

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO  
**STUDENTS' UNION**

# Annual Report 2020-2021

# Opening Information

## **Who We Are**

The University of Toronto Students' Union represents approximately 38,000 undergraduate students at the University of Toronto St. George campus. Our goal is to advocate and provide services for these students to the best of our capacity. The UTSU is governed by a President and five Vice-Presidents, who report to a 40-person Board of Directors. These positions are all elected each Spring by the members.

## **What We Do**

The UTSU both advocates for and provides services to our members. In terms of services, we provide a student health and dental insurance plan, fund campus clubs, offer financial aid, an income tax clinic, printing services, and so much more. In terms of advocacy, the UTSU lobbies the university administration, municipal, provincial, and federal governments on issues pertaining to students. In addition, the UTSU commits itself to the principles of equity and accountability all of its actions, both within and outside of the organization.

## **Our Members**

We are incredibly excited to represent full-time undergraduate students at the St. George Campus. In addition to these members, we also represent students registered in the Toronto School of Theology, the Transitional Year Programme, and the Professional Experience Year.



# Letter from the Executive

Dear UTSU Members,

Throughout the past few months, it has been an honour to further the inspiring work that last year's Executive team started. The 2020-2021 UTSU team navigated various challenges while supporting students through the COVID-19 pandemic, such as moving into the Student Commons, launching the scholarship program, and more.

Our predecessors worked endlessly to prioritize and engage in student advocacy despite the challenges that arose out of operating virtually. As leaders representing students, they made every decision while keeping the best interests of students in mind. There are countless words of praise we could say about the previous Executives and we are honoured to follow in their footsteps to continue the groundbreaking work they initiated. Thus, we are happy to present this report summarizing last year's endeavours on their behalf.

In an effort to support students throughout the past year, the UTSU released an emergency bursary as an additional financial resource to support any expenses incurred by the pandemic.

Additionally, the UTSU launched its scholarship program that offers financial aid for a wide range of expenses. This program ensured that several typically-overlooked areas of excellence no longer went unrecognized and that those who excelled in these areas were rewarded accordingly.

The UTSU was also able to successfully hold its first online orientation, UNITE, which featured various artists like Roy Woods and Alina Baraz. Later into the year, we created opportunities for students to interact with one another through Frost Week, entailing various exciting events that allowed for them to form connections while engaging in fun activities.

To support the transition into the new Student Commons, the Executive also introduced new staff members to help support the development of the Student Commons. With these staff members, the UTSU is excited to move to the Student Commons and eventually open it up to all students!

Last year's Exec also introduced Clubs Friday, which helped to showcase the wonderful clubs on campus and connect students with opportunities even when we were only able to congregate virtually.

Finally, one of the greatest achievements from last year was the successful advocacy led by the Executive. These campaigns include extending UMLAP consultations into the fall, lobbying for tuition freezes, the call for divestment from the Board of Directors, UCRU debt-free campaign, and more. Particular attention was paid to the return to campus advocacy in the Fall, which entailed matters regarding international students and COVID safety. Several remote learning reports were also generated to assess the quality of U of T's online education so that any weaknesses could be identified and addressed efficiently.

Moving forward into another year with the ongoing pandemic, we are grateful to follow in the footsteps of our predecessors who tirelessly maneuvered these unprecedented times and paved the way for our team to further support students. We feel proud and privileged to be able to further their work, and will do our best in emulating their work ethic and spirit. Though challenges may continue to present themselves through our operations this year, we are confident in our ability to confront them and set positive examples for our successors.

Should you ever have any questions or concerns, please never hesitate to reach out to members of our team directly. We are here to make the UTSU an organization for and by students like you.

**Yours in Service,,**

Alexa Ballis, President

Fiona Reuter, Vice President Operations

Catherine Lai, Vice President Public & University Affairs

Reva Aggarwal, Vice President Equity

Maria Lin, Vice President Student Life

Cathy Wang, Vice President Professional Faculties





# Services

## Health and Dental Plan

Our Health & Dental Plan continued to serve students in the 2020-2021 year, covering vision, dental, travel, and health claims. On an exciting note, we launched EmpowerMe at the end of the 2020-2021 year, and also were able to lower our plan cost increase for the first time, given the plan's stability!

## Student Aid

The UTSU's Student Aid Program ran in the 2020-2021 term, with \$114,718.95 being disbursed in aid and over 600 applications being approved. The Student Aid budget was also increased mid-way through the year to allow for us to support even more students, and we continued to support students through the Emergency Bursary during COVID-19.

