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Report of the Vice-President, University and External Affairs, 2018–2019

June 13, 2019

In my role as Vice-President, University and External Affairs, I represent UTFA on the Board of Directors of both the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations (OCUFA) and the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT). These organizations are dedicated to advancing the interests of faculty and librarians across the province and country, respectively.

Academic Freedom and Free Speech

Both OCUFA and CAUT have been focused on the challenges to academic freedom for faculty and librarians and the threats to free speech. OCUFA's journal, Academic Matters, has recently published an **authoritative issue on the topic of free speech in the academy**. CAUT's Harry Crowe Conference, which I attended as a representative of UTFA, also focused on the topic of academic freedom and free speech. Additionally, in this past year I have also acted as the liaison between UTFA and the following campus groups: the University of Toronto Employee Associations and Unions and student groups such as the Association of Part-time Undergraduate Students, the Graduate Students' Union, and the Canadian Federation of Students. I am proud to engage actively with these groups of university stakeholders whose work is focused on ensuring an equitable and sustainable university sector for the staff and student members of our University of Toronto community.

Ongoing Response to the Recommendations to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission

I also attended the recent panel discussion entitled **"Truth and reconciliation in higher education and the media: What are the responsibilities? What is needed to overcome the legacy of colonialism?"**, which was sponsored by OCUFA and the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education among others. Tanya Talaga, the feature speaker, spoke about the legacy of cultural genocide in Canada and her hope for a more inclusive and equitable future. A panel of indigenous scholars responded and added to her comments.

Challenges to Funding in Higher Education

Much of my work in recent months has involved working with campus groups and OCUFA to plan meaningful responses to the Ontario government's challenges to funding and free speech in the university sector. Following the Conservative government's decisions to reduce tuition fees and slash core funding by 10%, campus groups and faculty associations have focused on organizing and mobilization (see, for example, OCUFA's press release "Reckless government announcement threatens education quality and students' rights". Other events are also being planned to address the Ontario government's recently announced plan to introduce a balloting system for student organization funding. I have been working with the UTEAU group to organize against what is expected to significantly impact the most progressive student groups on campus. A student walkout took place on March 20, 2019, to demonstrate to the Ontario government that attacks on students and student union democracy will not be tolerated.

Mental Health and Well-Being Services, the Prevention of Sexual Violence, and Services for Survivors of Sexual Violence for Students at the University of Toronto

UTFA is carefully following the student protests and debates on the provision and adequacy of mental health care and support for well-being currently provided by the University of Toronto to the students in our community. We were also very concerned about the results of the Ontario government's report on its Student Voices on Sexual Violence Survey, which demonstrated that Ontario's students in higher education experience high levels of sexual violence. We encourage the University of Toronto administration to continue to support these areas and increase the funding and student accessibility to these important student services.

Finally, I would like to thank members of the UTFA Executive for their support and ideas. I would also like to thank the members of the University and External Affairs Committee for their ongoing engagement with these issues and for their assistance in awarding the UTFA Al Miller Award and the UTFA Undergraduate Tuition Awards.

J. Roy Gillis
Vice-President, University and External Affairs

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