



UNIVERSITY OF  
**TORONTO**  

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**MISSISSAUGA**

**Autonomy Funds**  
**Guiding Principles**

## **Background**

Academic units at the University of Toronto, Mississauga have experienced important change over recent years, leading to increased autonomy. In 2015-16, academic units were provided base funding to enhance undergraduate student education and experience along with discretionary funding to pursue initiatives of importance to each unit. In 2018-19, the UTM budget model was reviewed with Chairs and Directors of academic units and programs and we continue to make strides in increasing the level of autonomy our academic units have. Accordingly, effective May 1, 2019, each academic unit received “Autonomy Funds” in their base budget to pursue initiatives that enhance the undergraduate student education and experience and pursue priorities of the unit.

The Autonomy Funds replaced the base funding implemented in 2015-16 (Undergraduate Student Education Fund, Undergraduate Student Experience Fund and Discretionary Fund) and the total funding invested in the Autonomy Funds is double the value of the funding initiatives that were implemented in 2015-16.

## **Objective**

To enable academic units to decide freely on their financial expenditures and set and realize their priorities and goals while eliminating the redundancy associated with annual funding requests. Accordingly, it is expected that each unit fully utilize the Autonomy Funds, carryforward funds and, where applicable, utilize GEF funding prior to requesting any additional funding from the Dean’s Office.

## **Guiding principles and examples of initiatives:**

Academic units are encouraged to pursue initiatives that enhance the quality of education and the overall student experience of undergraduate students; including strategies designed to challenge student thinking, performance and growth.

Outlined below are examples of initiatives units may pursue:

### **Support innovative teaching and learning**

- Develop new courses, which are adaptive to reflect student interests and emerging issues within a particular area of study or industry.
- Provide undergraduate students with greater support for and opportunities to participate in experiential learning. This may include initiatives to encourage active learning by offering new/additional work-integrated learning and internship opportunities.
- Provide unique and specialized training to Teaching Assistants to address particular needs of an academic unit. (Note: academic units may also use [GEF Funding](#) for such initiatives).
- Field trip expenses related to course material during the phase-in of ancillary fees (Note: please ensure Ancillary Fees are established in line with the [Policy on Ancillary Fees](#))

### **Enable networking opportunities**

- Host seminars on a wide array of topics including those that provide students with an understanding of career opportunities within a field while also enabling networking opportunities with professionals and employers in the industry.
- Expand opportunities for student-faculty interaction through structured events such as luncheons, speaker series, etc.

### **Encourage research opportunities**

- Encourage student participation in local research conferences by providing funding for approved expenses related to attendance or presentations of results. (Note: Undergraduate Research Grants will continue to be available on a competitive basis).
- Conference sponsorship /participation/hosting of events and conferences.

### **Support core, continuing and operating needs of the unit**

- Professional development costs for administrative staff in excess of those reimbursed through the University's [Professional Development Fund](#).

### **Autonomy Funds are not meant for costs such as:**

- Where existing procedures and guidelines exist – for example appointing academic staff
- Where there are existing funding sources for specific needs such as [Teaching & Learning Grants](#)
- For expenditures related to graduate students where [GEF Funding](#) is available to the unit (including semi-annual GEF Funding competitions held by the Assistant Dean, Graduate)
- For expenditures related to graduate students where [UTM Conference Travel Grants](#) are available
- Research support for faculty members (please refer to UTM Office of the Vice Principal Research website for [Funding Opportunities](#))
- Course releases or course load reduction
- Moving expenses (except up to 1/3 of eligible expenses as per [UTM Summary of Travel and Moving Expenses for New Faculty Members](#))
- Hospitality beyond reasonable limits
- Alcohol

### **Funding Levels**

The funding levels will be revisited on a triannual basis, the funding provided to any particular unit may increase or decrease based on the funding basis (enrolment, faculty FTE and administrative FTE).

### **Annual Reporting**

A brief report outlining initiatives pursued and their outcome must be submitted to the Dean on an annual basis - no later than April 30<sup>th</sup> of each year. The brief report should approximate a paragraph per each initiative. Academic units are expected to record expenses using the autonomy funding cost centers that have been established for this purpose and enclose these reports in the annual submission. Please note, where on an **exceptional** basis, transactions are reallocated to the autonomy cost center; academic units should provide document numbers and transactional details of original postings with the annual report. A template will be provided for reporting purposes.

Please refer to the following link for a summary of funding opportunities available to all units:  
[Summary of Funding Opportunities](#)