

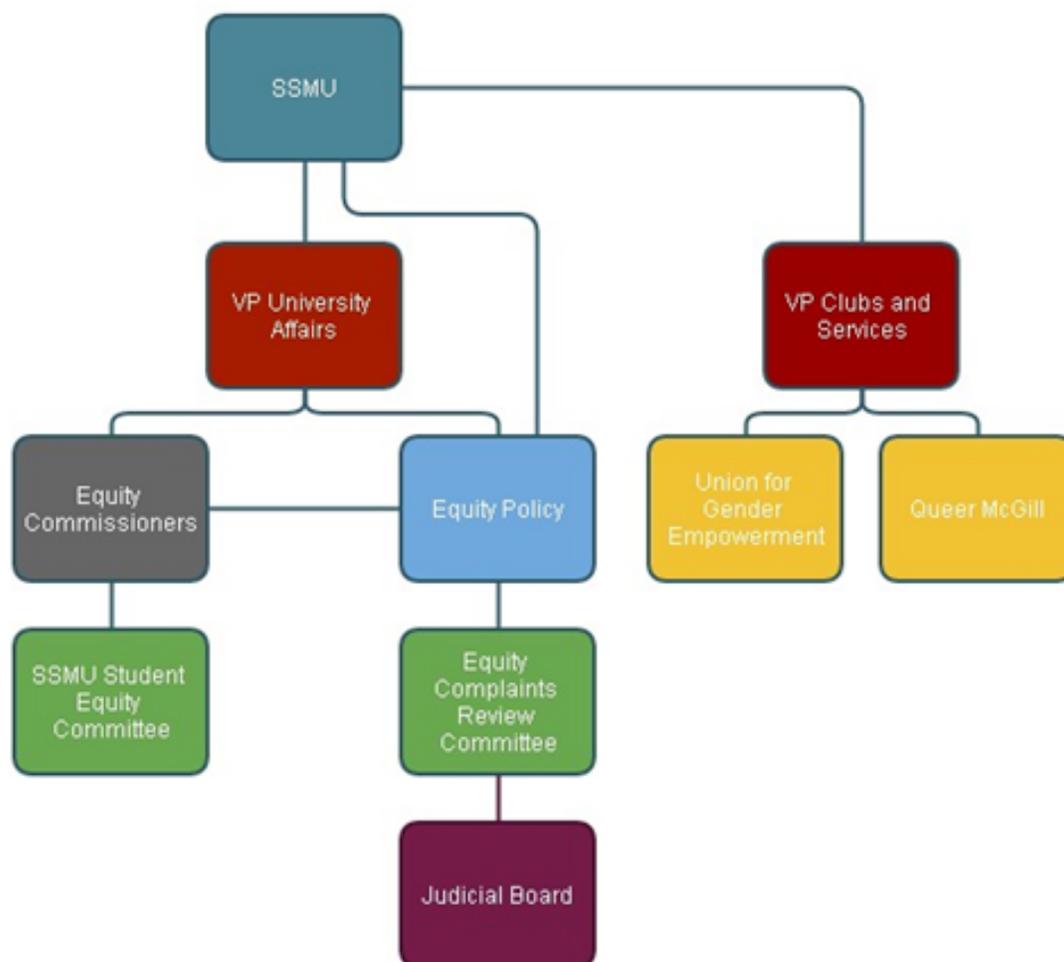
SSMU Equity Structure Report 2013-2014

Compiled By Chelsea Barnett for Shaina Agbayani and Justin Koh, Equity Commissioners, and Joey Shea, VP University Affairs

