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## Student Caucus of Osgoode Hall Law School

# Minutes

**14 October 2020 (12:30pm – 2:30pm)**

**Zoom (Online)**

**Present:** Akshay Aurora (Chair), Corey Fletcher, Gaby Pellerin, Karin Kazakevich, Priyanka Sharma, Nushrah Amod, Brittany Town, Nushrah Amod, 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 (12:33pm)**

### APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

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

## COMMENTS FROM THE EXECUTIVE

### Chair's Remarks & Items – General

Akshay: *Thanksgiving pleasantries*

*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 care taken 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 peaceably share and care for the Great Lakes region.*

Gaby: this isn't so much about indigenous stuff. I was sitting in York's meeting and 2019 was the year of indigenous languages (as termed by the Un). But really the resurgence of any language (indigenous language included) takes longer than one year. It is being termed the decade of indigenous languages. I was thinking this meeting could be an opportunity to learn a bit of indigenous language Anish.....

I will write down the words in the slack but I will teach you the words for the 4 sacred medicines. The word for tobacco is... saje...cedar.... And sweetgrass

Akshay: Thank you so much for doing that. I come from a country that has 500. When you come to the western world and people only speak 1 language.

I absolutely love learning new languages all the time, so thank you for that.

Gaby: I resonate with that with French being my first language.

Akshay: When I tell people this, they're a little weirded out, but I also constantly translate in my head from the other three languages that I speak. I also want to shoutout Brittany for her brilliant pattern, and Tomi for the utmost effort you've put in.

Tomi: I had a group presentation LOL

**Akshay: OFF RECORD**

Akshay: I would like to discuss certain points of advocacy that we could possibly look into now, and in the upcoming term. Before that, my only update is that we had an APPC meeting and just as an overview APPC was dealing with 2 things 1) evaluating the anti-black racism module as part of ELGC and 2) the session dates for the upcoming next year.

Brittany: I thought it was for this year, and part of it was just for the return to school date.

Akshay: The sessional dates were largely not controversial.

On the issue of the anti-black racism module, I came into the meeting late and I understood that we were looking to evaluate the module and provide feedback from

So 1Ls will be receiving feedback about how this module went and we will help APPC do this in a more structured manner. Professor FTR and Karen Drake are going to come up with questions and then we will work with the 1Ls to see how the module can be improved

Brittany: Yeah sure, there's a bit of a mixup. I would say that the only thing to add is that the conversation on the anti-racism module did expand a bit more than the evaluative process for it, and included whether or not it would be an effective model moving forward for education in 1L, like in ELGC or in other courses more broadly.

It wasn't really a conversation that necessarily went anywhere but was a general conversation considering all of those things in the context of 1L curriculum review and infusing the curriculum with more responsive elements with anti-black racism points

Akshay: Yeah, I think one of the professors also talked about whether it should be a part of 1L or an upper year thing. Like Brittany said, part of this wasn't on the agenda so it was just obiter. I think especially for your 1Ls, look out for feedback once the module starts taking place. It would be really helpful for us to advocate for where we see anti-black racism and to tackle the conversations.

Akshay: We started talking about an equity roundtable which is trying to get in more opinions about people on FC via a formalized body. As time has gone on we should entrench this body in the soncidtition so further SC dont think of this as adirecretory thing but a mandatory thing. I have prepared a draft which has not brought to the committee because it is still undergoing revision.

I will send to you after the meeting today. The body provides for appointment on a small body of individuals keeping in mind that we are not representative of the entire student body.

The mandate is strictly things that come in front of the equality ocmmitting and this is to assist Arielle and Nush .

I envisage this to be not a very formal thing, but I do want you know, some sort of written documentation to come out of this roundtable. I want to start creating an institutional history for things we advocate for, things we couldn't advocate for. That being said, there's nothing to be done as of this meeting, I just wanted to let you know I've drafted the legislative piece.

If anyone has any thoughts before I send the draft – please put the

Corey: The next meeting is the collaborative one with L&L, I don't know how that changes things

Akshay: So far the feedback has been good re this initiative.

If anybody has any thoughts on what they would like to see on this, maybe I can edit it and send it to you guys. I'll send you the draft very soon, maybe after this meeting.

Aya: Questions whether this roundtable will be those who never made it to the committee or will there be a special call for all people to apply to this roundtable?

