



Report

From the office of the...

Abilities Ad-Hoc Committee

TO: Members of the Student Representative Assembly
FROM: Giuliana Guarna, Vice President (Administration)
SUBJECT: MSU Maccess
DATE: September 27th, 2015

Dear Assembly,

The Abilities Ad-Hoc committee has been meeting throughout the summer to discuss and evaluate the need and/or potential for a new peer-support service to be created on campus. As a committee we have discussed a number of different gaps that currently exist for students with visible and invisible disabilities on campus. We hope that through this report, you will get a sense of the conversations that were had.

Throughout this report you will see recommendations that are being put forth by the committee, a timeline of what will be done in the coming months, and accomplishments to date.

The committee included both MSU and SRA members, the Services and Operations Commissioners, the Abilities Coordinator, Diversity Services Director and Assistant Director. The PTM's of the four other peer-support services (QSCC, WGEN, SHEC, PSL) also act as official observers on the committee. Their voices have been critical in helping our Ad-Hoc committee to understand the nature and structure of delivering peer support.

A few of the challenges that we have come across while working in this group include

- lack of space for the service
- where does this service fit in relation to other stakeholders in the McMaster community
- how to ensure that we prepare a PTM to take over the service
- budget
- how do we complete and facilitate the transition of responsibilities from Diversity Services to an Abilities Peer Support Service

In identifying these challenges, the committee had a number of conversations on how to tackle them. We have outlined some recommendations below, based on the conversations that we have had at the committee level.

Recommendations

1. *Hire a PTM at the same time as the CLAY coordinator.*
 - a. Last year we launched our fourth peer-support service, WGEN. Launching a service from the ground up is extremely time and energy intensive. The nature of peer-support requires the PTM to establish strong relationships with a number of key stakeholders. These stakeholders are usually a combination of both on and off campus partners. The establishment of trusted relationships or institutional

collaborations often requires time, due to the bureaucratic nature of the institution within which we operate. By hiring the PTM earlier and allowing them to start working from January 1st, we will enable them to have a four month head start to help establish these relationships, determine their executive structure, and put in place many of the pieces that are necessary for a service of this nature to operate.

- b. To note. This will be the PTM that also runs the service from May 2016-April 2017. This should help with the momentum that a new service needs in order to get off of the ground.

Find a reliable space that is consistently used to host Abilities safe space once per week.

- a. One of the questions that we had to address as a committee was - what does this service look like without a physical space?
- b. We have reached out to the SWELL to see if they would be able to give us a reliable 1 or 2 hour slot each week to host the safe space. The committee identified this space as one of the most accessible spaces on campus. Alternatively, we could also use MUSC 311/313. The problem with the MUSC room, is that MUSC only allows you to make three recurring bookings a row.

3. Creation of a “transition report” from the Abilities Coordinator housed in Diversity Services to the new PTM for the Abilities Peer Support Service.

- a. One of the challenges that we have to overcome is the passing of the torch from the Abilities Pillar of Diversity Services over to the “abilities service”. Lead by the current Abilities Coordinator, the committee will be creating a transition report to give to the newly hired PTM to help them have a better understanding of the abilities related programming and hopeful future directions for programming and services.

4. Remove the abilities pillar from Diversity services

- a. It is recommended that as MSU Maccess is created, that the Abilities pillar of Diversity services cease to exist. This is similar to the disbandment of the gender equity pillar through the creation of WGEN.
- b. As this change occurs, we will also need to critically evaluate the direction and scope of the services that Diversity Services provides.
- c.

5. Operate MSU Maccess as a full service

- a. It is recommended that MSU Maccess run as a full service from it's inception. There were a number of pressures that were highlighted by WGEN when they were a pilot service.
- b. To address the need for feedback and change within the first year, a review structure has been outlined in the proposed Operating Policy, which will be disbanded at the close of the 2016-2017 academic year.

Timeline

September 8-11: Job Description sent to Finance Committee, Brainstorm potential names for the service

September 14-18: Present OP to Executive Board for Approval; Finalize name of the service; circulate JD through Finance Committee

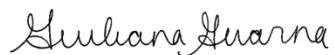
September 27: Present operating policy and Ad-Hoc Committee Report to the SRA. Goal is to pass the operating policy therefore "creating" the MSU Maccess service.

Late October/Early November: Hire PTM

Mid-Late November: Conduct PTM Training

January 1: PTM start

Best,



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