Over the 2020-2021 Term the UTSU Student Aid Program provided students with \$118,812.60 in financial aid supporting over 700 applicants. The program is continuing to grow as in the spring referendum there was an additional \$1 fee implemented which will allow the program to support countless students in the coming years.

## Tenant Guide

The UTSU Tenant Guide aids students in navigating the ever-complicated and expensive Toronto housing market. The Guide covers types of housing, how to rent a space, the process of moving, tenants' rights, finances, and more. Students are able to learn about what neighbourhood and housing is the best fit for them based on location, culture and price range. Additionally, students are advised in navigating hazards like bed bugs, scams, and fraud. For more information, the guide provides a series of resources in each section that students can pursue in greater detail.

## UTSU Scholarship Program

The UTSU Scholarship Program was an initiative spearheaded by the Vice-President, Professional Faculties to recognize and provide scholarships for areas of excellence that are often overlooked. Through this program, the UTSU awarded scholarships with an accumulated value of \$21,000.

The Program awarded 14 scholarships in 4 areas: Professional Faculties Leadership, Campus Involvement, Equity Initiatives and First-Year Engagement.

### **Campus Involvement Scholarship**

Rehan Vishwanath  
Lucas Granger  
Foti Vito  
Mariam Mahboob  
Noroh Dakim

### **Equity Initiatives Scholarship**

Alisha Deshmukh  
Emma Belhadfa  
Shantel Watson

### **Professional Faculties Leadership Scholarship**

Grant Shantz  
Jessica Goncalves  
Vivian An

### **First Year Engagement Scholarship**

Jessie Wu  
Neo Lou  
Elif Akyildirim



# Advocacy



## **The Canadian Federation of Students (CFS)**

The Canadian Federation of Students is the largest students union in Canada and operates on a national scale to advocate on a variety of student issues. The UTSU is part of the CFS and is required to send representatives to a series of events each year, most notably the Ontario General Meeting and the National General Meeting. The majority of the motions the UTSU present at this meeting are internal amendments. Unfortunately, this past year's meetings were cut short due to the pandemic, and many of our motions were either tabled or failed.

## **The CFS Report**

The CFS report was drafted to provide an account of the history, governance, services, advocacy, criticisms, and the relationship between the CFS and the UTSU. It provides all of the details required to effectively navigate the CFS and will assist in decertification.

## **The Campus Police Report**

In the summer of 2020 prompted by the advocacy around law enforcement accountability and the Black Lives Matter Movement, the Campus Police report was written. This report is a comprehensive view of the power structures and funding of the University of Toronto's campus police detailing their relationship with the Toronto Police Service and the university administration. The report further investigates the types of training that officers receive and the process for filing complaints against officers. The report then analyzes the different functions of the campus police and highlights specific tasks that the campus police have carried out in the past and details how other sectors of the university can better perform these duties.

## **Same Degree Same Fee (SDSF) Campaign**

Domestic students in Computer Science, Bioinformatics, and Data Science paid \$11,420 in tuition fees for the 2020-21 academic year, whereas the general rate for Arts & Science degrees was \$6,100. This financial discrepancy between programs also exists for international students. This higher fee places an undue financial burden on students seeking these fields of study, thereby unequitably restricting access to those fields; the higher fee also places pressure on students to perform academically, which has contributed to the mental health crisis in Computer Science. The Same Degree Same Fee campaign advocates for all students receiving an Honours Bachelor's of Science to pay the same fee.

The Vice-President Public and University Affairs also advocated for a general tuition freeze in response to the pandemic and spoke to the Governing Council on 11 March and 6 April 2021.

## **Pre-budget recommendations to the Ontario Budget**

In 2021, the UTSU submitted its first pre-budget recommendation to the Ontario Budget. In this document, the UTSU called on the government to support low-income and first-generation students more so now than ever due to the financial burdens of the pandemic. Some notable recommendations include continuing the tuition freeze, increasing OSAP grants, increasing mental health and accessibility services funding, and developing a rent relief program.



## **Remote Learning Reports**

The Report on Online Learning & Remote Classes analyzed data from the UTSU's Online Learning & Remote Classes Survey, the Rotman Commerce Students' Association, and The Mindfulness Measures Project. The results suggested that the "quality of education at the University of Toronto has suffered as a result of the shift to online learning," and noted several issues with accessibility and increased workload due to "micro-assessments" (eg. weekly quizzes, participation tasks, etc.). They also emphasized privacy/connectivity issues with synchronous exams and increased difficulty of take-home assessments.

