



To the Membership of the UTGSU,

On behalf of our fellow graduate students, the UTGSU Executive Committee has achieved the goals outlined by the 2014 *Provostial Recommendations on Graduate Student Financial Support* this past electoral year. We can officially announce that the following three major objectives have been achieved for graduate students in the funded cohort:

- Funding data became available for each department on the School of Graduate Studies (SGS) website.
- Limits were placed on the amount of employment income allowed to contribute to the stipends earned by funded students.
- A funding complaint process was created for students to help rectify issues with their funding packages.

In January 2014, the Provostial Committee on Graduate Student Financial Support, made up of UTGSU Executives, CUPE3902, and the University of Toronto administration, published a [report](#) to the Provost outlining specific recommendations that should be implemented to improve graduate student financial support. The Provost agreed to these recommendations and committed to implementing them by July 2016. However, these recommendations were ignored and remained incomplete until September 2015.

Due to the impact made by the CUPE3902 strike, the UTGSU Executives were able to reintroduce the recommendations and hold the administration accountable to accomplishing these previous commitments. In this 2016/2017 academic year, the proposed recommendations have been finalized and possess clear objectives with tangible outcomes. Below is a summary of these objectives and how they were achieved:

### **1. Increase Transparency Regarding Program Funding and Time to Completion**

By achieving this objective, students are now able to visit the SGS website and see the amount of guaranteed funding they will receive from their department, as well as the average time to completion. Furthermore, they are also provided with a breakdown of the funding package components, outlining how many TA/RA or other employment hours are required to achieve this base-funding package. The availability of this information promotes transparency and empowers current and prospective students to make informed decisions and plan ahead.



## **2. Decrease and Limit the Amount of Employment Income that Contributes to Base Funding Package**

We continue to work on decreasing the amount of employment income that contributes to the base funding package and have made significant progress in the Faculty of Social Work, and the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. In the Faculty of Social Work, students are now required to work 150 fewer hours for their stipend in second and third year, resulting in an additional \$3000 of University of Toronto Fellowship income. In the Faculty of Art and Science, the maximum amount of employment income allowed to contribute to the funding package is capped at the maximum amount of TA hours plus a maximum of \$1500 from RAships. This is a significant improvement, as this is the first-ever limit to be implemented, as past practice was to include over \$3000 of RAship income as part of base funding package. This limit ensures that students are able to keep any RAship income over \$1500. Changes in both Faculties were implemented in September of 2016.

## **3. Create a Funding Complaint Process**

The 2016-2017 UTGSU Executives finalized a funding complaint process that recognizes the UTGSU as a resource for graduate students to address concerns with their funding packages. One of the major benefits of this process is that if a student is not satisfied with a decision made by the administration, that student can bring the complaint to an Ombudsperson to make a final recommendation. Having a process in which students can access an impartial third party ensures that complaints are dealt with appropriately and given an opportunity to resolve. This process gives students the resources to assess if their funding packages conform to Faculty or University policies and guidelines.

In conclusion, the implementation of these recommendations is a step in the right direction and we recognize that there is more work to be done. While we have been able to achieve tangible ways to improve the experiences of funded graduate students, we recognize the need to investigate solutions that can also benefit graduate students within the professional and unfunded streams. The UTGSU Executive will continue to advocate for the needs of our Membership and we remain committed to achieving objectives that lead to impactful improvements.

Sincerely,

The 2016-2017 UTGSU Executive Committee



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