
Mental Health Commissioners' Legislative Report

Thursday, October 24, 2019

The following is a summary of the work conducted by the SSMU Mental Health Commissioners and the respective Mental Health Committees prior to October 24, 2019. Prepared for the Legislative Council of Student's Society of McGill University, by the SSMU Mental Health Commissioners, Olivia Frank and Dalya Kablawi.

1. Goals (2019/2020 Academic Year):

1a Advocacy Committee

I. *Update Policy*

The primary goal of the advocacy committee is to rewrite the 2020-2023 SSMU Mental Health Three Year Plan. This will serve as an opportunity to create long-term goals that mental health commissioners in the future can continue to work toward, thus serving to increase accountability and continuity between school years.

II. *Feedback Mechanism for the Hub*

Members will disseminate the anonymous Hub feedback form and then, gather and interpret student feedback in a comprehensive manner. The data from this form will be utilized by mental health commissioners in advisory meetings to support student-led improvements in the Hub and service provision.

1b Outreach Committee

I. *CKUT Speaker Series*

This initiative will aim to highlight students' lived experiences with mental health, mental illness and resources in and around McGill and Montreal. This series will also include interviews with important members of the mental health community at McGill, from peer supporters to professionals in any relevant fields to discuss anything from exam accommodations to self-advocacy. We are hoping to incorporate as many marginalized voices into this series to shed light on issues faced by those at the intersections of mental health.

II. *Campaigns on campus*

A common complaint amongst the student population is the limited access to information regarding existing mental health services on and

off campus. For this reason, we believe it is imperative to engage in informational and educational campaigns to disseminate important accessibility information and dispel the stigma associated with seeking help. Some ideas for awareness campaigns include but are not limited to: multimedia information and advocacy campaigns, regular submissions in campus newspapers. Emphasis will be placed on collaborations with other student groups to maximize reach and influence.

III. *Round-tables*

The goal is to bring all faculty mental health commissioners together and discuss specific needs of students in each faculty, and how to address the unrepresented faculties. We aim to bring representatives from every student-led mental health initiatives and associations (Jack.Org, Peer Support Centre, SACOMSS, Queer McGill, Nightline, Queer McGill, The Union for Gender Empowerment etc.) in order to facilitate communication and collaboration on like-minded issues.

1c General

I. *Active Engagement*

As commissioners, we are making a concerted effort to participate in the Hub's improvement in a meaningful way; through positions on the Healthy Living Annex Committee, the Student Wellness Hub Advisory Committee, the Student Health Insurance Committee etc.

II. *Communication and Accountability*

Continue meeting weekly with VP Student Life Billy Kawasaki. Provide exit reports at the end of each semester.

2. SSMU Mental Health Committees:

Seven members were recruited for both Advocacy and Outreach Committees. A preliminary meeting for both committees was held on Saturday, October 19. Overarching goals for the year were outlined and expectations for meetings and task management. Outreach representatives were chosen from each committee to act as VP Communications for mental health initiatives and general student liaisons. Moving forward, there will be one committee meeting every week (alternating Advocacy and Outreach) for a total of two meetings per month for each committee.

3. Mental Illness Awareness Speaker Series

Mental Illness Awareness Series comprised of three events from Monday, October 7 to Tuesday October 22.

3a Eating Disorder Educational Panel

This panel hosted a researcher from the Douglas Institute, a nutritionist specializing on mindful eating, and a political educator from SACOMSS. Topics discussed included new data and trends in the field of eating disorder research, the relationship between stress and food habits, and unique tools to navigate

3b Healthy Supporting Open Discussion

Often, those in support roles feel obligated to put others first, at the expense of their own mental health. This event aimed to change the culture prevalent amongst those in support roles and challenge the false equivalency between self-care and selfishness. The first event focused on self-care within the role of a peer supporter. The discussion group was led by two experienced volunteers from the Peer Support Center and Marie-Paul Deveau, the Local Wellness Advisor for varsity athletes.

3c (In)Accessibility

Our final event aimed to disseminate information regarding the changes to the provision of mental health services. We hosted Bianca Brunetti (Arts Local Wellness Advisor) and Cindi Owen (Residence Local Wellness Advisor) to hold a Q&A on the services provided, changes to accessibility and new procedures. Then, we held a discussion on barriers to care faced by students, and brainstorm some ways to mitigate these adverse effects.

4. Weekly check-in meetings with SSMU VP Student Life, Billy Kawasaki.

In our weekly meetings, we discuss our progress and keep each other accountable regarding our respective tasks. The meetings function as casual brainstorming sessions for new initiatives and help us troubleshoot any issues that arise in our plans.