



**ACADEMIC COUNCIL REPORT**

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**SESSION:**

Public   
 Non-Public

**ACTION REQUESTED:**

Decision   
 Discussion/Direction   
 Information

**TO:** Academic Council

**DATE:** April 26, 2018

**PRESENTED BY:** Joe Stokes, University Registrar

**SUBJECT:** Entrance Scholarship Program

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**ACADEMIC COUNCIL MANDATE:**

- Article 8.10(a)(iii) of UOIT By-law No. 1 provides that Academic Council has the authority to govern matters arising in connection with the award of fellowships, scholarships, medals, prizes, and other awards for academic achievement
- The Admissions & Scholarship Committee is seeking Academic Council’s approval of the following recommendations with respect to entrance scholarships & course scholarships

**BACKGROUND/CONTEXT & RATIONALE:**

All 21 universities in Ontario offer some sort of entrance scholarship program. These programs are seen by many intuitions, as influencers in the decision making process of students selecting universities, as larger awards can act as an incentive alongside an offer of admission.

Since 2003, the university has administered an entrance scholarship program for Ontario high school students. These scholarships, called the *Awards of Recognition* are guaranteed to any high school student who is admitted to the university presenting a high school grade point average (HSGPA) above 85%. This average is calculated using the best 6 U or M level courses of the Ontario curriculum, and is different than the students’ admissions average because it does not include program prerequisite courses.

There has been a variety of empirical studies in Canada that explore the relationship between the fees charged by post-secondary institutions and enrolment (Drolet, 2005; Fortin, 2005; Neill, 2006). Perhaps most surprising is that the Canadian literature has not shown a consistent correlation between increases in fees and reductions in enrolment (Coelli, 2009). This neutral relationship on Canadian enrolments is drastically different than similar studies that have come out of the USA, which show a negative correlation between higher fees and enrolment (Heller 1997), however with a higher overall cost of education and a greater income gap than Canada, this is perhaps not surprising. In Canada, there is evidence that lower income families in particular have lower post-secondary participation when fees increase, whereas this relationship is not apparent in middle and upper class families (Coelli, 2009). More recently, the Ontario government has made significant changes to need-based financial aid, and funding packages have improved significantly for students from families at the lower end of the provincial income distribution.

Internally, the Application Decliner Survey (ADS) that the university conducted most recently in 2016, showed that out of first year applicants who declined UOIT's offer of admission, 28% said financial need was a factor when considering UOIT. Of the students who noted funding to be an issue, only 17% noted that they had received a higher funding package from a competing university. It is important to note that this data was collected before the changes to the Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP) that allowed for increased funding to those with higher need.

Others have contested the efficacy of entrance awards altogether (Gucciaridi, 2004; Usher 2014). In particular Alex Usher (2014) deems the current entrance awards offered by Ontario universities as tantamount to an 'arms race', where one institution increases their award amount only to be matched or outdone by another institution. While admittedly this proliferation will not end in the mutually assured destruction of the university system, most institutions would likely get out of the race if they felt they wouldn't lose their competitive advantage. This rings even more true for UOIT, because without the large endowments that other universities enjoy, our current entrance scholarship program is funded entirely by operating dollars.

Currently, the university has the highest entrance scholarships above 85% secondary school GPA amongst our competing regional universities. These scholarships, while not marketed as renewable like some of our competitors, are still significantly higher at the 85% and 90% levels, and UOIT students who continue to excel academically benefit from the in-course scholarship program after the first year of study.