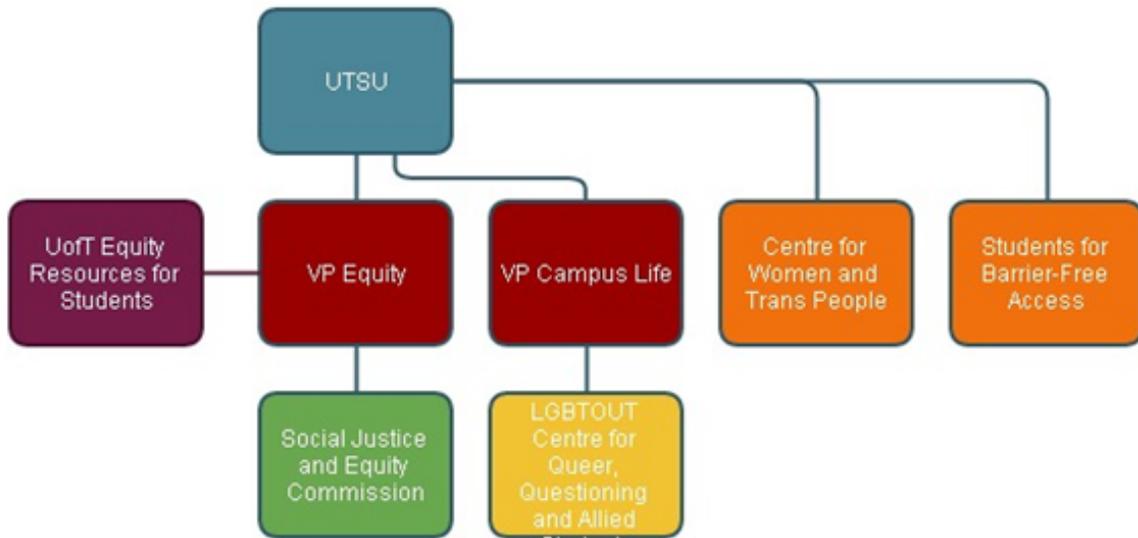
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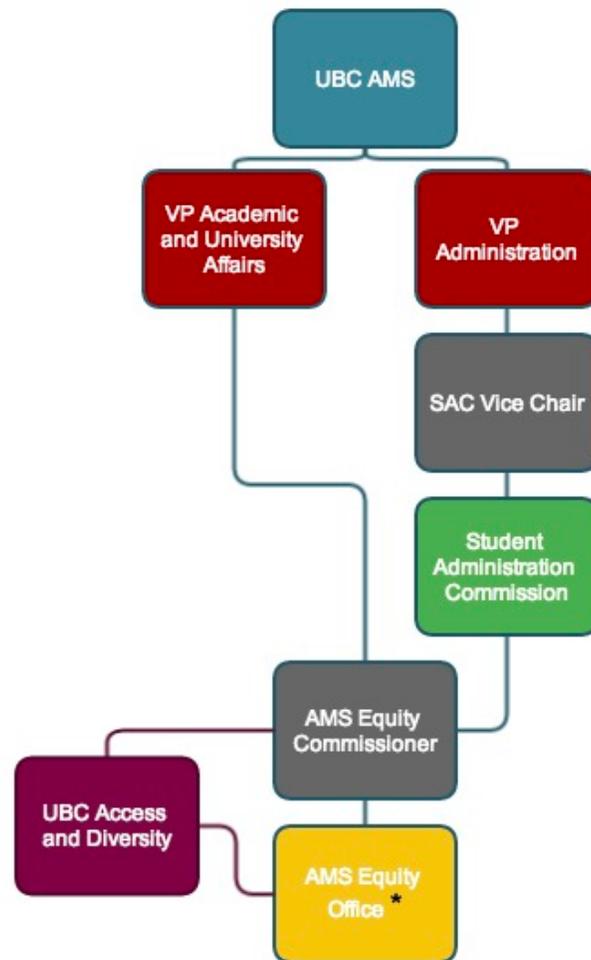
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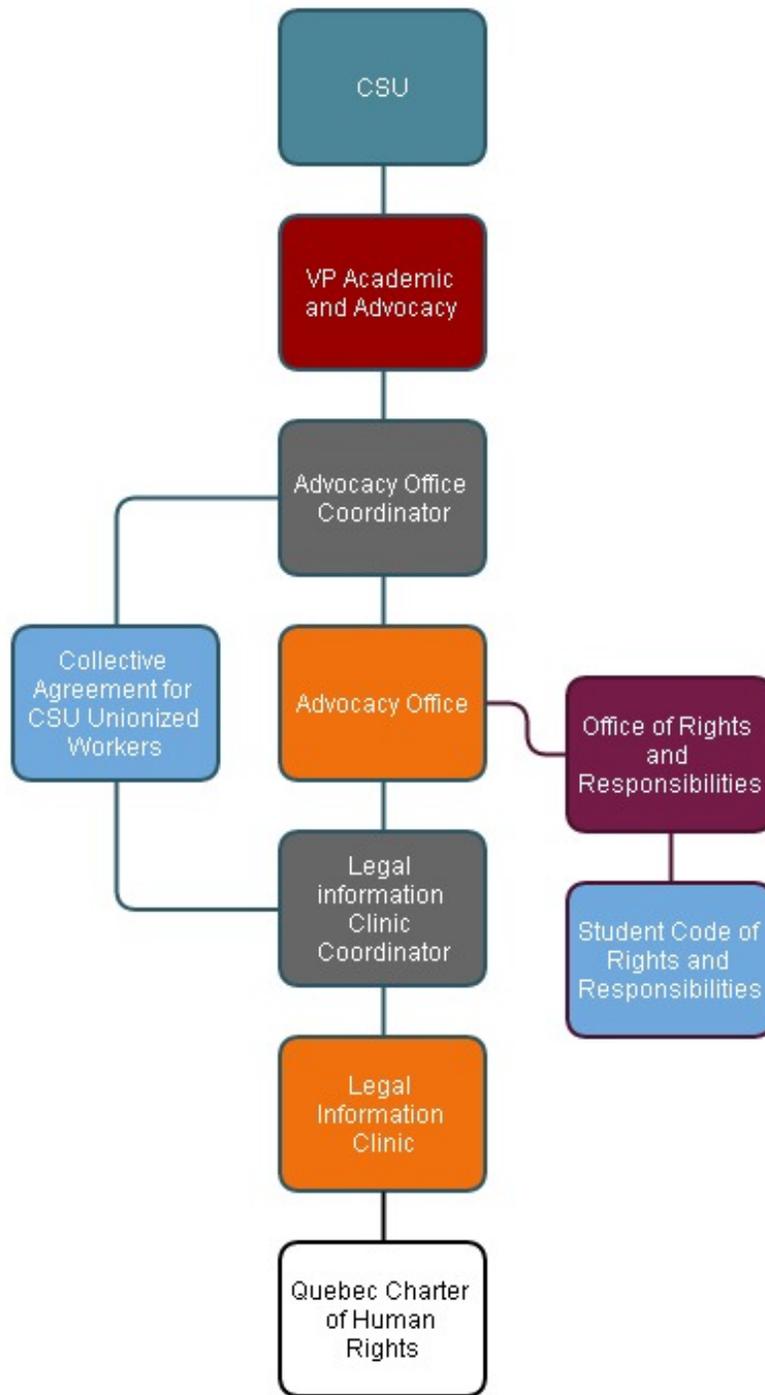
Student Society of McGill University (SSMU) Equity Structure



