

**FOR INFORMATION****PUBLIC****OPEN SESSION****TO:** University Affairs Board**SPONSOR:** Scott Mabury, Vice President, University Operations  
**CONTACT INFO:****PRESENTER:** Anne Macdonald, AVP, Spaces & Experiences  
**CONTACT INFO:** [anne.macdonald@utoronto.ca](mailto:anne.macdonald@utoronto.ca)**DATE:** May 12, 2025 for May 21, 2025**AGENDA ITEM:** 8**ITEM IDENTIFICATION:**

Annual Report on the *Code of Conduct for Trademark Licensees*

**JURISDICTIONAL INFORMATION:**

The University Affairs Board's areas of responsibility include use of the University of Toronto name. The Board is responsible for policy of a non-academic nature for matters within its areas of responsibility. The *University of Toronto Trademark Licensing Policy* charges the Board with receiving annual reports on the operation of and issues connected with the trademark licensing program.

**GOVERNANCE PATH:****1. University Affairs Board [For Information] (May 21, 2025)****PREVIOUS ACTION TAKEN:**

The Annual Report on Trademark Licensing 2023-24 was received by the Board at its May 29, 2024 meeting.

**HIGHLIGHTS:**

The Trademark Licensing Office spearheaded multiple collaborations this year including another collection with October's Very Own, a new partnership collection with lululemon and a new Black Excellence line. As in previous years, brand collaborations continue to do well, with community members engaging and getting excited about limited edition releases. Other major

activities this year included a continued renovation of the apparels floor at The Bookstore, development of event specific merchandise, the reissue of the Pride and the Lunar New Year collection. Next year, priorities will include strategic planning, further development of pop-up merchandise shops and increasing partnership collaboration opportunities.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:**

None.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

The documentation is presented for information.

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**DOCUMENTATION PROVIDED:**

*2024-25 Annual Report on the Code of Conduct for Trademark Licensees*

# Trademark Licensing **Annual Report** **2024 - 25**

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May 21, 2025



UNIVERSITY OF  
**TORONTO**

**Trademark Licensing**  
Spaces & Experiences

**U OF T**  
**SPACES &**  
**EXPERIENCES**





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# Introduction

Trademark licensing is the act of allowing another entity to reproduce a trademark. However, when looking specifically at branded collegiate merchandise, there is a special power this medium carries in creating and cementing pride for a brand and institution. While most brands have customers, higher education institutions have a community of individuals who feel an immense connection to the institution and look for ways to externally display their affiliation.

Operations on campus have returned to pre-pandemic levels— with in-person learning and campus life restored on all three of U of T campuses. The increased presence of in-person events created a spark of excitement on campus, and that translated directly into a desire for university branded merchandise.

As the world settles into a new era for how people purchase and consume goods, the licensing industry is also seeing a major shift in demand and development and production cycles.

Despite this, the Trademark Licensing Office (TML) was able to work on many projects and events that boosted pride and excitement for the University brand. The fourth OVO x U of T collection hit stores in September with a good level of enthusiasm. Other collaborations included an expanded Pride collection, a successful grand opening of the lululemon shop in the Bookstore in October, a Lunar New Year - Year of the Snake collection, special limited edition Black Excellence line, and a continued partnership with MOTUS.



TML implemented Phase 2 of the Bookstore refresh project to modernize, elevate, and improve the student and campus in-store experience. These collections and cross-promotional activations all work to support passion and pride for the U of T brand and unite the campus community.

The University of Toronto believes in the positive power of merchandise. This report shines a spotlight on the work TML does to promote the U of T brand, build a sense of pride and community on the university's campuses and support ethical procurement that is central to the beliefs of the institution.



# **1 | Trademark Licensing Overview**

# What is Trademark Licensing?

Trademark licensing is the process by which a trademark owner allows a third party, the licensee, to use registered trademarks on merchandise under a license agreement. Each year, many products are manufactured that bear the University of Toronto name and official marks. These include items sold at the University of Toronto Bookstore, team uniforms and promotional items ordered internally by students, faculty, and staff. In 2000, the University made a commitment to ensure that these products were produced in a manner consistent with its mission and values by passing the Trademark Licensing Policy and developing the Code of Conduct. TML is a self-funded unit within the Marketing & Communications team at Spaces & Experiences that oversees the production of U of T branded merchandise and ensures compliance to University policies.

