

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO  
THE GOVERNING COUNCIL  
**REPORT NUMBER 150 OF**  
**THE UNIVERSITY AFFAIRS BOARD**

**February 3, 2009**

To the Governing Council,  
University of Toronto.

Your Board reports that it met on Tuesday, February 3, 2009 at 4:30 p.m. in the Council Chamber, Simcoe Hall, with the following members present:

Ms B. Elizabeth Vosburgh, In the Chair  
Professor Jill Matus, Vice-Provost, Students  
Ms Lucy Fromowitz, Assistant Vice-President,  
Student Life  
Ms Diana A.R. Alli  
Dr. Louise Cowin  
Ms Judith Goldring  
Mr. Grant Gonzales  
Professor William Gough  
Mr. Keith Ho  
Professor Bruce Kidd  
Mr. Ben Liu  
Mr. Chris McGrath  
Mrs. Fiorella Shields  
Mr. John David Stewart  
Mr. David Stiles  
Dr. Sarita Verma

Non-Voting Assessors:

Mr. Jim Delaney, Director, Office of the Vice-Provost, Students  
Mr. Tom Nowers, Dean of Student Affairs,  
University of Toronto at Scarborough  
(UTSC)  
Mr. Mark Overton, Dean of Student Affairs,  
University of Toronto at Mississauga  
(UTM)  
Ms Elizabeth Sisam, Assistant Vice-President,  
Campus and Facilities Planning

Secretariat:

Mr. Henry Mulhall (Secretary)

Regrets:

Ms Mariana Bockarov  
Dr. Claude Davis  
Mr. Ken Davy  
Mr. Reza Hajivandi  
Mr. Stephen Job  
Ms Anna Okorokov

In Attendance:

Mr. Olivier Sorin, Member of the Governing Council  
Ms Aisling Burke, Office of the Vice-Provost, Students  
Mr. Stuart Chan, Sustainability Coordinator, Sustainability Office  
Ms Deanne Fisher, Director, Student Life Programs and Communications, Office of the Assistant Vice-President, Student Life  
Dr. Anthony Gray, Special Advisor to the President  
Dr. Beth Savan, Director, Sustainability Office  
Mr. Ian Simmie, Program Coordinator, Student Life Programs  
Ms Alison Webb, Committee Secretary, Office of the Governing Council

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ALL ITEMS ARE REPORTED FOR INFORMATION.

The Chair introduced and welcomed Professor Jill Matus, the Vice-Provost, Students to her first meeting as Senior Assessor to the Board.

**1. Report of the Previous Meeting**

Report Number 149 (November 4, 2008) was approved.

**2. Business Arising from the Report of the Previous Meeting**

There was no business arising from the Report of the previous meeting.

**3. Student Experience: Report on the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)**

The Chair noted that the enhancement of the student experience was one of the key priority objectives of the University's current academic plan. Each year the Board received a report from the Vice-Provost, Students on a survey of student engagement, this year's being the NSSE Survey on the undergraduate student experience.

Professor Matus provided a presentation on the results of the 2008 NSSE Survey. She stated that the term "student engagement" referred to the time and effort students invested in their university activities. Equally it was about what the University did to encourage and facilitate those activities. The NSSE Survey was not for the most part about student satisfaction; rather its questions focused on student engagement that occurred both inside and outside of the classroom. It was thus a useful tool in that it measured very specific things that mattered to education, and that could be changed over time.

The NSSE Survey had been designed by researchers in higher education at Indiana University, Bloomington. It was increasingly the student engagement measurement instrument of choice for North American colleges and universities. The University had been among the first Canadian universities to adapt it for use in Canada, and in 2006, all Ontario universities had been mandated to administer the survey every two years.

The University had recently begun to oversample, that is, survey more students than required by NSSE. This provided a larger dataset that would allow analysis of faculty-level and college-level results within the University. For 2008 there had been almost 5,000 respondents in the first-entry faculties. The public reports, however, used the base random sample, the smaller dataset of about 2,300 respondents that followed the strict sampling methodology set by NSSE. The response rate had been exceptionally high at 49% of the full sample.

Professor Matus noted that NSSE did not publish or share individual institutional results and was not designed for use in rankings. Rather it provided comparison groups of institutions that allowed analysis of how an institution performed against relevant peer sets. The University had three such comparison groups: Ontario universities, the Canadian Peer set of large research universities, and a US peer set of large, public research-intensive universities. It focused most on comparisons to the Canadian Peer set as members of this group were institutions that most closely resembled the University.

