Okanagan College Students' Union

Annual Report of the Board



ÓCSU

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Today, and every day, we acknowledge that the members, representatives, and staff of the Okanagan College Students' Union live, gather, work, and play on the ancestral, traditional, and unceded territories of the Okanagan Syilx People, and the Secwepemo People. Our Revelstoke members are located on the unceded territories of the Ktunaxa, Secwepemc, Sinixt and Syilx Peoples. These peoples have stewarded and cared for these lands since time immemorial. We understand that colonization is still used today to marginalize and dispossess Indigenous Peoples from their lands and waters, some of which reach beyond the geopolitical borders of socalled Canada, known traditionally as Turtle Island. We must centre these truths as we navigate the post secondary institutions of British Columbia which have been purposefully structured through colonial lenses for generations. There is much to be relearned by settlers and we commit to decolonization practices, and continue to learn and take anti-colonial and inclusive approaches to our work. We invite all OCSU members to understand whose land they reside on by visiting nativeland.ca.



Introduction

The Okanagan College Students' Union proudly represents over 5000 student members in Penticton, Kelowna, and Salmon Arm. We aim to ensure that post-secondary education is of high quality, publicly funded, and we hold education decision makers and stakeholders accountable to students. OCSU strives to achieve these goals by providing the students of Okanagan College with advocacy, services, and events.

Throughout 2022-2023 the OCSU had an exciting and productive year with our elected representatives and members. Our focus was on what the biggest needs of our student members were, and what changes we could make, or lobby for, to best support them. We chose to be bold and brave by publicly calling on Okanagan College leadership to better support students, and to keep students involved in all decision making. We supported our members through the challenges of the cyber attack last January. We also remembered to find some joy along the way and hosted tons of fun and engaging events. We look forward to sharing more details with our members in the pages ahead.

In Solidarity, Your OCSU 2022-2023 Board of Directors

STUDENT SOLIDARITY

In response to OC leadership's inaction on student issues and opacity with campus changes, our Board made the difficult decision to publicly protest by holding a walkout in Kelowna that was live streamed in Penticton and Salmon Arm. We had support from our student population and the OC Faculty Association (OCFA). The OC Faculty Association issued a public statement of support and solidarity for the protest. We also received media coverage from several outlets including Global News, Kelowna Capital News, the Vernon Morningstar, the Salmon Arm Observer, Castanet, and iheart Radio. By the end of the week after the protest, we collected over 700 signatures from students from all three of our campuses asking the college to cap international student tuition fees, bring back a cafeteria food service in Kelowna, and reinstate student association observers on the OC Board of Governors.

Following the walk out and letter signing, our board met with OC President Neil Fassina and then-VP Students Meri Kim Oliver in a meeting where no agreements or resolutions were reached. OCSU was asked to publish a co-released letter with the institution, but the Board felt that without any resolution, or any fruitful discussion in the meeting, a joint statement was inappropriate and irresponsible to our members. These actions were all publicly documented in our monthly newsletter and on our website to maintain transparency. We were proud to help unite students on issues that negatively impacted them, and remain hopeful that OC leadership will recognize the needs of its largest stakeholders, students, and make the positive changes they ask for.

Cyber Incident

Us, and our whole OC community, faced complications because of the Cyber Incident which occurred in January 2023. Since our wifi is connected through OC, we had some challenges with our operations and our entire phone system was offline for months. On the bright side, our Kelowna printing service was busier than ever due to the OC Library printers being out of service. Due to our position as a distinct entity from Okanagan College, we were able to resume our operations much quicker than most and helped ensure that members could continue to access our services throughout the entire second semester. Our Kelowna printing services continued to be low-cost and remained open to members five days a week.



ADVOCACY

The OCSU, like all students' unions, was founded with advocacy as the number one priority of our organization. Last year, we did a ton of advocacy work both through internal improvements to our organization and membership, and externally in our community.

The Board worked on Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Social Justice efforts through the launch of our Equity Committee. This committee focused on areas such as improving language and procedures within our bylaws and policies, and created a restorative justice approach to disciplinary and behavioral issues within the organization as opposed to using more traditional methods of discipline. The committee also supported our Penticton and Kelowna campus councils through the launch of Queer Qlub at both campuses-events and spaces specially curated and organized for our 2SLGBTQIA+ members. Through the work of this committee, it was determined that an Equity Director role should be established as a position within our Board of Directors, which we look forward to growing in 2023-2024.

