# University of Windsor Student Mental Health Strategy
**Implementation Committee Meeting – Spring 2020**
**June 19, 2020**
**1:00 to 3:00**
**Virtual Meeting**

## MEETING NOTES

**Present:** Lynette Kivisto (Co-Chair), Dr. Kathryn Pfaff (Co-Chair), Chris Baillargeon, Dr. Mohsan Beg, Mikayla Bornais, Aman Cameron, Jermeka Castello, Paige Coyne, Herman Dayal, Ryan Flannagan, Alice Grgicak-Mannion, Amal Jammali, Dr. Onawa Labelle, Shelby Lacey, Dr. Phebe Lam, Sandra Ondracka, Dr. Anouchka Plumb, Alana Sabelli, Jesse Scott, Jenessa Shaw, Ashley Vodarek, Dr. Sarah Woodruff, Kerry Zold

**Regrets:** Sarah Racinsky, Dr. Renu Sharma-Persaud

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1. **Introductions/Welcome New Members**
   Lynette welcomed new members and thanked returning members. Quick introductions followed.

2. **Confirmation of Agenda**
   - The Co-Chair asked members if there were any items to be added to the agenda.
   - Mikayla asked for an update on the services that are being provided to students due to the covid situation this semester.
   - This item was added to the agenda under "new business".

   The agenda was approved with the addition of this item.

3. **Review/Approval of February 28, 2020 Meeting Notes**
   February 28th Meeting Notes approved.

4. **Co-Chair Shared Experience and Call for 2020-2021 Co-Chairs (for electronic vote after meeting)**
   Outgoing Co-Chairs Lynette and Kathy provided insight regarding their experience as Co-Chairs of the Student Mental Health Strategy Implementation Committee. They shared the following:
   - Lynette – the committee works very differently from other committees. Looking at the procedures, you'll see that the committee strives for consensus and when

consensus isn't reached, a vote goes forward. The committee has generally come to agreement collectively/unanimously. The committee operates in an environment of respect and togetherness. The structure of having a faculty member and a student as Co-Chairs has been a positive and unique experience. While the committee does follow Roberts Rules to some extent, it is not as formal.

- Kathy – the committee is a very important committee to serve on, especially now with the current covid-19 crisis. Both Lynette and Kathy have both enjoyed the work and the time commitment is relatively low. Kathy emphasized the meaningfulness of the committee. The committee has been very successful in achieving a number of goals.

The floor was opened for nominations for Co-Chairs for the 2020-2021 academic year:

- Herman Dayal expressed interest in acting as Co-Chair for the Committee.
- Ashley asked if nominations could come in electronically so that committee members have time to think about it.
- Ryan will send email communication to committee members asking for nominations.

5. **Recommendation Ranking Results from IC Selection**

Jenessa presented the top 5 Student Mental Health Strategy recommendations.

21 of 28 committee members responded to the survey which asked that members select their top 5 recommendations. Many of these top recommendations tied in the rankings with other recommendations. Jenessa highlighted the top 10. They are as follows:

- Recommendation 19: Implement mandatory occasional training on mental health and suicide prevention for all faculty and staff, with particular priority for front line student support staff… Include training on how to work sensitively with the mental health needs of diverse groups (e.g., LGBTQ+, Indigenous, international students), and explore options for effective marketing, incentivizing, and maximizing training uptake.

Recommendations 9, 24 and 12 were tied in the rankings.

- Recommendation 9:   Create a central Student Wellness Centre that incorporates the Student Counselling Centre, Student Health Services, the Peer Support Centre, etc., to provide access to services that support physical and mental health in one location. Ensure that the hub and spoke model in Student Counselling is sustained by continuing to provide embedded therapists to departments in need, and that space is allotted for community partners to provide a regular rotation of services on campus, including group therapy and other specialized programs.
- Recommendation 24:  Develop an elective resiliency-based course and encourage faculties to consider making it part of their degree programs.
- Recommendation 12:  Prioritize raising mental health awareness and skill-building among first-year students in the first months of their degree. Increase the presence of mental health content in orientation programing (e.g., Welcome Week, Head

Start) and ensure that outreach extends beyond the initial first week of the semester and into the academic year.

