



Student Caucus of Osgoode Hall Law School

Minutes

11 November 2020 (12:30pm – 2:30pm)

Zoom (Online)

Present: Akshay Aurora (Chair), Chloé Duggal, Corey Fletcher (left partway) Gaby Pellerin, Karin Kazakevich, Viktor Hohlov, Arielle Masur, Faiza Tariq, Tomislav Milos, Aya Fahmi, Jaylene Olson, Herman Wong,

Note: The Caucus Executive suspended the usual rules of quorum and allowed for the meeting to take place online as well as in-person due to the COVID-19 pandemic. All members joining online or via phone were granted voting rights.

CALL TO ORDER (12:32pm)

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Motion: THAT the Agenda be approved. (Corey/ Brittany) CARRIED

COMMENTS FROM THE EXECUTIVE

Chair's Remarks & Items – General

Akshay:

Land acknowledgement.

As this meeting is virtual and we are not all gathered in the same space, I recognize that this land acknowledgment might not be for the territory that you are currently on. We ask that if this is the case, you take the responsibility to acknowledge the traditional territory you are on and the current treaty holders. As a member of the York University (Osgoode) community, I recognize that many Indigenous Nations have long standing relationships with the territories upon which York University campuses are located that precede the establishment of York University. York University (Osgoode Hall Law School) acknowledges its presence on the traditional territory of many Indigenous Nations. The area known as Tkaronto has been cared for by the Anishinabek Nation, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, and the Huron-Wendat. It is now home to many First Nation, Inuit and Métis communities. We acknowledge the current treaty holders, the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. This territory is subject of the Dish with One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement to peacefully share and care for the Great Lakes region.

Corey: *Interesting Indigenous tidbit about Binaaswi (Francis Pegahmagabow) – highest WW1 Indigenous Veteran in Canadian history.*

Toronto Star article about Binaaswi (Francis Pegahmagabow). This individual was absolutely amazing in WWI, one of 39 individuals to get the highest honors. When the war ended and everyone came back, he was called an "Indian" and not represented for his effort. The person who received the highest rank was still degraded, so you can imagine what happened to others. When we look at what is now considered Canada, we are grateful for Indigenous in more than one and recognize their ultimate sacrifices on remembrance day today.

Akshay: Taking indigenous law class with Professor Hewitt – Incredible class. Not only changes your worldview of law but changes your view as a person. It was incredible and I feel that I am changing as a person with this class and it is not something I generally feel with my other classes.

Yesterday had a component with writing where we had to write factum and had the misfortune of being the Crown in the moot.

You don't have to be the same kind of crown that the crown has been in those sorts of arguments before and we had to create an overhaul of how the crown proceeded with this. I think we did a great job!

Akshay:

Two very quick agenda items that need to be addressed:

1). 3 L volunteer Email CDO on whether they will be commissioning

Faiza: I asked them about virtual commissioning they said it's not possible because they have to jump through a lot of hoops and can't do it in person because they have to do a lot of printing and they are working from home and don't have printers at home

Keep record for themselves, that's what virtual commissioning entails. Whoever is the virtual commissioner has to keep track themselves. What they did say was they're going to send out emails... it's either virtual (third-party for a small fee of \$30.00) or try and increase more times or more availability.

In person with more time slots or virtual commissioning from 3rd parties

One more thing they pointed out for those who already secured articling positions they can ask their lawyers

Akshay: I'm sure that could work for people who are closer to their workplace. Thank you for that update, that saves a lot of time and answers. Faiza to put an update in the class of 2021 group on this.

2). The second thing I wanted to talk about is whoever is on the social media team, I keep getting emails to share from LSO. Those will be passed along to the social media team to post. Email coming forth today about tuition surveys and someone from the social media team please post that on the groups or instagram.

Arielle: There are 4 of us on the team so you can forward the emails to us and I am sure we can handle it.

Akshay: I'm also hearing great thing about our instagram, some people have said it's really pretty and they received information they didn't know

Action Item: Get a survey out to collect information on grading

Numbers and data collection on what the situation is and open to ideas on how we can go about this

Karin: We need to do our due diligence, but at the same time stop the floodgates from opening where we have a 50 page debate/google doc.

Akshay: I get it. I think it was not a good idea to keep an open google doc. Yes the survey will blow open the discussion but I do think that numbers can also be better representative of student body sentiments around grading.

Arielle: perhaps have a statement put out by faculty and that in March the circumstances were truly exceptional and that this year we are basing our grading system based on other law school's.

