



MEDIA RELEASE

Students Defend Right to Organize at UofT

*For immediate release
Tuesday, June 21, 2016*

TORONTO - Student unions at the University of Toronto are challenging a new policy being proposed by the University Administration that threatens the autonomy of student organizations. The policy is being voted on by the University's Governing Council on Thursday, June 23, 2016 at 4 pm. The policy seeks to institute an external appeals' body chaired by an Administrative appointee, which will adjudicate individual student grievances and could override decisions made by student organizations.

The policy evolved out of a forum struck by the University Administration in 2013-2014, known as the Student Society Summit, from which three central students' unions were excluded. The Association of Part-time Undergraduate Students' of the University of Toronto (APUS), Scarborough Campus Students' Union (SCSU), and Graduate Students' Union (GSU), collectively representing over 33,000 students were excluded. The University of Toronto Students' Union (UTSU) and University of Toronto Mississauga Students' Union (UTMSU) eventually withdrew from the Summit due to serious concerns about procedural fairness. Student groups that were not invited to participate were told that any outcomes of the Summit would not apply to them.

A primary concern for student unions is the need for autonomy. "In order to represent the diverse needs and barriers faced by our members, it's important for us to be autonomous and independent from the University Administration," said Mala Kashyap, APUS President, "As students, we can manage our own organizations and resolve any conflicts that may arise."

Student unions must act in an open, accessible and democratic manner in accordance with their bylaws as defined by their membership. They have mechanisms in place to address individual student grievances, as well as to resolve inter-organizational conflict. The University Administration asserts that it has a right to intervene because it collects membership dues and remits them to student unions.

"The University also collects union dues on behalf of labour unions representing thousands of its staff," said Richie Pyne, Vice-President External of APUS. "If Governing Council allows the Administration to interfere in autonomous student unions, will the labour unions be next?"

Students and members of the university community are encouraged to attend the Governing Council meeting on June 23, 2016 at 4 pm and to email their concerns about the policy to provost@utoronto.ca and cc: autonomy@utmsu.ca. Please tweet your support for students' rights to run their own organizations using the hashtag #students4students @UofT and @APUS97.

APUS represents over 6000 part-time students at the University of Toronto across all three campuses, providing services, programs and supports, and events. APUS is the representative voice of part-time students to the University Administration and all levels of government. We ensure the rights of part-time students are respected.

-30-

For more information:

Richie Pyne, Vice-President External, at vpexternal@apus.ca
Mala Kashyap, President, at president@apus.ca