



May 1, 2024

To the Oakland University Senate Steering Committee:

This is the end-of-year report for the Student Academic Support Committee, 2023-2024.

Chair: Tara Diesbourg

Committee members: Robert Uptegraff, Betty Tonui, Erin Dwyer, Nick Lauer, Stephen Bazinski, Qunfeng Liao, Ariana Abbott/Caitlyn Thayer, Dan Arnold, Lori Marsh, Jessie Hurse, Kristin Landis-Piowar, Murryum Farooqi (*student rep*), Maris Ferguson (*student rep*), Vanessa Thompson (*graduate student rep*)

Meetings: We met monthly, on the third Thursday of the month from 10/19/2023 to 4/18/2024. The 12/21/2023 meeting was canceled due to its conflict with final exams and the holiday break and the 2/15/2024 meeting was cancelled due to a last minute emergency in the chair's family.

In our initial meeting, we discussed what the focus of this committee should be for the 2023-2024 Academic Year. Last year, this committee had begun work on raising awareness of the student services offered on campus, and encouraging students to take advantage of the services. We focused on a "Please BUG me" campaign to reinforce to students that taking advantage of these services is not a bother to instructors and employees, but rather that it is entirely welcomed.

Then, we discussed initiatives for this year. We discussed excused absence policies, and clearer policy language surrounding breaks and holidays. As we dug deeper into these things, we found that these were all University policies, and the majority of the ideas that we discussed were already in place, and we did not have to create new policies. We found that the issue surrounded the housing/availability of University on OU websites. So that is where we focused our efforts. The University has a lot of policies in place to help the students succeed, but they are not easy to find unless you know exactly what you're looking for, and use the correct verbiage. So, we tasked individual departments to review the policies they oversee, and to consider providing a "layman's" version of the policy in addition to the legalese version of the policy that is currently posted. Just a short summary explaining to students their rights and responsibilities under that policy. We haven't seen or heard any update from any of the individual departments on this yet, but we're hoping that it comes to fruition over the next year. We also discussed a more easily navigable home for these policies, such as a "know your rights" tab in MySail, however with the upcoming software change, this could not be implemented at this time.

Another initiative we focused heavily on was digital accessibility, particularly surrounding serif fonts. Some students, especially those with some cognitive



impairments) find it difficult to read/interpret serif fonts. We reached out to DSS to get a better idea of their position on this issue, but all emails to DSS went unanswered. Therefore, we decided simply to raise awareness of this issue to faculty members. Faculty members should be willing to be more flexible on their assignment requirements, allowing either serif (Times New Roman) or sans-serif (Calibri) fonts in student submissions. Further, documentation, communications, and other written media between students and faculty should be available in sans-serif font when requested. This information was to be shared with Department Chairs at the Chairs' meeting, so that they can share it more broadly with faculty.

Lastly, we discussed the new Uwill system and the students' perspective on it. Students are appreciative of the increased availability of mental health resources on campus, however would like a more centralized access to Uwill. Therefore, we had e-LIS place a link to Uwill in the student dropdown menu on Moodle. When the software changeover from MySail is complete, we recommend placing a Uwill link in that system as well, to help make sure that students are able to identify the tool easily when they are in a crisis situation and may not have the bandwidth to search the internet for the resources they need.

It has been a pleasure serving as chair of the Student Academic Support Committee for these past three years, and I thank you for your support. Please let me know if you need anything else from me at this time.

Please Note: The e-LIS representative moving forward will be Kate Huttenlocher in place of Dan Arnold. Also, as this is Dr. Diesbourg's final year on this committee, a new chair is needed. While members were asked for a volunteer to chair next year's committee, no one stepped forward, and as such, we defer to the Senate Steering Committee to identify a chair for next year's SASC.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tara Diesbourg".

Dr. Tara Diesbourg
Assistant Professor
Public and Environmental Wellness Department, School of Health Sciences