



REPORT

From the office of the...

WGEN Coordinator

TO: Members of the Executive Board

FROM: Jocelyn Heaton

SUBJECT: Women and Gender Equity Network Report #3

DATE:s October 1st, 2018

UPDATE

We are happy to report that our service is officially up and running for the year. We help and attended a variety of welcome week events, conducted a second round of hiring, trained all our volunteers, opened our space, and held our first two events of the year! I will go into detail about most of these things in sections below. Generally, our service itself has been functioning every well. The executive team and volunteers seem to be enjoying their positions and providing excellent support. Our events have mostly been successful and well attended. And we have a great plan in place for the year, that so far we have been able to follow and complete.

The challenges we have faced have mostly been in our collaboration events with other groups, the Student Union, and the University. Communication has not always been the strongest between myself and university partners, resulting in a few miscommunications and mistakes. Also, events in which we have been asked to attend, that were not our own, have been rocky in ways I will describe in subsequent sections. The general sentiment of my team is that when we have control over things, we are able to complete things easier, because we have very strong inner-team communication, but when other groups are involved there is usually come sort of hiccup, For this reason we have made it a goal to more clearly communicate our needs and expectations when collaborating or working with other groups so as to avoid misunderstandings and mistakes, as well so we can concrete give feedback afterwards if things do go wrong, and have record that we had requested certain things. For example, Training and Homecoming were both done in collaboration with the other peer support services, the MSU and a few other partners, but expectations were not clearly given beforehand, and therefore problems arose that we weren't prepared to address.

I think two major success we have had is our Space Opening and our executive team collaboration. First, our space opened on time and with almost no problem. Volunteer performed their roles very well and seem to be getting comfortable. I will discuss this in more detail below. As for the Executive team, not only have they bonded really well personally, they have been excellent at communicating with each other and collaborating to get tasks done. Our volunteer hiring, training, and first few events were



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concentrated in 3 weeks, with those weeks also being heavy school wise for most, and yet we were able to execute things at a high standard. I think this goes to show the competence and professionalism of the executive team this year, and hopefully foreshadowing a very successful year for the service.

SERVICE USAGE

Physical Space

Our space has been open for two weeks. In order to track usage, we have one volunteer per shift assigned to complete an intake form. In the first week (Sept. 17th-21st) we had 74% of intakes completed, and recorded 142 people using the space. In the second week (Sept. 24th-28th) we had 66% of intakes completed, and recorded 92 people using the space. We can assume that with these intake completion percentages, the space usage is in actuality higher than these recorded numbers. In these two week of operation we have also received three disclosures of sexual violence.

Myself and the executive team have made a point of being very present and visible in the space so that our volunteers are able to ask us question and so we can monitor them in their roles and provide feedback when appropriate. So far we have been impressed with the volunteers, both in their implementation of everything from training and also their ability to ask questions in order to perform their best. Users have seemed comfortable in the space and some have provided oral feedback that the space is very welcoming and volunteers are great facilitators and good supporters.

Resources

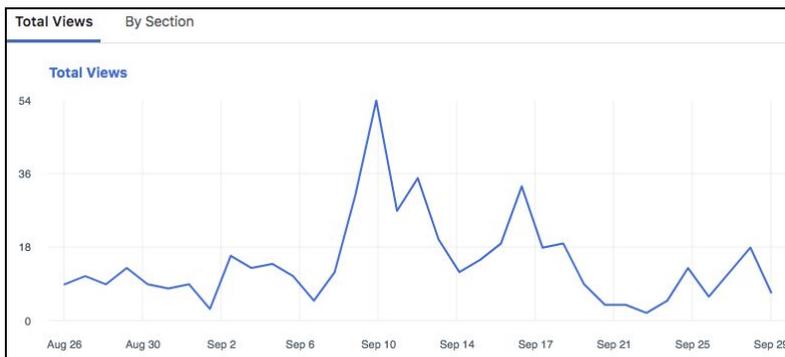
We have given out 5 books since our space opened on September 17th. We have also given out one chest binder. We plan on promoting our resources during our campaign weeks, and hope to see increased usage during these times. For example, there is plans to advertise our chest binder, bra drive and breast form initiatives during our Transforming Mac campaign in November.

Social Media

Facebook Page Views are up 209% since the summer months, indicating that our increased posting and presence in the mOnth of September has brought in a significant increase in engagement. We saw the biggest spikes in engagement on the last day of our

Hiring (Sept. 9th) and on our opening day (Sept. 17th).

Our Facebook page likes have also been steadily increasing since the beginning of Welcome week and we hope to maintain this positive trend (Figure 1.2).



Our Instagram launch has also been a success. By using the Story feature, we are able to provide more casual updates and activity to engage our followers and keep people updated with our service. We have also been using our twitter consistently. We mainly use it to interact with other Hamilton and McMaster groups in order to share events and initiatives that may interest our followers.



