SCARBOROUGH CAMPUS STUDENTS’ UNION
2016-2017 PRIORITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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Preamble

The Scarborough Campus Students’ Union (SCSU) is the official representative of all 12,000 full-time undergraduate students at the University of Toronto Scarborough Campus (UTSC). As per our Mission Statement, the SCSU is committed to progressively, responsibly and effectively representing and serving the changing needs of students. That said, we, the Executive, are dedicated to fulfilling our mission statement by addressing the issues that systematically impact our members and the surrounding community. The following document comprises few of several concerns expressed by students, and each concern is equipped with recommendations that would greatly improve the UTSC experience.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Canada recently published 94 Calls to Action, outlining the ways in which all Canadians can work to redress the colonial legacy and advance the process of Canadian reconciliation on Turtle Island.

According to the 2006 Census, 26,575 Indigenous people live within Toronto. Of these people, the vast majority (71%) are “first generation” residents of Toronto, meaning that they were born and raised somewhere other than Toronto. For these people, the two most common reasons for moving to Toronto were finding employment (42%) and to pursue education (38%). As part of the reconciliation process, the University of Toronto can play an important role in filling this desire for education by creating an educational environment that promotes and creates awareness of Indigenous knowledge.

UTSC in particular is in a prime location to take on this task because of the Indigenous community that surrounds our campus, including Eastview Public School, Sir Wilfrid Laurier Collegiate Institute, and Native Child and Family Services being located only a few minutes away.

The creation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Steering Committee at the University of Toronto is an important first step in this process, but there is still much that needs to be done.

Recommendations

1. University of Toronto, Scarborough administration work toward imbedding Indigenous literature, teachings, languages and/or culture into areas of study across all academic departments.
2. University of Toronto, Scarborough create new Indigenous staff positions, including a new Indigenous Community Liaison position and a full time Indigenous elder at UTSC, as well as recruit Indigenous faculty.
**Mandatory Equity Training**

University of Toronto Scarborough Campus is one of the most diverse campuses across Canada, with respect to folks with different ability, citizenship status, and with respect to race. UTSC believes, “it is vital to foster diversity in all facets of our campus culture.” In order to fully embrace diversity, it must first be respected. Students, staff and faculty deserve to have their diverse identities and experiences equitably recognized across the University of Toronto, and particularly at the Scarborough Campus.

Providing mandatory equity training for faculty and staff will help create a safer environment for all, including our members. We have spoken with students whose safety and comfort have been compromised on campus and in classroom settings, sometimes because of other students, and other times because of public or private interactions with professors. Equity training will offer an opportunity for faculty and staff to unlearn oppressive tendencies that disempower students. Further, staff and faculty may be offered ways to inclusively and respectfully engage with students and co-workers. Also, mandatory equity training will ensure that faculty and staff understand intersectional differences in the UTSC community, and that these differences are truly a strength.

**Recommendations**

1. University of Toronto Scarborough to create mandatory equity training for faculty and staff.

**Key Players:** Bruce Kidd, William Gough, Desmond Pouyat

**Student Space**

There is a great demand for student space on campus. Since the removal of the R-space, SCSU has had to renovate the TV Lounge to accommodate dancers who no longer had space to practice. This has increasingly become a trend on campus, with students having limited recreational and study space. As UTSC rapidly expands within the new few years it is vital that student recreational and study space is prioritized for the academic and personal success.

**Recommendation:**
1. Have a Scarborough Campus Students’ Union representative on the Space Allocation Committee and on building committees to ensure student concerns are addressed.
2. Keep Scarborough Campus Students’ Union up to date on development plans through student consultation.

Key Players: Desmond Poyut, Andrew Arifuzzaman, Bruce Kidd, Bill Gough

Prioritizing Student Booking Requests at TPASC

In 2010, University of Toronto ran a referendum to increase student levy fees as a way to support the creation of the Toronto Pan Am Sports Centre (TPASC). With the increase in fees, students were promised access to study space and open organizing space in the Centre. Currently, however, it is apparent that there is a lack of access to space that meet the needs of many of the students and student-lead organizations.

With the temporary loss of student space on campus during the development stage of Highland Halls, there will be a severely increased demand for space. Student groups, including cultural and dance clubs on campus, often booked the R Space semesters in advance to secure space for their programming and practices. Reflecting on the historic student leadership in running the referendum, and the current inaccessibility of TPASC bookings for students, it is important that we be included around the major decision-making table.

Recommendations:

1. The University of Toronto Scarborough work with SCSU to develop a clear booking process for student organizations, including prioritizing the needs of student-led programming and bookings at TPASC.
2. Increase study space for students in TPASC.
3. As there is only one student representative – SCAA, invite additional student representation on the TPASC Board.

Key Players: Andrew Arifuzzaman, Bruce Kidd

Transit

Access to adequate and efficient transit has been a constant concern for students at the University of Toronto Scarborough Campus. Though there have been conversations surrounding TTC improvement, including the Eglinton Crosstown East LRT which would stop at the Scarborough Campus, there is a need to discuss general transit improvements on campus.

