



# **DELIGHT IN DISCOVERY:** Positioning Hart House for the Future

—  
A 5-Year Strategic Plan  
2016-2020

**HartHouse**



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## BACKGROUND

Hart House has been the co-curricular centre of the University of Toronto for almost 100 years, welcoming both campus and community to explore cultural, intellectual and recreational activities – in the words of its founders, a site for the pursuit of “high endeavour.”

Today, those students who find their way to Hart House are encouraged to become more well-rounded individuals, compassionate leaders, and engaged global citizens. Many of the House’s most engaged students have gone on to achieve significant professional success and have effected significant positive change in their communities.

However, as the conditions of society and the labour market have changed, so too, has the University experience, and Hart House needs to ensure that it is continuing to serve students of the University of Toronto in the most appropriate manner. To that end, Hart House retained the services of The Divinsky Group to perform a thorough analysis of the environment in which Hart House operates in order to then identify effective strategy options and recommendations for the 2016-2020 operational period.

## FINDINGS

Through a series of interviews, focus groups, surveys, desk research and other means, the Divinsky Group arrived at a number of pivotal findings. Among these were a number generated through their direct discussions with students. For instance, in a globalized, automated market with fewer jobs than ever

before, students reported feeling pressure to forgo co-curricular interests and invest their time and energy into academic performance, hoping to gain an edge over their competitors.

In addition to feeling overwhelmed by what they perceive as bleak or uncertain professional opportunities after graduation, many students also reported feeling socially isolated and alone.

However, it is the very cognitive skills and experiences that co-curricular learning provides – creativity, collaboration, strategy, analysis, and problem-solving – that will best position students for success beyond university.

## **THE STAND: “DELIGHT IN DISCOVERY”**

Upon reviewing and analyzing a number of prevailing truths in the Hart House environment – including business, market, social and human truths – the Divinsky Group concluded that what Hart House must and does stand for in the world – its “Stand” – is the opportunity for students to take delight in exploration and discovery for their own sake, without fear of competition or failure or judgement.

Despite the complexity of its operations and its manifold business and program lines, Hart House, at its core, represents the opportunity for students to have a place where the pressures of expectations transform into the delight of discovery: the discovery of interests beyond their areas of academic study; of untapped skills, talents and personal resources that will serve them well, in both their private and professional lives; of new social circles and collaborators; of different communities and cultures, and multiple diverse perspectives that will help them to expand their world views. The opportunity to delight in healthy debate, constructive dialogue, and fresh ideas that evolve and inform their pre-existing points of view; in the discovery of their own, authentic voices and the fulfillment that comes from using that voice to enrich others and contribute to the greater good.

More than just personal development, Hart House stands for the cultivation of engaged local and global citizens who live lives that matter – to themselves, their professions, and to their communities, both inside and outside the University’s walls.

If fully realized, this “Stand” represents a galvanizing vision for Hart House that weaves together the central themes and strategic objectives of its various business units and galvanizes them toward the delivery of a more cohesive student experience.

If the “Stand” is being properly fulfilled, the following Key Themes should manifest and repeat in different ways across all of Hart House’s various program and operational units and their work:

**Diversity:** Students have an opportunity to engage with those of different backgrounds, identities and experiences in ways that are respectful and mutually enriching.

**Exploration:** Students are presented with an opportunity to investigate and experience new interests, talents and alternative ways of thinking and doing in ways that are inclusive, inviting and enjoyable.

**Engagement:** Students learn to synthesize newly discovered strengths and capacities in order to effect meaningful change in the local community and the world, either alone or with others.

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

To aid in the achievement of this larger purpose, efforts must be made to cultivate the public profile of the House, while also expanding its revenue streams, improving its infrastructure, and ensuring that all units of the House are working in a coordinated, collaborative manner. To this end, the House will pursue three key strategic objectives:

**Experiential Excellence:** Hart House will work to provide students of all backgrounds and identities with an exemplary, inclusive and welcoming experience of exploration and discovery essential to their personal and professional development; act as a community-builder inside and outside the University; and serve as a modern, accessible, and preferred home for students, staff, faculty, alumni and members of the broader community.

**Operational Excellence:** Hart House's many business lines and departments will all understand their own areas of contribution to the overall mission of the House, and will collaborate intentionally and harmoniously with each other to achieve operational efficiencies and provide a streamlined student experience. Hart House will maintain, repair and upgrade infrastructure in order to provide the best possible experience for all users.

**Reputational Experience:** Hart House will develop strong communication and marketing strategies to increase its brand awareness with all current and potential

stakeholders, including the formation of strong and positive partnerships across the University of Toronto and the broader community. Additionally, Hart House will maintain meaningful ties to its graduates, offering ongoing opportunities to celebrate their accomplishments, connect with and mentor existing students, and give back to the House via time or donations.

## IMPLEMENTATION

The 5-Year Strategic Plan will steer the operations of Hart House from 2016 to 2020, inclusive. Each year of the Plan will build upon the previous year and establish a foundation for the following one. Priorities over the course of the Plan will include raising awareness of the Plan among stakeholders; improving administrative processes; investing in the sustainability of the House and expanding and diversifying its sources of revenue; and deepening Hart House's tri-campus presence; expanding student engagement in the broader community. These and other priorities will form the basis for key impact metrics that will be gathered throughout the term of the Plan as a means of tracking success.

The specific focuses of each of the five years of the Strategic Plan will include:

- **Year 1:** Create awareness of Stand and Strategic Plan, begin development of comprehensive branding and marketing strategy and establish parameters of multi-year investment plan for infrastructure and accessibility improvements
- **Year 2:** Expand programming reflective of the Plan's Key Themes, begin implementation of community partnership plan and identify new revenue-generating opportunities
- **Year 3:** Use data from Years 1-3 to refine and streamline Hart House programs, policies and initiatives; ensure students from previously underrepresented communities are fully supported in their engagement at Hart House

- **Year 4:** Continue implementation of plan, further expand support base for infrastructure renewal fundraising campaign, review/refine metrics against Strategic Objectives and Aspirational Targets
- **Year 5:** Continue towards experiential, operational and reputational excellence in all areas; reach infrastructure renewal fundraising goals; and celebrate and communicate achievements

## CONCLUSION

The University has an obligation to prepare students for the evolving world in which they will live and work, and Hart House is well-positioned to support this effort through its sustained focus on student engagement in the arts & culture, debates & dialogue, recreation & wellness, and community-engaged learning. As a site of discovery, Hart House supports students in their acquisition of untapped skills and personal resources that will prove essential in their private and professional lives beyond U of T; the development of competencies to better understand and embrace difference – of identity, of position, of perspective – that will enable students to engage more effectively with a diverse world; and the discovery of their own, unique voices that, together, can enrich the University and the world beyond its walls.

