

Profiles of 2012 Recipients of the Excellence Through Innovation Awards

University of Toronto Scarborough Farmers' Market

Nominator's Summary Description of Initiative:

The UTSC Farmers' Market is designed to enhance the experience of students, staff and faculty and to engage the local community.

Local farmers, producers and vendors provide seasonal, locally grown, sustainably-produced, healthy foods. They also help educate patrons about the benefits of buying local foods, where and how food is grown and produced, and how to prepare it.

Beginning in 2010 as a weekly summer event featuring 10 vendors and just over 100 market goers each week, the Market now features over 20 regular vendors, boasts a weekly attendance of over 500 and includes an indoor monthly market through the winter.

Misting Station to Beat the Heat at Varsity Stadium

Nominator's Summary Description of Initiative:

A series of 30+ degree days at the stadium for hundreds of U of T campers and staff as well as U of T student athletes and their coaches compelled facility staffer Ian Stephen to devise a unique outdoor cooling system that provided necessary relief from the heat as well as a playful space for children and adults alike.

This allowed them to continue to enjoy their sports and workouts in the open air of the playing field and track. Amazing what a simple garden hose and a freestanding canopy can do in the hands of a creative staff member.

Research Alerts

Nominator's Summary Description of Initiative:

Research Alerts is a new email and web tool that enables the Office of the Vice President, Research to share information with the U of T research community based on individual roles and interests.



Centre for Collaborative Interactive Digital Media

Nominator's Summary Description of Initiative:

As part of a \$6M CFI/ORF project, our goal was to create an interactive digital media research centre of the highest international standards. The Centre would be unique in the world, bringing together researchers from human-computer interaction, computer graphics, vision, machine learning, computer-supported cooperative work, telepresence, networked gaming, mobile computing, speech processing, psychology, and social work. The design of the centre has focused on maximizing the ability of the Centre's participants to collaborate effectively. As such, the deployment of our centre has required a huge logistical effort at two levels: fundamental technological infrastructure and construction / space project management. These two roles have been superbly handled by John Hancock and Joseph Raghubar, respectively. The outcome is a fully functional, highly successful new set of research laboratories that has further lifted our department as a world leader in most areas related to digital media.

Appointments and Promotions Communication Strategy

Nominator's Summary Description of Initiative:

This project set out to achieve the coordination of appointments and promotions in the Department of Family Medicine. A multi-pronged communication strategy for administrative staff and faculty that includes: workshops, site-visits, template development and information dissemination through a website and Blackboard.

UTMail+

Nominator's Summary Description of Initiative:

The UTMail+ project involves the implementation of Microsoft's Live@Edu communication and collaboration suite replacing the existing UTMORmail service for all students.

The new services, branded as UTMail+, provide huge performance and service benefits to our students including; a modern e-mail interface with 10GB of email quota (versus 120 MB in UTMORmail), a 25GB personal online storage, online versions of Word, Excel, PowerPoint and OneNote, instant messaging, an online calendar, and opportunities to share documents for collaborative work. An immense amount of cross-institutional collaboration resulted in the initiative succeeding to meet objectives.

Touchscreen Kiosks

Nominator's Summary Description of Initiative:

The Robarts Library touchscreen information kiosks put a rich range of information about library services, news and events, and resources at the fingertip of students and visitors. By making innovative use of readily available, widely known, and freely available web technology, together with excellent touchscreen-focused design, the kiosk design team delivered extremely well-received, top-notch, low cost kiosks, and avoided the introduction of new technical infrastructure with its concurrent additional support and cost requirements. These touchscreen kiosks are easily supported, can be readily replicated and repurposed, and are richly featured.

Lecture Videoconferencing for the Mississauga Academy of Medicine

Nominator's Summary Description of Initiative:

With the opening of the Mississauga Academy of Medicine (MAM) at UTM in 2011, all first-year medical school lectures are now delivered via high-definition videoconference to students in the MAM and at the downtown Medical Sciences Building. Lectures originate from either site, and are all recorded and posted online for students the same day. During our first year of operation, in over 400 hours of lectures we achieved an uptime rate of 99.95%, and very positive student and faculty feedback. We are pleased to nominate the team that achieved this remarkable record for an Excellence Through Innovation Award.

