

UTS Equity Framework

UTS Commitment to Equity Mission Statement

PREFACE

UTS is an independent, fee-paying school with competitive entry and an even balance between male and female students. In these respects, we understand that access to our school is limited.

There is a great deal of diversity in the UTS community and contributions from all, including students, staff, parents, alumni and members of the Board are valued and encouraged. As a community, UTS strives to create an environment where the principles of equity, diversity and social justice are celebrated and consistently reviewed and acknowledged.

In keeping with UTS' Vision and Mission, we are committed to creating a learning environment that promotes in students a love of learning as well as ethical integrity and great character that seeks inclusiveness, yet respects individual differences, and above all looks to right injustice and any form of inequitable treatment of other members of society.

The UTS equity initiative aims to give students, staff, parents and volunteers the behavioural tools, vocabulary, insight and confidence to effect the appropriate change and act as advocates for those whose discrimination often goes unnoticed and unchallenged.

Every society is to some extent characterized by individual and systemic discrimination against particular groups. It is within the control of the individual, organizations and nations to take concrete and practical measures to eliminate discrimination. UTS recognizes that ensuring the inclusion and fair treatment of all individuals and groups is at the core of equity, and has made it an essential organizational principle within the UTS culture. Further, the school has set these principles of equity in the UTS Vision and strategic plan to ensure that the entire community works in support of Canada's commitment as a nation to social justice and the protection of the rights and freedoms of all citizens regardless of personal bias or opinion.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this document is to initiate the process for the development, implementation, and review of policies, programs and practice that promote equity within the UTS community, so as to ensure that equity is recognized as an essential principle within the school's overall mandate.

The Ministry of Education issued Policy/Program Memorandum 119 in 1993, requiring all school boards to develop and implement policies on antiracism and ethnocultural equity. All Ontario school boards have since drawn up such policies. As an independent school, UTS will go beyond references to race and ethnocultural background to create policies which endeavour to ensure an inclusive and respectful school environment for all.

EQUITY FOUNDATION STATEMENT

UTS is committed to acknowledging, validating and celebrating diverse cultures, individual differences and ideas that are represented both within our community, and also in a larger global community. This commitment will help to prepare our students for diverse careers and success in both domestic and international contexts. We believe that the philosophical underpinnings of equity must be clearly reflected and integrated into all school objectives, policies, programs and curriculum in order to provide safe environments that are conducive to learning and risk-taking. By ensuring that our school is a space that is free of discrimination and respects human rights, all members of our community will be given the opportunity to fully realize their potential.

We believe that education should provide equitable opportunities for all, regardless of the fact that certain groups in our society are treated inequitably because of individual and systemic biases related to race, colour, culture, ethnicity, linguistic origin, disability, socio-economic class, age, ancestry, nationality, place of origin, religion, faith, sex, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation and family status. In particular, due to the complexity of deeply entrenched systemic biases within institutions, UTS is committed to being proactive in addressing issues of equity.

We are equally committed to the principles of employment equity as outlined in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Ontario Human Rights Code, and the Ontario Labour Relations Act. We believe that no one should be denied access to employment opportunities for reasons unrelated to competence, and all should have access to the fullest opportunities to develop their individual potential. In order to fulfill these objectives, differences between people must be respected and accommodated in accordance with human rights legislation.

The *UTS Commitment to Equity* applies to all UTS students, employees, teachers, parents, volunteers, consultative committees and members of the Board of Directors. Further, it applies to those outside UTS whose discriminatory or harassing behaviour has repercussions that affect the learning and working environment.

UTS will therefore strive to meet the following objectives essential to fulfilling our Vision and Mission:

- A) Opportunities shall exist within the overall curriculum, at each grade level, to acquire and further develop the critical thinking skills needed to analyse issues of equity and apply this understanding to new contexts.
- B) Upon graduation, students will have been provided with curricular and co-curricular experiences which provide value: 1) knowledge from and of diverse peoples; and 2) the skills and knowledge that enable students to challenge unjust practices and build positive human relationships that value diversity and social justice.
- C) All admitted students shall be provided with equitable opportunities to be successful, and that any institutional barriers to such success will be identified and removed. Should removal of institutional barriers require financial support, UTS will accommodate within the school's ability to pay.

