress.

The White Papers explicitly link proper housing to a strong academic environment, but fail to pay significant attention to housing issues.

Recommendation: Allocate at least 250 beds at 89 Chestnut for graduate students in single rooms, on separate, graduate student only, floors, with a payment plan suited to graduate student needs.

Recommendation: Develop a standard set of procedures for the allocation of apartments at Family Housing in order to eliminate some of the tension caused by the long waiting list.

Student representation in governance process

This issue is not addressed to a significant degree in the White Papers. We recommend a discussion on this topic and suggest that (additional) autonomously, democratically elected student representation be required on departmental decision boards, hiring committees, etc.

Recommendation: A strategy to engage the student population with the governance and electoral processes is needed. Student Unions and the administration could share responsibility for such a plan.

Public/private partnerships in the Academic Plan

The White Papers state a vision for the University of Toronto as a premier public research institution. How do private sector interests fit into that vision? How can the University of Toronto remain truly “public” while soliciting donations from private sector corporations? We appreciate the need to fundraise, and also appreciate that those in the private sector are tempting targets for fundraising campaigns, but we suggest that we take the opportunity offered by the Academic Planning process to develop guidelines for the preservation and continuation of academic freedom for all members of the research environment at the University of Toronto.

We also suggest that, while technology transfer initiatives are laudable, there is a large quantity of research ongoing at this institution that does not have either immediate or any application to the world of industry. We encourage the University to strive equally hard toward “knowledge transfer” initiatives, and toward partnerships with nongovernmental organizations, not-for-profit corporations and other community groups.

Student life

We commend the inclusions on the undergraduate experience outside of the classroom, while noting that there isn’t much presented for graduate student experience. We suggest that departments, working singly or in collaboration through the SGS divisional structure, could arrange opportunities for interdepartmental discussion, debate and socialization.

Recommendation: *The School of Graduate Studies, graduate units and the Graduate Students’ Union collaborate on the development of opportunities for interdepartmental discussion, debate and socialization.*

While we also believe that a common student space on the St. George campus is, in principle, a good idea, we would suggest that the current funding models are not the most appropriate solution.

Funding of Student Services is not addressed in the White Papers. We believe changes are needed to the funding structures of Hart House and Athletics and Recreation.

Hart House is integral to campus life. Indeed, the University of Toronto uses Hart House as a tool for recruitment. It comes as a surprise to many students, then, that the House is treated as a separate entity, and expected to raise its own funding through fees. Hart House facilities are regularly used by University officials for receptions. However, students and members shoulder the burden of maintaining the physical structure of this heritage building.

Recommendation: *Funds should be allocated to the running of Hart House in proportion to University official use of the facilities, and funding should be restored for the deferred and major maintenance.*

Athletics and recreation are central to a healthy University experience. To allow these activities to best serve the student population, the University of Toronto should resume its financial support of deferred major maintenance and capital projects at the Athletics Centre, to prevent the constant increase in ancillary fees. The current situation, where these activities are funded almost completely through ancillary fees, creates an impression that co-curricular activities are somehow separate or additional, rather than central, to life at the University. However, such funding by the University should not result in increased spending by the Faculty for inappropriate expansions, for example, expanding high performance athletics over activities that serve the health and well being of the general university population.

Equity/diversity issues

We commend the initiative to include equity issues as part of a Vice-President's portfolio.

We are also delighted to see the addition of accessibility issues to the text of the White Papers. However, we feel that this section is too limited, and is focused exclusively on physical access and initiatives

to accommodate learning disabilities. While we applaud these recommendations, we feel that a broader awareness of accessibility issues should be in the White Papers.

Furthermore, the University of Toronto's Ontarians with Disabilities Act Accessibility Plan 2003-2004 is mentioned in a footnote in Companion Paper 5; would it not a better link between these two documents if the link were made in the body of the White Papers, and with more detail and emphasis?

Recommendation: *The Academic Planning process for all departments, divisions, faculties and units within the University of Toronto take into consideration the accessibility principles and recommendations outlined in the University of Toronto Ontarians with Disabilities Act Accessibility Plan 2003-2004.*

Recommendation: *A long-term relationship and interconnectivity be developed between the yearly ODA accessibility planning process and the academic plan of the University of Toronto.*

There is also a focus in the persons with disabilities section on students. What about staff and faculty, and recommendations devoted to them? Similarly, it is important to highlight other barriers to inclusion and other forms of disability.

We further commend the initiative to ensure that the University of Toronto community becomes reflective of the Toronto population. We offer, however, a word of caution: Many will interpret this initiative as a quota system, which we understand it is not nor is it intended to be. We hope that the University will continue to recruit and hire on the basis of an individual's academic record or CV, while taking into account the circumstances and barriers that may have existed for that person.

In companion paper five, the challenges and strategies of "Stepping Up" are defined in reference to Canada's legal requirements for representation from the "four designated groups", namely aboriginals,

women, visible minorities, and persons with disabilities. While the accompanying text of the papers discusses LGBTQ issues quite effectively, sexual minorities are absent from the strategies outlined. We feel the University of Toronto should not be limited by legal definitions, but instead lead the way in Canada, by making LGBTQ persons a fifth "recognized group". However, we understand that each of the equity challenges facing the university is a distinctive one, and that strategies will have to be tailored.

Specifically, strategies such as the strategy for diversity in faculty appointments should recognize sexual diversity as an important fifth area. To do this, we can promote practices ensuring that applicants for positions learn that the institution, division, and department are welcoming of sexual diversity, and that those who are open about being LGBTQ constitute a welcome addition to the University. Those who are open cannot be assumed to be intellectually focused on sexual diversity, but those that are should also feel that their scholarship or their equity-related interest would be valued. We know that there are already materials available for hiring committees on the topic of sexual orientation, including good examples for how to address the question. These should be expanded and emphasized in other areas, such as staff and student recruitment. Departments and divisions should be asked to reflect on how many openly LGBTQ faculty, staff, and students are in their midst, and if the numbers are very low or non-existent, what does that mean.

As a mostly "invisible" (and often undisclosed) group, benchmarking of recruitment success will be difficult. Good statistics on the population proportions in Canada are unavailable -- and due to the nature of sexual orientation, some would suggest not useful in any case. Thus education for search committees and Chairs, improvement of departmental climate, promotion of University of Toronto as an LGBTQ-friendly place to work and study, and other initiatives could be used to increase the sexual diversity of the community. Surveys of department members could be used to benchmark success.

Recommendation: Sexual diversity be recognized as a fifth “designated group,”

Recommendation: Initiatives for the education of search committees and Chairs, improvement of departmental climate, promotion of U of T as an LGBTQ-friendly place to work be developed in order to increase the sexual diversity of the University community.

We believe that there is a significant need for outreach to the underrepresented groups at the University of Toronto, and that a portion of the resources devoted to equity and diversity will be allocated toward such outreach campaigns.

Students as well as faculty and staff should be rewarded for their work in the field of equity.

Recommendation: A recognition program be created for students, staff and faculty who have made outstanding contributions to the improvement of equity and the development of equity initiatives within the University community.

Conclusions

Finally, we strongly encourage the inclusion of the Graduate Students’ Union in discussions around the implementation of the Academic Plan as it pertains to graduate students. Overall, we are pleased with the directions and initiatives contained within the Academic Plan. We at the Graduate Students’ Union are willing to do our part in ensure the success of the Academic Plan, and we look forward to working with the University community in realizing the goals of the Plan.

Respectfully submitted,

The GSU Executive
(On behalf of the membership of the Graduate Students’ Union)