

# OKANAGAN COLLEGE STUDENTS' UNION REPORT OF THE BOARD

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**2019-20**



# 2019-20 BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

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BCFS Federation Representative

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**Ashley Robinson**

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# TERRITORY ACKNOWLEDGEMENT & INTRODUCTION

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**The Okanagan College Students' Union is fortunate to** work, live, and play on the unceded traditional territories of the Okanagan Sylix People and the Shuswap Secwepemc People. We give our thanks to this beautiful valley and the peoples who have resided here since time immemorial.

**Hello from remote.**

In writing this report, it struck us how long ago some of the events we are sharing in this document seem. While things certainly look and feel different now, taking the time to reflect on the work we were able to accomplish last year reminds us that we are part of an amazing and resilient community. It also reminds us that this odd sort of limbo we find ourselves in, will end. We will gather together again, campaign together again, and come together to make change again. We can't wait to see you, our members, as soon as it's safe for all of us. For now, we would like to share the work we are most proud of from last year.

# CAMPUS HIGHLIGHTS: KELOWNA

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## **What's in the Pantry?**

We continued to improve our Kelowna food bank service, The Pantry. Students once again were able to access the Pantry for a set amount of items every week. We saw a total of 1100 students access the Pantry in Kelowna in the 2019-2020 academic year. Student Representatives of OCSU created a "Trick or Eat" campaign on Halloween where they were able to get a ton of donations from households around Kelowna by trick-or-treating for non-perishables. We also partnered with Connections, the institution's Staff and Faculty skills development conferences, and hundreds of donations were provided to the Pantry after we made two short presentations on the service. We partnered with Giving Tuesday in February and received many food and monetary donations. In total, we received over \$12,000 in donations from our campus community to help students with food insecurity.

## **Fair Trade Campus Week**

In October we launched our first Fair Trade awareness event on campus. This event included hundreds of free samples from local community organizations that provide fair trade products plus tons of information about how supporting Fair Trade can help the globe. We also gave out free fair trade coffee, tea, and fair trade chocolate. We hosted this event as a means to educate the campus community and work towards a fair trade campus designation for Okanagan College.

## **"What Were You Wearing" Exhibit**

We held our first 'What Were You Wearing' exhibit in conjunction with our Let's Get Consensual campaign in January. This multi-day art exhibit based on student-survivor descriptions of the clothes they were wearing during their sexual assault. The exhibit occurred in the Centre for Learning atrium and included support from the Counselling Department and the Sexual Violence committee, along with free tea and information resources. We plan to expand it to all campuses in the future. Work like this ties in directly with our efforts to inform and educate students about consent culture and dismantling rape culture.

## **Kelowna Clubs Day**

We hosted a Clubs Day in February this year to bring together existing student clubs and organizations, and help students create their own clubs. We also raised awareness of our student initiatives, our grant system that helps students with projects that will benefit the campus community. This event had a great turnout and students were able to get engaged with one another. We look forward to hosting this event again in the future.

# CAMPUS HIGHLIGHTS: PENTICTON

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## **Flourishing In Our Bodies**

The Penticton campus is a leader for OC when it comes to mental health resources for students. One of the great programs for students at the Penticton campus is Flourish. This bi-monthly workshop focuses on different themes surrounding wellness and mental health. OCSU was fortunate enough to give two workshops last year. In October we hosted our Let's Get Consensual Consent Workshop. In January we hosted a Body Positivity Session. We had a great time connecting and educating our members on these topics.

## **By-election, But Make it Virtual**

Penticton hosted a by-election in January. For the first time in OCSU history it was held 100% online through the platform Election Buddy. Members were emailed a link with a personalized access key and password. They were able to vote for the OCSU student representative candidate of their choice. By using an online platform we were able to have the polls open for physical station to cast their vote. Students were able to vote from anywhere with an internet connection, at a time that was convenient to them during the 72 hours of polling. This election went over very well; we took note of a couple logistical issues and corrected them for the general election we held this past fall, which was also online. OCSU plans to do all future elections this way.

## **Life Saving Skills on International Women's Day!**

International Women's Day, March 8th, was one of the last events held in Penticton before the campus shut down. The event was a big hit as always, and was made even more valuable and educational by the South Okanagan Women In Need Shelter providing resources and providing on-the-spot Naloxone training, as well as giving away Naloxone Kits to students who participated in the training. We also gave away our 'Rosie the Riveter' themed t-shirts and encouraged folks to write messages and quotes around empowering womxn.

