

International Students' Association: Consultation Summary Report

Prepared by: William Lau, VP SL – [February 14th, 2014]

1.0 Overview

The idea of an International Students' Association (ISA) has been brewing among the student body for quite a while now. With the international student tuition increase in December 2013, the Students' Union recognized the gap in communications with the international student body and decided to take a more active role in facilitating the creation of an ISA. In the interest of having the support and involvement of as many stakeholders as possible, we decided to hold multiple consultations with cultural student groups (Appendix I) that are likely to be involved.

2.0 What We Heard

The consultation meetings circled around the following three questions.

2.1 What is the ISA's primary role and function?

Every group agreed that the primary function would be to present a united voice for the international student community, while enhancing communications, sparking collaboration and building relationships between cultural student groups. The united voice would be presented primarily to the Students' Union to support student advocacy as well as the International Centre to advise student services. Since there is satisfactory international student representation within the Graduate Students' Association (GSA), the ISA's advocacy will lean more towards undergraduate international student issues.

The ISA would be a truly international environment, allowing mentorship relationships to naturally form as experiences are shared. It would help build awareness of the diverse array of cultures, and break stereotypes. It would be a space for all international students to get involved, especially those without a suitable cultural student group, and help them integrate into Canadian society.

An ISA could also play other roles, such as involve the larger student body to share perspectives and foster the building global citizens. It could help disseminate information from campus partners to international students, and even provide support in a student's language of choice where necessary.

2.2 What may be a barrier to your group's participation?

The largest single barrier for groups to participate will be time and commitment. Besides that, it might also be difficult to foster a sense of belonging with the ISA as a broad umbrella group when some groups are struggling to do that already within their smaller communities.

Given the diverse nature of an ISA, special attention will need to be directed at facilitating conversations to ensure that speaking turns are fair, especially when some cultures may be more assertive than others. Cultural differences may also lead to varying interpretation of values and different priorities. Every now and then, there might even be controversial issues that will not be agreed on by all parties.

Another few concerns that will need to be addressed structurally will be to:

- ensure that minorities and those not affiliated with student groups are represented;
- decrease financial barriers (i.e. membership fees);
- create a safe space for voicing concerns and advocacy;
- facilitate communications even when English competency levels vary; and
- strive to make the ISA relevant to each stakeholder.

2.3 What must the ISA include in order for your group to participate?

The ISA must allow an equal voice to student groups, as well as international students that do not belong to an already existing group. It must also have strong communications with the international student body, and have strong connections to the International Centre, Students' Union, and the Graduate Students' Association.

The ISA must provide to any international student regardless of affiliation with a student group, and should be about the shared status as international students, remaining distant from controversial cultural issues unless consensus is reached.

The ISA should be transparent, with open meetings, and more importantly, an open mind. Structurally, there should be ways to keep the group accountable. Although united, the ISA should maintain cultural diversity and promote intercultural competency.

3.0 Moving Forward

The Students' Union will be accepting proposals from the student body to suggest structures that will best allow the ISA to deliver its collaborative mandate as outlined in Sections 2.1-2.3.

Discover Governance will provide support to individuals/groups that are assembling proposals, and submissions will be due on March 14th 2014, at 11:59pm.

A town hall will be hosted by the Students' Union on the evening of March 28th for individuals/groups to present their proposals. Proposals will be discussed and critiqued openly, in hopes to choose or create the structure that best meets students' needs.

Appendix I

Stakeholders Contacted	Showed Interest	Full Participation
African Students' Association	X	X
Anatolian Heritage Students' Association	X	X
Association des Universitaires de la Faculté Saint-Jean	X	
Augustana Students' Association	X	
Canadian and Arabic Students' Association	X	X
Chinese Students and Scholars' Association	X	X
Chinese Students' Club	X	
Graduate Students' Association	X	X
HUB Community Association	X	X
Indian Students' Association	X	X
International Friendship Group	X	
International House Community Council	X	X
Korean Students' Association		
Latin American Students' Association	X	X
Malaysian Students' Association	X	X
Nigerian Students' Association	X	X
Pakistani Students' Association	X	X
Philippine Students' Association	X	
Scandinavian Club		
Taiwanese Students' Association		
Ukrainian Students' Society	X	X
Vietnamese Students' Association		