

University of Toronto's Student Environmental Resource Network

Terms of Reference

The following Terms of Reference, approved by the **January 18, 2024** UTERN Board of Directors, and modified with suggestions on **Saturday April 27, 2024**, and ratified at the **April 29, 2024** UTERN General Members Meeting, replaces the UTERN Constitution and is meant to address the problems UTERN has faced over the last twenty years and provide simple, realistic, and effective solutions going forward.

University of Toronto's Student Environmental Resource Network Terms of Reference

Article 1: Name

The official name shall be University of Toronto's Student Environmental Resource Network. The abbreviation of the name shall be UTERN.

Article 2: Purpose

UTERN will operate as an arms-length, independent body under the auspices of Regenesi Toronto (Regenesis UofT), where Regenesi Toronto shall provide administrative support and help ensure UTERN functions regularly and effectively.

The mandate of UTERN shall be to:

- 1) Maintain the UTERN fee levy as a fund that provides funding to [1] University of Toronto student environmental organizations, [2] University of Toronto student-led or student-involved environmental projects, [3] broader community environmental movements, organizations or projects that involve University of Toronto students, and [4] other University of Toronto student organizations seeking support for an environmental-themed event or project, as guided by the Financial Policy.
- 2) Aid in the natural formation of a sustainable community at the University of Toronto through facilitating networking, communications and annual events that bring together students and student groups interested in environmental sustainability and justice at the University of Toronto that supports networking and collaboration.
- 3) Work in collaboration with U of T sustainability offices, student union(s), and student environmental organizations at each campus, to co-organize events at each University of Toronto Campus (St. George, Mississauga, Scarborough) and online.

Article 3: Membership

In order to access funding, one must be a fee-paying member of the UTERN levy.

1) Individual membership is open to all students at the University of Toronto.

a. An individual is considered a member in good standing if they are an undergraduate or graduate student at the University of Toronto and have paid the levy membership fee for at least one semester for the year.

Article 4: Structure

1) UTERN shall operate as an independent body with an executive, under the legal auspices of Regenesys Toronto (UofT), who will be responsible for providing administrative support for the operations of UTERN, which aims to help maintain the institutional knowledge of UTERN and ease the annual transition process between executives.

2) The executive shall be two (2) co-chairs, an Executive Secretary, a Financial and Projects Manager, a Marketing Director, a UTSG Network Executive Liaison, a UTSC Network Executive Liaison and a UTM Network Executive Liaison. **Except for the Financial and Projects Manager**, these positions will be elected annually by the membership of UTERN from the University of Toronto student body and will serve in these positions as paid work-study positions. See *Article 5* for details on the elections and hiring process.

3) In addition, UTERN shall be made up of one representative of each University of Toronto student organization that has a primary environmental focus, as determined by the UTERN Executive in accordance with this constitution. These representatives, in addition to the UTERN Executive, shall attend meetings and aid in reviewing and voting on funding applications that are received.

4) Together, the UTERN Executive and the UTERN representatives from each environmental organization, shall be known as the UTERN board.

5) University of Toronto student organizations advocating for a particular political party or ideology are not eligible to have a representative sit on UTERN.

6) University of Toronto student organizations whose primary purpose is not environmental sustainability are not eligible to have a representative sit on UTERN.

7) University of Toronto student organizations that have a primary environmental focus, but are not registered with ULife, are still eligible to have a representative sit on UTERN as a representative, if they have an established presence at the University of Toronto and/or have been provided with some kind of recognition, official or otherwise, from a faculty, department or student union, as determined by the UTERN Executive.

8) Groups which are eligible to have a representative and receive funding based upon their purposes are listed in the appendix. Groups may be added or removed by a decision at a UTERN meeting.

9) Groups may be added (or removed from this list should they cease to exist) upon a decision of the Executive with a simple majority quorum. Additional groups should be considered at the start of each term and added from the UofT's Student Organization Portal (SOP) that have a core focus in environment and sustainability https://sop.utoronto.ca/groups/?areas_of_interest=environment-sustainability. UTERN reserves the right to reject groups that it does not feel align with the UTERN mission, including

groups it might see as greenwashing. Any rejection must be provided in writing outlining the reasons if the organization wishes to appeal.

10) The Co-Chairs shall be responsible for:

Ensuring that the obligations of the UTERN mission are met. This includes ensuring UTERN maintains its roots of acting as a model of an ENGO.

Chairing meetings (each co-chair shall rotate chairing meetings).

Liaising with the administrative staff from Regenesi on all UTERN matters.

Determining what is on the agenda and what agenda items take priority over others.

Filling in for the Executive Secretary when they are absent.

From time to time, review the UTERN mission and Terms of Reference, to ensure relevance to the current needs of students, and propose changes if necessary.

Facilitating an anonymous feedback survey on the UTERN experience from UTERN applicants and outgoing executives for the incoming Executive — a form that they themselves will also fill out; the upcoming executive team shall review the notes from previous executives. Feedback directed to the co-chairs shall be solicited by the advisors.

Acting as UTERN's Chief Returning Officer during the election process, and overseeing the hiring for the Financial and Projects Manager position, as well as hiring if any vacancies occur.

Running on-boarding training and ensuring the Executive are providing transition documents for their successors.

Ensure timesheets for work study are submitted for approval in a timely manner.

Developing, submitting and hosting a presentation for the Annual General Meeting of their work.

Developing a transition document for and hosting a meeting with their successor at the end of the academic year.

11) Executive Secretary shall be responsible for:

Providing notice and reminders of all meetings, including circulating the agenda.

Circulating the meetings minutes after each meeting.

Preparing the agenda, in consultation with the Co-Chairs.

Keeping minutes during meetings.

Ensure up to date meeting minutes, budgets, transition documents, changes to policy are updated on the UTERN website and social media.

Maintaining the website of UTERN. This includes adding and updating resources included on <https://uterntoronto.com/get-involved/resources/>

Developing, submitting and hosting a presentation for the Annual General Meeting of their work.

Developing a transition document for and hosting a meeting with their successor at the end of the academic year.

12) Financial and Projects Manager shall be responsible for:

Working with Regenesi to prepare an annual budget each year

Working with Regenesi to prepare financials for each meeting.

Working with Regenesi on the annual audit.

Presenting all financials, budgets, and audits, alongside the administrator, to the UTERN executive..

Presenting and managing funding applications to the UTERN Executive in the absence of the administrator.

Maintaining communication with all funding applicants.

Managing and keeping up to date financial records including receipts.

Ensuring that the levies of all previous years have been sent to and deposited by UTERN.

Developing, submitting and hosting a presentation for the Annual General Meeting of their work.
Developing a transition document for and hosting a meeting with their successor at the end of the academic year.

13) The Marketing Director shall be responsible for:

Designing social media posts and stories.

Managing the social media accounts of UTERN.

Amplifying and sharing campus environmental events, news, awards, funding, jobs and research, including and not limited to UTERN and UofT department listservs and newsletters, external newsletters and community partners.

Developing, submitting, and hosting a presentation for the Annual General Meeting of their work.

Developing a transition document for and hosting a meeting with their successor at the end of the academic year.

14) The Network Executive Liaisons shall be responsible for:

Co-coordinating with UofT/UTSC/UTM Sustainability Office, CECCS, and UofT/UTSC/UTM student environmental groups for tri-campus sustainability week(s) (previously known as Eco-Week).

