

Committee on Student Services
Monday, November 22, 2021 – 2:00-4:00 PM
ZOOM meeting

Attendees:

Aimee Ryan, Bassam Khoury, Cara Piperni, Caroline Arpin, Christian Tonnesen, Claire Downie, Darlene Hnatchuk, Eric Galbraith, Manuel Balan, Martine Gauthier, Nancy Czemann, Nathan Hall, Sean Clarke, Valerie Orsat.

Resource Persons: Cynthia Nkamicaniye, Evelina Ene, Lina Di Genova, Rick Hink, Vera Romano.

Guests: Ariunaa Bayarsaikhan, Asma Khamis, Julia Caddy, Julian Guidote, Kerry Yang, Thomas Germain, Mathias Orhero

Regrets: Karla Heisele Cubilla, Farah Abdalbari, Emmanuel Boateng, Zeke Bertrand.

AGENDA

Introduction of Thomas Germain – Student Experience Project Manager

1. Welcome and Land acknowledgement

2. Approval of Agenda

Move to postpone item 4, Student Services visibility and awareness in the campus community to January meeting

Seconded by Claire

Agenda is unanimously approved

3. Approval of Minutes (attached).

Notes:

Professor Nathan Hall Proposed some additions.

Lina Di Genova provided a clarification

Claire provided a clarification

Minutes approved

4. SSMU's Academic Wellness Proposal

Annex 1- Strategic Plan for Academic Wellness.

Additional invitees joined for the presentation and discussion:

- Julia Caddy
- Julian Guidote
- Kerry Yang
- Asma Khamis

Goal: System-wide approach and request for the Committee to champion the plan.

Martine

- Fabrice Labeau has requested we help support the proposal.
- Student Services has been working on portions on an ongoing basis.
- The proposal is about intersections of Student Services and academic practice.
- First step is presenting to CSS.
- Much in line with the National Standard on Psychological Wellbeing.
- Lots of commitment across campuses on mental health and wellbeing.
- This academic year we will be doing a self-assessment.
- In the academic sector, many campuses are struggling on how to bring alignment to life.
- The survey will inform us on what the campus is saying and see what other campuses are doing.
- The National Standard on Psychological Wellbeing looks at campus wellness as a partnership with the academic component, creating a learning environment that is conducive to mental health – accessible, inclusive tools and approaches to assessment, healthy dialogue in pedagogy, policies and practices across universities.
- The campus approach to is key.

Vera Romano:

- Stakeholders who developed the Standard are the same as those who led to the creation of the hub with an emphasis of a community approach, the importance of prevention and early intervention.
- The proposal's strategy is in alignment with the current climate and our community.

Martine Gauthier:

- We will bring the National Survey results (March) back to CSS and see the intersection with the students proposal and propose a discussion at Senate.
- Last year at Senate, we had a discussion on the Student Experience and Academic Distress and practices that can be implemented to address distress.
- The assessment will help us with objective baseline data.

Christian Tonnesen –

- My congratulations to the team bring this forward – 1.3 and 1.4 are “crazy awesome”.
- 1.4, alternate grading schemes – the expectations for memorization.

- Wellness course for credit is a motivational factor.
- Inclusion of harm reduction is so important.
- Taking a lens to all services offered – harm reduction and wellness approach.

Martine Gauthier

- I would like to hear the perspective of the faculty members present on this as it intersects with wellness and academic life.

Julia Caddy

- We agree on the benefits, but we are looking for champions, specific feedback or ways you can participate.

Bassam Khoury

- Taking a wellness course for credit. Teachers and instructors think about how they decide to teach and how it impacts students, our choices can positively impact mental health.
- Congratulations. You can use me anytime you like.

Aimee Ryan

- What rang out: maintaining academic excellence in the context of wellness – often people think you are asking to water it down “go soft”. That is not what people want.
- I look forward to reading through the document and how it was described will help illicit support more broadly with academics who feel there is a sort of separation of state between health and wellness.

Martine Gauthier

- Any comments about the barriers?

Eric Galbraith:

- Not having thought about this much, it comes down to the specifics. It is hard to change how professors do things to think outside the box. We tend to do things the way we experienced it.
- A technique cognizant of wellbeing can still be rigorous. They will be skeptical – they will think we are pandering.
- Showing data is key – Thinking more broadly about assessment. We are putting a lot of pressure for the perfect GPA score. I would like to see a grater look at the whole structure.

Julian Guidote

- The data is important. If we can we make this better.

Martine Gauthier

- Assessment is still under review, there is still room and time to work on that. It is a difficult topic changing policy. We have been working on it for a long time.

Nathan Hall

- Research informed practice – options based on personal competencies relives stresses. That section is directly on point.
- Roadblocks: Getting faculty buy in. This is difficult for GPS. Promoting wellbeing requires buy in. Recognition through teaching awards (EDI is an example). There is an awards chase for obtaining tenure.
- Is there a way to include this in progress reports? Ask them, “What have been your efforts to improve student wellness?” An annual reflective process that is not just private.
- Guidelines for chairs as something to ask – more regular, on the ground check-ins, tangible rewards, annual progress tracking.
- People are motivated to just do what they have been doing.

Christian Tonnesen

- I Agree with Professor Hall – the buy in is going to be critical for these steps. Grading scheme redesigning puts a lot of pressure. They need an incentive; we have to consider the wellness of the professors.