3rd Year Update

Akshay: that was brought up during the Town Hall and that Osgoode cannot make the jump if other law schools are not considering it.

Brittany (off the record): jumping off of that, and summarizing the 3L discussions, there was a strong opinion on the grading system. I understand that but I don't think they were necessarily bringing it to us to ask for across the board cr/ncr. But rather, they want us to at least advocate the student body and have those concerns heard by Osgoode, regardless of what the outcome is. That said, there are those differences and accommodations that need to arise in light of the pandemic. CR/CNR might not make sense from the admin perspective especially because this has been a status quo. The fact that students are impacted negatively... without the pandemic, there are those differences ... Easily accessible and robust accommodations.

Akshay: I think I will first reach out to FTR and Mia for the types of accommodations that were acknowledged and recognition that some people were affected by this more than others and more than ever the need for this will arise. Maybe let's see where it goes, I will of course bring this to FTR. I have been having these discussions since August with APPC.

Brittany: that sounds great and Faiza created a google doc for the 3L survey, we have 21 responses to that survey which is not all the 3Ls but a decent chunk

Akshay: Is there a way you can share those responses with me?

Faiza: I will make you an editor on the survey Akshay

Akshay: I wanted to take this opportunity to discuss the townhalls that have already happened, I know some have already happened and some have not. I know section B is on the 16th.

Annie: my townhall is later this afternoon

Akshay: since we've discussed a lot of what happened at 3L,

Grading and commissioning were the two action items I took away from it.

Brittany: I have some potential communications on behalf of student caucus to students at large. One question was with regards to the tuition working group and general grievances on structure of courses

Akshay: The issue of having more work to do during online classes is very individualistic. Of course Brittany and I will bring this to APPC, Gaby you should take this to TLC and see what they have to say about it and maybe we can discuss principles that professors should follow – things that work and that don't work. But this needs to be addressed on a more ad hoc basis.

General comments and grievances about course structures aside from the grading scheme

This needs to be addressed on a more ad hoc basis because to get these policies takes a while. We should deal with this on a more ad hoc basis to get any changes done by the winter and say this is working, this is not working. Does anyone have any thoughts about that?

Karin: Maybe that's a good place in terms of the survey, kind of like a virtual survey. The questions can be like what worked what didn't, what feedback would you give to professors, etc.

We can turn that into the guidance document to send back which is not a policy but more like recommendations "read this out of the goodness of your hearts"

Brittany: yea you mentioned this during our townhall and a good idea – definitely put out a survey and grouping together some feedback and have a student facing directive. I don't know if teachers are struggling with how to teach online but apart from feedback that comes from course evaluation, we can put out things that work for students and things that don't work and they can implement those changes

Akshay: that's a good idea. Gaby have you had a TLC meeting?

Gaby: No. Professor Lawrence is the chair of the committee. She sent out an email a week ago saying that we wouldn't be having a meeting in a while, unless it was necessary to meet earlier.

Basically saying that we wouldn't be having a meeting for a while unless it was necessary to meet earlier rather than later. But she listed out a few initiatives that could be taken up. There have already been a couple of responses and I am waiting for feedback

There have already been a couple of responses and I am just waiting to get her response from the feedback.

Akshay: I don't know what professor's feeling on online teaching is and would be good to hear their feedback

Gaby: The only information I have received from the email is that it is not so much a problem of developing the courses but they turned it as more of a problem of loneliness. Each faculty member is working from their own little island.

More personal to the faculty members themselves and not really in regards to the structure

One possible avenue the committee is thinking of taking is changing the structure of the courses and there was a positive response on doing some work in that area.

Akshay: good idea to get a survey going and looking for volunteers – I don't want it to be an extensive survey just something like what are some issues with regards to courses students are facing and maybe it would be better to keep it anonymous so that students can openly raise their concerns. Volunteers for the survey?

What is a I don't like this professor versus what is an actionable thing that we can work on as student caucus

Gaby: I'll do it

Akshay: Jaylene also has her hand up

Karin & Jaylene: yes i'd be happy to do it

Akshay: Would you be able to get me the questions, I know it's too soon but tomorrow?

Karin: what would be the best timing to do it? Would it be post-exam or before?

Akshay: post exam might be too late to start the first week of Jan, winter profs have decided what the courses will look like so we can have the whole winter break to think about and i

Karin: Fair enough; it will be more less exam focused and just generally course focused

Akshay: I also don't want students to feel burdened that they have exams and now they have a survey to fill out. Lets try to get this done by Friday and then we can deploy it over the weekend

Gaby: I can have it by Friday afternoon

Akshay: Friday evening to me and then on Saturday morning we can get it out. thank you i appreciate you all.

