

Student Societies Summit

Meeting #4 – November 15, 2013, Room 728, Bissell Building

Attendance:

Faculty Summit Members: Prof. Joe Desloges (Chair), Prof. Donald Ainslie, Prof. Linda White, Prof. Graham White

Student Participants: Yolen Bollo-Kamara (UTSU), Anges So (UTSU), Mauricio Curbelo (EngSoc), Thomas Santerre (EngSoc), Mary Stefanidis (ICSS), Ryan Lamers (ICSS), David Bastien (MedSoc), Ashkan Azimi (NCSC), Craig Maniscalco (NCSC), Anthony O'Brien (PHEUA), Alex Zappone (SMCSU), Brendan Stevens (SLS), Peter Flynn (SLS), Benjamin Crase (TCM), Nishi Kumar (UCLit), Zack Medow (VUSAC), Rhys Smith (WCSA), Joe Bodley (STU)

Administration: Prof. Jill Matus (Vice Provost, Students & First-Entry Divisions) Sarah Burley, Mike LeSage

Regrets: Prof. Brian Langille, Teresa Maida (STU), Michael Amiraslani (WCSA), Prof. Mark McGowan (Special Advisor to the Vice-Provost, Students), David Newman (Director, Student Life)

Welcome

Prof. Desloges welcomed all the student participants and provided an overview of the agenda for the meeting, including continuing the discussion that followed the small group discussions during Meeting #3 of the Summit. There was interest from some participants in discussing written submissions. Prof. Desloges said these would be addressed at the end of the meeting.

Review and Discussion of Breakout Group Findings from Previous Meeting

Participants were reminded to recall the discussions they had in their smaller group, specifically what each group had thought would be the key elements of a governance structure if we were to start from scratch. Each group provided the following key points:

- A central representative student body remains important; however, it might exist as a federated structure
- In the current system, each society is independent of each other and collectively they run parallel to each other, creating multiple structures (pyramids) that operate very separately

- A structure whereby students' representatives have a deep understanding of their constituent needs and experiences
- A system with impartiality and expectations of fair elections and campaigns
- Clear and official communication between a central body, local student societies, and university administration should be expected and maintained
- Clearly defined roles between a central body and the divisional groups are important in avoiding redundancies
- Consideration for thinking about different ways to organize constituencies

Forms and Values of Governance Structures

Although there was not always consensus the points discussed, participants identified the following values and issues:

- While some participants identified the need for a larger, umbrella student representative body, others believe that their interests are better represented at the local level
- Some consideration should be given to professional and second-entry programs, which have different interests and needs than Arts & Science and other students in first-entry programs
- Concerns were expressed that there are inherent challenges with the bi-campus organization (i.e., St. George and UTM representation) currently operative in UTSU, including providing UTMSU a differential role within UTSU (e.g., position on UTSU executive, fee transfers, etc.)
- Some representatives believe that the general students, particularly within their own divisions, may not know that they are members of both the divisional society and UTSU. This should be made clearer to students
- Some participants highlighted concerns that if a divisional society was to be distinct from a central body through an allowable process, it may wish to rejoin at a later time, which may have significant unforeseen implications
- It was indicated that the current student organization structure is based on a historical organization within the University, and that the structure, both from a governance and administrative perspective, has evolved to reflect the growth and expansion of the institution
- Some participants indicated concern that there is no official communication and decision-making process that connects the central body to the divisional societies

Explicit Roles of Student Societies at the University of Toronto

Specific issues were addressed around the roles of student societies and the services that they currently provide. There were questions for clarification and discussion around these topics:

Health and Dental Plan – Currently provided by the UTSU for all full-time undergraduate students on St. George and UTM campuses. The University administration clarified that it has no intentions to assume management of student health and dental plans; however, some student societies which ran plebiscites on fee diversion in the Spring 2013 indicated that their local divisions would be willing to administer their respective plans if fee diversion was approved.

Clubs – Both UTSU and divisional societies indicated that they provide a certain level of support for clubs. Many of the clubs allow for cross-divisional, and even tri-campus, participation. More information about the structure of clubs and funding mechanisms will be provided at the next meeting of the Summit.

Governance – Governance structures run completely independent of each other amongst student societies and there are no official channels or decision-making processes that connect the work. The processes currently run parallel to each other and are not interdependent. Applicable information on the Canada Not-for-Profit Corporations Act will be further discussed at the next meeting of Summit to see if there are implications in the current or other considered structures.

Summit Structure and Ongoing Format for Discussion

The Chair asked participants about the current format and how they would like the discussion structured, allowing for engagement in areas of agreement and disagreement. There was a general sense that there should be good continuity in participants, bringing in content experts as appropriate. Participants agreed that they should be relaying relevant information to their respective groups. There was general agreement that including the small group discussion format, in parts, is useful. Some participants requested increasing the membership to allow other groups that are not included currently. Although concerns were brought forward that the President of UTSU was not a participant, it was reiterated that each student society has made its own decision on who would represent its organization.

The next meeting has been scheduled on the following date:

- December 11, 2013 from 10:00am to noon. Lunch, provided by the Vice-Provost, Students & First-Entry Divisions, has been arranged following the meeting.

The Office of the Vice-Provost, Students & First-Entry Divisions will poll student participants for meeting schedules for next term.

Meeting adjourned at 3:00pm.