- D) UTS' admission process will include marketing initiatives to academically able students across diverse communities without prejudice or assumption, and said marketing will communicate the school's Vision and Mission, which includes a clear commitment to equity.
- E) The school's bursary program will be maintained for students in financial need, as well as the commitment to initiatives that will endeavour to expand the bursary endowment.
- F) UTS' hiring and promotion practices for support staff, administrators, teachers and selection processes for the Board of Directors will reflect that diverse experiences are not only valued, but are an integral component of enriched education. In support of this objective, advertising will reflect an interest in attracting diverse candidates. The interview process will both inform them of UTS' commitment to equity and provide them with the opportunity to illustrate how equity will be integrated into their teaching practice and/or illustrate their commitment to making sure that their work environment is safe and equitable and consistent with the UTS Mutual Respect Policy.
- G) When appropriate, contributions of parents, alumni and community groups will be used to encourage and enrich the curriculum.
- H) All members of our community will be provided with effective procedures for resolving concerns or complaints that may arise from experiences of unfair or inequitable treatment at UTS.
- I) Financial and human resources will be provided to support the work of staff and students in promoting equity and inclusion at UTS.
- J) On a yearly basis, we will assess policies, programs, operations and practices in order to promote equity at UTS and ensure that UTS' practice is consistent with Human Rights legislation and best practice.
- K) The Principal will meet with members of the Equity Committee and UTS staff on an annual basis to review the on-going implementation of this equity framework.
- L) The Administration, as part of our operating procedure, will ensure that a school-wide Equity Review is initiated every three years. It should be consistent with best practice and the results will be published to the benefit of staff, students, parents and the Board of Directors.

COMMITMENT TO EQUITY AND THE UTS VISION AND MISSION

The following Vision and Mission Statements are central to the role and direction of UTS:

Vision Statement

UTS is a transformative learning community focused on intellectual growth and individual development. We build on a tradition of academic distinction and leadership to develop socially responsible, global citizens.

Mission Statement

We admit students on the basis of merit and we are committed to making financial accessibility a reality for all UTS students.

- 1) We provide our students with an excellent academic experience that is rich, challenging and full of opportunities to reach beyond the requirements of the provincial diploma.
- 2) We inspire our students to challenge themselves as learners, communicators, creative artists and athletes, and to pursue their goals with confidence and integrity.
- 3) We provide a dynamic and respectful culture in which students take on significant responsibility for the decision-making, planning and leading of both student affairs and initiatives in the wider community.
- 4) We demonstrate leadership as a school through exemplary teaching practices, innovative curriculum and good governance.
- 5) We develop and nurture strong relationships with our community and strategic partners to fulfill our objectives.

In regard to **The Vision**, UTS believes that all learning communities must reflect the principles of equity. In order to develop socially responsible, global citizens we must provide authentic opportunities for them to analyse and combat different forms of discrimination and the factors that cause inequity in society.

In regard to part 1 of **The Mission**, UTS believes that accessible education to students selected on the basis of merit must be accompanied by vigilant fundraising in support of a bursary program. Further, UTS is committed to ensuring that outreach programs for new students are successful in reaching a diverse range of communities in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA).

UTS believes that the equity objectives outlined above in D, E, and F are essential to help us fulfill part 2 of The Mission which is to provide our students with an excellent academic experience that is rich, challenging and full of opportunities to reach beyond the requirements of the provincial diploma.

UTS believes that object C outlined above is essential to help us fulfill part 3 of The Mission to inspire our students to challenge themselves in myriad ways.

UTS believes that the equity objectives outlined above in G, H, and I are essential to help us fulfill part 4 of The Mission which is to create a dynamic and respectful environment for all staff, students, and community members.

UTS believes that the equity objectives outlined in H are also integral to fulfilling our 5th mission to demonstrate leadership through exemplary teaching practices. This will be supported by including an equity category in all annual review policies and procedures, and a standing presence in all staff professional development activity plans. UTS firmly believes that the philosophical underpinnings of equity must be clearly reflected and integrated into all school objectives, policies, procedures, programs and curriculum. UTS places significance on studying innovations in equity education in partnership with

OISE/UT. To this end, all pedagogical and administrative innovations will have a clear foundation in the principles of equity.

THE ROLE OF THE EQUITY COMMITTEE

The UTS Equity Committee recognizes that within the parameters of fiscal responsibility in an annual budget, the University of Toronto Schools is committed to an environment that allows all members of its community to be treated fairly, provides equitable opportunities for their success and personal growth, and respects their social and cultural diversity.

In support of UTS' commitment to Equity, the role of the UTS Equity Committee will be to provide the school with leadership and focused expertise in the area of equity, and assist the school as a whole with the development, implementation, and review of policies, programs and practice that promote equity within the UTS community, so as to ensure that diversity and social justice are recognized as essential principles within the school's overall mandate.

