Problem Description

Description of Problem Area

The main issue we want to tackle is the lack of a user-friendly platform that serves as a central location for efficiently finding, as well as publicizing, University of Toronto (U of T) related formal and informal events. The current platforms in use for U of T related events are typically either geared towards U of T sponsored formalized events, requiring an approval process for posting, or oriented towards informal student-organized events, which rely on social media algorithms and multiple users' interactions to connect U of T students to events. While U of T formal event platforms are accessible to all U of T students, they don't allow for agile student engagement due to the posting process. Additionally, the formal nature of these platforms prevents its use for spontaneous informal events. While social media platforms like Facebook allow both formal and informal event postings, they don't connect the entire U of T community, making it difficult to reach the correct audience.

Assumptions and Claims

We assume that U of T students are currently not very engaged in the U of T community partly due to a lack of access to an easy-to-use platform that includes all U of T-related formal and informal events. We also assume that U of T students want this kind of platform and would engage with it by posting and finding events to attend. Although events posted on Facebook and other social media platforms reach some U of T students through announcements or through notifications about other friends' attendance, we assume that a platform dedicated to U of T-related events would greatly increase these events' visibilities and result in increased student engagement. For formal U of T platforms, we claim that all events posted must go through a

formal process and meet certain criteria designating them as sufficiently formal. We also assume that U of T would be supportive of students creating a new platform focused on U of T community related events.

Risks and Realities

Some of the realities associated with our project is that U of T students may not actually be interested in attending or publicizing U of T community related events beyond what is currently available on existing platforms, making our aim of creating a new platform for U of T events unnecessary. Alternatively, if we create a new platform and many U of T students begin using it, we risk having too many events posted to the extent that students have difficulty finding events relevant to them. We also risk providing a space where students post offensive content or misuse the tool for exclusionary get-togethers or nefarious purposes. This increases our risk of running into legal challenges. Considering we only have four people working on this project, we must also acknowledge that we currently don't have the resources, time, or technical skills to rapidly scale up a new U of T events platform if many U of T students became interested in using it and started requesting design improvements.

Project Justification

This project is an important effort in increasing U of T students' engagement in the U of T community. Increasing student engagement should lead to an increased sense of community, leading to a more enriching and fulfilling experience for U of T students. It should also lead to improved social skills and networking skills that will help students in their personal and professional lives. Ideally, U of T students' lives will be enriched by long term relationships that formed in the U of T community and were made possible through our new events platform.