# BACKGROUND

## HART HOUSE PROFILE

Hart House has been the co-curricular centre of the University of Toronto for almost 100 years, welcoming both campus and community to explore cultural, intellectual and recreational activities – in the words of its founders, a site for the pursuit of “high endeavour.”

Open 365 days of the year, Hart House combines impressive study, social and dining spaces with an acclaimed art gallery, theatre, and modern athletic and aquatic facilities housed within a stunning neo-Gothic building. But more than an architecturally and program-rich student space, Hart House is a proud champion of education outside the lecture hall.

At a time when there is growing recognition that academic achievement alone is no guarantee of success beyond university, Hart House is ideally situated to play a vital developmental role by complementing students’ classroom education with: volunteer leadership opportunities; the exploration of complex social and political issues; the exchange of diverse narratives and perceptions; the development of a global consciousness; as well as opportunities for community service, artistic development, and athletic achievement.

As Hart House approaches its 100-year anniversary, it must ensure that it is responding effectively to the changing lives of students. For this reason Hart House has decided to develop a 5-Year Strategic Plan which honours the founding principles of the House, yet also responds proactively to the changing landscape of the marketplace, the

needs of the broader community, and the social and vocational realities facing today’s and tomorrow’s graduates.

## SCOPE OF WORK

The Divinsky Group was asked to perform a thorough analysis of the environment in which Hart House operates in order to then identify effective strategy options and recommendations for the 2016-2020 operational period.

The Divinsky Group was responsible for:

- developing a comprehensive stakeholder consultation framework;
- meaningfully engaging Hart House stakeholders, including student and senior members, staff, alumni, partners and donors;
- and collecting and subjecting data to rigorous and transparent analysis.

In addition, the Divinsky Group was tasked with identifying the “Stand” of Hart House: that is, what Hart House stands for in the world. To arrive at that “Stand” recommendation, the Divinsky Group reviewed copious numbers of documents and background information, considered the inputs it had gathered from various stakeholders, and assessed what it had observed firsthand through field research. The Group’s findings and recommendations were then reviewed, analyzed and expanded upon together with Hart House. A number of Key Themes, Strategic Objectives and Foundational Pillars were identified that would be essential to the House’s next five



years, and Key Metrics were identified that, if achieved, would be indices of success.

The results are summarized in the current document.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Notwithstanding the generality of the foregoing, working in collaboration with the senior leadership of Hart House, the Divinsky Group took the following steps:

1. Reviewed President Gertler's priorities, Student Life strategy and objectives;
2. Reviewed Hart House documentation: previous Strategic Plans, business plans, audience analysis, communications, programs, and fundraising plans;
3. Completed an assessment of current economic realities and trends as they pertain to students' future employability;
4. Completed a review of both academic and non-academic literature concerning key social and economic challenges facing young people today, including, but not limited to, social anxiety and mental health;
5. Held more than 25 one-on-one and group interviews with internal and external stakeholders, including students, senior members of Hart House, staff, faculty and senior administrators;
6. Completed an on-campus "street survey" of students in three different locations;
7. Held a consultation with the Hart House Board of Stewards;
8. Held a consultation with Hart House Student Ambassadors;
9. Convened two Ingenuity Parties: one with Alumni, Staff and Faculty, and one with Student Leaders; and
10. Spent significant time on-site observing users and staff operations.

## THE “STAND”

Hart House has worked with The Divinsky Group to formulate a Strategic Plan based around a “Stand.” The Stand is a short clear statement on the goal and purpose of Hart House; it explains what Hart House stands for in the world. All the work that Hart House does must support the Stand.

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Diagram #1

**TRUTHS: BUSINESS, SOCIAL, MARKET & HUMAN**

**BUSINESS TRUTH**

**MARKET TRUTH**

**STAND**

**SOCIAL TRUTH**

**HUMAN TRUTH**

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This Stand emerges from four core truths: a human truth, which is relatable and meaningful for students; a market truth, which responds to the realities of the labour market; a social truth, which locates Hart House within the needs of its community; and a business truth, which clarifies the mandate and work of the House.

# FINDINGS

## THE HUMAN TRUTH

The Human Truth is that which gives us a sense of authentic meaning and purpose in the world. For Hart House, it reflects the experiences that individual students have had, informs the choices they make, and indicates how their needs will be met. It must be deeply understandable, relatable and inspirational.

### Students Today

In order to understand the Human Truth of Hart House, it is essential to first understand the realities of students' lives. Students reported experiencing significant social distress due to the unrelenting pressures of performance combined with concerns about the future and generalized feelings of isolation. Moreover, students' perception of the precariousness of their situation appears to be interfering with their learning and the successful achievement of their full potential. Data collected from students across the University of Toronto highlighted five major areas of anxiety or concern:

**Isolation:** A number of factors, including dependency on digital/social media and widespread political and cultural uncertainty in an ever-shrinking global community, have resulted in a student body that is anxious in both academic and recreational settings, leading to feelings of isolation and disconnection. Students who commute to campus find it difficult to cultivate a sense of community, or pursue activities and interests outside the classroom, adding barriers to socialization. International students, who comprise an increasingly large portion of the

University's student body, also find it challenging to cultivate a sense of personal connection with their cohorts.

**Prioritization:** Students report feeling too short on time and "bandwidth" to meet the rigour and intensity of their academic program requirements. Expected to channel their best efforts into academic achievement, students all-too-often forgo opportunities to realize personal growth beyond the lecture hall or laboratory. This lack of time is only compounded by the additional time and energy that many students must put into working part time jobs or commuting long distances to support their studies. Without sufficient social and cultural engagement, and the time to nurture their personal interests and talents, students can feel lonely and uninspired.

**Uncertainty:** One of the contributing factors in students' generalized anxiety is their lack of certainty about what the future holds for them both professionally and personally. Particularly for students from relatively non-privileged backgrounds, there is a worry that their efforts at university will not translate into the kind of post-graduation success that will enable them to retire their student debt loads and achieve professional success. There is also a widespread confusion among students as to which path(s) to pursue after university, because yesterday's "guaranteed path to success" may no longer exist when they are finally ready to enter the job market. Some students also described a sort of existential angst that goes beyond simple concerns about economic opportunities to encompass

persistent worries about global security threats, dwindling resources, environmental degradation, and political upheaval.

