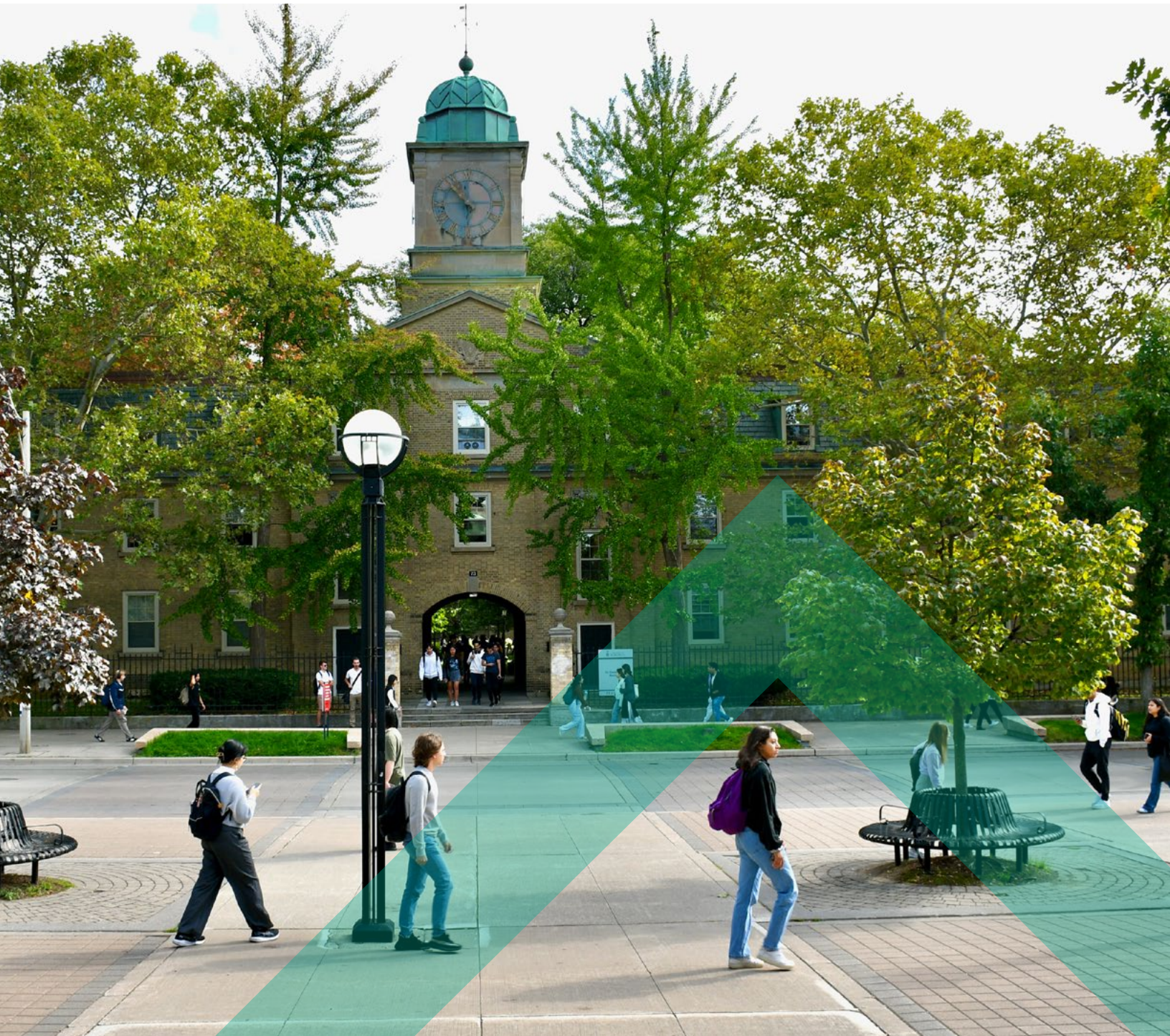
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

PEOPLE STRATEGY, EQUITY & CULTURE REPORT

2024



Statement of Acknowledgement of Traditional Land

We wish to acknowledge this land on which the University of Toronto operates. For thousands of years it has been the traditional land of the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca, and the Mississaugas of the Credit. Today, this meeting place is still the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work on this land.

