

## **UNIVERSITY AFFAIRS BOARD, Vice-Provost, Students' Report # 2 (2003-04)**

**Controversial Speakers/Events** - Arising from a need to address various aspects of planning for an upcoming event hosted by the Students' Administrative Council (SAC), I am working with Student Affairs and SAC to develop a protocol for potentially controversial activities and events which may attract protests. The objective is ensuring that events occur in a manner which protects freedom of speech while maintaining safety and security on campus.

**Student Survey** - I am currently working with SAC, APUS and the GSU towards the provision of an on-line survey on services and facilities available to students, compulsory non-academic incidental fees for facilities, and other related issues. SAC and the GSU have indicated that they would like to participate in the project. APUS will advise us about their participation shortly. The student governments participating will have the opportunity to investigate issues of concern to them.

In the near future, I expect to receive the results of a recent survey of prospective U of T students using the same technology anticipated to be used for the survey on services and facilities available to students.

**Student Portal** - Jim Delaney from Student Affairs is assisting me in investigating the development of a new student Internet portal for the University of Toronto. In short, the U of T student portal would be the primary web access point for students. The pages for students within the University's main home page collection would be replaced with a purpose designed and developed web site and access point for all U of T students. In general terms, the student portal would consist of web pages and services which will act as the starting point for using Internet-based services. As time goes on, it is hoped that the portal will provide a fully interactive environment and a single authentication system for access to various Internet based services available to students within the University.

**OSAP Reform** - After over a year of meetings of the OSAP Reform Working Group, student leaders and the administration sent a joint report to the Government reflecting a consensus that the Ontario Student Assistance Program is not meeting student needs. The report, which includes cost-of-living comparisons for students in four Ontario cities, demonstrates that costs for students in Toronto are much higher. It concludes that what OSAP provides is well below what students must actually pay. The report recommends a review of the allowances used in the program and eligibility criteria, such as the amounts that parents are expected to contribute. The full report can be found on our website at [www.osapreform.utoronto.ca](http://www.osapreform.utoronto.ca)

The report was submitted in September 2003, before the provincial election. It received some good publicity. With a government in transition, it is difficult to predict what effect it might have, but the new Premier promised a review of student aid during his election campaign. We hope that our report will give him a basis for engaging in that review, and some excellent suggestions for change.

**New Women Graduate Students** - On Wednesday, October 22, 2003 the Status of Women office held a Symposium for New Women Graduate Students. This was co-

sponsored by my office, Student Affairs and the School of Graduate Studies. All women students new to a graduate program this fall at the University of Toronto were invited to attend an afternoon of information and connection with other women graduate students. Speakers included the Provost, Shirley Neuman, other women faculty and graduate students, who offered suggestions and advice on being successful in graduate school.

**Ontario Universities Fair, September 25-27, 2003** - Held at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre, the Ontario Universities Fair provides high school students and their families the opportunity to meet with faculty, staff and students from all three campuses to learn about first entry programs. The University of Toronto distributed 34,000 viewbooks and made 24 forty-five minute overview presentations to approximately 10,000 people over the 3-day event. Attendance at this year's fair was down from last year due to the overlap with Rosh Hashanah, and also, because many graduating high school students came last year, then chose to defer university attendance for a year.

**University of Toronto Discovery Day - St. George Campus** - Saturday, October 4, 2003. Discovery Day is designed to provide interested students an opportunity to meet faculty, staff and students in both first and second entry programs. The three main components of the day were: program and service information tents around Kings College Circle, information sessions, and campus and college tours. Another key objective of the day was to make prospective students feel welcome and highlight the learning environment. Attendance is hard to gauge as people come and go all day and are often in sessions or on tours in many locations. We estimate 2500 visitors had quality interactions. UTM and UTSC will be holding their Discovery Days on October 19 and November 1, respectively.

**ROSI** - ROSI has just completed a hardware upgrade and additional disk space will be installed in a few weeks. Installation of new replacement software is in process. A noticeable benefit should be experienced by students who go to the front counter of their registrar's office on critical days. In the past, on extremely busy days, the ROSI infrastructure gave priority to transactions coming in from the SWS at the expense of administrative staff who also needed to use ROSI. Staff at the front desks could not answer students' queries because, for them, the system was extremely slow. Staff could not print off a single invoice or a single transcript. We hope that, with the combination of new hardware, software, and with the revised registrarial business processes, there will be enough capacity to allow everyone to do their work.

Students who do their business on the SWS should also experience faster response time. The test of this will be on the first day back at the University in January 2004.

**Students for Barrier-free Access** are hosting a conference, "Breaking Down Barriers 2003", on November 1. This is the first student-run disability issues conference at the University of Toronto. It is co-sponsored by the Graduate Students' Union, the Students' Administrative Council, the Vice-President, Institutional Relations and my office. The conference will educate participants on issues facing students with disabilities and provide a survival guide to post-secondary education. The organizers hope to open and influence the debate on barriers to education by engaging the student perspective. For those interested in attending, early registration is encouraged. Registration forms are available on-line at <http://individual.utoronto.ca/sfba>.