Hosting one Environmental Working Group per semester (Fall, Winter) — though Network Executive Liaisons are at liberty to host more — that includes workshops and panel discussions run by Advisors, alumni, ENGOs beyond U of T, environmental professionals, etc. to heighten interest and attendance, followed by networking.

Maintaining an up-to-date list of University of Toronto student organizations at their campus that have a primary environmental focus eligible to hold a UTERN representative seat and receive additional funding.

Adding events to [the Tri-Campus sustainability calendar](#).

Organizing the annual UTERN spring retreat, with the goals of providing quality educational opportunities to help make more effective eco-leaders, and encouraging networking between student environmental organizations and student eco-leaders.

Facilitate collaboration, networking and co-hosted events with student environmental organizations at their campus.

Managing and disseminating physical resources including UTERN's dishware, in collaboration with Regenesys and their Borrowing Centre initiatives at UTSG, UTM and UTSC. This includes storing dishware in secured cabinets, where individuals receive the key code upon submitting their security deposit, checking the dishware condition periodically, and updating the key code each term.

UTSC and UTM Network Executive Liaisons shall support the work of the UTSG Network Executive Liaison.

Developing, submitting and hosting a presentation for the Annual General Meeting of their work.

Developing a transition document for and hosting a meeting with their successor at the end of the academic year.

15) All Executive Members must be University of Toronto students.

16) All Executive Members must attend all meetings if possible. Executives shall remain in office for a term of one (1) year, or until the next Annual General Meeting is held, or until their resignation or removal. Members of the Executive who fail to provide written or electronic regrets for two (2) consecutive meetings may have their position terminated at the discretion of the Executive. Members of the Executive who fail to attend four (4) consecutive meetings may have their

position terminated at the discretion of the Executive. In the event of a vacancy, the Executive may appoint someone to fill the remainder of the term.

17) The Co-Chair is responsible for calling all meetings; meetings shall be held as regularly as seen fit by the Co-Chairs, monthly at minimum. Representatives from campus environmental organizations are encouraged to attend and participate in all UTERN board meetings.

18) Ex-officio members (e.g., advisor, administrative staff, auditor) shall have the right to attend and speak, but not vote, at all UTERN meetings.

19) The Co-Chairs are responsible for reviewing the current finances of the organization at the start of each meeting and conducting a discussion of funding applications as per the financial policy, ensuring that all funding allocated is reasonable given the budget and the remaining months left until the end of the fiscal year (April 30).

20) UTERN shall have work-study positions – of whom the Co-Chairs [2], Executive Secretary [1], Financial and Project Manager [1], Marketing Director [1] and the Network Executive Liaisons [3] shall also be UTERN Executive members (see Article 5); an administrator (see Article 6); and one or more advisor(s) from the staff or faculty of the University of Toronto (see Article 7).

Article 5: Executive Positions

UTERN Co-Chairs, with assistance as needed from the administrator, will apply for and maintain fall/winter work-study positions for the following roles. UTERN may apply and maintain additional summer work-study positions for the Co-Chairs, Financial and Projects Manager, general administrator, and/or any additional role to bridge the gap between April and September.

UTERN Executive

Co-Chairs (2)

Executive Secretary

Financial and Projects Manager

Marketing Director

UTSG Network Executive Liaison

UTSC Network Executive Liaison

UTM Network Executive Liaison

Total: 8 positions (7 elected, 1 hired)

Outgoing executive members will solicit and review applications for the new UTERN Executive. Selection of eligible candidates will be done by the outgoing UTERN Executive in consultation with the advisor(s). Students must have demonstrated interest and volunteer experience related to environmental sustainability. All selections shall be done through an open and transparent process, which includes posting all positions at least one month (30 days) in advance of any deadline on CLNx and social media. All candidates who apply and are University of Toronto students who qualify for the position shall be interviewed by the outgoing executive members to determine eligibility. Eligible candidates will then be forwarded for May elections to be held in-person at the Annual General Meeting. Given the breadth and depth of financial knowledge required by the Financial and Projects Manager, the Financial and Projects Manager position shall not be included in the elections.

Supervision of work-study positions will be done by the Co-Chairs, with assistance as needed from the administrator.

Article 6: Organization and Administration

1) UTERN will operate under Regenesi Toronto as an independent body governed by students, with Regenesi providing all necessary administrative services to support UTERN's mission.

2) All UTERN funds will be maintained in a separate Alterna bank account to ensure that all UTERN funds are spent on the mission of UTERN, as outlined in these terms of reference.

3) Regenesi is at no point eligible to request salaries from UTERN and/or UTERN's funds for Regenesi's support of UTERN.

a) In such a case, UTERN maintains the authority to sever all ties with Regenesi, thereby becoming an entirely sovereign levy organization.

4) The expectation is that Regenesi will:

a) Provide one person that will act as the main contact and administrative support person for UTERN;

Bookkeeping, record keeping and financial dispensation services, web/email hosting and software;

Process project funding applications according to the policies of UTERN;

b) Ensure UTERN maintain all records and policies in order to pass an annual audit that includes the UTERN levy funds received;

c) Work alongside the auditor to prepare an audit that includes the UTERN levy funds received;

d) Ensure all payments for funded projects and expenses are issued within seven (7) days of receipts being received, either automatically according to the policies, or approved by the Executive at a meeting (with an understanding for compassionate exceptions to this rule, such as illness or a death in the family);

e) Have the administrative staff person attend all UTERN meetings;

f) Aide with supervision of UTERN work-study positions, and aide with work-study applications;

g) Assist the UTERN Executive, as needed, to ensure the Executive remains well-functioning and has all work-study positions filled each year;

h) Provide support to the UTERN Executive to ensure it remains democratic and student-run;

i) Ensure UTERN is governed in accordance with these Terms of Reference and act as an agent of the organization in the unusual event of a governance failure (e.g. failure to hold elections) to bring UTERN back into compliance with all University of Toronto regulations and any obligations of Memorandums of Understandings with the respective UofT students unions (UTSU, UTGSU, UTMSU, SCSU).

j) In addition, Regenesi shall provide other support to the Executive as needed, to support activities, including any annual events and/or eco-weeks.

5) The expectation is that UTERN will provide:

a) Funding to cover all costs associated with UTERN work-study positions, administrative support costs, including audit fee, banking fees, and bookkeeping related costs (e.g. software and payroll service fees).

6) In the event that any of the administrative duties are not fulfilled, or if any disputes arise, UTERN Executive shall raise their concerns with the advisor(s) of UTERN and aim to seek an amicable solution. Should the concerns not be addressed in a timely and satisfactory manner, any concerned UTERN Executives can approach the University of Toronto, Office of VP Students, and the respective student

unions to help address the matter through meditation. UTERN Board reserves the right to decide to re-establishing UTERN as an entirely separate entity at any time, upon which said request shall be submitted to the Office of VP Students. Regenesi Toronto also reserves the right to exit this agreement, upon which it provides assistance to ensure a proper transition to whatever UTERN decides to become post-agreement

Article 7: Advisors

1) Advisors are staff, faculty or alumni at the University of Toronto appointed by the Executive and are non-voting members with speaking rights.