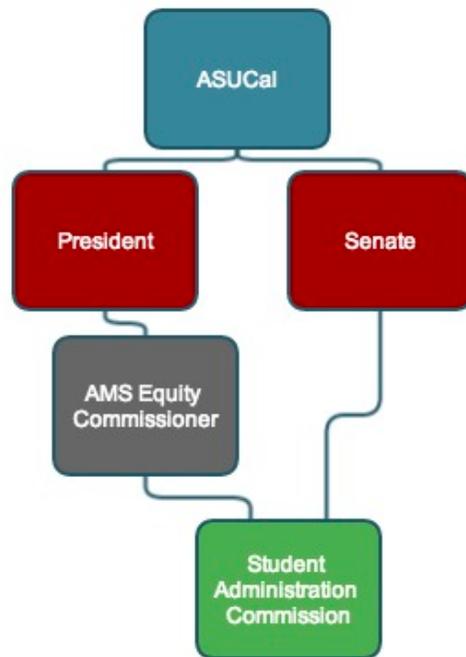
University of Toronto Students' Union (UTSU) Equity Structure



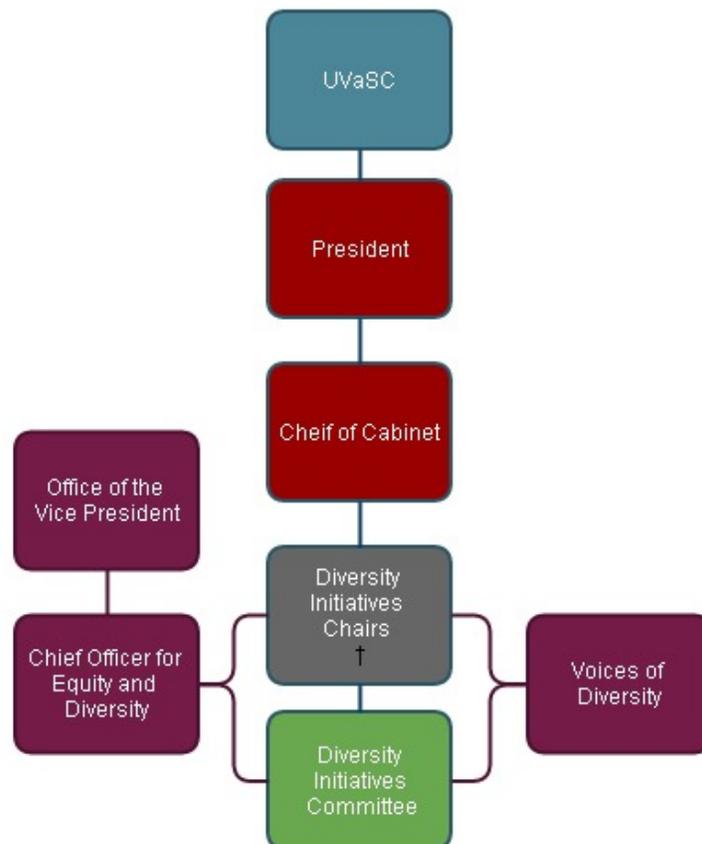
Alma Mater Society of University of British Columbia (AMS) Equity Structure



