U OF T’s RESPONSE TO 
IN THEIR OWN WORDS

The Council on Student Experience (2011)

Best practices & strategies for enhancing the student experience at the University of Toronto
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INTRODUCTION

CONTEXT

In 2009-10 the Council on Student Experience conducted a series of 38 focus groups, involving 367 students from first- and second-entry faculties on all three campuses. This initiative was designed to explore in depth aspects of the University of Toronto student experience that students themselves have identified as in need of attention. The project developed into the most comprehensive qualitative assessment of the University of Toronto student experience in recent years. The feedback elicited from these focus groups was categorized using the relevant NSSE benchmarks for effective educational practice, then published and distributed to the University community as In Their Own Words: Understanding the Undergraduate Student Experience at the University of Toronto (July, 2010).

This year, the Council on Student Experience (CSE) formed a series of Working Groups to respond to the major issues identified in In Their Own Words.

The present synthesis report, produced by the Office of the Vice-Provost, Students, was generated from reports by the Working Groups and feedback from the CSE. Thanks go to the Council on Student Experience members and others involved in the Working Groups for their concerted work on this project.

ABOUT THE WORKING GROUPS

Working Groups were established to explore issues around Co-Curricular Involvement and School Spirit, Mentorship, Orientation and Transition, Quality of Service, Student-Faculty Interaction and Communication. Specific and distinct mandates were developed for each Working Group with close reference to the themes of In their Own Words. Members of the Council, drawn from faculty, staff and administration across the University’s three campuses,

THE FOCUS GROUPS AT-A-GLANCE

Over a three-week period in March 2010, 38 focus groups took place involving 367 students from:

First Entry Divisions/Faculties
- UTM (71)
- UTSC (39)
- Faculty of Arts & Science (136)
  - Innis College
  - New College
  - St. Michael’s College
  - Trinity College
  - University College
  - Victoria College
  - Woodsworth College

First Entry Professional Faculties (60)
- Applied Science & Engineering
- Physical Education & Health
- Music

Second Entry Professional Faculties (61)
- Law
- Medicine
- Nursing
- Pharmacy
were approached to serve on these small, goal-oriented groups and further members were seconded from relevant divisions and departments as required. Thus the Working Groups were not comprised exclusively of Council members, but included interested stakeholders from various related University divisions: Student Life, the Division of University Advancement, Facilities and Services, Admissions and Awards, and many more. In all cases, consultation with individuals and units outside of the Council was undertaken and feedback reflected in the discussions and recommendations that follow. The groups met several times during the year, reporting on progress to the Council during the 2010-11 cycle of meetings. The Chairs of the groups were responsible for providing a written report to the Chair of the Council, the Vice-Provost, Students.

The group on Communication was comprised of the Chairs of each of the Working Groups, as well as additional staff from the Office of the Vice-Provost, Students, Student Life, UTM and UTSC. The aim of this Working Group was to summarize and combine the overarching work regarding key messages and communications strategies developed by each of the other Working Groups. Communication from the University to its students is a challenge identified by both students and staff. The section on communications thus concludes this synthesis report. Appendix B contains the Mandates for each Working Group.

OTHER INFORMATION

The In Their Own Words report is available online at: www.viceprovoststudents.utoronto.ca/intheirownwords.

Questions or comments about this report should be directed to the Office of the Vice-Provost, Students at: vp.students@utoronto.ca.
CO-CURRICULAR INVOLVEMENT & SCHOOL SPIRIT

INTRODUCTION

The Working Group on Co-Curricular Involvement and School Spirit had a broad mandate, the core of which was to explore structural mechanisms aimed at increasing student engagement outside of the classroom and encouraging students to feel more connected to their university community. In Their Own Words drew attention to the fact that many students at U of T feel pride in the institution, but highlighted that pride is something different from school spirit or identification with the institution and a feeling of belonging.

The Working Group recommended two significant initiatives: (1) providing common blocks of free time for students, and (2) the development of a co-curricular record. Both would require a considerable base of support if they are to be implemented.

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The terms of reference for the mandate included:

Investigating the feasibility of scheduling a common block of “co-curricular” time when no classes are held on each campus

There could be significant advantages to co-curricular involvement were a common time slot available when a large number of students are already on campus (ideally during the hours of 9-5 on Monday-Thursday), and it would still send a powerful message that their experience outside the classroom is important enough to be scheduled. Additionally, once campus groups and clubs become aware that common blocks of time are available, it seems likely that they would work to maximize on-campus activities and events during this period.

The difficulty with providing a common spare block of time (especially on the St. George campus) would be to find enough space to service all classes that were removed from this time, especially if it were a two-hour period during the day on Monday-Thursday (the Faculty of Applied Science and Engineering currently has a program called Frosh Fridays, where first-year students have a block of free time during the lunch hour on Fridays, though events hosted by...
the Faculty during this specific period only draw between 5 and 6%). These time slots are already crowded with 3300 lecture sections, plus practical and tutorial sections, encompassing 175,000 enrolments (for further breakdown of class enrolment by time across the span of the week, please see Appendix C). From a space perspective, moving all classes from one of these times to other periods would be impossible. The Working Group suggested an alternative.

A “free time by request” model already exists at U of T, and has the potential to be expanded. Students in First Year Learning Community (FLC) programs are requested to keep a particular time free in order for FLC-related activities to be scheduled. An adaptation of this model could be extended throughout the faculties and major disciplines across the three campuses. Generally speaking, co-curricular offerings are available at the end of the day, Monday through Thursday. It might be worthwhile to encourage co-curricular programming during “class” time, and actively work to attract students to prioritize their engagement in a co-curricular activity by making explicit the benefits of their doing so.

Recommendations:

That a pilot project be undertaken with one section of students (for example, those Arts & Science students in the humanities), where no classes in their discipline are held during a specific block of time, and where they are additionally requested by the Faculty to keep the time slot open.

Enlisting Next Generation Student Information Services (NGSIS) to determine the feasibility of developing a co-curricular record.

The University of Toronto is different in degree from other Canadian universities that have implemented tracking and authenticating students’ involvement in co-curricular and extra-curricular activities. U of T is larger, includes more academic units, is more multi-cultural, more research-intensive, and has a large commuter student base. Within the University, our students have access to 800 student organizations and an annual cycle of Student Life programming spanning life and learning skills, leadership training and career development. By some reports, almost one quarter of our undergraduate student population takes on eight hours or more of part-time employment while studying, and a great many students also engage in a substantial amount of volunteer work off-campus. Over 2000 undergraduates fill work-study positions every year and a sizeable number take part in research and other experiential learning.

A robust co-curricular record (CCR) has the ability to prioritize the importance of co-curricular involvement at U of T.
A robust co-curricular record (CCR) has the ability to prioritize the importance of co-curricular involvement at U of T; has the capacity to recognize, celebrate and make sense of co-curricular experiences, helping students relate to, reflect on, and learn from co-curricular involvement. The record of co-curricular experiences should be a useful reference in a student’s community, workplace, scholarly, professional and personal life.

The Working Group was provided with the blueprint of the Student Success Plan (SSP) – an initiative underway in the Division of Student Life (St. George campus) to provide students with a guide connecting their co-curricular participation to their Program of Study (POSt) and year. Such a program offers students advantages in the short term for building serviceable skills, for developing competencies that will help with academic progress, and for finding a future path. It was felt that the SSP would be an ideal complement to a co-curricular record. The Working Group also confirmed that the NGSIS team would welcome a proposal for a co-curricular record project as they develop the scope of NGSIS.

The issues raised in Appendix D were identified as critical for considering the feasibility of a CCR and its impact on the student experience at an institution like ours that is committed to accessibility and equity and to educating students for responsible and effective civic engagement. Three major issues surfaced in determining the feasibility of a CCR: how to define co-curricular activity and what would be noted on the CCR; how to provide incentives for students to engage in co-curricular learning and; ensuring a CCR meets U of T’s goals for accessibility and equity. Each issue is briefly outlined in the Appendix and is followed by questions for further inquiry.

Beyond the scope of the Working Group was an assessment of the impact a CCR would have on administrative time and on the investment in developing (or adapting), and maintaining the requisite e-tools. However, the group considered that a pilot project of a CCR within one college or faculty may be the appropriate first step towards an institution-wide CCR.

Can a CCR project at U of T account for the extensive, often self-generated, off-campus volunteer activity that our students engage in, not just in Toronto’s primary and secondary educational system and extensive hospital network, but throughout the city and in their communities?

Should experience and learning gained through employment on- or off-campus be included in a CCR?

Is experiential learning (for credit or not) similar enough to co-curricular activity to be included in a CCR?

- Appendix D

U of T’s Response to “In Their Own Words”
Recommendations:

That the University undertake a CCR study, aimed at addressing how to define co-curricular activity and what would be noted on the CCR; how to provide incentives for students to engage in co-curricular learning and; ensuring a CCR meets U of T’s goals for accessibility and equity (see Appendix D).

That, once the issues in the previous recommendation are resolved, the University undertake the creation of a CCR during the development of the NGSIS platform.

Identifying methods of reducing financial barriers to participation in co-curricular activities

One of the primary obstacles to co-curricular involvement seems to be students working off-campus, though the Working Group recognized that there is a limited capacity for the University to expand its work-study opportunities or the number of bursaries it provides to students. For a significant percentage of students, working off-campus will always be a necessity, and the Working Group discussed various ways to mitigate this need. These include: subsidizing a waiver for students in financial need to take part in co-curricular activities that cost money; encouraging student societies to use any surplus funding at year-end to subsidize co-curricular activities (rather than, for example, holding semi-formals or year-end celebrations); seeking philanthropic gifts directed to co-curricular involvement.

Recommendations:

That student societies be encouraged to use any surplus funding towards co-curricular activities.

That programs and bursaries facilitating co-curricular involvement be presented by DUA to prospective donors as appropriate.
Proposing non-monetary certificates or awards for student areas of involvement that are currently going unrecognized

The Working Group considered the value of creating a central co-curricular recognition event, in addition to those that currently take place within the divisions. This would not have to involve creating new processes of student merit review, but could simply be an invitation to the colleges, faculties, and departments to send their own student leaders to the event. Such an event would go beyond the annual Student Leaders Reception including a smaller, core group of students, and have notable award winners mentioned and recognized. It may also be desirable to create a system whereby students can nominate and vote for each other (similar to People’s Choice Awards) to help identify their peers whose work is currently going under-recognized. Two areas that the Working Group felt should also be highlighted were students involved in health and wellness initiatives, and those involved in environmental and sustainability efforts. It may also be valuable to have the colleges or faculties recognize those students who were runners-up for Cressy Awards, as well as those non-graduating students who might otherwise be recognized for a Cressy (Cressy Awards recognize only graduating students). As an example, the Faculty of Applied Science and Engineering currently asks students to complete an e-portfolio listing all their extra/co-curricular activities so that the Faculty is able to recognize them for a number of leadership/non-academic awards. Lastly, we should pursue, through NGSIS, the development of means to prompt students who qualify for awards but may be unaware of it.