Under the guidance and energy of our newly formed Equity Committee, our Penticton and Kelowna Campuses embraced our Queer Qlub initiatives and set to work organizing the events for it. The Penticton programming was set up and sponsored through our pride space, The Harbour, and in Kelowna activities were supported by the campus council. On both campuses, Queer Qlub events usually took place in the evenings and hosted 2SLGBTQIA+ community members and allies through different events and activities like Drag Night with Freida Whales and friends, movie night, a paint night, and games night. We brought the snacks, supplies, activities, and participants supplied the laughs, connections, and memories. We look forward to continuing these great events and our continued solidarity and allyship with all 2SLGBTQIA+ members and staff within Okanagan College.

ADVOCACY

At our Salmon Arm campus, we hosted our annual Candlelight Vigil in memory of The École Polytechnique massacre, which was a mass shooting that occurred on December 6, 1989 at the École Polytechnique de Montréal in Montreal. Fourteen women were murdered; another ten women and four men were injured. Every year we remind ourselves that violence against women is unacceptable. We had a good community and student turnout. Salmon Arm Campus Dean, Joan Ragsdale, spoke about the tragedy and awareness of violence against women. Musical guests set the background for the candle light walk around the campus pond. Red Dresses were displayed to bring attention to the missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and two-spirit folks of so-called Canada as well, which played a huge role and tragic role in the continuation of violence against women in North America. The outdoor vigil was followed by bannock tacos, snacks and beverages served indoors to warm up.

In the Winter semester Okanagan College suddenly announced that they were closing their four year bridging nursing program with UBC-O, and understandably the students affected were distraught. The nursing students were left stunned and feeling betrayed by the institution and government. With the OC portion of the program closing at the end of the semester, current students were facing much higher than expected tuition fees in the fall at UBC-O. Many also faced housing complications and transportation concerns, as several of the nursing students lived outside of Kelowna in the south of the Valley. Despite reassurances from both OC and UBC-O, the OC students also had concerns about the actual seat availability in the UBC-O program after speaking with the nursing students already at the university. Smaller class sizes at OC was one of the major factors for many of the affected students when originally choosing to do their first two years of their program at the college instead of the university. The OCSU supported these students through participating in a series of meetings between the students and OC, the students and

ADVOCACY

representatives from UBC-O, and by speaking to staff-representatives of both the Minister of Advanced Education and Minister of Health. OCSU also spoke with Kelowna-Mission MLA Renee Merrifield and Opposition Critic of Advanced Education, MLA Coralee Oakes about the abrupt change made to these students.

Ultimately, it was made clear that funding had been completely cut for the program at Okanagan College, in favour of eventually developing shorter-term revenue-generating health programs to replace the vacancy in the brand new Health and Science building. However, through lobbying and powerful testimonials from the affected students, the BC Government agreed to subsidize the OC nursing students' tuition for their unplanned first year at UBC-O so that they weren't forced into paying a higher tuition before they anticipated when planning their academic journey. UBC-O made arrangements for the students to get important supplies after official university spring deadlines had already passed, and while the transition and plans were still being finalized by the OC Board of Governors and UBC Senate.

Lobbying

In the fall we made our annual presentation to the Leadership Council of Okanagan College and pressed them to provide better support for students and to stop making decisions that negatively impact the biggest stakeholders of OC-its students.

In preparation for the presentation we surveyed members on the services provided by OC and OCSU and asked them to evaluate their experiences and let us know what areas they felt could use improvement.

Based on the feedback we got from our members, and from observations of OCSU representatives and staff, we called on OC to bring back the Kelowna cafeteria, which was scrapped in the summer of 2022 without warning to the student body. The introduction of the Okanagan Market was poorly received and poorly stocked. Options were not inclusive of students' diverse dietary needs and price points were highly incompatible with student budgets.

We made several other requests of OC to be more accountable to students, including to officially stock all campus washrooms with free menstrual products after continuous delays to do so, and to better support struggling student mental health through improvements to the counselling department by reducing wait times through the increase of the number of counsellors.

After our presentation to OC Leadership, we launched our student walkout to demonstrate students' frustration with the College.

We continued our work by speaking directly with both OC Leadership and Government on the needs of students. We maintained pressure on the issues impacting students in our annual submission to the BC Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services. We also participated in the annual British Columbia Federation of Students (BCFS) Lobby Week with MLAs and government officials from around BC.

Lobbying

We continued to push for better support for international students, better access to upfront grants, and increased institutional funding, which will relieve the pressure for students and tuition fees.