2) UTERN must maintain at least two (2) advisors at all times. While it is up to the UTERN Executive to determine their chosen advisor(s), it is recommended that one or more individuals in the following roles should be approached to be advisors if they aren't currently an advisor: [A] School of the Environment's Undergraduate Student Advisor; [B] Project Manager, Committee on the Environment, Climate Change, and Sustainability ; [C] A staff member of the Sustainability Office at the University of Toronto, UTM or UTSC. Additionally, retired professors, staff, post-docs, PhD students or alumni that are connected to the environmental sector are additional persons that can be considered for an advisor role.

3) The primary function of an Advisor is to provide guidance to the students on the Executive. This may include contributing meaningfully to discussion about proposals, administrative decisions, and finances. Advisors must attend UTERN events run by the Network Executive Liaisons.

Article 8: Meetings

1) Meetings shall be held regularly to ensure funding is quickly approved and allocated. The only exception to this rule shall be if no funding applications that are to be brought forward to UTERN are submitted that month and there are no other UTERN matters to be heard.

2) The minimum quorum shall be 2/3rd of the Executive. Additionally, no meeting will be considered valid unless the administrative staff person (or a substitute), or at least one (1) advisor are present.

3) All meetings will be held virtually.

Article 9: Conflict of Interest

1) Any member with a conflict of interest shall declare the conflict, and it shall be recorded in the meeting minutes, and they shall abstain from voting. A conflict of interest includes [1] applying and receiving funding for an organization that you, a family member, or current (or past) romantic/sexual partner is an executive member of; [2] Any funding application where you, a family member, or a current (or past) romantic/sexual partner, may benefit financially from (e.g. being hired to cater an event, hiring for a work-study position).

2) Anyone caught not declaring a conflict of interest shall immediately have the funding revoked, and if already issued, the Executive may require any funding received to be paid back. Further, they shall resign their status as a representative of their environmental student organization. The environmental student organization may appoint a replacement representative.

Article 10: Amendments

Any changes to this Terms of Reference shall require the consensus and approval of the UTERN Board, including the sign-off in writing of a majority of advisors.

Article 11: Approach to Decision Making

- 1) The rules contained in the current edition of The Guide to Consensus Building (by Lawrence Susskind, Sarah McKearnan, and Jennifer Thomas Larmer) shall govern the University of Toronto's Student Environmental Resource Network
- 2) Decisions will generally be made under a Consensus Decision Making Model.

Article 12: Unified Sustainability Fund

1) The penultimate goal of UTERN should be the establishment of a unified sustainability fund on campus, with the University of Toronto providing matching or greater funding than that provided by the UTERN levies themselves. Should the University of Toronto be open to future discussions on establishing a unified fund, the UTERN executive and Regenesys shall negotiate with the University of Toronto to enter into an agreement upon which the following points are essential for any UTERN fund merger to occur:

- [1] Any funding for student environmental projects is at least doubled with the support of non-levy funds from the University of Toronto;
- [2] That students should have the majority vote on any funding being allocated to student projects;
- [3] That none of the current UTERN levies will fund any non-student involved environmental projects (e.g. UofT building improvements, sustainability research lead by the UofT professor, etc.);
- [4] That the funding policy of any future fund will continue to be made accessible to non-UofT community environmental groups and movements, including climate justice and divestment, that involve UofT students.

Appendix A

Please refer to the document, *UTERN Historical Context and Restructuring*, for background.

Appendix B

Please refer to the document, *List of currently eligible groups*.

Appendix A: UTERN Historical Context and Restructuring

Terms of Reference approved by the January 18, 2024 UTERN Board of Directors, and modified with suggestions on Saturday April 27, 2024, and ratified at the April 29, 2024 UTERN General Members Meeting.

[A] Preamble and Historical Context

This document has been created to replace UTERN's Constitution and Financial Policy as part of the reorganization of UTERN.

We have decided to include a history of the first 20 years of UTERN so that future UofT students will understand and be better able to address any future challenges that UTERN may face.

UTERN was established in 2001 with the mission:

“University of Toronto's Environmental Resource Network. UTERN is an umbrella organization that encompasses various environmentally oriented groups, programmes, and organizations on campus. UTERN's objective is to allow for effective communication and distribution of information between the groups within UTERN.”

(Source: <https://web.archive.org/web/20011118112907/http://utern.sa.utoronto.ca/>)

Image 1: 2001 UTERN Website Homepage

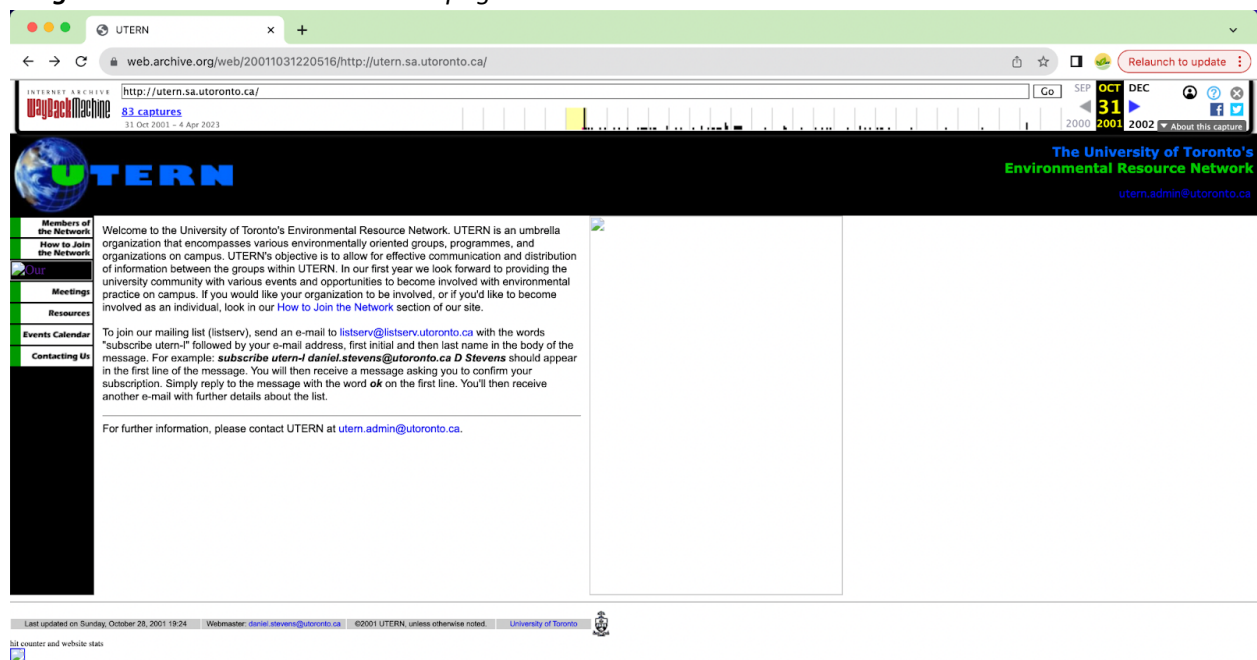
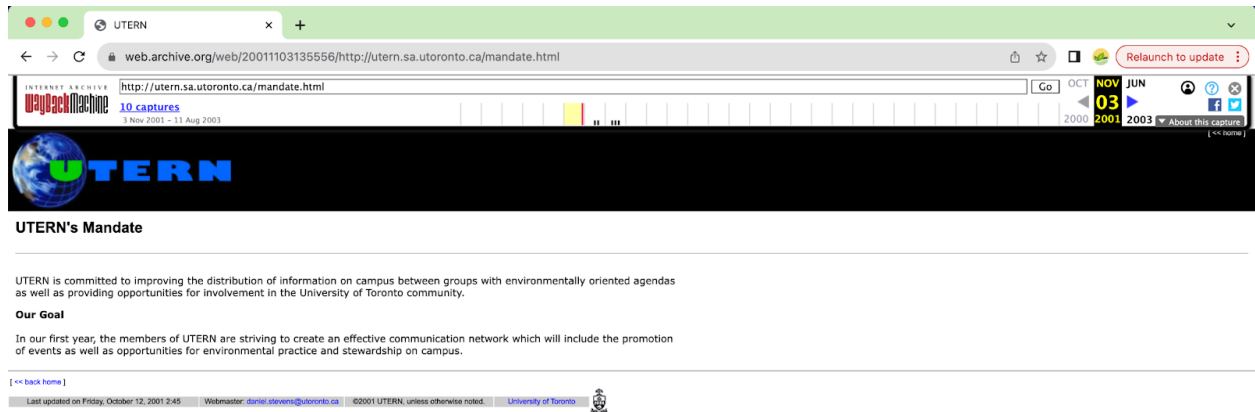