Image: A deer seen through yellow flowers at U of T Mississauga. Photo by Nick Iwanyshyn.

Table of Contents

Welcome 4
Invest in People 5
Foster an Institutional Culture of Belonging 8
Be Guided by Our Community 11
Prioritize Employee Wellness & Safety 14
Think Ahead 16
2025 & Beyond 18

Kelly Hannah-Moffat.
Photo by Moussa Faddoul.

Welcome from the Vice-President, People Strategy, Equity & Culture

By all accounts, 2024 was a challenging year for our community and the world at large. We continued to experience the impacts of global crises and witnessed an alarming rise of hatred and discrimination. Tensions on post-secondary campuses across North America resonated within our community as students, faculty members, librarians, and staff were personally impacted. We wrestled with dissenting beliefs and opinions amid individual and collective calls for compassion.

Recognizing these challenges, we present this streamlined PSEC Report to focus on the initiatives that supported our community's well-being and responded to community needs. The Report shows the breadth of our collaborative partnerships and how we operationalized our Divisional principles, defined in five of the Report's sections.

It has often been stated that our community's diversity of perspectives, lived experiences, and identities is our greatest institutional asset. We are at a juncture where recognizing the truth of this statement is crucial to our way forward as a community. We can choose to seize this opportunity to learn about and from each other, accept that we will make mistakes, and continue communicating, however difficult it may be. Through this very human work, we can find common ground.

Thank you for engaging with our Division and with the ideas and values of this institution. I am immensely grateful to be learning along with you.

Kelly Hannah-Moffat
Vice-President, People Strategy, Equity & Culture

Invest in People

[/ɪnˈvɛst ɪn ˈpipəl/] ***action***

Invest in People
1. Provide opportunities for personal growth, knowledge-building, professional development.

2. Create tools & frameworks that help our community work with each other more effectively.

3. Build compassionate leaders who are responsive to their team members' needs and advance the University's goals and objectives.

Image: Students in the Instructional Centre at U of T Scarborough. Photo by Matthew Dochstader.

Invest in People

The University of Toronto is an exceptionally large and decentralized institution, with the population of a small Ontario city spread over nearly 2 million gross square metres and three distinct campuses. It can be challenging for employees to make connections beyond their immediate team, or even to feel affirmed for their individual contributions. By making it a divisional priority to invest in people, PSEC endeavours to humanize the University and make it a place where employees want to work, stay, and build their careers.

Relationship-building is at the core of our Division's work to invest in people. It is particularly important in the complex labour environment of U of T, whose workforce of approximately 25,000 people comprises 10 unions, one faculty association, and four non-represented employee groups. Last year PSEC and the Vice-Provost, Faculty & Academic Life met regularly with the University of Toronto Faculty Association (UTFA) to discuss improvements to the Memorandum of Agreement between the University and UTFA. These collective efforts and constructive discussions laid a positive foundation on which we will build in 2025.

In a busy year of collective bargaining, our Labour Relations team, working closely with various internal cross-functional teams and University of Toronto Communications, prioritized building trust and strengthening relationships in negotiations with our union bargaining partners. Fostering open and respectful dialogue with 13 different bargaining units in five of our 10 unions, they applied collegial problem-solving and creativity to negotiate fair and fiscally responsible collective agreements for unionized employees who collectively support all dimensions of our students' experience at U of T.

Two leader-focused initiatives in 2024 highlighted additional ways we invest in people. We launched an **annual cycle of data-sharing with Deans and Chief Administrative Officers** to foster a deeper understanding among leaders of how their employees self-identify; current concerns and overall job satisfaction; and a variety of employee-related trends, involving factors such as recruitment, hiring, and job evaluations. One-on-one meetings introduced data to leaders and offered high-level analyses of trends. Leaders could then delve into more granular detail by accessing dashboards customized to their Faculty, division, or campus.

Data from three employee surveys features prominently in the Reporting & Insights hub for leaders: the Employment Equity Survey, Pulse Surveys, and the Speaking Out! Survey. From this knowledge base, leaders can make more informed decisions about how best to support their employees and identify strategies needed to fulfill their local goals, year after year.