Akshay: Would it be wise to have new interviews? That is something we can do, but I think that initially the thought of those who applied to the Equality Committee, but I have not drafted it that way – it would be for a fresh call of applications.

Gaby: I am really excited about this. I did not have time to read the meeting minutes from the last meeting so this is the first time I am hearing about this. I don't believe I applied for the equality committee this year as I knew that I wanted to make sure that whatever committee I was sitting on I would be able to bring perspectives of equality and equity to. I think this is great and would be amazing to include in the constitution

Akshay: Yeah, and I think that a lot of this will be easier if you see the draft. One part of it is to advise the committee members, but also to advise us. I don't think my draft as it currently stands should be read in a way that restricts the Equality Committee, but that it falls within the mandate of Caucus *and* the Equality Committee. Any other thoughts? I'm more than willing to see your comments on it.

*Akshay to send out draft of this*

Akshay: Those are my updates. Another thing I thought of and this is out of the blue because I have not brought up this with anybody. On the topic of entrenching good practice into the constitution.

### **Committee Appointments**

Akshay: I want to get up your thoughts on entrenching the committee appointment mechanism into the constitution for the reasons that, being on Caucus for 3 years, there have been many appointment techniques. In my second year, I think it was the same thing, but for the student body it was an application. The third year, it was about, 'Tell me why you should be on this,' as a way of making a level playing field for everyone.

Gabrielle: Speaking as someone who is in their 2nd year at Caucus, entrenching the process itself would be helpful for 2 reasons: to ensure consistency, but it will also provide more guidance to the VP when going through the process. In terms of how that would be described

in the constitution, I would recommend that the wording will allow flexibility within the process. Obviously, it's going to vary every year depending on the needs and the objectives of the Caucus are.

Akshay: that is a great point, it is one of the problems that I had in drafting this. To be vague in drafting but also to make it understandable for future years.

Faiza: Echoing what Gaby says; shocked not in constitution. I would push to allow for more timing in the app.

Akshay: I think that is true. This year was an unpleasantly tight deadline and a lot of that stems from the timing of the election and a lot of the committees wanted to get going.

Nushrah: It's kind of related to what Gaby brought up earlier about bringing an equity perspective to a committee that doesn't really deal with equity. I think that caucus as a diverse body is not something we can ensure year to year. We need maybe an equity consultation if we are not as diverse in the future.

Akshay: could you speak more to what that equity consultation would entail?

Nushrah: I'm not sure if it should be a formal process, but maybe an informal consultation the Vice Chair will do with the Equity Officer. We want to make sure that the makeup of committees are not homogenous. We are very diverse this year, but that does not mean we will be diverse *next* year.

Akshay: I absolutely agree.

Corey: One thing I would like to see included is that the decision makers of the time are in tune with the issue that are at hand because it is important to be diverse and this year we really saw what the primary issue were and we had to base our decisions on that.

Akshay: I think that's a great point, and that's what we did this year. It's going to be a tough one drafting this, but thank you for your suggestions. Does anyone else have any thoughts?

Brittany: *Offering help to draft.*

Akshay: *Accepts*

Aya: Understands the importance of guidelines and framework, but at the same time – people are different and the needs will be different. This is highlighted by the roundtable. I hope this doesn't limit this discretion so that it limits the creation of other initiatives. I think a guiding framework would be helpful

Karin: SO just a thought, but would it be worth thinking about certain positions that are already on certain committees for the sake of transparency? I feel like it's not written down anywhere, but it might be worth writing down in terms of who gets on committees or not. It might be a really good opportunity to do that now so there aren't any further issues.

Akshay: Absolutely, I think that is a good point. The FC meeting that happens at the end of the previous year is where it is written down who sits on what.

Karin: So it comes from the previous SC and then we sign off?

Akshay: Okay, if there's nothing else, we can now move on. Karin received a complaint that she forwarded to me about library times not being sufficient (10:00 am- 3:30 pm, only from Monday to Thursday). Will bring it up with the Deans but not expecting much leeway as we are in the 2nd wave of COVID. Has anyone heard anything similar re: the library?

Arielle: Vik had something as part of his 2L update something about library hours but he is not here.

Akshay: I think those are all my updates. I think we can now move on and see how things go.