**Competition:** Students feel they are in a constant competition with their peers, pointing to limited acceptance rates to university, limited space in academic programs, bell-curve grading, and the anticipation of an over-crowded post-

graduation labour market.

**Vocation:** Students crave purpose-driven lives. More than roles and responsibilities that are functional, they seek meaningful careers in the marketplace that combine appropriate financial remuneration with social impact. At the same time, they are being bombarded by reports that there are fewer jobs awaiting graduates than ever before.

Diagram #2



### PRECARIAT LIFE

Uncertain, lonely and anxious

### UNRELENTING COMPETITIVENESS

The pressures for individual success are intense and unforgiving

### ALGORITHMS

The new matchmakers and distributors



**YOU FEEL ALONE.**

*The Human Truth* is that for some students, these anxieties, singularly or collectively, can create an often stressful university experience that undermines their enthusiasm for, or delight in, the process of learning. Yet, paradoxically, it is this very enthusiasm for exploration which helps unearth our passions, hone our deepest strengths, grow our social capital, reinforce our self-confidence, and prepare us for work that gives us personal meaning and allows us to give back to our communities.

## THE MARKET TRUTH

The Market Truth reflects the realities of the labour market and the broader political and economic realities of the world outside the university. It examines the conditions that students will be facing after graduation and how they can be best equipped to respond to them.

### Work in the 21st Century

On its own, a traditional post-secondary education is no longer enough to prepare graduates for a rapidly changing working world. Current graduates are facing a labour market that is facing the following challenges:

**Globalization:** Cost-cutting has resulted in the pursuit of lower labour costs and the relocation of business practices offshore.<sup>1</sup>

**Evolving Technologies:** Predictable work requiring either physical or cognitive labour is declining, as jobs with a high degree of routine are replaced by algorithms, while unpredictable work requiring physical or cognitive agility is expanding. This shift in work patterns is even impacting educated, professional workers including accountants, lawyers, technicians and doctors.<sup>2</sup>

**Productivity:** Companies are now able to produce more with far fewer direct full-time employees<sup>3</sup>, and studies show that by 2020, 47% of current jobs will be made completely redundant – a great many corresponding to middle income earners.<sup>4</sup>

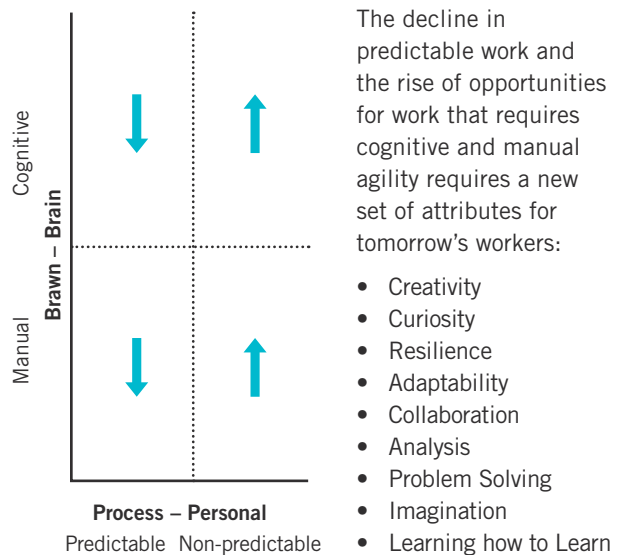
**Demographics:** Populations are increasing and diversifying, people are living longer,

and the cost of living is rising, yet the number of available, permanent positions continues to decline.<sup>5</sup>

**Stability:** As stable employment declines graduates are pursuing more precarious work that is part time, short-term or ad hoc without the health/dental/stock benefits provided by more permanent positions.<sup>6</sup>

Diagram #3

### THE CHANGING NATURE OF WORK



*The Market Truth* is that graduates who are currently entering the workforce are confronting more precarious lives with the disappearance of the traditional middle-zone employment market. They must have the agility to apply their skills to a variety of

fields and the adaptability to work alongside a diverse pool of workers. Job seekers who combine formal study with well-developed conceptual and critical thinking skills will be best-positioned for success in the job market. Despite the evolving nature of the labour market, creativity, collaboration, strategy, analysis and problem solving cannot be outsourced or made obsolete. The acquisition of such skills now represents students' best chance at future success.

## THE SOCIAL TRUTH

The Social Truth is that which draws us together into community, and enables us to foster a sense of belonging to a group, cause or purpose greater than ourselves. It also shines a light on current challenges facing all of us, and offers us collective hope for confronting them successfully, together.

## Campus Profile

Students are searching for sites of belonging and exploration that will simultaneously expand their breadth of experience (see horizontal axis on the diagram below), and enhance their overall state of mind by transforming anxiety into confidence (see vertical axis on the diagram below). At the University of Toronto, some of those sites where students undertake their search include:

**Classes:** The classroom, while providing a platform for students to engage intellectually, is focused almost exclusively on academic performance, which for some students can lead to competitiveness and anxiety due to the pressure to perform.

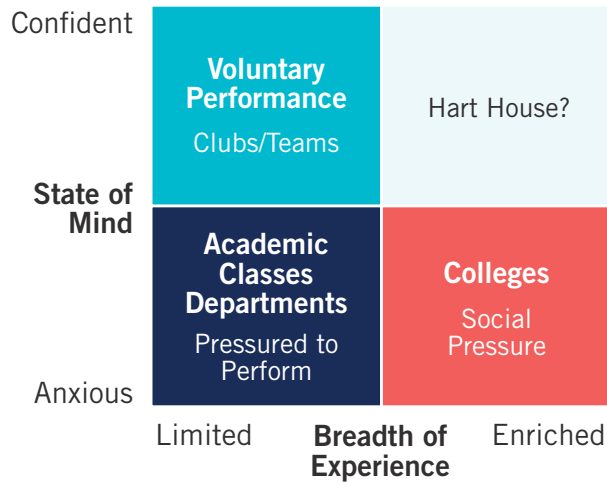
**Clubs and Teams:** Voluntary participation on clubs and teams makes it possible for students to meet and explore new or common interests with less pressure than in the lecture hall. However, these experiences can tend to be limited in focus and subject matter in ways that do not always create maximum opportunity for unbridled exploration and discovery.

