

On behalf of the senior administration of the Faculty of Music, I write to acknowledge the [Open Letter](#) received over the past few days from our students and other members of our community, and I thank them for sharing the profound testimony and urgent call to action that it contains.

The Faculty administration concurs that “serious action is needed to ensure the safety and well-being of all members of the University community.” The institutional culture detailed in the Letter is distressingly toxic and needs to change both immediately and permanently. It is clear that we have failed to ensure the safety of our community. The painful truths of individuals, and those of others whose voices are not yet registered, are deeply shocking and upsetting.

With respect to the initial requests cited in the Open Letter, we offer some initial responses with the full intention of further discussion in order to address the important imperatives it presents:

1. To make concrete, transparent, and public commitments to actions that prioritize and enhance student safety, with emphasis on open communication between Administration, Faculty, and students;

We pledge to take immediate and ongoing actions to prioritize and enhance student safety. We are already working with incoming Dean Ellie Hisama to put a Workgroup in place that will consult broadly in the coming months so that, by Fall 2021, we can begin to implement concrete policy changes for the Faculty of Music that address issues of safety and harassment and that are supplemental to and complementary with University policies already in place. There are precedents for this in other performing-arts institutions on which we can build.

2. To instigate an external and impartial review which investigates the issues within the Faculty of Music that contribute to a culture of misogyny, of fear of speaking out against sexual misconduct, and of systemic power abuse;

In this case, it will be important to discuss the issue with incoming Dean Hisama, who will consult with others in the Faculty to determine the best path forward. While it will be important to seek independent and impartial review of the current culture, it is also important that the Faculty community look inward in order to own the problems and especially the steps needed to solve them. Core issues such as the systemic abuse of power, the lack of understanding of boundaries, and inappropriate behaviour (incivility and harassment, including sexual harassment) must be rectified.

3. To implement mandatory consent training in collaboration with the Sexual Violence Prevention and Support Centre for Faculty, Staff, and students which clarifies appropriate boundaries and procedures for reporting harassment;

We expect to adopt a culture where such training is viewed as mandatory. The Faculty administration and ARAO (Faculty of Music’s Anti-Racism and Anti-Oppression Committee) have put several educational and training sessions in place with SVPSC (Sexual Violence Prevention & Support Centre), SGDO (Sexual Gender and Diversity Office), ARCDO (Anti-

Racism & Cultural Diversity Office), and other university services. We recognize that, in the least, these sessions need to be regularly recurrent, since the issues require constant reinforcement and the student cohort (and some faculty and staff complement) changes annually.

4. To add the role of an in-house Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Officer within the Faculty of Music.

We agree that this is a priority. This effort is already underway in discussions with ARAO and with the Provost. A challenge is that the Faculty has no budget capacity for additional staff; nonetheless, the urgency of this need is evident to all. It is hoped that a new support person, supplemented by the ongoing safe-space presence of several faculty members, can be in place by Fall 2021. Such a position goes some way to providing a safe space for disclosure and helps diminish the fear of reprisal which can be understandable in many cases, particularly in a field such as ours that relies on considerable one-on-one and small group program delivery.

As the Open Letter states, as a leading Music program, and an institution set within the most diverse city in Canada, “the University of Toronto Faculty of Music has the potential to become a world leader in breaking through the systemic inequalities that plague the music industry” and higher education in the performing arts.

Challenging as the current situation is, I am confident that UofT Music can move forward to achieve that status and reputation with the support of our students, faculty, staff, and community.

With best wishes to all,
Don McLean
Dean