



2022-23 UMSU Mental Health Working Group (MHWG) Recommendations:

Background:

The UMSU Mental Health Working Group was struck in the Summer of 2022 with the mandate of creating recommendations for UMSU and the UM to advance student support resources. While the document is broken up into two sections, one for UMSU and one for the UM Administration, we believe that all these projects can and should be worked on in tandem between the incoming UMSU Executive team, and the UM Administration team. I want to extend a massive thank you to members of the UMSU MHWG, and I hope that this document will serve as a wonderful reminder of how far there still is to go for students' mental health support.

All the best,

Jaron Rykiss, UMSU President

Recommendations For UMSU:

Peer listening group

The goal of our partnership with the student counseling center (SCC) is to establish a program that offers regular "listening ear" events for students to engage in peer listening and gain emotional support. Our aim is to create a safe and non-judgmental environment where students can come and chat with one another, fostering a sense of community and understanding. This program would be like the HealthyU (<https://umanitoba.ca/student-supports/health-wellness/healthy-u>) program! By providing this program, we hope to offer an

outlet for students to express themselves and receive the support they need, without the potential liability issues that may arise from peer support. Our ultimate goal is to help students feel heard and supported, contributing to their overall well-being and success.

Create a diagnostic clinic on campus

To establish a partnership with an external party that specializes in diagnosing students to ensure that they receive the proper treatment. By inviting this party to our campus, we aim to provide our students with access to comprehensive diagnostic services that are not typically available on campus. Our objective is to identify any underlying mental health issues that may be affecting our students' academic and personal success and connect them with the appropriate resources for treatment. This initiative would hopefully occur several times throughout the year, like the CRA Clinic that UMSU has hosted throughout the year. Ultimately, our goal is to improve the overall health and wellbeing of our student body, ensuring that they have the support and care they need to thrive both in and outside of the classroom.

Prep sessions for incoming first year students

To provide additional sessions for students on how to balance their mental health and academic work while at university. We recognize that university life can be challenging and stressful, and we want to ensure that our students have the resources and support they need to maintain their mental health and wellbeing. By offering these sessions, we aim to equip our students with practical strategies and tools for managing their workload and prioritizing self-care. To host these sessions, we would recommend inviting a professional in the community, or potentially if the next year's UMSU team strikes another Mental Health Working Group (MHWG), they could participate in the creation of such events. Another option is to partner with the UManitoba student affairs team and the Student Counselling Center to create events that can be hosted during the "Welcome to the Herd" events. Our objective is to help our students develop a healthy and sustainable approach to their academic work, which will not only benefit their mental health but also contribute to their overall success and achievement. Ultimately, our goal is to create a campus environment that supports and promotes the mental health and well-being of all our students.

UM Mental Health Text hotline

To implement a text hotline for mental health, building upon the foundation that has been set with the administration. We have contacted the counselling services to ensure that the hotline will be staffed by student peers who can provide immediate support and assistance to those

who need it. To facilitate the implementation of this hotline, we are looking to partner with Laurie Schnarr's office to leverage their expertise and resources in mental health and wellbeing. Our objective is to provide a safe, accessible, and confidential way for students to seek help and support for their mental health needs, particularly during times of stress and crisis. By establishing this hotline, we hope to enhance our campus mental health services and promote a culture of care and support for all members of our community. We aim to ensure that our students feel empowered to take care of their mental health and well-being, knowing that they have access to the resources and support they need.

Mental Health Module for UMLearn

To create a module for UMLearn that focuses on mental health and well-being. We recognize that mental health is a crucial aspect of student success and well-being, and we want to ensure that our students have access to resources and support that can help them maintain good mental health. To achieve this goal, we have contacted IST to initiate the process of creating the module. We have been referred to the department for the advancement of teaching and learning, thecentrecontactus@umanitoba.ca, to develop the module. We would work with the experts in the department to create a module that is engaging, informative, and accessible to all students. The module will cover topics such as stress management, coping strategies, and mental health resources available on campus. This, we believe, is a high-priority project and one that would greatly benefit all members of our community. It would be great to see this implemented as a project for UMSU's incoming VPSL. Ultimately, our goal is to promote a culture of mental health awareness and well-being among our students and equip them with the tools they need to thrive academically and personally.

Recommendations For UM:

Work to create a culture of acceptance within UM surrounding mental health

To remove barriers or policies that contribute to the formation and maintenance of stigma around mental health on our campus. We recognize that stigma can be a significant barrier to accessing mental health services and can prevent individuals from seeking help when they need it most. To achieve this goal, we aim to identify and address any policies or practices on our campus that perpetuate mental health stigma. We will work with stakeholders across the university to educate and raise awareness about the impact of stigma and how it can be addressed. Our objective is to create a campus environment that promotes mental health awareness, acceptance, and understanding, and where all students feel supported and

empowered to take care of their mental health needs. We would like to see the creation of a UM Strategic Plan, like the general strategic plan, which is currently being created, but one that explores student mental health specifically. UM ought to focus on removing any barriers or obstacles that prevent our students from accessing the mental health services they need and to foster a culture of care and support for mental health on our campus.

Mental Health exemptions and do overs

To advocate for a new policy at UM that allows for exemptions or do-overs for students who experience significant mental health challenges that impact their academic performance. We recognize that mental health can significantly impact a student's ability to complete assignments and excel academically. We would like to work with the university administration to develop a policy that takes into account the impact of mental health on academic performance and provides a fair and equitable system for students who require exemptions or do-overs. We believe that not every assignment is critical and that students should have the opportunity to redo assignments if there is sufficient mental health need. This policy is different than the "Self-Assessment form" which the university implemented last year; however, it provides similar supports in the way of removing additional stress on students. By implementing this policy, we aim to reduce the stress and anxiety that can arise from academic performance pressure and provide students with the support they need to succeed academically while managing their mental health needs. Our goal is to create a culture of care and understanding about mental health on our campus and to ensure that all students can thrive academically and personally.

If there are any questions, feel free to reach out to me, Jaron Rykiss, and I would be happy to work with whomever to add clarity. I can be reached by email at: Jaronrykiss@gmail.com, or by telephone at +1(204) 509-0044. It is important to note that my term as UMSU President will be ending as of May 1st, 2023, and that Tracy Karuhogo will be replacing me. For any questions on implementation or process, please reach out to the Pres@umsu.ca email, and whomever is available would be happy to support.

Thank you.