## **Legal & Lit Updates**

Karin: Generally, The club budgets have been decided – requests have been lower because of COVID. Clubs are still doing stuff and people are being creative

We have our mental health and wellness week coming up in November – Nush is leading this.

Tentative Idea: If you go on Insta and type on "Oz Book" – living time capsule that captures what it's like to be a law student during 2021. It is a living scrapbook, that captures what this

year is like. It is a soft launch

We also have our regular newsletter – we're trying things, and likewise, if any of you are in clubs, Zoom events are hard, and it's just the nature of this year. It doesn't mean the club is doing you wrong – everyone is trying to see what will stick. If you feel discouraged, just encourage everybody to stay positive.

Nush: If anyone wants to be a part of the mental health week planning, let me know. On Oz Book we talked about it being a meme page where we can send things in that are relatable.

### **Director of Communications Remarks & Items**

Corey: We got all the 1Ls up on the website. Congrats guys, your photos look impressive! Other things that I'm working on is that I will add the names of those who are on the committees. Should we include photos?

Akshay: By the time 20-ish people send photos, that will take a while.

Corey: I'll just put our names then. Jaylene also joined the Caucus media team. Feature people on our social media who are supporting others and doing great things. The next thing I want to work on is to get our FB page working. I'm not sure if it will still be useful, but mind as well if we are using Instagram as the main push. Someone reached out to me re: grading schemes for exams – a few people have suggested optional pass/fail. The merits for pass/fail is that for 2Ls and 1Ls, it takes the stress off as the 3Ls may remove themselves. The con is that Akshay also told me that last year, people felt pressure to opt-in to a grading scheme, so it may not operate as we plan it. Still, we should still think about it and as the pandemic heightens, if this could possibly change again. Any thoughts? Generally, what would people prefer: grading scheme, or pass/fail?

Gaby: When we are saying other schools are going back – we mean regular grading systems. I will leave my thoughts until we got more info

Brittany: I guess I assumed that we would be going back to the normal grading system for various reasons. I haven't heard anything from my circle of 3Ls that they were expecting a

move to pass/fail. I think last semester was definitely an exceptional case, and that still required a lot of advocacy. I would be surprised if we did that again, Grades are grades, there is always going to be hubbub about it. If we continued with a traditional grading system, getting law school grades isn't a negative thing. I will keep an ear to the ground though.

Faiza: I have not heard anything about grading. There will be students who will raise equity issues around grading. If it becomes absolutely sure that we are going to grading, then I would say we need to advocate for accommodations for students to possibly write exams on campus.

Akshay: That's a good point, I think this might lead to more accommodation rather than a policy discussion. Having optional grading this year would be a non-option, where you would have  $\frac{1}{3}$  of your law school not graded. You would have one whole year with no grades.

Corey: I can see somebody who applies for accommodation but it shoots them in the foot. Maybe something we should advocate for is that exams don't start at 8:30, for people on the West Coast.

Akshay: I think that is great. At our next meeting we are supposed to talk about exams. I will bring this up with the Deans. I think we should lean more to accommodations for COVID-related exam situations. I will speak to Tan? About having an official statement because I think that people will feel better having this information.

B: In the upper year courses the profs have changed the grading scheme.. But do you have largely 100% finals

Jaylene: ! Prof moved to a mixed version of the terms but mostly 100%. Sit

Herman: Mixed, 2 exams that are 100% and the other have mini assignments and not just focused on the

Aya: Reiterates the same

Akshay: All the ones that are 100%, are they take-home, or do you have to do it within three hours.

Jaylene: One is take-home, the other is during a time period.

Aya: Same.

Akshay: Take-home would change the nature of the exam, even though it is worth 100%. Exams will definitely have to be done differently

Brittany: The reason i asked is because everyone has written law school exams and at-home exams *except* for the 1Ls. We should be supporting 1Ls throughout this context we're working in.

Corey: To round out the feedback, if we can go back to when viktor brought up how exams would be administered. He wanted it so that we have equal or greater access to how examsoft would operate. Akshay can you bring this up. Specifically about digital summaries.

Akshay: I think digital summaries are a good idea. I do think you can copy and paste on exams.

Vic: My main point is that it should be an ongoing institution and not just a temporary patch-fix. I don't think we were allowed to copy and paste, but I wouldn't be proposing something like that either.

