

Vice President Equity: Report to APUS General Meeting November 12, 2021

Duties performed since the Summer General Meeting – August 12, 2021

My name is Dianne Acuna. I started off as a board member representing the part-time students of the Faculty of Arts and Science, helping to make decisions in APUS matters. Now I am the new Vice President Equity here at the APUS student union, representing all three campuses at the University of Toronto. My portfolio involves engaging and getting informed in equity issues, events, activities and workshops that help to challenge or raise awareness of inequalities. Especially for racialized and marginalized students, drawing upon various intersectionalities. While the focus is to help part-time students of all ages, we here at APUS and as the VP Equity, are here to essentially advocate for all students. Though this is my focus, I constantly work collectively with all APUS execs and staff as a team to make sure our student's voices are heard. Outlined below are just a few of the ways that I help to support APUS and its student membership

APUS Involvement:

As the VP Equity, part of my portfolio alongside my fellow execs, is to attend and participate in **Executive Meetings** where we bring to the table issues concerning students and discuss how we can collectively find ways to raise awareness of these issues or how to continue to tackle them. Such concerns of late have been of the safe return for all students and staff to the university and the **University Mandated Leave of Absence Policy (UMLAP)**. I also attend our **Board Meetings**, the latest one being on Oct. 19th where we participated in an **Anti-Black Racism workshop** teaching us how to become better allies, move forward the conversation and action on the matter. I was also part of the **APUS Fall Orientation** for our part time students where I participated and helped to provide some input.

Along side the **VP Events and Outreach**, I have helped to keep track of events by other groups and organizations that offer workshops that help build skills, events that offer safe spaces for marginalized and racialized student members or events that help teach/raise awareness on equity issues that would be of interest or relevance to students. Some of the groups/organizations include **Sexual and Diversity Gender Office (SGDO)**, **Students for Barrier-Free Access (SBA)** and events from **UTM** and **UTSC**. We then make sure to share these events within our social media and our newsletter, The Voice to keep our members as informed as possible about these other ongoing events.

Canadian Federation of Students

Along with the rest of the execs, I attended the **CFS Ontario Annual General Meetings** which were divided into two parts that took place over a span of 3 and 5 days. It a conference where many student unions across Ontario come together to have a voice in the policies that are made by passing motions; motions that we all come together to review to make sure that is fair, representative and beneficial to present and future students. The first part took place during the month of August 18th to 20th, where aside from discussing motions, we also participated in an **Anti-Oppression training** and **Social Justice workshop**.

The second part of the **CFS-O AGM** took place the 13th to the 17th of September. It is there that the caucus and constituency meetings took place. **APUS** is part of the **Part-Time Student's Caucus meetings** and I specifically participated in the **Mature Student Constituency meetings** bringing forth concerns of safe re-opening, hybrid classes, what barriers part-time and mature students faces such OSAP or ODSP

challenges, sharing solutions that different student unions proposed to their university, how to engage students and continue to help them during covid times. Lastly, I also took part in the **Two-Spirit/Women's Constituency**. We discussed how to make safe spaces, what else we can do to be proactive, campaigns that continue to educate and raise awareness of consent, opportunities/events that could be supportive, informative, and beneficial and lastly making sure we broaden the perspective so that events/workshops are also inclusive to trans and queer students.

The **CFS-O AGM** is a great space to connect and communicate with students, unions and universities across Ontario as we come together to support each other and create change as a whole.

Community/University/Event Involvement

As is the duty of every exec, I also participate and attended meetings with the **OVPS** or the **UofT** admin. Where we advocate for the most pressing issues at the time. In recent meetings, the focus has been on discussing the measures the university was taking to ensure a safe re-opening for all at campus and pushing for the continuation of hybrid events/ services for students who may find it difficult to come to campus.

APUS also has seats on many different committees that can affect students. Some of those are **Hart House Board of Stewards**, different **Library Committees**, **Woodsworth Student Council (WSC)**, **Provost Undergraduate Student Advisory Group (PUSAG)** to name a few. I sit on the **Council of Student Services (COSS)**, where we review budget and programming presentations from **Student Life**, **KPE** and **Hart House**. Here I make sure to give our student members a voice by giving feedback and raise any concerns before anything can be approved and move forward.

I also help to support and collaborate in event planning with other the other campuses and other groups, along with the VP Events and Outreach, especially those that deal with equity issues. Some of the events that I have worked on during this time is participating in **Queer Orientation**, partnering up with **LGBTOUT** to create self-care packages to send to students during these difficult times. I have also partnered up with **UTMSU**, **SCSU**, and **SBA** to create a **2SLGBTQ+ Virtual Town Hall** event – a safe space specifically from students within the community to share their voice, ask questions of their student unions and groups and share what more we can do for them as students or what we can continue to change. Currently I am part of the **Trans Day of Remembrance planning committee** where different groups of us here at **UofT**, led by the **SGDO**, are working hard to plan weeklong events leading up to the date – making sure the events will be safe spaces for the community and allies.

As mentioned, one of our other main concerns has been **UMLAP**, a policy that is currently in the process of getting reviewed. I have been educating myself, by not only reading the policy but joining in on consultations with outside professionals that have experience dealing with leaves of absences and in webinars. We have been pushing to make sure that there is fair student consultation throughout all three campuses and that changes are made. Currently it can single out, discriminate against and be harmful to all – (especially BIPOC and 2SLGBTQ+) – students suffering through mental health issues that can be vulnerable and in need of specific, equitable supports. Along with other execs from all three campuses, I attended an **UMLAP townhall** to share my voice, had consultations as a student union with representatives reviewing the policy, signed petitions and letters urging for change and have helped provide input on a report listing recommendations that we at **APUS** have come up with based on all the research that has been done.