Professor Matus noted that the survey included background questions that provided an informative profile of the student body. For example, about 16% of students reported that their parents had not attended higher education. Further, 19% of first-year students reported that they were not Canadian citizens. These included both international students and students who had immigrated to Canada. In

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In addition, over 70% of first year students had selected an ethno-cultural background other than “white”. A question that asked where students lived was of particular significance, as the results seemed to be a factor that affected levels of student engagement in some areas. Compared to its Canadian peer groups, the University had a significantly lower percentage of first year students living in residence, and well over half of first year students commuted to campus. Even fewer upper year students lived in residence, most continuing to commute from a significant distance. This seemed to affect the way in which students used their time.

Compared to the Ontario mean, and the Canadian Peer set, the University’s first-year students reported spending a similar amount of time studying and socializing. Compared to the US Peer set, they spent more time working at off-campus employment. Compared to all peer sets they reported spending more time caring for dependents and commuting. Finally, they reported spending significantly less time participating in co-curricular activities, a challenge that needed to be considered in any efforts to enhance levels of student engagement.

Despite such challenges, Professor Matus noted that the most recent NSSE results indicated that some progress had been made in areas that related directly to priorities of the University’s *Stepping Up* academic plan. She highlighted a few areas of such progress. Both interest in conducting undergraduate research, as well as levels of participation, had improved in the 2008 results. More first year students had reported that they planned to study abroad, and a higher proportion had done so by their senior years. Progress was also evident in reported levels of participation in the arts as well as in physical fitness activities.

The NSSE Benchmarks of Effective Educational Practice were a key element of the Report. These collapsed scores on a number of related items into a single Benchmark Score which could be used to measure progress against peers and over time. The University had made progress since 2006 on all 5 benchmarks, though some results had not been statistically significant. In most areas it had recovered from a slight decline that had occurred in 2006, to surpass 2004 levels. Benchmark #1 measured Level of Academic Challenge, and the University performed very well against peers. Conversely, its scores for Active and Collaborative Learning were significantly below those of its peer groups, though some progress had been made, especially among senior year students. Perhaps the most positive results of the 2008 survey related to Benchmark #3, Student-Faculty Interaction, where first year and senior year responses had improved significantly over 2006 levels, and the University was considerably outperforming its Canadian peers. Scores for Enriching Educational Experiences lagged behind those of peers and probably reflected to some degree the unique time pressures experienced by the University’s students, especially during first year. Finally the University’s scores for Benchmark #5, Supportive Campus Environment, were troubling. There had been a very small improvement over 2006 scores, but they had not recovered to 2004 levels, and were significantly lower than peers for both first and senior year students.

Professor Matus provided more detailed analysis of the Supportive Campus Environment scores. This benchmark consisted of six different questions which measured how students felt about their campus environment, their social relationships, and whether they received the support they needed to for academic success and coping with non-academic responsibilities. The University’s students reported feeling significantly less supported than students in the rest of Ontario and Canada. Though scores for the quality of their relationships with administrative staff were similar to those of peer groups, scores with respect to relationships with both faculty and other students were significantly lower. Overall, the survey

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data, combined with written comments provided by individual participants, indicated that the University was providing a high quality education, but that it was doing so in an extremely competitive environment.

Professor Matus concluded by noting that there was much in the survey results that should be celebrated. The University was a very large institution, and thus it took significant time and effort to bring about change. However, the value of a tool like NSSE was that it focused efforts and discussions on issues that affected educational quality. To facilitate such discussion, a NSSE blog had been established. In addition, data derived from the oversampling process had recently been provided to the University's divisions for analysis. The divisions would be encouraged actively to share insights and best practices related to the challenges identified by the NSSE results.

Among the matters that arose in discussion were the following. A member suggested that efforts be made to increase activity on the University's campuses outside of the regular workday hours that defined activity in an urban environment with many commuters. A member asked if the federated nature of the University had been factored into the analysis of the data. Professor Matus responded that data from the oversampling process had been provided to divisions at the request of Principals and Deans, and would be used for more detailed analysis. In response to a question about the effect of the University's size and geographic extent on the student experience, it was noted that efforts were being made to communicate more effectively the richness of activities and programs that were available for students on the three campuses. In particular, information was being communicated using tools preferred by students. A member suggested that it would be valuable to assess whether students who cared for dependents were in greater need of student aid. A member noted that students reported increased interaction with faculty members, but that the interaction was of lower quality. He advised surveying faculty members to determine whether large class sizes made it difficult to provide high quality interaction. Another member advised making full use of the other significant sources of data, beyond the NSSE results, on the student experience. There was also enormous expertise across the three campuses that needed to be shared and taken into consideration in order to develop a composite picture of student engagement.

