



University Affairs Board 2004-05 Vice-Provost, Students' Report #5

As part of the University's commitment in Stepping UP to enhance the student experience, we are currently developing a new on-line student communications and community service. Communication with our students and building community among our students are key priorities for the University.

Accordingly, we are developing a new web-based student portal which will be designed to provide direct access, in a functionally organized and student-centered fashion (rather than according to the organizational structure of the University), to the many on-line resources and services available to students (such as the libraries, ROSI, student affairs and services and resources, academic information and resources, etc.).

The University is perceived by many to be a large and complicated place for students. Finding information and advice about programs of study and knowing where to get information about the services available to students – from applying for financial assistance or locating health services to engaging in a community project or locating a good place for lunch – is sometimes, perhaps often, difficult. The student portal aims to:

- Provide a mechanism for the University to communicate with students and to provide an environment in which students can communicate with each other, with faculty and with staff.
- Create an environment in which community will develop among all U of T students.
- Make it easier to access information and manage programs of study online.
- Access the electronic academic and non-academic resources of the University anywhere, anytime.
- Perform the administrative functions associated attending the University in a well-defined and uncomplicated manner.
- Provide real-time, accurate and consistent information about how to do campus business online.
- Better inform students about what's going on around the campus.

The service is being built initially to meet the needs of students. These needs have now been verified through a survey which included the participation of over 6,000 students on all three campuses. As we now begin development of the portal, the project will involve the collaboration of many students and staff across the University.

The working group which has been developing the initial concepts and specifications for the student portal has adopted a simple theme: **The portal is a place for students to get stuff, find stuff and do stuff.** In many ways, the portal can be conceived as an on-line student centre which has the potential to be as significant in the lives of students as Hart House, our athletics and recreation facilities, our student services, our campus organizations, and the many nodes of student activity space already available. Moreover, because the portal will relate to both the academic and the co-curricular lives of students, it has the potential to be a profoundly important support at the heart of the student experience at the University of Toronto.

For more information about the student portal project, contact Jim Delaney, Assistant Director, Student Affairs, (at 416-978-4027 or <jim.delaney@utoronto.ca>) or Marden Paul, Director, Strategic Computing (at 416-946-0440 or <marden.paul@utoronto.ca>).

A story about the development of the student portal is available on-line at <<http://www.stepsingup.utoronto.ca/bin/001099.asp>>.