The report offered nine recommendations for the University administration and course instructors: proactive accessibility, expansion of academic forgiveness policies, technological support for instructors, recordings of all synchronous course material, reduced workload, accommodations for participation marks, limits on hours of content, increase in instructor communication, and financial relief for students.

In addition, the Report on Online Proctoring Services examined the University's recognized third-party proctoring services, as well as the policies and procedures which outline their use. It advocated for students' right to refuse, information notices, and transparency in regards to data usage and contracts with third-party proctoring services.



## **University Mandated Leave of Absence Policy**

The University-Mandated Leave of Absence Policy (UMLAP) defines circumstances and outlines procedures by which the University may place students on a Leave of Absence. It has been a deeply controversial policy since its first draft was revealed in 2017, and entered its review period on 1 March 2021 with the intent to conclude in May 2021. In March 2021, the UTSU fielded a survey on the subject, and began work on a report which presented student views.

On 19 March 2021, the UTSU released a joint letter alongside the Association of Part-Time Undergraduate Students, the Scarborough Campus Students' Union, the University of Toronto Mississauga Students' Union, and the University of Toronto Graduate Students' Union. The letter was addressed to the head of the review team Professor Donald Ainslie, and requested that the review period be extended into Fall 2021 in order to allow for more comprehensive consultations.

The Governing Council has since extended the review period into Fall 2021. You can provide feedback on UMLAP to the Governing Council throughout the semester, and fall town hall dates on the subject are to be announced.

## **Advancing Equity in Education Campaign**

The Advancing Equity report listed all the equity courses that will be offered at UofT during the 2022-2021 academic year. The report outlines the descriptions and requirements of the equity-related courses in the arts and science faculty department - such as African studies, Diaspora & Transnational Studies, East Asian studies, Indigenous studies, Women's & Gender studies to name a few. Ultimately, this guide is aimed to offer students to become more engaged and educated with the interrelatedness of equity, diversity and social justice.

## **Professional Faculties Residence Report**

The First-Entry Professional Faculties Residence Representation & Accommodations Report presented results from the First-Entry Professional Faculties Residence Survey fielded during the 2020-21 academic year. The report identified several issues – including lack of information given to first-years when choosing their residences, issues surrounding the low number of professional faculty students in college residences, and ambiguous language in the StarPortal residence ranking system – and presented recommendations in order to mitigate them.



UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO  
**STUDENTS' UNION**

# Student Life

## **Orientation**

UNITE 2020 was the UTSU's first fully online orientation and was a massive success reaching over 2000 sign-ups and being covered by CityNews in Toronto. During UNITE 2020 the UTSU was able to host performances by Roy Woods and Alina Baraz.

## **Frost Week**

Frost week 2021 was a massive success. The week consisted of multiple events held over the week of January 25th to 29th. Monday started with a Live show with the VP Student Life to speak about their time as an executive. Tuesday the UTSU hosted a Tie-Dye session with Megan from U of Meg who redesigns university merch into more exciting pieces. Then on Thursday, you could learn to bake an Apple Pie with Le Dolci before the grand finale of Clubs Night which closed out the week with a bang.

## **Unity Week**

Unity Week was a series of asynchronous events that ran leading up to unity ball which provided students with wellness events, workout sessions and other events and resources to help with the end of the term. These events were held asynchronously to allow students to enjoy activities at their own pace and around their busy exam schedules. The week ended on April 9th with Unity Ball which was available on-demand with awards to students and interviews with the exec recapping the year.

