



VICTORIA UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL

150 Charles St. West, Room 127
Toronto, ON , M5S 1K9
(416) 585 - 4473
www.vusac.ca | fb.com/vusacuoft

27 July 2018

ATTN: Dean of Students and Registrar, Victoria University
Other Faculty and Staff of the University of Toronto

RE: University of Toronto Mandatory Leave of Absence Policy

Despite vocal opposition from students, the University of Toronto Governing Council adopted the [Mandatory Leave of Absence Policy](#) on June 27th. The policy is now in effect at the University. On May 17th, The VUSAC executive released [this statement](#) in solidarity with Students for Barrier Free Access (SBA). At least 15 student organizations have released statements condemning the policy, including the five unions collectively representing every full- and part-time graduate and undergraduate student across UofT's three campuses. The Chief Commissioner of the OHRC sent [this letter](#) describing an earlier version of the policy as discriminatory. The since-updated policy failed to address some of the many concerns identified in the letter. Several major student unions jointly organized a well-attended protest outside of Simcoe Hall during the Governing Council's meeting regarding the policy. Nevertheless, the policy was adopted.

Those working in student life at the University of Toronto should be advised that referring students experiencing mental illness to the Office of the Vice-Provost of Students (OVPS) may result in unfair and discriminatory treatment. If a student is judged by the OVPS to be "unable to engage in activities required to pursue an education," and some attempt by the university to accommodate them has been unsuccessful, they may be placed on a mandatory leave of absence against their will.

A student placed on leave will be prevented from pursuing their education, and may lose access to housing, student services, extra-curricular activities and a community that they depend on. The risk for harm to a student placed on a mandatory leave is significant. Further, the ability of a student to appeal a decision under this policy is substantially restricted compared to a decision under the existing *Code of Student Conduct*.

The students most likely to be affected by this policy are those belonging to communities marginalized by the University. Indigenous, racialized, and queer students are more likely to experience mental illness than their peers.

The VUSAC strongly urges the Dean of Students, Registrar, and other faculty and staff at the University to carefully consider any other accommodative options possible before referring a student to the Office of the Vice-Provost of Students, in light of the risk of harm to students posed by this policy.



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We believe that the University must strive to accommodate any student who is struggling in their education due to experiences of mental illness. The University is required by law to accommodate that student to the point of excessive cost or significant health and safety risk. In doing so, a student's input and wishes should be heard in good faith, and their best interests kept at heart.

Moving forward, the VUSAC wishes to reaffirm its commitment to promoting the mental wellness of students and advocating for the rights and interests of students experiencing mental illness at the University. We are committed to pursuing these goals in collaboration with staff, faculty, and other student organizations at the University. We will work towards the expansion of the University's mental health services, accessible front-line services, increased supports through Accessibility Services, and student-led discussions around mental health and wellness. We invite others at the University to do the same and sincerely thank those who already are.

Yours in service,

Jayde Jones, President
president@vusac.ca

Devon Wilton, Vice-President External
vpe@vusac.ca

On behalf of the Victoria University Students' Administrative Council, at the directive of a vote on July 27th 2018.



Campus Resources and Community Supports

If you are experiencing an emergency situation, please **call 911** or take yourself to the nearest emergency room. The following resources are not for emergencies.

Accessibility Services	(416) 978-8060
Anti-Racism and Cultural Diversity Office	(416) 978-1259
Assault Counsellor/Educator	(416) 978-0174
Campus Police	(416) 978-2222
Centre for International Experience	(416) 978-2564
Centre for Women and Trans People	(416) 978-8201
Community Safety Office	(416) 978-1485
Counselling & Psychological Services at Health & Wellness	(416)-978-8070
Distress Centres	(416) 408-4357
Family Care Office	(416) 946-3899
First Nations House	(416) 978-8227
Gerstein Centre Mental Health Crisis Line	(416) 929-5200
Good 2 Talk Student Helpline	1 (866) 925-5454
Health and Wellness Centre	(416) 978-8030
Multi-Faith Centre	(416) 946-3120
Ontario Mental Health Help Line	1 (866) 531-2600
Sexual and Gender Diversity Office	(416) 946-5624
Sexual Violence Prevention & Support Centre	(416) 978-2266
Status of Women Officer	(416) 978-2527
Students for Barrier-Free Access	(416) 967-7322
Walksmart	(416) 978-7233