

Re-Elect Terezia Zorić
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Skilled, experienced, and determined.

PLATFORM

1. Introduction

I am proud to have served two terms as your President and to have led UTFA teams who have accomplished so much in that time. Like other faculty and librarians, I came to the University of Toronto excited to contribute in important ways to my field of study and to make a meaningful difference in the lives of students and the broader communities we serve through our research, teaching, service, and professional practice. I am eager to return full-time to those activities, yet these are pivotal times that demand the skills, experience, and determination I have cultivated in this role. I am therefore seeking a final two-year term as your UTFA President.

I did not start with the goal of being deeply involved in a faculty association. I was drawn to UTFA after witnessing troubling institutional policies and practices that hamper many colleagues' ability to thrive and do the work they love. Many of these obstacles were the outgrowth of wider social trends, like the affordable housing crisis, but at least some of them, like the growing precarity of jobs and ever-expanding workloads were choices of our Administration. I came to believe that an effective faculty association could reduce these obstacles to faculty and librarians thriving and would make our university better and stronger. And so, I began to devote my time and energy to the work of UTFA, first elected as a Committee Chair, then as a Vice-President, and then President for the last four years.

My work at UTFA is built around a team effort. Presidential leadership matters but is ineffectual without the cooperation of many dedicated and talented people. The election format asks you to choose between two candidates, but in fact, you are choosing between two teams. *The other candidate's team is not specified.* The most prominent members of my team

are easy to discern: they are UTFA members who were duly elected to UTFA's governing bodies, Council and Executive, as well as the Salary and Benefits Negotiating Team. My willingness to run for a final term as President and to ask for your support is contingent on our shared confidence in each other's abilities and dedication to UTFA's work. ['Team Terezia' is a collection of creative and hardworking colleagues drawn from every corner of our tri-campus.](#) We come from STEM, the humanities, social sciences, and professional fields. We are Tenure and Teaching stream, librarians, retirees, part-time and full-time. We are diverse in our perspectives, skills, and backgrounds. And we are experienced and effective in getting the job done, together.

My platform focuses on two main sources. First, the promises we made in the last campaign and how our team fulfilled them. **Second**, our team's commitments for the next two years. However, if you are interested in reading about the fundamental differences between my team's approach and that of the other candidate, and see our response to his mudslinging, please visit my [website](#).

2. Promises made, promises kept.

Making promises is easy; it is much harder to deliver on them. During the 2022 UTFA Presidential campaign, I identified fourteen goals (which Professor Levine criticized, then as now, as too many). Here's what I promised and how we delivered. **Green** means done. **Yellow** means a work in progress; **see [HERE](#) for more details on ongoing work.**

- Protect equal health benefits for retirees. *Still a top priority for the current round.*
- Ensure full-time faculty positions remain the norm and reverse the increasing trend to replace secure positions with more precarious sessional, part-time, and CLTA appointments. *Ongoing priority.*

- ✔ Prevent any repeat of the Administration's withholding of PTR payments as a bargaining tactic. *Long-term work remains.*
- ✔ Bargain for increased compensation. **We achieved sector-leading success!**
- ✔ Achieve reduced workloads and enhanced workload supports. *Ongoing (via bargaining and an Association Grievance) and still a top priority.*
- ✔ Expand and further democratize UTFA's membership outreach via Town Halls, surveys, focus groups and panel events. *More to come.*
- ✔ Address the housing crisis which particularly affects junior members. *A top priority; see also below.*
- ✔ Improve workload and job security protections for UTFA's precarious members. *Ongoing priority.*
- ✔ Defend academic freedom and collegial governance as core values of UTFA and the University. *Always a top priority.*
- ✔ Identify and address systemic obstacles preventing our members from being able to engage in research, scholarship, and creative professional activities. *Some progress is being made.*
- ✔ Advocate for safe and healthy workplaces via policy-making that is collegial, transparent, evidence-based, and aligned with science. *Ongoing priority.*
- ✔ Work with UTFA's Pension Committee to ensure that our pension plan (UPP) invests ethically and responsibly, and that it pursues "an industry-leading climate policy" that goes beyond good intentions and moves to "rapid and comprehensive action."
- ✔ Pursue UTFA's ongoing and complex Association grievances on pay equity and salary discrimination. *Slow progress.*

- ✔ Champion UTFA's Policy for Librarians negotiations. After years of work and decades of waiting, a new deal was reached!
- ✔ Build on our negotiated benefits improvements, including mental health supports. See [here](#) for a *benefits bargaining update*.

