innovation**hub**

Insights & Ideas

INNOVATION HUB OVERVIEW

Whole Student Development

Access For Every Student

innovation hub domains

Fostering Connectedness

Integrated Learning Experience

Future Ready Students

The **Innovation Hub** is a methodology introduced by Student Life to provide opportunities for the University community to co-create and operationalize innovative initiatives that enhance the University experience for our students. It is a highly collaborative, engaging and inclusive space consisting of staff, faculty and students. The hub has five main domains, each co-led by students. Supporting these domain teams are operational teams in communications and IT; events and administration; operations and design; and organizational learning. Each team is conducting ethnographic research using a student-centred, design-thinking methodology, and will ideate and test ideas for transformational innovations in student services. They will also participate in the implementation phase.

The Innovation Hub explores two core questions:

- Who are our students?
- How is the world changing for them?

The answers to these questions will help us to shape our future programs and services to create the University of Toronto student experience of the future.

100+ students, staff and faculty are involved in the Innovation Hub

750+ students, staff and faculty have attended Innovation Hub events

More than **100** one-to-one interviews have been conducted with students in the research phase.

INNOVATION HUB TEAM MEMBERS

Access for Every Student:

Student Co-Lead: Tamsyn Riddle – third-year student, Diaspora and Transnational Studies, Equity Studies and Political Science

Staff Co-Lead: Lai Wardak – Program Administrator, UHIP Office, Centre for International Experience

Emma Beaulieu – Master's student, Occupational Therapy

Jennifer Davies – Manager of Career Development, UTSC Academic Advising and Career Centre

Sania Hameed – M.Ed student, Student Development and Student Services in Higher Education, OISE

Brian Luk – second-year student, Computer Science

Ben Poynton – Senior Coordinator, Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, Human Resources & Equity and the Office of Vice-Provost

Sunny Xiang – first-year student, Rotman Commerce

Fostering Connectedness:

Student Co-Lead: Natasha Tang – fourth-year student, Genetics

Staff Co-Lead: Erin Clifford – Lead Coordinator, Mentorship and Peer Programs, Student & Campus Community Development

Sean Caffrey – Executive Director, BioZone, Center for Applied Biosciences and Bioengineering

Danny Farah – Master's student, Mechanical and Industrial Engineering

Elvis Ibrahimovic – Co-Curricular Learning Coordinator, Centre for Community Partnerships

Cathy Maloney – Manager, Intercultural Initiatives and Learning Strategy, Centre for International Experience

Guang Ying Mo – Postdoctoral Fellow, Institute of Communication, Culture, Information and Technology

Future Ready Students:

Student Co-Lead: Ling Lam – Master's Student – Faculty of Information

Staff Co-Lead: Melanie Coleman – Coordinator, Employment Recruitment and Engagement, St. George Career Centre

Jonathan Cheevers – Manager, Student and Young Alumni Outreach, Alumni Relations

Christopher Duff – Community Partner & President, Inspired Initiatives

Ainsley Goldman - Placement Program Coordinator, Faculty of Kinesiology and Physical Education

Ming Da (Tim) Li – second- year student, Computer Engineering

Pranay Shrestha – MASc student, Mechanical and Industrial Engineering

Vincent Tu – third-year student, Rotman Commerce

Aziza Virani – Special Projects Officer, Centre for International Experience

Integrated Learning Experience:

Student Co-Lead: Jacquie Beaulieu –PhD student, Higher Education, OISE

Staff Co-Lead: Julian Weinrib – Special Projects Officer, Office of the Vice-Provost, Innovations in Undergraduate Education

Marc Arnold – Coordinator, Transition and Advising for International Students, Centre for International Experience

Michelle Brownrigg – Senior Director, Co-Curricular Education and Chief Program Officer, Hart House

Stacy Costa – PhD Student, Curriculum, Studies and Teacher development, OISE

Atifa F. Karim – M.Ed student, Higher Education, OISE

Fatema Khan – fourth-year student, Rotman Commerce

Bonnie Jane Maracle – Aboriginal Learning Strategist, Academic Learning Center

Eric Schwenger – M.Ed student, Higher Education, OISE

Whole Student Development:

