#### Trent University LogoEXEMPT JOB DESCRIPTION

**Job Title:** Associate University Secretary (Senate)

**Job Number:** X-175 | VIP: 1049

**Band:** EXEMPT- 6

**NOC:** 1221

**Department:** University Secretariat

**Supervisor Title:** University Secretary

**Last Reviewed:**  June 4, 2013

#### **Job Purpose:**

The Associate University Secretary (Senate) is the sole member of Secretariat staff dedicated to directing and administering the business of the Senate of the university, the university’s academic governing body, which has statutory jurisdiction under the *Trent Act* for all matters of educational policy. The Associate University Secretary (Senate) also manages the work of several of Senate’s key committees including, notably, the final-level academic appeal process, Special Appeals. The number of Senate and Senate committee meetings (excluding appeal hearings) for which the Associate University Secretary (Senate) is responsible numbers 35-40 per year. The Associate University Secretary (Senate) additionally serves in a high-level research and policy advisory capacity to senior academic administration on various academic matters (e.g. academic integrity, quality assurance).

#### Key Activities:

***Directs Senate Operations – Meeting Year:***

1. Manages all aspects of the business and operation of the Senate of Trent University (a body with over 70 members; chaired by the President & Vice-Chancellor).
2. Develops meeting schedules, work plans and agendas; liaises with senior members of academic administration; drafts and coordinates documentation.
3. Conducts research on academic governance and the responsibilities of Senate; advises Senate on best governance practices.
4. Senate on matters of practice and procedure including interpretation of the Trent Act, Senate’s by-laws, rules of order, precedents, existing policies, and practice at other institutions.
5. Advises the President & Vice-Chancellor, Vice-Presidents and other administrators on matters within the ambit of Senate, precedents, policy and procedures.
6. Meets regularly with the Chair (President & Vice-Chancellor) and provides briefings as needed.
7. Drafts the official meeting minutes and record of proceedings, prepares post-meeting communications (e.g. publication of decisions on the intranet) and follow-up correspondence.
8. Maintains and publishes the official University record of Senate’s educational policies.
9. Develops and delivers an annual Orientation program for voting members and official visitors.
10. Facilitates communication between Student Senate Caucus and administration to achieve early resolution of student concerns.
11. Manages member information and elections; maintains corporate files and electronic indexes.

***Administers Special Appeals:***

1. Administers all aspects of the university’s highest level appeal process on all academic matters which involves management of an administrative tribunal that is answerable to the courts on increasingly complex matters owing to the greater number of students in professional and graduate programs for whom a career can be at stake in an appeal. The Special Appeals process extends to students fulsome procedural rights that require management, including rights to a full documentary disclosure process and the right to be represented by legal counsel (with full in-hearing examinations).
2. Provides advice to students, faculty, academic advisors, and administrators on Special Appeals process and practice as well as lower-level processes.
3. Receives and processes appeals considering various jurisdictional matters, exercising discretion delegated by the committee with respect to deadlines.
4. Communicates with the parties through the various stages of the appeal process, including with legal counsel retained by appellants or other named representatives.
5. Informally mediates with parties in some cases with the aim of settling matters without the necessity of going forward to hearing.
6. Consults with the Special Appeals Chair on various matters and provides briefings to the Chair / Vice-Chair in advance of hearings.
7. Develops and delivers annual comprehensive and participatory training programme for panel members on matters of jurisdiction, bias/conflict of interest, natural justice and procedural fairness, burden of proof, evidence and decision-making principles.
8. Develops scripts for the Chair/Vice-Chairs to use in the event that various scenarios unfold at the hearing and serves in an on-the-spot advisory capacity during hearings.
9. Provides advice to panel members during deliberations on precedent, procedure and legal principles; facilitates deliberation discussions to ensure clear reasoning.
10. Takes minutes and maintains the official record of the proceeding.
11. Drafts decisions for the Chair further to panel deliberations, consulting with other specialist resources as appropriate.
12. Prepares necessary case notes; maintains files, database of precedents and website.