Identifying key messages to communicate to students, staff and faculty regarding co-curricular involvement and school spirit.

School spirit involves an emotional connection to one’s educational institution and can take many forms. At its best, school spirit creates a positive learning environment during a student’s time at the university and a life-long connection once they graduate.
The University of Toronto has a very diverse student body with a large commuter population - factors which may prove challenging as we attempt to foster student identification with the university community. Spirit can develop through multiple associations: colleges, faculties, programs, student clubs, teammates, etc. Our goal would be to reflect a sense of the larger community while respecting the local affiliations (communities) that foster close relationships. Even in a University of our diversity and range, messaging must attempt to reflect and capture the essence of what it means to be a "U of T student". It must be sincere and resonate with students, faculty and staff. Success might be better achieved were we to establish one clear message.

**Recommendations:**

*That agreement be sought on an iconic image or message that resonates emotionally with students, staff and faculty across the university.*

*That the message be communicated early and consistently, from the offer of admission, during orientation week, in subsequent central and local communications through convocation.*

*That the message be linked to our U of T visual identity (colour, watermark, font, etc.) in a way that it can “live” alongside the more local allegiances. The goal is to develop an iconic image or message that evokes an emotional response to a positive experience.*
MENTORSHIP

INTRODUCTION

The Working Group on Mentorship was asked to explore the means by which the University of Toronto could expand the mentoring opportunities available to students and further develop existing programs.

In an effort to frame the discussions and subsequent recommendations, the first task of the Working Group was to develop a shared understanding of the definition of mentorship within the context of the University. Working Group members agreed that mentorship must be an intentional process of interaction between two or more individuals designed to foster growth and development and build community. Mentors may be students, staff, faculty or alumni who serve as guides, role-models and educators to the student(s) with whom they are matched.

Although the Working Group identified a number of specific recommendations, many of these recommendations are interconnected and relate to two clear themes that emerged throughout the Group’s discussions: a) the need for centralized support of mentorship programming across the University, and; b) the need for enhanced communication about the availability of opportunities to have a mentor and/or be a mentor.

Working Group members agreed that many of the recommendations described below could be addressed through the creation of a “mentorship hub” which could house a central clearinghouse of resources; develop and maintain an inventory of mentorship programs; support the development of new mentorship programming; coordinate central training; and facilitate communication among students, staff and faculty coordinating mentorship programs.
The terms of reference for the mandate included:

**Developing a set of best practices for the development and maintenance of mentorship programs at the University of Toronto, and; Investigating models of mentorship and making recommendations regarding their feasibility within the University of Toronto context**

To gain a deeper understanding of the programs already in place at the University as well as those at other comparable institutions, the Working Group determined that it was necessary to survey existing mentorship programs at the University of Toronto. An online survey was sent to faculty, staff, and student-led mentorship programs across the tri-campus community. In addition to creating an invaluable inventory of existing mentorship programs and models the survey also collected best practices that could be shared with the broader University of Toronto community.

The Working Group also explored models and best practices at comparable institutions across Canada. Programs at the other universities shared a number of similarities to program models already in place at the University of Toronto. However, many of these institutions have been able to successfully connect several decentralized programs across their campuses through a centralized clearinghouse of resources available to students, staff and faculty responsible for coordinating these programs.

Recognizing the diversity of needs across the University, the Working Group determined that the following list of best practices could provide a broad general framework that can be tailored to specific mentorship programs as appropriate.

Mentorship Programs at the University of Toronto should include:

- Clearly articulated program goals
- A defined administrative structure
- A reasonable threshold to entry for participants
- An intentional recruitment strategy for mentors and mentees based on program goals
- Defined criteria for the matching of mentors and mentees
- Clear expectations for both mentors and mentees, including time commitment, responsibilities and methods of communication
- Defined outcomes for both mentors and mentees
- Provision of training for mentors
- An orientation to the program for mentees
- A defined timeframe for the program
- An assessment plan

The Working Group discussed a variety of means by which the implementation of these best practices could be supported across the University. Two key areas of attention were (1) the ability to offer easy access to resources on mentorship to students, staff and faculty interested in starting new programs, and; (2) the provision of training to mentors.

Recommendations:

The establishment of a central training program for student mentors following a similar model to central Residence Life Staff Training on the St. George Campus, where core topics common to all programs are delivered centrally and consistently, and where program-specific training is delivered locally.

The establishment of an online central clearinghouse for resources related to best practices for the development and maintenance of mentorship programs.

The development of a guide describing various models of mentorship, including the resources required to implement a model and the anticipated program outcomes. This framework should be included in the online clearinghouse as a resource for staff, faculty and students who may be considering the development of a mentorship program.

Exploring opportunities to provide short-term, time-specific mentorship opportunities

The Working Group defined short-term, time-specific mentorship opportunities as programs lasting six weeks or less – often focused on key transition points in the student life cycle (e.g. transition into first year, graduation, etc.). Although many such programs currently exist at U of T, the Working Group discussed the further development of these programs as a means to enhance access to mentorship – while also creating more structured, longer-term opportunities for students. Group members felt that there was a particular opportunity to utilize online formats and various forms of social media for short-term programming.
Recommendations:

That mentoring be made available to students in a variety of formats (e.g. online, one-to-one, small group, etc.).

That the development of new mentorship programs be focused on key transition points in the student experience (e.g. transition into first year, transition to program of study, graduation, transition into graduate or professional school, etc.).

Identifying methods of offering equal access to mentoring across the University

After completing the external and internal reviews of mentorship programs and models, the Working Group discussed the importance of ensuring students are well informed about the availability of existing mentorship programs at the University. The Working Group identified the need for a central online resource that could be accessed by students looking for a mentor as well as students, staff, faculty and alumni interested in being a mentor. This single point of entry would simplify the process of searching for a mentor and volunteering to be a mentor.

It should be noted that due to the diversity of mentorship programs across the University, this online resource should not be used as a matching system. Mentor/mentee matching should be done at the local level in a manner that is consistent with the stated outcomes of the specific mentorship program. In addition, in order to make such a system feasible, a comprehensive inventory of mentorship programs at the University would need to be developed and maintained on an ongoing basis.

The Working Group noted that providing equal access to mentorship programs also involves ensuring that University of Toronto students, staff, faculty and alumni have the necessary resources and support when developing, implementing, and managing new mentorship programs.

Recommendations:

The establishment of an online resource where students interested in having a mentor or being a mentor can access information on available opportunities.

The development of a comprehensive inventory of the existing mentorship programs at the University and the identification of any gaps in the availability of mentoring opportunities.
Identifying key messages to be communicated to students, staff and faculty regarding mentorship

The Working Group discussed the importance of effective communication within successful mentorship models and the various methods that might be most effective at the University of Toronto. Working Group members emphasized the importance of centralized resources and support as well as user-friendly websites for students, staff, faculty and alumni.

Another important aspect of successful mentorship programs involved strong support from senior administrators, as well as a University-wide culture of mentorship and support for all students.

Recommendations:

*The establishment of a mentoring culture at the University with a clearly articulated institutional commitment.*

*The establishment of a mentorship network to encourage new initiatives and facilitate communication among staff, faculty and students coordinating mentorship programs across the University.*

*The exploration of opportunities to partner with the Organizational Development & Learning Centre (ODLC) and Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation (CTSI) to provide staff and faculty with training related to best practices in mentoring.*
INTRODUCTION

The Working Group on Orientation and Transition was tasked with reviewing current orientation practices across the University, developing a set of shared principles for Orientation programming in the first-entry undergraduate divisions and exploring opportunities to ease students’ academic transition. Students participate in orientation to make friends, familiarize themselves with the campus and feel prepared for entering their first year of university. The Working Group felt there was value in having common goals and principles for orientation across the University’s diverse divisions, but recognized that students also need to be able to shape their own orientation experience. For a detailed list of recommendations and ideas for how to enhance orientation programming, please see Appendix E. Appendix F provides a timetable for student outcomes and objectives and their corresponding orientation and transition activities.

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The terms of reference for the mandate included:

Developing a set of shared principles for Orientation programming in the first-entry undergraduate divisions

Orientation is a shared responsibility between faculty, staff and students. The goal of orientation is to create a sense of belonging while welcoming the wide variety of students arriving on our campus. The Working Group met with a number of experienced student orientation coordinators to learn about the goals of orientation from the students’ perspective. The coordinators emphasized that incoming students want to feel welcome in the university community, and to know that it is a safe and supportive space. They felt it was important to examine barriers to participation, whether that was related to language, strenuous physical activities, types of programming (e.g. heterosexist), financial and family considerations, age, and level of extroversion.

Coordinators agreed that the transition from orientation to classes is challenging for some students. They recommended increasing collaboration with course unions, having events during
the first week of classes, and introducing college student councils, programs, and a range of involvement activities. “Speed meetings” based on program, or being matched with upper year students in the same program, were also suggested. Regarding academic support, coordinators suggested a focus on what students need to know for their first few weeks of class. Information should be selective in order to avoid overload.

Shared principles identified by orientation coordinators:

- Orientation should emphasize U of T identity as well as divisional identities
- Inclusivity should be at the forefront of any orientation activities
- Risk management, harm reduction and safety are paramount
- Attention must be paid to ensuring commuter students make campus connections
- Student leaders should have an understanding of their power and influence, and of the vulnerability of first year students
- Orientation should be about the welcome, not about competition, and it should actively create positive interactions among students

The coordinators also stressed that faculty members should be involved during orientation week. Strong messaging to faculty about the value of their involvement in orientation would be helpful, as would creating and communicating opportunities for faculty involvement. It may be valuable to staff trying to link students and faculty if there were a directory of faculty members who may be available to speak to student groups or take part in orientation.

The Working Group saw potential for greater involvement from these student coordinators beyond orientation week; they are already a tremendous resource trained by the University, and by working with them we can increase their effectiveness. In order to do this well, we need to increase the communication between student coordinators and administrative staff. Staff support for orientation and transition activities is uneven across divisions and faculties; encouraging divisions to commit to similar levels of staff support would be valuable.