Image 2: 2001 UTERN Website Mandate



UTERN secured a levy in 2003, they adapted their mission:

“UTERN is the University of Toronto's Environmental Resource Network, an umbrella organization and the meeting point for everyone in the university community concerned about the health of our environment. UTERN is already two years old, but this year after successfully securing a 50-cent levy from all undergraduate students, it has taken new proportions. UTERN now manages more than twenty thousand dollars, which is almost entirely available to fund student-run, environmental projects at U of T. As a network, we also want to help groups promote events and projects that positively affect the University's environment.

Our mandate is to:

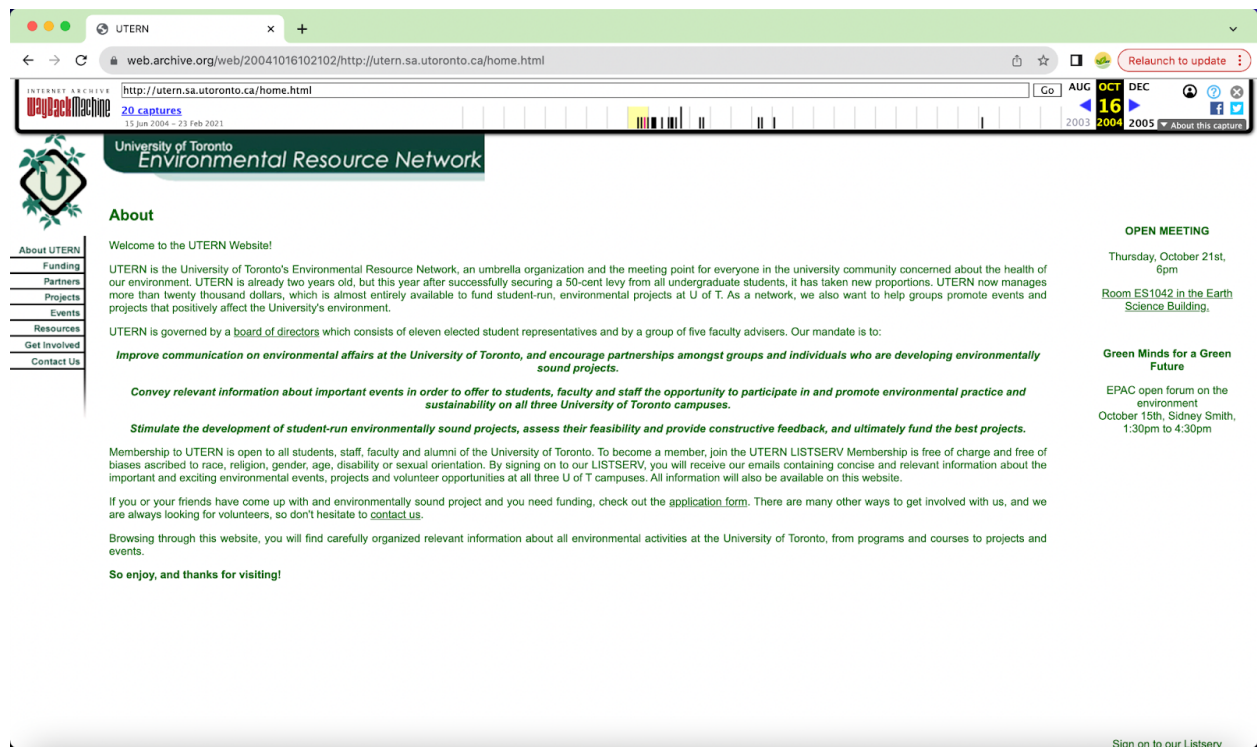
Improve communication on environmental affairs at the University of Toronto, and encourage partnerships amongst groups and individuals who are developing environmentally sound projects.

Convey relevant information about important events in order to offer to students, faculty and staff the opportunity to participate in and promote environmental practice and sustainability on all three University of Toronto campuses.

Stimulate the development of student-run environmentally sound projects, assess their feasibility and provide constructive feedback, and ultimately fund the best projects.”

(Source: <https://web.archive.org/web/20041016102102/http://utern.sa.utoronto.ca/home.html>)

Image 3: 2004 UTERN Website Homepage



The current mission of UTERN (Amended April 6, 2020) is stated as:

“The mandate of UTERN shall be to:

1. Establish a network to encourage and improve communications within and beyond the environmental community at the University of Toronto.
 - Make sure that information is accessible; have a social media presence
 - Act as a mediator
 - Partner closely with other environmental/sustainability groups on campus
 - Engage in meaningful communication
2. Engage students, faculty and staff to participate in and promote region-based environmental planning practices and sustainability on all three University of Toronto campuses.
 - Consider impact beyond specific groups at UofT; prioritize outreach
3. Encourage partnerships among groups and individuals within and external of the environmental community to promote deeper understandings of environmentalism on campus.
 - Both direct impact on the environment and education about it
4. Acting as a mediator, facilitator, and liaison by which groups and individuals on campus interested in environmental issues, can pool their resources and network.
 - Research comes down to outreach; prioritize the number of students affected and what part of UofT they come from
5. Provide resources and ongoing support for marginalized and Indigenous groups at UofT while going beyond simple themes of reconciliation and fundamentally promoting decolonization at UofT.”

The 2023-24 UTERN executive, upon extensive consultations, decided to reorganize UTERN in order to better fulfill the mission of the organization.

