

# CONVOCATION ADVISORY REVIEW COMMITTEE

## TERMS OF REFERENCE

March 29, 2018

Convocation remains one of the largest, most important and inclusive celebratory events held at the University of Toronto involving all academic divisions and a number of administrative offices. The reach of this event extends beyond the physical campus with the live world-wide webcast capturing a global audience.

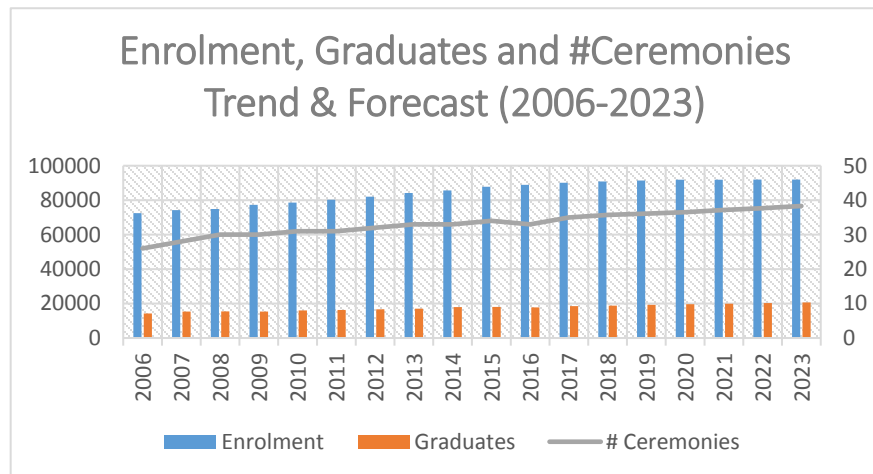
### Background

In the 2016-17 academic year, there were 35 ceremonies: 27 in June spanning across 13 days, and 8 in November over 4 days. We now graduate over 18,000 students annually and, of these, approximately 15,000 attend their convocation ceremonies with their over 37,000 guests.

Our current model focuses attention on individual students with each graduand being greeted by the Chancellor and the President (or another presiding officer acting for either of them) and receiving their diploma at the ceremony. This is a rare and unique model for a university of this size.

### Context

As the capacity of Convocation Hall is approximately 1,700 people, attendance at many ceremonies has now reached that capacity. Steady enrolment expansion at the Mississauga campus and the Scarborough campus, in graduate studies, and in professional programs, has resulted in growth in our graduating classes. Enrolment has increased nearly 10.7% over the last 5 years (2011/12 to 16/17). The increase translates to an 8.9% increase in the size of the graduating classes. For more context, this is a 22.6% increase in enrolment and 24.7% increase in the number of graduates over the 10-year period (2006/07 to 16/17) since the last Convocation Review (more about the Review below). The forecast of the number of graduates and the number of ceremonies needed over the next five years, based on the enrolment projections provided by the Planning and Budget Office (below), indicates a continuing upward growth.



Source: Planning & Budget Office and Office of Convocation

Currently, each graduand receives two guest tickets. Frequently, graduands request additional tickets in the event that they are available. As graduating class sizes increase, it is likely that the availability of extra tickets beyond two guest tickets per graduand may diminish and the option of extra tickets may therefore have to be eliminated.

Beginning in 2008, the capacity limit has been accommodated by splitting the ceremonies within the same Faculty or campus by departments, requiring large units such as the Faculty of Applied Science and Engineering (FASE), Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), Woodsworth College, University of Toronto Mississauga (UTM) and University of Toronto Scarborough (UTSC) to hold multiple ceremonies, with some occurring over multiple days. In addition, and for the first time, the spring 2018 season will have evening ceremonies almost daily in order to allow for three ceremonies a day rather than two. This will have significant logistical implications, as well as potential spillovers that affect other aspects of the normal business of the university. Also, for the first time, there will be more triple ceremony days than double ceremony days.

In 2005, in light of the impact of growing enrolment at that time, the first Committee to Review Convocation was established. In December 2006, the Committee delivered a Report containing the results of broad internal consultations and an alumni survey, and recommendations for next steps. The review emphasized that Convocation was a meaningful and important milestone in the continuum of the student experience, and recommended that Convocation Hall continue to be the primary venue for the ceremony. Since 2006, numerous improvements to Convocation and services for graduating students have been implemented arising from the Report and the University's commitment to enhancing the convocation experience for our students.

Some examples of the changes are as follows:

- The Opening Statement, which begins a convocation ceremony, has been updated to be more inclusive, to be respectful of diversity, and to recognize the traditional native lands upon which the University is built.
- The number of ceremonies increased from 22 in 2007 to 27 in 2017 to accommodate enrolment growth and the demand for guest tickets.
- Undergraduate and graduate convocation ceremonies have been combined, where appropriate, to reinforce the sense of a division's academic community.
- The academic regalia rental service has been radically improved to offer clean, fresh regalia to all students, faculty & staff within a professional and well-organized operation. Additionally, all doctoral candidates are provided with doctoral regalia.
- A comprehensive and easy-to-navigate online service for students was launched in 2009 to streamline gown rental, to RSVP, to order guest tickets, and to request accommodations for guests (and students).
- There were upgrades in 2015 to add an E-ticket functionality.