**4. Sustainability Office: Annual Report, 2008-2009**

The Chair stated that this was the first year that the Board had received for information the Annual Report of the Sustainability Office, in keeping with its responsibility for matters that directly concerned the quality of student and campus life. She introduced Dr. Beth Savan, the Director of the Office who provided the Board with a presentation on the highlights of the Report.

Dr. Savan noted that she was Sustainability Director for the St. George Campus, but that the Annual Report and her presentation would cover all three of the University's campuses. Though each was unique, all three campuses were working together towards the common mission of creating a culture of sustainability at the University that would be reflected in its functions and operations. In the broadest sense of the term, sustainability referred to the ability of a system or a community to maintain itself over time. Sustainable communities met economic, social and environmental needs for the short- and long-term, which required the balancing of both present expectations and future needs.

The Sustainability Report highlighted initiatives that reduced the environmental impact and improved the financial sustainability of University operations; demonstrated a strong commitment to a student engagement through coursework, research, and volunteer and internship opportunities; and, supported the University's public image in a climate of growing environmental concern. Recent initiatives intended to reduce environmental impacts had included retrofitted vending machines, transit passes and carpool

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### 4. Sustainability Office: Annual Report, 2008-2009 (cont'd)

incentives, as well as more efficient use of laboratory fume hoods. A number of initiatives in 2008 had generated revenue and avoided costs by leveraging internal funds into external contributions to projects, reducing operational costs, and providing student internship funding. Grants from agencies and foundations had totaled \$330,000, and internship subsidies provided by EcoCanada and Natural Resources Canada had helped fund five contract staff.

Beyond the support of the University and outside funders, there were a number of internal and external partnerships that also contributed to sustainability initiatives at the University. Across the three campuses, the Sustainability Offices had engaged many community members in courses, conferences, lectures and other sustainability issues. These had included: sixty work study students; eleven part-time project and summer student staff; twelve independent coursework students; twenty-five students through classes; fifty-seven students as Rewire Project coordinators; over 3,500 students through programs and events; and, a significant number of volunteers, staff and faculty. For the year ahead, the Sustainability Board had identified the following priorities: the creation of a set of overarching sustainability objectives; the continuation of work on the development of funding mechanisms and partnerships to support the initiatives of each campus; the continuation of work on the University's Environmental Policy and its associated procedures; and, finally, despite challenging economic times, the continuation of dedicated efforts toward creating a culture of sustainability, through energy and resource planning, and the implementation of initiatives to reduce operational costs.

Ms Sisam noted that the Sustainability Office, since its establishment in 2004, had involved over 4,000 students in its activities, and she congratulated Dr. Savan and all members of the Office for this outstanding level of student engagement.

### 5. Compulsory Non-Academic Incidental Fees: Annual Report and Analysis: 2008-2009

The Chair noted that the University Affairs Board was responsible for the approval of non-academic incidental fees. In order to provide context for this approval process, the administration provided an annual report for information on the full set of fees charged across the University's three campuses. Professor Matus added that the Report was an inventory both of the compulsory non-academic incidental fees approved by the Board and collected by the University as well as similar fees charged by the Federated Universities.

### 6. Recognized Campus Groups, 2008-09: Report #1

Professor Matus stated that this was the first of two such reports made to the Board each year as required by the *Policy on the Recognition of Campus Groups*. The Report listed the names of the 351 campus groups that had met the requirements for recognition to date. No groups had either been denied recognition or had their recognition withdrawn.

Ms Fromowitz noted that the Board had, at a meeting the previous year, expressed an interest in learning more about the broader spectrum of clubs and groups on campus beyond those that had received official recognition. In response, her office had prepared a presentation intended to highlight some of these groups, and to give a sense of the breadth of student engagement that they fostered. Mr. Ian Simmie, Program Coordinator for Student Life Programs informed the Board that, beyond the recognized campus groups, extra- and co-curricular activities also occurred in a multitude of campus organizations. These included: student societies, college and faculty student governments, residence councils, and campus media; course unions, academic societies and Departmental Student Associations (DSAs);

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### 6. Recognized Campus Groups, 2008-09: Report #1 (cont'd)

College and Faculty Student Clubs; Hart House Clubs and Committees; as well as athletic groups, clubs and teams. Many of these organizations were profiled on the Ulife website of the Office of the Vice-Provost, Students which was organized to allow students to find groups that matched their interests.

