



October 29, 2020

**Statement on the External Review of the Search Process
for a Director of the International Human Rights Program at the Faculty of Law**

I have followed with deep concern the controversy surrounding the recent search for a new Director of the International Human Rights Program, an administrative staff position in the Faculty of Law. Allegations have been made that a candidate's academic freedom has been breached by the alleged rescinding of an offer for her to be employed as Director. Additional concerns about particular aspects of the search process have also been raised.

Let me underscore, as I have said often during my term as president, that academic freedom is a fundamental value of the University of Toronto. Any suggestion that academic freedom has been violated must be treated with the utmost gravity. It is also critically important that the integrity of our search processes be upheld. Hence, it is imperative that these concerns be thoroughly and fairly reviewed to establish the facts.

In response to these concerns, the Vice-President of Human Resources and Equity announced that an external review would be undertaken by Professor Bonnie Patterson, CM, OOnt, MLS, LL.D, ICD.D, a highly respected consultant in higher education and governance. Professor Patterson is former President of the Council of Ontario Universities and former President and Vice-Chancellor of Trent University.

Some have raised questions about the independence, impartiality, and transparency of the review as originally structured. I have heard these concerns.

To remove any doubts, I am announcing:

- First, that the Patterson review will now report to me directly, and that Professor Patterson will submit her written report to me by mid-January at the latest.
- Second, I undertake to make the full report and its recommendations public, subject only to respecting the privacy of individual candidates involved in the search process.

The terms of reference for the review, which provide for a thorough, fair, and evidence-based review of the search process, will remain the same. They ask the external reviewer to provide:

- A comprehensive factual narrative of events pertaining to the search committee process;
- A report on the basis for the decision to discontinue the candidacy of the search committee's preferred candidate; and
- Her conclusions on whether existing University policies and procedures were followed in this

search, including those relating to confidentiality obligations in search processes.

While participation in this review is voluntary, if anyone is asked by the reviewer to be interviewed, I urge them to participate.

The University of Toronto remains deeply committed to academic freedom. It is important that we now await the results of the comprehensive review that will establish the facts of what happened and make recommendations to the University in a report to me that will be made public.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Meric Gertler". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Meric Gertler
President