PAST EVENTS, PROJECTS & ACTIVITIES

WGEN was very active during welcome week, attending many tabling style events as well as working as volunteers at a variety of the events. I want to talk about three events of the week in particular. First, we held a keynote event on August 30th as part of the Strategic Themes Advisory Committee, in which we invited Rania El Mugammar to speak on rape culture and supporting survivors. I estimated around 40 attendees. The talk was absolutely wonderful and engaging, with Rania continually interacting with the audience, at one point doing an activity that got almost every person in the room talking. Many attendees approached myself, one of the execs, or Rania after the event to express their gratitude and share something they learned. We also told everyone present about our Hiring and many of the folks who attended ended up applying to be a volunteer. The second event was also on August 30th, and was the Wellness Fair



in which we collaborated with the MSU Maroons for a consent promotion (above photos are from the event). We had been told that all the services would develop an activity and



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then for each activity completed students would be entered into a draw for a prize. Unfortunately on the day, when I went asking about how that would all be working, I was told that it had been cancelled and I, nor the other PTM's had been informed. We were accommodated and given a 25\$ gift card to give to a winner of just the WGEN & Maroons collaboration but the communication made it difficult to execute smoothly. As well, had we been notified of the change earlier there is a good chance we would have help the Maroons collaboration on another day instead of incorporating it into the Wellness fair. The last event I want to mention is the Concert. WGEN, and other service volunteers were present to offer peer support and aid in any other tasks. We did receive two disclosures that night and offered support to approximately 4 people. There were a few concerns brought to me by volunteers, noteworthy of which was that the DJ playing before the headliner was playing music with offensive slurs in it and in doing so, many event attendees were singing along those slurs. Given that myself and many of my volunteers occupy marginalized identities, in some cases very visual ones, it became very uncomfortable for us to walk around a crowd of people saying slurs against our identities. In the future, I would recommend that artists and DJs brought to campus be vetted more thoroughly for this type of conduct and given clear limits on what they can and cannot play.

Since our Space opening on September 18th we have also hosted two events. First, we had our WGENius, intersectional Feminist Trivia Night on Sept, 19th. This event was well attended and we received positive feedback from many of the attendees. The executive team were all very engaged in the planning of this event, particularly the Community Events and Planning executives, and the Social and Political Advocacy executives.



We were also able to come in under budget for this event. We also hosted a workshop as a part of OPIRG's Making Connections week on Sept. 26th called Diversity in University. There wasn't very strong attendance at this event with under 10 people attending, but it made it so those that did attend could ask lots of questions, and get more out of the workshop. After talking with most the attendees after the event, they expressed that it wasn't exactly what they thought it would be but that they learned something new. I think one of the reasons the event might not have been as well attended was promotions. We focused our promotions on the WGENius Trivia night the week before and so really only had a week to promote this event, rather than our usual two weeks. In the future I would try to avoid having events so close together that are not part of the same campaign to avoid this problem



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The last event I want to mention is Homecoming. WGEN, and the other peer support services were asked to attend the homecoming concert for peer support. I was very disappointed with the way this event was run. The location was poorly conceived, largely due to the heat and lack of exits. Being in the hot gym, many folks wanted to leave to get air but there was almost no space outside for people to do that, especially after a large chunk of the outdoor area was blocked off due to incidents of intoxication. We were also concerned that it took almost two hours for an ambulance to be called for an attendee that, from our perspective, showed clear signs of needing medical attention immediately. At this point it was brought to our attention that an ambulance had not been ordered and therefore there were no paramedics on sight. I think this was a huge oversight or mistake and could have put attendees in danger. One main issue we had was also the security and police presence. Security were not letting some people into the venue due to intoxication, as well as removing them after gaining entrance, but instead of ensuring their safety, we witnessed them simply escorted people out of the lines alone, often without letting these people's friends know they had been removed and leaving them to get home alone. Myself and my volunteers walked 3 people back to residences after incidents like this, and without our help these students may not have made it home safely. There was also a specific incident involving two Hamilton Police officers inside the venue. First, I do not think it is necessary at all to have police inside the concert venue. If they are needed they can be called and brought in but we received a lot of feedback that their presence made a lot of attendees very uncomfortable. Second, I will likely be pursuing a complaint against two of the officers for their specific conduct with an attendee but due to confidentiality am not able to share more regarding

UPCOMING EVENTS, PROJECTS & ACTIVITIES

We are planning two main Events/Campaigns for the rest of this term. First, we plan on hosting our annual Spooptacular night at the end of October. It will likely be a movie night coupled with some sort of feminist education piece but planning has just begun for this event and so I don't have anything else to report. We have also begun planning our Transforming Mac week to be held November 19th-23rd. We will be holding at least one event with the McMaster Womanists, our working group during this week and have begun brainstorming on other potential collaborations as well.

We are also working on updating our library catalogue to a more efficient system. The resources team has been trailing a variety of systems this month and we think we have found one that will work. The Resources team has also been working on an ongoing collaboration with the Silhouette in which our executives and volunteers submit columns to the opinion section of the paper.

The Social and Political Advocacy team has been reviewing a variety of collaboration requests throughout the summer and we are excited about a few of those coming up this semester. Notably, we have been working with an Event Organizer



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regarding a Commit(men)t and Allyship Event, meant to discuss toxic masculinity and rape culture with men, with all proceeds going to SACHA. They have also begun brainstorming future collaborations with campus partners and have already been in contact with a few including the Womanists, MISCA, and MMPJ to discuss potential events and programs.