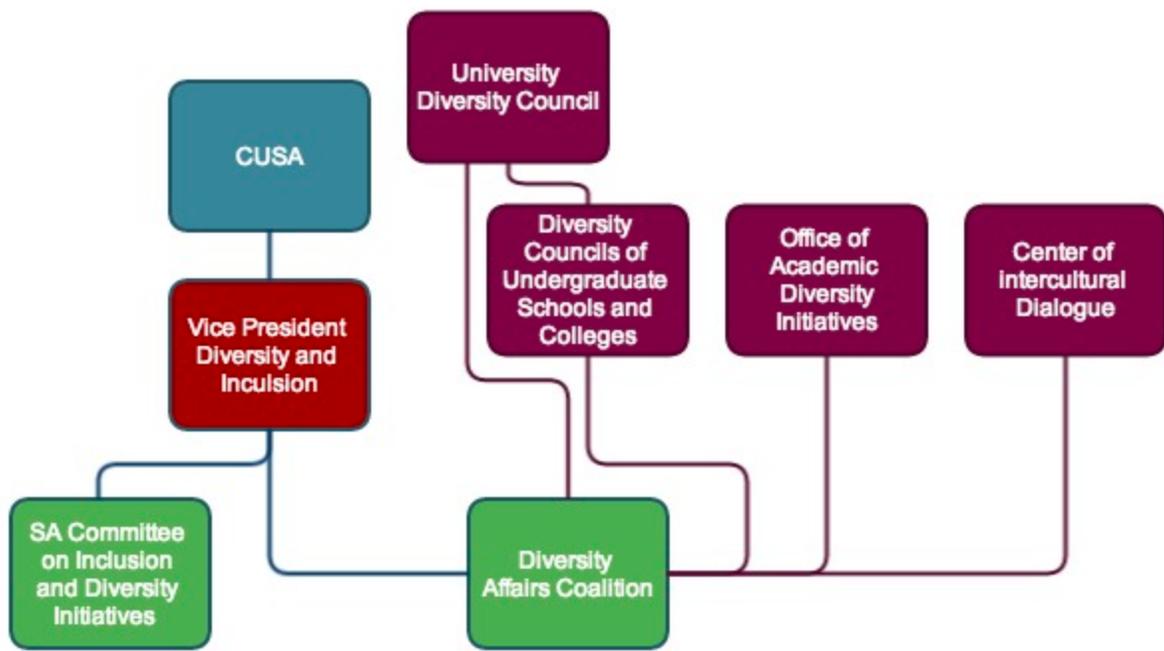
Concordia Student Union (CSU) Equity Structure



Association Students University of California (Berkeley) Equity Structure



University of Virginia Student Council Equity Structure



Cornell University Student Association Equity Structure

Interpretation Information



* The UBC AMS Equity Office is not a club itself, but rather a service specifically for AMS clubs
 † It is unclear if the UVa Diversity Initiatives Chairs are hired or appointed from within the committee or by the executive

Introduction

Above is a visual guide of seven universities' equity structure within its student run organization. The following report is a series of school profiles giving further details into this structure. Before proceeding, it is worth noting what was included in the measurement of equity structure. Five categories were evaluated to determine this structure; they are: (1) Overview including website url, history of equity, reason for selection and other necessary features; (2) Relationship with University at large, generally and in terms of equity; (3) Employed positions and committees/councils; (4) Programming including policy, outreach and other; and (5) Types of equity work including information related to clubs and equity. What was not included was any information obtained that could be related to equity, but did not fall within the initiatives specifically taken up within the equity structure. For example, as Western privilege creates a hierarchy that prevents equality on a global level, lobbying for universities to ensure their overseas investments are ethical can be considered a matter of equity, however if this is not an initiative taken up within the equity portfolio, specifically to promote equity for the students, but is rather a charitable/activist initiative coming from another office, it would be omitted. The report concludes by noting some notable features of other schools in the form of suggestions for SSMU; this is not a comprehensive list of all interesting and unique initiatives taken up by these other schools, so it is worth actively comparing to the SSMU profile while reading.

A Note on Language

While the Student Society of McGill University and this report uses 'equity', and it is my evaluation that this term is the most fitting, many schools use alternate terminology. These terms included 'advocacy', 'diversity', 'inclusion' and 'social justice'. Although these words have the same sentiment, it is my recommendation that SSMU continues to use equity as it has connotations of restorative justice that the others do not and seems to imply a focus on the community the student run organization serves. Equity was at times confused with financial equity, which lead to the use of the term 'social equity' in some correspondence.

Statement of Problem

SSMU has commissioned a report to evaluate its equity practices comparatively to other schools of a similar nature.

Research Questions

1. Is SSMU's structure of Equity formally operationalized under the portfolio of one executive (VP University Affairs), with two commissioners paid for 225 hours a year, supported by an Equity Committee effective in optimally promoting a culture of equity at McGill?
2. How do other undergraduate student societies operate to institutionalized equity-building cultures at their universities? What is their programming? What are their benchmarks of progress? How do these compare to that of SSMU?
3. Ultimately, how effective is SSMU, compared to other Universities in institutionalizing equity-promoting culture at McGill?

Significance of Problem

In recognizing a history of inequality, social equity practices are necessary to move towards equality and provide avenues for addressing times in which equality is infringed upon. Equity recognizes that identities that have been historically marginalized require different and greater support services to achieve equality than those who have been historically privileged.

Description of Research Design and Procedures Used

Six schools were selected to evaluate and compare to SSMU in terms of equity. Each school was selected because of a specific property that resembled that of McGill; in cases in which there were multiple schools that fit the given requirement, a preliminary overview of the schools were done, and the school that was selected appeared to have the strongest equity practices based on this evaluation.