The University contracts with a third-party licensing agent, Collegiate Licensing Company (CLC), to carry out the administrative work associated with licensing suppliers, including contracts and collecting manufacturing information. CLC also provides advice on best practices in the collegiate licensing industry.

Over the years, the work of the Trademark Licensing Office has established the University of Toronto as a leader in collegiate licensing in Canada. The office continually revisits all elements of the program to ensure it is meeting industry standards and establishing the University as a strong brand throughout the city and the world. TML ensures the University and its departments engage in ethical procurement of merchandise with vetted and approved vendors monitored through the Workers Rights Consortium (WRC) and Fair Labour Association (FLA). These organizations work to conduct factory assessments on behalf of collegiate apparel industry to advocate positive systemic change in the global supply chain. U of T Trademark Licensing is a proud and longtime supporting member of both organizations.



TML also enriches campus life and the student experience by fostering a sense of affinity and pride for U of T and the city. TML strives to support a merchandise program which is a symbol of the University's great and lasting impact on its community.

Spaces & Experiences (S&E) serves the student, faculty and staff at the St. George campus by enriching and improving life outside of the classroom. TML is part of the broader S&E Marketing and Communications team and has evolved to support and engage multiple business units such as Food Services, Student Residences, University Family Housing and Real Estate Partnerships by integrating branded merchandise into their respective marketing plans and outreach initiatives. It continues to look for new and innovative ways to offer functional and meaningful solutions to the campus through each respective portfolio.

S&E Marketing and Communications also provides creative and design resources for TML such as producing digital content to amplify capsule collection content, highlight grass-root student-led brand initiatives and visual assets are consistent with divisional and institutional identity guidelines and best practices.