# Unity Ball Winners

## **Best Virtual Event of the Fall Semester**

UTWA: Let's Talk Careers Conference

## **Best Virtual Event of the Winter Semester**

IEEE: Make UofT Hackathon

## **Excellence in Student Leadership Award**

Sarah Dadabhoy

## **Outstanding Club of the Year**

UN Women at U of T

## **Outstanding New Club of the Year (1-3 Years)**

Policy-Thon

## **Graduating Award for Student Leadership**

Laura Gallo

## **Chimwemwe Alao Excellence in Equity Award**

Gelila Tgiorgis

## **Service to Students Award**

Ikran Jama

## **Joshua Bowman First-Year Student Leadership Award**

Jiaqi Sarah Sun

# Governance

## **First-Year Council**

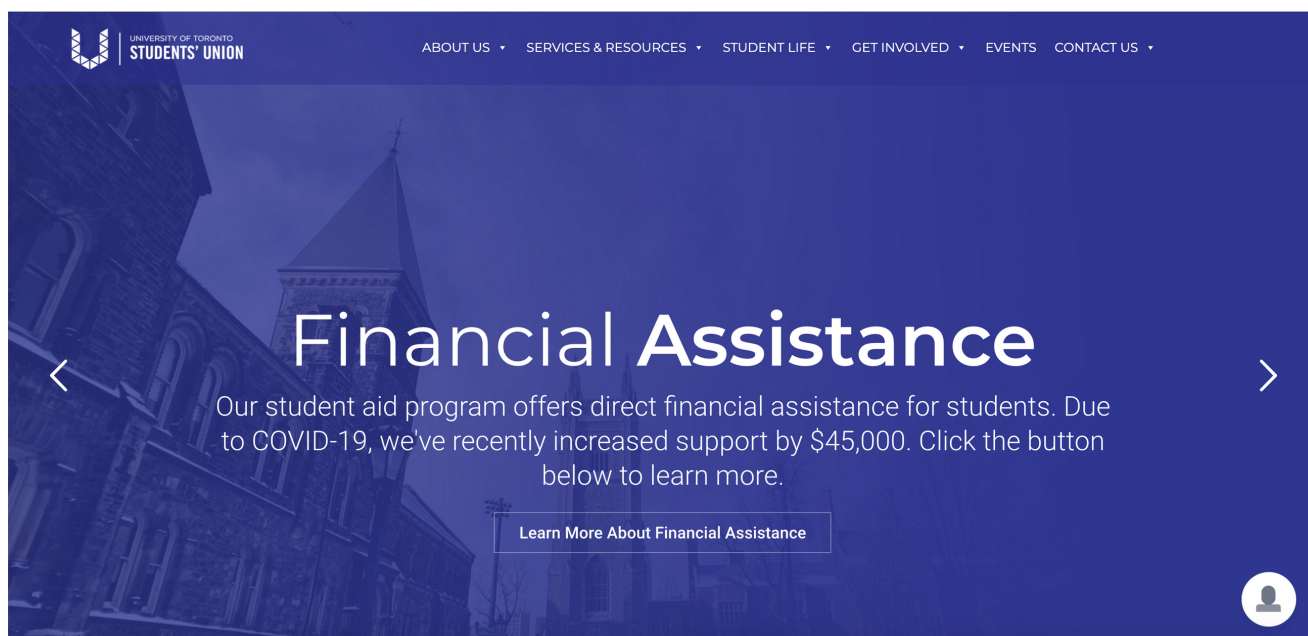
The second year of the First Year Council was a huge success! Despite being entirely online for their first year, the councillors ran multiple events, created a community award, and launched a digital campus space for first-years to connect. Massive congratulations to all first-year students who served on the Council last year - we can't wait to see what you do next.

## **Policy Structure Overhaul**

Our UTSU policies were completely reformatted in the form of Policy Books! This was done in an effort to ensure our policies were clear and easy to access. Many policies were also cleaned up and edited to ensure consistency and accuracy for how the UTSU operated in actuality. A new method of archiving was also introduced in the form of policy headers to help keep a better record of previous changes.

## New Website

A major project of the 2020-2021 term was the launching of our new website! The VP Operations worked with EggsMedia to design a completely new site, which focuses on highlighting student resources and making the UTSU's governance and services more accessible to our membership. You can check out the new website at [utsu.ca](https://utsu.ca)!







## **Elections Changes**

The Spring Elections also brought with them several changes to our Elections Procedure Code, including a massive overhaul that brought the Charter for Referenda and Elections Procedure Code together into one book!

The Executive also put forward changes to make elections more accessible by changing the funds that can be used to support election campaigns, altering the allowance system to be more accessible to lower-income students, and allowing students to use their preferred name in nomination signature collection.

Furthermore, the Executive also aspired to make the elections more green and sustainable by reducing how many posters can be printed for campaigns and lowered the number of signatures required to run in elections. Overall, 2020-2021 brought massive changes to our election system in hopes of making them more accessible to all students.