## **A Safe Harbour**

Just as our campuses were shutting down, OCSU took over the former OASIS space in Penticton and relaunched it under the new Harbour. The decision was made between the OASIS board and OCSU with the intention of ensuring this space was going to be consistently available to students. OASIS was designed to be a safe and inclusive space on campus. We will be honouring this intention as well as expanding on this by also operating a food bank out of it as well. Our revamp of this service is currently paused while we are working remotely, but we are looking forward to opening this space once we are all back together on campus.



# CAMPUS HIGHLIGHTS: SALMON ARM

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## **Bottled Water Free At Last!**

A big win for Salmon Arm was the elimination of plastic water bottles from our campus. Thanks to our reusable water bottle service (something offered on all of our campuses), we helped create a cleaner atmosphere in Salmon Arm, while helping out our students! We're looking forward to seeing this victory on all Okanagan College campuses.

## **In Remembrance & Solidarity**

Our annual December 6th Candlelight Vigil held, in collaboration with Salmon Arm's SAFE Society and Okanagan College's Aboriginal Services, provides a safe place to educate and support community members on violence against women. It is also in remembrance of the 1989 Polytechnique massacre. The Vigil part of this event is held in honour and memory of missing and murdered Indigenous women, as well as for women who are, and have been, victims of domestic violence. After the outdoor vigil, attendees came inside to warm up with refreshments and hear stories from community members.

## **Everybody Loves Sexual Health Day!**

One of our most popular events was our Sexual Health Awareness campaign. We had a fantastic turnout from students, gave out tons of safer sex supplies, sexual health information, and themed cookies! Our famous sexual health mascots (picture life-sized, walking, talking sexual organs) also made the rounds as usual.

## **Free Lunch Once a Month**

We are in our 4th year of giving out a free lunch to 10 students once a month at our Salmon Arm campus. Each month we host a sign-up for this service in a first-come first-serve style. Students are treated to a delicious hot lunch from our cafeteria. This, along with a free shelf outside of our office are how we are combating student food insecurity on our campus. We look forward to providing both of these services again once our campus reopens.



# NOTABLE ACTIVITIES

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## **Your Neighbourhood Champions**

It's well documented that the ever rising cost of textbooks creates a major barrier for many students when attending post-secondary. OCSU continues to work with a diverse group of Open Education Resources (OER) Champions on the Okanagan College OER Task Force. This committee was established by the OCSU and includes a member of BCcampus and lots of great OC staff and faculty members. The goal is to increase awareness of OERs and help reduce the burdens for post-secondary education by eliminating the high costs of traditional textbooks. All campuses held events and activities to help raise awareness and gather support. We continue to lobby our institution and government leaders on the benefits of OER support.

## **Shoutouts From Government Committees**

Part of our lobbying work every year is presenting to the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services about what funding and resources are needed for post-secondary students. Last year we highlighted the needs for institutional and operational funding, the high costs of tuition and lack of financial assistance, mental health support, and fairness for international students. We did this in a coordinated effort with other students' unions across BC. We were pleased to see that the committee took several of our requests seriously and even gave the OCSU a couple of shoutouts in their published report. Check out the report here: [www.leg.bc.ca/content/CommitteeDocuments/41st-parliament/4th-session/fgs/reports/FGS\\_41-2-2\\_Budget-2020-Consultation-Report\\_2019-08-07.pdf](http://www.leg.bc.ca/content/CommitteeDocuments/41st-parliament/4th-session/fgs/reports/FGS_41-2-2_Budget-2020-Consultation-Report_2019-08-07.pdf)

## **Talking Student Issues in Victoria**

In October we sent 3 OCSU representatives to Victoria to lobby our MLAs and government staff. This Advocacy Week was the second year in a row that we, along with representatives from many other BC Students' Unions, came together with a mixture of region-specific and unified asks of our elected officials.

In February, we were invited to send two representatives to hear the BC Budget announcement in Victoria, and the announcement of the long-awaited BC Access Grant, the first upfront, needs-based, non-repayable grant program for BC post secondary students in over fifteen years. Our delegates were able to meet with MLAs, government officials and also participated in media interviews.

## **Braving Regina In The Winter For Better Inclusivity**

In February OCSU student representatives and staff attend the Canadian University Queer Services Conference hosted by the Pride Society of the University of Regina, in Saskatchewan. This three day conference had lots of great speakers, Key Notes, and contributors. OCSU came home with lots of great ideas on how to make Okanagan College a more inclusive institution. We look forward to implementing some of these projects when campuses reopen.

