

Mr. Andrew Szende
Chair, University Affairs Board
27 King's College Circle, Room 206
Toronto ON Canada
M5S 1A1

May 26th, 2016

Re: New Policy on Open, Accessible and Democratic Autonomous Student Organizations

Dear Mr. Szende,

We are writing to express our opposition to the proposed *Policy on Open, Accessible and Democratic Autonomous Student Organizations* that was proposed at the University Affairs Board meeting on May 25th, 2016.

We have articulated to University administrators our concerns about the Student Society Summit, which was the pre-requisite to the development of the proposed new policy, which in our opinion:

- Violates the legal commitment of Erindale College Students' Union Inc. (Operating as UTMSU) to respond to its members requests ONLY and not a third party body when it pertains to UTMSU governance or decisions made by its members.
- The proposed University Complaint and Resolution Council for Student Societies (CRCSS) is a council whose membership is not comprised of members of UTMSU, hence the recommendations or decisions are not binding as per the constitution of Erindale College Students' Union (UTMSU) and most importantly, the Ontario's Corporations Act.

It is important to note that the Erindale College Students' Union (UTMSU) was not consulted during the development of the policy. Our last contact with the Office of the Vice-Provost, Students was May 24, 2016 following up on a meeting request sent on March 23, 2016.

It is unfortunate that the University Administration has proposed to move forward with a policy without consulting all the relevant stakeholders that will be impacted by the new policy, and will undermine the watchdog role of student unions, who act in the best interests of their members and not necessarily the University Administration, when it pertains to policy matters.

At every phase of the development of the policy, UTMSU was excluded from the process. As the students' union that represents all undergraduate students at the University of Toronto Mississauga, this is very problematic. We have not yet received a response from the University to correspondence that we sent to your predecessor on March 3, 2014.

In the correspondence we outlined the following concerns raised by the elected representatives of UTM students approved through a motion considered on February 25, 2014:

- *The Summit is undemocratic and does not allow for participation or engagement by our members.*
- *The Summit privileges some student groups over others, who have been disparaged and disrespected through this process.*

- *The Summit has been discussing scenarios that treat University of Toronto Mississauga (UTM) students as second-class students of the University of Toronto, and bars us from participating in valuable student leadership opportunities.*

As a students' union, we are further concerned that:

- *The Summit represents a breach of students' union autonomy.*
- *The Summit has engaged in discussions about other students' unions who have been barred from participating.*
- *There have never been any specific terms of reference or information about the scope of this body provided to us. All information relating to its purpose has been vague.*
- *The Summit has encouraged the UTMSU and the UTSU to open ourselves up to litigation by violating contract law.*
- *The Summit seeks negotiation and compromise on an unequal playing field.*
- *The Summit fails to recognize and discuss incidents of bullying and intimidation tactics as part of the problem.*

The Erindale College Student Union Inc. (UTMSU) is an incorporated entity and will seek a legal remedy if the policy is enforced onto UTMSU. If the University adopts the new policy, which inevitably becomes a tool to attempt to coerce, intimidate or force UTMSU to adopt or abide by the policy, the University will be acting in bad faith and forcing the students' union to make decisions in contradiction to the mandate of its members. This is a breach of the important and crucial role of the student union being autonomous from the University Administration, so that it could fulfill its role as a watchdog on behalf of its members.

We fear that the decision by the University Administration to develop such policy may be a reflection of a growing trend that is undermining student union autonomy in Ontario.

UTMSU believes that remedies should be sought through legislative mechanisms to protect the autonomy of a students' union while respecting the rights of its members.

We implore members of University Affairs Board to table consideration of the proposed new policy to the next governance cycle to allow for stakeholders to be consulted about the purpose of the new proposed policy and its legal and operational impact on the functions of student unions.

UTMSU's experience with our sister students' union, the Association of Part-Time Undergraduate Students should serve as a reminder to all stakeholders that the Judiciary continues to respect organizational autonomy and the wishes of its members through the democratically established policies and by-laws of the organization. Any attempts to circumvent these processes by a select few members will be a dangerous precedent that we will caution against.

We remain concerned that the contents of the previous letters distributed on February 10, 2014 and March 3, 2014 have not been addressed by the University Administration through the University Provost Professor Cheryl Regehr.

We look forward to your response.

Yours truly,



Nour Alideeb
President,
University of Toronto Mississauga Students' Union

Cc:

Prof. Donald Ainslie

Prof. Graham White

Prof. Linda White

Honourable Reza Moridi, Minister, Training, Colleges and Universities

Prof. Joan E. Foley, Ombudsperson, University of Toronto

Ms. Jasmine Denike, President, University of Toronto Students' Union

Prof. Cheryl Regehr, Provost and Vice President, University of Toronto

Prof. Meric Gertler, President, University of Toronto

Prof. Cynthia Messenger, President, University of Toronto Faculty Association

Ms. Jessica Kirk, President, Scarborough Campus Students' Union

Ms. Mala Kashyap, President, Association of Part-time Undergraduate Students
Board of Directors, University of Toronto Mississauga Students' Union