

Council on Student Services

Minutes of the meeting held on
Wednesday, November 21, 2018
5 p.m. – 7 p.m. in SL 232, Student Centre

Members: Desmond P., Sheila J., Varsha P., Nadia R., Michelle V., Nicole B., Chemi L., Hana S., Anthony L., Qusai H., James R., Urja N., Arda E., Aaheli M., Darshana K.

Non-Members: Anthony C., Elsa K., Sarah M., Laurie H., Kevin T., Delicia A., Mohsin B., Chris B., Tasneem N (Secretary).

1. Approval of Agenda

Nobody had any questions.

Moved: Chemi L.

Seconded: All

All in favour.

2. Approval of Meeting Minutes – Wednesday, October 24, 2018

Moved: James R.

Seconded: Qusai H.

All in favour.

3. Presentation by the Family Care Office, followed by Q&A

Francesca Dobbin began by introducing herself and the Family Care Office (FCO). The FCO serves students, staff and faculty on all three campuses. The FCO is funded by St. George students through the Student Life fee, and by UTM students through the Quality Service to Students fee. She said that UTSC students currently do not receive FCO services, but they have received a request this year to provide support to UTSC graduate students by Prof. Mary Silcox, Vice Dean Graduate, UTSC.

The FCO provides confidential guidance, resources, referrals, educational programming and advocacy for the U of T community and their families. The FCO raises awareness of family care issues central to the achievement of education and employment equity. She said they focus on questions around planning for a child, childcare and schools or looking for resources for caring for an aging relative. The assistance can happen through workshops, webinars, discussion groups, family events and online student chats. They also see people by individual appointments (drop-in or scheduled), or via email.

The FCO also has a peer mentorship program and can match a student with a peer to discuss these type of concerns.

The FCO also helps students, staff and faculty to find out what resources and supports are available in the community. Workshop series are designed to empower students to find a better balance between their academic work and caring for others. Topics include self-care, study tips, juggling school and family life. They are also CCR approved.

FCO also has its own Student Advisory Committee and it hears directly from students about services and programming.

Proposed support to UTSC will include access to all FCO workshops, webinars, groups and services offered on campus, St. George and UTM. Student peer mentors will be available onsite or online and there will be an embedded family care advisor on site one day per week to provide advising appointments, and to outreach and promote FCO programs and services to students with family responsibilities. Currently, FCO has an advisor on UTSC campus once every six weeks (as of Nov 2018). It will move to once a week on campus in order to provide increased access to a family care advisor.

Anthony L. asked if orientation outreach activities are aimed at all students or graduate students only. Francesca said it is for all students, and that they do their own orientation focused on supporting students with families, providing meals and childcare.

Aaheli M. said that since one of the proposed support is access to workshops, does that mean more workshops at UTSC. Francesca said yes, workshops currently are not open to students at UTSC but in the future, will be available for students to attend.

Qusai H. asked if there is plans to incorporate family housing at UTSC, since students do not want to live downtown and commute to UTSC. Michelle V. said that with the current housing situation, there are no current plans to create family housing at this time. Desmond said there is plans underway for a new residence, and as this develops, things will change. UTSC also has townhouses, once we have a new residence, it could probably be repurposed for family housing.

Arda E. asked if there were plans to bring family spaces to UTSC, similar to the family space at Robarts library. Francesca said that Robarts Library asked the FCO, and after consulting with staff and students, brought about the family space. Francesca said that they are always ready to help once departments or individuals reach out.

Aaheli M. asked why the UTSC student services fee does not contribute to the FCO. Desmond said that they have recognized that, and that is why FCO is presenting and that it will be part of the budget for the new year, probably under the student service fee. Chemi L. asked how much increase they will see, Desmond P. said funding will depend on existing fees, but will not be a large amount, and it will be implemented in the next fiscal year.

4. Presentations from Portfolios of Student Affairs & Services: Health & Wellness Centre

Sheila began the Health & Wellness Centre presentation by providing an overview of staff and their roles, before discussing the health and counselling services, and health promotion programming. She said that there has been an increase in visit numbers in all areas and discussed new services and supports. Embedded counselling is also provided in collaboration with various departments such as AccessAbility Services, Sexual Violence Prevention & Support Centre, Student Housing & Residence Life, Department of Management, Department of Psychology, etc. Different types of counselling groups are available for students - closed groups and drop-in groups.

Health promotion teams include Wellness Peer Programs which provide outreach of services and promote healthy lifestyles through peer education. Teams include Health & Wellness Centre Ambassadors, Leave The Pack Behind, Mental Wellness, Nutritional Health, Party In The Right Spirit and Sexual Health.

Priorities for the New Year for the HWC include peer to peer supports, healthy campus initiative, online services and walk-in services.