**Suggestions for Improving Orientation and Transition to U of T**

- **Build a university-wide platform for greater sharing of tools and videos used by colleges and academic divisions (such as YouTube videos on how to select courses)**
- **Provide campus tours grouped by academic programs, departments and class schedules (so students know where they’re going during the first week)**
- **Staff support levels at different divisions for student orientation ideally should be consistent**
  - Appendix D
- **U of T’s Response to “In Their Own Words”**
Recommendations:

That where feasible financial support for student participation in orientation be enhanced through bursaries.

That staff support levels across divisions be consistent for student orientation.

That divisions be encouraged to provide shorter “alternative” orientation events if they are not doing so already, for students who are unable to commit to a full week of activities.

That faculty involvement in orientation activities be encouraged.

Exploring opportunities to integrate orientation and transition programming at the course level, and;
Identifying means of integrating additional information on academic skills into orientation programming

During orientation, it would be valuable for students to identify peers who are enrolled in similar academic programs. This could be achieved with, for example, colour-coded lanyards (e.g. green for Life Sciences, etc.). Such identification would assist students in meeting others who will likely be in their classes, and help to form communities even before classes have begun.

Grouping students during orientation into major academic fields should be linked with an increase in the academic skills preparation offered by the University. Academic skills preparation should be expanded beyond the standard orientation period. First year students come to the University of Toronto from a wide variety of academic backgrounds and preparation. To take advantage of the best practices that are currently used in academic division and colleges, a full inventory of the various workshops and seminars needs to be undertaken and then shared.

The first weeks of September are an intense period for new students and it is not realistic to expect them to retain all the information provided during orientation. The University could take
better advantage of the summer period (prior to the start of classes) to introduce topics of academic readiness and preparation. Both in-person and on-line delivery of such workshops needs to be developed. For in-person workshops, we should take advantage of existing platforms (such as college days) to deliver standard workshops and to have staff members available to do so (particularly during evenings and weekends).

In addition to working with new students much earlier with pre-orientation workshops and seminars, we should also capitalize on the post-orientation period. Once new students have had the opportunity to experience classes for a few weeks, a series of check-in workshops can help to identify those students who may be struggling in the early stages. The Working Group feels strongly that any academic skills program must have the support of and assistance from faculty members as students generally have a high level of respect for faculty members. It may be valuable to provide faculty members with an academic skills “toolkit”, including information such as key resources for students who are struggling and recommendations on how to refer students to appropriate resources. These resources could be announced on digital slides as is currently being done for ‘Frosh Friday’ activities in large first-year Engineering classes.

Another opportunity to work with faculty members is to ask those teaching large first-year classes to provide key information to students; this could be accomplished by making digital slides available to faculty members and asking them to display the information before classes. The Working Group recommends a pilot project (likely focused on courses such as PSY100, ECO100 and BIO150) with two slides for the fall term and two slides for the winter term to be made available. The information on the slides should speak to students, using their language and perspectives and the information should be concise and be available just in time. For example, test preparation information should be displayed before the first set of mid-terms, and information about how to select a POS can be made near the end of the first year.

Faculty members are key partners in supporting students’ skill development during the orientation period. The Working Group felt that New Faculty Orientation is an opportunity to engage new faculty members and helps to promote awareness of the full range of academic support available to students.
Recommendations:

The creation of an inventory of the different academic pre-arrival sessions across the University.

The development of a “toolkit” for faculty members on how to support student success.

The development of a set of just-in-time information digital slides for faculty members to display during the minutes before classes begin.

Investigating methods of expanding orientation and transition programming to continue throughout the first six weeks of the Fall term

The Working Group felt it would be valuable to develop a student ambassador program stemming from orientation week – self-identified students (and perhaps all orientation leaders) could receive training and some form of ambassador clothing (T-shirt, cap). Similar to the “Ask Me” campaign, when ambassadorial staff are wearing their identifier, they are making themselves available to help new students, particularly during the first few weeks of school. Student ambassadors could make brief classroom presentations on how to adjust to university and on various resources and services. It may also be worthwhile to hire students to maintain information booths at certain key locations.

Recommendation:

The development of a student ambassador program with the primary goal of assisting new students’ transition into their academic career.
Investigating the feasibility of providing additional programming to facilitate students’ transition to their program of study at the end of first year

The Working Group encouraged the development of an open house day hosted by each academic department during the winter term. First year students who are picking their POS will be invited to these events (with snacks, giveaways, etc.) as would faculty and department staff. Open house days would serve to demystify the process of picking a POS and encourage students to think of it as their home-base during their upper years. Additionally, registrars and departments could create “picking your POS” videos, which would walk students step-by-step through this sometimes daunting process. Further, instructors in second and third-year classes could be encouraged to have upper year students (particularly those who are mentors) invite first year students to their classes, to get a taste for them. These initiatives would help students heading into upper-year classes see that this is a positive, exciting process.

Recommendation:

The development of departmental open house days to assist students who are choosing their POS.
QUALITY OF SERVICE

INTRODUCTION

The mandate of the Working Group on Quality of Service was divided into three broad segments: Academic and Personal Support, Food, and Information Technology. In the case of Food and I.T., the mandate specified consultation with the relevant divisions and stakeholders. In the case of Academic and Personal Support, the Working Group divided itself into three subcommittees to approach what were seen as the dominant issues:

- intentional, pro-active advising for all students
- identification of students who may be in academic difficulty, at the earliest time in their academic career, to allow registrars to implement intervention strategies
- professional development for registrarial staff

The Working Group consulted with other offices and divisions, exploring quality of service opportunities with the T-Card Office; expediting OSAP processing; the implementation of uniform signage within buildings on the St. George campus with the Office of Space Management; and ever improving IT access with the CIO’s Office. As well, the Director of Ancillary Services provided regular updates around a comprehensive food card.

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS - ACADEMIC AND PERSONAL SUPPORT

The terms of reference for the mandate included:

Identifying opportunities for intentional, pro-active advising for all students

The Working Group (having among its members a number of college and faculty registrars) considered advising to be a critical success strategy. The group discussed the stages in a student’s academic transition in first year where intentional, pro-active advising would be of most value:

- Post-Admission Advising (September)
- Early Intervention Advising (November)
- Remedial Advising (January)
The group reflected on the limitation of staffing resources but recognized that a variety of approaches could be implemented that would include: small group sessions, online information sessions (that would walk students through subject POSs, course enrolment, fees and OSAP, for example), online real-time chat sessions with trained staff and upper-year students, and brief “touch base” appointments. Another way to build capacity would be to partner registrarial staff with resources from other areas, such as Student Life departments or Writing Centres. The Working Group also considered advising as an important role for front-line staff and recommended increased training to support this. For example, front line staff could coordinate and host online chat sessions or schedule drop-in times that would meet student needs.

Post-Admission Advising: While the majority of U of T students arrive with a strong academic record, there are those whose previous record suggests they are at risk of experiencing academic stress. These include: students whose secondary school marks decreased significantly from midterm to final grades, those admitted on probation, those admitted on appeal, and identified ESL students.

Early Intervention Advising: Despite a student’s preparedness for academic success, his or her first experience with a graded assignment or test may be disappointing. This gap between expectation and outcome presents another opportunity where students would likely be receptive to an invitation to meet with an advisor or participate in success strategy interventions. The traditional period for such advising falls into the November timeframe when midterm assignments and tests are in progress.

Remedial Advising: In January, with the release of first term grades, there are clear indicators for students who are experiencing academic challenges. In the Faculty of Applied Science and Engineering, remedial advising meetings are conducted with students in November and March when the Faculty has access to mid-term results. The Faculty of Arts and Science has also implemented programs whereby students are contacted and invited to meet with an advisor. The University should explore opportunities across all units to implement such programs and an opportunity for divisional registrars to meet with the NGSIS team to develop appropriate “alert” reports should be explored.
Recommendations:

That the University develop reports and provide systems access to divisional registrars.

1. A variety of admissions reports from Next Generation Student Information Services (NGSIS) should be made available to registrars, to help them identify vulnerable students;

2. Access to data that identifies students who have failed courses, achieved grades of “D”, and who have withdrawn from required courses should be provided as early as it is available;

3. The University should consider providing access to Blackboard to divisional registrars, allowing them to access grade data at the earliest opportunity so that they can initiate early intervention strategies.

That those students who are identified as “at-risk” be contacted by a registrarial staff member who then becomes that student’s advisor. These meetings should be considered an opportunity to discuss success strategies rather than as remedial interventions. Students can then engage in “touch base” opportunities with their advisor until they connect to resources. Furthermore:

That partnerships with non-registrarial areas such as Student Life departments and Writing Centres be explored.
Identifying methods of eliminating long line-ups and wait-times for student support services

The Working Group identified two key transactional processes that contribute to excessive staff demands, and hence wait-times, in registrarial offices: the late withdrawal period and OSAP administration. In addition, the group identified the T-Card Office as an opportunity which could be used more strategically.

Late withdrawal periods: Due to the small window of opportunity available to students, the late withdrawal period was identified by registrars as being one of the primary periods of wait-time in colleges and faculties.

Recommendation:

That registrars’ offices (where this does not already happen) consider: dedicated drop-in appointments and the reallocation of staff resources to meet the priority demands during this time.

OSAP Wait Time: In a meeting with the University Registrar, it was noted by the Working Group that provincial advocacy efforts were underway to encourage electronic processing and direct deposit of OSAP payments. The earliest we may be see this implemented is Fall, 2012. The University of Toronto has volunteered to be a pilot institution for electronic coordination of OSAP.

Recommendation:

That the University continue to work alongside peer institutions in advocacy efforts for online OSAP processing.
**T-Card Office:** One area that is a required stop for all new students is the T-Card Office. A meeting was held to explore opportunities to leverage this mandatory visit with the Working Group’s desire to provide another touch point to connect with students.

The T-Card Office—while no longer experiencing significant wait-times for students—may nevertheless have significant potential for improving the overall quality of service to students. This consultation found that the T-Card could be mobile and therefore made available around the campus. Thus it could be brought to areas of high activity, or mobilized to focal points during periods of high demand, such as orientation week sites. Further, since every new student requires a T-Card regardless of faculty or college, it may be valuable to relocate the Office, temporarily or permanently, to other areas (Admissions, Koffler Student Services, etc.). Linking the T-Card Office more closely with strategic messaging to students would be another point of information sharing.

