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## Report of the Chair of the Membership Committee, 2023-2024

April 19, 2024

This Committee provides advice on all matters related to promoting membership engagement with and participation in UTFA.

by Deb Cowen

Greetings colleagues!

It is my pleasure to share this annual update on the work of the [Membership Committee](#). As Chair of the Membership Committee, I have worked to uphold and expand the important past work of colleagues in this vital area of UTFA's efforts. The Membership Committee holds critical responsibilities within the Association's wider work; we are responsible for promoting members' engagement with, and participation in, UTFA. Initiatives to help keep the membership informed on the work of Council and the Bargaining Team, to build a sense of community and investment in the work of the Association, and to connect members to each other and to UTFA, are especially important as we continue to rebuild our social and professional lives in the wake of lockdowns, and in a time of attenuated hardship and division.

As the Chair of the Membership Committee, I have worked with the wonderful support of so many members, Council Representatives, Executive Officers, and staff, to engage faculty and librarians in UTFA's efforts and to bring our members information and insights about our work on the Tri-Campus and beyond. I offer some brief updates below, and as ever, I invite you to get in touch if you are interested in learning more or getting involved in the Membership Committee!

### Academic Citizenship Award

One of the greatest pleasures of our work this year was in honouring the recipients of the UTFA Academic Citizenship Award. The award honours "initiatives undertaken by members of UTFA who have made a significant contribution to our understanding of the relationship between the University and public life—whether by encouraging the positive engagement of academics in key social issues, or by working to extend democratic and accountable practices within the University itself, or by making an outstanding

contribution to the well-being of their community.” The awards ceremony took place on the patio of the Faculty Club, and was planned with the outgoing Committee chair, Paul Hamel, and with invaluable support from Claire Reyes, Jess Martin and Nellie De Lorenzi.

## **Formation of Two Subcommittees**

This year, the membership committee formed two subcommittees to undertake some distinct areas of work: a communications subcommittee, and a climate justice subcommittee.

- **Communications**

Building on the longstanding work of the Membership Committee in this area, a Communications Subcommittee met regularly (eventually, weekly!) to strategize how to enhance both the work of UTFA Council and our effectiveness in reaching and activating the membership through our efforts in this area. We focussed our efforts on developing clear, efficient updates to members, as well as a longer-term communications strategy that could involve video and other media. We also worked to help reinvigorate Council by introducing more interactive formats for meetings.

- **Climate Justice**

This new subcommittee emerged out of the recognition that there is a groundswell of interest among UTFA members in working as colleagues to address the climate crisis. No doubt, this topic overlaps with the work of many other UTFA committees (and our efforts have involved much collaboration). However, at its core, we aimed to mobilize member interest and create a space for engagement. The first initiative of the subcommittee focussed on the University Pension Plan (UPP). In response to calls for the world to transition away from fossil fuels, and with the knowledge that the University Pension Plan (UPP) has already divested from the coal industry, UTFA Council passed a motion to call on the UPP to implement an immediate screen on any new investments in oil and gas and announce a rapid timeline for complete divestment from the oil and gas industry. This motion is the culmination of many years of thoughtful and dedicated work from tri-campus UTFA members, working in collaboration with staff and students, to tackle climate issues on campus. Drafted by UTFA's Sub-Committee on Climate Justice, the motion was developed in consultation with colleagues from the Pension Committee and experts in finance, who considered the dual challenges of the climate crisis and the fund's fiduciary responsibilities. The resolution is crafted with strength, modesty, and precision, ensuring no undue risk to the fund while also insisting on a responsible and meaningful path forward.

Every bit of this work was possible because of the active engagement of so many committed and creative colleagues. If this brief account of our work piques your interest, or if you have other ideas for initiatives to enhance our connection and communication with members, then consider getting involved in the Membership Committee!

Many thanks and see you at the AGM.