

UNIVERSITY SENATE
ANNUAL COMMITTEE REPORT 2019-20

Committee Name: Student Relations Committee

Number of meetings held this year: 6

Committee Chair: Jennifer Savage

Committee Members: (list here)

Arielle Gedeon, SGA President

Ayala Gedeon, SGA Secretary

Kevin McCarthy, SGA Government Relations

Jenna Day, SGA Advancement

Jason Brooks, SGA Student Affairs

Melanie Alverio, Assistant Director, Marketing, Member Service & Business Operations, Campus Recreation

Shan An, Cataloging Librarian, Campbell Library

Karen Brager, Lecturer, Communication Studies, Ric Edelman College of Communication and Creative Arts

Valerie Carabetta, Assistant Professor, Department of Biomedical Sciences, Cooper Medical School of Rowan University

Christina Davidson-Tucci, Advisor, College of Science and Math

Jeanine Dowd, Advisor, School of Health Professions

Daniel Drutz, Events & Public Relations Coordinator, Office of the Dean, Henry M. Rowan College of Engineering

Daniel Kipnis, Life Sciences Librarian, Campbell Library

Alison Novak, Assistant Professor, Department of Public Relations & Advertising, Ric Edelman College of Communication & Creative Arts

Mildred Rodriguez, Assistant Director, Financial Aid & Special Programs

Henry Jimenez, Supervisor, Print Center

Purpose of/Charge to Committee: This committee evaluates existing and proposed relations and procedures and initiates recommendations for changes.

Summary of Activities this Year:

During our first meetings, we identified the following areas to concentrate on:

- Affordability Task Force (ATF) Collaboration
 - Alison Novak is on our committee plus the Affordability Task Force and we discussed ways to collaborate with that group.
 - We were given the list of ATF events and we were asked to promote within our departments and several of us attended a few
- Election Day
 - We discussed recommending no school on Election Day to promote voting.

- Food Insecurity
 - This was identified as a major issue and we learned how SGA is working with the University to promote Gourmet Dining's swipe donations.
- Wellness Center
 - We discussed the concerns of the Wellness Center having a bad reputation for wait lists/no access and how we could help to support and promote them
 - Discussed difficulty in communicating deaths/tragedies
 - We talked about collaborating with programs at CMSRU for suicide awareness programs and mental health check-ins.
- Student Wellness/Suicide
 - As the semester progressed, the tragic suicides on campus became the main focus of our group. We made the following Recommendations to the Senate President to submit to the newly organized Campus Wellness Task Force:

Recommendations to the Rowan University Senate from the Student Relations Committee

One of the most critical areas that we see as needing improvement is communication.

- Email is not the mode of communication most students engage in; but it is the #1 mode the University uses to communicate important information.
- Students are not getting accurate information about existing resources, and therefore their knowledge about these resources is limited.
- There is a need for a communication liaison.
- We believe there are five individuals who work in the media relations office, but many departments have internal communications officers. That ratio is low for a University of this size.
- **Recommendation: All divisions have an established communication contact for external media relations, and an established communication director for internal communications. These contacts should be clearly articulated in one place on the Rowan University website.**
- **Recommendation: Need more proactive social media communication/liaison**

There have been concerns raised at the Town Hall Meeting and our last committee meeting regarding warning flags.

- If a student has been absent x amount of times, the university is notified to check on them; however, not all professors take attendance.
- Starfish is configured to alert the system of a problem only after three flags have been raised.
- **Recommendation: Ensure attendance policies are up-to-date and enforced.**
- **Recommendation: Investigate if Starfish can be reconfigured (either the amount of flags or prioritize flags for emergent issues).**

The Wellness Center physical space is limited.

- **Recommendation: The Wellness Center space needs to be expanded, improved upon, starting with converting back the classroom space in Winans Hall to the Wellness Center.**

Another major area of concern is that parents/families are not being adequately informed and communicated with.

- We do not believe there is a direct parent email to receive the Daily Announcers with this important information. Are students forwarding such information or discussing it with them? Or, are they getting information (often times rumors) from social media?
- There are two Facebook groups (one in correlation with University, one private),

- We know there are FERPA regulations; but there needs to be a better communication channel with families.
- **Recommendation: Involve the Rowan University Family Group to improve the communication with families.**

There is an urgent need for training for the entire Rowan community.

- We know that the Deans are sending communications to their faculty and some are providing on-site training, but there does not seem to be an organized, standardized University-wide initiative.
- Professional staff/non-academic departments should be included in this initiative, in addition to faculty.
- We researched how some other Universities handle this training.
 - University of California: <https://www.ucop.edu/student-mental-health-resources/suicide-prevention/certified-training.html>
 - Prevention programs, evidenced-based training and awareness campaigns
 - Rutgers University: <https://afsp.org/our-work/advocacy/public-policy-priorities/suicide-prevention-university-college-campuses/>
 - Awareness, prevention and postvention
 - In person, online and social media resources, The AFSP-produced film *It's Real: College Students and Mental Health* (an 18-minute documentary designed to raise awareness about mental health issues commonly experienced by college students)
- **Recommendation: Develop robust training/awareness initiative for faculty, administration and staff.**
- **Recommendation: Need more than one forum (face-to-face, online)**
- **Recommendation: Include this as Professional Development for tenure/recontracting**
- **Recommendation: Create a comprehensive website with all mental health resources in one place**

Of additional concern is that multiple students have reported to SGA Advancement difficulties in finding resources on/reporting sexual assault on Rowan University campuses.

- **Recommendation: Reach out to the Office of Student Equity & Compliance (OSEC) to ensure that students are made aware of their website, which does include extensive resources, as well as the correct procedures to follow in identifying and reporting of sexual assault on campus.**

SUGGESTIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Suggestions:

- Due to the unprecedented transformation to online instruction/business practices for the end of Spring 2020 semester, we suggest that our group be contacted with any information that has come up in the Task Force meetings in regards to our recommendations plus the additional stresses being encountered with the COVID-19 outbreak and the transition to online learning.

Recommendations:

- Moving forward, we recommend that this committee continue to build strong collaborative relationships with various task forces within the Rowan Community, including the Affordability Task Force and the Campus Wellness Task Force. Important work is being done within these groups and we want to be able to support the work being done, as well as communicate it to our larger community.