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# Troubling reports about an Amazon/U of T deal

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Dear colleagues,

Last week, The Logic published **this article** (if paywalled, you can also access it from **here**) which describes troubling conduct by University of Toronto senior administrators surrounding a corporate donation from Amazon.

According to the article, the University accepted more than half a million dollars from Amazon last year to fund research and symposia on competition law at the Faculty of Law, and to pay a portion of the salary of a key staff member. The agreement came at a time when the sufficiency of existing competition laws to address the growing power of corporations like Amazon was becoming a live issue among experts, academics, and political leaders, and when the federal government had pledged to review Canada's competition rules in ways that could affect Amazon.

Most disturbingly, the article reveals that Amazon's donation was not disclosed to the academic community or to the public, and further, that speakers who participated in a seminar funded by the donation were chosen from a list prepared by Amazon. It also notes that the University of Ottawa rejected a similar donation from Amazon out of concerns that the terms that Amazon insisted on violated that university's academic freedom standards. (For a more detailed article on the University of Ottawa's rejection of the Amazon deal, **see University of Ottawa scrubs proposed partnership with 'insistent' and 'controlling' Amazon**).

These are very concerning allegations about decisions at the University of Toronto, which, if true, threaten to undermine academic and public trust in our institution and in the integrity of its members. If true, the allegations would also appear to violate several University policies designed to ensure the fundamental principles of integrity, autonomy, and academic freedom, including the University of Toronto's own **Provostial Guidelines on Donations**, updated in 2021 following earlier concerns about undue donor influence. They also raise serious questions about what collegial processes were followed, if any, before the decision to accept the donation was made and what steps were taken to ensure that the gift supports approved academic priorities.

It has been more than a week since the article was published and we have not heard anything from the Administration about these very serious claims. Accordingly, today we have contacted the Provost, requesting an urgent meeting to hear more about this situation.

We will update you as we learn more.

Sincerely,

Jeff Bale
UTFA Vice-President, University and External Affairs

Terezia Zorić
UTFA President

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