**Recommendations:**

*That consideration be given to the location of the T-Card Office, possibly situating it in a student high traffic area.*

*That information of importance to first year students be sent to the T-Card Office to maximize the value of the Office.*

*That the T-Card Office be invited to attend events, such as Orientation, so students can obtain their T-Cards on the spot.*

*That opportunities for broader use of the T-Card be considered, such as additional use of “swipe technology” for purposes of checking in and gathering data on how students use and access services.*
Investigating the need for additional training of front line staff

The Working Group had a number of suggestions for improving training opportunities to front-line staff. Foremost was the need to bring all registrarial/student success staff together at key times of the year to share information about new services, intervention strategies and best practices. Staff members in the School of Graduate Studies, Faculty of Music and Faculty of Applied Science and Engineering have organized professional development days for all registrarial staff in professional faculties and graduate departments for the past three years. Annually, since 2002 (and excepting the current year) the Arts and Science college registrars’ offices have organized a professional development day during Reading Week. Such a program should be expanded and would ideally lead to the creation of an annual professional conference for staff. The annual event should be rotated among the three campuses and, on the day of the conference, registrars’ offices should close, signaling the University’s commitment to staff development and quality of service for students. We would need, however, to assess the impact of such a closure on students.

Linked to the spirit of a conference, is the creation of an annual registrars’ meeting to bring together all registrars to exchange ideas and best practices, and to ensure that the quality of service is consistent across the institution.

The Working Group also felt that recognition programs for registrarial teams are an important component in staff morale. Ideas considered for recognition included seeking nominations from students for excellence in service of front-line and other staff.

Three additional areas of professional development were considered by the Working Group. The first is increased opportunities for sponsored secondments, which would facilitate cross-pollination of best practices. Such an initiative would encourage a culture of institution-wide cooperation and professional development. The second is specific professional development training courses offered to front-line staff through the Organizational Development and Learning Centre (ODLC). The courses could be taught by senior registrarial and student success staff. The third is to signal support of professional development to front-line staff through release time and/or greater recognition of professional service in performance evaluations.
Recommendations:

That there be an annual meeting of all senior registrarial staff. This could be organized by the University Registrar.

That a subgroup of registrarial staff be tasked with planning an annual professional conference for all registrarial and student success staff.

That the University support programs such as sponsored secondments and recognition programs.

That ODLC be consulted regarding specialized training for registrarial staff and senior registrarial staff should be encouraged to attend relevant provincial and national conferences to establish a broad network of colleagues and to benefit from excellent work being done elsewhere.

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS – FOOD SERVICES

The terms of reference for the mandate included:

Consulting with Ancillary Services and divisional foodservice operations to determine the following:

i. Status of attempts to offer meal plans that can be used across a variety of food service operations (divisional & central); and,

ii. Feasibility of allowing students to pay with gift card, debit or credit cards at additional food service locations

Meal plan transferability was noted as a St. George campus issue. Colleges with a meal plan operate independently and are expected to fully cover direct and indirect costs. As a result, meal plans have been developed in isolation and there are financial disincentives to increasing the transferability of these plans. This can be frustrating for students, particularly those who move around the campus a great deal and have difficulty making it back to their home college or residence for meal times.

There has been some recent progress made on this issue. The St. George Central Ancillary Services department, working with UTM and University College, is undertaking a networking project that will link together the disparate food operations on the St. George campus and provide students with a more seamless experience. UTM’s role is that of project manager and eventual administrator of the system, as it is currently running the software for its campus foodservices and will use this as an opportunity to upgrade it. Implementation of this project is planned for Fall 2011. Most St. George campus retail outlets, including Aramark (Sid Smith,
Medical Sciences, Robarts, OISE, Bahen, Gerstein, McLennan, Law), Second Cup, Veda and Sammy’s at Hart House will be networked as well as the residences.

iii. Feasibility of extended operating hours in some locations, and;
iv. If opportunities exist to increase the variety of food options available on-campus

Food service outlets on each campus must set operating hours that are consistent with traffic in buildings, and at “off-peak” hours it is reasonable for lower traffic outlets to close or reduce service. Some food service operations have experimented with extended hours of service in response to student feedback, but have had limited success in attracting enough business to support the incremental labour cost. Other experiments, like the extended hours at Robarts Library on the St. George campus, have been more successful.

A solution is to ensure that students are made aware of the food service options available to them at different times and in different places, and to provide extended hours of service in central, high-traffic buildings. Residence dining halls in particular have longer hours of service already and a more varied menu than the smaller retail kiosks in academic and administrative buildings. Many students are not well informed that they are permitted to eat in residential dining halls if they are not student residents. This sense is reinforced by the physical locations of the dining halls, which are often “hidden” from passers-by. Ancillary Services recognizes that more marketing and communication needs to be undertaken on this front.

Recommendations:

That Ancillary Services increase its distribution of the St. George Food Map, to increase awareness to students of the many dining options after hours and on weekends, and particularly in residential dining halls.

That all campuses, but particularly St. George, consider marketing campaigns and/or special events at the beginning of the academic year, to raise awareness about the residential dining halls which are open to all students.
DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS - INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SERVICES

The terms of reference for the mandate included:

Consulting with the Office of the Chief Information Officer (CIO) regarding the status of wireless internet availability across the University, and;
Consulting with Facilities Management & Planning at UTSC & UTM regarding the feasibility of adding additional electrical outlets

The Working Group consulted with the Office of the CIO and discovered that steps are currently being taken to increase wireless internet availability across the University (they are on their way to having 90% coverage at all three campuses), and to increase the number of electrical outlets at UTSC and UTM. The Working Group welcomed the opportunity to provide its input to the CIO’s Office, which extended an invitation for further consultation as NGSIS is being developed. The Working Group thus has no recommendations for these mandate points.
STUDENT-FACULTY INTERACTION

INTRODUCTION

As detailed in *In Their Own Words*, students have identified the need for increased opportunities to get to know and to interact with instructors. Therefore, the Working Group on Student-Faculty Interaction’s primary focus was the role of instructors at the University of Toronto and their interaction with students. The mandate items were discussed extensively among members of the Working Group, data were gathered from across the University, and the following discussions and recommendations reflect the advice of the group. The Working Group focused on ways to gather information about effective University of Toronto practices and identified ways to best share these with the broader community.

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The terms of reference for the mandate included:

- **Identifying ways in which faculty members effectively foster student-faculty interactions;**
- **Sharing best practices with regard to student-faculty interaction across departments;** and,
- **Identifying ways to enhance the use of online tools for out-of-class discussion.**

The Working Group generated a rich list of examples related to these mandate items from a range of contexts. To expand this list, the group gathered additional data about current practices across the University that promote student-faculty interaction. Data were gathered through a variety of mechanisms, including:

- The CTSI listserv, website and newsletter
- Through direct requests to instructors (this was undertaken at UTM and UTSC)
- Through interviews with individual faculty members about their approaches
- Through the efforts of the individual members of the Working Group
- Through a meeting of the Teaching, Learning and Technology Advisory Group (TLTAC)
- Through a Roundtable Discussion facilitated by CTSI at the UTSC Teaching and Learning Celebration

An extensive list of examples (see Appendix G) from across the institution that reflects a wide-variety of teaching contexts (e.g., small classes, large classes, tutorials, etc.). This list includes initiatives that can be implemented in most departments, divisions and units both within and outside the classroom.
The end result is an extensive list of examples (see Appendix G) from across the institution that reflects a wide-variety of teaching contexts (e.g., small classes, large classes, tutorials, etc.). This list includes initiatives that can be implemented in most departments, divisions and units both within and outside the classroom.

Current research is clear regarding the key role that faculty play in enhancing the quality of student learning through meaningful and purposeful student-faculty interaction. Even more important is that our students at the University of Toronto continue to share with us the reasons why such interaction is important to their learning, and examples of ways that this can occur. Such information has to be shared with instructors, but more importantly, they need to be supported in implementing practices that are both effective and manageable.

Overall, the Working Group had little difficulty identifying effective practices but felt that the key to encouraging the adoption of these practices was to develop a system for communication and implementation. The group discussed a number of ways that these practices could be shared with faculty, including web sites, list servers, newsletters, events, and so on. However, the Working Group felt there was a need to take a more strategic approach, and so recommends adoption of an integrated implementation plan that aligns effective practices with appropriate support and communication networks.
Recommendations:

The development of an integrated implementation plan regarding student-faculty interaction that includes the following elements:

1) The Working Group’s current inventory of effective practices related to student-faculty interactions (which will also continue to evolve).

2) Dedicated locations and avenues for sharing these practices with the broader community (e.g., a dedicated web page and/or on-line profiles on the CTSI web site).

3) Support and resources to assist instructors, departments and divisions with the implementation of the practices, which might include access to an on-line resource kit for new faculty, tip sheets or guides, and dedicated professional development opportunities and programming.

That priority be given to initiatives related to enhancing student-faculty interaction and that divisional and central offices consider dedicating support to such initiatives. This support may involve an individual coordinator and/or a small advisory group.

That an initiative be developed to engage undergraduate students (e.g. as student liaisons) in teaching and learning support. Through this initiative student input could be gathered, ensuring that student perspectives are reflected in the planning and delivery of teaching-related programming for instructors.

Identifying ways to enhance the use of online tools for out-of-class discussion

There is a great deal of information and research on the student experience and the ways in which instructors can use technology to support them. However, the Working Group felt that further investigation into the University of Toronto context would be valuable. Some questions worth exploring include: How comfortable do U of T faculty feel using online tools for out of class discussion? Why/what are faculty contributing to these conversations? What is their role in these conversations? Are Teaching Assistants included in these conversations as well? Is training needed?

There are many opportunities available to U of T faculty to conduct out-of-class discussions, including UTHub or any of a vast number of third party providers. In many cases these tools can be easily integrated into courses. A number of faculty are using technology to enhance their out-of-class discussion; however, they can and do encounter problems similar to in-class discussion or face-to-face meetings. Students may feel intimidated by the instructor, or by having to speak up in front of their peers, and the students that are most comfortable speaking
up in person can also be the ones most comfortable communicating online. Providing faculty with resources that introduce them to appropriate technologies and demonstrate effective strategies for their use can help them more effectively implement these into their courses.

Instructors at U of T have consistently shown a very keen interest in how their colleagues approach similar situations, especially around emerging technologies and their potential benefits for engagement inside and outside of the classroom. The University should capitalize on our faculty’s eagerness to share with and learn from each other. CTSI has a number of “Innovation Profiles” on their website related to online courses – additional profiles related to the use of online tools to foster out of class discussion could be developed and added to the website. In addition, the inventory of effective practices (see Appendix G) includes numerous examples from across U of T.