BUDGET

WGEN spent Depreciation funding on some updated furniture and storage for the space. The total cost was 912.7801 with tax. We also spent 75\$ on Underground graphics, 20\$ for our Clubsfest table, and 12\$ on button making. For our first event, WGENius we spent 186.23\$. For training we spent 267.73\$. As of now we have mostly landed under budget for most of my initial predictions and so this may allow us more wiggle room further into the term. However, I was recently made aware that WGEN's working group, the Womanists, do not receive any independent funding and I hadn't accounted for funding their programming in my initial predictions. To my knowledge WGEN's budget was not specifically increased with the addition of the working group and I plan to discuss this with the VP Finance soon, in order to improve the working groups functioning for this year, and future years. Additionally, the issue reported previously in which a charge from last year was placed on my budget has been resolved. They cannot remove the charge, but I have been given approval to spend over my budget line by the amount of the charge which is 420\$

VOLUNTEERS

The Executive team has been outstanding so far. With the immense amount of stress that September brings, I am very impressed with them. Most notably I am very happy about the level of communication with each other and myself. They all seem passionate about their roles and are therefore working hard to put the best work forward. Also, they have been excellent at communicating when they cannot get things done, and setting healthy limits for themselves about when and how they do their work. I plan on doing some sort of appreciation for the team mid semester, likely after reading week to thank them for all the hard work.

WGEN Safe(r) Space volunteers have been hired trained and have now completed two weeks of their role in facilitating the space. We get generally positive feedback from training, and so far have had very open communication with them. Many seem comfortable in the role and also in asking questions when they are unsure which is vital to improving the services. We will be holding a term end appreciation for these volunteers.



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WGEN Events Committee volunteers worked to help plan the WGENius Trivia night and will soon establish a consistent meeting time to begin working on Spooptacular and Transforming Mac events. We will provide appreciation for these volunteers after major events and campaigns.

CURRENT CHALLENGES

The main challenges WGEN is facing right now is improve our communication with campus partners in order to make collaboration initiatives and events stronger. We would love to be involved in some great group projects this year but need to make sure we are setting out expectations for ourselves and others that are reasonable. This is an ongoing issue because we do not have control over others and therefore need to come up with some strategies on our end to makes such collaborations worthwhile and successful.

SUCSESSES

So much happened in September, and there are so many little, and big successes we could celebrate. I explained many of these throughout the report but mainly, I want to give a large shout out to the executive team for their amazing work the past few months and for getting our service off to a strong start.

OTHER

The peer support training weekend had a lot of ups and downs. Generally, I found that the WGEN run portions were fairly smooth as myself and my team had control over a smaller group of volunteers. Unfortunately on the first day when all the services had sessions and lunch together there were a handful of problems. There are a lot of good things that came out of training, noteworthy of which was overwhelmingly positive feedback from the volunteers on the content and learning experience, so I will be spending most my time covering critiques and feedback in order to improve the weekend for future years. I have provided Kristina with six general areas of feedback and will summarize those here. First, I felt there was some general problems with communication. I felt a little confused and scrambled in the weeks before training because certain information wasn't communicated, or if it was, only to certain PTM's. During the weekend I don't feel I was given clear instructions on when and how I should be communicating with the TRRA, the AVP Services and the VP Admin. Second, the timing and content of AOP training was rather rushed and unorganized. I enjoyed the AOP training but my team had already spent the summer designing similar content as we had been informed we wouldn't be receiving it. More notice on this addition to the weekend would have helped significantly in our planning process. Also, I do not think one hour was not enough time to deliver AOP content. Third, the room bookings were disorganized. I was unclear until a few days before training who had to book rooms for which days, so to connect this piece to communication, more information on this front would have been nice. Also, the room booked to deliver AOP to all 4 services was not



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big enough. With no supporting staff present, we had to make a command decision to have WGEN get AOP on the afternoon because there was no way we could all get it together. This caused WGEN some scheduling difficulties, as well as inconveniencing the folks from Diversity Services. Fourth, the food delivery on Saturday was very confusing and caused significant tension between services. There was not nearly enough Vegan pizza ordered despite us sending in our numbers ahead of time. Special accommodations food was delivered almost an hour after the other food, at which point I had sent a few of my executives to Williams to get these individuals something to eat in a timely manner. This charge came out of WGEN's budget. Fifth, the TRRA role was unclear and disorganized. I was unclear what the TRRA was meant to do before and during training and so I think further clarification of this role would be helpful in future years. Considering the 4 PTMs had to recreate the entire Peer Support training powerpoint, 2 of us had to deliver it, and the TRRA was not present on the weekend, I would be interested in pursuing additional compensation for this work that was not in our job descriptions during a week in which we were all already working over our allocated hours. Lastly, I generally felt unsupported on the weekend. I was constantly putting out fires, running around trying to fix problems and appease everyone. There was some conflict between teams and the PTMs were left to handle these situations alone. I want to stress that this feedback is mostly negative because I wish to improve training for future years and hope to see this type of information passed on to future years.