UTERN over the years, has struggled to fulfill its mission and maintain a well-functioning organization—this is indicative of many troubling factors. Some examples include breach of

memorandum of understanding agreements with student unions (e.g. inadequate election and meeting notice, audited financial statements not complete or provided in a timely manner), levy payments from some student unions not being received (and ultimately being lost), audits being conducted years later long-after the executive and institutional memory has passed (e.g. 2021/2022 audit being given to the 2023/24 UTERN executive who has no idea where missing receipts are or how to answer the auditors questions), students and clubs waiting over a year to be reimbursed for applications that were approved, and having inactive UTERN executive members receive pay from their work-study positions but aren't doing the required work. During some years UTERN has functioned more effectively, this has been because of one or two individual students putting in the effort rather than a sound organizational structure, as a properly working organization would be able to fulfill its mission and function regularly and issues such of the aforementioned should be a rarity. This restructuring held as its core principle that we should be looking at what is best for the students at the University of Toronto, environmental groups and projects at the University of Toronto, and the broader issues related to environmental sustainability in the local, regional, national, and global contexts.

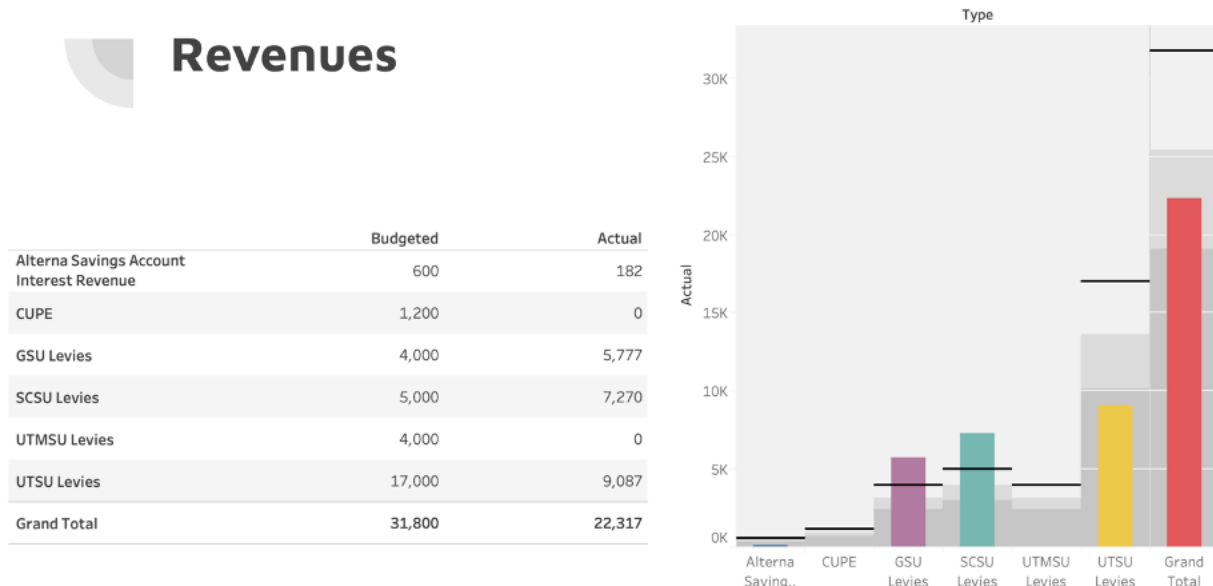
[B] Financial Context

[B1] - Levy not tied to inflation (Canadian Consumer Price Index)

This section aims to provide an overview and understanding of the history of UTERN's financial position, including an understanding of our fee levies.

UTERN established a student levy in 2003, receiving around \$20,000/annually. This amount has since grown with the increased enrollment at the University of Toronto has grown (62,000 in 2003 to 97,000 in 2023). However, the UTERN levy is not tied to inflation (Canadian Consumer Price Index) as most other levies are, so overall, the amount of the levy per-capita has shrunk significantly. **The overall levy should be around \$94,250 if the levy question was tied to inflation (as most levies are), however, it is not. UTERN currently receives a levy around \$41,000, 40% of the UTERN levy is given to other organizations, and only a portion of it (about 25%) is actually allocated to student environmental projects (see Image 2).**

Image 4: 2021 UTERN sources of Income (not including amounts provided to BikeChain and UTM Sustainability Office)



[B2] - Audit costs eat up a significant portion of the levy

\$4000 (or 10% of the levy) goes to pay an auditor, which is a requirement for all student organizations.

Audit fees are generally standard for levied student organizations (between \$4000-\$6000), and are therefore more burdensome on levy organizations with a smaller levy. This audit fee could be eliminated if another larger student levy organization administers UTERN's funding pool on our behalf.

Image 5: 2021 UTERN Expenses (not including work-study expenses)

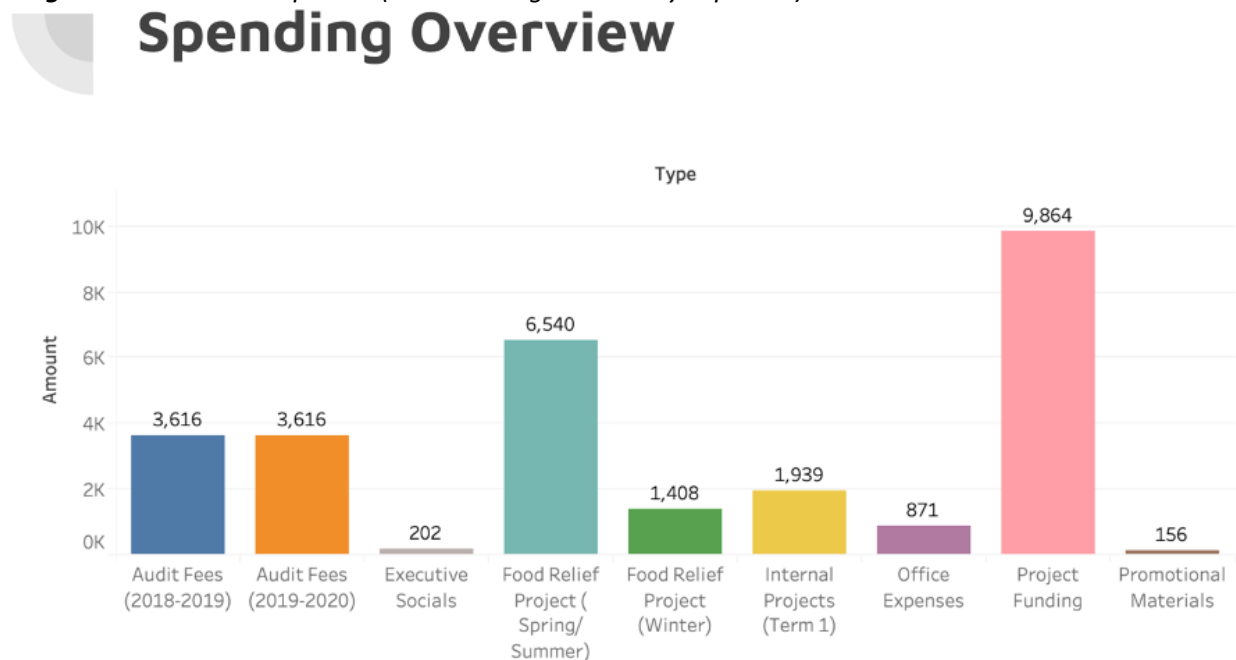


Image 6: 2021-2022 UTERN Work Study Wages Per Semester

University of Toronto Environmental Resource Network (UTERN)
Expense Statement
For the year ended April 30, 2023

Expense		Amount	Receipt	Date Issued	Type		
Cheque#439 School of Environment 2021-2022 Work Study Wage		\$3,205.05	School of Environment	October 21, 2022	Other		