Investing in people also involves developing self-aware and empathetic leaders who earn their team members' trust and establish a culture of mutual respect and collaboration. In 2024, we expanded the **People Leadership Program** pilot offered by the Centre for Learning, Leadership & Culture to two official cohorts, and made a significant change to the way the principles of equity, diversity, and inclusion are embedded into the program. A representative of equity offices across the tri-campus attended all in-person sessions to support the facilitator and the participants with questions and concerns.

The nine-month People Leadership Program uniquely focuses on changing people leader behaviours that can create unhealthy work environments. In doing so, it is helping leaders understand how their own behaviours can contribute to—or challenge—their teams' experiences of belonging.

Other ways we invest in people:

Creating Institutional Recognition Programs & Awards.

Providing Learning Opportunities & Skill Development for Employees.

Image: A meeting of people around a large table at U of T Scarborough. Photo by Matthew Dochstader.

Foster an Institutional Culture of Belonging

[/fɒstər ən ˌɪnstɪˈtuːʃənl ˈkʌltʃər əv bɪˈlɔːŋɪŋ/] ***action***

Foster an Institutional Culture of Belonging
1. Create the conditions across the tri-campus that enable everyone in our community to feel welcome and affirmed in the spaces where they learn and work; supported in their goals; and recognized for their contributions.

2. Inspire our students, faculty, librarians, and staff to achieve success on their own terms and to recognize their shared responsibility to support others' success.

Image: Ziibiing Indigenous Landscape project at U of T St. George. Photo by David Lee.

The concept of "belonging" is difficult to articulate. Yet, once experienced, it is impossible to forget. By fostering an institutional culture of belonging, we can create a strong and unified community that encourages students, faculty, librarians, and staff to be themselves and feel valued for their contributions.

Many interconnected strategies are needed to affirm the diverse identities in our community and the talents and perspectives they bring to the University. Creating dedicated spaces of connection for community members with shared identities supports this important work. Last year, the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) Office implemented this strategy by facilitating the creation of U of T's first **Employees with Disabilities Community Network**. The idea for an Employees with Disabilities Community Network emerged from discussions within a small group of employees with lived experience of disability. These discussions evolved during National AccessAbility Week. The Network launched in late 2024 with a stated aim to build relationships and a sense of community as well as offer opportunities for mentorship and professional development.

Training provides another key strategy to foster an institutional culture of belonging. By building knowledge and understanding, we can recognize our shared responsibility to support and affirm other members of the community. The Office of Indigenous Initiatives (OII), jointly overseen by PSEC and the Office of the Vice-President and Provost, implemented this strategy by **expanding—in both reach and content—its Indigenous cultural competency training for students and employees**. Last year the OII surpassed the milestone of engaging 10,000 students, staff, faculty, and librarians across the University in sessions exploring Canada's hidden history of Indigenous-settler relations, the impact of government decisions and policies on Indigenous peoples, the role of land acknowledgements, and the nature of allyship. The opening of Ziibiing, the Indigenous landscape project in Hart House Circle on St. George campus, enabled the OII to add land-based workshops and events to its educational roster. Collectively, the trainings, now led by two Indigenous training coordinators, promote a deeper understanding of both "truth" and "reconciliation," and build a foundation of understanding to inspire further learning and inform action. With this knowledge, non-Indigenous students and employees can more clearly identify what they can do in their Faculty, division, or campus to advance the Calls to Action issued by Answering the Call: *Wecheehetowin*, the Final Report of the Steering Committee for the U of T Response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.

Ziibiing itself emerged from the first Call to Action, which recommended "the creation of significant dedicated Indigenous space on the St. George Campus" including "outdoor space appropriate for Indigenous spiritual needs." A place for gathering, teaching, and ceremony, Ziibiing will support experiences of belonging for Indigenous members of the U of T community and affirm the long and continuous presence of Indigenous peoples on the land on which the University operates.

Other ways we foster an institutional culture of belonging:

Offering a Diverse Range of EDI Programming, Training & Events.

Be Guided by Our Community

[/bi ˈgaɪ.dɪd baɪ ˈaʊər kəˌmjun.ɪ.ti/] ***action***

Be guided by our community
1. Create informal and formal opportunities for consultation with students and employees on issues impacting our community and consider this feedback in decision-making.