OCSU representatives met with Central Okanagan MLAs Norm Letnick, Renee Merrifield, and Ben Stewart to address important issues related to post-secondary education funding. Emphasis was placed on the need for a comprehensive post-secondary funding review, which has not been conducted in the last two decades. We also discussed improving the current tuition fee limit policy to prevent institutions from raising fees through ancillary charges, and we proposed incorporating regulations for international student tuition within this policy. Another discussion point was the necessity of the development of a new international education strategy that would promote fairness, consistency, and predictability for international students. As a result, there are ongoing conversations surrounding the possibility of implementing a predictable model for international student tuition fees, demonstrating progress in our efforts to enhance accessibility and affordability in post-secondary education.

Our Internal Director and OCSU staff had the opportunity to meet with Minister of Housing, Ravi Kahlon at the Penticton campus. In the days leading up to the meeting, Penticton representatives and staff surveyed members on campus to get a sense of their housing status and needs, and gave them the opportunity to share their stories about their struggles to find affordable housing in the Okanagan. Our Internal Director presented copies of the surveys to the Minister and shared a few of them to the gathered group. We also raised the issue that there is currently no student housing, or plans to build student housing in Penticton, unlike every other OC campus. The student stories made a clear impact on the Minister and we are hopeful that long overdue progress regarding student housing for our Penticton members is on the horizon.

Lobbying

We also supplied a tailored presentation on Open Education Resources (OERs) to the OCFA at their semi-annual general meeting. We used this time to assess awareness levels among faculty and myth-bust some common OER misconceptions. We gathered information regarding faculty members' use of resources, their experiences with OERs, and the barriers they face implementing them. We look forward to collaborating with the OCFA further to address the identified barriers and continue to promote the benefits of OERs for both members and faculty.



Report of the Board 2022-2023

As the affordability crisis worsened over the last year, we saw members depending on our services more and more. We put considerable effort and resources into supporting students through our Student Initiatives & Clubs program. We provide funding for students for up to \$1500 for groups and up to \$500 per individual per application to work on projects that benefit the student community. We approved over \$16,000 in funding for various student projects and activities—our largest approval amount to date. We promoted this service by hosting Clubs Days and using the fun slogan OCSU is DTF (Down To Fund!). All existing clubs were informed and offered the option to host a table at the event, or send recruitment materials if they were unable to attend. The Kelowna event's success was evident with consistent engagement and impressive sign-ups, with each club attracting at least 9 new members, some exceeding 20 sign ups.

We also continued to support our student members through our bursaries program. Students may apply for an OCSU bursary through OC Financial Aid. Our range of available bursaries include OCSU general awards, OCSU Animation awards, OCSU International Student awards, OCSU EDI awards, OCSU Emergency Bursaries and OCSU Health awards. Last year we provided \$15,000 in student bursaries and we are so proud of each of our recipients!

It may not be new that post-secondary students face food insecurity, but that doesn't mean its acceptable. Immense effort was put into helping students facing short-term food insecurity, and evaluating how to best support our members through our three OCSU food banks, while trying to keep costs low. Food costs have continued to rise and keeping up with the pace of student-demand on the services required us to connect with various campus and community partners to help raise awareness for the issue of food insecurity and increase the profile of our food banks. We also worked with the OC Foundation to provide tax receipts to donors and to provide grocery store gift cards for members.

The Pantry-our Kelowna food bank-continues to grow in membership awareness and usage. Last year we supported around 650 individual students with this service. We hired a Pantry Coordinator and launched an appointment system to reduce wait times, to better accommodate student schedules, and to ensure our food stocks reach as many members in need as possible. The departure from our drop-in schedule was piloted in the summer, and we hope this move will help us reach more students facing short-term food insecurity.

Our Salmon Arm team has been supporting members' access to food for perhaps the longest time of any of our campus teams with their monthly "Lunch On Us!" service. Last year it proved to be at the top of the list for most utilized and valued service in Salmon Arm. Every month, ten gift cards to local restaurants are given away to members. Members were selected on a first come, first served and/or new registration basis to ensure as many individual members as possible were able to receive the support.

There is also a food shelf outside of our Salmon Arm office to support members with food security. This service was restocked weekly and was almost always emptied by the end of each week. We went through some service revamping efforts with the shelf to focus on providing non-perishable basics instead of snacks to better align with the goal of the service across all three campuses. Even with the adjustment, it remained a well-used, effective service that an estimated 50 individual members used throughout the year.