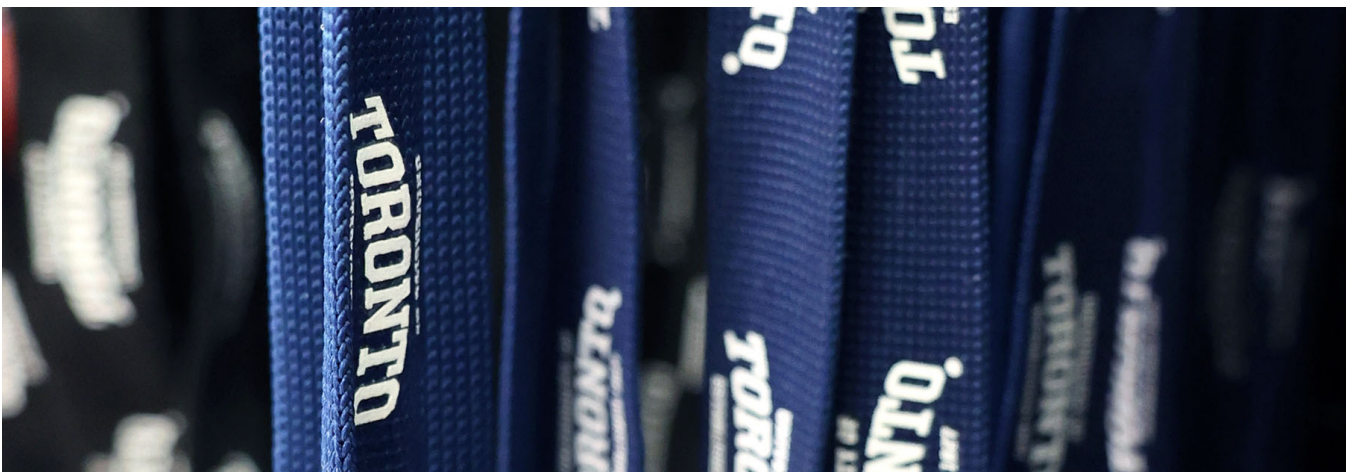


# The daily work of the department includes:

- Ensuring that suppliers of University of Toronto merchandise are licensed and have signed and abide by the University's Code of Conduct.
- Reviewing and approving artwork for merchandise.
- Working with University departments and student groups to fulfill special requests for merchandise.
- Working to expand and enhance the selection of University of Toronto merchandise available for sale, both in our Bookstore and within off-campus retailers.
- Promoting institutional pride through branded merchandise available at special events.
- Registering and maintaining official marks on file for the University and following up on improper use of the marks.
- Maintaining good relationships with labour monitoring organizations, who evaluate workplace compliance with university codes of conduct.
- Engaging with licensees when issues are identified.

## Strategic Goals

- 1. Increase desirability and visibility of U of T branded merchandise.**
- 2. Increase financial and human resources to better support the University community.**
- 3. Increase administrative efficiency to ensure consistent, convenient and valuable service to the campus.**



## Bookstore Partnership

The University of Toronto Bookstore is a division of the University of Toronto Press (UTP). Founded in 1901, UTP is Canada's leading academic publisher and one of the largest university presses in North America. The Bookstore, originally named the Students' Book Department, was established by Miss McMicking, a staff member of the University library. Today, the Bookstore is the primary retailer for University of Toronto merchandise and serves tens of thousands of customers each year. The Canadian Booksellers Association has named them Campus Bookseller of the Year five times.

The University of Toronto Bookstore continues to be the University's largest retail partner for branded merchandise. TML works closely with The Bookstore to ensure that a variety of merchandise is available which both upholds the University brand and meets student demand for merchandise that is on trend and reflects school pride.

The Bookstore also operates an in-house garment printing and embroidery shop, which offers on demand custom merchandise that caters to frequent requests from many staff, faculty and student groups. This has allowed TML to respond to the campus community's need for customized garments at lower prices and smaller minimum quantities and has cemented the U of T Bookstore as one of the main suppliers of U of T merchandise to the internal campus community.



## Collegiate Licensing Company (CLC)

For more than ten years, the Trademark Licensing Office has contracted with a licensing agency to handle part of the administrative function of running the program. This includes licensing companies and collecting manufacturing information and royalty reports as well as providing advice on social responsibility issues and trademark licensing best practices. Collegiate Licensing Company (CLC) was successful in their bid with the initial agreement to end April 2025. With this renewal comes positive changes to the administration of the program, namely the ability for licensees to report and pay royalties in Canadian dollars.

In January 2025 a review of the CLC services and contract was completed and a two-year extension was formalized. As such, plans to implement expanded services including the integration of non-retail vendors into the artwork approval portal process will take effect the 2025-26 year. This will improve efficiency in the production timelines for campus clients and provide granular metrics for future service models of the portfolio.

Previously, the CLC system would only accept reports and payments in USD, which resulted in licensees needing to use exchange rates to calculate USD equivalents for their reports. In January 2023, a new system, Direct Licensing Hub (DLH), was launched to ensure all monetary transactions can be reported and paid in Canadian dollars. It has been two years since CLC has migrated all licenses and information on the new system and it continues to provide more streamlined financial reporting of branded merchandise sales and royalties. This system has proven successful in providing efficient processes for the approval and integration of new licensees.



# **2 | Year at a Glance**

# 2024-25 Program Updates

While campus activity returned to a near normal level, Bookstore sales have recovered well but still have not reached pre-pandemic levels. Purchasing behaviours, traffic patterns and volumes have shifted with the new cohort and the TML program and the Bookstore are working to streamline offerings, bring in new and relevant products and brands and refresh branding to ensure future success and increase U of T merchandise sales.

The Trademark Licensing Officer role was added to the portfolio in Summer 2024 to provide additional capacity and increase service to the campus community. The TML officer focuses on the daily approval process of retail and non-retail orders, facilitates branding inquiries, audits approved vendor roster and updates the inventory of standardized marks from all tri-campus divisions and services in preparation for the migration of non-retail operations to the CLC platform for 25-26 fiscal year.