# KEEPING STUDENTS ON THE GO

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## **New Tech**

This year the OCSU decided to make a long overdue upgrade on our industrial photocopier. Our photocopier prints, scans, copies, makes brochures, and has long been a favourite service of many of our members as our copy/print prices are the lowest in town. The photocopier might be new, the low prices are the same as always.

## **Student Initiatives**

The OCSU continues to support a wide range of student initiatives, projects, and events. We help members out financially, with event awareness, and logistical support. This year we saw several groups create everything from a Moosehide campaign event, to an Afro-Caribbean club, to support on the road to a few Enactus championships.

## **Hiring Committees**

OCSU representatives sat on several hiring committees for Okanagan College last year. OCSU is invited to these spaces to provide Okanagan College with student input regarding the roles that work closely with students. Two high profile search committees this year included the President's search committee and the VP Students search committee. We were pleased to offer our input and recommendations of the great candidates for both roles.

# COVID-19 ADAPTING

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## **Topping Off The Pool**

Before the creation of the Canadian Emergency Student Benefit it was clear that students were in need of more financial support. OCSU supplied extra funding for the Okanagan College Emergency Funding pool to ensure OC students were able to access short-term funding from the institution at the start of the COVID-19 shut down without any barriers.

## **International Student Bursary Increases**

In 2018-19 our Board of Directors established a new bursary just for International students as they are often prohibited from applying to existing bursaries, meaning they have very few routes to apply for financial support once they begin their studies in Canada. This year, due to high demand, we added extra funding into our International Student bursary, to help ensure that support was available to any student who is in need of assistance to reduce barriers to post-secondary.

## **In Talks With Leadership**

We were in daily meetings with OC Leadership at the onslaught of the pandemic, and all through the summer. We took feedback, concerns, and issues we were hearing from students and relayed them to this committee. Some of the things we lobbied OC to do for students was to present clear and consistent communication directly to students; in particular we lobbied for improvements to the COVID-19 information page, for more consistency in course delivery models and technical support for students, and we asked for an extended withdrawal deadline for students receiving their final grades as a way to protect their GPA after the hasty transition to online learning. The institution helped ensure students had the choice on how the GPA would appear, reducing the stress load of many students.



# COVID-19 ADAPTING

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## **Sharing Information & Keeping Things Positive**

We put a lot of our energy into curating and sharing important information and access to resources for members over the summer. We utilized our social media channels and our app to make sure students had all the up to date communications surrounding COVID-19 from both Okanagan College, our communities, and from our Provincial & Federal Governments. We kept our online presence positive over the summer for our members by also sharing local mental health resources, and affirmations. We hosted several giveaways from our e-newsletter and social media platforms. We gave away a mixture of grocery store & local business gift cards throughout the summer that were very popular with our members.

## **OC Culinary Students To The Rescue**

OC Serves Up launched in July 2020 as a way to help students facing food insecurity. Run as a joint effort between OCSU, the OC Culinary Arts department, and RBC, this program donates free lunches five days a week to OC students studying at the Kelowna campus. As part of their training, students in OC's Culinary and Pastry Arts programs prepare up to 50 delicious meals each day. These meals are then donated to OC students who have applied to the program. Applying is easy; students need only submit their name and student number to OC Serves Up via email in order to receive a lunch. This initiative has been met with overwhelmingly positive feedback from both OC students and administration, with more and more students accessing it each week. Many students praise the quality of the food, and are always appreciative of this program.

## **Special Delivery**

At the start of the fall semester we created a mail-out program for members to access our frosh supplies. Students fill out a request form for a frosh pack, and we mail them a package of some of our most popular items, including our members handbook/dayplanner, a pen, highlighter, lip chap and lanyard. We also include information about our health & dental plan and other campaigns and services-all at no cost to them! As of late September 2020 we have received over 500 requests for this mail out service.



# IN CLOSING

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**Our 2019-2020 year certainly didn't go as anyone could** have planned. However, we are proud of the work we did before, and during, the COVID-19 crisis—all for the benefit of our members. While this pandemic has had a profound impact on how we learn and interact with each other, we know that you, our members, are resilient and are working hard to adapt to life online. We are committed to ensuring no OC students are left behind or in the dark.

If you are interested in finding out more about any of the campaigns or services we mentioned in this report, we invite you to check out our website, [ocsu.ca](https://ocsu.ca), for more information and to find our contact info for any questions or comments you may have. The year ahead of us is also full of uncertainties but we feel ready to continue our work on behalf of students and make the best of this year.

In solidarity,  
Your Students' Union.