The Equity Committee is composed of a steering committee as well as 4 subcommittees that are focused on four main strands/areas of interest (fig.1);

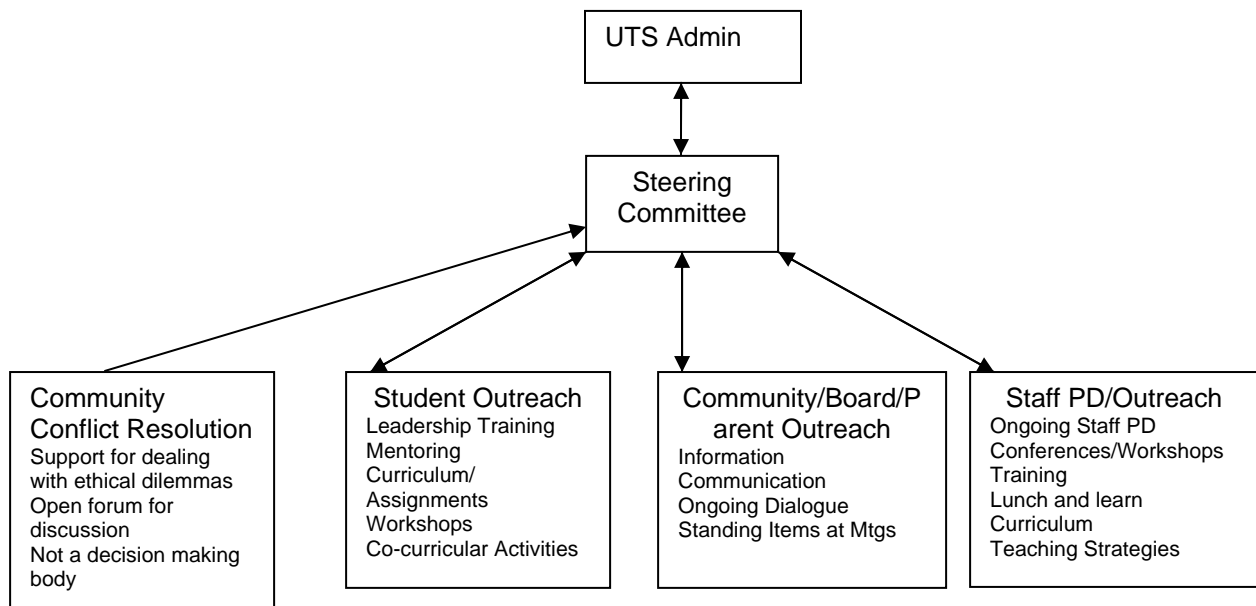


Figure 1: The UTS Equity Committee structure

STEERING COMMITTEE

The Steering Committee is comprised of each subcommittee Chair, two Chairs of the Steering Committee, and additional representatives from staff and administration. The primary role of the Steering Committee is to: A) act as a mechanism for communication between the different subcommittees, staff, administration and the rest of the UTS community; and B) coordinating the activities and opportunities provided by these committees.

STUDENT OUTREACH

In this subcommittee, the focus is on aspects of equity and diversity that directly relate to and involve students at UTS. A commitment to leadership training, the development of peer mentoring programs, and a commitment to the review and development of equitable curriculum, assignments and student programs form the basis of the work for this subcommittee.

STAFF PD/OUTREACH

This subcommittee is focused upon initiatives that relate directly to staff development and support in the areas of equity and diversity. Examples of initiatives under the auspices of this group include regular and ongoing staff PD and training, sharing information pertaining to the application of equity and diversity principles to curriculum and teaching strategies.

PARENT/COMMUNITY/BOARD OUTREACH

This third subcommittee is meant to address issues and initiatives that reach out to and affect the larger UTS community. Facilitating the delivery and exchange of information and dialogue between the school and its partners is a key focus for this group. Newsletters, the website, and other forums for communication are essential to the delivery of ongoing work in the area of equity and diversity.

COMMUNITY CONFLICT RESOLUTION

The function of this subcommittee is to act as a support for staff and students dealing with ethical dilemmas. The committee will be comprised of a cross-section of staff that has an interest in conflict resolution and providing an open forum to discuss and articulate possible courses of action that would respect the human rights of all parties involved in the conflict. While this is not a decision-making body, this subcommittee will be a valuable resource to assist staff in responding to sensitive issues.