For each school selected, the executive responsible for equity practices was identified and contacted. The following questions were asked:

1. What is the relationship between your student union and the university, generally and specifically in terms of equity?
2. What is the history of equity at your student union?
3. Who is in charge of equity within your student union (positions/committees/etc)? Are these positions employed (paid)? What is the hierarchy of these positions (who is the supervisor of the positions)?
4. What sorts of programming do you do in terms of equity? Is there an equity policy? Is there equity outreach (activities/workshops/conferences/etc)?
 - a. What are your current initiatives this year?
5. What do you consider to be your benchmarks of progress in terms of equity?
6. What are the types of equity you are engaged in (gender/race/sexuality/ability/etc)?
7. Are there clubs under the student society involved in this equity work?

This is where the biggest failure of the study arose, although multiple followups were administered, executives were reluctant to participate in the research. This was likely not because of an intentional lack of transparency, but rather because of a lack of time to dedicated to initiatives outside of their school's interests. Therefore, the report is not as complete as desired, and much of the information is compiled from online sources obtained from database searches using search terms as listed in the language section. Readers can assume this to be the case unless otherwise noted.

School Profiles

McGill University: Student Society of McGill University (SSMU)

Overview

As compiled for SSMU, it is this information that should be used as a baseline in interpreting the following school profiles. Information was compiled from email communication with one of the SSMU Equity Commissioners, Shaina Agbayani, and from the SSMU Equity Policy.

Website: <http://ssmu.mcgill.ca/representation/ssmu-policies/ssmu-equity/>

History of Equity

SSMU has a well documented history of equity. Growth and consideration of equity has been appropriately reactionary to the civil rights movements of the past 40 years. Notable developments in SSMU's equity practices include: SSMU defines itself as anti-oppressive in 1989 ; Equity Commissioner position created as a reaction to the second rejection of the creation of VP Equity in 1996-1997; major revisions of the Equity Policy have occurred since 2005; the current version of the Equity Policy passed in 2012.

Relationship with University at Large

SSMU and McGill University are distinct entities. As students at McGill, members of the SSMU have access to equity practices put in place by McGill including five subcommittees on Women, Race and Ethnicity, First People, Queer People, and People with Disabilities; the Policy on Harassment; the Social Equity and Diversity Education Office; the Principle's 2009 Taskforce on Diversity, Excellence and Community Engagement. For SSMU specific matters, members have access to a separate protocol handled by SSMU internally and governed by the SSMU Equity Policy.

Employed Positions and Committees/Councils

Two Equity Commissioners are employed by SSMU. This position began in 2009 as an unpaid volunteer position, before becoming one stipended position. The stipend position became a salary position which then evolved from one salaried position to two salaried positions at 150 hours each. In 2012-2013, the position became what it is now which involved a paid hour increase to 225 hours over the school year. Commissioners are paid \$13.65/hour. The Commissioners direct a volunteer Equity Committee of 8-12 people. The salaried executive position of Vice President University Affairs oversees the entire portfolio of equity.

Programing

Policy

There is an independent Equity Policy for SSMU that can be found here:

<http://ssmu.mcgill.ca/wp-content/uploads/2010/12/SSMU-Equity-Policy-New.pdf>. Please see the accompanying report on Equity Policy for further information. The equity complaints process, as outlined in the policy, is implemented by the Commissioners.

Outreach

Outreach initiatives have included a film series (2012-2013 topic: Islamophobia in collaboration with the Muslims Students Association), an annual research conference (2011-2012 topic: equity and media; 2012-2013 topic: equity and space; forthcoming 2013-2014 topic: equity and health), educational workshops (2012-2013 topics: feminism and socioeconomic class). Equity-related training and consultation can be provided to other organizations on campus by request. 2013-2014 workshops have included: cultural appropriation, queer people of colour, a joint discussion with SEDE and IGSF to identify strategies to oppose the Charter; and plan to include: a health and equity workshop in addition to the conference. Other 2013-2014 plans include: developing an accessibility map, a collaboration with residences to add race component to Rez Project, and an awareness campaign for the equity fund to get independent equity projects funded for projects outside of the committee.

Other

Other initiatives include collaboration and consultation roles such as the monitoring of costumes for 4Floors Halloween Party, consultation for departmental equity initiatives (provided active support for the AUS, SUS, and EUS in developing equity portfolios), and attending/organizing collaborative Equity socials with SEDE and PGSS to familiarize equity organizations on campus. One Commissioner each year serves on the Joint Senate Board Committee on Equity, and the Equity Award Committee.

Benchmarks of Progress

- **Money** allocated to the internal operating budget and the committee members projects; please see accompanying report on Finance for further information about money allocation
- **Quantity and Quality** of projects (workshops, screenings, etc.)
- **Complaints** filed (how many, access to policy, restorative action)
- **Variety** of topics of education that we offer (race, sexuality, gender, ability, class)
- **Diversity** of committee members who are most affected by the systems of oppressions that the committee is trying to challenge

Types of Equity Work

The SSMU constitution expressly mentions personal characteristic including but not limited to “race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, gender identification, age, mental or physical disability, sexual orientation or social class”. The Equity Policy offers a more progressive, comprehensive, language sensitive list including but not limited to “women, trans* and gender non-conforming persons, indigenous persons, Métis, people of color, visible minorities, ethnic minorities, queer people, people with disabilities, people whose language is not that of dominant usage, persons without citizenship status, immigrants, refugees, people who do not conform to dominant size norms, or people from a disadvantaged socioeconomic status”. It is worth noting that this is the most inclusive and complete lists of all school evaluated.