Image: Inside the Robarts Library, U of T St. George. Photo by Hanna Borodina.

Be Guided by Our Community

Consultation and collaboration are pillars that support our work, and they reflect our firm commitment to listen to, engage, and be guided by our community. When we are guided by our community, our policies, programming, and initiatives respond to community need. In this way, we can cultivate a sense of shared responsibility for the changes we advance and for ensuring that this change has sustainable, positive impacts on students and employees across the tri-campus.

The University's equity-related working groups and taskforces provide a formal mechanism for community engagement with those most directly impacted by specific forms of discrimination on the grounds identified in the Ontario *Human Rights Code* (Code). Last year, we fulfilled a recommendation of U of T's Antisemitism Working Group Report, released in late 2021, by hiring a staff member to assist the University community in addressing individual and systemic faith- and race-based discrimination. Since joining the Institutional Equity Office, the **inaugural Assistant Director, Faith & Anti-Racism** has played an integral role in creating resources to support community members directly impacted by the events of October 7, 2023 and ensuing war in Gaza, the West Bank, and the broader region. These resources include the EDI in a Global Context webpage, which serves as a portal for members of U of T's Jewish and Israeli communities; Palestinian, Arab, and Muslim communities; and the broader U of T community to access customized supports. They also include more than 40 "Community Check-ins"—meetings with over 100 students, employees, and members of the extended U of T community to discuss experiences and concerns. The Assistant Director additionally worked with the Executive Director, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion to develop a Faith & Anti-Racism Inclusion Strategy, which includes developing online education modules on antisemitism, Islamophobia, and other forms of discrimination based on grounds identified in the Code and supporting efforts to refine complaints pathways for members of our community. As of December 2024, consultations on e-modules had begun and a foundation built from which to launch a formal review of U of T's *Statement on Prohibited Discrimination and Discriminatory Harassment*.

Also last year, the Assistant Director, Faith & Anti-Racism and Executive Director, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion supported the launch of the University's newest working group: the **Muslim, Arab, and Palestinian Discrimination Working Group or MAP DWG**. Building on the Anti-Islamophobia Working Group established in 2019, MAP DWG has a mandate to deliver a final report with recommendations for advancing inclusion and belonging for Muslim, Arab, and Palestinian community members. A central part of this work will be to gather feedback about the experiences of anti-Muslim, anti-Palestinian, and anti-Arab discrimination and harassment at the University through a variety of means: a survey, focus groups, consultation meetings, and written submissions. A review of existing policies, practices, and processes will also aid the Working Group in recommending actionable steps to help the University achieve a more respectful, equitable, and inclusive community. The Working Group's final report will be delivered to senior leaders in 2026. To ensure institutional accountability for change, progress on implementing recommendations formally accepted by leadership will be communicated through the Institutional Equity Commitments website.

Like working groups, consultation committees and advisory groups provide invaluable direction on efforts to address barriers and practices that prevent everyone's full participation in University activities. Last year, the AODA Office established a new practice of striking a Multi-Year Plan Consultation Committee (MPCC) **to inform the work of developing our Multi-Year Institutional Accessibility Plan**, required by the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*. The Plan will address accessibility barriers in our physical spaces, digital environments, customer services, communications, employment practices, and transportation, and aim to set a new benchmark for accessibility in higher education. MPCC membership reflected tri-campus representation from the tri-campus and from all constituents in our community, including students and employees with lived experience of disability.

Other ways we are guided by our community:

Collaborating to Offer Compassion and Care for our Community: EDI in a Global Context.

Engaging in Community Consultations, such as the Review of U of T's *Statement on Prohibited Discrimination and Discriminatory Harassment*.

Image: Two people seated at a table, talking, at U of T Scarborough. Photo by Matthew Dochstader.

Prioritize Employee Wellness & Safety

[/praɪˈɔːrəˌtaɪz ɛmˈplɔɪi ˈwɛl.nəs ænd ˈseɪf.ti/] ***action***

Prioritize employee wellness and safety

1. Assess opportunities to support employee wellness & safety more effectively and inclusively.
2. Create opportunities to support employee wellness & safety.
3. Consider the impact of leadership decisions, policies, and practices on employee wellness.
4. Consider the impact of external factors on employee wellness & safety.
5. Gather employee feedback about their wellness & safety at work.
6. Respond quickly and effectively to employee concerns about their wellness and/or safety.

