

Oakland University Senate¹
Student Academic Support Committee
Annual Report for the 2018-2019 Academic Year

1. Committee Charge

To promote the academic success of students by considering, evaluating, and recommending policies and procedures in the areas of advising, financial aid, registration, admissions, student life, career development, and any other areas of student academic interest that may be brought before it.

2. Composition of the Committee

The Student Academic Support Committee, whose charge is stated above, is made up of members from various constituents of the University: faculty, students, and staff representatives from areas such as Academic Affairs, Advising, and the Office of the Dean of Students. A total of thirteen (13) members served on the committee during the year. All faculty and students on the committee were voting members. The names of those from these groups who served were as follows:

Faculty

- Henry Aigbedo, School of Business Administration (Committee Chair)
- Terressa Benz, College of Arts and Sciences
- Joanna Hernandez, School of Nursing
- Lan Jiang, College of Arts and Sciences
- Danielle Ligocki, School of Education and Human Services
- Susan McCarty, College of Arts and Sciences

Students

- Ryan Fox, President of Student Congress
- Gabrielle Schwartz, Undergraduate Representative
- Tyler Parsons, Graduate Representative

Staff

- Steve Farver, Representative of Professional Adviser Council
- Jesse Hurse, Designee, Dean of Students
- Yoel Joa, Designee, Vice President of Student Affairs
- Jill Tyus-Coates, Designee, Senior Vice President of Academic Affairs and Provost

¹ Prepared by Henry Aigbedo, Chair of the Student Academic Support Committee (2018/2019 Academic Year), May 25, 2020.

3. Meetings

The meetings took place in the Chairs' Conference room, Elliott Hall (School of Business Administration) from 10:00 am to 11:00 am on Wednesdays, approximately every 3 weeks. On 2 of the days when that venue was unavailable (November 7 and November 28), the committee held the meetings in the Dean's Conference room in the same building. The meeting dates were as follows:

Fall Semester 2018: September 26, October 27, November 7, November 28, December 5

Winter Semester 2019: January 9, February 13, February 27, March 13

4. Observations, Activities and Accomplishments

Right from the beginning of the academic year, the students on the committee identified Student Mental Health as the primary issue that needed to be addressed. Thus, the committee focused on this matter throughout the entire year. During the year, the committee examined and discussed the problem from various perspectives. The following is a summary of major observations from the deliberations and actions the committee took:

- (1) Many Oakland University students experience a great deal of stress as a result of being overwhelmed with their schoolwork
- (2) There is the danger of some of these OU students doing harm to themselves
- (3) Available counseling resources at OU's Graham Health Center are inadequate to meet students demand for help. Consequently, there is often long wait times before the students can be helped.
- (4) It was acknowledged that faculty role on this important matter is limited, since they are not trained in counseling or on how to provide direct help to students with regards to mental health.
- (5) It was recognized that since faculty are the closest to students (through lectures that they offer), it would be most effective for faculty to reach students by making them aware of available resources to help the students.
- (6) During our work, we became aware that there were some other entities on campus that have been addressing mental health related issues in some form. This includes the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (through its Supporting Students' Emotional Health Learning Community) and Mental Health First Aid (An initiative involving some faculty members in the School of Health Sciences). Attempts were made to connect with these groups so that we could compare notes and share information. More would still need to be done in this regard.
- (7) We were privileged to hear the perspectives of Dr. David Schwartz, psychologist, and the director of the counseling center (housed in the Graham Health Center) at Oakland University. Dr. Schwartz honored our invitation to speak to the committee. Among other things, he shared with us the current state with respect to counseling services that they offer and the resource constraints. He said that the average counseling staff to student ratio for universities in Michigan is 1:1700 while the recommended ratio is 1:1500, but at OU, the

ratio is 1:3500. As a result of this, there are often large numbers of students on the waitlist to receive services. However, he noted that the University is aware of these problems and is trying to address the matter.

- (8) The committee worked on developing verbiage on student mental health that all faculty would include in their syllabi. After some research, including examining similar documents at other institutions, the committee came up with the verbiage below. On March 21, 2019, the committee made a formal presentation to OU Senate, in order to create faculty awareness on this important matter. The senate approved the verbiage. The full PowerPoint document presented to the Senate is included as an attachment to this report.

Verbiage About Student Mental Health

Oakland University is committed to advancing the mental health and well-being of its students. If you or someone you know is feeling overwhelmed, depressed, and/or in need of support, services are available. For help, contact The OU Counseling Center at Graham Health at (248) 370-3465. Student resources can also be found at www.oakland.edu/deanofstudents by clicking on Student Health & Safety Resources.

- (9) After the presentation to OU Senate, the committee worked through its members in the different academic units to disseminate the same information at the unit level. Presentations were made at the faculty assemblies of the School of Business Administration and the School of Education and Human Services and plans were underway to do so in other units. Even though a formal presentation was not made to the faculty assembly of the School of Engineering and Computer Science, the information was disseminated to the faculty there through a contact that the committee had in the school. A committee representative also made a presentation to the Academic Council.
- (10) Another major issue that the committee worked on was the consolidation of information about mental health resources in a single repository so that students can go there directly. Work was continuing to scale up what the Dean of Students Office already had in place in this regard.