***Manages Work of Senate Committees:***

1. Manages the work of the Senate Executive (steering committee), the Academic Planning & Budget Committee, the Undergraduate Academic Policy Committee, the University Honours Subcommittee, and the Nominating and Governance Subcommittee.
2. Develops meeting schedules, work plans, templates and agendas, working closely with the committee Chairs; coordinates documentation and ensures that documents are ready for consideration and in many cases drafts exhibits (reports, proposals, summaries, etc.) and reports/proposals to Senate on behalf of Chairs and committee members.
3. Conducts research on matters of academic planning and policy.
4. Provides advice to committee Chairs and to the committees at large on best practices at other universities.
5. Drafts the official meeting minutes and prepares pre- and post-meeting communications.
6. Orients new committee members.
7. Manages member information, attendance and maintains appropriate file records.

***Advises – Research & Policy:***

1. Provides research support to academic administrators on various academic matters.
2. Serves in an advisory capacity on matters of academic policy.
3. Provides drafting assistance to academic administrators on academic policy matters (sometimes meeting with various constituencies to understand and address concerns).
4. Key contact on academic integrity matters providing substantive and procedural advice to the Deans, Directors / Department Chairs, academic advisors and members of faculty.
5. Acts as a consultant to the university’s Policy Advisory Committee.
6. Provides advice on lower-level appeal procedures, practices, and investigation to administrators and academic programs (e.g. professional schools).

***Manages Senate Operations – Special Projects:***

1. Manages Chancellor searches.
2. Initiates and provides full support and research for Senate By-Law reviews and Senate committee structure reviews.
3. Works to improve the functioning of Senate by introducing new practices (e.g. setting of Senate objectives and committee objectives).

#### Education Required:

* Master’s Degree in Public Administration, Public Policy or related field, or equivalent.

#### Experience/Qualifications Required:

1. Minimum of five years of work experience in public policy or equivalent experience, preferably in a university or broader public sector organization.
2. Knowledge of and ability to advise on and apply best practices for good governance.
3. Experience and skill interpreting legislation, by-laws and policy.
4. Strong ability to draft policy, high-level meeting minutes, briefing notes and other documents.
5. Expertise in Administrative Law and first-hand experience with tribunals.
6. Strong research and analytical skills.
7. Strong verbal communication skills.
8. Excellent demonstrated ability to write clearly, gracefully, succinctly and unambiguously.
9. High-level organizational and planning skills.
10. Demonstrated diplomacy, tact and sensitivity.

**Job Evaluation Factors:**

**Analytical Reasoning**

Position requires very complex analytical reasoning skills, including analysis of legal principles. High-level research, policy drafting and policy advice requires considerable judgment and analysis.

On-the-spot complex analysis is frequently required in situations of extreme time constraints such as on the floor of meetings and in appeal hearings.

The Associate University Secretary (Senate) must frequently conduct analysis in the face of incomplete and/or inconsistent Senate records or badly drafted policy (the overall state of academic policy at the University is improving but is still generally poor). It is rare that a policy on record will point to a clear answer on an issue.

**Decision Making**

Considerable opportunity to exercise initiative and act independently in making complex decisions is afforded to the position. The Associate University Secretary (Senate) provides regular briefings to the University Secretary, seeks more senior advice as appropriate, and generally serves as a specialist on academic policy matters (i.e. provides advice, drafts documents, implements ideas and manages work within broad policy constraints.)

**Impact**

Significant institutional risk could result from the Associate University Secretary (Senate)’s actions and decisions for which he/she would be held directly accountable. Incorrect governance advice could result in a judicial review process as could the misconduct of an appeal hearing. Such errors, once made, would be very difficult to correct and such a result would put the university through an expensive and complicated legal process. Bad policy advice and research could also have expensive legal ramifications for the university, negatively affect morale and working relationships within and beyond the Senate and cause reputational damage to the institution.

**Responsibility for the Work of Others**

Indirect Responsibility for the Work of Others:

* Co-ordinator, Board and Senate Support

**Communication**

Internal:

* President & Vice-Chancellor (Chair of Senate / Chair of Senate Executive Committee) - Regular meetings prior to each meeting of Senate during which the Associate University Secretary (Senate) briefs the President on various issues and acts in an advisory and support capacity; various other communication as necessary, mainly with respect to the work of Senate and Senate Executive.
* Provost & Vice-President, Academic - Regular communication with respect to work of Senate and Senate committees (notably Academic Planning & Budget Committee chaired by the Provost & VP Academic), research and policy matters.
* Deans - Regular communication with respect to the work of Senate and Senate committees, notably the Undergraduate Academic Policy Committee and the Undergraduate Studies Committee (curriculum), academic integrity, appeal and other policy matters.
* Dean of Graduate Studies - Regular communication with respect to the work of Senate’s Graduate Studies Committee (curriculum and policy) and other matters particular to graduate studies.
* Vice-President, Research & International - Regular communication with respect to the work of Senate’s Research Policy Committee and subcommittees; enrolment reports and other matters.
* Registrar & Associate Registrar - Regular communication with respect to policy, policy implementation and best practice; matters brought to Senate from the Registrar’s Office (e.g. Convocation Rolls, enrolment reports, etc.).
* Senators - Faculty, Students & Staff
* University Secretariat colleagues
* Students re: appeal and potential appeal matters
* Faculty members (notably Directors of the professional programs) re: appeal, potential appeal and policy matters
* Professional and Support staff in administrative offices (President’s Office, VPs, Deans, , etc.)
* Staff members supporting non-Secretariat supported Senate Committees

External:

* Parents re: appeal and potential appeal matters
* Legal counsel re: appeal and potential appeal matters
* Secretariat counterparts at other institutions in Ontario and across Canada via University Secretariat listserv re: best practices, advice, information sharing

**Motor/ Sensory Skills**

* Dexterity/Speed - Need to produce finished documents with high degree of accuracy to tight timelines. Keyboarding for prolonged periods (regularly five hours or more daily)
* Visual - High-level proofreading, working at a computer screen, reading
* Hearing - Taking official record of proceeding in large meeting chamber, sometimes when more than one person is speaking or where other background noise is present.

**Effort**

Mental:

* Sustained concentration - Regular continuous minute-taking for 3 hours or more at a time, often highly detailed subject matter, while simultaneously managing other aspects of a meeting.
* Focus - Must maintain focus in drafting various documents or conducting research amidst frequent interruptions outside of control.
* Writing to tight timelines - Preparing reports and minutes to meet deadlines, requiring rapid synthesis of complex and varied subject matter.

Physical:

* Remaining motionless - Continuous minute-taking may lead to cramping of hand, neck and back.

**Working Conditions**

Physical:

* Controlled office - Sealed building with variable temperature and no air quality control can result in a sluggish work environment.
* No natural light in office - Enclosed office is in a dark corner lighted by fluorescent lights and lamps. No natural light is available in nearby common areas.
* Sitting for long periods of time in meetings may damage circulation
* Writing and keyboarding for long periods of time frequently causes hand, wrist and eye strain
* Senate records have not been digitized and are kept in old binders that have become musty and difficult to use for extended periods without immediate negative health effects (headaches, sore throat).

Psychological:

* Dealing with frustrated - The Associate University Secretary (Senate) frequently deals with and provides procedural advice to angry, or confrontational people students and parents (and retained legal counsel) who are profoundly upset, distressed and even irate with the university’s decision on an academic matter (grade appeal, petition, allegation of academic dishonesty). The Associate University Secretary (Senate) must provide information and tactfully maintain university practice in stressful and even sometimes threatening circumstances.
* Complaints, criticism - Factions of Senate can direct criticism toward the Secretariat for certain decisions and outcomes (e.g. faculty Senators critical of decisions of administration). The Associate University Secretary (Senate) must remain neutral and courteously process requests from all sides of a debate while at the same time acting as a buffer for the President & Vice-Chancellor. The Secretary must remain resilient and find creative ways to deal with negativity, stress and frustration.
* Changing deadlines/time pressures - Factors outside of the Associate University Secretary (Senate)’s control can frequently and suddenly affect deadlines causing a disturbance to workflow and priorities.
* Interruptions - Work is interrupted throughout the day and priorities must be shifted to deal with arising matters. Students frequently drop by the office to seek advice on appeal matters.
* Lack of control over pace of work - Pace of work is frequently dictated by the needs of senior administrators according to their required timeframes and by the unpredictable volume of appeal matters.
* Multiple competing demands - The Associate University Secretary (Senate) performs work for various offices in the university which are not coordinated. A variety of work projects may be assigned or due at once.
* Isolation - The Associate University Secretary (Senate) is the sole staff member working with the Senate of the university.
* Conflicting priorities - The Associate University Secretary (Senate) serves Senate as a whole but works closely with administration and the President & Vice-Chancellor as Chair. The needs of each can come into conflict.