Student Co-Lead: Taylor Stinson – third-year student, Computer Science

Staff Co-Lead: Cristina Peter – Student Success Programs Coordinator, Faculty of Arts & Science

Aman Chohan – Student Life Officer, Housing Services and Division of Student Life

Aryan Esgandanian – Non-profit sector, designing and implementing programs designed to support marginalized populations

Susan Ivimey – Executive Assistant, Co-Curricular Physical Education and Sport in the Faculty of Kinesiology and Physical Education

Ary Maharaj – First-year, M.Ed, Counselling and Psychotherapy at OISE

Firas Najjar – Master's of Engineering student, Materials Science & Engineering

Tayyaba Shahzad – third-year student, Political Science & Criminology

Ayana Webb – Recreation and Wellness Program Associate, Hart House

Communications Team:

Josh Hass – Lead Coordinator for Orientation, Transition & Engagement, Division of Student Life

Margaryta Ignatenko – first-year Student, Journalism, UTSC

Tricia Kenderdine – Manager, Communications Projects, Student Life Communications

Karen Shim – Communications Associate, Vice-Provost, Academic Programs Office

Events Team:

Kay Dawkins – Manager, Physical Activity at the Faculty of Kinesiology and Physical Education

Meagan Lau – Administrative Coordinator, Student Success, Division of Student Life

Riley McCullough – Alumnus & Planning and Policy Advisor, Toronto City Councillor

Linda Moss – Event Coordinator, St. George Career Centre

Igor Samardzic – Organizer, The Agency at U of T

Operations & Design Team:

Jeff Burrow – Manager of Assessment & Analysis, Student Life

Laura Klamot – User Experience Designer, ACORN Team, EASI

Danniel Liu – second-year student, Computer Science & Statistics

Joseph Minichini – Business Analyst, Registrarial Policy, Enrolment Services

Ana Quilumbango – second-year student, Mechanical Engineering

Ali Rodney – PhD student, Sociology
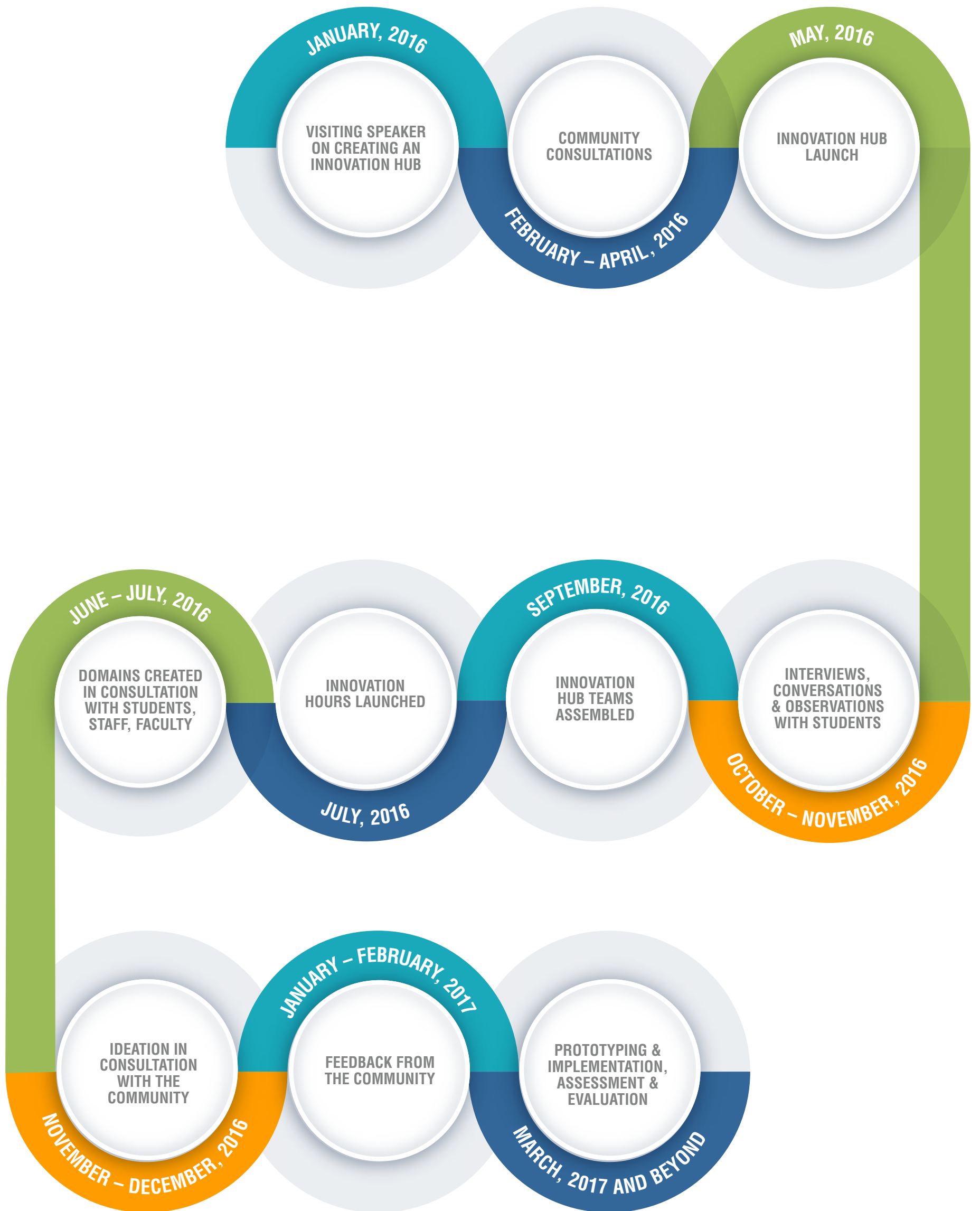
Organizational Learning Team:

Denise Bentum – Master's Adult Education and Community Development student.

Kate Bowers – Career Educator, Career Centre, Division of Student Life

Tanya Lewis – Director of Accessibility Services & Academic Success

Liam O'Leary – Graduate Programming Coordinator, School of Graduate Studies

INNOVATION HUB TIMELINE

JANUARY, 2016

VISITING SPEAKER ON CREATING AN INNOVATION HUB

COMMUNITY CONSULTATIONS

FEBRUARY – APRIL, 2016

MAY, 2016

INNOVATION HUB LAUNCH

JUNE – JULY, 2016

DOMAINS CREATED IN CONSULTATION WITH STUDENTS, STAFF, FACULTY

INNOVATION HOURS LAUNCHED

JULY, 2016

SEPTEMBER, 2016

INNOVATION HUB TEAMS ASSEMBLED

INTERVIEWS, CONVERSATIONS & OBSERVATIONS WITH STUDENTS

OCTOBER – NOVEMBER, 2016

IDEATION IN CONSULTATION WITH THE COMMUNITY

NOVEMBER – DECEMBER, 2016

JANUARY – FEBRUARY, 2017

FEEDBACK FROM THE COMMUNITY

PROTOTYPING & IMPLEMENTATION, ASSESSMENT & EVALUATION

**MARCH, 2017 AND BEYOND**

SUMMARY OF WHAT WE LEARNED

Our team identified the following six insights that stood out, including key needs and the underlying values associated with those needs:

1. Students value being cared about and helped through their journey at U of T. They have a need to feel supported by staff, faculty and other students. Every interaction with others at U of T, however brief, has the potential to make an impact on students' lives.
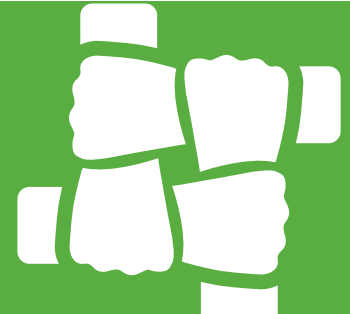
2. Students value inclusivity. Some students feel marginalized on campus and express a need for connection in more inclusive and safe spaces. Both symbolic and physical aspects of university life were identified as feeling non-inclusive by some students.

3. Students value academic achievement but they express a need for help negotiating the tension between academics and other aspects of being a student (e.g. being prepared for a future career, co-curriculars, making connections with others, wellness). Students know that these other aspects of university life are important but they don't know how to fit it all in.

