To the UTSU Membership,

Over the past few months, concerns have been raised regarding actions the UTSU board has taken. In particular, these actions have had huge effects on the degree to which students feel they are being represented, especially racialized students who are engaged in anti-racism initiatives. The executive committee feels it to be imperative that we make a statement regarding these actions, and how we can better ensure concerns are not only heard, but also legitimized.

As executives, we serve as the “faces of the organization” on a day-to-day basis, but what many do not realize is that the UTSU Board governs executives. Executives are required to follow the Board’s guidance in the ways in which they pursue initiatives and projects. In addition, each of the six voting executives holds only one vote each on the Board. The rest of the Board is comprised of 45 individuals from colleges, professional faculties and UTM. As a result of this, the executives do not have a large say in decisions made by that body. In essence, the executives report to the board, not the other way around, and this is not always the impression that is given.

We would like to make it very clear that the executive committee is not one and the same with the UTSU Board. The Board has made decisions that the executive committee does not agree with, yet we are the ones who are required to justify these actions to students. We acknowledge that as the UTSU’s public figures, we are the faces that students engage with on a day-to-day basis. With that being said, however, we need for students to understand that the two bodies are distinct, and that they do not always see eye to eye.

In addition, as executives it is our responsibility to take student concerns seriously, and this includes handling situations professionally and respectfully. Recently, members have felt that their concerns have not only been dismissed, but also belittled. When a student has a complaint, they have the right to not only be heard, but to also have their concerns legitimized and honestly considered. Members also deserve to feel like when a concern is conveyed, it isn’t ignored because of who they are or because of the work they engage with in the U of T community. For this reason, the executive committee would like to deeply apologize to any of its members who were ever made to feel this way due to poor judgment calls on our part.
Moving forward, the executive committee would like members to feel like there is an outlet through which their complaints will both be taken seriously and will also lead to positive outcomes. To that end, we will have a new inbox, concerns@utsu.ca, to be administered by our Executive Director. We hope that, by having a neutral party administer this, students will feel more comfortable with bringing up their concerns and that their grievances will be taken seriously. In addition, we remain committed to doing better when receiving complaints and will always be happy to meet students in person to discuss their concerns.

We are further committed to representing and fighting for student issues, no matter the barriers we encounter. We hope the UTSU membership will help us in working toward creating a UTSU that strives to reflect its members to the best of its abilities.

Respectfully,

Ben Coleman  
President

Ryan Gomes  
VP Internal & Services

Sania Khan  
VP Equity

Vere-Marie Khan  
VP University Affairs

Jasmine Denike  
VP External

Akshan Bansal  
VP Campus Life