Another major enhancement to the convocation experience was the introduction in Spring 2011 of Convocation Plaza, a space of celebration situated adjacent to the Convocation Hall. Graduates, family and friends can assemble before or after their convocation ceremonies under a marquee that offers numerous services, to enjoy refreshments, take photographs and connect with fellow graduates, faculty and staff from their division, and be welcomed into the Alumni Community. It also serves as a live-

stream venue that makes the convocation ceremony more accessible to family and friends of graduands who could not be in the Hall due to ticket limits.

Despite these many positive initiatives, the overall capacity issue remains. In addition, there is also a need to review the elements of the ceremony itself with a goal to maintaining the University's traditions but at the same time adapt to changing needs.

### **Action**

In light of the above, the President and the Chair of the Governing Council have struck an advisory review committee, to be co-chaired by the Secretary of the Governing Council and the Assistant Vice-President, Office of the President & Chief of Protocol, that will make recommendations to the President and the Chair of the Governing Council.

### **Mandate**

The Convocation Advisory Review Committee's (CARC) general mandate is to:

- Examine the feasibility of the current model taking into account the trend and forecast of the number of ceremonies, number of dates in Spring and Fall convocation periods and limited venue capacity,
- Examine and recommend possible venue alternatives and possible changes in the delivery of ceremonies, and
- Make recommendations that will allow the University to continue to provide an outstandingly positive, memorable experience for graduands and their families.

Within these general terms and without limiting the scope of the review, the CARC is asked to examine and make recommendations on issues under two broad themes of Venue and Ceremony.

### **Venue**

On the theme of venue, the CARC will examine the current use of Convocation Hall and explore the use of other venues and evaluate the implications of each option. Factors to be considered will include: availability and feasibility of advanced booking, accessibility services, capacity and resulting estimated number of ceremonies and ticket availability, parking, access, transportation to and from campus where divisional Convocation-related events are held, financial implications such as venue rental fee, AV costs and cancellation penalties, and branding strategies.

### **Ceremony**

With respect to the ceremony, the CARC will carefully consider elements of the ceremony including, but not limited to: order of ceremony, length of speeches, participation guidelines (current graduates, past graduates), how and when the diploma should be presented, appropriate inclusion of Indigenous Culture, and accessibility matters. The CARC will also consult external sources including peer academic institutions.

## **Process**

It is expected that the work of the CARC will be informed by extensive consultations with the University community. This will include one-on-one meetings with Principals and Deans, outreach to divisional faculty and staff with involvement in convocation, the 2018 spring and fall graduating class, and the alumni community.

Outreach to graduating students and alumni will involve surveys. Key questions will focus on how well the University met their expectations with regard to their convocation experience with a focus on the themes of venue and ceremony, and will also seek open-ended feedback. The survey results will then be cross referenced with the feedback received through other consultations and from input from members of CARC, and used to achieve a coherent understanding of the student experience of Convocation.

## **Schedule**

The CARC will provide to the President and the Chair an Interim Report in December 2018 and a Final Report in early 2019.

Recommendations on various matters may ultimately require governance approval. For example, decisions regarding changes to convocation procedures rest with the Ceremonials Committee of the Academic Board.

To the extent possible, the CARC should outline the resource implications of its proposed recommendations and propose timelines for implementation should its recommendations be accepted.

## **Membership of the Committee**

### **Co-Chairs:**

Sheree Drummond (Secretary of the Governing Council)

Bryn MacPherson (Assistant Vice-President, Office of the President & Chief of Protocol)

### **Members:**

1. Steve Bailey, Director (Office of Academic & Campus Events)
2. Althea Blackburn-Evans (Interim Executive Director, Communications Partnerships, University of Toronto Communications)
3. Joseph Desloges (Professor and Principal, Woodsworth College)
4. Barbara Dick (Assistant Vice-President, Alumni Relations, Division of University Advancement)
5. Jonathan Hamilton-Diabo (Director, Indigenous Initiatives)
6. Janet Hunter (Faculty Registrar & Director, Enrolment Services, Faculty of Medicine)
7. Brenda Ichikawa (Director, University Events & Assistant to the Chancellor)
8. Richard Levin (University Registrar)
9. Don MacMillan (Faculty Registrar, Faculty of Applied Science & Engineering)
10. Don McLean (Professor and Dean, Faculty of Music)
11. Mark Overton (Dean of Student Affairs, University of Toronto Mississauga)
12. Carolyn Peralta (Alumna (HBA 2015, MA 2017))

13. Mary Pugh (Professor and Acting Vice-Dean, Undergraduate & International, Faculty of Arts & Science)
14. Ben Poynton (Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) Officer, Office of the Vice-Provost, Students)
15. Silvia Rosatone (Director, Office of Convocation)
16. Fiorella Sabadin (Associate Registrar & Director of Student Services, University of Toronto Scarborough)
17. Elizabeth Smyth (Professor and Vice-Dean, Programs, School of Graduate Studies)
18. Sandy Welsh (Professor and Vice-Provost, Students)
19. Joseph Wong (Professor and Associate Vice-President & Vice-Provost, International Student Experience)

**Secretary:**

Ayako Ariga (Special Projects Officer, Office of the Governing Council)