



GRADUATE STUDENTS' UNION

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
LOCAL 19, CANADIAN FEDERATION OF STUDENTS

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GSU Response to the 'Towards 2030' Task Force on Enrolment Strategy

The Graduate Students' Union is pleased to have this opportunity to participate in the consultation process on the 'Towards 2030' Task Force on Enrolment Strategy. Overall, we are encouraged by the University's foresight to engage in a long-term strategic planning process.

Due to current graduate enrolment expansion at the University of Toronto, students are facing many challenges associated with access to their supervisors, availability of study space, competition for research funding and increased class sizes. 'Towards 2030' presents an ideal opportunity to reflect on these current issues and to ensure that they are not further exacerbated by plans to increase graduate enrolment to 25% of the student population at the University of Toronto.

Our main concerns in 'Towards 2030' include:

- The "earned autonomy" model of tuition fee regulation, which will reduce access for students wishing to pursue post-secondary education (PSE) at U of T. Recent studies from Statistics Canada have demonstrated that tuition fee increases disproportionately affect low-income families, resulting in "financial reasons" being the most frequently identified barrier to university and college attendance for students who did not pursue PSE.
- Internationalization at U of T as a means to increase University revenue, rather than to enrich the student experience. International recruitment should be aimed towards the best students from across the globe, rather than the students who can afford to come to U of T. In this vein, U of T should seek to diversify its student population, and offer admission and funding support to international students from resource-poor countries as well as to First Nations students in Canada.
- The proposal for a sole graduate campus, which will reduce academic exchange. We advocate for a multi-campus strategy that maintains a balance between undergraduate and graduate enrolment.
- The promotion of professional graduate programs without significant attention to high student debt load and the realities of the job market.
- Increased commercialization of research at U of T, and prioritization of disciplines that are more amenable to industry-sponsorship, such as the natural sciences, engineering and the health sciences, which may place funding for basic research in the humanities, social sciences or sciences in jeopardy.

Target enrolment scenarios for each campus

- 1- In light of the increasing demand for post-secondary education in the near future, the University should investigate the possibility of a fourth University of Toronto campus in

- a region of the GTA with high population growth (e.g. Brampton).¹
- 2- We recognize the necessity of graduate enrolment expansion. However, we need to accommodate growth without compromising quality. For example: effort should be directed at maintaining a reasonable student-to-faculty ratio. This is a very important index that cannot be dismissed or taken for granted with respect to the delivery of quality graduate experience. U of T student-to-faculty ratios run 60% higher than the American peer average and 20% higher than the Canadian peer mean. Another concern is the lack of graduate student space. Many graduate students report that there is insufficient space at the University to accommodate current graduate enrolment. Efforts should be made to ensure that every graduate student offered admission to the University of Toronto is guaranteed access to laboratory/study space. Bearing in mind the current constraints on graduate students accessing teaching assistantships and research assistantships, further graduate expansion should not limit the resources available to existing students. In planning for 2030, the University should ensure that these essential components of graduate education are preserved.
 - 3- Efforts should be made to increase accessibility for international students at all three campuses, not just as a funding resource for the institution, but as a means of diversifying the University and encouraging international academic exchange. The University should develop a clear and comprehensive strategy for international student recruitment, which draws students from all parts of the world, especially resource-poor countries. We recognize the University's efforts to lobby the government for increased funding for post-secondary education, and encourage the University to ask for the inclusion of international students into BIU allocations.

Mix & balance by campus

- 1- We believe in a quadruple-campus vision/strategy with improvement of the coordination and communication between the campuses. We do not believe in designating St. George as the sole graduate campus, as it would discourage exchange between students and scholars at different points in their academic careers.

Graduate versus undergraduate balance

- 1- Every campus at the University of Toronto should have a balance between graduate and undergraduate students. An undergraduate/post-graduate mix ensures academic growth opportunities for graduate students, through the availability of teaching assistantships. With the projected increase of undergraduate enrolment in Ontario, the University should plan to maintain the present transition rate from undergraduate to graduate programs.

Types of degrees (e.g. professional masters versus doctoral stream)

- 1- Expansion of professional graduate programs should be based on their academic merit and professional needs, rather than as a means to increase tuition revenues to the University. Unregulated tuition fees for professional Masters programs limit access to graduate studies. Increasing enrolment in large professional programs without sufficient attention to the reality of the job market creates the phenomenon of graduating highly skilled classes of students who have significant student debt, and cannot find work in

¹ The Canadian Census 2005 reported that Brampton is the fastest growing city in Canada (<http://www.statcan.ca>).

their fields of study. Also, higher enrolment in professional programs often puts guaranteed work placements in jeopardy, forcing students to double up on placements or miss opportunities for placement, which negatively impacts the quality of their graduate experience.

- 2- Given that due to current graduate enrolment expansion, individual departments/programs are challenged in providing transfer opportunities to their Masters' students into PhD programs, the University should ensure that these constraints are clearly communicated to all newly admitted students. Graduate departments/programs that offer 'doctoral stream' programs need to ensure that they have space and resources for their Masters' students who are wishing to apply for doctoral studies.

Sources of students and recruitment strategies

- 1- The University of Toronto community (students, staff and faculty) should reflect the diversity of the Canadian population. As a publicly-funded Ontario institution, the University has an obligation to the province of Ontario and the GTA; in addition, as a premiere research institution, the University's recruitment strategy should encompass 'great minds' from across Canada and the globe.
- 2- The University has an obligation to ensure access to the growing population of First Nations people in Canada, who already face significant barriers to post-secondary education. A specific strategy to promote post-secondary studies for First Nations people at the University of Toronto should be developed.
- 3- The recruitment of international students should not be promoted as a financial strategy for the University, but rather as a means of enriching the overall graduate experience. A diverse U of T community brings new perspectives to the types of research on our campuses and facilitates the global exchange of ideas. Emphasis should be placed on the recruitment of students from resource-poor countries.

Breadth of disciplines across the institution

- 1- The University should offer a large breadth of programs that allow for cutting-edge research and that address emerging societal challenges, such as aging, climate change, health, migration, and technology.
- 2- Interdisciplinary graduate programs at the University should be promoted and expanded upon, given the complex nature of current problems that require input and engagement from a variety of disciplinary perspectives.
- 3- 'Towards 2030' outlines provisions to increase industry-sponsored research at the University of Toronto. As a public institution, the University should be responsive to the public's needs, rather than to particular needs of private companies. Furthermore, we are concerned that commercialization may lead to a decrease in the quality and innovation of the research conducted at the expense of basic research in the humanities, sciences and social sciences, and to infringements on academic freedom.

Respectfully submitted,

The GSU Executive