Manuel Balan

- Resources is a roadblock from the perspective of professors.
 - Cost of transition to change the way you have been doing things.
 - Changing grading schemes for 600 students – how does this materialize in how you do things in classes.
 - What supports can be provided to undertake those changes.
 - It is not resource neutral initiatives- support in terms of resources
- Professors are prize driven but also time driven – resources, training, time to do it – if imposed in between other things then it won't succeed.
- In terms of the work, I do as AD student affairs – I have 5 faculty advisors for 9000 students it needs to be based on EDI and implementing EDI in the work of the advisors.
- I need rules and procedures the worst thing in terms of EDI is providing for some and not others because of lack of resources.
- Rules, procedures, guidelines in terms of how to implement is key here. It will help battle the narrative of giving students what they want. “These are the procedures”.
- It needs to be well managed and implemented in an equitable, accessible way. If not, you are privileging some over others.

The new draft of the assessment policy is available. It takes into account many of the things presented here there was much consultation and productive work and there should be movement on this, and the current timeline is to present it at senate in the next 3 months.

Martine Gauthier

- Alignment of the strategy with the National Standard would be beneficial for funding opportunities linked to the assessment piece and provide a baseline to apply to different sources of funding it is something to be hopeful about.

5. S2 Anti-Black Racism Assessment - focus group findings

Annex 2- S2 ABRP Black student needs Assessment Focus Groups Report

Presented by Ariunaa Bayarsaikhan

Annex 3 - S2 ABRP Updates CSS Nov 22, 2021

Presented by Cynthia Nkamicanaye

Questions:

Christina Tonnesen

- Anti-oppression in frosh training is very interesting.
- Would it be similar to it takes all of us where we purchased a module?

Cynthia Nkamicanaye

- We recorder our own and it is mandatory. It is the intent to develop something like "It takes all of us" but to implement this year we did not have the time.
- TLS is working on the module in collaboration with CL&E

Christina Tonnesen

- Is there the possibility of making this mandatory for all McGill?

Martine Gauthier

- That would have to be approved by the Provost office, but it is my understanding the discussions are happening – it is beyond our scope – frosh and orientation are in our scope.

6. Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (BIPOC) representation

Martine Gauthier

It has been requested several times of us to hire frontline support members who are BIPOC, we wanted to have a discussion around strategies. We struggle. We have increased our representation in terms of staff over the last few years, we make an avid effort, and we recognize that students would like to have more representation.

Eric Galbraith

- What are the limitations

Martine Gauthier:

- Students would like to see positions that are specific to populations, for example, a BIPOC LWA. Our black students would like to see them across all our services. We hire BIPOC staff but they don't want to be identified BIPOC for BIPOC they want to serve all populations.

Kerry Yang

- Tokenization, so much pressure to achieve that it probably contributes to the lack of interest in the positions.
- Important to try to actively diversify so it broadens the pool and the odds.

Martine Gauthier

- It is important to diversify. For six half days, we focus on staff and for 3 of those, this year, we will do EDI training. All staff can have a sensitivity and ability to respond to all students. We still would like to take additional steps.

Claire Downie:

- How many LWAs total are there?
- It is about making sure that McGill and S2 is a good place for BIPOC people to work.
- People don't want to be tokenized and want to be in an environment where there is respect, and it is a good place for all to work.

Vera Romano

- 14 LWAs total – population specific, we have an LGBTI and BIPOC
- Important to create specialized programming for different identities – the issue of the kind of recruitment and to create an ecosystem that is supportive, not tokenizing.
- There is also a supply chain issue. If we are not graduating enough, not recruiting them into the programs. This applies to medical and mental health - we need to start earlier in the process.
- Across the board we need more diverse staff. We have had improvements but it does not always translate into specialized supports.

Bassam Khoury

- In my program I have only seen one black student in 6 years. Are we doing enough to encourage applications? I don't understand why there is such lack of diversity in our program as of the early stage.
- Different faculties and programs need to think of why people are not coming. What is going on?

Martine Gauthier

- For the professional orders in Quebec people need to pass exams in French that is limiting and challenging. An additional barrier to hiring.

Cynthia Nkamicanaye:

- Comments are pointing to macro issues. What I am focusing on is finding things we can do. It may be a narrower area but there are supports to hiring diversity, recommended practices:
 - Places to post positions.
 - Rewriting the job descriptions to attract applicants.
 - An employer brand – will I find diversity will I feel at home. If we can change our internal branding.
 - Having targets that we are working towards. Being aware can help us in the micro ways we can do our part.
 - Temporary contracts can seem unattractive. Ideas like that.

7. Orientation survey results

Annex 4 – Post-Orientation Week Survey Results Fall 2021

Presented By Lina Di Genova

- Very positive feedback.
- Happy for the in-person component
- Lot of safety and sense of belonging.
- Targeted efforts: graduate survey results were favourable in terms of the different strategies of reaching students pre-arrival, it reduces anxiety.
- Challenges: Grad students do not recognize how it applies to them and why it is important.
- The cost of frosh is limiting.
- Thinking about the future; spaces and places what to have online VS. what to have in person. Students want that connection to know what the social circle will be.
- Moving forward the challenge is going to be what can we keep virtual what do we want to have in person.

Christian Tonnesen

- Students were much more enthused this year

Adjournment

The chair would look favourably upon a motion to adjourn.

Next meeting: January 24, 2021, 2:00 -4:00. Location TBA.