A number of faculty are using technology to enhance their out-of-class discussion; however, they can and do encounter problems similar to those arising in in-class discussion or face-to-face meetings.

**Recommendations:**

*That the University capitalize on available funding and existing educational technology staff to support the development of new initiatives that enhance student-faculty interaction through the innovative use of instructional technology.*

**Investigating the feasibility of offering students small group Q&A sessions with faculty in addition to, or in place of, office hours**

In addition to online opportunities for student-faculty interaction, it is also important to encourage in-course venues that provide opportunities for students to ask questions and express opinions. This is often especially true in large class settings where students may find it difficult to interact with faculty on a regular basis.
The Working Group considered the possibility of small group Q&A sessions with faculty to supplement or replace traditional office hours. A number of courses and instructors who had adopted this approach quite successfully were identified; however, the group also determined that the scalability of such a practice was limited. Mandating regular times for small group Q&A sessions would be difficult, particularly for large classes. Moreover, providing set opportunities for students once or twice a term to meet in a small group with faculty might have limited success, particularly if these sessions were scheduled at times when students did not have relevant or meaningful questions or issues to discuss.

Overall, the Working Group felt that this practice could work in some settings but would not be feasible in all teaching contexts. At the core of this issue, was the need to identify meaningful, stress-free and comfortable opportunities for students to interact with faculty at relevant times. As such, though there are no direct recommendations for this mandate item, many of the examples in Appendix G address this need.

The Working Group discussed the importance of ensuring that faculty efforts to initiate opportunities for student-faculty interaction be acknowledged and that data be collected to measure successes in this area.

**Recommendations:**

*That instructors be encouraged to include information on efforts to provide opportunities for student-faculty interaction in their teaching dossiers and annual PTR/Merit submissions and that the University encourage units to acknowledge such efforts in annual PTR/Merit reviews, and in the tenure and promotion processes.*

*That the Course Evaluation Implementation Group develop questions that assess student-faculty interaction efforts so that the student voice is valued.*
COMMUNICATION

INTRODUCTION

The core mandate of the Working Group on Communication was to compile an inventory of the key messages identified by each of the working groups to be communicated to students, staff and faculty, and to identify appropriate strategies for the communication of each key message.

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The terms of reference for the mandate included:

**Compiling an inventory of the key messages identified by each of the Working Groups to be communicated to students, staff and faculty**

Messages should vary according to the time of year, the student’s academic affiliation and the student’s year level. All messaging should be delivered in a just-in-time model to prevent information overload. For example, the information that a first year student needs in September is radically different what he or she needs in November and different than information an upper year student may need at those points in time. We must always consider our audiences when developing communication plans. Keeping staff and faculty well informed is as critical as communicating to students directly, since staff and faculty support, advise and counsel students.

Easy access to program and service information: Central databases which capture the huge array of support, transition and engagement programs should be developed and made available online. Currently this information is housed locally and is difficult to locate. Since students “don’t know what they don’t know,” too often these programs and opportunities remain hidden in local websites until it is too late to reach the intended audience. Areas that lend themselves to this development include: mentorships, leadership opportunities; experiential learning opportunities. These searchable online repositories would also assist staff who advise students.
Messaging must be delivered at the appropriate time to a targeted group. Students who are bombarded with information from too many sources or overwhelmed with too much information will tune out.

“Wayfinding” is a primary need for students during their transition to university. This includes physical spaces as well as services. Various means should be considered including, electronic maps/searchable databases (a project is underway and set for a mid-July launch), signage on or at building entrances indicating the services and food outlets inside the building. The members suggested that we consider using universal symbols, such as a knife and fork to indicate food outlets.

All “wayfinding” information, especially paper based, should be distributed to all student points of contact, including all registrars’ offices, academic program offices and student service departments as well as the T-Card Office.

Identifying appropriate strategies for the communication of each key message

There needs to be a fundamental shift in our student communications strategy, away from competing with each other for a student’s attention (which can be overwhelming) to a collaborative approach whereby units collectively consider a communication cycle. A communication cycle or “communications roadmap” should be developed, identifying key communication points, and which supports consistent and time-appropriate messaging. An example of collaborative communications with time-specific messaging would be the eNewsletters which were co-developed by the Faculty of Arts and Science and the School of Graduate Studies with the Office of Student Life.

While there is great value in hard copy communications, we must also strategically leverage social media that students are accustomed to. Some units, such as CTSI, are using videos as a means of highlighting instructional approaches and innovations in teaching. A recommendation is to establish a central video production team, possibly hosted by Strategic
Communications. Faculties, colleges and divisions are eager to take advantage of this medium, however, they lack the resources or knowledge to create and maintain their own film production and editing capability. Enhanced value would also come from a professional and consistent look and feel that support the U of T brand.

Resources should also be considered for training opportunities around communicating to students in various media: online, real-time chat sessions, social media or e-mail.

Finally, and critically important, we must expand opportunities for interactive communications with our students.

**Recommendations:**

*Wherever possible, communications should be interactive, to encourage student input and feedback.*

*As more departments are developing short online videos, consideration should be given to establishing central video production capability.*

*Workshops should be developed to support staff and faculty members who are developing communication tools to students (such as live chats, social media strategies and websites).*

*Collaborative communications strategies must be encouraged. A series of workshops or a single “communication summit” should be considered to develop a “communications roadmap” which supports an institution-wide understanding and consensus around the key information points in a student life cycle and a cohesive plan to provide just-in-time and meaningful information. Our initial focus should be on the period of transition to university (at all levels).*

*Messaging across the University that encourages and supports a culture of co-curricular participation should be consistent in its emphasis on the benefits of engagement and the educational effectiveness of participation in- and outside the classroom.*
Exploring opportunities to communicate to and with students on an on-going basis

Communicating effectively with students requires both direct and indirect methods. Our students approach their lives and interests in a holistic manner and distinguish information by interest and subject. They are indifferent to administrative structures. This means that we must coordinate our communication.

Information must also be communicated to staff, faculty and families as they are in contact with students and are key influencers in their lives.

The Working Group’s suggestions include: leveraging in-class technology and/or providing faculty members with slides to display either at the beginning or end of class during key periods (such as just prior to mid-terms); use spaces where students congregate, such as elevator areas (particularly in Robarts), OSAP line-ups or the T-Card Office as a communications opportunities (monitors, brochures, boards); and utilizing student orientation leaders to serve as ambassadors in communicating to their fellow students.

All points where line-ups cannot be eliminated should be considered opportunities to communicate or provide information.
Recommendations:

The coordination of discrete communications for different audiences such as faculty, staff and families to support and reinforce messaging to students.

Multi-modal forms of communications must be developed to capture the attention of students with different learning styles.

The development of strategic, regularly scheduled email communications to students in groupings that they (self-)identify such as year level, program, college, faculty, or location. In focus groups conducted by Student Life, students indicated that email was their preferred method of getting important information from the University but they receive far too much of it and too often it does not pertain to them.

The concept of “one-stop” access to all information for students should be explored, perhaps through developing a “landing page” (portal) whereby students access a variety of available information and bring these sources into their personalized “landing page”.
CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

A key finding of In Their Own Words is the holistic way in which students view their experiences at the University of Toronto. While structurally we may be divided into various departments and divisions, and draw separations between curricular and co-curricular activities - students do not make these distinctions and administrative imposition of these categories can be a source of confusion. When forming the Working Groups, the CSE was conscious of the need for ongoing inter-group communication in order to ensure these divisions were not inadvertently reinforced through the process. It is, therefore, deeply gratifying to see such a high degree of consistency across the Working Groups and strong interconnections among many of the recommendations.

It is clear that the majority of the recommendations fall under three broad themes: (1) The need for enhanced communication among students, staff and faculty; (2) The need for greater emphasis on intentional cross-divisional collaboration; and, (3) The need for on-going consideration of the needs of the University’s diverse student population. These themes are consistent with the findings of In Their Own Words and may serve as guides in the implementation of the Working Group recommendations.

The report of the Working Groups will be shared with the Council on Student Experience in July 2011 and then with the broader U of T community. The CSE will utilize the recommendations to inform the Council’s next steps with regard to enhancing the student experience at the University of Toronto.
SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

CO-CURRICULAR INVOLVEMENT AND SCHOOL SPIRIT

- That a piloted project be undertaken with one section of students (for example, those Arts & Science students in the Humanities), whereby no classes in their discipline are scheduled during a specific block of time, and where they are additionally requested by their faculty to keep the time slot open.
- That the University undertake a CCR study, aimed at addressing how to define co-curricular activity and what would be noted on the CCR; how to provide incentives for students to engage in co-curricular learning and; ensuring a CCR meets U of T’s goals for accessibility and equity (see Appendix D).
- That, once the issues in the previous recommendation are resolved, the University undertake the creation of a CCR during the development of the NGSIS platform.
- That student societies be encouraged to use any surplus funding to subsidize co-curricular activities.
- That programs and bursaries facilitating co-curricular involvement be presented by DUA to prospective donors as appropriate.
- That agreement be sought on an iconic image or “school spirit” message that resonates emotionally with students, staff and faculty across the university.
- That a “school spirit” message be communicated early and consistently, from the offer of admission, during orientation week, in subsequent central and local communications through convocation.
- That the message be linked to our U of T visual identity (colour, watermark, font, etc.) in a way that it can “live” alongside the more local allegiances. The goal is to develop an iconic image or message that evokes an emotional response to a positive experience.

MENTORSHIP

- The establishment of a central training program for student mentors following a similar model to central Residence Life Staff Training on the St. George Campus, where core topics common to all programs are delivered centrally and consistently, and where program-specific training is delivered locally.
- The establishment of an online central clearinghouse for resources related to best practices for the development and maintenance of mentorship programs.
- The development of a guide describing various models of mentorship, including the resources required to implement a model and the anticipated program outcomes. This framework should be included in the online clearinghouse as a resource for staff, faculty and students who may be considering the development of a mentorship program.
• That mentoring be made available to students in a variety of formats (e.g. online, one-to-one, small group, etc.).
• That the development of new mentorship programs be focused on key transition points in the student experience (e.g. transition into first year, transition to program of study, graduation, transition into graduate or professional school, etc.).
• The establishment of an online resource where students interested in having a mentor or being a mentor can access information on available opportunities.
• The development of a comprehensive inventory of the existing mentorship programs at the University and the identification of gaps in the availability of mentoring opportunities.
• The establishment of a mentoring culture at the University with a clearly articulated institutional commitment.
• The establishment of a mentorship network to encourage new initiatives and facilitate communication among staff, faculty and students coordinating mentorship programs across the University.
• The exploration of opportunities to partner with the Organizational Development & Learning Centre (ODLC) and Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation (CTSI) to provide staff and faculty with training related to best practices in mentoring.

