The University & the City
Executive Summary

Dynamism and resilience – Universities bring dynamism and resilience to the economies of urban regions, helping their host cities to reinvent themselves over time.

Regional stability – At the same time, universities are tremendously important stabilizing forces on urban economies, and on the local neighbourhoods they inhabit.

International Gateways – Universities like the University of Toronto connect their host regions to the world, and vice versa.

Symbiosis – The University of Toronto gains as much from its association with Toronto as it contributes.

“
A strong university helps build a strong city, and the reverse is also true: a strong city helps build a strong university. We need to leverage this relationship to our mutual advantage to advance our shared prosperity.”

Research Dynamism

In 2011–12, the University of Toronto and its partner hospitals carried out $1.2B in funded research. That is roughly equal to the entire operating budgets of nine of our sister universities in Ontario — combined.

While much of that $1.2B came from federal and provincial research councils, about a quarter-billion dollars last year arose from collaboration with industrial, institutional, and not-for-profit partners, including local businesses large and small, and community-based organizations.
Embodied Knowledge

Helping educate human capital, embodied knowledge, represents the University’s single biggest contribution to Toronto, Ontario, and Canada.

16,500 students graduated from the University of Toronto in 2012–13. Over 82% of them were employed within six months, and more than 90% were employed within two years.

These days, with youth unemployment so high, these figures are reassuring. Toronto is a terrific place to build a career in nearly any field, and employers in this region benefit from the supply of well-educated graduates flowing from its universities and colleges.

Entrepreneurship & Innovation

Sometimes rather than find a job, why not create a job, a company, or even an entirely new industry or field? The University of Toronto community is spectacularly good at this.

From 2008–09 to 2010–11, U of T anchored the fastest growing entrepreneurial hub among all major North American institutions. And in the last three years this academic community created more start-up companies than any other North American university.

Much of the credit for this remarkable story must be shared with the Toronto region itself. The region’s success as an emerging innovation and entrepreneurship powerhouse rests on its tremendous multi-sectoral, convergent strength. This unusually diverse economic base provides a powerful spark for innovation and entrepreneurship, drawing on a rich environment of specialized suppliers and services.

Number of startup companies, top 15 single-reporting institutions in North America, three-year total 2009–10 to 2011–2012, includes partner hospitals

Source: AUTM, October 2013
Regional Resilience & Reinvention

Toronto has reinvented itself continually over the course of its history: from trading post, textiles, and tanning, to farm implements and food processing, and more recently to finance, pharma, film-making, and artisanal foods.

Successive waves of immigrants moving to Toronto for economic opportunities and social-political stability have helped create the world’s most multicultural region — where half of its inhabitants were born outside of Canada. These new Canadians have brought their talents, ideas, and drive to Toronto, transforming our city profoundly.

Not surprisingly, the composition of the world’s most multicultural region is reflected in the enrolment of its universities and colleges. Today, well over half of U of T’s students self-identify as ‘visible minority’ and about one in six is the first in their family to attend university.

Today’s students are tomorrow’s leaders and knowledge workers: fully 68% of the Toronto region’s population between the ages of 25 and 65 has some kind of post-secondary education credential. This is a huge advantage in a knowledge economy, and has provided the wherewithal for Toronto to reinvent itself over time.
Employment Symbiosis

The University of Toronto is a major employer in the city, with 16,000 full- and part-time employees. In fact, U of T directly employs a greater number of people on its three campuses in the Toronto region than Chrysler and GM employ in all of Canada—combined.

Employment, generally, is another excellent example of the mutually reinforcing positive feedback loop that characterizes U of T’s relationship with the Toronto region: U of T benefits from the talent Toronto has to offer as Toronto benefits from the talent U of T helps educate, attract, and retain.

A Deep & Shared Root System

The University of Toronto and the Toronto region share a deep, intertwined, and largely hidden root system. For example…

Every summer and March break thousands of children descend upon U of T: In 2012, the Junior Blues and Camp U of T welcomed 8,505 participants between the ages of 4 and 17.

U of T dentistry students received 78,000 patient-visits in their clinics last year as part of their training. Half of these patients were children or seniors and 87% were without insurance.

The Munk School of Global Affairs welcomes an astounding 33,000 visitors annually to its conferences, lectures, and other public events.
Toronto’s—and Canada’s—present and future prosperity depends on access to knowledge produced in other leading centres of research and innovation around the world.

In 2012 alone, authors with a U of T affiliation produced over 14,000 publications in scholarly journals and collaborated with over 8,000 distinct institutions in hundreds of municipalities around the world. (The map shows only those collaborations with 25 or more citations.)

These partnerships often lead to ideas that fuel local innovation, even as Toronto-led innovations flow into the global arena.
In the knowledge-based economy, universities have come to be regarded as prized competitive assets for cities, regions, and nation-states. At the same time, it takes a dynamic region as a symbiotic partner for a university to flourish.

The Toronto region is fortunate to have both: a globally renowned research university and a world-class city-region.

Let’s work together.

Dr. Meric Gertler
President, University of Toronto
Address to the
Toronto Region
Board of Trade
Thursday, May 29, 2014

For more information, please visit us online at www.utoronto.ca or better yet, visit us in person.