Online United Way

Nominator's Summary Description of Initiative:

The team developed an alternative way to run the United Way Campaign in order to optimize the organizational administration of the process at the University (taking into account privacy requirements, U of T's resources and technological automation).

Student-Centred Social Media

Nominator's Summary Description of Initiative:

The Office of Student Life's social media initiative began with the UpbeaT student life blog in 2008 and expanded last year to include Student Life Ambassadors who led conversations on Twitter with U of T students. The blog is now a collaboration with institutional partners across the campus to broaden the scope of the initiative and reach more students. The student bloggers and ambassadors initiate and participate in online conversations to help U of T students better engage on campus and develop a sense of community on the St. George campus.

Faculty of Arts & Science / Woodsworth - Seneca Facilitated Transfer Program

Nominator's Summary Description of Initiative:

This initiative offers qualified students from Seneca College a seamless option for continuing their education in an HBA Program in the Faculty of Arts and Science (FAS) at UofT with significant transfer credit. Students are admitted to Woodworth College, which facilitates the successful transfer of students from Seneca's LAT program to degree studies. Facilitation, which directly connects the college and university programs, includes an orientation program of on-site visits, pre-transfer advising at Seneca, access to U of T courses as a visiting student while completing the college diploma, and ongoing specialized academic and financial advising after admission to degree studies.

Electrical and Computer Engineering IT Infrastructure Streamlining and Consolidation Project

Nominator's Summary Description of Initiative:

To streamline and rationalize the administration and support of a large research computing infrastructure (1000+ computers) thus improving the quality of service and efficiency of the operation.

St. George Meal Plan

Nominator's Summary Description of Initiative:

The initiative set out to achieve a seamless and convenient consumer experience for students, allowing them to eat at all St. George campus food service outlets regardless of the origin of their meal plan. A secondary goal was to create an attractive meal plan program for non-residential students to enhance their experience on campus and encourage them to visit residential dining halls (which many incorrectly assume are “private” spaces only for residential students). Solution included partnering with the UTM campus to network all St. George campus food outlets to the UTM server, as UTM had experience running a successful meal plan program of its own using the Blackboard system for a number of years. Significant administrative work was also done to transfer “ownership” of the meal plan to the university from a contracted food provider, as well as ensure that accounts were appropriately reconciled for participating vendors and constituent colleges, as well as for meal plan holders themselves. Finally, a brand new meal plan program and all accompanying marketing and communications materials were created and published in September 2011.

Online Petition Administration System

Nominator's Summary Description of Initiative:

The Online Petition Administration System is a bold initiative to build and maintain an intuitive, responsive, web-based portal for Faculty of Applied Science & Engineering students to submit petitions for missed exams or against faculty regulations. The guided tool allows students to safely and securely disclose requests for accommodation and submit supporting evidence; authorized staff and faculty to review petitions in a timely matter; and, detailed, customizable responses have been created based on a proprietary-built communications module. The Online Petition Administration System represents a leap forward in efficient, high-quality, responsive and transparent review of student requests while achieving significant advancements in the Faculty's goal of a “paperless office”.

'Stream Team' Livestream webcasts to prospective students

Nominator's Summary Description of Initiative:

The 'Stream Team' is the result of a brainstorming session amongst the recruitment team who were looking for ways to reach out to and actively engage students who had applied and who were waiting for an admissions decision – a stressful time for them. Livestream webcasts were designed to include active participation from first entry divisions working with the recruitment team – resulting in weekly broadcasts on Thursdays on a variety of topics and a weekly 'ask a recruiter session' on Tuesdays from January to June. These live, interactive webcasts on the Join portal provide an opportunity for applicants and admitted students to ask questions via a message board and get real-time, personalized, on-camera responses that thereafter are archived on the site for students' future reference. A dedicated team, the 'Stream Team', was created complete with a producer, director and presenters using special recording equipment as a unique way of engaging prospective students. These live webcasts have reached over 15,000 prospective students from around the world.