Recommendations 13 and 20 tied for the next top spot.

- Recommendation 13: Likewise, implement similar orientation initiatives for students who may not be reached by these efforts, such as transfer students, graduate students, mature students, and international students.
- Recommendation 20: Implement a continuum of mental health training for all student staff (including Graduate Assistants and Teaching Assistants) and any students who are in potential support, leadership, or mentorship roles, with those more likely to encounter disclosures receiving the highest level of training. Work with the three student unions (UWSA, OPUS, and GSS) to implement training for their student leaders and volunteers.

Recommendations 31, 16 and 25 were tied for the next top spot.

- Recommendation 31: Ensure that the Student Counselling Centre has an appropriate number of full-time counsellors/clinical therapists/psychologists to meet the needs of students.
- Recommendation 16: Build knowledge, skills, and sensitivity among UWindsor faculty and staff around the requirements and support needed for the University's accommodation process, as well as the responsibilities that are placed on faculty, staff, and the University in this domain through legal and human rights obligations.
- Recommendation 25: Increase mental health and resiliency outreach to high schools and consider working with guidance counsellors to identify what they need to help them support their students in transitioning to university. Enhance existing university transition programs for all incoming students (e.g., high school students, university and college transfers, etc.) and ensure that there is a stronger emphasis on resiliency/wellness and that students are better informed on how they can support themselves and access the support they need on campus. For both outreach and transition programming, give consideration to prioritizing an Indigenous-focused program.

Recommendation 28 closed off the list.

- Recommendation 28: Explore innovative approaches for supporting students as they take their first steps to seek services at the Student Counselling Centre. Work to increase ease of access to appointment scheduling, reduce uncertainty around what to expect, include photos and biographies of therapists on website, and strive to champion a safe, warm, and welcoming experience from the moment students walk through the door. The intake process should give consideration to other services or opportunities available, including Peer Support Centre, online supports, and off-campus resources when Counsellor access is delayed.

6. **Ranking of Recommendations to be Pursued**

Following Jenessa's presentation, committee members discussed the top recommendations.

- Anouchka – is there any information around budgets, funding that help inform which of these recommendations could be further prioritized as some of these recommendations would require a higher level of financial support than others.
- Ryan – some of the recommendations will require significant financial resources. As we are reviewing and discussing these recommendations, we should identify the top priorities that we should be working on as a University regardless of the financial impact. These will be brought to senior administration to request funding if necessary.
- Phebe – progress to date, some of the recommendations we have been working on are near completion. Should we take this into consideration? For those where there has been no work done, should these be given priority? When reviewing recommendations, that is approach she took when selecting top five.
- Ryan – in the first two years of the strategy about 11 recommendations were identified. Many have been achieved but in some cases, we have not achieved the full potential of particular recommendation. Various issues worked against being able to address the Strategy's first tranche of selected recommendations.
- Ashley – when we started the exercise to identify the next batch of recommendations from the Strategy, we removed any complete recommendations so that we were left with twenty-four recommendations for review.
- Herman – in reference to the top recommendation, item 19, Herman asked if there is a reason that it has not become mandatory.
- Ryan – there was good debate during the development of strategy recommendations regarding the word mandatory. Making anything mandatory on campus requires negotiation. If we had a voluntary program which was robust and encouraged by senior management, our hope is to see a high faculty and staff participation rate, but the working group that created the Strategy was explicit on this recommendation. They wanted to see mandatory training because they knew that people who most need to take the training are unlikely to participant in any voluntary training program.
- Kerry – when looking at the top recommendations, because number 12 and 13 are so similar, perhaps we should collapse them, ie. 4a and 4b to make room for any recommendation that the committee would like to give consideration to as well.
- Anouchka – agree with Kerry. Another consideration is to look at some of the recommendations that could be implemented in our virtual reality. Number 23 (explore and develop new and innovate peer-to-peer models aimed at building resilience and capacity within the student population) for instance is an item that can be operationalized both virtually and/or face-to-face. It satisfies the question of what the institution is doing to build connections and can augment the value of the online nature of what we are providing as an institution.