Is there anything else from the 3L townhall?

Brittany: Drafted synopsis of questions and highlighted discussions we had.

I was wondering if that's something we would feel publishing as a private google doc with a link for people to view info, it can just be something that people scroll through, it can be useful as a resting place and can be on the student caucus website

We can use something like this going forward, where we can link on the Caucus' website. We update people on facebook, but there is also a link that directs people to the google doc.

Akshay: i like the idea that the associate dean Drake is doing something of this sort. Should we be also doing press release of this sort so that people know that I am not just sitting here doing nothing

Brittany: You're doing so much work and we're all doing so much work

Akshay: It's a great idea, You should speak to Corey about it since he handles the website we can do an updates page

Brittany: not at all I'll give him a call later

Akshay: thanks for bringing this up though because I was thinking about this too. Okay time to move on to the 2L Town Hall

Unless there's anything else from the 3L townhall I will move on to the 2L townhall. Thank you so much 3Ls I really appreciate all the work you have done

Arielle: we only got like 3 responses. 2 were about the tuition survey. Essentially we had a small group of people show up maybe 15 people max. Things that were asked about were exams, are they going to be the same like last semester. Chloe got in charge of saying that you will be able to access your digital summaries but not the internet

2nd Year Update

Arielle: We didn't have as good of a response as the 3Ls – 3 responses in total about the tuition working group and about the 1L formal which is now a 2L formal. Questions like if exams are going to be the same as last year, We did an information sheet that Chloé posted – you can access online summaries.

We also got a lot of feedback from mature students and they were saying that it was hard for them because last semester they needed to meet care accommodations for a couple of weeks but this semester they had to eat up all their resources to get accommodations for the entire semester and so they were mostly concerned about the grading and CR./CNR.

We were talking to them about accommodations for different life circumstances

We also talked about Passy internet connectivity issues and a lot of fire alarms, actual fires and flooding. Pri has been taking that on and talking to faculty or admin about anything policy related to Passy such as an internet outage during exams or have library open for Passy students and have them prioritized because they won't be able to have anywhere else to go to give exam

Lastly, there was a question about the OCI process and what that would look like. Someone brought about how firm tours take place and they've been releasing information about tours but students haven't really been finding that information through CDO and are finding it through other sources. Is it normal for people to be looking for the information outside of the CDO, where does the onus fall?

What the policies are if there is an internet outage during someone's exam, to have people at passy being prioritized for library bookings especially during exams.

Akshay: On the issue of firm tours, the CDO does put some info on the events but by and large this is something you go find what you can.

There is an event that the CDO page has but on the whole this is something people put up on the facebook page

There is an events page on CDO you can check out but mostly you go to the Facebook page to check out those firm tour updates.

Also, to be frank it will be lesser than usual this year because not a lot of lawyers at the firms

Maybe that's why it seems less than usual, I think the majority I went to were ones I found myself

Arielle: okay that's good to know

Akshay: Your internet will get disconnected by virtue of examsoft and you can download the exam in advance. Don't worry you don't need the internet during the exam, you can use hotspot to upload it. 1L reps, please update 1Ls on how examsoft works.

We will tell you because we have tried it and will let you know the information to update the 1Ls

1st Year Update

Akshay: Sounds great though and I am glad you addressed those and keep me updated on what happens on those things. Let's move on to the 1L townhalls.

Okay let's move on to the 1L townhalls

Jaylene: for Section C, we had our townhall yesterday in the middle of the day.

We had about 15 or so people that were there and when we opened the floor for people to speak everyone said we're only here to hear what other people have to say

Mostly the feeling was that everyone was curious to hear what others had to say. I very much emphasized that if anything does come up to tell me

If anything does come up, come back to me. I specifically asked for feedback on o-week and the anti-black module, it was interesting to hear what people had to say and ideas around that; Christina took the lead on that part of it.

How can we talk about this more consistently in our class and the overall feedback was that it was the best module we've had so far and general desire to see more and see it come up in more places. One of the examples people used was how David Lepovsky jumped into the lectures and gave accessibility related issues, can we have other representations to call out some of the discrepancies in other spaces?

Overall, no strong complaints which I was expecting.

Akshay: I just want to get this so when I take it back to APPC I have more detail. Do student wish the anti-black module in every class

Would students not want the anti-Black racism module or do we want both to happen? I just want to figure out if the module stands alone doing something different?