# Thank you!

## *2020-2021 Executive Committee*

Muntaka Ahmed, President

Dermot O'Halloran, Vice President Operations

Tyler Riches, Vice President Public & University Affairs

Alex McLean, Vice President Equity

Neeharika Hemrajani, Vice President Student Life

Paul Kaita, Vice President Professional Faculties

## *2020-2021 Executive Assistant Team*

Vibhuti Kacholia, Chief Executive Assistant

Margaret de Leon, Chief Operations Assistant

Emmanuel Sackeyfio, Executive Assistant Operations

Maria Lin, Executive Assistant Student Life

Micaela Consens, Executive Assistant Student Life

Krishna Mansukhani, Executive Assistant Research & Administration

Sophia Di Nicolo, Executive Assistant Research & Administration

Joshua Bienstock, Executive Assistant Research & Administration

Winston Chan, Executive Assistant Research & Administration

Zubiya Burney, Administrative Assistant

## *Staff Team*

Sabrina Battaglin, Internal Coordinator

Suzanne Belleau, General Manager

Krishna Bhagat, Community Resource Specialist

Ferris Bledin, Events Coordinator

Branden Cave, Speaker

Tasnim Choudhury, Community Resource Specialist

Marco Hernandez-Henriquez, Programs Coordinator

Maya James, Community Resource Specialist

Nicole Johnson, Executive Coordinator

Judy Josefowicz, Special Advisor, Strategic Projects

Wafiyah Khanam, Community Resource Connections Coordinator

Yara Koders Shah, Manager, People & Culture



### ***Staff Team***

Alicia Lashley, Outreach & Partnerships Coordinator  
Kate MacMillan, Events Manager, Student Commons  
Terri Nikolaevsky, Senior Manager, Programs & Services  
Jaime Nolan, Facilities Coordinator  
Leanne O'Brien, Director, Communications & Engagement  
Brian Stock, Director, Communications & Engagement  
Skylar Petrah, Community Resources Specialist  
Thianesh Rajendran, Bookkeeper & HR Assistant  
Tasia Richards, Digital Media Specialist  
Spencer Robertson, Community Animator, Student Groups  
Ankit Sharma, Director of Operations  
Amy Stewart, Senior Content Advisor  
Zubie Taupan, Research Associate  
Deng Tor, Community Resource Specialist  
Jillian Warma, Community Resource Specialist

### ***2020-2021 Board of Directors***

Jeannie Yoo, University College Director  
Pranay Prem, University College Director  
Basmah Ramadan, University College Director  
Matthew Ho, St. Michael's College Director  
Jonathan Hsu, St. Michael's College Director  
Fiona Reuter, Trinity College Director  
Radhika Dhawan, Victoria College Director  
Ava Harrington, Victoria College Director  
Sierra Bevacqua, Woodsworth College Director  
Miloni Mehta, Woodsworth College Director  
Sheryl Ordonez, Woodsworth College Director  
Karel Peters, New College Director  
Ramtin Taramsari, New College Director  
Kayleigh McCormick, New College Director  
Katherine Jung, Life Sciences Director  
Alex Erickson, Social Sciences Director  
Sidrah Rana, Mathematical and Physical Sciences Director

### ***2020-2021 Board of Directors***

Jai Kakkar, Rotman Commerce Director  
Astrid Chandler, Humanities Director  
Evan Kanter, Computer Science Director  
Andrew Chen, Engineering Director  
Nelson Lee, Engineering Director  
Diana Li, Engineering Director  
Tiffany Tiua, KPE Director  
Catherine Wang, Music Director  
José Power, Architecture & Visual Studies Director  
Rose Mohammad, Professional-Faculties-at-Large Director  
Vanshika Dhawan, Law Director  
Meredith McKinnon, Nursing Director  
Shaon Parial, Pharmacy Director  
Danielle Lewis, Medicine Director  
Nermin Piragic, Dentistry Director

### ***2020-2021 First Year Council***

Anusha Madhusudanan, FYC President  
Maggie Kou, FYC Vice-President  
Chloe Panganiban, FYC Policies Commission Chair  
Jessie Wu, FYC Events Commission Chair  
Elif Erzican, FYC Finance Commission Chair  
Zaiboon Azhar, FYC Outreach Commission Chair  
Jenny Shen, FYC Finance Commission Vice-Chair  
Shmily Lin  
Isha Rizwan  
Dasha Tereschenko  
Catherine Economopoulos  
Maria Ebeid  
Olivia Forrest  
Jonathon Wang  
Marjorie He  
Zhen Chew  
Sofia Bravo



UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO  
**STUDENTS' UNION**



2020-2021 Executive Team