For one, the YRT is a service that has not been made accessible to the students of UTSC. Many of our members travel from York Region, and pay multiple fares in order
to come to UTSC. The long travel times along with the financial burden of paying for multiple modes of transit is cumbersome for students. Moreover, this is an issue of access which discourages potential students from enrolling in to the Scarborough Campus. There is a demand and a need to have an YRT stop at UTSC, which will better connect York Region students to the Scarborough Campus.

Another transit improvement that needs to be addressed is improvements to the existing 198E U of T Scarborough. The 198 Express was implemented in September 2014, replacing the 116 E Morningside East Express, to provide a more efficient and better connection between UTSC and the Kennedy Subway. Although this was a major improvement and helpful for students, there still has to be improvements made to the number of current stops and the service frequency. Initially, the 198E wasn’t even designed to pick up passengers on the way. The current 198 Express has 13 stops whereas the 86E Scarborough East Express which consists of similar stops only has 6 stops; stopping only at Kennedy Station, Eglinton Ave East at Markham Rd, Kingston Rd at Lawrence Ave East, Kingston Rd and Morningside Ave, Highland Creek at Kingston Rd, and Meadowvale Rd at Ellesmere Rd. The 198E has over twice the number of stops at 86E even though the purpose of the 198E is make it faster for students to get between Kennedy Station and UTSC. Having these several stops which could be accessed by other buses compromises the efficiency of the 198E. In regards to service times, the bus service should run more frequently because as it stands the bus comes every 12 minutes but it would be more accessible for students if service frequency is increased to every 10 minutes.

Transit improvements should be a priority to ensure that students have access to UTSC.

**Recommendations:**

1. University of Toronto, Scarborough lobby York Region Transit for a bus to stop at the Scarborough Campus
2. University of Toronto, Scarborough administration work with the Toronto Transit Commission for speed and frequency improvements to the 198 U of T Scarborough Rocket.
3. The University of Toronto, Scarborough proactively communicate, consult, and include the Scarborough Campus Students’ Union in addressing transit improvements on and around the campus.

**Key Players:** Andrew Arifuzzaman

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**Laptop Policy**

The Academic Handbook recognizes that the use of laptops in the classroom is an area of growing concern for professors and recommends that professors discourage the inappropriate use of laptops in the classroom. However, it fails to address invisible
access needs their students may have, and does not provide professors any advice on how best mediate inappropriate use. This has resulted in isolated policies developed by individual professors without having consulted with Equity Office or AccessAbility Services.

While some professors have created policies that balance the needs of students with diverse learning styles, others have simply resorted to blanket bans. These bans create untenable situations for students who are registered with AccessAbility, and have also lead to hostile learning environments for students who simply prefer to take notes on a laptop.

Recommendations

1. University of Toronto, Scarborough implement a Laptop Policy Best Practices
2. that balances the need for a distraction free learning environment with the need for student to be able to learn how they choose.
3. University of Toronto, Scarborough work with students and faculty to develop other policies that can be used to ensure that classes remain both engaging, accessible, and non-discriminatory.

Key Players: Bill Gough, Desmond Pouyat

Equity Breadth Requirement

Equity matters are critical in all facets of life and areas of scholarship and this should be reflected in course offerings. Students in every department, whether it be the Natural Sciences, Business, Humanities or Social Sciences need the experience of thinking critically about equity matters in and around their selected fields.

The Scarborough Campus Students’ Union's’ most recent conversations about an Equity Course Requirement were had members of the Dean’s Office. University of Toronto Scarborough administration and SCSU were all very enthusiastic that an equity course would be coming into fruition at the Scarborough Campus, as per recommendation from SCSU in 2015-2016. We also understand that there is potential for a Standalone Equity Certificate to be developed and awarded to students who complete a course related to equity matters upon degree completion. There was hesitancy from the University, however, with respect to committing to developing an Equity Course Requirement at the Scarborough Campus. Though there is no standard requirement through Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance for an equity breadth, there have been instances of equity-based breadth requirements being developed and implemented at Universities in Canada, beyond their standard requirements.

Introducing an equity breadth requirement not only promotes respect and understanding between different communities, but responds to the fact that we live in an intersectional society that requires understanding of cultural differences and
concepts. It will put University of Toronto at the forefront of social change and economic justice.

Recommendation:

1. University of Toronto, Scarborough administration explore the implementation of an equity breadth requirement for undergraduate degree completion.
2. After having set the standard in Ontario, University of Toronto, Scarborough lobby the Ontario Universities Council on Quality Assurance to mandate an equity breadth requirement for Post-Secondary Institutions across the province.

Key Players: Bill Gough, Mark Schmuckler, Bruce Kidd

References


Scarborough Campus Students’ Union. (2015). *2015-2016 Priorities and Recommendations* Unpublished manuscript, University of Toronto, Scarborough, ON.