**Colleges:** Each of U of T's seven colleges is culturally unique and provides students with counselling, accommodation, orientation and social events. They are integral to campus life, yet some students reported that they can inadvertently inhibit interaction with students beyond their membership. Additionally, the belonging afforded by a well-defined college culture can also be experienced by some as pressure to conform.

**Hart House:** Hart House has an opportunity to inhabit that place for students at the University of Toronto where they can simultaneously have their confidence boosted and encounter a broad and welcoming social and educational student experience without corresponding pressures to perform or conform to others' expectations. It is an opportunity waiting to be seized.

(See diagram #4 on the next page)

Diagram #4



### AN OPPORTUNITY FOR HART HOUSE

Hart House has an opportunity to simultaneously boost students' confidence and provide a broad and welcoming social and educational student experience in partnership with others who deliver learning-focused initiatives both in and out of the classroom. This is an opportunity that is waiting to be seized.

*The Social Truth* is that a diverse student body is at the greatest advantage in environments that embrace difference in every exchange and collaboration, that provide broad and varied educational experiences and that create inclusive space for voluntary exploration and experimentation free from judgement and the pressure to perform.

## THE BUSINESS TRUTH

The Business Truth is the House's "value proposition"; an encapsulation of the House's programming and operational mandates, and how well they are being met. It also speaks to the House's success in meeting its business-related challenges and seizing on new opportunities.

### Challenges

Hart House must address a number of challenges in order to achieve its full potential. These include a number of problematic perceptions of Hart House as it currently operates, as reported to The Divinsky Group by various stakeholders:

**"Hidden Gem"**: While the architectural beauty of Hart House inspires awe, students can feel intimidated and unwelcomed by its grandeur. Its primary audiences are either unaware of its existence, or believe they would not belong. Hart House's offerings are well-loved and cherished by its devotees, but this current audience is too small to support its ongoing activities and livelihood. The House offers a wide range of activities and services; however, in the absence of a clearly articulated mission, Hart House has created the impression that it seeks to be all things to all people. This perception, in turn, has limited the House's ability to communicate its larger purpose to the majority of students.

**"Place not a Space"**: Despite a core audience of students and alumni who have a deep emotional attachment to the House and its offerings, the majority of stakeholders have a transactional

relationship with Hart House instead of a transformational one. Hart House is understood by most students as a collection of functional units such as the gym, cafeteria and theatre.

**"Fading Glory"**: Hart House has an eroding infrastructure, inadequate wireless capabilities, and accessibility issues in need of resolution. Hart House is not routinely experienced as a place of outstanding service, or of excellence. Not only do students with identifiable physical limitations have difficulty accessing some of Hart House's physical spaces, but some students feel excluded from engaging fully in the House because the building in its current state does not align with their sense of personal identity. For instance, there are no all-gender change rooms in the fitness centre for use by gender non-conforming students.

**"Why Should I Give?"**: Hart House has worked hard to develop its revenue streams, but the capital repairs required for Hart House to continue serving its stakeholders demand a dramatic increase in sustainable funding. Hart House has had limited success in attracting external donors for several reasons. These include: the unique challenges of identifying a donor base for a student-focused centre that belongs to everyone; alumni's tendency to donate to their former faculties, colleges or programs; the non-engagement of non-advancement related units of the House in fundraising activities; and, most significantly, the lack of a clear "value proposition" for Hart House.



**“Too Many Silos”:** After almost a century, several of the various programming and business units within Hart House have extremely well-established reputations and brand identities. The downside of this generally positive finding is that, given the broad range of these units’ mandates and in the absence of a clearly articulated strategic vision for the House as a whole, the House can tend towards internal fragmentation and fail to fully realize potential organizational efficiencies. Opportunities for enhanced collaboration abound.

### **Opportunities for Growth**

Stakeholders view Hart House as well-situated to complement academic study, foster a greater sense of community on campus, and help students maximize their potential. By growing and enhancing opportunities in the following areas, Hart House can better achieve its potential:

**Social/Co-curricular Activities:** Hart House provides opportunities for students to assemble recreationally or work collaboratively to organize symposia, art installations, theatrical and musical performances, public talks and debate, and to engage in social activism and physical fitness. In addition to collaboration, Hart House activities nurture creativity, problem solving, strategic thinking, and project management skills. It is vitally important that Hart House make these opportunities better known to, and accessible to, all University of Toronto students.

**Diversity and Inclusion:** In a recent survey of highly engaged students, Hart House found that the average Hart House student was an undergraduate student in her third year who is involved with Hart House through a club or committee. She is an able-bodied, non-religious, heterosexual Caucasian who lives off-campus and commutes to university. Her parents’/guardians’ combined income is between \$50,000 and \$100,000 and one or both of her parents/guardians attended university (although not at U of T).<sup>3</sup> Although many students will see themselves represented in some or all of that description, many students will not. Hart House must be committed to becoming an even more welcoming, mutually respectful space for students of all heritages, sexual identities, gender expressions and political leanings to engage, collaborate, discuss, dine and debate. Hart House must work toward becoming a place of belonging for all; serving as an inclusive space where students learn to navigate difference and explore their common interests.

**Community Engagement:** Hart House Committees are increasingly encouraged to pursue community engagement activities as part of their regular mandates. As they further develop their strengths in community-engaged learning, these Committees will provide students with more opportunities to participate and make a difference locally, gain valuable and transferable experience, and also gain insights about themselves and the

<sup>3</sup> Hart House Highly Engaged Student Survey, Spring 2016

communities they are serving.

**Mentorship:** Hart House facilitates informal mentorship opportunities with U of T alumni and professional community members who can provide guidance and support to graduating students. The House has an opportunity to expand these informal opportunities and create more formal mechanisms for engagement between students and alumni of the University.

**Self-Discovery:** The House offers numerous drop-in and fee-based recreational and cultural classes that invite students to explore their personal interests and passions in a supportive environment without fear of judgement, social pressure, or formal evaluation.

*The Business Truth* is that to be valuable Hart House must be the champion of students. It must provide experiences that cultivate the attributes required for the future of work and to live lives that matter. The House must be a space where students have opportunities to expand their skill sets, discover and pursue their talents, and participate actively in projects of social consequence while immersing themselves in an environment as diverse as the world beyond academia. In order to do this Hart House must expand its reach to all University of Toronto students, become a more welcoming and inclusive space, work more collaboratively, and ensure sustainable funding for both its future programming and its infrastructure.