ORIENTATION AND TRANSITION

• That where feasible, financial support for student participation in orientation be enhanced through bursaries.
• That staff support levels across divisions be consistent for student orientation.
• That divisions be encouraged to provide shorter “alternative” orientation if they are not doing so already, for students who are unable to commit to a full week of activities.
• That faculty involvement in orientation activities be encouraged.
• The creation of an inventory of the different academic pre-arrival sessions across the University.
• The development of a “toolkit” for faculty members on how to support student success.
• The development of a set of just-in-time information digital slides for faculty members to display during the minutes before classes begin.
• The development of a student ambassador program with the primary goal of assisting new students’ transition into their academic career.
• The development of departmental open house days to assist students who are picking their POST.
QUALITY OF SERVICE

- That the University develop reports and provide systems access to divisional registrars.
  1) A variety of admissions reports from Next Generation Student Information Services (NGSIS) should be made available to registrars, to help them identify vulnerable students;
  2) Access to data that identifies students who have failed courses, achieved grades of “D”, and who have withdrawn from required courses should be provided as early as it is available;
  3) If possible, access to Blackboard on the part of divisional registrars, allowing them to access grade data at the earliest opportunity so that they can initiate early intervention strategies.

- That those students who are identified as “at-risk” be contacted by a registrarial staff member, who then becomes that student’s advisor. These meetings should be considered an opportunity to discuss success strategies rather than as remedial interventions. Students can then engage in “touch base” opportunities with their advisor until they connect to resources. Furthermore:
  1) That partnerships with non-registrarial areas such as Student Life departments and Writing Centres be explored.

- That the University continue to work alongside peer institutions in advocacy efforts for online OSAP processing.
- That consideration be given to the location of the T-Card Office, possibly situating it in a student high traffic area.
- That information of importance to first year students be sent to the T-Card Office to maximize the value of the Office.
- That the T-Card Office be invited to attend events, such as Orientation, so students can obtain their T-Cards on the spot.
- That opportunities for broader use of the T-Card be considered such as additional use of “swipe technology” for purposes of checking in and gathering data on how students use and access services.
- That there is an annual meeting of all senior registrarial staff. This could be organized by the University Registrar.
- That a subgroup of registrarial staff be tasked with planning an annual professional conference for all registrarial and student success staff.
- That the University support programs such as sponsored secondments and recognition programs.
- That ODLC be consulted regarding specialized training for registrarial staff and senior registrarial staff should be encouraged to attend relevant provincial and national conferences to establish a broad network of colleagues and to benefit from excellent work being done elsewhere.
- That Ancillary Services increase its distribution of the St. George Food Map, in order to increase awareness to students of the many dining options after hours and on weekends, and particularly in residential dining halls.
• That all campuses, but particularly St. George, consider marketing campaigns and/or special events at the beginning of the academic year, to raise awareness about the residential dining halls which are open to all students.

STUDENT-FACULTY INTERACTION

• The development of an integrated implementation plan regarding student-faculty interaction that includes the following elements:
  1) The Working Group’s current inventory of effective practices related to student-faculty interactions (which will also continue to evolve).
  2) Dedicated locations and avenues for sharing these practices with the broader community (e.g., a dedicated web page and/or on-line profiles on the CTSI web site).
  3) Support and resources to assist instructors, departments and divisions with the implementation of the practices, which might include access to an on-line resource kit for new faculty, tip sheets or guides, and dedicated professional development opportunities and programming.
• That priority be given to initiatives related to enhancing student-faculty interaction and that divisional and central offices consider dedicating support to such initiatives. This support may involve an individual coordinator and/or a small advisory group.
• That an initiative be developed to engage undergraduate students (e.g. as student liaisons) in teaching and learning support. Through this initiative student input could be gathered, ensuring that student perspectives are reflected in the planning and delivery of teaching-related programming for instructors.
• That the University capitalize on available funding and existing educational technology staff to support the development of new initiatives that enhance student-faculty interaction through the innovative use of instructional technology.
• That instructors be encouraged to include information on efforts to provide opportunities for student-faculty interaction in their teaching dossiers and annual PTR/Merit submissions and that the University encourage units to acknowledge such efforts in annual PTR/Merit reviews, and in the tenure and promotion processes.
• That the Course Evaluation Implementation Group develop questions that assess student-faculty interaction efforts so that the student voice is valued.
COMMUNICATION

- Messaging must be delivered at the appropriate time to a targeted group. Students who are bombarded with information from too many sources or overwhelmed with too much information will tune out.
- “Wayfinding” is a primary need for students during their transition to university. This includes physical spaces as well as services. Various means should be considered including, electronic maps/searchable databases (the first phase of a project was launched in mid-July), signage on or at building entrances indicating the services and food outlets inside the building. The members suggested that we consider using universal symbols, such as a knife and fork to indicate food outlets.
- All “wayfinding” information, especially paper based, should be distributed to all student points of contact, including all registrars’ offices, academic program offices and student service departments as well as the T-Card Office.
- Wherever possible, communications should be interactive, to encourage student input and feedback.
- As more departments are developing short online videos, consideration should be given to establishing central video production capability.
- Workshops should be developed to support staff and faculty members who are developing communication tools to students (such as live chats, social media strategies and websites).
- Collaborative communications strategies must be encouraged. A series of workshops or a single “communication summit” should be considered to develop a “communications roadmap” which supports an institution-wide understanding and consensus around the key information points in a student life cycle and a cohesive plan to provide just-in-time and meaningful information. Our initial focus should be on the period of transition to university (at all levels).
- Messaging across the University that encourages and supports a culture of co-curricular participation should be consistent in its emphasis on the benefits of engagement and the educational effectiveness of participation in- and outside the classroom.
- The coordination of discrete communications for different audiences such as faculty, staff and families to support and reinforce messaging to students.
- Multi-modal forms of communications must be developed to capture the attention of students with different learning styles.
- The development of strategic, regularly scheduled email communications to students in groupings that they (self-)identify such as by year level, program, college, faculty, or location. In focus groups conducted by Student Life, students indicated that email was their preferred method of getting important information from the University but they receive far too much of it and too often it does not pertain to them.
- The concept of “one-stop” access to all information for students should be explored, perhaps through developing a “landing page” (portal) whereby students access a variety of available information and bring these sources into their personalized “landing page”.

U of T’s Response to In Their Own Words (2010)
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APPENDIX A – MEMBERSHIP OF THE WORKING GROUPS

CO-CURRICULAR INVOLVEMENT AND SCHOOL SPIRIT

Louise Cowin – Hart House (Chair)
Donald Boere – Innis College
Michelle Brownrigg – Faculty of Physical Education and Health
Sanjeev Chandra – Faculty of Applied Science and Engineering
Anita Comella – Faculty of Physical Education & Health
Josh Hass – Office of Student Life, St. George Campus
Renu Kanga – University College
David Kim – Woodsworth College
Karen McCrank – Centre for Community Partnerships
Dale Mullings – Student Housing & Residence Life, University of Toronto Mississauga
Yvonne Rodney – Career Centre
Nadia Rosemond – Department of Student Life, University of Toronto Scarborough
Jonathan Steels – Trinity College

MENTORSHIP

Liza Arnason – Student Life, University of Toronto Scarborough (Co-Chair)
Melinda Scott – Office of Student Life, St. George Campus (Co-Chair)
Jonathan Cheevers – Alumni Affairs
Barbara Dick – Alumni Affairs
Robin Elliot – Faculty of Music
Kaye Francis – Family Care Office
Gerri George – St. Michael’s College
Tanya Lewis – Academic Success & Accessibility Services, St. George Campus
Holly Luffman – Centre for International Experience
Chris McGrath – Student Affairs, University of Toronto Mississauga
Curtis Norman – Student Affairs, University of Toronto Mississauga
Leslie Nickell – Faculty of Medicine
Heidi Pepper-Coles – Faculty of Arts & Science
Nona Robinson – University College
Jude Tate – Sexual & Gender Diversity Office
ORIENTATION AND TRANSITION

Miranda Cheng – Centre for International Experience (Co-Chair)
Nona Robinson – University College (Co-Chair)
Emzheh Chen – Department of Student Life, UTSC
Joan Griffin – Office of the Vice-Provost, Students
Kelly Jay – Faculty of Arts & Science
Wenda Kwong – Faculty of Physical Education & Health
Lesley Mak – Faculty of Applied Science & Engineering
Andrea McGee – St. Michael’s College
Chris McGrath – University of Toronto Mississauga
Liza Nassim/Josephine Mullally – Woodsworth College
Jennifer Newcombe – Hart House
Melinda Scott – Office of Student Life, St. George Campus
Sally Walker – New College
Tim Worgan – Innis College

QUALITY OF SERVICE

Lucy Fromowitz – Student Life Programs & Services, St. George Campus (Co-Chair)
Anne MacDonald – Ancillary Services (Co-Chair)
Nalayini Balasubramaniam – Faculty of Music
Curtis Cole – Office of the Registrar, University of Toronto Scarborough
Shelley Cornack – University College
Gerri George – St. Michael’s College
Joan Griffin – Office of the Vice-Provost, Students
Jennifer Guyatt – Woodsworth College
Kelly Jay – Faculty of Arts & Science
Heather Kelly – School of Graduate Studies
Barbara McCann – Faculty of Applied Science & Engineering
Leah McCormack – University College
Susan McDonald – Victoria University
Soobong Song – Faculty of Nursing
Brenda Thrush – Faculty of Pharmacy
Sally Walker – New College
Ian Whyte – Library, University of Toronto Mississauga
STUDENT-FACULTY INTERACTION

Carol Rolheiser – Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation (Chair)
Lisa Chambers - Centre for Community Partnerships
Tammy Chan – Faculty of Nursing
Pam Gravestock – Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation
Clare Hasenkampf – Centre for Teaching & Learning, University of Toronto Scarborough
Angela Lange – University of Toronto Mississauga
Glenn Loney – Faculty of Arts & Science
Susan McCahan – Faculty of Applied Science & Engineering
Adriana Rossini – Faculty of Information
Cheryl Shook – Woodsworth College

COMMUNICATION

Lucy Fromowitz – Student Life Programs & Services, St. George Campus (Chair)
Liza Arnason – Department of Student Life, University of Toronto Scarborough
Louise Cowin – Hart House
Miranda Cheng – Centre for International Experience
Joan Griffin – Office of the Vice-Provost, Students
Anne MacDonald – Ancillary Services
Chris McGrath – Student Affairs, University of Toronto Mississauga
Mark Overton – University of Toronto Mississauga
Nona Robinson – University College
Carol Rolheiser – Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation
Melinda Scott – Office of Student Life, St. George Campus
Cheryl Ziegler – Office of Student Life, St. George Campus
APPENDIX B – MANDATES OF THE WORKING GROUPS

MANDATES OF THE WORKING GROUPS

In addition to the below listed mandates, each Working Group was asked to:

a) Provide regular progress updates at meetings of the Council on Student Experience.

b) Provide a final report to the Council on Student Experience outlining the following:
   i. Progress made on each area of the group mandate.
   ii. Outline of any new initiatives resulting from the work of the group.
   iii. How the effectiveness of each new initiative will be assessed.
   iv. Recommendations for next steps with regard to enhancing communication at the University of Toronto.