[B3] - UTERN providing a large portion of our levy (approx 40%) to BikeChain and BikeShare
 UTERN receives a .50/cent per session levy fee from all UTSU students, however, **50% of the UTERN levy from UTSU students goes to BikeChain, who has a separate .58/cent per session levy fee from UTSU students – this amounts to approximately \$18,500 of UTERN's levy going to BikeChain.** BikeChain was previously a committee of UTERN. They ran a referendum under UTERN as they were not a registered student organization. An agreement with BikeChain made by UTERN executives in the past to have a referendum run under UTERN and provide that portion to BikeChain. At the time, the UTSU (then called the Student Administrative Council) represented students at both the St. George and Mississauga campuses. As a result of this, the levy to support BikeChain via UTERN continues to be collected at both the St. George and Mississauga campuses, despite BikeChain not having a presence at the Mississauga campus. **Currently at UTM, 50% of UTERN's levy, or about \$8,500, goes to the university itself – to the Sustainability Office at UTM,** since Bikechain ceased operating directly at UTM several years ago. BikeChain several years ago made the decision, without any consultation with UTERN, to provide the money to the Sustainability Office at UTM. We believe that student levies should be governed by students and not be provided for university operations.

Image 7: UTERN levies with each student union



Levy Rates

- UTSU: **\$0.50** per session, per full time undergraduate student. Of that \$0.50 per session, \$0.25 is allocated to bike chain
- UTMSU: **\$0.50** per session, per full time undergraduate student. Of that \$0.50 per session, \$0.25 is allocated to bikeshare
- UTGSU: UTERN receives **\$0.25** per session, per full time graduate student, and \$0.12 per session, per part-time graduate student
- SCSU: UTERN receives **\$0.25** per session, per full time undergraduate student

The biggest issue here is financial transparency for UofT students. Students who believe they are paying 50/cents a credit to UTERN according to the University of Toronto website, but get contradictory

information from the student union about where their fees are going, is misleading. While BikeChain was originally a committee of UTERN, upon which the UTERN executive at the time got the UTERN levy increased passed with UTSU (then called Students' Administrative Council of the University of Toronto, and represented students at both UTSG and UTM), and allocated a portion of the UTERN levy to the BikeChain project. After BikeChain established themselves as an independent student organization and secured their own separate levy a couple years afterwards, UTERN should have at that time ceased providing them a portion of our levy. BikeChain should have asked for an adequate amount for providing their services originally from students. BikeChain has since passed multiple levy increases with both the UTSU and UTGSU. Further, when the Students' Administrative Council of the University of Toronto split into the UTSU and UTMSU, no consultations were done with UTERN regarding the portion of the levy collected from UTM students that was provided to BikeChain. BikeChain does not receive a levy from UTM students. While it is our understanding that BikeChain originally operated programming at UTM under the name BikeShare UTM, since that time BikeChain has been allocating the funding they get from the UTERN UTMSU levy to the UTM Sustainability Office, which has other troubling issues (such as the lack of student governance over a voluntary student-fee levy).

We have looked into if it is possible to separate the portion of the UTERN levy going to BikeChain so students can have full transparency on where their funds are going, however, Josh Hass from the Office of VP Students says this is not possible. Additionally, these allocations should be re-examined as other environmental groups, like UofT Bees, Dig In! Campus Agriculture, OISE Community Learning Garden, Regenesi UTSG/UTM, and MealCare, have been denied (or had reduced) funding for larger projects as our project budget has significantly been reduced per capita thanks to inflation, and such additional funds could really help these groups who do not have their own levy fees currently.

We are therefore recommending that we reclaim the UTERN levy amounts being provided to BikeChain by the UTSU and UTMSU. Our goal is to do this in a way that promotes mutual solidarity and does not harm the operations of either organization. Our recommendation is that both UTERN and BikeChain request to hold referenda in the 2024/2025 school term that would increase both the BikeChain levy and the UTERN levy, while simultaneously ending the portion of the UTERN levy going towards BikeChain at St. George (and BikeShare UTM via the UTM Sustainability Office at UTM).

Image 8: 2019 UTERN Budget



Proposed Budget

September 2019

University of Toronto Environmental Resource Network (UTERN)				
Proposed Budget				
For the fiscal year May 1, 2019 to April 30, 2020				
Revenue				
UTSU Levies (Summer, Fall, Winter)				~\$35,000
UTM Levies (Summer, Fall, Winter)				
SCSU Levies (Summer, Fall, Winter)				
GSU Levies (Summer, Fall, Winter)				
Alterna Savings Account Interest Revenue				~\$500
Total				~\$40,000
Expenses				
Funding				
Projects				\$26,350.00
EcoFest Projects				\$2,000.00
Sustainability Campaign				\$500.00
Total				\$28,850.00
Administration				
Alterna Account Fees				\$50.00
UTERN Executive Meeting Expenses (Food)				\$400.00
UTERN Environment Working Group Meetings and AGM				\$400.00
Networking Events				\$800.00
Executive Socials				\$200.00
Office Expenses				\$1,000.00
Promotional Materials				\$300.00
Work-Study Payments				\$5,000.00
Audit Fees for 2018-2019				\$3,000.00
Total				\$11,150
Net Income				\$0

What UTERN should be receiving (approximately) based on our current levies (if all funds were allocated to UTERN):

\$37,000/year – UTSU (45,370 x .50 x 2 sessions) (\$18,500 actual)
 \$17,000/year – UTMSU (16,041 x .50 x 2 sessions) (\$8,500 actual)
 \$7,000/year – SCSU (14,171 x .25 x 2 sessions)
\$7,000/year – UTGSU (21,484 x .25 x 3 sessions)
 \$68,000/year (\$41,000 actual)

Further, if our levy was tied to inflation (Canadian Consumer Price Index), as most student fee levies are, our levy would be 35% larger (or \$94,250/annually).

However, due to the fact we are giving away \$27,000 (or 40% of our total levy) to other entities, which is against UTERN's financial policy, we are only due to receive \$41,000. However, this has been further reduced by a lack of due diligence of past UTERN executive members, as cheques from some student unions for the levy fee they collect on our behalf have not been deposited and cannot be recovered.

B4 - Reoccurring Issues with audits, levy refund requests and other administrative and financial issues that put at risk UTERN levy fees and existence

The current 2023/24 executive has been having to deal with getting the 2021 audited financial statements complete. For those familiar with non-profit and charitable organizations, to successfully

complete an audit, it should be completely immediately after the end of the fiscal year to ensure that the current treasurer and other members of the executive are still around to answer any questions the auditor has, find any missing receipts, or clarify any specific transactions flagged by the auditor. This is a total failure of management, and only because of committed individual UTERN executive members who have put in extra work, are we getting closer to the best remaining outcome – a conditionally approved (qualified opinion) audit.

UTERN receives a levy from four different student unions. Some of these payments from the student union were never received – not due to the part of the student union, but to a failure of duties of past executives (in particular, past presidents and treasurers), to ensure that all levy money collected for UTERN is received. This relates to financial transparency and fairness, as students expect the funds to be allocated to UTERN environmental funding in the current year they are a student in. We don't even currently know how much we are missing. We are hoping to work with our auditors to straighten this out and collect any funds owing to us by the student union.