# DELIGHT IN DISCOVERY

Hart House is in need of a central purpose or thread that weaves together the key themes underlying its work and the Strategic Objectives of its various units and galvanizes them toward one common goal. This central purpose must simultaneously fulfil the mandate of the House (i.e., the Business Truth), respond to the realities of the market (i.e., the Market Truth), respond to the needs of its community (i.e., the Social Truth), and authentically inspire in students a sense of relatable, personal meaning (i.e., the

Human Truth). Where these four truths intersect reveals the organization’s Stand, or rather, what Hart House stands for in the world.

Despite the complexity of its operations and its manifold business and program lines, Hart House, at its core, represents the opportunity for students to have a place where the pressures of expectations transform into the delight of discovery: the discovery of interests beyond their areas of academic study; of untapped skills,

Diagram #5

**BUSINESS TRUTH**

**MARKET TRUTH**

**STAND**

**SOCIAL TRUTH**

**HUMAN TRUTH**

These four Truths intersect to reveal the organization’s Stand, or rather, what Hart House stands for in the world.

talents and personal resources that will serve them well, in both their private and professional lives; of new social circles and collaborators; of different communities and cultures, and multiple diverse perspectives that will help them to expand their world views. Hart House is a place where students have the opportunity to delight in healthy debate, constructive dialogue, and fresh ideas that evolve and inform their pre-existing points of view; to discover their own, authentic voice and the fulfillment that comes from using that voice to enrich others and contribute to the greater good.

More than just personal development, Hart House stands for the cultivation of engaged local and global citizens who live lives that matter – to themselves, their professions, and to their communities, both inside and outside the University’s walls.

Hart House must work with others to create a non-competitive environment where students – including those who are typically under-represented – experience the freedom to dabble, to try new things, to explore. The success of Hart House will be in transforming stress into delight, and pressure into discovery.

**HART HOUSE STANDS FOR DELIGHT IN DISCOVERY.**

# THE STRATEGIC PLAN

The Strategic Plan for Hart House emerges from the “Delight in Discovery” Stand. The principal elements of the Plan include a number of Key Themes that when present in House programming or operational decisions are indicators of Stand compliance; Strategic Objectives to help transform the grand vision

of the Stand into manageable and measurable programs and priorities; and Foundational Pillars that are the essential bedrock upon which the fulfilment of the entire Plan depends.

Schematically, these elements stand together as shown in the following diagram:

Diagram #6



## KEY THEMES

As Hart House seeks to achieve the full meaning and potential impact of its “Delight in Discovery” Stand over the next five years, many

creative ideas, proposals and opportunities will present themselves for consideration. In order to help distinguish the best ideas from the rest, and to help ensure that the programmatic

and operational decisions made by the House are both consistent with and reinforcing of that Stand, it is important to identify recurring themes (“Key Themes”) that, if present, would seem to recommend the further exploration of the proposals in question, and, conversely, whose absence should signal reason to proceed only with caution.

In the same way that certain melodies will repeat throughout the score of a play or the soundtrack of a film to denote different characters or emotions, if Hart House is successfully living up to the potential of its “Delight in Discovery” Stand and staying “on plan,” the following Key Themes should manifest and repeat in different ways across all of its various program and operational units and their work:

**Diversity:** Students have an opportunity to engage with those of different backgrounds, identities and experiences in ways that are respectful, meaningfully inclusive and mutually enriching.

**Exploration:** Students are presented with an opportunity to investigate and experience new interests, talents and alternative ways of thinking and doing in ways that are inclusive, inviting and enjoyable.

**Engagement:** Students learn to synthesize newly discovered strengths and capacities in order to effect meaningful change in the local community and the world, either alone or with others.

These same Key Themes – which are mutually reinforcing and interconnected – should

also inspire and guide the various business units and departments of Hart House to work collaboratively and intentionally to create integrated programs, processes and policies that will embody the core work of the Stand in all their efforts. The result should be a more coherent and cohesive student experience.

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Strategic Objectives are “long-term organizational goals that help to convert a mission statement from a broad vision into more specific plans and projects.”<sup>4</sup> The consultants recommend that Hart House prioritize the following Strategic Objectives to fully realize the Stand and nurture the development of the Key Themes across U of T’s three campuses:

**Experiential Excellence:** Hart House will work to provide students of all backgrounds and identities with an exemplary, inclusive and welcoming experience of exploration and discovery essential to their personal and professional development; act as a community-builder inside and outside the University; and serve as a modern, accessible, and preferred home for students, staff, faculty, alumni and members of the broader community.

**Operational Excellence:** Hart House’s many business lines and departments will understand their own areas of contribution to the overall mission of the House, and will collaborate intentionally and harmoniously with each other to achieve operational efficiencies and provide a streamlined student experience.

Hart House will maintain, repair and upgrade infrastructure in order to provide the best possible experience for all users.

**Reputational Excellence:** Hart House will develop strong communication and marketing strategies to increase its brand awareness with all current and potential stakeholders, including the formation of strong and positive partnerships across the University of Toronto and the broader community. Additionally, Hart House will maintain meaningful ties to graduates, offering ongoing opportunities to celebrate their accomplishments, connect with and mentor existing students, and give back to the House via time or donations.

## FOUNDATIONAL PILLARS

In order to achieve any of the goals set out in the Strategic Plan, Hart House must first have a solid foundation for its work. The following Foundational Pillars must be firmly in place, and be given regular reinforcement and attention, if Hart House is to realize its full strategic potential:

**People:** Hart House will only ever be as strong and effective an organization as the people who are a part of it. Its staff must be and forever remain committed, enthusiastic and ready to embrace creative and constructive change. Its student leaders must see themselves as lifelong brand ambassadors for taking “Delight in Discovery” at Hart House, to the benefit of both today’s and tomorrow’s students. Its alumni and other senior members must see themselves as essential contributors to a culture and

a place that celebrates and promotes diversity, exploration and engagement through its programs and services.

**Infrastructure:** As noted above, Hart House is a century-old building that requires a significant amount of care, attention and financial investment if it is to meet the needs of today’s and tomorrow’s students. Capital improvements – both minor and major in magnitude – must be made throughout the next five years if Hart House is to have any hope of fulfilling its full potential as a dynamic, inclusive place where students are able to take “Delight in Discovery”.