I just want to figure out, is the model stand alone

Jaylene: desire for both. Comment in that specific module that the presenter did a very good job of providing places within the session to provide reflection and engage in activities which I found very helpful for my own learning. But there was a comment that when it was open up to the bigger group of 150 people, people did not feel able to verbally reflect within that space but still felt that the discussions were very useful

Akshay: That's great to know because it backed a case for having a separate module distinct from people going into distinct lectures. Maybe we can do this section wise instead of combining sections

Jaylene: I think my section would have liked that

Akshay: Anything else?

Jaylene: Nothing more specific, I will write up these notes and send them

Jaylene: I can write up these notes and send them

Herman: I wrote a bunch of notes down that I will send later to Akshay. We had a town hall on Monday. Just had general comments about what people wanted to talk about and got 4 responses only.

We had about 14 people including me, we asked for general comments of what people wanted to talk about and we got 4 answers, we knew beforehand. The majority was confidential

Majority of the townhall was about the specific course that is confidential and concerns around that. It was very informative and eye-opening and we communicated back to the student what the professor said. There were some confidential things said about that.

We had a conversation with the professor and we had feedback sessions with the students

Apart from that, we had a lot of issues around covid and mental health and oh don't forget to sign up for the care packages. When are they coming?

Karin: We're shipping them on Monday and there are a couple of spots left. As long as you don't get a "this form is closed" you're good.

Herman: A lot of the talk was about mental health and a lot of people are going through it these days and a lot of it seems like student led initiatives not faculty led.

A lot of it has to do with the fact that mental health is more student led rather than faculty led initiative. A lot of different schools are very performative and telling you to oh take care of yourself but everyone has different ways of decompressing and not everything works the same way for everyone. Students were saying Osgoode may not be recognizing how unprecedented this situation is for 1L some people are complaining that they are being graded as previous 1Ls and some people complained that reading week was only two days

Even the reading days, we didn't have the full week. Some people said we should have an entire week.

Apart from that, we talked about Osgoode career and counseling services and how they are underused and so these need to be used more. We encouraged people to use the services available to students

There are also questions about exam delivery, but that was answered by the post yesterday. There are people who live in different timezones, so we really want to make sure they're accommodated as well. A lot of the focus tends to prioritize people who live in the EST time zone. We didn't really talk about a lot of things that other groups seemed to have talked about. A lot of the things seemed section D centric as opposed to Osgoode in general.

Akshay: okay well that's great.

Akshay: they will basically talk to you about anything even if it's not OZ related, you can speak to them like a therapist. In 2017/2018 first years didn't get anything, and the student government fought and fought and got two days. The course load for 1Ls is much higher it's 36

credits for 1Ls vs. upper year of 30 credits. Professors had a hard time teaching the course material while missing a week. Highly unlikely you will get something out of it – It is what it is.

On exam delivery, it's less student Caucus but because you guys are Caucus person, we do expect you to explain how examsoft works. Upper years did not seem to get anything either.

Brittany: yea one of the things we're missing is the cross-year hallway conversation and we would have told the 1Ls to relax

Akshay: yea examsoft is not that hard and it has crashed but not to a bunch of people. You will get an email to register for exams- in the past that has meant looking at things like do you want to handwrite it, on the student computer, this year it will be on your own computer

Osgoode basic webpage that is not complicated at all.

You download the software, you get a username (usually student ID) and password, and it gives you a mark exam that's already there for you. Say for example, I have a Conflict of Law exam on dec 8, the exam will be something I've downloaded already but I can't access it b/c there will be a password. They will give you a password which you can enter to get into the exam. Your time starts when you start typing. When that happens, your wifi will get disconnected. This year, you can use digital summaries. Another thing that is different this year is that you'll get "preparation time". You get an exam paper which you can print out if you want. Examsoft is just to write, it's not the exam – the exam is always a separate booklet.

Aya: yea I have a question – I don't get it that if I take 35 minutes to read the exam and not writing, does that mean the time is not counting

Akshay: no it will be counting. If your exam is 9 to 11, you do have to submit it at 11am.

Faiza: The preparation time given last semester.. Even though your exam started at 9am, you could download the exam at 8am. Technically, you're not supposed to be looking at the exam until 9am. This is just to help us print it out set up study space

Technically you're not supposed to start reading until the time for the exam starts. Not every course has designated reading periods, but other courses don't.

Akshay: Be very careful whether there is a designated reading time or not.