3. Future goals and priorities

Salaries

In the recent round of negotiations, the University Administration's final offer was only 4.75% over three years, less than half of the 10% UTFA obtained via arbitration. This demonstrates how essential it is to have a strong UTFA Negotiating Team when dealing with economic issues. Now that Bill 124 has been overturned, UTFA must bargain forcefully for across-the-board salary increases that keep pace with inflation.

According to its audited financial statements, the University of Toronto continues to be in [a strong financial position](#) with a considerable \$551M annual carryover. It has billions of dollars in net assets and hundreds of millions of dollars in reserves to cover contingencies. In short, the University of Toronto Administration can readily afford to provide all UTFA members—and indeed all U of T employees—with fair compensation and benefits.

Benefits

The Administration wanted to create a two-tier system with lower benefits for retirees. It also deprived retirees of automatic access to Microsoft 365 without reasonable explanation or discussion, a move that UTFA is firmly contesting. It is essential that UTFA vigorously defends equal health benefits and other benefits for retirees, and our team is committed to doing so.

The recent gains in mental health and other health benefits have been of enormous value to our members and their families, but it is important to understand that such gains do not arrive automatically. The Administration offered far less [than UTFA ultimately achieved for you in the last round](#). UTFA's Team has only recently received relevant, required, disclosure from the

Administration to inform our current benefits proposals, but we have already tabled significant improvements in Librarian Research Days and Childcare Benefits, proposing to the Administration an increase to the age of eligibility, a doubling of per diems, per child maximums, and overall investment in the plan.

Housing

In this round of bargaining, UTFA has already been in substantial discussions with the Administration about housing, in addition to advocating for a revival of the housing loan program over several years. Our goal is to develop a joint UTFA-Administration comprehensive, multi-year, faculty and librarian housing strategy to address affordability requirements, to provide access to family-sized units, and to ensure that University funds are transparently and equitably distributed. As housing has become a burning issue for our membership, we have worked diligently to push for action from the Administration. By putting member housing on the agenda and drawing on the extraordinary expertise of our membership on this topic, **our advocacy has already borne some fruit.**

For the first time, the Administration has accepted that UTFA has a role to play in the future of UofT's housing provision and financing support. Never before has the Administration acknowledged the substantial benefit to housing quality and sustainability and to program effectiveness that would come from involving our leadership and our membership in this work. Yet the Administration has begun to engage more meaningfully with us in bargaining on this issue, and to respond directly to our proposals for a collaborative approach. In a special session at the bargaining table with lead UofT real estate actors and UTFA member-housing experts, we opened the doors to a whole new terrain of collegial governance. ***Read more about our fruitful housing advocacy [here](#).***

Resisting Precarity

We must find ways to protect secure, full-time, and Tenure-Stream faculty and Librarian positions as the norm. Many units increasingly supplant Tenure Stream positions with more precarious sessional, part-time, and CLTA appointments. Part-time faculty lack the same degree of job security that

comes with a full-time appointment, and this vulnerability has negative effects not only for them but also for full-time faculty.

Some people want or need to work part-time, but our team wants to make sure that part-time members have a path to permanency and that UTFA's precarious members have improved workload protections. ***Read more about resisting precarity [here](#).***

Workload

We need to address the significant, growing, systemic, and persistent workload challenges that UTFA members face, and which compromise their ability to focus and produce high-quality research and teaching. To do this, we need more and new data. In bargaining, UTFA proposed a joint workload case study that invited a collaborative investigation of the workload problem through a genuinely collegial approach between UTFA and the Administration, to produce knowledge and action jointly. The Administration Negotiating Team rejected our premise that faculty and librarian overwork is a serious or widespread problem and refused to commit to our solutions-based approach. Instead, the Administration leads stated that any issues with overwork could be resolved by redistributing work amongst members of the same unit—effectively seeking to pit members against one another.

Enhanced transparency in the criteria used to govern workload will enable us to demonstrate the substantial gap between the principles that are supposed to guide workload assignments and the realities of how workload is assigned in practice. This in turn will allow us to advocate for remedies and solutions more effectively via Association grievances, at the bargaining table, and in interest arbitration.

