

Committee on Student Services
Monday October 26, 2020 – 2:00-4:00 PM
Venue:

Attendees: Rick Hink, Lina Di Genova, Darlene Hnatchuk, Martine Gauthier, Ffion Hughes, Lucyna Lach, Jonathan Britt, Valerie Orsat, Bassam El-Khoury, Aimee K. Ryan Nancy Czemmell, Darshan Daryanani, Brooklyn Frizzle, Maheen Akter, Mustafa Fakih, Samer Salameh (arrived for second half of meeting)

Regrets: Fabrice Labeau, Rosella De Stefano, Marie Prémont-St-Jean.

Meeting called to order: 2:03p.m.

AGENDA

1. Approval of Agenda

The agenda was approved

Motion made by Darleen Hnatchuk, seconded by Valerie Orsat

2. Approval of Minutes

Notes from the last meeting (attached).

The minutes were approved

Motion made by Valerie Orsat, Seconded by John Britt

3. Brief Introductions

Round table: Members introduce themselves, their organization/unit, and their involvement in student services.

4. Annual Report to Senate (Attached)

The subject was brought to the table by Co-Chair Lucyna Larch.

There were no comments.

5. Overview of Student Services

Martine Gauthier

The scope

Student services (S2) is comprised of 7 services. Previously there had been 11 Medical, counselling and psychiatric services were combined under wellness including health promotion. Other services, all part of the wellness wheel: Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD), Scholarships and Student Aid Office (SSAO), International Student Services (ISS), McGill Office of Religious and Spiritual Life (MORSEL), Campus Life and Engagement (CLE) (focus on engagement, orientation) Career Planning Services (CaPS), The Office of Student Services (OSS) includes a Communications team and Operations

including Human Resources and Finance, supporting all of Student Services. We have over 200 employees ensuring student support and retention our role starts where enrolment services, end and CAPS help launch students into their future careers. With student support and student wellness in mind through the entire piece.

The current context:

In March, we pivoted, we had been thinking of what our future should look like and COVID propelled us into the future in terms of providing virtual services. Within a week, even within days, all services went virtual. The Medical hub took a few weeks to move online because of some obstacles related to telehealth. Orientation and frosh were entirely virtual and career fairs moved 100% online.

We experienced challenges around career leader's programming and difficulty to pivoting because of the impact of the hiring freeze and training of students.

The same value was found in the virtual delivery for all the different programs. We found it improved our ability to serve students increasing one-on-one meeting capacity. Other areas, such as wellness programming saw some uptake but as the semester evolves, we are struggling more and more with Zoom fatigue. Over the summer and early fall efforts to promote engagement and participation in our offerings was more productive. For example over Thanksgiving we needed to offer more support and opportunities to engage and our list of offerings was important but fewer and fewer chose to engage and the main message is that it is difficult to focus on anything additional than the academic portions and engagement is not a priority.

Next week, results from the latest student needs assessment survey will provide insight into this and what we see is that students are struggling with restrictions related to COVID. Returning students are spending more time on each class this year over last, a greater investment of time is required, and motivation is plummeting. Faculties are also struggling to engage students in class work. Student engagement, keeping students motivated and helping students keeping themselves motivated is one of our greatest concerns. This is not only a concern for S2 but the entire university. We are the net, students come to us when they fall but they are already falling.

I will share the global survey results, in a document not to be circulated.

Questions:

Lucy Lach – We are here to be helpful to you how can we achieve that?

Martine Gauthier– We can add that as part of the terms of reference document. This fall is unique, normally I would say let's dialogue and brainstorm around this. Usually student's level of connection, sense of being supported is around 85% this year it is currently at 50%. The issue is about the university, not just Student Services.

Fifon Hughes– Will this (survey information) be shared through the faculties?

Martine Gauthier– Yes, it has been through the EOC. Today it will trickle down through the Associate Deans, next week the fuller results will be disseminated through the Deans, then the following week, faculty specific analysis (including grads, continuing studies) will be shared in break out reports.

Lucy Lach– Every faculty is going through their own exercises with focus groups and town halls and the messaging is consistent.

Darlene Hnatchuk– I don't think everyone knows about the Student Engagement Collective (SEC) would you like to speak about that?

Martine Gauthier– The SEC that Darlene is referring to was created to find ways to engage students virtually. When we pivoted to remote learning in March DPSLL asked me to create a group to look at these questions. This is a pan university collective, there are 10 working groups, for example, Faculty Engagement who look at how we share and generate ideas, communications, the team is formed by many communications professionals from across the university: housing and hospitality, student Life and Learning, Central communications, so we can provide consistent communications about student engagement activities across the university. A website was developed. <https://www.mcgill.ca/remote-students/>

Great initiatives hit their mark over the summer but as the fall unfolds, we are working on how to support student wellness, not necessarily engaging students. That is the shift we are taking.

Lucy Lach– Any remarks?

Darshan Daryanani – As a student, yes we are experiencing issues and remote learning is not necessarily ideal but there are a lot of opportunities in providing services remotely for example, OSD, note taking. The bridge is not being met to receiving services to help gain accesses. Notes are no longer incentivized. Another service that can be addressed with remote learning is providing equipment for online learning.

Brooklyn Frizzle– With regards to the Wellness Hub, there is nothing that says they adapted rapidly, there are still many concerns surrounding access to medical care. I understand there are roadblocks, there are many longstanding issues that the Hub has not been able to address.

