

**Administrative Response  
to the Report of the Convocation Advisory Review Committee (CARC)**

**March 2019**

We formally acknowledge having received the **Report of the Convocation Advisory Review Committee (CARC)**. This report was commissioned by us to examine the continued feasibility of the current model for Convocation, and to consider possible changes, including format, venue, participants and other details. The last such review was undertaken in 2006. At that time, we had 20 ceremonies in the June season and six in the November season. By way of comparison, we are anticipating some 31 ceremonies in June 2019 (up from 29 last year) - spread over three full weeks. This is in addition to the eight ceremonies that we expect in November 2019 – for a total of nearly 40 ceremonies. Not only has the number of ceremonies expanded steadily over the past decade, but so too has the length of many of our ceremonies.

We wish to commend the members of the Review Committee for their work. In particular, we would note the extensively consultative approach that was undertaken by the Committee. In our view this Review was a model for a research-based process, culminating in recommendations based on much input and extensive evidence. The Committee not only surveyed graduating students and alumni to solicit their views on convocation, and consulted widely with stakeholders in our community, but also reviewed the approaches followed by a number of peer institutions around the world.

The Report makes clear that members of our community believe strongly that Convocation Hall must remain the sole venue for future ceremonies. The essential nature of the current U of T convocation experience – in which each graduating student is individually recognized – was highly valued by virtually everyone who was consulted. Given this groundswell of support, we have accepted the recommendation that ‘Convocation Hall continue to be the sole venue for convocation ceremonies’.

We would note, however, that there are important implications and trade-offs that necessarily arise from this decision, as the University continues to experience growth in the size of our graduating classes. First, we support the recommendation that any further increases to the number of ceremonies be justified only on the basis of enrolment numbers and the size of the graduating class. Second, if we are to maintain the essential, intimate character of the convocation experience, while also maintaining control of the length of each ceremony, we must focus on limiting the number of speakers at each convocation.

With respect to Recommendation 9, we are sympathetic to the spirit if not the letter of the recommendation. While we recognize the desire for principals, deans and heads of Federated universities to play a prominent role in the convocation ceremony, the logistical limits of the ceremony impose unavoidable restrictions on the extent to which this can take place. In our view, the most feasible way to provide for divisional presence is to make more deliberate use of the *Policy on Presiding Officers for Convocation*, and to ask such leaders to take on formal presiding roles at convocation more frequently. We will also further explore additional ways in

which the role of the divisional leader can be incorporated (e.g., a message as an insert in the program).

The Report makes recommendations on a number of other matters which we agree should be taken into consideration and executed upon as appropriate by staff in the Office of the President and in the Office of Convocation, and with relevant partners.

In closing, we would like to thank all those who took the time to participate in this important process. We, along with the Committee, are heartened by the high level of engagement of our community on the topic of convocation. It is clear that the convocation experience at U of T is extremely valued and that the respect for and appreciation of our long-held traditions run deep. We would also like to thank the Co-Chairs and the members of the Review Committee for their excellent work and dedication over the past year.

Meric Gertler  
President

Claire M.C. Kennedy  
Chair of the Governing Council