Usually you professors will tell you if reading time is included. It's not rocket science

I've been told that you can't copy from your summary to the Exam soft but you can copy within the software from one question to another – you can copy from answer 1 to answer 2

You can open a new sheet to write

Dont panic at all, it's really not that scary. Does anyone else have anything else to add on that?

Britany: I don't have anything else to add but it is a useful discussion for 1Ls and maybe we can have an insta live where we can have a live session that can be later pinned for students to just ask questions

Arielle: good idea I will take this up with Corey

Brittany: good idea and I'll volunteer as well

Just to provide the answers to some questions the same way Akshay did

Akshay: great idea – Arielle, i will leave that to you Corey and Brittany to make it happen. I do think that the exam graphic that was made would hopefully make things easier.

In any other year it would be you bumping into me and me explaining. I don't think the graphic that was made makes things easier, so i hope this makes it a little easier.

Akshay: Anti-black racism module yet?

Herman: we have received zero feedback

Akshay: Do you think you can ask for feedback? Preferably this week because we have our meeting later this week. Annie and Aya we will do your townhall summaries next meeting.

Try not to make definitive statements and actively solicit feedback on the anti-black racism module. So action items Faiza to do an update on commissioning, Karin, Jaylene and Gaby to

do survey on grading, and Brittany and Arielle to check with Corey on InstaLive session on ExamSoft for 1Ls.

Aya: Question about teaching committee's email that we got. I'm not sure b/c they said in the email that this is not a committee that has a lot of power and cannot really create policy. Is this the case?

Akshay: yes and no. The teaching committee does have some sort of power to make policies, but there are a bunch of other people from Osgoode that need to engage.

Aya: I looked quickly at some of the things that TLC wants to do and have a roundtable around things that students have benefited from

Akshay: Some things can be taken up with the professor directly, depends on what the action item is. Seeing how pedagogy works is within the mandate of teaching committee

Gaby: Aya if you want, before we go to TLC, we can put forth a joint response and how we can support each other and I can help you with some of those questions.

Akshay: yea Gaby has been on SC for two years so she can help you a lot. Does that help?

Aya: yes

Committee Meeting Updates

Akshay: has anyone had any committee meetings so far? I forgot about this but we basically have to do an update each meeting. We have to do committee updates every meeting so you have to tell me what your committee has done

Brittany: do you mean since last time SC has met?

Akshay: yes and why dont we have Tomi start

Tomi: There are some issues of confidentiality but it was fun

Akshay: anything we have to deal with?

Tomi: nope it was great

Akshay: okay who can go next

Jaylene: Academic standing committee we had only one grading issue

Jaylene: We had a brief meeting on monday. The professors were chatting and showing pictures but not many action items but more on the issue of loneliness a

Annie: for clinical education meeting, we talked about the Scotiabank diversity scholarship and how it should be considered. I am not sure if I am suppose to say anything more than that but as far as I know, there is nothing

Scotiabank diversity scholarship and how it should be considered. As far as I know there is nothing that needs to be done on Student Caucus' end

Faiza: admissions committee went great, we just got the applications on Nov 1st and the meeting was before that so we were trying to figure out teams but other than that it's all confidential

Akshay: if you've had radio silence from your committee chair, make sure to reach out to them. Of course TLC is different because she has already reached out to you

Annie: I've been hearing thoughts from my peers if would it be possible to have people's preferred name on their email

Akshay: any name change has a form and there is some sort of formality but it's York that does it not Osgoode. It is very doable people do it all the time

Akshay: so there's some sort of formality but it is possible but you have to go through York, not Osgoode. I don't know the exact resource but it is very do-able

Annie: okay thanks. Do you know if it is possible even if their preferred name is not their legal name

Akshay: it does have to be a legal name but I am not authoritative on this. I'm sure we could explore that but it's not an osgoode thing at all. If it's a Zoom name, you can inform the professor in advance that you're using that name -in case you don't want it to be public, just let your professor know, the name is there for participation grade purposes.

Annie: the concern that I was getting was that students have concerns with the name change for their OCIs and they don't want to use the names on their Osgoode email for work

Akshay: yes I understand that and if that's the concern a possible solution is that don't feel the need to use your Osgoode email for OCIs. You can use your personal email instead.

Brittany: yea most students don't use their Osgoode email address.

Akshay: Okay, anything else, Okay sounds great, thank you so much for all the work everybody is putting in. Have a great day and a great week ahead and I now adjourn this meeting.

Motion: Motion to conclude the November 11th Student Caucus Meeting (Akshay/Jaylene)
CARRIED