Organizations (Clubs)

The Equity Policy expressly mentions Queer McGill, the Union for Gender Empowerment, the Black Students Network, the Sexual Assault Centre of McGill's Students' Society, Walksafe, and Drivesafe and explains that dozens more share the commitment to anti-discrimination. Collaborative initiatives have happened with The Union for Gender Empowerment, the Muslim Students Association, and Queer McGill.

University of Toronto (UofT): University of Toronto Students' Union (UTSU)

Overview

Website: <http://utsu.ca/section/1415>

A Note on Selection

The University of Toronto was selected because its caliber, research intensiveness, and geographic location within Canada make it comparable to McGill University. It was also requested in the original report questions.

History of Equity

Within the documented UTSU historical highlights, several relate to equity, including: The Centre for Women and Trans People is established through funding by the Students' Union in 1986; a student-levy-based Wheelchair Accessibility Committee was created in 1989; Over 175 cultural, spiritual and leadership student groups are recognised and supported in 1998.

Relationship with University at Large

UTSU and UofT are distinct entities, however matters of Equity go through UofT Equity Resources for Students and the Statement on Equity, Diversity and Excellence.

Employed Positions and Committees/Councils

The salaried executive position of Vice President Equity oversees the portfolio of equity which includes the Social Justice and Equity Commission.

Programing

Policy

None. UTSU refers out to the UofT Statement on Equity, Diversity and Excellence.

Outreach

The annual event eXpression Against Oppression is run alongside other institutionalized Student Union Events. 2014 campaigns include: No Means No, Say What You Mean, and Mental Health Awareness.

Other

The Wheelchair Accessibility group has allocated upwards of \$3 million towards physical upgrade making campus more accessible. UTSU Equity Garden is a project that provides fresh, organic, locally grown produce to the UofT Food and Clothing Bank. An open letter was published on the UTSU website airing grievances with a professor that failed to comply with

university equity mandates. 2014 marked the launch of a multi-faith meditation space. Two task forces have been developed to support racialized students: on Campus Racism, and on the Needs of Muslim Students. A focus on Aboriginal Student needs is an upcoming initiative.

Benchmarks of Progress

Information not available.

Types of Equity Work

The VP Equity is responsible for “ableism, ageism, classism, racism, sexism, queerphobia, transphobia, islamophobia, anti-semitism or any other form of oppression”.

Organizations (Clubs)

There are two fee levy groups related to equity, the Centre for Women and Trans People, and Students of Barrier-free Access (formerly the Wheelchair Accessibility Committee). All clubs are required to “uphold the Canadian Human Rights Code”.

University of British Columbia (UBC): Alma Mater Society (AMS)

Overview

Website: <http://www.ams.ubc.ca/clubs/resources/ubc-equity-office/>

A Note on Selection

UBC was selected because it is the only other U21 research school in Canada.

History of Equity

No events related to equity are included in the AMS timeline, however the 1986 event “Bowling to protests, the Engineers replace their annual Lady Godiva ride with a mock funeral procession, but then stage a strip show in the Hebb Theatre. (The rides subsequently resumed for a few more years, but were discontinued after 1989.)” is listed - notable due to its sexist undertones.

Relationship with University at Large

AMS and UBC are distinct entities, however matters (grievances, resource requests) of Equity go through UBC Access and Diversity.

Employed Positions and Committees/Councils

One Equity Commissioner, staff position, runs the Office of Diversity which falls under the portfolio of the salaried executive position of Vice President Academic and University Affairs. However, as the Office of Diversity is a resource for clubs, the salaried executive position of Vice President Administration and the Student Administrative Commission also help oversee it in its capacity as this resource. Further, there is a second paid staff member, the Mental Health Commissioner, whose roles is related to Equity but whose position is separated from it.

Programing

Policy

None.

Outreach

Key Project and Reports from the 2013-2014 VP Academic Office are largely unrelated to equity. OutWeek was an event hosted in February of 2013.

Other

The Equity Office initiatives are vague and listed as:

- Advance students, faculty, and staff's understanding of diversity and equity to bring about meaningful social change;
- Educate community members about their human rights and their responsibilities regarding the rights of others;
- Identify and ultimately eliminate any systemic barriers to equity that exist in our university policies and practices;
- Consult, educate, and, where appropriate, intervene when discrimination or harassment that violates human rights occurs on campus;
- Fund initiatives that enhance educational and employment diversity and equity at UBC;
- Monitor and report our progress in ensuring that everyone has equitable access to study and work opportunities; and
- Hold UBC accountable for its stated values of integrity, mutual respect, and equity.

Benchmarks of Progress

Information not available.

Types of Equity Work

Information undefined.

