



Friday, March 13, 2020

**The Executive Committee
University of Toronto Students' Union
12 Hart House Circle
Toronto, ON
M5S 3J9**

Re: Update for students on COVID-19 (novel coronavirus)

As leaders of a student-run organization, the University of Toronto Students' Union Executive team have been closely monitoring the situation related to the global pandemic of COVID-19. While prioritizing our mission to provide services to our members, we have been carefully evaluating emerging information from the Toronto Public Health, the provincial and federal health agencies, and the University of Toronto administration in order to ensure our operations promote the health and well-being of the student population and of our student workers.

While the University campus and services remain open, all in-person classes have been cancelled and the University has recommended “social distancing” and “cancellation or postponement of all discretionary events that are not required as part of courses and academic requirements.” For additional information [please read the message from University of Toronto President Meric Gertler](#).

In light of this decision the UTSU urges that:

- All classes, including those in professional Faculties, must go entirely online immediately.
- A full and comprehensive plan for the exam schedule must be communicated by each Faculty, respectively.
- Every professor needs to be in contact with their students informing them immediately of the next course of action for their class. While we understand that the switch to moving courses entirely online will take time, it is unfair to leave students waiting for a response.
- The University increase online mental health support for students to help manage the uncertainty and anxiety resulting from both the overall context of the pandemic and the disruption of the academic year.
- The University protect the wages of all employees who are unable to work due to the pandemic or any resulting impacts, including closures.



- The University maintain clear and open communication with all student societies, who often have the most direct contact with students, to ensure students are getting accurate and timely information.
- The University of Toronto, and in particular University of Toronto Student Family Housing, take the necessary steps to inform their members of their rights in light of COVID19.

We are very concerned about our many international student members and the support available to them during this difficult time. These students are in a vulnerable situation which is likely to be characterized by rapid shifts in international travel and border policies. We urge the University of Toronto:

- To protect international students by ensuring that, in the case of a University closure, residences housing international students and their food services remain open -- if necessary, for an extended period of time.
- To reach out to international students to ensure they are informed of this commitment and supported in their specific circumstances.

As of today the UTSU Office is open, but we are developing plans to shift our entire operations online to promote the health and wellbeing of our staff team, the majority of whom are also students. We will ensure that our staff are guaranteed their wages throughout our shifted operations, and we encourage all employers on campus to do the same.

Here is the current status of UTSU services and activities:

- The in-person Help Desk will be converted to be fully online, and will remain accessible via www.utsu.ca/#helpdesk .
 - Students can continue to use this service for help accessing their health and dental benefits.
 - For more information on accessing health and dental benefits, students are also encouraged to visit Studentcare.ca.
- UTSU's Got You will be postponed, but we are actively working on strategies to support students during the exam season, bearing in mind that we are encouraging the University administration to also take exams fully online.
- The Tax Clinic will not be operating as it is contingent on the participation of student volunteers and we do not wish to put them in a position where they could feel unsafe.
- Events, including the scheduled Strategic Planning Town Halls, Multicultural Club Festival, and Sexual Violence Prevention workshops, are postponed until further notice.



- We are exploring options and identifying our ongoing member needs related to our Food Bank, but are looking to pursue the possibility of providing both non-perishable food items and toiletries to our members during this difficult time.
- We encourage all clubs to reach out to us about the status of their events and programming. We are committed to absorbing the cost of deposits on venues so clubs do not have to, as we fully understand the financial strain this can put on student-run groups that predominantly run events out of pocket.

For the past few years, the UTSU has operated its election cycle entirely online so to ensure accessibility and transparency. We pride ourselves on this process and as such, we will be continuing with our elections as planned. For prospective candidates, the All Candidates Meeting and subsequent Executive Debate will be conducted online through a live video feed. If we determine that future circumstances impede students' ability to participate actively in our election, we will take the necessary steps to postpone the election accordingly.

We encourage our members to reach out with questions, and in particular to get in touch with us online at www.utsu.ca/#helpdesk or through our email addresses at executives@utsu.ca.

In alignment with health authorities, we encourage all community members to socially distance themselves, stay home if they've possibly been exposed or are sick, and to practice the key prevention method of frequent hand washing and sanitizing.

Yours in service,

The UTSU Executive | executives@utsu.ca | 416-978-4911



CANADIAN CORONAVIRUS INFORMATION

[Toronto Public Health](#)

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) information for the U of T community](#)

[Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\): Outbreak update - Government of Canada](#)

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HEALTH AND COUNSELLING CENTRES

Telehealth Ontario 24-hour service 1 866-797-0000

U of T St. George: Koffler Building, 2nd floor: 416-978-8030

U of T Scarborough: Environmental Building: 416-287-7065

UofT Mississauga: Davis Building (Basement): 905-828-5255

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

My SSP for International Students: 1-844-451-9700

MENTAL HEALTH

Good 2 Talk Student Helpline: 1-866-925-5454

Ontario Mental Health Helpline: 1-866-531-2600

Personal Counsellors: 416-978-8030 (Drop in available)

OISE Psychology Clinic: 416-978-0620

Drug & Alcohol Helpline: 1-800-565-8603

Gerstein Centre Mental Health Crisis Line: 416-929-5200