**Table 1:** Scholarship Comparison by University for 2018 Admissions Year

	80%	85%	88%	90%	92%	95%
Toronto (UTSC)	N/A	\$500	\$1,000	\$1,500	\$2,000	\$3000*
York	\$500	\$1,000		\$2,000		\$3500*
Ryerson	\$500*	\$1000*		\$2000*		\$4000*
<b>UOIT</b>		<b>\$2,000</b>		<b>\$3,000</b>		<b>\$4,000</b>
McMaster	\$500	\$750		\$1,000		\$2,500

Waterloo		\$1,000		\$2,000		\$3500**
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*\*Indicates renewable award; \*\* Indicates an additional work placement opportunity*

In the 2017 enrolment year the university had an expenditure of \$748,000 on entrance scholarships for high school applicants. If we adjusted the amount at the 85% and 90% segments to be more in line with the next highest awards (Ryerson) we would still have the highest scholarships within our local competitive set of universities. The difference, approximately \$300,000 based on 2017 data, would allow the university to support alternate types of financial support for academically strong students. Figure 2 outlines a proposed scholarship approach.

**Table 2:** Scholarship Comparison by University for 2019 Admissions Year with Proposed Changes

	80%	85%	88%	90%	92%	95%
Toronto (UTSC)	N/A	\$500	\$1,000	\$1,500	\$2,000	\$3000*
York	\$500	\$1,000		\$2,000		\$3500*
Ryerson	\$500*	\$1000*		\$2000*		\$4000*
<b>UOIT</b>		<b>\$1,000</b>		<b>\$2,000</b>		<b>\$4,000</b>
McMaster	\$500	\$750		\$1,000		\$2,500
Waterloo		\$1,000		\$2,000		\$3500**

*\*Indicates renewable award; \*\* Indicates an additional work placement opportunity*

Currently UOIT entrance awards are not renewable, but with the in-course scholarship program, students continue to be rewarded for academic achievement, sometimes at a higher rate than the original award (\$1500 for 80% and \$2000 for 90%) based on the students undergraduate GPA. In 2018, UOIT will emphasize this scholarship package in our marketing materials.

These proposed changes will continue to have UOIT positioned with the top entrance scholarships in our competitive set of universities, while freeing up operating funds dedicated to financial support for the following recommendation.

#### Merit-Based Experiential Learning Opportunities (Motion 1)

There are many funding options that the university could leverage with the proposed changes. If the university reduced the current entrance award amounts to those outlined in Table 2, the savings from the changes would allow UOIT to expand and develop paid student employment and research opportunities. These opportunities could have developed learning outcomes, and be aligned with the Ontario Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development Guiding Principles for Experiential Learning. Some of this surplus would be used to hire a Student Employment Coordinator in the financial aid office to coordinate the program. This position would provide the pivot point between Faculties, students and potential work opportunities.

This program could provide approximately 100 students paid experiential learning opportunities that would be developed with UOIT Faculties, support services and community partners to provide relevant, meaningful experiences relating to the students' program of study. This option would likely be very attractive to students, and the

university would benefit from more high-caliber students working on campus in roles that could contribute to Faculty projects and innovation. These awards would be renewable in subsequent years of study, should the student meet a minimum 3.7 (A-) GPA.

As the current entrance scholarship stratification is higher than our competitive set of universities, UOIT would run little risk in adjusting our awards to be on par with others in the GTA. As need-based funding has greatly increased under the new provincial net-tuition initiative, streaming money to merit-based experiential learning opportunities could have a very positive effect on both our reputation with students, and our commitment to experiential learning across the academy. For these reasons, we would like to propose moving toward a reduced, but continued commitment to entrance awards as outline in Table 2, with the addition of merit-based, paid experiential learning opportunities for eligible students.

#### In-Program Experiential Learning Opportunities (Motion 2)

As the university continues to work towards a defined strategy for experiential learning, the current in-program scholarships could be changed to reflect this commitment. As we have discussed, the current in-program scholarships, (\$1500 for 80% and \$2000 for 90% based on the students undergraduate GPA) also recognize the merit of upper year students. However, in-program students would not have the benefits of the experiential learning opportunity afforded to students outlined in Motion 1.