In Penticton, we saw 300 students utilize our food bank, which is located inside the Harbour. We hired a Harbour Coordinator to help increase and improve our support of members on both the food bank and the pride side of the Harbour.

Our Coordinator has helped keep the doors consistently open and ensure the ever-increasing number of members in need of food security have access to a reliable supply of basic non-perishable food options. All members are welcome to use the food bank. The Harbour also *prided* (pun intended!) itself on providing its campus members with a safe and inclusive space. In addition to the food shelves, the Harbour offered a wide range of resources, including mental health support, sexual health information, and dedicated support for the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. These resources aimed to address the diverse needs of the campus community, ensuring that individuals could access the support they required. Of course, the Harbour also hosted the Queer Qlub events we referenced to earlier. Through each of these pieces of the Harbour, members could connect, form friendships, and find a sense of belonging.

The Harbour was also host to some of our community outreach organizations like the Foundry, South Okanagan Women In Need Society, and the Access Centre. These organizations would come and work in the space on a monthly basis connecting members with community, helpful resources, and support.

We would be remiss if we did not take a moment to revisit our Salmon Arm campus to talk about their latest, greatest 15/10 service: Millie the Therapy Dog, certified Good Girl. Millie was immediately beloved by all and quickly became a staple to members, staff, and faculty alike on campus. Millie came to all OCSU events, and did laps around the student lounge during office hours to assist with member's mental health. Just don't ask her to help with your homework, that's above her pay-grade!

Each of our campuses continued to provide our long-standing services like our extended Health and Dental plan, and student discounts through the Deals App. We gave out free frosh supplies such as water bottles, hand sanitizer, and pens. We handed out thousands of member day planners, and we always kept our offices stocked with free menstrual and safer sex products. Penticton continues to provide lockers to members to store books between classes, and Kelowna's printing services proved to be an assignment-saver during the cyber incident when the library's printing services went down. Kelowna also sold 636 monthly, and 550 semester, college-priced bus passes between September 2022 and August 2023.

Another way we support our members is by raising awareness levels of the campaign work we do on their behalf, almost all of which is aimed to improve the post-secondary education experience. We engage our members with this work by hosting events, providing services, creating social media content, and through official documents like this annual report. Some of our campaign and event highlights from last year include our fall Kickstart events, a few of which we do in partnership with OC. We handed out tons of frosh supplies, and we unveiled our new member's handbook. At these events we sometimes bring in community partners for things like Pancake Breakfast with the Lions club in Kelowna, or local food truck in Salmon Arm. We also worked with our respective communities on initiatives like food drives to support our food banks and shelf. Kelowna hosted a Trick or Eat food drive on Halloween by going door to door in Lower Mission neighbourhoods near campus, collecting non-perishable donations. Penticton and Salmon Arm partnered with OC for Giving Tuesday in November to receive community donations alongside the OC Foundation. OCSU was honoured to be the honorary beneficiary of the JCI Penticton & Valley First annual food drive in Penticton. JCI Penticton brought in tons of food as well as monetary donations for The Harbour's food bank.

In the fall we also put lots of energy into our Let's Get Consensual (LGC) Campaign. Every year we host LGC events in early to mid October in an effort to educate our members about consent and sexual violence. We speak about this topic early in an effort to combat an issue known as the "redzone", which is the first 6 weeks of the academic year when there is the highest rate of sexual violence at post-secondary institutions.

Another alarming issue that students confront every fall-and winter!- is the unreasonable price of textbooks. We have been continually working on the "Open Textbooks Now!" campaign, and last year we had lots of great engagement. Members and faculty alike signed pledges to ask for, and promote, Open Education Resources (OERs), and we partnered with other campus partners like the Library and Indigenous services to help move forward with cost-reductions and OER awareness. We asked members what they could have used their money for if they didn't need to purchase expensive textbooks and we got lots of great feedback from them. Members said they could use those funds for transit expenses, rent, groceries, and a couple even said they'd squirrel it away for savings or for reading week getaways!

The fall semester was also municipal election season. Municipal elections historically have lower engagement among student-aged voters and there is often a lot of misunderstanding about what a municipal government does and controls. We held awareness events at each campus to inform our members of the importance of voting in this election. We also provided members with information on how they can vote and locations where they could vote.

After the municipal elections wrapped up, we zoomed our focus out and started talking about provincial-wide issues in post secondary education. While our team in Kelowna was holding their campus walk out, Penticton and Salmon Arm were gathering students in solidarity and talking about the Fairness for International Students Campaign (FFIS). We educated our members about the unpredictability of fees and tuition for international students, collected both FFIS pledges, and letters of support for our walk out letter to OC leadership.

