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Update: COVID-19 crisis at U of T

March 19, 2020

In this unprecedented crisis, I am humbled to witness the Herculean efforts of our members to maintain teaching and learning against the odds. UTFA is finding that, in several departments and faculties, small numbers of people are helping colleagues identify online tutorials, software, and teaching strategies that hold promise. I am aware of successful initiatives in the Department of English, in Economics, at Rotman, at OISE, and in the writing centres, *to name only a very few examples*. The expertise and dedication of the University's librarians on all three campuses have been incredibly important, and we are all grateful. And where would we be without U of T's superb IT staff?

For some of our members, the switch to online forms of teaching (however imperfect) was possible, but for others, many of them brilliant and devoted teachers, the short timeline, the lack of planning runway, and the huge additional workload burden are overwhelming. UTFA will be surveying its members to gather more information and data on what they have been experiencing during the crisis. Using member responses, UTFA will seek to negotiate various kinds of policy change. More on this later.

To our U of T students, without whom there is no university, no teaching and learning, we wish to convey how very sorry we are that you are suffering. We can only imagine how stressful this term must be for you. Many of you are now home or on your way home. Some of you cannot return home, for an array of valid reasons. The University Administration has confirmed to UTFA that you will be adequately housed. Please know that you are more than welcome here.

U of T students are from all over Canada, the United States, China, Africa, India, Europe, Iran, South America, and other parts of the globe. We look forward to your return to U of T. We hope that day will be soon.

Cynthia Messenger
UTFA President

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