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Prof. Levine - UTFA Presidential Statement #3

Dear Colleagues:

I know this is the end of the semester and you probably have a pile of grading similar to the one that I should have finished last Monday, so I am grateful that you are taking a few minutes to read about **how I will lead UTFA if elected to be your president**.

NO CERTIFICATION DRIVE

"*In labour strife, as in war, the first casualty is truth, and there is no exception for universities. Slogans, spin, and often the demonization of opponents move to centre stage, and the performance is public*."
– Peter Mackinnon (President Emeritus of the University of Saskatchewan, 2015)

As President, I will move UTFA beyond the strife and power struggles that recently marred governance at our university, not exacerbate them by organizing a certification drive. For many years, UTFA leaders argued that our faculty association enjoyed advantages that outweighed the benefits of certifying as a union. As a result, decades of UTFA presidents *never* sought certification. *I am the only candidate in this race pledged to continue that tradition*.

As President, I will build badly needed trust with the administration. Through building trust, UTFA and the administration will be able to find common ground on key policies and procedures such as PTR. If UTFA and the administration cannot agree on salaries in a timely fashion, I will insist that we use the mechanisms we have already in place: first mediation and then arbitration, which can work very well for UTFA members. We should remember that the certified status of some of other Ontario's faculty associations has not led to much more success in recent negotiations. I will recognize that some policies must be decided on Governing Council, where our faculty colleagues will be able to count on UTFA to deliberate thoughtfully about many of the same issues so they can best engage and speak for us at critical junctures in policy debates. I will take a pragmatic approach to other issues that arbitrators are unlikely to adjudicate and seek negotiated resolutions.

ACADEMIC FREEDOM

"...the University's fundamental commitment is to the principle that debate or deliberation may not be suppressed because the ideas put forth are thought by some or even by most members of the University community to be offensive, unwise, immoral, or wrong-headed. It is for the individual members of the University community, not for the University as an institution, to make those judgments for themselves..." – Chicago Principles

As President, I will protect your academic freedom. UTFA will applaud, not criticize scholars who win prestigious awards for their research, and will insist that our university continues to act in a manner consistent with our own rules and statements, as well as legal requirements that we honor the Chicago Principles. I will insist that departments and other units adhere to principles of institutional neutrality, and insist that no department dictate to faculty and students what scholarly approaches are "essential," and which are not.

A DEMOCRATIC UTFA

If I am elected, I promise that a democratic UTFA will be a bigger priority than my own, or my allies', election to executive positions. Democratic organizations thrive when their members are engaged by vibrant competition and when leaders can always be held accountable. To those ends, I will ensure elections are contested on a fair playing field enforced by a CRO with the authority to take corrective action when campaigns violate the rules. Unlike in this campaign, I will ensure that there is time before voting begins for candidates to campaign. I will insist that information about UTFA be made public and readily available to all members, including detailed association budgets so our members can assess whether our association is stronger than it was at the previous election. At the same time, I will secure information that is confidential and intended only for association use with the same rigor all of our colleagues use to protect similar data collected from human subjects. In contrast to an email sent out earlier this week, UTFA leaders will no longer be able to misuse data provided by members on salary/benefit surveys for personal campaign purposes without your permission.

As President, I will listen to diverse and dissenting voices. Your representatives to UTFA Council will be given opportunities to discuss and debate every proposal brought by UTFA's committees before UTFA acts. I will encourage members to join all of UTFA's committees, working together with colleagues from across our three campuses to find ways to improve our university. I will restore transparency to our organization's finances, formulate a functioning anti-harassment and non-discrimination policy, and ensure that our staff are given the resources - and protections - they need to thrive.

LEVERAGING MY SKILLS & EXPERTISE

As President, I will use my skills as a political scientist to strengthen our negotiating team. Under my leadership, UTFA will collect accurate data about our members and their working condition, share that data, complete rigorous analyses in a timely fashion, understand even the most technical of the administration's arguments, and will be honest with our members about how UTFA and Simcoe Hall arrived at an outcome.

You can read eight reasons why I think it is important to vote via this link, read about why I am running for president by clicking here, or learn more about me by visiting my website: renanlevine.com

Thank you for your support!

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