UTERN receives its levy on the promise that it is a refundable levy, meaning that any student can request a refund of the levy from UTERN within a certain time window each year. The majority of these email requests from past years that we found in our UTERN GMail account were totally ignored.

UTERN has unpaid bills, with a past executive having previously lost our previous domain name due to a failure to renew our website hosting and domain name.

UTERN has funded some questionable activities in the past. These include funding non-environmental events and programs, funding events that could be considered 'greenwashed', providing funding to student governments and other student organizations that already receive their own levy, paying for flight travel for conferences and guest speakers (which is antithetical to the climate crisis), executives voting in favor of funding their own expenses or other organizations they are with (which is a clear conflict of interest, which should be declared and the executive abstain from voting on), funding events or programs that don't directly benefit the UofT student community, providing funding to applications that appear fraudulent in nature (e.g. individual UofT students requesting funding for things like camera equipment).¹ In one case we found, a guest speaker was provided with funding for a round trip flight, but never showed up to speak or returned the money.

[C] Potential Ramifications

UTERN has been threatened with defunding multiple times by the Graduate Students' Union due to failures to comply with our agreement with them (e.g. not providing audits to the GSU in a timely manner, failing to provide an annual summary and presentation of how funds were used to the GSU membership, failure to provide a seat to the GSU representative, failure to provide adequate notice to students for elections and meetings). While we haven't faced the same level of scrutiny from the UTSU, UTMSU or SCSU, as we have demonstrated above, the above issues of governance failure by past UTERN executives is concerning. While we acknowledge that some years UTERN has been operated in an excellent manner, and do recognize the nature of student organizations is one of learning and that some mistakes are expected to occur, we feel that these problems have reoccurred – often years apart. While governance failures are common with student clubs, given we receive a student levy, we have a responsibility to ensure good governance. We believe that the problems of UTERN is a systemic problem

¹ If students are interested in borrowing camera equipment, VicXposure (<https://vicxposure.ca/about>) and Hart House Camera Club (<https://www.harthousecameraclub.ca/>) loan out such equipment to students.

given the unique circumstances of UTERN (i.e. our levy not large enough to have the staff capacity to ensure good financial management, student lack these skills and the systems and capacity aren't in place to adequately train them, UTERN is not embedded in a larger entity that would have the capacity and resources to ensure such failures of governance don't occur).

[D] Identifying the Core Problems

[1] UTERN could do far better in our mission to fund “the best student-run environmental projects.”² Large portions of our levy go towards unrelated purposes (audit, work-studies) and other funded entities (BikeChain, UTM Sustainability Office). Many larger requests for worthy — according to UTERN's Constitution and Financial Policy — environmental projects and campaigns have been denied (or received reduced funding) due to UTERN not having enough funds.

[2] UTERN as primarily a ‘funding body’ does not motivate enough students to be involved, or even apply. On average only a handful of applications (12-20) are received and approved. This is an unnecessary amount of extra bureaucracy for handing out a small amount of funding (typically less than \$10,000 per year) to only a handful of applicants. One attempted solution, proposed and established several years ago, was establishing work-study positions to run UTERN. However, many UTERN executive positions still go unfilled some years, resulting in vacancies and by-elections. Many of those elected to UTERN positions are acclaimed and have never been involved with other environmental organizations or causes on campus and simply apply because it is a paid work-study position. Further, some inactive UTERN executive members receive pay from their work-study positions but aren't doing the required work. This occurs often because there either isn't any work (applications), or that direction isn't being provided by the President of UTERN.

[3] Inadequate administrative support has broken the trust between UTERN and many students. Many students and student groups UTERN fund applicants have gone months (and even over a year) without being reimbursed. Student fees should never be ‘lost in the mail’ when the student unions send UTERN levy payments. Student fees are meant to be spent in the same year they are collected to benefit the students who paid the fee through improvements to student life, campus sustainability and services that benefit students. UTERN has a voluntary levy where students can request the fee they pay to UTERN back within a certain time frame, however, many of these inquiries have been ignored or not refunded.

Some of these issues are exacerbated by poor transitions between executives. Due to limitations of the work-study program, UTERN executives aren't obligated to help with the transition to the new executive or completing the previous year's audit. This has been problematic as the end of financial year is April 30th (to align with the University of Toronto and the various student unions financial year), which means an audit can only be started after May 1st (assuming all the bookkeeping is up to order, including all receipts have been submitted). March/April is also typically when most student organization hold elections, with new executives taking office typically on May 1—this leaves no time for a transition and often UTERN executives have ghosted after their hours are completed and don't aide in training their replacement, leaving that to other executives to figure out how to transition those roles.

Image 9: UofT Work-Study Program Schedule. Students are not allowed to work April 1 to May 7, or August 14th to First day of classes.

² As per UTERN Mission Statement

The Work Study program has two sessions (Fall-Winter and Summer) with specific dates that vary each session. **Employers may set an application deadline before the application period ends – apply early!**

	2023/24 Fall-Winter Program	2023 Summer Program
Student Application Period • When Work Study positions become visible and you can apply	August 16, 2023 – September 25, 2023	April 17, 2023 – May 14, 2023
Hiring Deadline for Employers • When employers will conduct interviews • Successful candidates should return their signed offer letters and receive program approval within this timeframe	August 16, 2023 – October 6, 2023	April 17, 2023 – May 30, 2023
Program Period • Timeframe you can work	First day of classes – March 31, 2024	May 8, 2023 – August 14, 2023

[4] UTERN has not done as well as it could in terms of amplifying the communications and promotions of sustainability groups and projects on campus and has only marginally been successful with establishing a sustainability network on campus. UTERN is too often just ‘preaching to the choir’ in that our communication efforts have largely been limited to a handful of student environmental groups that are active and regularly receive funding from us. The environmental networking aspect of UTERN, which previously was run by other entities (such as UTSU Environmental Commission), has also struggled most years to maintain broad engagement from students interested in environmental issues and student environmental groups, especially at the satellite campuses of Mississauga and Scarborough. UTERN is simply under-resourced and does not have adequate staffing that would be necessary to support this work on our own. Such an effort would be best lead by the University of Toronto Sustainability Office and CECCS (Committee on the Environment, Climate Change, and Sustainability) to ensure a broad array of stakeholders, including professors, staff, alumni and the broader community, and not just students and student groups, are part of a broader, more connected and more effective environmental network here at the University of Toronto. UofT students and UTERN, we believe, should play a key role in participating and helping to facilitate the network, but ultimately, the university itself needs to take the lead to ensure adequate resources and participation for a pan-university network.

It is important to acknowledge that all these problems are further exacerbated by late-stage capitalism, as students are increasingly busy, having to balance school, work, personal life – and ultimately have less time to be involved unless they come from a more privileged background.

