

Renan Levine

Associate Professor, Teaching Stream

Department of Political Science, University of Toronto Scarborough

While serving on UTFA Council, I ran for UTFA President because I concluded that UTFA could not effectively advocate for its members without changing the way it operates. My candidacy drew attention to the way inflation affected our members, and especially to how costs for childcare and housing increased without UTFA or the administration being mindful of how much those issues affected faculty & librarians. I promised to take an approach at UTFA that was less consistently antagonistic to the administration, and to engage Simcoe Hall in collaborative searches for creative solutions that would benefit our members.

Two years later, I'm running again for President because there has been so little improvement. An arbitrator gave UTFA a raise to help us keep up with inflation in just one year (out of several that diminished our buying power), but nothing was done to help families with young children, and the only new housing initiative is a proposal lacking blueprints.

UTFA regularly antagonizes the administration, accumulating a long list of unresolved grievances. UTFA complains that the administration is neither collegial nor operating in good faith, yet when the university recently announced an initiative to address a contentious campus climate, UTFA's leadership publicly mocked those efforts on social media. When the administration failed to consult faculty over a new carbon-offset policy for travelers and proposed a plan that disproportionately affected members with disabilities, UTFA complained that the new policy violated our MOA, rather than working collaboratively towards equity and carbon neutrality. UTFA's approach is ineffective.

If elected, I will restore a constructive relationship with Simcoe Hall. The administration needs to do a better job of listening to, and communicating with, faculty. For that to happen, our representatives must come to the table willing to work together to solve problems rather than just pounding fists and pointing fingers.

I am especially concerned with the way UTFA governs itself. Reforms are necessary to ensure transparency and accountability. Every member should be concerned about how a toxic work environment at UTFA contributed to most every staffer leaving the organization over the past two years including at least eight staff attorneys, the abrupt departure of a Vice President - Grievances, an OHRT complaint against the current president, and an OHRT complaint against the association. I recently learned that at least one former employee spoke to legal counsel about a potential lawsuit against the association. Executives failed to warn Council that every staff attorney had already provided notice of quitting. They never disclosed to membership how the absence of experienced staff attorneys affects our budget or the association's ability to effectively advocate for its members. UTFA has no functioning harassment policy, produces budgets absent crucial detailed items, and fails to bring potential conflicts of interest to Council's attention.

UTFA members deserve a choice this year. Please visit renanlevine.com to learn more about how UTFA will become more effective under my leadership.