OAKLAND UNIVERSITY™

May 10, 2021

To the Oakland University Senate Steering Committee:

This is the end-of-year report for the Student Academic Support Committee, 2020-2021.

Chair: Susan McCarty
Committee members: Hoda Abdel-Aty-Zohdy, Terressa Benz, Ethan Bradley, Joanna Hernandez, Jessie Hurse, Danielle Ligocki, Lori Marsh, Courtney McCarrey, Robert Uptegraff, Samantha Keefer

Meetings: We met every three weeks, on the following dates: 10/1/20, 10/22/20, 11/12/20, 12/3/20, 1/21/21, 2/11/21, (3/4/21—this meeting was cancelled due to low attendance), 3/25/21, and 4/15/21.

During this school year, we discussed at length how best to support students during the move to online instruction and during ongoing online instruction over the academic school year. This committee has, in the past, focused on student mental health, and we decided to keep that focus since many committee members reported encountering students in even more distress during the pandemic than they already had been (mental health struggles of students is well-documented on OU campus both by this committee previously and by mental health resources on campus such as Graham Health Center).

Combining these concerns, we brainstormed ways we could help support students in the pandemic during this time in which their community connections were largely absent due to students not being able to gather on campus in the usual ways. To help identify areas where this would be possible, we spoke with Olivia Nash, the SEHS Counseling Center Coordinator, who provided us with a list of mental health resources at OU and in the community, and we spoke with Susanne Condron and Song Yan about the Provost's Student Survey (Fall 2020) to ascertain if there were particular modalities of support needed that we could provide.

We also consulted with Nic Bongers at e-LIS to discuss ways to aid in student support in online spaces, and gave him input for a student success workshop designed to help students get more out of their online learning environments.

By the second half of the year, we had narrowed our focus to the location and identification of mental health resources on the OU website and the ease of student access of them. Our last project was the inclusion of mental health resources language on the syllabus template, but students are not looking much at syllabi this year, so we wondered if there was a way to get that information to students via a link on Moodle or in some other more direct way.

In the committee's opinion, mental health resource information on the OU website was scattershot and we wondered if students who needed help right away would be able to find what they needed. We spoke with David Schwartz at the OU Counseling Center, and Michael MacDonald and Terry Dibble, both of whom worked on the GRASP initiative and who are still involved in mental health on campus. All agreed that a condensed list of mental health resources obvious and accessible to students would be very useful. Terry encouraged us to look into the Healthy Campus initiative which was just about to be rolled out at the time.

The committee also hit upon the idea of establishing a permanent mental health subcommittee that would be in charge of working on these specific concerns. Since the Healthy Campus Initiative was just rolling out at the time, we contacted Becky Lewis who agreed to establish a mental health subcommittee within the Healthy Campus Initiative, which would allow interested Committee members whose terms were coming to an end to voice concerns and help steer the programming and planning of the Healthy Campus Initiative to help students (and faculty) with their mental health.

Through that mental health subcommittee, we have been working with Lewis and e-LIS to provide a link from Moodle to a landing page hosted by the Health Campus Initiative that would give students an obvious and comprehensive list of mental health resources both on campus and off. We have also provided Lewis with committee feedback about the Healthy Campus Initiative website, and specifically the role of mental health on the website and in HCI programing. We asked that Lewis add the words "mental health" to the front page of the Healthy Campus Initiative, and make the words prominent so that students can see them (the current wording now is "well-being" and the Committee is concerned that students will not be able to make the leap from the mental-health assistance they need from these words). Lewis is currently working with Dan Arnold to draft a pop-up message in Moodle that provide a link for students to a list of mental health resources, along with a link in the student drop-down menu. We expect this will be a very useful tool for students and faculty far beyond the pandemic year. This work will continue in the mental-health subcommittee that has been established (by suggestion of the SASC) as part of the Healthy Campus Initiative.

Our work on this will continue through the end of the year, and so far at least two SASC committee members whose terms are ending (myself and Joanna Hernandez) have joined the Healthy Initiative subcommittee on mental health to continue our work there.

Note: No returning committee members have volunteered to chair the committee next year.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dr. Susan McCarty
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Department of English