



February 10, 2010

Prof. Tat Smith  
Dean  
Faculty of Forestry  
University of Toronto

Dear Tat,

Reviews of academic programs and units are critical to ensuring academic excellence at the University of Toronto and the reports provide us with vital information about our strengths and areas for improvement. This external review has particular importance as it provides advice regarding possibilities for the future of Forestry at the University of Toronto and options for reorganization that will enhance our ability to maintain and strengthen our forestry programs.

I am pleased to note that the reviewers commented on the positive view that students had towards their educational experiences. The reviewers commented on the strength of the Forestry faculty members' research, the degree to which these faculty members are valued by colleagues in other divisions of the university, and the importance of consultation/liaison work provided by faculty members to outside agencies and organizations. The report also pointed to recognition of the need for restructuring of the Faculty by students and others in the university, as a result of low student enrolment and changing nature of academic forestry.

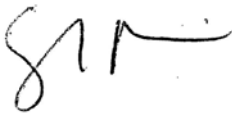
Throughout North America, post-secondary institutions are addressing challenges general to the discipline of forestry. In many cases these challenges have been resolved by alliances with other environmentally focused divisions of the university. Forests and their conservation continue to be critical to Canada as a nation and to the global environment and thus finding a solution to the challenges that face our own Faculty of Forestry is a top priority of the University of Toronto.

Student demand for programs in the Faculty of Forestry has been an issue at the University of Toronto since the 1970s. In 1990 a Provostial Working Group on the Environment considered the problem, followed by a Provostial Working Group on the Future of the Faculty of Forestry in 1992. At that time the undergraduate program in Forestry was discontinued and recommendations were made for structural changes that would result in the Faculty becoming a department within another Faculty. The decision was made to enhance graduate offerings within the Faculty. More recently in 2007, a Round Table for the Environment was established and chaired by the Provost, followed by a Task Force on Environmental Studies at UofT chaired by the Vice-President of Research. These bodies have noted the strong teaching and research focus for environmental studies at the University in several academic divisions. These include programs offered through the Faculty of Arts and Science Centre for Environment and other departments within Arts & Science, programs offered by the Department of Physical and Environmental Sciences at the University of Toronto Scarborough, and programs offered through the Faculty of Applied Science and Engineering. These various programs present opportunities for strengthening our offerings in forestry through structural changes which would enhance faculty member collaboration and program integration.

In response to the enrolment issues, the history of attempts at resolving them, and the external review, I appointed a working group of senior faculty members to consider future directions for the Faculty. The Faculty Working Group been actively engaged in discussions with faculty members, staff, students other university divisions and external constituents in order to consider options. The resulting plan is intended to build on already strong collaboration in teaching and research and to encourage integrated and excellent forestry programs.

Cheryl Regehr, Vice-Provost Academic Programs will support the Working Group and facilitate discussions with internal and external communities in order to identify the best strategy to ensure the academic quality and sustainability of forestry programs at the University of Toronto.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Cheryl Misak', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Cheryl Misak  
Vice-President and Provost