

September 29, 2009

Office of the President

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Dear member of the York community,

I have now had the opportunity to review the report of the Task Force on Student Life, Learning and Community; what follows is my response to the recommendations by category as laid out in the report.

Fostering Greater Dialogue and Genuine Debate at York

We have a shared responsibility to do our utmost to create and maintain a learning environment where ideas are challenged and not attacked; an environment where every member of this community feels welcome and respected.

I accept the recommendation to create the Standing Committee on Campus Dialogue; its purpose will be to foster an inclusive exploration of important public issues from the widest possible range of perspectives. Professor David Leyton-Brown has agreed to serve as Co-Chair of the Standing Committee. Professor Leyton-Brown will be responsible for designing an inclusive process for the selection of the remaining members of the Committee, which will include students, staff and faculty.

We will be exploring a number of initiatives outlined in the report, and I have asked VP Tiffin to take the lead on these, including:

- Creating a working group with broad representation from the academic and student community to explore the recommendation of an Intergroup Relations program; and to consider similar initiatives underway at other universities, including participating in the Canadian Community for Dialogue and Deliberation conference in October 2009. The working group will report back by February 2010
- Developing the terms of reference for an annual award to recognize a student who demonstrates a strong commitment to fostering intercultural awareness and constructive dialogue between students.

Student Space

I recognize the need for more undergraduate and graduate student space for study and social purposes as one of the highest priorities for students. The University will conduct a consultative process with students to review space in order to define and prioritize the various student space enhancements that would improve the quality of student experience on campus. During the review, best efforts will be made to ensure there is no loss of student space. The process of identifying student space priorities will be done in time to provide input to the University Long-Term Capital Plan update, currently anticipated to be completed May 2010.

Commencing October 4, 2009, Scott Library will be in 24-hour operation Sunday through Thursday; this will continue through the months of October, November and December as well as from January 31 until the end of April. Students will have access to the study area on the first floor and there will be sufficient staff to ensure adequate supervision and address any security concerns. Security has been involved in the development of the plan, and there will also be periodic security patrols throughout the night.



Other initiatives around improving student space include:

- Finalizing and expediting plans to develop a new Learning Commons on the second floor of Scott Library. This area could include more student seating and create a greater variety of learning environments that will facilitate learning, interaction, collaboration, group study and teaching, with the larger goal of enhancing student academic success.
- Vice-President Students and Vice-President Finance & Administration will initiate discussions with the Executive Director of the Student Centre Corporation to explore possible options for ways in which the student capital levy could be utilized in the context of a longer term space plan for students at York.
- As an alternative to extended hours for computing facilities, other solutions to meet computing needs for students will also be examined.
- As part of the subway planning and development process, exploring opportunities for relocating buses from the Harry Arthurs Common in order to provide the basis for a renewal of this important space to improve the quality of student experience on campus.

Temporary Use of University Space (TUUS) Policy

It is agreed that respect for the procedures around booking of space on campus is essential. These procedures are designed to protect the rights of users of the space, as well as those whose rights or activities might be infringed by particular uses. At the same time, the procedures must be fair, not unduly onerous or bureaucratic, and applied in a transparent manner.

The University has developed an online process for space bookings and the procedure will be operational by November 1, 2009. Section 3.2 of the TUUS will be reviewed and updated by January 1, 2010, to provide greater clarity with respect to the grounds and notification process for cancellations.

Student Code of Conduct

It is agreed that the Student Code of Conduct fulfills an important purpose at York. It is designed to protect students and others in the community and ensure a safe campus and an appropriate learning environment for all members of the community. A panel consisting of representatives from YFS, GSA, student members at large, faculty, Associate Deans, and staff will be established in October to consult with the community in the review of the Student Code of Conduct and the development of the Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities. The review will be completed by April 30, 2010.

In light of the expansion of the Code to include certain rights, the Office of Student Conduct and Dispute Resolution will be renamed to more accurately reflect the recommendations made by the Task Force.

The Task Force highlighted the need for students to have access to advocacy on academic and non-academic matters; it is understood that both the YFS and GSA have staff that provide these services. VP Tiffin will explore with the YFS and GSA ways to expand the awareness of these services amongst students, including the role of Community Legal Advice Service Partnership (CLASP) and its support for students.

More effective communication with and between students

The Task Force has identified that the University needs to review the way it communicates important information to students. In light of this finding, the University will establish a working group consisting of Communications, UIT, Associate Deans and students to examine

how we can best communicate with students, including using social networking utilities to ensure that information is received in a timely and effective manner.