The TML program expanded merchandise offerings to provide custom lines of merchandise that appealed to target demographics. This included the launch of new event focused merchandise for the Mac N' Cheese smackdown run by the S&E Food Services department, and the development of an S&E pop-up shop for special merchandise.

TML continues to promote branded merchandise in many ways, partnering with Food Services Retail and Residential dining, The Bookstore, Student Life and UTC via promotional contests and giveaways. In addition, TML continues to work to procure priority partnership opportunities by featuring University collaborations like lululemon, OVO, Roots and MOTUS. TML will continue to work closely with the Bookstore and other university partners to ensure the success and growth of branded merchandise by taking advantage of new trends, designs and on campus marketing opportunities.





# Industry Updates + Challenges

While the retail sector showed modest positive signs of recovery, a full rebound of the collegiate licensed product market was not fully realized due to continued economic strains, significant inflation and increased interest rates. The impact of the rising cost of living shifted student purchases to more essential items. Overseas online drop-ship retailers, such as Temu and Shein, offering low-budget fast fashion, also competed for students' shrinking discretionary purchasing power. Looming tariffs and trade wars with the U.S. administration threatened consumer confidence and softened sales in an era of uncertainty.

Despite such challenges, TML found new and innovative ways to incorporate merchandise into the various Spaces and Experiences portfolios as the shift from virtual to on campus life continues to evolve.



# **3 | Collaborations & Special Collections**



# U of T x lululemon Grand Opening

The installation of the U of T x lululemon collegiate store-within-store concept at the Bookstore's St. George flagship's location was the marquis project of the year. The September grand opening date featured a VIP exclusive early bird shop, with TML providing an integral role in supporting media communications, providing statement platforms from key stakeholders, establishing cross-promotional opportunities with Food Services vendors, and managing outreach to key student and faculty groups.

The lululemon collegiate concept launched in UBC in 2024 and has since focused their expansion to U.S. universities. U of T is their first return to Canada and is one of their largest installations. The traffic, sales and activity generated on opening day met and exceeded expectations compared to previous collegiate launches.

TML invested in a special limited gift-with-purchase U of T x lululemon cross-body bag for the first 100 customers on opening day. Line-ups wrapped around the Koffler Building and started an hour before opening, lasting well into the afternoon, while robust sales of the co-branded U of T signature and apparel and accessories exemplified the resounding success of the collective efforts of the campaign.





# OVO Collection

Now in its fourth year, OVO x U of T launched its latest collaboration called the Campus Collection. The series featured expanded partnerships with three other institutions Stanford, Yale, Cambridge and the Canadian “Old Four” rival - Western. The photoshoot for the U of T portion of the campaign was set in Knox College featuring Toronto talent Roy Woods, garnering widespread media attention.

TML worked closely with OVO to refine the assortment and establish a back-to-basics collection which brought back the return of the popular varsity jacket from the inaugural launch collection. TML worked with OVO to adjust the release dates from late Summer (2023) to Fall (2024) that optimally aligned with U of T market presence. This strategy along with a curated collection proved to be effective with pre-store line-up not seen since early season drop dates and sell through inventory by season end. In addition, TML invested in specialized merchandise fixtures with OVO x U of T wraps to enhance the institutional brand and in-store experience for students and campus community.





# Lunar New Year

Following a successful Year of the Dragon collection in Winter 2024, TML collaborated with the Bookstore to launch an expanded line for the Year of the Snake in February 2025. The Bookstore's Vice President of Distribution and Retail, Jason Farrell, was invited to open the in-store collection with an auspicious Lion Dance ceremony, one of many that toured the St. George campus. Merchandise was once again featured on specially wrapped Year of the Snake fixtures provided by TML, further enhancing the brand and in-store experience. Efforts to coordinate social media resources between Spaces & Experiences and the Bookstore's marketing & communications teams proved effective with close to sell-out numbers by the end of the Lunar New Year date.