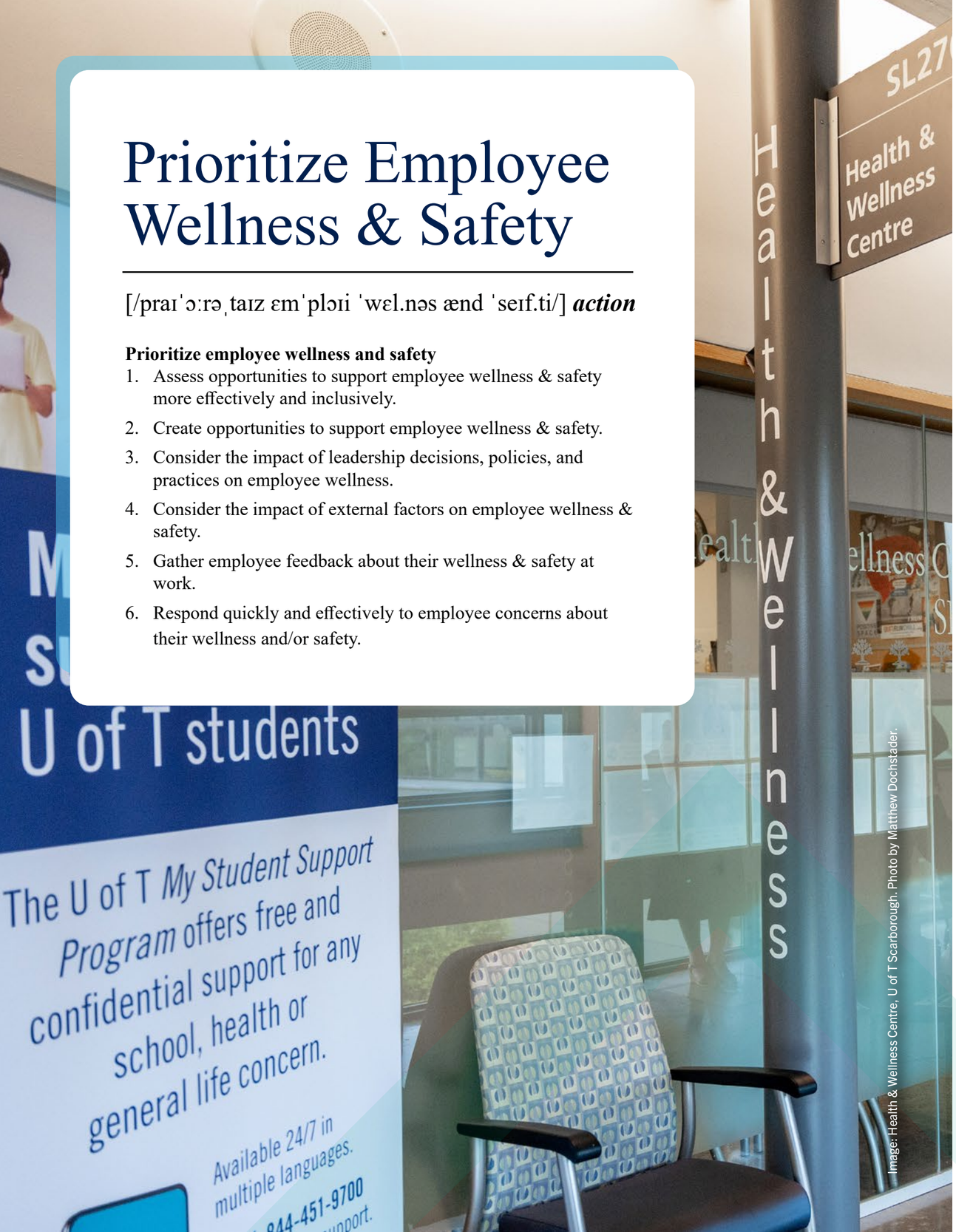


Image: Health & Wellness Centre, U of T Scarborough. Photo by Matthew Dochstader.