[E] K.I.S.S. (Keep It Simple Solutions)

When considering solutions, the UTERN governance subcommittee and our advisors felt that any solutions should be practical to implement and that recommitts UTERN to our core mission. The decision to work with Regenesys was reflective and judicious. While engaging with the University of Toronto was

thoroughly considered, we encountered limited enthusiasm for a merger and held concerns about student autonomy (e.g. support for divestment and climate justice movements) could be hindered if UTERN was fully embedded into the university. Looking elsewhere for administrative support, we felt that student unions were not a good fit given that each only represents a fraction of the UTERN membership, that student unions have such a broad mandate that UTERN could be neglected within their purview, and that student union politics could hinder UTERN and student environmental activists from speaking out (e.g. protests over UTSU lease with Royal Bank On Campus branch in the Student Commons). Looking at student levied organizations, we identified three potential groups suitable: BikeChain, which was originally part of UTERN and focuses on cycling at the St. George campus, OPIRG Toronto, a social and environmental justice focused organization at the St. George campus, and Regenesiis, which is an environmental sustainability organization with a presence on all three University of Toronto campuses. Regenesiis stands out from the others due to its unique combination of proven experience, the additional resources and support it can provide to UTERN, their commitment to climate justice, and having a presence across all three campuses. All that said, we do still feel that long-term the best approach for UTERN would be a symbiotic relationship, similar to that between Embark Sustainability and Simon Fraser University Sustainability Office, or Regenesiis York and York University's Sustainability Office, with students maintaining a level of self-governance, funding and autonomy, but also having a place within institutional structures (e.g. seats on various sustainability and sustainability-related committees) and coordinating sustainability efforts (e.g. Environmental Working Groups on each campus, co-hosting a Sustainability Week). Included within the proposed terms of reference are these stated goals, for the UTERN committee and Regenesiis, to continue to work towards more co-operative and integration with the CECCS and the University of Toronto Sustainability Office, while maintaining student-autonomy and a commitment to divestment and environmental justice.

[1] Get funding out to those who need it as quickly as possible.

[2] Prioritize funding student environmental organizations, as these organizations have the most impact; this includes environmental organizations that aren't registered at UofT, but that involve many UofT students, such as Change Course (formerly Banking on a Better Future) and Fridays for Future Toronto. Provide funding in the amounts necessary for projects that have a larger benefit to the campus community, the wider Tkaronto community and environmental sustainability.

[3] Establish a structure that reduces bureaucracy by establishing clear financial policies that allow the automatic approval of funds for smaller and more urgent requests that meet the guidelines established.

[4] Have UTERN to include representatives from other environmental organizations in order to better reflect the needs of environmental advocates and groups on campus.

[5] Provide funding for work-study positions that support campus environmental organizations and projects, the grassroots work students actually want to be doing, rather than just UTERN operations.

[6] Establish a partnership relationship with a larger student-levy organization (ideally with an environmental focus and similar values) that can provide an administrative backbone to the work of UTERN. We have determined the group best suited to this would be Regenesiis, as they have an environmental-focus, are present at all three UofT campuses, have resources and capacity to support UTERN, and are committed to supporting such a partnership. This would allow us to ensure all bookkeeping and funds are accounted for, ensure funding is provided in a timely manner, help support student environmental organizations apply and support work-study positions, and provide support for

maintaining a sustainability network. This would also save us around \$4000 in annual audit costs that can be redirected to funding environmental projects and additional student-work study positions. Having the administrative support from Regenesis would also help UTERN with transition issues that have regularly occurred since adopting the work-study position model for UTERN executive members.

[7] Maintain the sustainability network of student environmental organizations and student eco-activists through annual events and rituals for students (e.g., an annual spring retreat to Hart House Farm or UTOC Cabin, maintaining the annual environmental week but ensuring it is held at a consistent time each year when students are less busy - which will be the 3rd or 4th week in January going forward - and having the UofT Sustainability Office and CECCS co-host it). This approach is more fruitful than the current structure of the EWG (Environmental Working Group), which has often suffered from poor meeting attendance and is often characterized by groups simply promoting their events to each other.

Further, in continuing the work of the Environmental Working Group, originally established by the UTSU and continued by UTERN, we shall work with the University of Toronto Sustainability Office, CECCS, Regenesis and other student environmental organizations to establish a pan-university sustainability committee (environmental working group), with sub-committees at each campus, that includes and involves a broad set of stakeholders, including students, staff, faculty, alumni, student groups, local community members and community partner organizations.

Appendix B: List of currently eligible groups

Terms of Reference approved by the January 18, 2024 UTERN Board of Directors, and modified with suggestions on Saturday April 27, 2024, and ratified at the April 29, 2024 UTERN General Members Meeting.

NOTE: Groups that receive a student levy, or are a sub-entity of a student union that receives student union funds, are noted in italics.

*BikeChain [St George] *receives student levy from all UTSG students*

*Blue Sky Solar Racing [St George] *receives student levy from all UofT students*

*Caffiends [St. George] *receives student levy from VUSAC*

Change Course (formerly Banking on a Better Future) [External, founded and involving many UofT students]

Clean Energy Club [St George]

Climate Justice Toronto [External, but involving many UofT students]

Climate Justice UofT [St George]

Community Climate Council [External, but involving many UTM students]

Dig In! Campus Agriculture [St. George] *unregistered, but long-existing project, also part of Regenesi
UTSG

EnviroCare [UTSC]

Environmental and Physical Sciences Students' Association [St George]

Environmental Students' Union [St George]

Foresters' Club [St George]

Fridays For Future Toronto [External, but involving many UofT students]

Future Living Lab [St George]

Graduate Environmental Students' Association [St George]

Green Chemistry Initiative [St George]

Green Career Centre [External, but involving many UofT students]

Green Up Initiative [St George]

Hart House Student Farm Committee [all campuses]

Horizons [UTSC]

Hult Prize University of Toronto [St George]

Jane Goodall's Roots and Shoots [St George]

Masters of Sustainability Student Executive Council [UTM]

MealCare University of Toronto [St. George]

Munk School Environmental Working Group [Munk]

NetImpact Rotman [Rotman]

OISE Sustainability and Climate Action Network [OISE] *unregistered with ULife, but part of OISE

*OPIRG Toronto [St George] *receives student levy*

Parks and Restoration [St George]

*Regenesi St. George [St George] *seeking a student levy*

*Regenesi UTM [UTM] *will start receiving a student levy in Fall 2024*

*Regenesi UTSC [UTSC] *will start receiving a student levy in Fall 2024*

Rotman Commerce Sustainable Business [Rotman]

Sustainable Buildings Network [St George]

Sustainable Collaboration Initiative [UTSC]

Sustainable Engineers Association [St George]

Sustainable Innovation Group [UTSC]
Sustainable Investment Club [St George]
The Energy Network [UTM]
Toronto Youth Environmental Council [External, but involving many UofT students]
Trinity Food Systems Lab [St. George]
University of Toronto Bees [St George]
University of Toronto Environmental Action [St George]
University of Toronto Food Coalition [St. George]
University of Toronto Formula for our Future [St George]
University of Toronto Global Brigades [St George]
University of Toronto Mississauga Global Brigades [St George]
University of Toronto Outing Club [St George]
University of Toronto Trash Team [St George] *unregistered with ULife, but long-existing project
UofTrees Student Club [St George]
Urbanism Club [UTM]
UTM ACADEMIC SOC – Student Association of Geography and Environment (SAGE) [UTM]
UTM Wildlife and Ornithology Club (UTWO) [UTM]
UTSC Parks Canada Club [UTSC]
UTWind [St George]
Valley Cat Coalition [UTSC]
Veg Club [St George]
*Vic Sustainability Commission [St. George] *receives student union funding from VUSAC*
YENYR - Youth Environmental Network of York Region [External, but involving many UTSC and UTSG students]