



## **AVSSU Townhall Minutes**

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**Date:** Tuesday, October 13th

**Time:** 6:00 – 7:00pm (EDT)

**Location:** Zoom

**Attendance of AVSSU Executive Members:** Randa Omar (President), Zargham Nasir (VP Internal), Jose Power (VP External), Ashish Gangwar (VP Student Life), Mathilde Dreyer (Commissioner of Sustainability), Athina Ji-Hae Alight (Commissioner of Health and Wellness), Rebecka Ferraro (VP Communications)

**Attendance of Daniels Faculty Members:** Robert Levit (Associate Dean, Academic), Andrea McGee (Registrar & Assistant Dean, Students) Carla Baptista (Associate Registrar, Academic Advising & Student Engagement), Charles Stankievech (Directors of the Visual Studies Program and Associate Professor)

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### **Addressing the loss of studio culture**

One student stated that there is a diminishing sense of studio culture due to the online learning format and would like to see initiatives geared towards replicating this environment so that people can view each other's work. Andrea McGee mentioned that Faculty have the option to put up course Instagram pages as a platform to view work, as some have. Robert Levit stated that he will ask Faculty for recommendations to achieve these ends. Possible solutions discussed among the group include the use of Miro Boards, and the potential for AVSSU run "Work with Me" videos that would be live and operable throughout the week on Instagram, Discord, or Zoom.

### **Concerns with online learning**

Students mentioned that ten-minute breaks between each hour of class are extremely helpful, however many courses have stopped doing this since classes became virtual. Given that

students are spending greater amounts of time in front of their computer screens, these breaks become especially important.

It is noted by students that courses originally listed as synchronous have become hybrids encompassing both synchronous and asynchronous lectures. As a result, some students are finding themselves overwhelmed with heavier workloads due to the extended class hours and additional information provided by the combination of synchronous and asynchronous lectures, which exceed the stated class length. Robert Levit stated that he will clarify with the Faculty to stick to specified class times and workloads. Another student stated that all asynchronous portions should be able to be watched in the synchronous sessions. They believe that synchronous times are important and help people form a schedule.

Students reported that there should be more notice given for assignments before the deadline, and that some professors have shown an unwillingness to grant extensions on smaller assignments between 1-4%.

Charles Stankievecch mentioned that there has been a lot of frontloading of assignments, in exchange for larger assignments. He stated that professors have more pressure when recording and that Q&A periods are much longer due to the chat online function.

### **Credit/No Credit Option**

Students have made inquiries about extending the credit/no credit options given the circumstances of the pandemic and the subsequent shift to online learning. Robert Levit stated that CR/NCR is a university-wide policy and not a faculty-specific decision. Andrea McGee clarified that CR/NCR will not be extended. She noted that students were aware of the expectations and the virtual format going into the semester, which makes this option unnecessary. In response, a student stated that they did not know expectations going into the semester, including but not limited to late syllabi postage, synchronous courses becoming asynchronous, and the subsequent increases in workloads. Robert Levit stated that this is a learning process and he will give this feedback to professors.

### **Communication and Accessibility with the Registrar**

A student mentioned that they experienced difficulties in contacting the Registrar over the phone. Andrea McGee noted that there is only one person in the office during the day to answer phone calls. Carla Baptista suggested that email is better as there are more people able to respond.

Andrea McGee apologized for the wait time for emails and stated that administrative work has increased for them as well. They are looking at ways to have Registrar virtual drop-ins, and that the details for this will be worked by the end of next week. It is noted that throughout the summer and towards the winter, academic advising appointments are available. Carla Baptista mentioned that there will be a series of emails going out over seven weeks highlighting one of the student services offered at Daniels or within UofT as a whole.

Students can book spaces at Daniels through a proper sign-in system, and can organize together in small groups. The link to do so is as follows:  
[https://www.daniels.utoronto.ca/sites/default/files/fall2020\\_daniels\\_space\\_and\\_resource\\_guide.pdf](https://www.daniels.utoronto.ca/sites/default/files/fall2020_daniels_space_and_resource_guide.pdf)

## **Tuition**

Students have inquired about how tuition fees are affected by the transition to online learning. Some believe that they should not be paying full price to support facilities which they cannot access or use. It was clarified that the tuition is set by the university, rather than the Daniels Faculty, and that bursaries are provided for students with financial challenges. It is noted that studio and extra material course fees have been waived, and that the Faculty has requested that international student fees do not increase. Andrea McGee noted that additional TAs have been hired because of the online learning format which is one of the reasons course tuition remains the same. There is a new infographic that will explain the difference between fees and tuition coming soon. Students are encouraged to review the following link for more information about course fees during the pandemic: <https://www.viceprovoststudents.utoronto.ca/covid-19/#Fees>