Healthy workplaces build our employees' capacity for resourcefulness, creativity, and compassion. They enhance our employees' ability to manage change and navigate challenges. They help employees feel supported in their mental and physical wellness, and confident that their concerns or complaints will be addressed.

This year, responsive work by our Workplace Investigations (WPI) team and Wellness Review Committee highlighted efforts to prioritize the wellness and safety of our employees. **WPI developed workplace restoration training** for leaders and teams and delivered sessions to senior PSEC leaders, enhancing their capacity to support a workplace culture where employees can work free from harassment, discrimination, or harm. WPI additionally **expanded their services to support early intervention and alternative conflict resolution pathways**, including facilitated restoration. In doing so, they responded to community feedback, which indicated a preference for dispute resolution strategies that minimized the distress often associated with formal investigations. WPI's efforts underscored the importance of proactive intervention, promoting mutual respect among team members, and addressing behaviours that erode a sense of belonging for employees. They also positioned the University well to respond to the newly introduced requirements of Bill 166, *Strengthening Accountability and Student Supports Act* 2024 and the Minister's Anti-Racism/Anti-Hate Directive for Publicly-Assisted Colleges and Universities. In 2025, they will continue to refine strategies to manage employee concerns and complaints while maintaining their focus on repairing harm, rebuilding relationships, and addressing the underlying issues that contribute to conflict. This commitment to restoration goes beyond resolving immediate complaints, and often involves long-term engagement with Faculties, divisions, or campuses to foster a healthier work environment.

In turn, the **Wellness Review Committee**, struck in early 2024 by PSEC's Vice-President, laid important groundwork for our Division to improve how we support employees across the many dimensions of health. Tasked with conducting a comprehensive assessment of the University's employee wellness supports and services, the Committee consulted with 18 PSEC and Divisional Human Resources Offices responsible for providing services to U of T employees. Consultations focused on identifying best practices, recommendations, and challenges experienced by these offices as well as their clients. Additional consultations with managers and their teams from several offices ensured a breadth of perspectives on employee wellness. A confidential Pulse Survey focusing on employee wellness provided insights about employees' levels of wellness and their experiences with wellness services across the tri-campus, and an external scan of best practices for employee wellness among peer institutions and organizations provided context for these findings.

The Wellness Review Committee completed their report in late 2024, with recommendations across five areas: Communication and Service Delivery; Capacity and Resourcing; Leadership Support; Wellness as part of Daily Work; and Culture. PSEC will review and assess all recommendations and develop an action plan in 2025.

Other ways we prioritize employee wellness & safety:

Offering Wellness & Safety Supports, Resources & Events:

- Health & Well-being
- Family Care Office
- Environmental Health & Safety
- Community Safety Office
- Sexual Violence Prevention & Support Centre

Think Ahead

[θɪŋk əˈhɛd] ***action***

Think Ahead

1. Be proactive and creative.
2. Be visionary.
3. Be tactical and strategic.

Image: A strategic planning session, U of T Scarborough. Photo by Office of the VP Research.

To think ahead, we need to be creative and practical, imagining future possibilities even as we develop proactive solutions. Thinking ahead enables us to implement strategies that mitigate risks and improve the efficiency of our work. We can better prepare our community to respond effectively to unexpected challenges, and to seize opportunities that may arise.

Last year, our Division engaged in forward-thinking strategies to support the security of our community's work and protect the privacy of their personal information. The Office of Safety & High Risk (OSHR) partnered with the Office of the Chief Information Security Officer to determine how to **integrate the identification, assessment, and management of cyber risks into the Institutional Framework for Responding to a Crisis or Routine Emergency**. This Framework ensures that all administrative and operational units across our three campuses are prepared to respond effectively to a critical situation, and OSHR provides ongoing training to prepare academic and administrative leaders for its implementation. Slated for implementation in 2025, the refinements to the Institutional Framework will strengthen our community's preparedness for cyber incidents, supporting a swift and effective response that, when initiated, will mitigate damage and prevent further compromise to the security and privacy of our network.

