

FOR RECOMMENDATION

PUBLIC

OPEN SESSION

TO: UTSC Campus Affairs Committee

SPONSOR: Prof. Karin Ruhlandt, Vice-Principal Academic & Dean

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PRESENTER: Prof. Thy Phu, Acting Vice-Dean, Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies

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DATE: April 13, 2026 for April 28, 2026

AGENDA ITEM: 3

ITEM IDENTIFICATION:

Closure of the Centre for Planetary Sciences as an Extra-Departmental Unit C (EDU:C) at the University of Toronto Scarborough

JURISDICTIONAL INFORMATION:

The UTSC Campus Affairs Committee “is concerned with matters that directly concern the quality of student and campus life. The Committee is also responsible for monitoring, reviewing and making recommendations concerning a broad range of planning issues and priorities and for “the use of campus resources.” (*UTSC Campus Affairs Committee Terms of Reference*, Section 4). Under Section 5.8.1 of the *UTSC Campus Affairs Committee Terms of Reference*, “the Committee recommends to the UTSC Council on plans and proposals to establish, disestablish, or significantly restructure academic units, here defined as faculties, schools, colleges, departments, centres and institutes with teaching, or teaching and research functions, undergraduate degree programs, and graduate degree programs, regardless of the source of funds.”

GOVERNANCE PATH:

1. **UTSC Campus Affairs Committee [For Recommendation]: April 28, 2026**
2. UTSC Campus Council [For Approval]: May 25, 2026
3. Executive Committee [For Confirmation]: June 15, 2026

PREVIOUS ACTION TAKEN:

No previous action in governance has been taken on this item.

HIGHLIGHTS:

This proposal seeks approval to formally close the Centre for Planetary Sciences (CPS), an Extra-Departmental Unit (EDU:C) housed at the University of Toronto Scarborough.

The CPS was established in 2013 as a cross-departmental, tri-campus research hub to advance planetary and exoplanet science at the University of Toronto. It brought together approximately 18 faculty members from U of T Scarborough, U of T's St. George Campus, and U of T Mississauga, with research spanning astrophysics, planetary dynamics, geophysics, and observational astronomy. The Centre aimed to:

- foster collaborative research across the three campuses;
- enhance the visibility of planetary sciences at U of T;
- coordinate seminars, postdoctoral opportunities, and visiting scholar programs; and
- support outreach and public education through observatory-based programming.

The proposed closure is based on three key considerations:

- the absence of identifiable academic, administrative, or outreach activity since 2019, along with a lack of active governance and administrative oversight;
- the availability of more established and active units across UTSC and the broader U of T that already support interdisciplinary research, graduate supervision, and related initiatives; and
- the Centre no longer meets the University's Guidelines for Extra-Departmental Units, which require active programming, clear governance structures, and demonstrable outcomes.

The closure is expected to have minimal impact on stakeholders. There is currently no active teaching, research, or programming associated with the Centre. Faculty formerly affiliated with the Centre continue their work through departmental and institute-based structures, and student learning opportunities, including those related to observatory-based teaching, remain embedded in courses offered by the Department of Physical and Environmental Sciences (DPES). There are no staff or administrative roles associated with the Centre that would require reassignment.

The proposal has been prepared through the Office of the Vice-Principal Academic and Dean, in consultation with DPES in Fall 2025 and with Faculty of Arts & Science and the University of Toronto Mississauga in Winter 2026. Stakeholders consulted expressed support or no objection to the proposed closure.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

There are no net implications to the campus operating budget.

RECOMMENDATION:

Be It Recommended,

Subject to approval by the UTSC Campus Council and confirmation by the Executive Committee,

THAT the Centre for Planetary Sciences, an Extra-Departmental Unit C (EDU:C) at the University of Toronto Scarborough, as described in the attached proposal, be closed effective June 30, 2026.

DOCUMENTATION PROVIDED:

1. Proposal for a Closure of an Existing Extra-Departmental Unit: Centre for Planetary Sciences (CPS), dated March 10, 2026

PROPOSAL FOR A CLOSURE OF AN EXISTING EXTRA-DEPARTMENTAL UNIT

Name of Extra-Departmental Unit (EDU):	Centre for Planetary Sciences (CPS)
Extra-Departmental Unit Status: EDU:A/B/C/D – please refer to the Guidelines for Extra-Departmental Units for definitions of EDU:A/B/C/D	EDU:C
Faculty/Division:	University of Toronto Scarborough (UTSC)
Dean's Office Contact:	Thy Phu, Acting Vice-Dean, Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies (vdgraduate.utsc@utoronto.ca) Kevin Mak, Manager, Academic Program Reviews & Quality Assurance (kevin.mak@utoronto.ca)
Version Date: Please update this field as the proposal evolves.	March 10, 2026

Statement of Purpose

This proposal seeks approval to formally close the Centre for Planetary Sciences (CPS), an Extra-Departmental Unit (EDU:C) housed at the University of Toronto Scarborough. The Centre has been inactive for several years and no longer meets the expectations, operational standards, or governance requirements outlined in the University's *Guidelines for Extra-Departmental Units (EDU:A/B/C/D)*. With no current academic programming, research coordination, public outreach, staffing, or administrative oversight, the Centre does not, in practice, function.