- Phebe – agrees with the comment. Can we implement the mental health workshops virtually? Regarding recommendations number 16, Phebe expressed a concern that students with accessibility issues are experiencing challenges in being accommodated in their online courses.
- Shelby – with the top recommendation, black students were not identified as one of diverse groups.  This should be added especially in the current climate. We should do some consultation with groups on campus to see how we can work with them.
- Ashley – we have access to face talk suicide prevention online.
- Paige – regarding accessibility services, Paige has had students with accessibility issues in the online environment. Speaking from experience, there are a high number of students who share a lot of personal information and concerns with GAs. GAs are not necessarily equipped to deal with or to guide in these situations. Will there be training for professors and GAs? Perhaps this should be one of the higher priority groups.
- Jenessa – providing training to TA and GAs is recommendation 20. This was one of the top recommendations. There are recommendations that are similar, such as 19 and 20.
- Mikayla – one of the top recommendations, number 12, relates to first-year students, can we add something about high school student outreach?
- Ryan – we realized that high school students are a distinct population. The working group that developed the Strategy recognized that this group would be served well by mental health support. However, working group members also realized that there are limited resources and there may be difficulty working with high schools, guidance counsellors, etc. This might be a recommendation where we need to look to senior admin to provide resources.
- Herman – perhaps there is a different way to look at the data as there is some overlap. What if we looked at broader categories such as training, academic reform, physical mental health supports etc.? As an example, considering the broader issue of training and orientation, that could include a) faculty/staff, b) GAs, TAs, etc.
- Ryan – when the Strategy was developed, there were a number of domains. Where the recommendations are overlapped there is the possibility of combining them. The effort and the process of focusing in on something specific goes back to goal achievement. When we have specific goals, it allows us to be more focused and deliberate. The benefit of being specific with the recommendations is that we are identifying what we want to achieve and then accountable for that.
- Jenessa – added, that as a committee, we plan to accomplish all of the recommendations set forth, but at this time, we are identifying the top five recommendations to focus our energy on for the upcoming year.
- Ashley – when looking at this exercise we are hoping to identify those recommendations that we can look at immediately and those that are aspirational.

- Jermeka – many of the things that we have discussed weave into each other. One of the items regarding the online environment, that is something that is extremely important in today's environment and should be given priority.
- Lynette – once we reach the objectives of a recommendation, we add more to the list. What we would be looking for is any strong arguments against the top recommendations that were ranked.
- Anouchka: can 19 and 20 (training for faculty, staff, students, GAs etc) be collapsed and then bring 25 into the rankings?

Motion:  Over the next year, it is proposed that the committee focus its efforts and work on supporting the implementation of the six recommendations that were identified as priorities during this discussion. These recommendations include: 9, 12,13, 19, 20 and 25.

Approved.

7. **Fund Applications Impacted by COVID-19 (extensions and revisions)**
   Five projects were approved for funding for the 2020/2021 academic year.
   - Therapy Dogs to Support Students – this initiative has moved forward and there is no request for an extension or revision to the application/approval.
   - Lancers Recover – normally when we are discussing the application, the applicant is not present, however if the committee requires any clarification we may look to Onawa for response. In this instance, the applicant is looking for reallocation of funds within the project. Onawa indicated that currently some of the social events are being held online via Zoom however they are looking at creative ways to bring the students together. There is less need for administrative work and more need for social connections at this time.  As a result, the request is to move funds from the admin section of the budget to the social section.
     Motion: to accept the Lancers Recover revised budget.
     Approved.
   - Muslim Chaplaincy – were not able to provide a revised budget in time for the meeting. They are moving many initiatives online and are looking to reallocate funds from hosting in-person events to providing incentives for students to attend online events. They are also hoping to use some funds for sponsored online advertisements. We will look to see updated budget submission before making a decision on this request.
   - Girl Talk – initially proposing hosting an in-person event. The organizers are now looking to host the event virtually and will look to deliver supplies to students' dorm rooms so they can participate virtually. There is no reallocation of funds, just a change in the format for delivery of the activity.