We also recognize that mindful use of technology will increase our Division's efficiency in sharing expertise and information, free administrative staff to focus on more strategic and expertise-driven work, and better support our employee community in managing and administering HR data. To this end, **we made significant progress towards our goal of launching the new institutional HR platform SuccessFactors Employee Central**, which will automate transactional tasks and move HR data to the Cloud. Last year, representatives from PSEC, Enterprise Applications & Solutions Integration (EASI), and divisional and Faculty stakeholders engaged in a series of workshops to identify current challenges to the retrieval and sharing of HR data in their diverse roles. These workshops provided crucial insights that will inform the final stages of work and support a smooth transition when SuccessFactors Employee Central is fully implemented in 2027.

Other ways we think ahead:

Encouraging Inclusive Planning for Meetings & Events with Dates of Recognition, Observance & Celebration.

Developing Inclusive Leaders through Training, such as Accessible People Leadership.

Thinking ahead enables us to embrace the future and seize opportunities to evolve as a Division and as a community. Last year we continued to identify areas where future-facing technologies can be applied to the University's administrative activities, including an initial exploration of Generative Artificial Intelligence. Our University Human Resources team delivered an **education session for the Division and Divisional HR Offices** to enhance our knowledge and use of AI and **contributed insights to** the **University of Toronto Artificial Intelligence Task Force**, whose recommendations will be released in 2025. Through such engagement, we advanced PSEC's ongoing efforts to increase efficiencies across our work and we look forward to developing a collective understanding of AI's potential benefits, limitations, and ethical implications.

2025 & Beyond

In 2025, the University will navigate the impacts of ongoing economic uncertainty and global conflict as well as changes in political leadership here and abroad. We will identify strategies to leverage technology and increase our efficiency—including with the use of Generative AI—in our processes and throughout our operations. Building and maintaining relationships with our tri-campus community, employee groups and unions, and external partners will strengthen our collective response to challenges and opportunities that emerge in the year ahead.

Our efforts in the coming year will focus on the following themes:

Facilitate a path forward for our community by supporting difficult conversations and enhancing inclusion on our campuses
The Institutional Equity Office will consult with Jewish community members on educational resources that expand awareness and understanding of antisemitism across our institution; support the work of the Muslim, Arab, and Palestinian Discrimination Working Group; and facilitate community consultations during the Review of U of T's *Statement on Prohibited Discrimination and Discriminatory Harassment*. In doing so, it will reinforce its role as a central provider of education, strategic advice, and issues management expertise for our tri-campus community and affirm the unique capacity of equity work to address experiences of exclusion and discrimination based on all grounds identified in the Ontario *Human Rights Code*.

Meanwhile, the Office of Indigenous Initiatives will continue work to establish an Indigenous identity substantiation process to confirm eligibility for designated opportunities at the University.

Build our community's capacity to respond effectively to internal and external challenges
We will develop best practices to encourage productive dialogue, refine pathways for Code-based complaints, and create resources that can be customized to the needs of our community. Recommendations from an external review, expected in spring 2025, will guide our efforts to refine crisis and emergency response on our campuses. To support this work, we will encourage broader institutional coordination in times of crisis by enhancing training for academic and administrative leaders on the Institutional Framework for Responding to a Crisis or Routine Emergency.

We will advance efforts to strengthen our employee wellness strategies and supports, understanding the role that wellness plays in an individual's capacity to manage change or navigate uncertainty. Our work will integrate recommendations of our tri-campus Wellness Review Committee, which explored the multitude of factors impacting employee wellness and workplace health.

Prepare our employees for technological advances that will enhance their work
This year will bring two important milestones that deepen our longstanding commitment to digital transformation. In partnership with the Enterprise Applications & Solutions Integration (EASI) team, we will begin transitioning our HR information to the SuccessFactors Employee Central platform. Additionally, we will begin implementing recommendations of the University of Toronto Artificial Intelligence Task Force as part of broader efforts to support the effective and responsible use of AI in our working environments. Helping our community incorporate new tools into their daily tasks will require robust training and communication about the benefits and limitations of future-facing technologies. It will equally require us to reassert the value of human effort, insights, and connection at the University.

Image: Staff look over a balcony, U of T St. George. Photo by Lisa Sakulensky.

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

Image: View of people walking on St George Street in the fall, U of T St. George. Photo by Diana Tyszko.