**Funding:** Nothing happens without money. Buildings, and especially century-old heritage buildings, demand resources for both present-day operations and long-term restoration. The cost of staffing and other budget lines is expected to continue to rise over the next five years. As an institution whose two principal budget sources are student ancillary fees and business revenues, Hart House must make a concerted effort to limit any requests to raise the former, but simultaneously raise the latter in such a way as to limit interference with students’ ability to take “Delight in Discovery”. This will be an unrelentingly difficult challenge, but one with which Hart House must remain seized. Correspondingly, Hart House must devote significantly more effort and persistence to raising annual and longer-term funding through creative Advancement efforts both alone and in partnership with the Department of University Advancement (DUA).

# IMPLEMENTATION

In order to achieve the full potential of the Strategic Plan, a clear implementation plan including a tent pole core action, a 90-day "plan within a plan", a road map for the next five years, and a clear articulation of how success will be defined and measured will all be essential.

## CORE ACTION

A Core Action will galvanize the business units of Hart House around an event or program which exemplifies and amplifies stakeholder awareness of the Stand, initiates and extends involvement with Hart House, and creates active ambassadors for the central tenets of the Strategic Plan. To maximize success, any Core Action must:

- Respond to issues of vital concern to students and to their desire to live lives that matter, as well as to a wide range of external stakeholders with an experiential focus on delighting in discovery.
- Invite participants to talk about and identify creative solutions to issues of vital concern to them, and also lay groundwork for the implementation of those ideas.
- Ensure that there is representation and accommodation of diverse stakeholders from inside and outside the University, including students, faculty, staff, campus groups, community members and business leaders, experts, and policy advisors.
- Be both enjoyable and meaningfully engaging to inspire participants to return.
- Be scalable to other venues across U of T's three campuses and potentially replicable in other cities and locations where U of T either has a presence or seeks to generate interest.

## THE FIRST 90 DAYS

The first three months of a new Strategic Plan are essential to its ultimate success. Therefore, we are recommending a specific 90-day approach that embodies the House's "Delight in Discovery" Stand, reflects its related Key Themes, and lays the groundwork for the achievement of its principal Strategic Objectives. We further recommend launching "Delight in Discovery" publicly in the Winter Term beginning in January 2017. Specific actions for the first 90 days could include:

- **Laying Groundwork for Advancement:** Define advancement targets/goals for each year, and develop a Partner & Donor prospect list alongside compelling, customized "Cases for Investment."
- **Improving In-House Partnerships:** Host a series of collaborative business unit work sessions to develop approaches to effectively integrate the Key Themes and improve collaboration across the House.
- **Integrating the Stand:** Translate "Delight in Discovery" into a creative narrative with supporting assets for both internal and external audiences. This should include drafting a core story or manifesto with complementary branding and integration across events, webpages and promotional collateral.
- **Introducing a Core Action:** "Delight in Discovery" events have the potential to bring together a diverse group of internal and external collaborators to engage creatively with the Stand. Such events will maximize their alignment not only with the Stand but also with the enumerated priorities of President Gertler



if they include very intentional efforts to understand and respond creatively to a timely and pressing issue or set of issues relevant to all stakeholders, resulting in the formation of a new diverse community of interest. In addition to spurring meaningful community engagement at Hart House, such events should also aspire to be self-financing.

### “RUNNING THE RACE”

A five-year implementation schedule is recommended for successfully integrating and measuring the success of the "Delight in Discovery" Stand. Each year of the Strategic Plan builds on the work of the previous years in order to expand and deepen understanding of the important work of Hart House among students, and other constituents. Actions and priorities are recommended for each calendar year in order to inform Hart House’s annual business planning process and to help promote internal coherence and strategic consistency throughout the five-year period.

Given Hart House's storied history as a leading centre for sport and recreation, an analogy to the different stages of a foot race may provide a helpful illustration of the anticipated implementation of the 5-Year Strategic plan.

- **Year 1** of the Plan is like the start of the race: a powerful, explosive start with the ultimate goal clearly in sight will help set the course for the next five years;
- **Year 2** is the acceleration phase. Excitement builds as the Plan begins to take its full shape and gives a hint of its full potential;

- **Year 3** is when the House, like the runner, should be fully hitting its stride; maintaining focus will be key to both ongoing and ultimate success;
- **Year 4** is the home stretch, with the end of the 5-Years now fully in sight. At this point, as with a runner who prepares to lean in to the tape, the House must make the extra effort to ensure that its goals will be reached and success realized;
- **Year 5**, if there are no stumbles, is when the House crosses the finish line; it fulfills the full potential of the Plan and takes time to celebrate success.

Diagram #7



More specifically, the multi-year implementation of the Hart House Strategic Plan will entail the following flow of priorities, some of which will build year over year while others will stand on their own:

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>PRIORITIES</b>
<b>Year One</b> “Start”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create awareness of Stand and Strategic Plan</li> <li>• Begin development of comprehensive branding and marketing strategy for Hart House consistent with “Delight in Discovery” Stand</li> <li>• Establish parameters of multi-year investment plan for infrastructure and accessibility improvements</li> <li>• Launch infrastructure renewal fundraising campaign</li> <li>• Develop, alone and in partnership with both internal and external stakeholders, programming reflective of the Plan’s Key Themes (ie. Diversity, Exploration, Engagement)</li> <li>• Introduce galvanizing “Core Action” to embody Key Themes of Strategic Plan</li> <li>• Assess/improve organizational harmony, governance structure, systems and processes</li> <li>• Improve profitability of all revenue-generating business lines</li> <li>• Create and monitor baseline metrics</li> </ul>
<b>Year Two</b> “Acceleration”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conclude and begin implementation of branding and marketing strategy, and increase showcasing of Hart House excellence</li> <li>• Continue and expand programming reflective of the Plan’s Key Themes (ie. Diversity, Exploration, Engagement)</li> <li>• In particular, expand and increase student and community engagement in House’s Core Action</li> <li>• Develop and begin implementation of community partnership plan</li> <li>• Continue with accessibility and infrastructure renewal projects</li> <li>• Identify lead donor(s) for infrastructure renewal fundraising campaign</li> <li>• Further improve profitability of all revenue-generating business lines, and identify new revenue-generating opportunities</li> <li>• Reinforce culture of assessment at Hart House</li> </ul>

