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Report of the President, 2015–2016

April 26, 2016

Greetings. The Annual General Meeting coincides with the arrival of spring (we assume!), the end of the winter term, and in many units, transition from one academic year to another. UTFA's calendar too turns over, with any vacancies on the UTFA Executive filled by the Council at its May meeting for terms commencing July 1. This year has seen an UTFA Presidential election as well. I want to offer my sincere congratulations to Cynthia Messenger, whose term will likewise begin July 1. I am looking forward to working with and supporting Cynthia during this period of transition. I also wish to thank Paul Hamel for his candidacy. UTFA's presidential elections comprise important opportunities for members to directly shape UTFA's direction (in my opinion, such opportunities are too few – see below); both candidates deserve our appreciation for facilitating direct member engagement.

With the election of Cynthia Messenger as your new President, I am approaching the end of my own run. While I have been President since July 1, 2012, I have been a member of the Executive Committee since July 2007; it is time for a change. I am extremely grateful that I have been given the opportunity to serve UTFA's extraordinary (and extraordinarily diverse) membership and the University of Toronto. UTFA will always be about and for its members, not its leaders. Our organizational strength and capacity to advocate flows from the active engagement and support of our members. We must never forget this.

Now is an important time for UTFA. I have served during a multi-year process of reform and renewal, on two fronts. The first involved modernizing our relationship with the University administration, seeking ways to enhance UTFA's role in crafting policies comprising terms and conditions of academic employment for faculty and librarians. The unparalleled professional achievements and expectations that distinguish faculty and librarians at U of T demand that such policies – including academic freedom, privacy provisions pertaining to academic records, appointments policies, processes governing significant academic reorganization, etc. – be of the highest procedural and substantive quality. Perhaps just as importantly, it is vital in any university worthy of being called as much (and certainly at U of T) that such policies meaningfully reflect the views of academics rather than being crafted in an environment of administrative excess. The recently concluded Special Joint Advisory Committee process (SJAC), a collaborative initiative between UTFA and the Administration, was founded on these principles. SJAC

resulted in several important changes that will shape the landscape of academic work at this University and the relationship between UTFA and Simcoe Hall for years to come.[1] In sum, SJAC resulted in:

i. Changes to the policies and procedures governing tenure review, including greater transparency in the drafting of summaries of evidence from expert reviewers, extension in the time to tenure to six years, and the establishment of a pre-tenure professional development term normally free of assigned teaching and service.
ii. Changes to the policies and procedures governing teaching stream appointments, including securitization and regularization of initial appointments, establishment of an interim pre-promotion review, introduction of professorial titles and ranks, and explicit recognition of the scholarly character of the stream (the latter meaning that teaching stream appointments at U of T are teaching *intensive* faculty appointments, *not* teaching *only* faculty appointments).
iii. Modernization of the language on academic freedom in the UTFA Memorandum of Agreement, recognizing that academic freedom applies to research, teaching *and* service, and that academic freedom specifically covers creative or professional work undertaken by faculty and librarians in their capacity as U of T employees.
iv. Establishment, for the first time, of a prescribed collegial process governing significant academic restructuring initiatives, designed to provide transparency and accountability when significant changes are proposed that may affect the configuration of academic units. The new policy deals with timelines, provision of information, and opportunity for collegial input.
v. Significant reform and update of the UTFA Memorandum of Agreement, the foundational document that prescribes the role of UTFA at U of T. Changes to the MoA are highlighted by a new, formal negotiating process for UTFA and the Administration to engage over proposals for changes to existing policies or the establishment of new policies that are of a significant, University-wide character and that comprise terms and conditions of employment for faculty and/or librarians. This new process includes provision for good faith and full scope bilateral negotiation, but also third party facilitation and fact-finding when the parties are unable to agree on their own. Establishment of effectively full scope collective bargaining rights over monetary and non-monetary terms and conditions of employment, and a new dispute resolution process for those matters excluded from arbitration, ends years of stalemate between UTFA and Simcoe Hall over the severe limitations of our previously antiquated and dysfunctional MoA. The modernization specifically brings to an end the era of important academic policies frozen in time without adequate means to modernize or supplement them. It also, hopefully, will improve collegiality and accountability. We shall see.

I mentioned earlier a second process of reform and renewal. Here I refer to internal changes to UTFA designed to increase member engagement and to enhance, in turn, the accountability of UTFA's leadership to its members. While the President is directly elected by the members, this is an exception. Other members of the Executive are elected or appointed by the UTFA Council, the latter being the principal decision-making body of UTFA on most matters. In February of 2007, UTFA Council established the Membership Committee, whose Chair was regularized as a member of the Executive in 2008. The Membership Committee serves many functions in supporting other members of the Executive, but the primary focus is to enhance membership outreach and engagement and to make UTFA more responsive and accountable to its membership. Last year, we also established a new committee representing retired members and the Chair of that committee also holds a seat on the Executive. Less formally, in recent years, we have made concerted efforts to consult members more directly and more often by using surveys, by directly circulating bargaining proposals prior to tabling them, and by conducting extensive in-person consultations in the form of department visits and focus groups. I certainly hope these initiatives will continue. With UTFA's new capacities comes an enhanced responsibility to ensure that our

leadership, our negotiating teams, and our representatives on bodies such as the University Pension Committee represent the Association in ways that reflect the views of our membership. We might, for instance, consider moving to direct member ratification of negotiated settlements, as certified unions must do. While there are certainly some members who do not want to see UTFA become certified, there is simply no question that the Labour Relations Act prescribes a higher standard of internal democracy than UTFA now meets. Nothing prevents us from closing that gap and we need not certify to do so. It is a simple matter of constitutional reform. Our strength is our membership; we need to use it.

I look forward to reading about UTFA's future initiatives, a drink in my hand and my toes in the sand as it were. It has been my privilege and honour to represent you, UTFA's members. Thank you for that. I also want to acknowledge and thank all those with whom I have worked in recent years, including Executive members, Council members, Committee members, staff, and external lawyers and consultants. I wish all of you the very best.

Scott Prudham
President

[1] For more information on SJAC, visit our website, and see in particular SJAC Information Report #7.

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