The recent NSSE Survey had indicated that levels of participation in co-curricular activities were increasing, but still lagged levels at Canadian peer institutions. Areas that saw high levels of participation included ethnic and cultural groups, intramural sports, and academic related groups. One of the key goals of student engagement beyond the classroom was to allow students to develop civic skills that would serve them well in their post-University lives. Research indicated that involvement in extra- and co-curricular activities positively affected students in three broad areas: academic and community engagement, civic responsibility, and life skills. Some student groups were making direct connections between their academic classroom learning and their extra-curricular activities, and those that offered leadership and collaborative experiences seemed to have a particularly valuable developmental impact. Mr. Simmie reported that, to this end, a leadership program pilot project had recently been developed for implementation at the Faculty of Applied Science and Engineering (APSE) as well as New College.

Among the matters that arose in discussion and questions were the following. A member asked whether there were incentives for groups on the list that appeared to be very similar to collaborate in their activities. Mr. Delaney noted that groups with similar names often differed significantly in their activities, and that freedom of association was a principle that underlay the recognition process. In response to a question, Mr. Delaney clarified that course unions were granted recognition by parent student societies and implicitly by academic departments. In response to a member's question, Mr. Simmie noted that the leadership pilot project would make use of NSSE oversampling data collected from APSE and New College students regarding the types of activities in which they participated, and their reasons for doing so. A member noted that UTSC was planning to provide students with a co-curricular transcript or record that would document their participation in activities outside the classroom. A member reported that in his experience some executive members of student groups were not adequately engaged, to the displeasure of fee-paying members. Conflict was a problem within such groups, as well as between groups with similar names and purposes. He advised that programs to assist student groups with conflict resolution would be valuable. Dr. Cowin noted that the annual Toolkit Conference provided such conflict resolution training and that perhaps greater participation was needed. A member advised that student engagement should not be confused with social interaction and leadership development. Efforts to enhance engagement required an understanding of the common issues that currently ignited student interest in the educational experience.

### 7. Report of the Senior Assessor

- (a) *Accessibility of Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA): University of Toronto Accessibility Plan, 2008-09*

Professor Matus provided the Board with a summary of the highlights of the *Accessibility of Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA): University of Toronto Accessibility Plan, 2008-09*, in particular with respect to student services on the University's three campuses. The University prepared its annual plan in keeping with the guidelines specified by the AODA. Accessibility plans were intended both to address existing barriers to people with disabilities and to prevent the establishment of new barriers. Responsibility for the plan fell within the portfolio of the Vice President, Human Resources and Equity, the staff complement of which included a full-time Employment Equity Officer and an AODA Advisor.

**REPORT NUMBER 150 OF THE UNIVERSITY AFFAIRS BOARD – February 3, 2009****7. Report of the Senior Assessor (cont'd)**

- (a) *Accessibility of Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA): University of Toronto Accessibility Plan, 2008-09 (cont'd)*

A highly inclusive and representative AODA Accessibility Planning Committee guided the planning process, and members included students, staff, faculty, and alumni.

The AODA report presented progress during 2007-08 within four broad categories: the Built Environment, Pedagogy, Student Life, and Mental Health, and provided updates on planned and additional initiatives which had been completed or were ongoing during that year. New initiatives and goals for 2008-2009 were presented within the same four categories. The only AODA initiatives that received targeted funding from the Provincial Government were the offices at the St. George, UTM, and UTSC campuses that addressed the accessibility needs of students. In 2007-08 these offices had received \$1.4 million of government funding, but had cost \$2.7 million to operate. The balance had been funded as part of the University's ongoing operations, as had all other AODA initiatives. Professor Matus concluded by noting that additional changes to the legislation beginning in 2010 include the creation of standards for customer service, information and communication, the built environment, transportation, and employment. These standards would impact the University of Toronto in unique ways.