I have already acted on the Task Force's recommendation to install electronic bulletin boards in key locations on campus. The installation of these e-boards has commenced and by the end of October 2009, a total of 25 electronic bulletin boards will have been installed and be fully operational. The primary purpose of these screens is to support the University's emergency messaging program; further communications opportunities will be examined and implemented as appropriate.

Other communications initiatives under review include:

- Expanding communication with student groups regarding TUUS policies and procedures for booking space and cancellations of bookings through presentations and outreach initiatives.
- Establishing at least one additional space in consultation with students on the Keele campus where students can post flyers or posters in accordance with the University's poster policy.
- Student Community and Leadership Development will undertake to enhance services available at the Information Booth in the Vari/Ross link.
- During fall 2009, locations of map display signs will be reviewed by VPFA staff and augmented as appropriate.

Vari Hall

I accept the recommendation to establish a consultative process to help enhance the quality of Vari Hall as a space for students and have asked the Vice-President Students to undertake a consultative process with student groups and the York community to review potential options. Discussions will be initiated in October and members of the York community will have an opportunity to comment in November. We will also explore, through consultation with students, an appropriate bookable outdoor venue for major public events. The development of a plan for an outdoor venue will be undertaken concurrently with the Vari Hall review process in October.

Better Enforcement

The Task Force has highlighted that a safe and secure learning environment is very important for our students, staff and faculty. We believe that safety and security issues need to be addressed through more effective and timely enforcement of University policies relevant to personal and community safety on our campuses.

I agree that respect for the procedures around booking of space on campus is essential. Where violations of the TUUS occur, York University Security Services will inform those involved of the requirements of the policy, request that the activities cease and, if they continue, serve a notice of violation. These notices and a report will be filed with and followed up by the appropriate office. I have asked the Vice-President Finance and Administration to work with Security Services as well as with the Vice-President Students to develop the appropriate procedures for this to occur and to have them in place by no later than November 15, 2009.

I agree that the Student Code of Rights and Responsibilities needs to be enforced in a fair and transparent manner and that York Security Services should take a proactive approach in supporting the enforcement of the Code. In cases where Security Services observe an apparent violation of the Code, the personnel will file the regular security reports on the

incident and notify the Office of Student Community & Leadership Development. This office will review these reports in order to determine whether to initiate further enforcement proceedings under the Code.

The establishment and implementation of a university security model is a significant and complex matter. The University has over the past 10 years reaffirmed and focused considerable effort in its community-based approach to security that works in a cooperative and complementary manner with Toronto Police Services. I am confident that the changes outline above will sufficiently address the concerns raised to the Task Force, and therefore we will not be pursuing the Special Constable recommendation at this time.

The York Community & External Groups

York University is open to the world, a product and reflection of our diverse and pluralistic society. That said, the York community has certain values and rules that must be upheld, both by community members and those who visit our campuses. For our purposes, the York community is defined as persons who are on our campuses as currently registered students, full-time faculty members, contract faculty members under contract, staff and members of the governing bodies (Senate and Board).

All others are guests or invitees, here either by contract, invitation or at the will of the University. Non-community members will be warned and subsequently trespassed if they violate University regulations or engage in disruption of University business or activities. I also accept the recommendation that the University's campuses should not be the locus of demonstrations by outside interest groups and such demonstrations will not be permitted.

Organizational Change

The Report recommends the hiring of an officer charged with issues around cultural awareness and cultural sensitivity training; the Centre for Human Rights has recently hired two Senior Advisors with a mandate to help anticipate and identify potential campus issues and trends as they arise through their education and outreach activities, as well as providing culture awareness and anti-racism training. We feel these two recent hires address the need identified by the Task Force. It should also be noted that the following offices have increased coordination and communication: the Centre for Human Rights; Security Services; SCDR and SC&LD.

Education and Training

The Task Force has identified a number of opportunities for the University to help foster an environment where there is a free and open exchange of ideas. There are a number of initiatives underway through the Centre for Human Rights including:

- Respectful Speech campaign to be launched in October 2009
- The Respect and Inclusivity Tutorial to be launched on October 5 to coincide with the Inclusion Day conference.
- Working with University offices to provide training in the areas of anti-harassment and inclusion
- Collaboration with YFS to provide inclusion training during Orientation
- Providing inclusion and safe space training to Residence Dons.

Over the coming academic year, we will explore other possibilities, including

- Expanding TA and new faculty training programs
- Studying the feasibility of a student emergency response team.

To view the complete response to the Task Force recommendations, [click here](#).

I believe the insights and actions arising from this report will have a transformative effect on the student experience at York, and I want to express my sincere thanks to the members of the Task Force for their hard work in preparing this report, as well as the members of the York community and individuals and groups who participated in the consultations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M Shoukri', with a small dot at the end.

Mamdouh Shoukri
President and Vice-Chancellor