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Update: COVID-19 crisis at U of T

March 17, 2020

UTFA is asking that U of T libraries be closed. We suggest that librarians be permitted to create work-arounds to assist students and faculty. **By keeping public spaces open, the University Administration might well be unwittingly increasing the risk that the virus will spread, including to staff.**

UTFA is keeping correspondence to a minimum because we know that members have been receiving a lot of memos and guidelines from the University Administration. See the notes below.

1. See the new FAQs that have just today been posted by the Division of the Vice-President, Research & Innovation (VPRI):

https://research.utoronto.ca/covid-19

2. Writing centres are operating through a variety of means, including phone and video appointments. Some faculty are creating writing assignments to replace cancelled tests. The writing centres are there to help.

3. Members maintain intellectual property rights over all material that they themselves create for online delivery. UTFA will remind the Administration of this fact.

4. Members are helping other members move teaching online—and this support and engagement are wonderful to see. Faculty should not, however, feel under pressure to post video lectures. Many faculty members are posting lecture notes online (Quercus) and making themselves available for phone appointments, where doing so is possible. Equally, teaching assistants should not feel pressured to produce feats of technological wizardry. Many faculty are eliminating an assignment, where absolutely necessary, including term tests and final exams, and they are redistributing the grade across earlier assignments. Instructors must follow protocols for making changes to syllabi, including conducting class votes (online).

5. I want to assure members that UTFA is available to advise any member who wishes to contact us at advice@utfa.org or at faculty@utfa.org. Our staff are working from home, but they are available by phone and email.

6. Please remember that you may contact the Employee and Family Assistance Program for help with stress. http://benefits.hrandequity.utoronto.ca/efap

With all best wishes in an incredibly challenging time.

Cynthia Messenger
UTFA President

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