Our Penticton council did great work raising awareness about reconciliation by hosting a special event for Louis Riel Day on November 16th. For this event, the campus council made posters and handbills to raise awareness about Louis Riel, who was an important political leader of the Métis people. The event gave away bannock and prizes that were made by the local indigenous community.

Our fall semester wrapped up at each campus with partnered Holiday Hurrah events with OC. We hosted hot chocolate bars with all the toppings you can imagine, gave away fantastic prizes, and sent our members off for their winter break with some much needed levity. Kelowna's annual Winter Formal immediately followed the Holiday Hurrah. This highly anticipated party sold out and members danced the night away with our DJ, made memories at the photo booth, and enjoyed snacks and beverages!

When we came back for the winter semester we focused on mental health in January by hosting, or co-hosting, awareness events where we shared wellness and mindfulness materials. February is always reserved for our annual Sexual Health Fair events. At the Fairs, OCSU promotes sexual health, and works to eliminate the stigma around it. We also talk about our Let's Get Consensual Campaign, and United Way's Period Promise campaign. This year across the valley we had some amazing community partners join us at our campuses including: The Options Clinic, Living Positive, Kelowna Pride Society, the SAFE Society, the South Okanagan Pride Society, and more! All three campuses also busted out our famous Sexual Health mascots and took photos with members around campus. We supplied free safer sex supplies, menstrual supplies, and educational material. In Penticton, local nurses were also able to provide free STI testing in a separate, private, space.

Our traditional spring events continued in March with the celebration of International Women's Day. The 2023 events centred around the theme "Embrace Equity." Hundreds of members were provided with free t-shirts, tote bags, equity buttons, and cupcakes, which set the tone for this successful event. The interactive "Embrace Equity" whiteboard display allowed members to share their personal commitments to promoting equity. Further, the display of equity definitions and discussions surrounding the significance of International Womens' Day being a day for everyone encouraged a broader understanding of the campaign. We also promoted the Moosehide Campaign and were joined by community partners such Elizabeth Fry, South Okangan Women In Need Society, and OC Indigenous Services.

We kept the celebration of women running through March with our first ever Women In Tech panel. This panel was moderated by OC professor Sarah Foss. Women from various positions and fields in tech from around the valley joined us as panelists to share their experiences navigating through an ever-evolving industry, while also addressing the gender disparity that exists in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics, also known as STEM. We provided snacks and a stage, and students and community members alike were welcome to attend this free event. The evening was very well received and we look forward to expanding and growing it in the future.

We wound down our campaign season with Sustainability Day and Fund It, Fix It awareness events. For Sustainability Day, we partnered with the Shuswap Climate Action Society who were amazing and shared lots of valuable information, and we provided reusable, eco-friendly products to give away to students as prizes.

Our Fund it, Fix it event also included another conversation about the Fairness for International Students campaign. During the event, we presented a thermometer visual that illustrated the disparities in funding between international and domestic students, as well as the gaps in support from both the institution and the government. As part of our advocacy efforts, we provided postcards for students to share their own personal experiences related to the campaigns. These postcards were sent to key decision-makers, including local MLAs, Minister of Advanced Education Selina Robinson, the OC Board of Governors, and institution leaders, amplifying the voices and concerns of the international student community and the dire need for more funding in BC post secondary education. We also sent invitations to the OC Board of Governors to attend the event to chat with students about the need to better support their stakeholders. While we were disappointed that no OC leaders or Board members decided to attend, the engagement and participation from members was amazing, marking a step forward in our pursuit of fairness and equity for both domestic and international students.

If you would like to learn more about our campaigns, please visit out website, www.ocsu.ca and sign up for our monthly newsletter to get up to date details.

Coaltion Partners

We couldn't have had the successful year we did without the instrumental support of our community coalition partners. We would like to extend our gratitude to the Access Outreach Centre, Brain Trust, Elizabeth Fry, the Foundry, Indigenous Services, the Kelowna Friendship Society, the Kelowna Pride Society, Living Positive, the Okanagan College Faculty Association, the OC Library team, the OC Wellness team, the OC Counselling Department, the Options Clinic, the SAFE Society, the Shuswap and South Okanagan Sexual Assault Response Teams, Shuswap Climate Action Society, the South Okanagan Women In Need Society, the SOS Pride, and St. John's Therapy Dogs, and others for helping us support, stand with, and educate our members.