Lucy Lach - I want to clarify that there are advisories. Issues are brought to the advisories that then bring it to us. Do you know who the student representatives are for those?

Brooklyn Fizzle- Yes

6. Defining CSS mandate

- a. Current terms (attached)

- b. Proposal to review terms
- c. Process to review

Martine Gauthier– Lucy is referring to what the exact mandate is on CSS. We have been rounding this bush quite a bit. Each service has advisory committees where issues relating to operations and concerns around specific items are discussed and work with students there to find solutions and explain why the issues are occurring. CSS reports to senate and we have advisories. How can the committee deal with greater, strategies issues is the question.

Lucy Lach - It has never been clear what the mandate is, there are a number of leads who report to Martine and she reports to DPSLL. The advisories provide reports to us and we provide it to Senate. What is our role in reporting to senate?

I want to understand the roles of other Senate subcommittees, decisional or consultative roles and I want to bring that back to the TOR. Changes need to be made. What are the pain points? How can they address those? That is a project.

Martine Gauthier – To give a brief history, CSS used to report to Dean of Students (DOS) when there was no DPSLL there were many student policies that were within the DOS portfolio that S2 would implement. When the split was made, and the Dean of Students became a colleague to the Executive director of S2, the Dean of Students took the student policy. Those policies where what CSS reported on and at that point the mission became unclear. CSS became a place for complaint, spinning our wheels.

We are looking at repositioning CSS to bring people together to see how we can support students in their academic mission. This committee doesn't always feel purposeful with the focus on helping students to succeed in their academic mission.

Lucy Lach- Recognizing that the academy and Student Services operating in silos is an obstacle and there should be more of an overlap and coming together. This is a direction the office of the Executive Director of Student Services has been taking. The importance of understanding the the expectation and impact of each professor and class on students' wellness. How do we talk about that to build that bridge, that closer connection between the two?

Bassam El Khoury – I am hearing from students and professors about a lot of distance, students are having a difficult time engaging and faculty is feeling unmotivated and burned out. Difficulties with platforms, both reporting the same thing and creating more conflict. We need to find interventions to bring them together. Both are feeling high levels of distress.

Martine Gauthier – One of the gaps in our dialogue is that S2 does not do academic accommodation (enrolment services do) only disability accommodations. Also being clear on our role is important in dialoguing for the solutions.

Lucy Lach- The information is there. What can we do? What is going well? Reality is paralyzing.

Martine Gauthier – Do you have any comment as we speak of the mandate and TOR? Having a representative from enrolment services? What areas should be represented in order to be actioned out? To be solution focused we need to work together.

Mustafa Fakhri – If most of what is needed is academic, awareness for professors, can we act according to this or can we only act on it for S2?

Martine Gauthier– I don't think we can advise the faculties directly, the student assessment survey is one of many ways to provide information about student success across the university. Some are national, some are more focused. Should we be working off of these? Some of the most fruitful conversations have been when we bring forward results, what kind of advice can this committee give based on that data? We have great data on wellness, on mental health, on career services. Two very population specific surveys coming from black students, needs assessment around indigenous students. We generate a lot of data that doesn't necessarily go anywhere. We can use that to build the bridges.

Lucy Lach– We have a look at what is or is not problematic and what this means as a strategic direction of the university. It is not operations; we need to operate at a different level.

Ffion Hughes– Martine can you talk about the hiring freeze and the impact that has on your services?

Lucy Lach– before we move on, Brooklyn in did you want to talk about the mandate?
Brooklyn - I am a little confused, our goal is on a broader higher level I am confused as to how we can have a meaningful impact on how services are accessed. How is that possible without getting into the operations of S2. There are some S2 issues that cross over and if our goal is to improve it, makes it more accessible and engaging there are some priorities to be made there.

Lucy Lach– That is an important point, and the cross-cutting issues do need to come to us and if something can be done. We need to have this conversation and this meeting was to talk about what needs to be gotten into. I take your point Brooklyn.

Martine Gauthier– Your point is well taken. The surveys do bring that in, the concerns that you have, are what we are hearing from students also. If we take a data driven approach, we will see these cross-cutting issues and have a broader view.

With regards to the hiring freeze – we have a number of positions that are being posted in the Hub. There are areas with maternity leaves where we were not able to replace those positions. We are sharing resources across areas to compensate.

Ffion Hughes– How long will it last?

Martine Gauthier – We don't know yet.

Mustafa Fakhri – How often are reports provided to the committee and how often do we provide feedback?

Lucy Lach – I don't think that is how that works, but we can structure it so we are familiar and aware. I am not aware of that being a part of our committee in the past.

Martine Gauthier - No it has not worked that way in the past.

Darlene Hnatchuk – Far back in the past, occasionally they would invite a unit to speak about the report in an ad hoc way. The sentiment of the advisories would be that they are happy to know the reason they create the reports and that they are used.

7. Election of co-chair (10 minutes) 3:12

Breakout room for student members to select the co-chair.

Brooklyn Fizzle – This is a high-ranking body and as such the TOR has a lot of power that is not being exercised. There is a lot of untapped potential, we can spend time ramping up.

Brooklyn is named Co-Chair

8. Other Business

9. Adjournment

Motion made by Aimee Ryan and seconded by John Britt.

Next meeting: November 30, 2020, 2:00 -4:00. Location TBA.