We propose that any student currently in program be given the choice to receive the meritorious scholarship already available to them, or receive the same amount of money tied to an experiential learning opportunity. As we build this program, and because more in-program students receive awards compared to incoming students, these opportunities would exist as long as capacity is available.

Both programs will be re-evaluated by the Admissions and Scholarship Committee every three years.

### **ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:**

#### **Status Quo**

A status quo option would have the university continue to have the highest merit-based awards when compared to our competitive set (Table 1). However, as per the discussion outlined above, this may not have an impact on a student's decision to enroll, which was the initial reason for creating the scholarship funding envelope.

#### **Merit-based Experiential Learning Opportunities**

If the university reduced the current entrance award amounts to those outlined in Table 2, the savings from the changes would allow UOIT to expand and develop paid student employment and research opportunities. These opportunities could have developed learning outcomes, and be aligned with the Ontario Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development Guiding Principles for Experiential Learning. The Student Employment Coordinator position in the financial aid office, could be expanded to provide incoming students who have achieved academic excellence with this different

kind of recognition. There would be approximately 100 students who could be offered paid experiential learning opportunities that would be developed with UOIT Faculties, support services and community partners to provide relevant, meaningful experiences relating to the students' program of study. This option would likely be very attractive to students, and the university would benefit from more high-caliber students working on campus in roles that could contribute to Faculty projects and innovation.

**Needs-Base Awards**

Alternatively, the university could look at increasing need-based funding to students who are unable to meet their fee obligations. This would advantage some students, but could consume significant human resources in the administration of such funding. With the increase in OSAP funding under Ontario's net-tuition project, more students are receiving funding than ever before, and although the approach would be novel in Ontario, it may not have a significant impact on our student population. Moreover, most of our current in-program awards are need-based.

**Move to Total Needs-based or Experiential Awards**

A final option would be to reallocate all funds currently allocated for entrance scholarships, and move towards a more robust need-based or experiential model outlined above, or even a combination of the two. This option is perhaps the most radical, as it would mean UOIT would be the only university in the province that would not have an entrance scholarship program. Moreover, we have already discussed that there be less capacity for need-based funding based on government programming. However, a total move to experiential opportunities could be quite novel, and considered as an attractive option for students.

**CONSULTATION:**

- Admissions and Scholarship Committee – April 24, 2018

**COMPLIANCE WITH POLICY/LEGISLATION:**

- In compliance with the Admissions & Scholarship Committee's mandate set out in its Terms of Reference
- In compliance with the university's By-law, Article 8.10(a)(iii)

**MOTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION:**

**Motion #1:** That pursuant to the recommendation of the Admissions and Scholarship Committee, Academic Council approve the proposed changes to the entrance scholarship program for the 2019-20 academic year.

**Motion #2:** That pursuant to the recommendation of the Admissions and Scholarship Committee, Academic Council approve the proposed changes to in course scholarships for the 2019-20 academic year.

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**SUPPORTING REFERENCE MATERIALS:**

- Academica, (2016). Applicant Decliner Survey. Internal report. London ON: Academica Group.
- Coelli, Michael (2009) Tuition fees and equality of university enrolment. *Canadian Journal of Economics* 42(3), 1072-1099
- Drolet, Marie (2005) 'Participation in post-secondary education in Canada: has the role of parental income and education changed over the 1990s?' Statistics Canada Analytical Studies Branch Research Paper Series No. 243
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- Gucciardi, F. (2004). Recognizing Excellence? Canada's Merit Scholarships. The Canadian Millennium Scholarship Foundation.
- Heller, Donald (1997) 'Student price response in higher education: an update to Leslie and Brinkman,' *The Journal of Higher Education* 68, 624-59
- Neill, Christine (2006) 'Tuition fees and the demand for university places,' mimeo, Department of Economics, Wilfred Laurier University
- Usher, A. (2014). Ending the merit scholarship arms race. Blog post retrieved from <http://higheredstrategy.com/ending-the-merit-scholarship-arms-race/>