James R. asked about solution-focused therapy. Sheila said when students are in crisis, every individual student is assessed individually by a counsellor, and that they try to meet the needs of each student individually. Appointments are given to students based on their needs.

Arda E. asked if HWC refers students to external specialists. Desmond P. said no limits imposed, but there may be some exceptions when some students may have a real need to continue with counselling needs. At that time, after consultation with colleagues, and if it cannot be done at HWC and if the problems are severe and the student needs specialized services, then they are referred to external specialists. For example, if there is a mental health condition that can only be treated at a hospital. However, most issues have been dealt within the first session, or with four to seven sessions.

Qusai H. asked Sarah M. about embedded counselling in the Department of Environmental Science and if anyone has reached out to her for support. She said many have, but not sure if they are graduate students specifically. Sheila and Sarah explained that every year is spent reaching out to different departments to find out if they are interested in embedded counselling.

Aaheli M. inquired if the survey questions are multiple choice questions. Elsa K. said they are general questions that are asked by volunteers. They ask students to answer survey if they can, and collect quantitative and qualitative statistics on how we can improve our services. Students are welcome to provide suggestions and testimonials. If students have concerns, we reach out to them for further discussion.

Darshana K. asked how the group session topics are decided. Sarah M. said the team discusses various topics, and as counsellors do

various sessions with students, they see key themes and key goals. Based on this information, the HWC decides which groups to run. They also gather feedback from the groups they currently run.

5. Presentations from Portfolios of Student Affairs & Services: Athletics & Recreation

Sheila began by introducing the staff that were present. She said that Athletics & Recreation are the largest student employer on campus. Alumni also come back due to the relationships and programming work they are involved in. Sheila discussed the Toronto Pan Am Sports Centre facilities and campus partnerships, as well as space rental for campus groups. She highlighted athletic programming, outdoor recreation, community events and outreach. She concluded with numbers and statistics, future positions as well as programs and initiatives such as SCAA, Sneaker Squad, MoveU, etc.

Athletics & Recreation priorities include increasing first year student engagement, embedding equity principles into programming, implementing more activities across campus to engage more students who may not access the Toronto Pan Am Sports Centre, enhancing international student engagement, social engagement through mentorship and activities and increasing women's participation.

Aaheli M. asked about the women's only hours and how there were concerns last year about the curtains not being sufficient to create private space, and if it had been resolved. Mohsin B. said that signage has been placed there, and female fitness ambassadors are present during those times to supervise, and they are cognizant of who walks in during women's only hours. Mohsin B. said they also work with Toronto Pan Am Sports Centre partners to support women's hours and programming. Ramona S. also works with women and trans centre, and are also looking at offering more options for programming women's sports.

James R. asked why athletics and recreation are different line items on ACORN. Desmond P. requested that he bring it in at the next meeting to share with the group.

Qusai H. asked if they offer family events for students with families. Mohsin B. said they currently do not offer family programming; they have recreation trips, open house, a Toronto Marlies trip, which families are welcome to attend. Toronto Pan Am Sports Centre is open to families, but will need to obtain a membership to use Toronto Pan Am Sports Centre. Claudia L. added in that the City of Toronto and Toronto Pan Am Sports Centre also runs programs and events for families and children. Anthony C. added in that family drop-in programming is also available, and that more information is available on the Toronto Pan Am Sports Centre website.

6. Presentations from Portfolios of Student Affairs & Services: Student Housing & Residence Life

Michelle V. discussed the mission and components of residence. She discussed the expanded housing inventory program that was implemented in September 2018, the off campus housing services and the timeline for the new residence building. She said that SHRL reached out to Centennial College and a MOU was created so that UTSC students can stay at Centennial College residence. Michelle V. highlighted the roles of the advisory committees and associated working groups.

James R. asked if SHRL offered workshops on housing, living off campus, dealing with their landlord, and what they need to know, etc. Michelle V. said we do offer services to students to educate themselves. SHRL has also partnered with SCSU and joined them in sessions and workshops to educate students about fire prevention equipment, lease agreements, etc.

Chemi L. asked if Michelle V. is a part of the city consultations, and if SCSU could also be a part of the consultations. Michelle V. said that there are several other colleagues at UTSC who are at the table, but not Michelle V. Desmond P. asked Chemi L. to add the request to the agenda for the Winter CAO Forum.

James R. inquired about emergency housing and what happens when there is a need for immediate housing for a student. Michelle V. said they try assisting the student by working out a solution with family or friends. If no spaces are available on residence, SHRL has arranged for the student to stay at a hotel nearby.

7. Adjournment

Moved: Aaheli M.

Seconded: Darshana K.

All in favour. Meeting adjourned.