Fixing the Memorandum of Agreement Dysfunction

As will now be apparent, addressing the limitations of the current Memorandum of Agreement is a crucial goal for UTFA in the next two years.

The current Memorandum of Agreement makes it much more difficult to pursue the preceding (and many other) goals effectively. (For example, Arbitrator Eli Gedalof noted in his [recent arbitration award](#) that the MoA and

the WLPP, in their current form, are ill-equipped to meaningfully address overwork.) Too often the U of T Administration faces no timely, enforceable, legal obligations to provide UTFA with the information it needs, or to consult with UTFA on matters of fundamental importance to faculty, or even to bargain in good faith.

Our Negotiating Teams need the right to bargain all terms and conditions of employment for our members and to do so within an efficient, modern mediation/arbitration framework (as needed). This includes enforceable timelines, as well as an expedited arbitration process, to eliminate what are now routine lengthy delays in bargaining, grievances, and the resolution of other disputes. UTFA must work with the membership, with negotiators from other Associations, and with scholars and legal experts to explore solutions or alternatives to our dysfunctional Memorandum of Agreement, including certification.

For more details, see my report in UTFA's [2022-23 AGM Newsletter](#).

Defending Core Values

Defending our core values of academic freedom, collegial governance, and non-discrimination remains a priority. Sometimes defending these core values leads UTFA to work with the University Administration to protect the University against private actors or government officials seeking to control what scholars think and write and teach. On other occasions, it is the University Administration itself that takes courses of action in conflict with these core values. UTFA is committed to defending these core values whatever the source of the danger to them.

Amplifying Members' Voices

The University is full of scholarly experts with detailed knowledge about concrete problems and how best to address them. Too often the University Administration fails to take advantage of this local and available expertise. UTFA does not and will not take that approach. We want to hear our members' expert advice on health & safety, pensions, housing, and more, having that advice inform our Association's positions.

Expanding membership engagement and participation. It is important to democratize UTFA further through membership outreach and participation via ongoing Town Halls, surveys, focus groups, expert panels, and more. As indicated previously, I would also support exploring the desirability of introducing membership-wide elections for UTFA’s senior Executive officers.

Ensuring that our pension plan invests ethically and responsibly.

UTFA has a very active and well-informed Pension Committee that has been pressing the University Pension Plan (UPP) to pay serious attention to climate change as well as other ethical issues and to adopt investment guidelines that are clear and transparent. This work will continue.

Pursuing Association Grievances

When collegial efforts to resolve systemic issues are unsuccessful, UTFA files Association grievances. There are currently 14 such grievances active right now, on issues including workload, health and safety, academic freedom, and student evaluations (SETs). Some of the largest and most complex of these are the pay equity and salary discrimination grievances, which underscore UTFA’s commitment to eradicating the root causes of significant, persistent, pervasive, and systemic pay gaps.

Research Equity

When the Administration finally allowed Teaching Stream faculty and librarians to act as Principal Investigators (“PI”) for their research and have full access to the online [MRA \(My Research Applications & Agreements\) system](#) in July 2022, they also imposed eligibility criteria within the approval process that could restrict or prevent these members from pursuing self-directed research. The imposition of these criteria had the effect of placing greater restrictions on the academic freedom of some UTFA members than others. After striving for many months to work collegially with the Administration to remove these inequities from the MRA – a process which, at times, seemed to be working, but ultimately failed – UTFA filed and then escalated a grievance. The Administration now appears willing to work with UTFA. ***Learn more [here](#).***

Health and Safety

UTFA will continue to Advocate for safe and healthy workplaces via central health and safety policy-making that is collegial, transparent, evidence-based, and aligned with science. UTFA needs to hold the central Administration to account where their policies and responses fall short and challenge the Administration to step back from uncoordinated or ill-considered efforts that merely waste time and money without positive effect.

4. Final thoughts

If you haven't done so already, we encourage you to visit Terezia's **website** to explore all the reasons why you should vote for Terezia on (or soon after) March 20, 2024.

If you want to organize a meeting in your department or unit, **contact the campaign** and we'll get back to you to do so!

Your vote is important.

We very much hope that we can count on your support.