To ensure clarity, accuracy, and coherence across UTSC's academic unit structure, we propose that CPS be formally closed effective June 30, 2026.

Background on the EDU:C

The Centre for Planetary Sciences was established in 2013 as a cross-departmental, tri-campus research hub intended to advance planetary and exoplanet science at the University of Toronto.

At inception, CPS brought together approximately 18 faculty members from UTSC, UTSG, and UTM whose research intersected across astrophysics, planetary dynamics, geophysics, and observational astronomy. The Centre's goals included:

- fostering collaborative research across the three campuses;
- enhancing the visibility of planetary sciences at U of T;
- coordinating seminars, postdoctoral opportunities, and visiting scholar programs; and
- providing outreach and public education through observatory-based programming.

CPS played a visible role between 2013 and 2017, particularly during the launch of the Solar Walk installation and related public events. A new director appointed in 2017 contributed to revitalizing observatory programming. However, activity diminished thereafter, with no identifiable academic, administrative, or outreach work taking place after approximately 2019.

Rationale for Closure

CPS is being proposed for closure because it is no longer operational, no longer fulfills the expectations of an EDU:C, and its intended functions have either ceased or migrated back to permanent academic units. Specifically:

1. Inactivity and Loss of Core Functions

- The CPS website has remained unchanged since 2017 and no longer lists current personnel, events, or programming.
- The last identified CPS-branded activity was a colloquium planned for 2019–20, which was subsequently cancelled, and no further academic or public programming has taken place.
- CPS no longer maintains governance, advisory structures, or administrative oversight, and the unit is absent from current UTSC research centre listings.

2. Redundancy of Mandate

The interdisciplinary research CPS once aimed to coordinate is now fully supported through established and active units:

- the Department of Physical and Environmental Sciences (DPES),
- the David A. Dunlap Department of Astronomy and Astrophysics,
- the Dunlap Institute for Astronomy and Astrophysics, and
- the Canadian Institute for Theoretical Astrophysics (CITA).

These units collectively support graduate supervision, research collaborations, observatory activities, and public outreach, rendering CPS unnecessary within the current landscape.

3. Alignment with EDU Guidelines

Under the University's *Guidelines for Extra-Departmental Units*, EDU:C status requires active programming, clear governance, participation across units, and demonstrable success measures. CPS has not met these expectations for several years. Maintaining a dormant EDU creates confusion for students and external audiences and destabilizes the integrity of the University's academic unit structure.

For these reasons, closure is appropriate, timely, and consistent with governance expectations for EDU:C units.

Impact of Closure

The closure of CPS will have minimal impact on stakeholders because:

- No active teaching, research, or programming currently occurs under the CPS banner.
- Faculty formerly affiliated with CPS continue their work through departmental and institute-based structures.
- Student learning opportunities, particularly observatory-related teaching, remain embedded in DPES courses and are unaffected by CPS's existence or closure.
- No staff positions, budget lines, or administrative roles are attached to CPS that would require transition or reassignment.
- External partners and public audiences have not received CPS-related communications or programming in several years; therefore, no disruption to ongoing collaborations is anticipated.

Closing CPS will instead improve clarity by removing outdated information from University websites, eliminating reference to an inactive unit, and ensuring alignment between UTSC's operational reality and its formal academic structures.

Consultation

Consultation regarding the proposed closure of the Centre took place in November 2025 between the Office of the Vice-Principal Academic and Dean and with the Department of Physical and Environmental Sciences, where many affiliated faculty were based. The current chair of the department confirms that the Centre has been inactive for many years, that no faculty currently rely on CPS for research or teaching functions, and that formal closure is appropriate.

The proposal was also shared with the Deans' Offices in the Faculty of Arts & Science and the University of Toronto Mississauga (UTM) in February 2026 for review and feedback. In the Faculty of Arts & Science, the Chair of the Department of Astronomy and Astrophysics, and the

Interim Director of the Canadian Institute for Theoretical Astrophysics expressed no objection to the proposed closure of the Centre. At UTM, the Department of Chemical and Physical Sciences indicated that they had no comments to share.

Because CPS has not had identifiable programming, governance, student involvement, or external partnerships since approximately 2019, there were no active stakeholders requiring further outreach. Nonetheless, the consultation process verified that:

- no faculty member is currently engaged in CPS activities;
- no staff or student roles are affected;
- no external partners or funders remain connected to CPS.

This consultation confirms that closure will not disrupt existing academic, research, or administrative work.