

Mental Health Task Force

Faculty Council - October 31, 2018



UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
FACULTY OF APPLIED SCIENCE & ENGINEERING

Mandate

The Decanal Task Force of Mental Health Strategies worked to:

- Identify and review the mental health strategies and resources that the Faculty of Applied Science and Engineering currently provides or facilitates
- Review the current initiatives and strategies that promote mental health, and their effectiveness, within the University of Toronto and beyond
- Recommend a mental health strategy and implementation plan for the Faculty that aligns with the University's new Mental Health Framework
- Recommend appropriate working groups to implement the proposed strategy and plan

Process

- The Task Force met from July 2015 to October 2015
- Four working groups were formed:
 - Awareness, Education, Training & Anti-Stigma
 - Inclusive Curriculum & Pedagogy.
 - Mental Health Services & Programs
 - Supportive Policies and Procedures
- Final report presented to Faculty Council in December 2016



Summary of Recommendations

Education, Training, Awareness & Anti-Stigma

1. Improve the Faculty's webpages dedicated to student health and wellness resources.
2. Develop and clarify a communication and referral protocol for students in crisis.
3. Develop a coordinated training program for staff and faculty on addressing students in distress and increase training for academic departments.
4. Develop a quick reference guide on addressing students in distress for faculty and instructors.
5. Develop a campaign to showcase Engineering students who prioritize healthy habits and lifestyle.

Inclusive Curriculum & Pedagogy

6. Develop a mental health statement to be included on all course syllabi.
7. Utilize Universal Design principles as a paradigm when proposing new academic programs or making changes to existing academic programs.
8. Review and further develop academic and personal support services for graduate students.
9. Better communicate to students their program's academic objectives and how their program's requirements are designed to support them.

Mental Health Service & Programs

10. Expand the capacity for embedded personal counselling within the Faculty.

Policies & Procedures

11. Modify the current Engineering undergraduate ranking system.
12. Facilitate a review on the Faculty's accessibility and accommodations policies.



Implementation

Education, Training, Awareness & Anti-Stigma

1. Improve the Faculty's webpages dedicated to student health and wellness resources - **Complete**
 - “Feeling Distressed” button added to top of every page – direct link to mental health and crisis support
 - Developed clearer, easier to find, pages for Advising & Wellness on undergraduate student website
2. Develop and clarify a communication and referral protocol for students in crisis – **Complete**
 - The “Identify, Assist, Refer (IAR): Supporting Students in Distress” program was developed by Health & Wellness and implemented at U of T Engineering in 2017
 - This aligns with the goals and recommendations of the Academic Advising Steering Committee
3. Develop a coordinated training program for staff and faculty on addressing students in distress and increase training for academic departments – **Complete**
 - IAR training was offered to staff and faculty in person in collaboration with Health & Wellness and the Crisis Response Team in 2017 & 2018
 - IAR online training launched October 2018 - Emails promoting the training will be sent to staff, faculty & students throughout October 2018 and will be included in future communications once a term (iar.utoronto.ca)



Implementation

Education, Training, Awareness & Anti-Stigma

4. Develop a quick reference guide on addressing students in distress for faculty and instructors - **Complete**
 - IAR packages with resources and steps for how to identify and refer students in distress were circulated to staff and faculty in 2017
 - IAR Resources are now online at iar.utoronto.ca
5. Develop a campaign to showcase Engineering students who prioritize healthy habits and lifestyle – **In progress**
 - A campaign is in development with the RO & StratComm, to be launched March 2018



Implementation

Inclusive Curriculum & Pedagogy

6. Develop a mental health statement to be included on all course syllabi - **Complete**
 - The statement has been circulated to instructors at the beginning of each term since Fall 2017

7. Utilize Universal Design principles as a paradigm when proposing new academic programs or making changes to existing academic programs – **Upcoming**
 - Resources to be compiled and circulated to the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee and the Teaching Methods and Resource Committee
 - Develop workshops that will be offered to instructors (1 per term)



Implementation

Inclusive Curriculum & Pedagogy

8. Review and further develop academic and personal support services for graduate students – **In progress**
 - Under the direction of the Vice-Dean, Graduate a PhD career peer support initiative will be launched in 2019. As part of this initiative 4 PhD students have been trained as career educators and wellness support (including SafeTalk) and referring wellness resources have been part of their training. The plan is to expand this to the MEng and MASC programs in the future
 - Further, the Vice-Dean Graduate office is discussing financial supports for graduate student associations with mental health initiatives (e.g., Graduate Engineering Council of Students)
 - Finally, information on supporting and referring students in distress has been included in TA Training for first time TAs

9. Better communicate to students their program's academic objectives and how their program's requirements are designed to support them – **Upcoming**
 - A committee will be formed to decide to determine approach to implementation
 - Graduate attributes and curriculum maps are widely shared with students and are used as references.



Implementation

Mental Health Service & Programs

10. Expand the capacity for embedded personal counselling within the Faculty – **Complete**
 - A full-time Embedded Health & Wellness Counsellor has been hired
 - Increased hours from 2 days/week to 5 days/week

Policies & Procedures

11. Modify the current Engineering undergraduate ranking system – **Decided not to Implement**
 - After further review with students and the engineering society, it was found that most students wanted the existing ranking student to remain in place
12. Facilitate a review on the Faculty's accessibility and accommodations policies – **Complete**
 - Our polices are in alignment with University policies and procedures.



Moving Forward

Continue to Implement the Recommendations

- Consultations with the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee, the Teaching Methods and Resource Committee and the Institute for Studies of Transdisciplinary Engineering Education and Practice will begin in Nov 2018 to move forward implementing recommendations 7 & 9

Ongoing Initiatives to Support & Assess Mental Health Support

- Circulate the Mental Health Syllabus Statement to instructors before the beginning of each term
- Promotion of the the IAR Online Training to faculty, staff and students will continue each academic year
- Collect data from undergraduate students on access to resources and students perception of metal health support through the First Year Exit Survey and the Graduating Student Survey
- Monitor demand for appointments with the Embedded Mental Health Counsellor and re-evaluate capacity with Health & Wellness as necessary
- Coordinate and promote Mindful Moments sessions for students, staff and faculty at Engineering (www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/hwc/mindful-moments)
- The Assistant Director, Student Experience & Teaching Development will continue to liaise with the Engineering Society's Mental Wellness Director to develop and promote initiatives and resources
- The FYO will continue to organize SafeTalk training for Orientation Leaders each year



Questions?



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