CO-CURRICULAR INVOLVEMENT & SCHOOL SPIRIT

The working group is asked to:

a) Investigate the feasibility of scheduling a common block of “co-curricular” time when no classes are held on each campus.

b) Consult with the Next Generation Student Information System (NGSIS) working group to determine the feasibility of the development of a co-curricular transcript.

c) Consult with the Division of Student Life Programs and Services (St. George Campus) to determine the status of the Student Success Plan and explore means by which co-curricular programming could be connected to a student’s Program of Study (POSt) across the University.

d) Identify methods of promoting co-curricular involvement after first year.

e) Identify methods of reducing financial barriers to participation in co-curricular activities.

f) Consult with the Office of Student Life (St. George Campus), Department of Student Life (UTSC) and Student Affairs (UTM) to determine the status of current efforts to strengthen Recognized Campus Groups, and identify next steps in this regard across the University.

g) Propose non-monetary certificates or awards for student areas of involvement that are currently going unrecognized.

h) Identify key messages to be communicated to students, staff and faculty regarding co-curricular involvement and school spirit.
MENTORSHIP

The working group is asked to:

a) Develop a set of best practices for the development and maintenance of mentorship programs at the University of Toronto.
b) Investigate models of mentorship and make recommendations regarding their feasibility in a University of Toronto context.
c) Explore opportunities to provide short-term, time-specific mentoring opportunities.
d) Identify methods of offering equal access to mentoring across the University.
e) Identify key messages to be communicated to students, staff and faculty regarding mentorship.

ORIENTATION AND TRANSITION

The working group is asked to:

a) Develop a set of shared principles for Orientation programming in the first-entry undergraduate divisions.
b) Describe the steps needed to organize Orientation groups by predominant course registration in divisions where this is not already occurring.
c) Explore opportunities to integrate orientation and transition programming at the course level.
d) Identify means of integrating additional information on academic skills into Orientation programming.
e) Investigate methods of expanding orientation and transition programming to continue throughout the first six weeks of the Fall term.
f) Investigate feasibility of providing additional programming to facilitate students’ transition to their program of study at the end of first year.
g) Identify key messages to be communicated to students, staff and faculty regarding orientation and transition.

QUALITY OF SERVICE

Academic & Personal Support

The working group is asked to:

a) Identify a pilot site in the Faculty of Arts & Science for the assignment of students to specific members of the Registrarial staff.
b) Identify methods of eliminating long line-ups and wait-times for student support services.

c) Explore methods of enhancing communication regarding the academic and personal support services available to students, and ensuring that it is delivered at the appropriate time.

d) Investigate the need for additional training of front line staff and consult with the Organizational Development and Learning Centre (ODLC) regarding the development of any new training initiatives.

e) Identify key messages to be communicated to students, staff and faculty regarding academic and personal support.

Food

The working group is asked to:

a) Consult with Ancillary Services and divisional foodservice operations to determine the following:
   i. Status of attempts to offer meal plans that can be used across a variety of food service operations (divisional & central).
   ii. Feasibility of allowing students to pay with gift card, debit or credit cards at additional food service locations.
   iii. Feasibility of extended operating hours in some locations.
   iv. If opportunities exist to increase the variety of food options available on-campus.

b) Identify key messages to be communicated to students, staff and faculty regarding food services on-campus.

I.T.

The working group is asked to:

a) Consult with the CIO’s office regarding the status of wireless internet availability across the University.

b) Consult with Facilities Management & Planning at UTSC & UTM regarding the feasibility of adding additional electrical outlets.

c) Identify key messages to be communicated to students, staff and faculty regarding IT services on-campus.
STUDENT-FACULTY INTERACTION

The working group is asked to:

a) Identify ways in which faculty members effectively foster student-faculty interaction.

b) Share best-practices with regard to student-faculty interaction across departments.

c) Investigate the feasibility of offering students small group Q&A sessions with faculty in addition to, or in place of, office hours.

d) Identify ways to enhance the use of online tools for out of class discussion.

e) Identify opportunities in all academic disciplines for semi-structured social interaction between students and faculty members.

f) Identify key messages to be communicated to students, staff and faculty regarding the value of student-faculty interaction.

COMMUNICATION

The working group is asked to:

a) Compile an inventory of the key messages identified by each of the working groups to be communicated to students, staff and faculty.

b) Identify appropriate strategies for the communication of each key message.

c) Develop methods of informing the University community of the progress of each working group.

d) Explore opportunities to communicate to and with students on an on-going basis.
APPENDIX C – NUMBER OF STUDENTS ENROLLED IN ARTS AND SCIENCE SECTIONS

NUMBER OF STUDENTS ENROLLED IN FACULTY OF ARTS AND SCIENCE SECTIONS (LECTURE, PRACTICAL OR TUTORIAL) BY DAY AND TIME

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APPENDIX D – ISSUES REGARDING CREATION OF CO-CURRICULAR RECORD

ISSUES REGARDING THE CREATION OF A U OF T CO-CURRICULAR RECORD

Defining co-curricular activity

Any working proposal for a feasible CCR is predicated on an understanding of what constitutes co-curricular activity at U of T. At most universities that use a CCR, involvement is limited to activity done outside of a credit course but on-campus and on a voluntary rather than paid basis. Recognized involvement can include the following: leadership in an organization, activity or program; on-campus project coordination; individual participation in activities, groups and athletic teams; community service or volunteer experience; honours, awards and recognitions; learning and life skills workshops and professional and educational development activity; and sometimes certifications, part-time work, internships and summer employment. When off-campus activity is included, the activity is most often co-ordinated by the University.

Questions for further consideration: Can a CCR project at U of T account for the extensive, often self-generated, off-campus volunteer activity that our students engage in, not just in Toronto’s primary and secondary educational system and extensive hospital network, but throughout the city and in their communities? Should experience and learning gained through employment on- or off-campus be included in a CCR? Is experiential learning (for credit or not) similar enough to co-curricular activity to be included in a CCR?

Providing incentives to engage in co-curricular learning and using a CCR

In the Concurrent Teacher Education Program at U of T, the initial incentive for student participation in co-curricular activity is an academic grade determined by a program facilitator. The Faculty of Applied Science and Engineering also plans to introduce co-curricular activity into courses, and professors will measure (for degree-credit), the depth of involvement and the learning gained as a result.

Once students get involved in co-curricular activities, they may still be resistant to using a CCR. The Working Group found that, almost universally, at other institutions there are initial frustrations for student users of CCRs. Voluntary participation is reportedly very slow at first. Students may not find the application easy enough to use.

If a CCR is integrated with other information systems in an e-portfolio that students find useful, participation rates might accelerate. In some North American institutions, e-portfolios offer students a way to track their credit courses and degree options as well as their experiences.
(curricular and co-curricular) and to print an experience record. At U of T, AUGUR is a computer application platform designed in outline by two undergraduate students. It allows students to perform prerequisite checks of courses, obtain course suggestions and calculate GPA. AUGUR also helps students make course choices and map out their degrees. It has the capability to provide a holistic set of services that can make recommendations to students or alert them to opportunities such as clubs, organizations, scholarships or research opportunities in their fields of study and suggest employment opportunities by comparing their profile information with other available data. It also has expandability for other personalized tools. It has been presented to the PWG of the NGSIS group and has attracted some interest.

Questions for further consideration:

- For non-credit-based co-curricular activity, is the fact that the experience can be recorded enough to prompt students to get involved?
- Can we better understand the process by which students decide to get involved in co-curricular experiences? What is that step prior to the reflection process that gets students wanting to engage in co-curricular activities?
- What can prompt a student to want to take advantage of a CCR? Is there an appetite at U of T for a project that incorporates a CCR into AUGUR or an AUGUR-like platform?

Accessibility and Equity

The Working Group noted the appeal of certificates and credentials to students. (For further discussion on this, please see the discussion on providing non-monetary recognition below). Involved students appreciate records of distinction for their voluntary work done on-campus and, in some cases, off-campus. Some external agencies (employers, volunteer agencies) have reported finding value in a CCR that tells them about students’ abilities and interests.

The purpose of a CCR at U of T would not be to reinforce the behaviour of those students who are already actively involved, engaged and learning from co-curricular activity. Rather, while the Working Group acknowledges that some students may never get involved, can a CCR increase the participation of those who may want to get involved but have not for any number of reasons (including reticence, nervousness, intimidation, lack of awareness of the opportunities, disengagement, part-time employment obligations or other financial restraints, family commitments or constraints)?

Questions for further consideration:

- Can we ensure that a CCR would not be biased against underrepresented groups of students?
- Would more targeted promotion of co-curricular activities increase student involvement at U of T?
Would a CCR be a good vehicle for promoting those activities – and the learning to be gained from them – among students who do not currently get involved but might like to get involved at U of T?
APPENDIX E – ORIENTATION & TRANSITION IMPROVEMENT PROPOSAL

GENERAL PROPOSALS FOR IMPROVING ORIENTATION AND TRANSITION

Short term (less than 4 months)

- Create an inventory of all academic pre-arrival sessions, workshops (during orientation/transition periods) and make this available online for new students.
- Build a university-wide platform for greater sharing of tools and videos used by colleges and academic divisions (such as YouTube videos on how to select courses in the Faculty of Arts and Science).
- Provide campus tours grouped by academic programs, departments and class schedules (so students know where to go during first week of classes).
- Provide opportunities for new students to attend sample classes (either in person or virtually).
- Develop a student ambassador program stemming from orientation week.
- Send a strong institutional message around the importance of orientation.