- o Mikayla – do they have anything for males? Mikayla has good mental health resources which she can provide links for and post on Instagram for instance.
  - o Jenessa – even though they are calling it "Girl Talk," the activity is open to anyone regardless of their gender identification. They kept the name because the program has been ongoing, and they didn't want to lose the momentum.
  - o Ashley – will include Mikayla's links to resources in Mental Health Wellness outreach.
- Wellness Wednesday (Science) – the initial plan was to host in-person event during exams. Now they are hoping to partner with mental health resources on campus (Jack.org for instance); as a result, the group is proposing a revision to the event. They are now looking to have a drive-by event where students can drive up for school supplies, food, etc. If this is not approved by the Dean, the group is looking for an extension to their application.
  - o Mikayla – look at an online platform such as Instagram where they can put up short messages.
  - o Ashley – in planning the wellness and mental health campaign, Ashley will follow up with "Girl Talk" and "Wellness Wednesday" to ensure the information is highlighted on the platform.

  Motion: The committee supports the drive-up event if the group receives approval from the Dean of Science. The committee supports an extension if the event is not approved.

  Approved.

## 8. New Business

Update on the services available to students this semester:

Ryan provided a brief update:

- All of the services normally held on campus continue, but in a virtual capacity such as counselling, academic advising, etc.
- We are looking to create a robust program that has a wide variety of activities to support students virtually. As the fall semester will primarily be online, efforts will focus on activities and supports that build communities online, particularly for our incoming students who won't have that support network.

Ashley provided the following:

- Anything the Wellness Outreach Office would normally do in person; they are developing it for online. Ashley noted that they also actively promote other campus mental health activities and initiatives.
- Ashley provided an update on planned Wellness Outreach Office initiatives for the upcoming academic year.

Mohsan provided the following update:

- Virtual and tele-counselling has been happening. Up until this point, Health Services has been open with reduced hours to accommodate students living in residence. The Student Counselling Centre and Health Services average approximately 100 appointments per week. Health Services is working with an off-campus partner to offer a tele-medicine video service.
- Student Counselling Services has set up two counselling groups for Black students starting July 29th.
- In the fall, Counselling Services will be offering online groups to support the creation of community for students.

Regarding the My Student Support Program (MySSP)

- Ashley described MySSP for the group -- 24/7 talk and text for free confidential counselling. There are also articles within the app about some of the key issues that students are dealing with.
- Mohsan added that MySSP is offering an anxiety psychoeducational group. Also, Mohsan indicated that he signed a joint statement with colleagues in Ontario asking for more support specifically for Black students.
- Anyone who had follow up questions were asked to connect with Ashley and Mohsan directly.

9. **Next Meeting**

The next meeting will take place in the fall semester sometime in October or November.

Before closing:
- Ryan – thanked Lynette and Dr. Pfaff for their excellent work as Co-Chairs of the Student Mental Health Strategy Implementation Committee.
- Ashley – extended a special thank you to Jenessa for all the work she has done on this initiative

Motion: to adjourn
Approved.

**Action Items from Meeting:**
- Ryan will send email communication to committee members asking for nominations to co-chair the Implementation Committee. So far, Herman has been nominated.
- Over the next year, that the committee focus its efforts and work on supporting the implementation of the six recommendations that were identified as priorities during this discussion. These recommendations include: 9, 12,13, 19, 20 and 25.
- Review/consider updated Muslim Chaplaincy budget when provided.
- Book next meeting for Implementation Committee for late October, early November.