- (b) 245 College Street Student Residence Proposal

Professor Matus reported for information that the Business Board had, at its December 15, 2008 meeting, approved a real estate transaction to lease property at 245 College Street to a third party developer who intended to use the property to construct a student residence. The University currently owned the land at 245 College Street, which had previously been leased to the University of Toronto Press. Knightstone Capital had acquired the adjacent site at 247 College Street in January 2007. The developer was in a position to proceed independently to build a student residence on its own site. However, if the two sites were combined, a larger residence with 1,250 beds could be constructed, providing a significant increase in student housing supply in the area. For financial reasons, the University had chosen not to enter into a partnership agreement, but instead had received a proposal for a land/lease relationship.

Under the proposal the University would lease the land to the developer for 99 years, and would receive an annual fee of approximately \$350,000, escalating with the consumer price index over time. This revenue would be directed to Student Life programs and services, and would thus be of direct benefit to students. The developer would build and operate a student residence on the consolidated properties, with a restriction that the use of the site be limited only to this purpose. The residence would not provide off-campus housing exclusively to University of Toronto students, but rather to any local students including those from the Ontario College of Art and Design and Ryerson University. As an independent residence, it would not bear the University's name. The University would promote the residence in the same manner that it promoted other non-affiliated student housing located in the neighborhood, such as Campus Co-op and Tartu College.

In addition, the University would have no obligation to fill the residence and no ongoing financial liability. The developer was, however, committed to working with the University to ensure a quality experience for students. This included entering into a service level agreement that would stipulate expectations of both parties, outline the parameters of the ongoing relationships between the parties, and set out the basic operating standards for the residence. As well, the University would assist and advise the developer in establishing residence life policies and procedures.

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Professor Matus stated that high quality off-campus housing in close proximity to the University was of considerable interest to the University, especially when taking into account the directions suggested in the *Towards 2030* strategic planning exercise. These directions proposed that the University should aim to increase its proportion of undergraduate students from other provinces, as well as graduate students and international students, while slightly decreasing the numbers of undergraduate students on the St. George campus. There would be a need not only for more housing, but also different kinds of housing to suit the needs of this evolving student population. Since there were no immediate plans for the University itself to build more student residences, the 245 College Street proposal represented an attractive opportunity for the University to facilitate a major expansion of quality student housing in close proximity to the downtown campus.

A year previously, the Assistant Vice President, Student Life had conducted a review of centrally-operated student housing on the St. George campus. As part of that review, the committee had examined demand and had concluded that, as all on-campus residences were fully occupied, some with waiting lists, there was unmet demand for student housing on the St. George campus. Further, the Housing Office reported that non-affiliated residences in the immediate vicinity were often operating at capacity. These residences provided about 2,000 spaces for the University's students, who comprised 50-80% of their occupants. Either by necessity or choice, the University's students occupied a significant number of rental beds available in the immediate vicinity. These privately operated residences included Campus Commons, Campus Co-op, New Horizons, the Primrose Hotel, St. Vladimir's Institute, Tartu College, and The Residence. They were independent facilities and rarely offered the supports available in on-campus residences. In addition, the University had little or no influence on the quality of student housing or the standards and training of the support staff available to students at these residences.

Due diligence concerning student life issues had been carried out with respect to the proposed developer of the 245 College Street property. The Assistant Vice-President, Student Life; the Chief Real Estate Officer; and the Director of Ancillary Services had met at length with the prospective operators to discuss the needs of students and the standards expected of university housing. They had also visited sites currently managed by the prospective operators, had viewed those facilities and, had met there with university representatives and management staff to confirm that the operation was indeed meeting institutional needs and standards. They had also reviewed the current service level agreements in place at these universities.

Professor Matus concluded by stating that the 245 College Street proposal would have no adverse impact on demand for existing University of Toronto residences. Further, it would support the University's strategy to allocate the current housing inventory towards meeting the enrolment goals of the University and offering on-campus residence space to its most vulnerable students, namely first year students and those new to the Toronto area. It would also compete usefully with some of the sub-standard housing inventory currently available on the off-campus market. The University had been extremely cautious in its review of this opportunity given its need to be accountable for the quality of the student experience.

**(c) Council on Student Services (COSS) Process**

Professor Matus reported that the 2008-09 COSS process was underway in anticipation of the consideration of the operating plans for student services on the St. George Campus that would occur at the March 17, 2008 meeting of the University Affairs Board.



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**8. Date of the Next Meeting**

The Chair informed members that the next regular meeting of the Board was scheduled for Tuesday, March 17, 2009 at 4:30 p.m.

**9. Other Business**

There was no other business.

The meeting adjourned at 6:20 p.m.

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Secretary

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Chair

February 20, 2009