Middle term (4 months to 8 months)

- Group students by academic program in non-Faculty orientations (e.g. by providing colour-coded lanyards)
- Have student ambassadors deliver brief classroom presentations on adjusting to university and on university resources/involvement.
- Encourage divisions to provide shorter “alternative” orientation if they are not doing so already, for students who are unable to commit to a full week of activities.
- Encourage faculty involvement in orientation activities.
- Develop a toolkit or support manual for instructors on supporting students.
- Provide staff training on video development and uploading, and/or create a central “video team” for the university who can assist staff in developing instructional videos.

Long term (more than 8 months)

- Examine staff support levels at different divisions for student orientation and encourage consistency.
- Examine other means to support student orientation programming, including collaboration on UTSU Day planning and funding.
• Expand incentive program; develop success benchmarks and scale incentive to them; the focus can be put on inclusivity, risk management, harm reduction, safety, and appropriateness; leader recruitment and training can also be part of incentive measures.
• Enhance orientation financial support through bursaries, and encourage consistency across divisions.
• Examine where pre-arrival welcome sessions can be pooled or shared; coordinate different activities such as welcome days, picking a program of study workshop, etc.
• Encourage early identification with programs as well as colleges.
• Continue developing in-person and online pre-arrival academic skills workshops.
• Consider bringing new faculty together to share best practices, tips, interactions with students, perhaps in a symposium hosted by a senior administrator and CTSI.
• Look at “university 101” courses or components and include information on academic skills, career opportunities, etc.
• Student New Year Campaign: offer a smaller reorientation in January to remind students of resources and support that are available.
• Create a “welcome to the department” open house day for first year students who are picking their POST.
• Encourage faculty to have upper year students invite first year students to classes.
• Develop a guide for parents to support their students during the transition period.
• Develop a second-year course for those students who experienced academic difficulties in first year.
# APPENDIX F – STUDENT OUTCOMES ORIENTATION/TRANSITION

## STUDENT OUTCOMES/OBJECTIVES AND CORRESPONDING ORIENTATION/TRANSITION ACTIVITIES

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<tr>
<th>Time Period</th>
<th>Student Outcomes/Objectives</th>
<th>Activities</th>
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<tr>
<td>Pre-Orientation</td>
<td>Decrease anxiety</td>
<td>Welcome sessions</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Understand the University’s communication systems</td>
<td>Advising</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Begin the process of transitioning from dependence on parents/family and independence</td>
<td>Peer mentors</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Understand basics/first steps (fees, financial aid, housing, course enrolment, etc.)</td>
<td>Orienting parents or offering a parent guidebook</td>
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<td>Re-examine process for T-card pick-up (multiple locations, online photo submission, use opportunities to provide key information)</td>
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<td>Orientation</td>
<td>Build confidence in academic preparation</td>
<td>“Ask an upper year student”</td>
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<td>Develop social connections</td>
<td>Peer mentorship programs</td>
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<td>Become physically oriented to the campus &amp; key buildings</td>
<td>Opportunities to attend a sample class</td>
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<td>Understand behavioural expectations of University (classroom etiquette, code of behaviour, equity)</td>
<td>Student-support manual for faculty</td>
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<td>Understand the basics of involvement &amp; school-life balance</td>
<td>Connecting students to clubs &amp; student organizations</td>
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<td>First 6 Weeks</td>
<td>Time management/academic skills</td>
<td>Establishment of a “home base” for each student</td>
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<td>Balancing responsibilities</td>
<td>First year learning communities</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Developing social networks</td>
<td>Utilizing orientation leaders as ambassadors in weeks following Orientation</td>
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<td>Understanding resources &amp; where to access them</td>
<td>Provide videos of upper year students sharing advice/experiences</td>
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<td>Understanding of equity &amp; diversity</td>
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<td>End of First Year</td>
<td>Pick a Program of Study</td>
<td>Student New Year’s campaign in January</td>
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<td>Exam preparation</td>
<td>Departmental open houses</td>
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<td>Develop more specific/targeted academic skills</td>
<td>Career development programming</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Deepen social networks</td>
<td>Communication of leadership &amp; mentorship opportunities</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Deepen student involvement/leadership development experiences</td>
<td>Second-year course for students in academic difficulty</td>
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Initiatives that promote student-faculty interaction enhance the quality of student learning as well as students’ overall academic success. For faculty, such interactions inform instructional decision-making and design, enhance job satisfaction and can expand collaborations (for example, in research opportunities). The following U of T practices currently promote and enable such benefits. Many of these initiatives can easily be adapted and implemented in a wide range of teaching and learning contexts (within small and large courses, outside the classroom, in small groups, one-on-one, or online).

Themes/sub-categories:

1. Technology for communication
2. Technology to supplement in-class teaching
3. Technology to promote interactivity
4. In-course meetings/Office hours
5. Interaction during lecture
6. Instructional design
7. Improving personal dimension
8. Academic/Co-curricular interactions
9. Social/Extra-curricular interactions
10. Advising and Mentoring
11. Student-led Programming

1. Technology for communication:

- Create an information-rich course site (e.g. Blackboard)
- Create an online course support community, e.g. Biome, UT Hub
- Low-stakes assignment for students to familiarize themselves with the instructor, course websites and communication norms; instructor can follow-up in class if any issues arise
- Posting a weekly “digest” or “FAQ” of responses to common student questions (weekly or at particular times of year)
- Use discussion boards in Blackboard
- Use the Journal Tool in Blackboard as a communication vehicle between the instructor (or TAs) and each individual student or as a reflection journal to record students’ progress
- Poll your class on how they would like to receive updates about course information
2. **Technology to supplement in-class teaching:**

- Post help session videos online for common help topics and FAQs
- Supplement or augment lectures with class lecture videos and student-created PowerPoint voiceovers
- Virtual office hours (e.g. Blackboard discussion boards, instant messaging, Adobe Connect, or other platforms?) on a regular basis or just-in-time before quizzes, tests, and assignments

3. **Technology to promote interactivity:**

- Using Twitter or texting during lectures to post ideas and pose questions (or, designate certain periods of class, break, or pre-class time when you can receive questions)
- Clickers in large classes to ask questions and generate feedback from instructor

4. **In-course meetings/Office Hours:**

- Faculty-led tutorials
- Faculty-led Q&A sessions for use in multiple related courses, particularly large core courses
- Group office hours, drop-in sessions or Q&A in bookable library space or classroom, allowing students to ask questions while working on assignments/homework, and possible informal interaction
- Interactive techniques in large classes to promote discussion (e.g. think-pair-share)
- Supplemental office hours in an informal setting such as student “home” space, or cafeteria
- Responding to general assignment concerns in class or reporting on grading done by TAs
- Promote “open door” policies in class and ask students to come visit your office
- Schedule face to face meetings with individual students, to improve comfort with speaking up in class
- Allocate time after lectures to answer questions from students who linger
- Partner with librarians and learning strategists to attend help/drop-in sessions

5. **Interaction during lecture:**

- Create “Meet Your Partner” activities in class and invite random partners to introduce their peers; instructor can also participate
- Use tented name cards in class to help get to know students’ names
- Make use of peer-teaching and small group learning activities to enhance student-faculty interaction
• Facilitate small group reflection sessions in class periodically, where the faculty member responds/adds to what is shared based on their own experience
• Spread teaching team members (TAs, team faculty) throughout the classroom to engage with students during group discussion
• Work with more senior students to peer-teach first-year students and ask them to share their learning experiences with faculty members
• Use wikis for collaborative/group work and to communicate with instructors (e.g. http://pbworks.com/)

6. Instructional Design:

• Creation of small courses around field work, research opportunities, first-year seminars or experiential/service learning to promote cohort-building and faculty interaction
• Assign small group work and consult with each group over the term
• Schedule field trips as part of an assignment, to nearby locations or further abroad if funding and course size allow
• Include simulations or hands-on activities to break hierarchical relationship between student and teacher
• Give direct feedback to students, weekly or at preset times, on their ongoing projects

7. Improving personal dimension:

• To personalize the syllabus, include photo(s) of the instructor or a short instructor biography
• Share relevant personal anecdotes during lecture as a way of personalizing topic and helping students get to know the instructor
• Use humour during lectures

8. Academic/Co-curricular interactions:

• Student course representatives and meetings with faculty (lunch provided)
• Student-run seminars for faculty, with faculty and staff engagement
• Pre-scheduled timetable slot for topics to enhance student experience, e.g. study skills sessions, meetings with alumni and faculty
• Invitations to attend job talks and provide feedback (lunch provided)
• Invitations to serve on department committees, governance and special interest groups
• Regular meetings between Chair/Dean/senior faculty and student council groups
• “Lunch and Learn” series in which faculty lecture on current research or a relevant topic (lunch provided)
9. Social/Extra-curricular interactions:

- Fall department open house targeted to first year students, with a chance to meet faculty (food provided)
- Co-host an event with the students in your course, where they play a role in coordinating logistics, finding speakers, doing introductions.
- Informal networking opportunities like “Breakfast with the department” or “Lunch with the professor” series, to get to know professors in future courses
- “Speed dating” type event to get to know faculty: an instructor/TA sits at a table and groups of students rotate in 15 minute intervals to ask questions
- Evening social events such as debates, movie screenings, public lectures
- Work with student groups to involve faculty in student events (Pub Nites, Fundraisers, Club events, Formals)
- Summer networking event for faculty to get to know incoming students and share stories

10. Advising and Mentoring:

- Assign groups the task of finding a faculty mentor to assist them with course projects
- Offer coaching opportunities to teach students skills to engage with faculty (could be partnered with other faculty members, courses)
- Offer internship or research opportunities, or help students identify placement opportunities
- Invite students to a forum in which faculty share ongoing research, and students have opportunity to give feedback and ask questions
- Discuss reference letters in class and how the instructor determines who they are written for and what helps them get to know students before writing a letter
- Faculty involvement in professional development/professional skills programming
- Incorporate faculty-led breakout sessions into student orientations
- Student-faculty discussions on career planning and future work placements

11. Student-led programming:

- Book club with faculty members, 1-4 times a year
- “The Real Lives of...” – series to host faculty members to discuss research interests, career path, and personal interests
- Capstone projects for first-year initiatives such as rezone/genONE, in which students develop a learning experience with community and connect with faculty members in the process
- Library seminars as part of first-year programming
These practices and others will be explored in greater detail in documents to be posted on the CTSI website, and in forthcoming CTSI programming for the 2011-12 year.