<p><b>Year Three</b> “Hitting Stride”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain clear, strong marketing and brand presence</li> <li>• Continue implementation of community partnership plan</li> <li>• Continue and expand programming reflective of the Plan’s Key Themes (ie. Diversity, Exploration, Engagement)</li> <li>• Continue and expand engagement in House’s Core Action</li> <li>• Use data from Year 1-3 to refine and streamline Hart House programs, policies, initiatives</li> <li>• Ensure students from previously underrepresented communities are fully supported in their engagement at Hart House</li> <li>• Continue with accessibility and infrastructure renewal projects</li> <li>• Further expand support base for infrastructure renewal fundraising campaign</li> <li>• Develop and introduce new revenue-generating lines at Hart House</li> </ul>
<p><b>Year Four</b> “Home stretch”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain clear, strong marketing and brand presence</li> <li>• Continue implementation of community partnership plan</li> <li>• Continue and further expand programming reflective of the Plan’s Key Themes (ie. Diversity, Exploration, Engagement)</li> <li>• Continue and further expand engagement in House’s Core Action</li> <li>• Use data from Years 1-4 to refine and streamline Hart House programs, policies, initiatives</li> <li>• Ensure students from previously underrepresented communities are fully supported in their engagement at Hart House</li> <li>• Enhance profitability of all revenue-generating lines at Hart House</li> <li>• Further expand support base for infrastructure renewal fundraising campaign</li> <li>• Review/redefine metrics against Strategic Objectives and Aspirational Targets in anticipation of Year 5</li> </ul>
<p><b>Year Five</b> “Finish Line”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain clear, strong marketing and brand presence</li> <li>• Continue towards experiential, operational and reputational excellence in all areas</li> <li>• Reach infrastructure renewal fundraising goals</li> <li>• Undertake comprehensive review of success in realizing all Strategic Objectives and Aspirational Targets</li> <li>• Begin planning for next multi-year cycle</li> <li>• Showcase impact of Hart House engagement on U of T graduates in the community and abroad</li> <li>• Celebrate and communicate achievements</li> </ul>

## **DEFINING SUCCESS**

Hart House will not be able to recognize its success (or failure) at realizing the full potential of the Stand unless it defines success carefully from the outset. Specific, measurable goals must be set with respect to achieving the full potential of the Stand, and specific means established for the collection and analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data that will be essential to this measurement and assessment.

### **Establishing a Culture of Assessment**

It is important to create an assessment framework and culture at Hart House that includes meaningful and straightforward metrics for determining to what extent the Strategic Objectives of the Plan are being met. Such metrics must be able to point to what is working and why, and to identify any areas where adjustments or refinements should be made in order to sure that the Objectives are met and the Stand is successfully brought to life.

At present, virtually none of the data exists that will be essential to tracking these metrics. Therefore, from an assessment perspective, the first year of the Strategic Plan must be mainly focused on establishing a baseline for each of the specific metrics listed so that the House can ascertain how much room exists for improvement in the area, and then establish ambitious, yet realizable targets for the remaining four years of the Plan. These targets will in turn be integrated into Hart House's annual business planning process.

Across the House, a new culture of assessment will be developed and guided by the Warden's Office. Going forward, on a monthly basis,

departmental metrics will be collected and assessed in order to ensure reliable, consistent data is available and goals are being met.

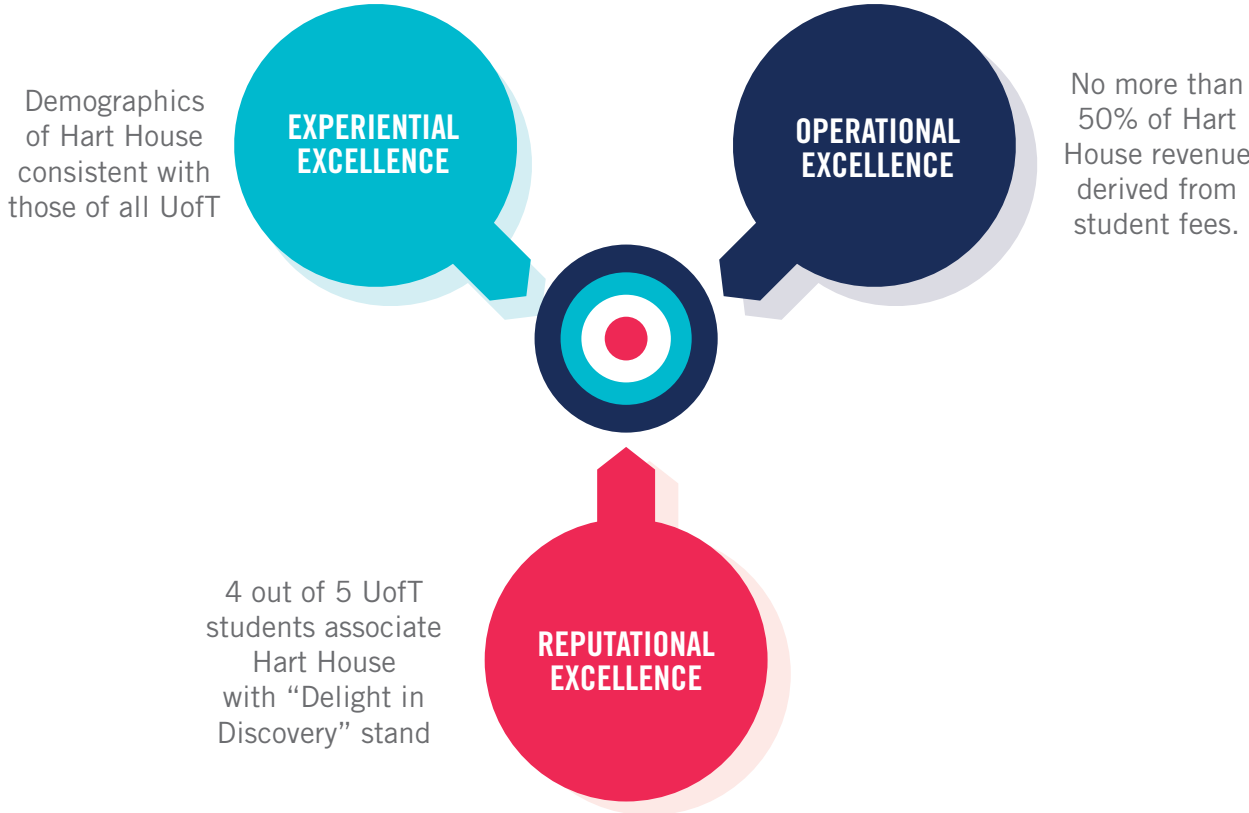
Hart House will also continue to work closely with the Office of Student Life as a member of its evaluation team to ensure that its Strategic Plan metrics and methods align with all other pertinent data sources. Where possible, Hart House will seek to benefit from the use of relevant University-wide data regarding the student experience including but not limited to the Co-Curricular Record, the National Survey on Student Experience, the National College Health Assessment, and the Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership.

