



# University of Toronto

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OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT AND PROVOST

## MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the University Affairs Board

From: Vivek Goel, Vice-President & Provost

Date: September 19, 2006

Re: Administrative Response to the Final Report of the Committee to Review Student Activity Space

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Enhancing the student experience and student learning, both inside and outside of the classroom, depends upon the provision of outstanding facilities, services and student spaces. Institutions which demonstrate effective educational practices have well developed learning environments which augment and help to harmonize efforts in supporting student success.

At the University of Toronto's St. George Campus, a number of exceptional medium and large nodes of student activity space already exist (e.g., Hart House, International Student Centre, the Sussex Club House). In addition, many small nodes (e.g., lounges) and niches exist all over the campus. Each of these nodes, in its own way, provides profound and important opportunities for students to learn and engage in the out of classroom experience of the University.

In response to questions with respect to a need for new student activity space on the St. George Campus, a committee to review student activity space was established in the summer of 2005. The committee was chaired by David Farrar, Deputy Provost and Vice-Provost, Students and included a broad cross-section of University community members.

The terms of reference of the committee were as follows:

- 1) To review and make recommendations with respect to the University's current approach to student activity space on the St. George Campus and, specifically, the extent to which the multi-nodal approach to student activity space continues to serve the needs of students on the campus.
- 2) To articulate the extent to which there is a current need for an additional large node of student activity space on the St. George Campus.
- 3) To articulate the current needs with respect to the expansion of student activity space and to recommend the means by which the University might address these needs.
- 4) To evaluate alternative ways of meeting the needs articulated including, but not limited to, the reallocation of existing space, the conversion of existing space, and the construction or acquisition of new space.

- 5) To develop an outline of a financial plan, consistent with existing policy, to meet any new capital and operating costs associated with any new initiatives recommended by the committee.
- 6) To assess the current use and allocation of student activity space.

The Committee has now completed its work and has provided the attached final report.

I am very grateful to members of the Committee and other community members that contributed to its work.

The report documents important principles associated with the University's approach to the provision of student activity space. It also includes recommendations concerning the development of a new large node of space and other spaces on the St. George Campus, and provides suggestions for business process enhancements to facilitate the use of space by campus organizations.

### **Approach to Student Activity Space (Recommendations 1 and 2)**

The Committee recommended that the University reaffirm the multi-nodal approach to student activity space. Not only is this appropriate, it is practical and reflects a diversity of needs and philosophies of supporting student activity. Hart House and other medium and large nodes will continue to serve important student needs. However, it would be a mistake to make the assumption that any single node, whatever the size, or even any single philosophy of service delivery, might reasonably meet the needs of tens of thousands of students distributed across an area that reaches across several kilometers. I accept the Committee's recommendation and will establish the recommended student activity space network as the body responsible for advancing the multi-nodal approach and for addressing campus-wide student activity space issues as they emerge. Rather than establish a new separate body, I have asked the Director, Student Affairs, Susan Addario, to consider a way to connect this effort to the work of the Committee to Allocate Student Activity Space with appropriate revisions to its terms of reference and membership (without diminishing the important role of students in the allocation of offices to campus organizations).

### **The Need for an Additional Large Node (Recommendation 3)**

The Committee has suggested the development of a new large node of student activity space. I believe it is essential that this recommendation receive quick attention since it would potentially involve considerable financial and land resources. Accordingly, I will establish an appropriately representative project planning committee, to be chaired by Elizabeth Sisam, Assistant Vice-President, Campus and Facilities Planning. We will endeavour to present the membership of the committee to the Planning and Budget Committee of Governing Council in the second cycle this fall.

### **Current Needs With Respect to the Expansion of Student Activity Space (Recommendations 4 to 11)**

Eight recommendations relate to various space needs associated with campus activity. I would note that some of these recommendations may be accommodated in the establishment of a new major node of student activity space. Since many of these recommendations require specific planning as part of larger projects, I have asked Elizabeth Sisam to advance these recommendations through future project planning efforts.

In addition, various initiatives supported under Student Enhancement Fund will result in the creation of small nodes of activity space, additional meeting and workshop spaces, and casual lounge spaces (recommendations 4, 6, and 7). I will ask Catherine Riggall, Vice President, Business Affairs to consider the Committee's recommendation concerning additional affordable food services (recommendation 5). The Co-Curricular Working Group of the Arts Council will be asked to address the development of additional rehearsal space for performing arts groups (recommendation 10).

### **Financing (Recommendations 12 to 15)**

Three recommendations in this area address various aspects of the planning process and will be taken up in the normal course of the work of project planning committees. Recommendation 13 suggests that the University commit fifty cents for each dollar raised through the establishment of student levies sponsored by the representative student governments. I will endeavor to secure a source of funding for such a match.

### **Current Use and Allocation of Student Activity Space (Recommendations 16 to 19)**

The Committee also made several recommendations that would assist campus organizations in accessing and making use of campus spaces for activities. An interactive campus map (recommendation 16) is already in development. I have asked the Director, Strategic Computing, Marden Paul, to incorporate the suggestions made by the Committee. I have asked Elizabeth Sisam to work with her colleagues in the Office of Space Management to consider the development of an on-line room reservation system and to consider revisions to the room booking rules that will further facilitate activities of campus groups (recommendations 17 and 19). I have asked the Associate Director and Senior Policy Adviser, Student Affairs, Jim Delaney to consider revisions to the group recognition process in order to allow two contact people for each group (recommendation 18) and to enhance the recognition process generally.

Once again, I would like to thank members of the Committee for their thoughtful and thorough work. The Committee has articulated a set of important principles for a new era of student activity space development and expansion.