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Report of the Vice-President, University and External Affairs, 2020–2021

July 9, 2021

UTFA Undergraduate and Graduate Student Awards
The most rewarding and immediately impactful part of my responsibilities as Vice-President, University and External Affairs has been organizing, awarding, and presenting the UTFA undergraduate and graduate student awards. The members of the University and External Affairs Committee are thrilled to support these exceptional scholars and look forward to meeting them during the Annual General Meeting.

UTFA Committee and Constituency Involvement
As Vice-President, University and External Affairs, I am involved in many external UTFA committees, internal committees, and working groups. I have also been an active and contributing member of the UTFA-Administration Joint Committee. In addition, I was attentive to the concerns and questions raised by my constituents at OISE and helped to organize the recent member consultation and bargaining update at OISE.

Representation of UTFA at the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Association and the Canadian Association of University Teachers

I serve as UTFA's representative to the boards of both OCUFA and CAUT and work to facilitate the exchange of information with these provincial and federal organizations. This role helps UTFA facilitate our broader effort to support sector-wide issues in post-secondary education.

Recently, central in this commitment has been our collective opposition to the unfolding governance and financial crisis at Laurentian University. To date, we are witnessing the troubling unilateral decision by Laurentian's Administration to file for creditor protection, a legal proceeding that has only been applied for private sector matters. Despite widescale appeals to the Ontario government from several faculty associations and across the post-secondary sector, we were disappointed to find that the 2021 budget did not offer financial support for Laurentian.

As Canada’s only university with a tricultural mandate, Laurentian offers an outstanding higher education and research experience in English and French, with a comprehensive approach to Indigenous education. UTFA and Canada’s post-secondary sector all recognize the importance of maintaining Laurentian’s unique programs and cultural and community involvement and are opposed to court involvement or further governmental regulation of internal university governance practices.

Laurentian’s crisis is the consequence of years of underfunding of post-secondary education. Both provincial and federal governments have failed Laurentian University.

UTFA continues to support work to raise awareness on behalf of Laurentian’s faculty association and the greater Sudbury community. I hope I can count on your support for this important initiative.

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

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