**Aspirational Targets**

Even in the absence of baseline measures, the House has identified three broad, aspirational targets to be achieved by the five-year mark of the Plan, one for each of the Strategic Objectives of the Plan. These are:

- **Experiential Excellence:** The demographics of students highly-engaged at Hart House are representative of the demographics of the general student population of the University of Toronto;
- **Operational Excellence:** No more than 50% of the revenue of the House is derived from student fees;
- **Reputational Excellence:** 80% of the U of T student population associate Hart House with attributes consistent with the “Delight in Discovery” Stand.

Diagram #8  
**ASPIRATIONAL TARGETS**



In addition to the Aspirational Targets listed above, the following chart shows just some of the key metrics that have been identified to help track the success of Hart House in achieving the Strategic Objectives outlined in the Plan. As base measures are gathered for each of these metrics in Year 1, this list will grow and/or be refined to reflect those facets of Hart House that best portray the House’s success in embodying the “Delight in Discovery” stand.

<b>STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES</b>	<b>KEY METRICS</b>
Experiential Excellence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engaged students achieve Student Life Key Performance Indicators &amp; learning outcomes</li> <li>• Expanded, more representative student participation</li> <li>• Students report they see and experience Hart House as accessible, welcoming and inclusive</li> <li>• High number and quality of opportunities for community engaged learning</li> <li>• Customer and client satisfaction</li> </ul>
Operational Excellence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure timelines and revenue goals are met</li> <li>• Increased building accessibility</li> <li>• Increased internal collaboration among Hart House departments</li> <li>• Launch and completion of successful infrastructure renewal campaign</li> <li>• Increase annual advancement contributions and financial investments</li> <li>• Establishment of robust assessment practices across the House</li> <li>• Customer, client and staff satisfaction</li> </ul>
Reputational Excellence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong media penetration</li> <li>• High brand awareness on campus and off</li> <li>• Receipt and public awareness of Hart House awards and achievements</li> <li>• Increased and enhanced stakeholder engagement</li> <li>• High quantity and quality of external collaborations and partnerships</li> </ul>

# CONCLUSION

A site of personal and professional development beyond the classroom, Hart House has long nurtured students to become more well-rounded individuals, compassionate leaders, and engaged global citizens who go on to effect positive change in their post-graduate careers and communities. As the conditions of society and the labour market have changed however, so, too, has the University experience, and the University of Toronto has an obligation to prepare students for the evolving world in which they will live and work. Hart House is well-situated to help students build their confidence, foster a sense of belonging, and give them the tools they will need to be competitive in an already saturated job market.

By inviting students to take "Delight in Discovery", Hart House has the potential to inspire a whole new generation of students to explore untapped skills and personal resources that will prove essential in their private and professional lives beyond U of T; develop competencies to better understand and embrace difference – of identity, of position, of perspective – that will enable students to work meaningfully in a diverse world; explore new interests, talents and alternative ways of thinking and doing; and engage productively in a wide range of communities outside of the University.

As the Strategic Plan is launched, Hart House will work to rally both internal and external stakeholders of the House around the Stand and its Key themes. Hart House will work to foster and implant a culture of assessment across all departments and units; it will also

set specific annual targets for achieving the Strategic Objectives of the Plan. Hart House will also undertake to ensure that its various business units are better collaborating and coordinating their efforts to support the development of a generation of engaged and committed citizens living lives that matter.

For almost 100 years, Hart House has served, and will continue to serve, the highest interests of students by offering a place where the pressures of expectations transform into the delight of discovery. The next five years will be a pivotal, strategic opportunity for Hart House to build upon that legacy in exciting new ways that will help to define the century to come.

# APPENDIX

## A MANIFESTO: WHAT DOES HART HOUSE STAND FOR?

"Hart House faces a very different world from the one of its original Founders. Seeking a place for "true education" through fellowship, debate, music, pictures, theatre, sports, suppleness and clarity, Hart House has always been a champion of high endeavour. In today's marketplace, however, the definition of high endeavour has evolved, and there are social and economic pressures that make it increasingly difficult to achieve.

The world within which Hart House operates is an increasingly uncertain and competitive one. Students are intensely aware of the challenges that await them after graduation, including a job market more saturated with other graduates than ever before. Many students experience social distress, financial worries, and even mental health problems, which can interfere with their ability to invest time and attention in their pursuit of personal development and fulfilment outside of the classroom.

University education remains the most certain path to success in an uncertain world, and yet, our lecturers cannot shoulder the responsibility of our students' futures all on their own. There are important complementary roles to be played by other members of the university community; those able to nurture the skills and personal resources students will need to be well-rounded contributors to the workforce and the broader community.

In a world of rapid change, where solutions come from the assembly of diverse minds and skills, and where creativity trumps process, success today requires a longer list

of attributes than it once did. Resilient. Agile. Creative. Strategic. Analytical. Collaborative. Problem-Solving. To be employable, one has to be multi-talented, multi-layered, and unafraid to explore, navigate, and contribute.

Hart House can work with others to provide an environment where students are freed from the pressure to compete or perform; an environment where students feel free to explore their passions, embrace diverse experiences and points of view, and cultivate a sense of social responsibility; where students have the opportunity to dabble, to test, to try without the fear of formal evaluation or social judgment because when we take pleasure in any exercise, we build habits for life.

For Hart House to be valuable to students, it needs to equip them with skills and experiences that will serve them well in both their careers and communities, with the inspiration to live and work in the service of the greater good.

As the champion of high endeavor, Hart House must give students the freedom to realize their full potential. When people are given the opportunity, the resources and the encouragement to explore the world beyond the familiar without fear of failure, they become more resilient individuals, more successful students, and more committed citizens. Hart House continues to serve the highest interests of students by offering a place where the pressures of expectation transform into the delight of discovery."

- The Divinsky Group



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