

**University of Toronto Governing Council
UNIVERSITY AFFAIRS BOARD 2002-03**

**VICE-PROVOST STUDENTS
NEWSLETTER #1**

September 13, 2002

Comments are welcome at sheldon.levy@utoronto.ca or (416) 978-5401

Introduction

The portfolio of the Vice-Provost, Students includes a number of responsibilities and issues that are part of the University Affairs Board mandate either on a cyclical basis or as items arise. The purpose of the Newsletter will be to provide a brief summary of current issues and priorities for information and to invite input and discussion. The Newsletter will be distributed with UAB materials in advance of each meeting.

Student Housing Guarantee

The university found it very difficult to make good on the first year residence guarantee for this 2002-03 year. Fulfilling the terms of the residence guarantee required doubling the number of floors in the Primrose Hotel - from the original six floors we have edged up over the years to housing 393 students on twelve floors this year - as well as having to accommodate a further 92 students at the Delta Chelsea Inn. This is in addition to the 102 students who are off-campus at the nurse's residence located at Gerrard Street and Bay, and the 99 students who are at Tartu on Bloor at Madison -- for a total of 686 students having to be housed off campus. The subsidy paid by the university to ensure that student residence fees for these rooms are at par with residence fees on campus now exceeds \$3 million. Some relief will be provided by the addition of one new residence on campus in Fall 2003, and a further two residences in Fall 2004, but it has to be acknowledged that we are still in the position of far greater demand than the supply is able to accommodate. That said, the student housing guarantee is important and will continue, and we are studying ways to reduce the cost while maintaining the commitment.

Questionnaire on Student Housing in Toronto

Through the Office of the Vice-Provost, Space & Facilities Planning, the university was approached by a development firm interested in conducting a survey designed to measure student attitudes and preferences regarding both on-campus and off-campus housing, as well as student willingness and ability to pay for various housing services. The company is currently involved in constructing student housing facilities in the U.S. and interested in the possibilities of expansion in Toronto. Given the present student housing pressures, and the company's commitment to share the survey results with the university to assist in its own planning priorities, the university agreed to participate in the survey as follows: over the period September 16-23, 2002 an electronic message is being sent from the university to a sample size of 5,000 to 10,000 U of T students on the St. George campus. Participation is entirely voluntary - the e-mail message will *invite* students to log-on to a particular website (identified only in the e-mail note) to access the questionnaire, complete it and submit it electronically. We have notified the Presidents of SAC, APUS and the GSU that this survey is being undertaken.

SAC

The university has been involved to a considerable extent in terms of time and financial support in respect of SAC orientation activities and the SAC 101 initiative. The funding provided by the Vice-Provost Students will not fully cover the costs of SAC 101, however, and the student government is continuing discussions with other sources on campus seeking financial support. [The SAC 101 initiative celebrates 101 years of student government, with plans including the preparation of an historical overview of SAC and celebrations on each of the three UT campuses.]

TTC

The university has been working with SAC on strategies to put in place a student transit pass. We have met with TTC Chair Councillor Betty Disero, and talks continue.

OSAP

Rona Abramovitch is the administration lead, working with student groups (APUS, GSU, SAC, and student governors) to identify issues that could improve the effectiveness of OSAP in helping to handle student financial requirements. For example, the study is looking at bringing rates up to date for the kinds of items OSAP includes in its support assessments, as well as urging OSAP to recognize the cost of living in Toronto relative to other Ontario communities and in general to amend OSAP policy to reflect the reality that one size does not fit all. As work proceeds, it is intended to release a report to the community as part of a communications strategy with government.

Student Experience and Academic Planning

The academic planning process being led by the Provost necessarily includes consideration of a range of non-academic elements that contribute to the overall environment at a leading research university. A critical part of the academic plan will focus on aspects of the university community that affect the student experience, including for example student services, organizations, facilities, and programs designed to attract and enhance quality. A proposal to strike a Task Force on Recruitment is under consideration as one area that has a direct impact on the academic nature and development of the university.

Safety Abroad Officer

A two-year pilot project is being supported to provide resources for the appointment of a Safety Abroad Project Officer. This initiative will bring together services for students who are responding to the university's encouragement to experience international educational opportunities. Preparatory to leaving on exchanges, students will receive orientation advice and help on matters such as academic transfer and new cultural communities, and will receive assurance that while they are studying abroad they have a supportive contact here at the University of Toronto should any questions or difficulties arise.

Emergency Preparedness Task Force

We are working on revisions to our emergency preparedness procedures and capabilities in an initiative that includes wide representation across the university community.

Graduate Student Financial Issues

The university is working to ensure that the administration of funding, and the associated services, reflect both financial and personal realities. For example, we have revised fee payment requirements for graduate students to help balance the payment schedule with the flow of guaranteed graduate support income. We are also working with Faculties to implement the details of the graduate student guarantee, i.e. allocating funds to units as per the approved budget in order to make commitments to students clear.

Ontario Student Opportunity Trust Fund 2 (OSOTF2)

In the May 2002 budget, the Ontario government announced a second round of the highly successful student support matching program. On the strength of that announcement the university has been anticipating opportunities to maximize contributions, but no program details have yet been announced. We have been in discussions with government to express our enthusiasm for OSOTF2 and our concerns about timing. This is a serious issue for the development agenda led by VP Dellandrea in particular.

Exploratory Committee on a Student Centre, St. George Campus

An Exploratory Committee, chaired by the Vice-Provost - Space & Facilities Planning, has been established to consider the pros and cons of creating a Student Centre on the St. George Campus. The mandate of this Committee is strictly exploratory in nature with no commitments. SAC, APUS and GSU have been invited to nominate representatives to serve on this Committee. A final report is anticipated by December 31st, 2002.

Upcoming Policy Reviews

Daycare Policy	UAB January 2003
Alcohol Policy	UAB February 2003