# Pride Merchandise

Trademark Licensing celebrated Pride Month with the 2024 capsule collection launched at the St. George flag raising ceremony on June 4, 2024 at Varsity Stadium. Available at all three campus Bookstore locations and online, the collection featured updated progress stripe designs on hoodies, t-shirts, tank tops, mugs, totes and plush toys. TML supported in-store marketing efforts with elevated displays in the St. George flagship location. All royalty proceeds from the sales of the 2024 Pride collection went to benefit the Equity Ideas Fund for the Faculty of Kinesiology and Physical Education.





# Black Excellence Collection

In 2024, Trademark Licensing worked with its counterparts at Howard University in Washington D.C. to develop a co-branded crewneck fleece. Over 30 University of Toronto Scarborough students and staff wore these with pride during the inaugural Black History Month field trip via the Black Student Engagement office.

Because the 2024 co-branded apparel well received by participants, a student-led grass-roots initiative was proposed to expand the line and offer it to the general public. TML provided full support including design, in-store marketing material, social media promotional content development, and expanded the availability to the tri-campus bookstore locations. The two shirts designed were available for purchase and featured inspirational quotes from Andrea Lewis, Coordinator, UTSC Black Student Engagement.



# **4 | Special Projects + Activations**



# U of T Bookstore Renovation + Refresh

In 2024, the TML program invested heavily in a “renovation refresh” project for the Bookstore’s main retail space to help modernize and update the customer experience. The TML program re-invested royalty revenues back into the student retail experience by re-painting the main level, installing all new flooring in the 7,500 sq ft space and purchasing new fixtures and displays for capsule partnership collections. TML also included in the scope of work labour costs to move existing infrastructure to address the overstock and inventory storage issues that the Bookstore was struggling with.

This year, TML funded Phase 2 of the interior renovation + refresh project for The Bookstore’s main floor (which now houses all of U of T branded merchandise and apparel assortment). An additional mobile merchandiser was purchased to feature and highlight limited edition collections supported through TML initiatives. These units now allow for the installation of interchangeable high impact graphic wraps to promote targeted campaigns where TML strategies are invested.

In lieu of purchasing new hardware and permanent fixtures, TML consulted with Bookstore management and opted to re-veneer existing fixtures in inventory. This environmentally friendly option reduced landfill contributions and was the most economically pragmatic choice. The 20-year-old fluorescent tubes were also replaced with energy efficient LED light fixtures creating a brighter crisp environment that optimally showcased products and branded merchandise, further enhancing the student experience while reducing energy costs and carbon emissions.

Not only do the refresh efforts support the growth and sales of U of T branded merchandise, but the student and campus community will get a retail experience that will excite and engage them. It is a space that reflects the institution, fosters pride and befits the reputation that U of T enjoys in Canada and across the world.



Before



After

# Event Focused Limited Edition Merchandise + S&E Pop Up Shops

S&E's Mac N Cheese Smackdown has quickly established itself as one of the best loved annual campus events. Building on the success of this event series, S&E launched the inaugural Taco Takedown in October 2024, which provided an opportunity for St. George chefs to test their Mexican culinary skills. The campus community responded with sell-out numbers as over 600 students, faculty and staff sampled four team submissions over the lunch hour at Hart House while live authentic Mariachi music entertained guests.

To supplement this activation, TML created an assortment of merchandise and apparel to sell in a Hacienda themed pop-up shop that revolved around four animated Mexican cuisine inspired characters including an avocado, chile, nacho and taco. Themed crewnecks, kitchen towels and the ever-popular enamel pins were available for purchase along with SoYoung x U of T lunch bags. Items were also used for pre-promotional and day-of prizes for Food Services social media content campaigns in efforts to engage participants before and during the event.

The 2025 Mac N Cheese edition also saw an expansion of merchandise assortment with and addition of a premium lined hoodie, character tote bags and expanded assortment of enamel pins.

TML and Food Services followed up on the success of the Taco Takedown and the Mac N Cheese Smackdown with a limited time campaign in the Robarts Food Hall Foodie Finds pop-up concept. Students and the campus community were able to savour the winning dishes and purchase the event branded merchandise at the location for a limited promotional period.