4. Students value guidance. They have a need for assurance and want someone to show them the way.

5. Students value preparedness for the career world beyond U of T. They express a need for help with wayfinding (figuring out what career path is right for them), work experience and job-finding after graduation. These features are built into some but not all programs at U of T. If they aren't, students feel torn between academics and optional career-prep activities (see insight number three above).

6. Students value belonging. Because of the size of the U of T population, students express the need to find community connection. Often this is found in smaller (homogeneous) groups but is harder for marginalized students, commuter students, international students or students who are focused primarily on academics. Students want to feel like more than a number and want to feel a sense of pride in being a U of T student, but they often don't.

ACCESS FOR EVERY STUDENT

We conducted in-depth qualitative interviews with students from groups who may feel marginalized on campus to better understand how their identities shape their experiences at university.

We identified that these students have the following unmet needs related to access:

Support
Inclusion
To be valued
To feel safe

Afraid Alex*

21, undergraduate student, transgender, registered with Accessibility Services

Alex's primary identity is as a transgender student. Their accessibility needs are not met and they've had trouble getting accommodation. They don't feel acknowledged or safe most of the time on campus and feel a need for community and connection with others who feel the same way. Alex feels isolated and othered, and wishes someone was actively advocating for students like them on campus. Alex wants to seek help (e.g. accessibility, financial assistance) but doesn't feel safe doing so.

* Alias names used to protect student identity.

> "Clubs that I don't know would have anti-oppressive policies, I don't know if I could be part of that. I don't think I feel comfortable. It does feel very isolating."

IMAGINE…

> "I spent a lot of time in undergrad explaining Accessibility Services to profs. They often had no idea. There doesn't seem to be any training about it for profs."

What if U of T developed a poster and social media campaign that would celebrate students like Alex who often feel excluded and underrepresented?

What if U of T had student-led equity training for staff members so that students have an opportunity to share their experiences and develop relationship with staff, and staff members have an opportunity to develop a deep understanding of students' needs?

What if U of T developed a childcare collective where student-parents could volunteer to share childcare duties while they participate in campus events?

What if students with special dietary needs could easily access properly labeled healthy options on campus?

What if students could receive a stipend to upload excellent notes for other students who need accomodation through Accessibility Services?

FOSTERING CONNECTEDNESS

We conducted interviews to explore how students feel connected to others and to the University. Students defined "connectedness" as:

1. a sense of knowing what's going on
2. feeling a sense of pride for attending the University
3. community

We identified students' unmet needs related to connectedness:

Connection opportunities

Permission to connect

Support to connect

Tentative Tasha*

21, 4th-year undergraduate, transfer student

Tasha started at a residential university where community came to her. She didn't have to wonder where students lived because everyone was nearby. She simply went about her daily routine and the outcome was feeling very connected. She transferred in third year because of her program of study and the prestige of U of T. She lived close to campus but wasn't connected to anyone. Now she lives more than an hour away and would like to connect to some groups on campus. For Tasha, there are barriers to participating like time and the expense of transportation.

* Alias names used to protect student identity.

> **"I'm quite quiet when I get to a new place, I generally hope that someone will come up and talk to me."**

IMAGINE…

> **"With the clubs that I've been part of, it doesn't feel that it matters to anyone if I show up or not."**

> **"Loneliness is a natural part of U of T."**

What if ordinary places at U of T, like elevators, became designated spaces to connect with others?

What if, when students were accepted at U of T, the University was able to connect them with other students who live in the same region?

What if students felt like the University cared about them through ambassadors who made personalized contact with students throughout the school year?

What if the University facilitated lunch activities designed for students to interact and converse with each other?

What if there was a concierge service in a central location on campus that acted as an initial contact point for wayfinding and referrals?

FUTURE-READY STUDENTS

We explored what being future-ready means to students and what they're doing to be ready for the future. We also talked to alumni and employers in the community about what future-readiness looks like. We defined future readiness as knowing how to acquire and demonstrate knowledge, skills and aptitudes in demand in today's labour market.