## Year Updates

### 1st Year

Aya: From section B – we have had a glitch in communication in organizing the sessions with the dean's fellow. The polls were made on FB and the dates were decided and then a day before people discovered that they didn't know about the meeting and they didn't know about the meeting.

Akshay: Dean's fellow get paid and they should manage this

Corey: They have access to the section B listserv and should be doing this,

Aya: Zooms facilitator posting the lectures at a particular time. The recordings have been late and this is stressful. Students are wondering if there could be a policy that mandates a time where the recordings are posted. The prof doesn't have a problem but forwarded to the : n facilitator

Akshay: this is a question of the zoom facilitators and the professors. This is just a complication for the professors, but I will speak to the dean re what the policy is.

Aya: Request by people to see if the lectures to be closed captions

Akshay: I will look into it

Jaylene: This is on behalf of Annie. In one of the classes there is an issue on the structure when there are updates.

For example, for the class today they never received updates on what readings they are supposed to be doing. Some of her classmates have emailed about this. Annie is wondering how to follow up with this.

In regards to section C – the only concern is around the timing of the ending of the tutorial session because they run up against another class. This was brought up to my L&L cohort. Otherwise nothing else

AA: *Loves Section C* on the issue of prof running over time. When you are running over – say you have another class to get to. This doesn't have to be a major issue. Sometimes you just have to stop them from continuing. Seems like the theme is that professors are not doing things right. As a previous 1L rep – the best thing is to talk to the professors. A lot of these we have to think was Dean Condon will do

**Herman:**

Akshay: Please encourage your class to fill out an honest and robust prof evaluation . form. If there are things that are directly in class – please interject if possible!

**2nd Year**

Vik: Two things that I want to cover. 1) our town hall, we have come up with a date for that we have set it for Monday November 2nd. At 12:30. 2) Concern around library hours. They are too short, people that have little option but to live on or near campus feel like they are especially more than anyone cheated out of the value they get for their education. Services they ge

not measure up to what they are paying for their education. Difficulty focusing. Library services and other services not up to par. I know Chloe is aware of this.

Akshay: We spoke about this before you joined. This is something I will take to the library committee. Two things: 1) we need to stop saying because we are online things should be cheap – this is not a cheap year for osgoode. Especially true having seen the budget.

We will bring this up to the Library but there are limitations and surprising especially that the library is open now at the height of the second wave. I understand why everyone may need other study space – just take into considerations of some of the limitations

### **3rd Year**

Gaby: The only thing I was going to bring up was about the grading scheme but we already addressed that.

Akshay: Any updates on the 3L Town hall.

Gaby: We have not established a date yet.

Akshay: Also lets get started on that. For both years, make sure it is very well advertised and maybe submit a request for questions so that you can have some topics

Karin: Make sure it not during the reading week because it is articling time

Chloe: I was thinking that to boost participation for these town halls, maybe we can do a 'Join a Town Hall and submit a question,' where you could win a gift card or something. Getting engagement right now is so difficult since it's just a Zoom link, but maybe we can find a way to get people to contribute.

Arielle: *Agrees*

Akshay: I'll leave that to the 2Ls, and if you are going to do that, let us know in advance.

### **Vice-Chair's Remarks & Items**

Chloe : I know last meeting I talked about a zoom session how to for Committee applications. Instead I have created a 2 page outline for how advocacy should be done. It is mostly geared for non SC members

Corey: Faiza had the idea to use a portion of the student caucus to purchase some laptops for a school that is short on them during COVID-19..

Akshay: I don't know if we can do that because the budget from L&L is to be used for Osgoode Caucus purposes, but that's a great idea. May not be constitutional.

Faiza: Thanks for that, Akshay. Maybe we can tweak it a little and see if there are other ways in which we can raise funds for Osgoode students for other causes.

Akshay: I think we'd need to give that a lot of thought, because I think every Osgoode student has a laptop.

Faculty Council on October 26th. Everyone will be introduced. Report from Student Caucus. At this point is not anything special in addition to intros and talking about how we value diversity and what we have been doing so far. If you have anything that you want me to say, send it to me.

Corey: Please talk about the synergy meeting.

AA: *Discuss synergy meeting*

Karin: *Discusses synergy meeting*

**Motion: Motion to conclude the October 14<sup>th</sup> Student Caucus Meeting? (Corey/Akshay)**

**CARRIED**