# **5 | Forward Thinking**



# Forward Thinking

Trademark Licensing continues to work on deliverables that weren't realized in 2024 and have developed new initiatives that are planned for the 2025-26 fiscal and academic year.

TML maintains its commitment to supporting U of T student-led brands. No other office in any other Canadian institution holds such a mandate. To ease the administrative burden on new businesses, initial considerations will begin via University of Toronto Entrepreneurship (UTE) application. TML will continue to develop parameters for final selection. As part of the program, the students will learn how to work with buyers, how to design within partnership brand guidelines, how to navigate licensing processes and royalty agreements, as well as brand development, advertising, social media engagement and planning. The TML program will also act as a conduit for the brand's exposure to other entrepreneurial outlets, such as UTE and other networks that may prove helpful to the business.

MOTUS, the first recipient of TML support which debuted in 2024, will launch its second line in the Bookstore in Fall 2025. TML is currently developing a new partnership with the student led brand MyDorm, focusing on U of T branded bed linens and dorm specific accessories.



# Strategic Planning

Over the last 5 years, the world landscape has shifted dramatically and with it has brought new issues and changes in consumer habits that have only been accelerated and reinforced by the pandemic and ongoing changes in world economics. Much of the world is seeing continued labour and supply shortages, inflation and economic uncertainty has caused demand to stagnate, and many consumers are looking to consume less in general or buy second-hand when possible.

The Trademark Licensing program itself has grown and changed over the last decade, carving an important spot for branded merchandise amongst the University community as well as helping to further brand recognition across North America. However, many of the internal processes and policies have remained unchanged since the department's inception in 2000. It is therefore an excellent time to develop a new strategic plan for the program that reflects the current values of the University and its brand, while also considering financial sustainability, consumer and industry trends, and the way in which the global apparel supply chain has evolved. With so many exciting projects on the horizon, it's important to set a strong strategic foundation to ensure the program is adding value to the University.

Turnover of staff and students creates a community of key individuals who are unaware of the University's trademark policies and guidelines. In addition, visual identity guidelines have been updated which affect how official signatures and marks are articulated on merchandise and apparel. This requires a renewed and concerted effort to educate and engage students, faculty, staff and vendors with clear, concise and consistent information that serves the campus community. In a new digital age, TML aims to provide online content to supplement in-person information sessions to cover topics from best practices within the trademark and merchandise landscape. The website will be updated to cater to key stakeholders, student groups, administrative staff and vendors. The information and guidelines will migrate to more visual content to provide improved clarity on TML policies and guidelines.

Strengthening brand alignment will continue to guide merchandise strategy, steering assortment back to primary institutional colours, focusing graphics to classic typeface and restricting novel designs for limited-edition seasonal offerings. Approved signature lockups for divisions will become more standardized to provide a consistent visual identity that is in line with University of Toronto Communications (UTC) Brand Hub.

With an event-based pop-up shop concept established, TML will look to test out permanent seasonal merchandise concepts to enhance food and residence experiences. Like seasonal shop models such as Starbucks point-of-sale displays or grocery store novelty add-on sales, the TML assortment will compliment food retail and residence operations specific to location and season.

Protecting the U of T brand from unauthorized commercial use and encouraging the community to embrace the brand simultaneously is a delicate balance in the collegiate trademark business. TML plans to test out a new short-term licensing program, utilizing a Craft Vendor License offered through the CLC platform. This will provide an opportunity to support small local home crafts and artisans while offering unique and bespoke U of T branded artisanal products on a one-of-a-kind/temporary basis. The emphasis of this initiative will be to highlight the U of T student and campus creative community.

For 25 years, U of T Trademark Licensing has been the leader in establishing ethical procurement standards of collegiate merchandise in Canada. Our new strategy will continue to hold true to our fundamental values, but TML will continue to be at the forefront on the collegiate licensing industry. We will embrace opportunities to serve the campus community in the 21st Century by modernizing operations, expanding assortment categories and innovative designs to offer new university stakeholders, and strengthen relationships with licensees.

# Annual Report 2024 - 25

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