We would also like to send a shout out to the Kelowna Rockets and Penticton Vees for hosting college night hockey games with us!

In Conclusion

Our 2022-2023 year was certainly one for the books. We are immensely proud of our student leaders for being courageous and standing up for the rights and needs of our members, as well as their tireless efforts to spread fun and engagement at each campus. Our members are at the heart of everything we do, and we want to express our gratitude for you all. It was exciting to bring you a mixture of traditional and new experiences, and we look forward to bringing even greater projects to you in the year ahead.

Thank you, 2022-2023 OCSU Board of Directors

Our Mandate

The Okanagan College Students' Union operates under three very important mandates. We aim to ensure that post-secondary education is of high quality, publicly funded, and we hold education decision makers and stakeholders accountable to students. OCSU strives to achieve these goals by providing the students of Okanagan College with advocacy, services, and events.

Advocacy

- Campaigns
- Lobbying government officials
- Lobbying college administrators
- Providing support with grade appeals and academic + non-academic challenges

Services

- Free supplies such as handbooks, reusable water bottles, lip balm and pens
- Free safer sex supplies, menstrual hygiene products, and hand sanitizer
- Extended Health & Dental benefits for eligible students
- Student food banks
- Local & BC-wide student discounts
- Subsididal services such as legal aid

Events

- Fostering campus community & student connections
- Promoting stress relief and improving mental health on campus
- Educating members about important campaigns and causes
- Empowering students
- Free food

OCSU & Equity

The Okanagan College Students' Union stands in solidarity and allyship with our members from marginalized communities;

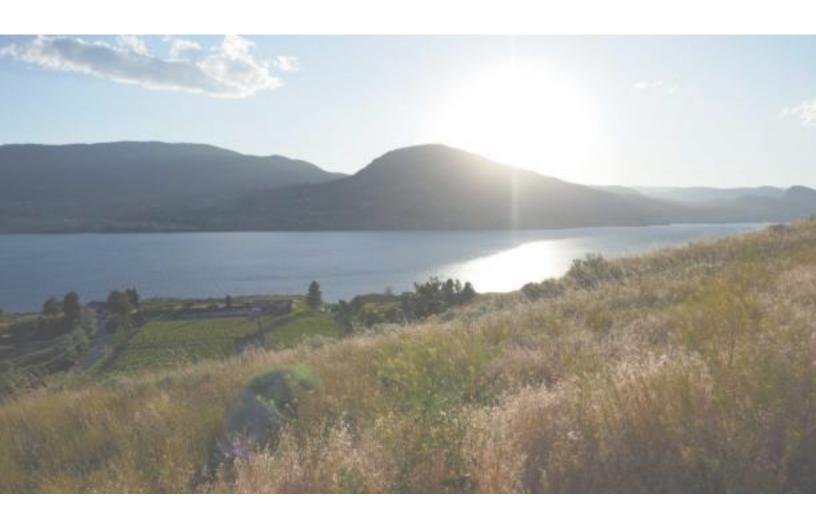
- our members who experience discrimination
- our members from BIPOC communities
- our members who experience systemic oppression
- our members burdened by legacies of discrimination
- and all people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, gender queer, two-spirit, and all other non-binary identities.

We see you, you are valid, you are important, you are loved. We know and believe that all human beings have a right to safe spaces, to dignity, and to equality; especially those whose rights may be more easily violated, ignored, or not fulfilled. OCSU denounces any action that diminishes the integrity and human rights of any person, and will always advocate to protect and preserve the rights of vulnerable members in our community and society.

OCSU recognizes the diverse backgrounds and experiences of all of our members. We recognize that in recent years a spotlight has been shown on the long-overdue need for more justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion in all spaces of our society and communities. OCSU is committed to creating an inclusive community where all members and their experiences are seen as valued and truthful. OCSU is committed to unlearning internalized racial biases, widening our understanding of the varied and multicultural backgrounds of our members and advocating for those who have been marginalized or systematically disadvantaged. We work diligently to remove barriers wherever possible and are committed to ongoing education for all our members.

Our Commitment To Sustainability

OCSU is dedicated to using sustainable and ethically sourced products for all promotional and frosh materials wherever possible. We believe that we must care for our planet, be accountable and conscious of our consumption, and aim to provide reusable, recycled and/or recyclable materials at every reasonable opportunity. We also acknowledge our responsibility to seek fair trade and/or ethically sourced consumables for our events.



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