Organizations (Clubs)

As mentioned, the Equity Office functions largely as a resource for clubs.

Concordia University: Concordia Student Union (CSU)

Overview

Information was compiled from an in-person interview with Gene Morrow the VP Academic & Advocacy. This interview proved very useful, and Gene was very critically reflective of CSU's equity practices. During the original email exchange, it seemed less promising as the definition of equity had to be explained.

Website: none.

A Note on Selection

Concordia was selected because it is the other anglophone university in Montreal.

History of Equity

As the archives are inaccessible due to logistical problems, it is believed that there would be record that could more adequately answer this question. From executive memory, CSU used to have a women's caucus for gender issues in council (it was abolished only three years ago

because the gender category 'women' became limiting), and in the early 2000s there was an "anti-colonialist/anti-imperialist" project.

Relationship with University at Large

The CSU is an accredited student association, which is incorporated as non-profit by Quebec law. This legal statutes guaranteed certain rights, including the university's mandatory recognition of CSU's student representation; the ability to levy a fee (voted into bylaws and referenda); access to one room, one phone, one computer, and to communication with all members. CSU is legally autonomous, but has the right to appoint members to university committees. In terms of discrimination on campus it is nebulous as to the relationship between CSU and Concordia. The University Code of Rights and Responsibility covers discrimination (provision requires the act of discrimination to occur on campus, and to "impede work"). Because of CSU's autonomy, the university has tried to claim that acts occurring within the CSU offices are not subject to the university code. This is problematic because CSU does not have its own policy. The SU staff are unionized and their collective agreement includes a clause on discrimination, however this does not apply to executives, members of councils, members at large within the offices, and members of clubs (but clubs are covered by the university code). CSU uses its independence to focus on putting pressure on the university in terms of equity, for example lobbying for the Sexual Assault Resource Centre.

Employed Positions and Committees/Councils

There is no formal structures of equity within the governance of the union. Equity is informally viewed as a sustainability issue, or an advocacy issue and therefore falls under the portfolio of salaries executive positions of Vice President Sustainability and Vice President Academic and Advocacy, respectively. As overseen by the VP Advocacy, there is an Advocacy Office. This is run by one full-time staff member. The office has the responsibility of helping student use code of rights and responsibility (but cases are mostly related to student conduct, not discrimination). Out of the Advocacy Office, there is a Legal Info Clinic, which has access to a Legal Fund. If determined by the fund Coordinator (part-time staff) this fund can pay to have legal representation in court cases appealing to the Quebec Charter of Human Rights.

Programing

Policy

None. CSU refers out to the Concordia University Code of Rights and Responsibility (not always successfully as mentioned above).

Outreach

Annually, February is Black History Month and CSU organized some events, and March is a month dedicated to gender (historically Women's Month, but looking into breaking down gender binaries in future) - this includes speakers and workshops, and a gallery show (put on by Vice President Student Life). Most equity outreach initiatives are run by levy groups that function independently (except funding support) from CSU.

Other

During executive orientation, all executives receive a mandatory consent training.

Benchmarks of Progress

None established.

Types of Equity Work

CSU views equity as closely related to sustainability. This leads to a focus on access to anti-colonialist/anti-capitalist groceries (initiative largely run by levy groups), and a more broader inclusion of a consideration for social sustainability under the VP Sustainability portfolio.

Organizations (Clubs)

Notable fee levy groups are the Sexual Assault Resource Centre, and the Centre for Gender Advocacy (formerly the 2110 Centre). Clubs do not have an equity mandate.

University of California (UCal), Berkeley: Associated Students, University of California (ASUCal)

Overview

Website: none centralized.

A Note on Selection

The University of California Berkeley is reputable for its strong equity practices coming out of the Division of Student Affairs Social Justice and Diversity Resources. However, Berkeley's individual reputation does not seem to translate to the student government level.

History of Equity

Information not available.

Relationship with University at Large

ASUCal and Berkeley are distinct entities. There also appears to be a relationship between the ASUCal Berkeley and the other UCal Universities and/or Student Run Organizations, however this relationship is unclear.

Employed Positions and Committees/Councils

Under the salaried executive position of President there is a hired staff member called the Campus Inclusion and Diversity Coordinator (Campus Climate Department), however this position is currently vacant. In this capacity, the Coordinator would oversee the Commission of Diversity Affairs. The members of this commission are appointed by the Senate.

Programing

Policy

None.

Outreach

Information not available.

Other

Descriptions of the commission and the coordinator position are vague. The President does highlight social justice as a priority of the ASUCal, but there is no information as to how this has manifested. ASUCal provides mandated support of Black History Month and Women's History Month on their website and with a plaque, and with a letter sent by email, respectively. There is a Diversity Affairs Scholarship. An ASUCal Senate Member acts as a representative at the Gender Equity Resource Centre.

Benchmarks of Progress

Information not available.

Types of Equity Work

Information not available.

Organizations (Clubs)

The Student's Advocate's Office offers support with grievances "unrelated to academics, financial aid matters, or student conduct proceedings". The Gender Equity Resource Centre, the Disabled Students Program, and the Hate and Bias Task Force function out of the Advocate's Office.