Students expressed the following unmet needs in relation to being future-ready:

Guidance
Social networks
Labour market knowledge

Lost Lok*

20, commerce undergraduate, international student,

Lok is an international student who feels like he has missed out on important information to ensure his success in finding internships and a job after graduation. He's been told that he should participate in co-curricular activities to increase his social networks, but feels torn between those and the time needed for his coursework. Lok believes strongly in participating in values-based activities but those aren't rewarded in terms of his GPA.

* Alias names used to protect student identity.

> " I feel jealous of other people. They know how to get a job based on their prior experience, and I don't. "

IMAGINE…

> " I don't know how to put in effort effectively in order to get something. I don't have the same access to resources that some students had even in high school. "

What if students could take a for-credit course to explore all of the wonderful things they could do with their degrees *before* they graduated?

What if the University provided bursaries to students facing financial barriers who want to participate in placement opportunities?

What if students took a career education and skills development course as part of earning their degree?

What if students received career support and advice by becoming part of a cohort of students with similar career goals?

What if the University had a resource centre that provided guidance and support for students to engage in work-integrated learning opportunities?

INTEGRATED LEARNING

We gathered insights on how U of T might better support students in weaving together what they're learning in various places. We also explored the question of where students learn at U of T and when students have felt engaged or disengaged as learners.

We identified the following needs related to integrating different kinds of learning in relation to integrated learning:

- Connection between academics and real life
- Respect for different learning styles
- Validation of different learning experiences

Pessimistic Pete*

35, undergraduate student, began at U of T in the TYP, member of a First Nation

Pete never had the opportunity to learn about his Indigenous heritage until he came to U of T and met others with the same story. He experiences struggle and frustration because in class he is expected to know "all about Aboriginal people", but contrastingly, when he presents on his own experience and is critical of mainstream policies, his audience of peers doesn't accept the truths he knows from experience. Throughout his time at U of T, First Nations House has become Pete's safe haven of learning, understanding and acceptance.

* Alias names used to protect student identity.

> " I've learned most of what I know doing field work and from my friends in the community, so class doesn't really matter. "

IMAGINE…

> " When I'm put on the spot in class as the "token Indian" and expected to provide explanations to others in class… like I know everything. It gets pretty uncomfortable. I just want to get out of there. I feel like I need to escape this. "

What if the University repurposed an existing central space on campus and used it as a hub where undergraduate students could actively engage with faculty and teaching assistants?

What if students were alerted to co-curricular opportunities tailored to their interests using the same software they use for course management?

What if the University created a campaign aimed at encouraging students to share thoughts on what they want instructors, TAs, staff and fellow students to know about them?

What if graduate students had a multipurpose, co-working space where co-curricular learning opportunities were also offered?

What if U of T developed a widget that allowed students to pose anonymous questions in any class?

WHOLE STUDENT DEVELOPMENT

We explored eight dimensions of wellness in our interviews with students. These were: emotional, spiritual, intellectual, physical, environmental, financial, occupational and social. We asked students how the University affects their development related to these eight dimensions.

We identified the following needs related to students' development as a whole person:

Guidance
Connection
Access to knowledge

Resourceful Rohini*

3rd-year undergraduate student, 20, first-generation student

Rebecca is aware of the support services at U of T but she's too pressed for time to access them. She is a first-generation student, so her parents aren't any help when she talks to them about her university stresses. She would like one-on-one advice but can only get it in the middle of a crisis. She's constantly concerned about her future plans and wonders why she came to this university. Rebecca would like to participate in an activity outside of class that would help her cope with setbacks, but she doesn't know what that would be and doesn't have the time to look for one.

* Alias names used to protect student identity.

> "I want to understand my purpose here; I like knowing I have a path."

IMAGINE…

> "You get so caught up with school, by the time you use resources, it's too late."

What if, university-wide, there was an hour each day during which no classes were scheduled?

What if existing, underused spaces were transformed, at minimal cost, into commuter lounges?

What if walk-and-talk rituals were promoted on campus for students, staff and faculty?

What if nap pods were installed for students who have long and tiring days on campus?

What if students received guidance at the start of each semester, depending on the stage they're in towards degree-completion, on how to develop and realize their goals?

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