Skate and Innovate: Fostering Engagement and Active Living

Nominator's Summary Description of Initiative:

This initiative sought to reach out to the diverse community of students at the University of Toronto through a series of themed recreational skating events, allowing students to re-discover our campus arena, engage in physical activity and Varsity Blues sporting events, and to meet fellow students in a festive and welcoming environment. The primary objective was to reduce a key barrier by providing students with free skates, so that they could easily participate. Instructional support was provided to support new skaters, many of whom were international students, standing up on skates for the very first time!

Pre-portal for MBA Students

Nominator's Summary Description of Initiative:

The 5 modules on the Pre-Portal were newly created to provide valuable career information and exercises to incoming MBA students. The modules were designed to help students through the initial stages of career exploration by taking them through 5 modules which were 1) Assess who I am 2) Explore my options and develop my plan 3) Prepare my documents 4) Target my search and 5) Ace my

interview and Accept my offer. Each module contained a set of exercises that students completed in order to move onto the next module. Students were able to complete them at their leisure at anytime and anywhere in the world which helped our international student population feel connected to the Rotman community.

Convocation Communications

Nominator's Summary Description of Initiative:

The 2012 convocation communications strategy sought to highlight convocation as the culminating moment in the U of T student experience. By gathering and celebrating students' stories before and during the events, and by sharing those stories – and encouraging students to share the stories – in the University's online and social media spaces, the initiative honoured graduating students, reinforced for current students their choice to attend U of T, and encouraged prospective students to make U of T their first-choice university.

Clinical Placement Partnerships – Evaluation Feedback Optimization

Nominator's Summary Description of Initiative:

The Clinical Education Office at Faculty of Nursing developed a framework and methodology for leveraging evaluation data with clinical placement partners, to strengthen partnerships and create strategies for enriched learning environments. Evaluation data from both

Clinical Instructors and Students in the Undergraduate Nursing program is input in a proprietary web-based application. The data is analyzed across all placement sites and agencies and reports on quality and learning metrics are developed for feedback to each individual site and agency. Summative data is provided in each report as a benchmark for comparison, and tracking for future trends and improvements in quality of the learning environment and experience.

Electrical and Computer Engineering Practical Skills Tutorials

Nominator's Summary Description of Initiative:

To streamline and rationalize the administration and support of a large research computing infrastructure (1000+ computers) thus improving the quality of service and efficiency of the operation.

Development and implementation of Negotiable RFP program

Nominator's Summary Description of Initiative:

The Procurement Services Team (PST) developed and implemented a new Negotiable RFP (NRFP) in 2010. The NRFP is a public procurement method with a state-of-the art legal mechanism developed in collaboration with The Procurement Law Office. This innovation allows unprecedented flexibility for clients to tailor deliverables to best meet their project needs. Prior to the Negotiable RFP, the conventional procurement process locked the buyer into an agreement that could not change. More importantly, the process has resulted in significant negotiated enhancements above and beyond solutions proposed by the market. This is a significant advantage especially in highly intensive research environments such as U of T, where technologies often change faster than the RFP process life cycle.

We are the first University in Canada to use this new model for public procurement. It is now our standard competitive procurement methodology. Our NRFP program has recently been recognized for its Quality and Productivity excellence by winning the CAUBO 2012 National Award.

Data Centre Renovation

Nominator's Summary Description of Initiative:

The purpose of the Data Centre Renovation project was to develop and deliver a professionally managed, central administrative data centre able to accommodate and support core IT and computing services in a cost-effective manner to meet the academic and administrative needs of the University.

In achieving this goal, the guiding values and principles were:

- **Predictability, reliability and resilience**
- **Cost effectiveness and efficiency**
- **Managing risk** to meet business continuity and disaster recovery requirements
- **Energy efficiency** to minimize carbon emissions
- **Flexibility and scalability** to meet the changing needs of the University