University of Virginia (UVa): University of Virginia Student Council (UVaSC)

Overview

Website: <http://www.uvastudentcouncil.com/about/cabinet/diversity-initiatives/>

A Note on Selection

UVa was selected because it is the American U21 research school with the strongest equity structure.

History of Equity

Information not available.

Relationship with University at Large

UVaSC and UVa are distinct entities, however matters of Equity go through either UVa's Voices of Diversity, or the Chief Officer of Equity and Diversity in the UVa Office of the Vice President, and members have access to the protection of the UVa Non-Discrimination Policy.

Employed Positions and Committees/Councils

Two Diversity Initiatives Chairs (it is unclear if these positions are paid) oversee the Committee of Diversity Affairs. Diversity Initiatives is in the portfolio of the salaried executive position of Chief of Cabinet which is in the Office of the President.

Programing

Policy

None. UVaSC refers out to the UVa Non-Discrimination Policy.

Outreach

Campaign to broaden the protection under the Non-Discrimination Policy to include protection for sexual orientation and to include gender identity; this included an official endorsement of Resolution SR 10-02. There was an awareness campaign about Accessibility in 2012-2013. Hosts Leaders Luncheons to foster relationships between various cultural, ethnic, and religious CIOs. Diversity Week 2013 included an interfaith dinner, a culture night, and a few other events. Other events include an Annual Commemoration of Enslaved Labourers, and a Slam Poetry night.

Other

Secured a donation for modifications for Handicapped off-ground housing and developed a database of existing accessible housing. Supporting the construction of a new memorial for Enslaved Labourers. (Note: this is a progressive project, with dated language use - "handicapped").

Benchmarks of Progress

Information not available.

Types of Equity Work

Issues pertaining to race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and religion.

Organizations (Clubs)

Information not available.

Cornell University: Student Assembly (CUSA)

Overview

Website: <http://assembly.cornell.edu/SACIDI/Home>

A Note on Selection

Cornell was selected because its has the strongest equity structure of the Ivy League schools.

History of Equity

In February 2012 the executive position of Vice President Diversity and Inclusion was created to begin in the 2012-2013 school year. A historical archive was not available.

Relationship with University at Large

CUSA and Cornell University are distinct entities. However, in terms of equity, the CUSA Diversity Affairs Coalition is specifically a body designed to collaborate the effort of the CUSA with other equity stakeholders within Cornell including the University Diversity Council, the Diversity Councils of Undergraduate Schools and Colleges, the Office of Academic Diversity Initiatives, and the Center for Intercultural Dialogue.

Employed Positions and Committees/Councils

The salaried executive positions of Vice President Diversity and Inclusion oversees the Committee on Inclusion and Diversity Initiatives, and the CUSA portion of the collaborative Diversity Affairs Coalition.

Programing

Policy

None.

Outreach

Campaigns have included: Gym passes for those who cannot afford them, recognizing Indigenous Day rather than Columbus Day, Getting Cornell to formally recognize that Cornell sits on the lands of the Cayuga peoples, and the “Know Your Words” campaign with first-year students—working with Residence Programs.

Other

Further information not available.

Benchmarks of Progress

Information not available.

Types of Equity Work

Various racial, ethnic, and cultural constituencies.

Organizations (Clubs)

The Diversity Affairs Coalition works with The Women’s Resource Center; the SA International Students; the SA Minority Group; the Center for Intercultural Dialogue; The African Latino Asian Native American Students Programming Board (ALANA) ; Joint Assemblies Multicultural Issues Committee (JAMIC); the The Asian & Asian American Center (A3C); the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Trans Resource Centre (LGBTRC); and Cornell Outdoor Education

A Note on Harvard

During the preliminary research into selecting an Ivy League school for comparison, it was uncovered that Harvard runs its Equity Practices out of its security office and has a designated police officer for the purposes of legally enforcing equity. This is not included as a recommendation (as often legal systems work more against than for those who are marginalized), but it is a noteworthy strategy.

Conclusion

SSMU's structure of Equity is comparatively very effective; it excels in all measures included in measuring equity structure in this report. However, it is slightly unclear as to whether SSMU's Equity structure appears so strong because it is, or because of the lack of participation by other universities surveyed, however is there is evidence (eg. the existence of a policy, documented history, etc.) to suggest that it is largely the former. Although this means there are few recommendations as a result of this report, this is to be celebrated. In terms of recommendations, some of the notable features of other schools have motivated these points:

- Unionization of student run organization staff, with collective bargaining agreement explicitly addressing issues of discrimination
- Closer connections between sustainability and equity
- A committee which is made up of one member of each campus equity stakeholder to promote collaborative efforts between student run organizations and the university
- Revisiting the creation of a Vice President position specifically for equity initiatives
- Developing a scholarship related to equity
- More “symbolic acts” coming from the equity office (eg. plaques, monuments, website and listserv endorsements, and published open letters)
- Greater focus on Indigenous Students' needs, and recognizing and changing the colonial institutions implicitly reinforced by the university