

Princeton USG Senate  
Meeting 4  
February 20th, 2022  
8:00 pm EST



### Introduction

1. Question and Answer Session (5 minutes)
2. President's Report (Mayu Takeuchi, 5 minutes)
  - a. Holistic approach to mental health
    - i. All aspects of student life come together to support mental health
    - ii. Integrating diversity and inclusion
      1. Met with Michelle Minter and Shawn Maxam
        - a. Discussed mental health and resources with emphasis on DEI efforts and disciplinary action based on background
        - b. Now have standing monthly meeting
      2. Avi is pulling in DEI efforts to upcoming USLC meeting
    - iii. Met with Zhan Okuda-Lim and talked about shift in campus culture regarding mental health
      - a. Destigmatizing mental health conversations
    - iv. Need to set boundaries for doing good work and making time for ourselves
    - v. Mental Health Task Force will meet with Dr. Chin of CPS
    - vi. Transportation is considering how to best unite safety with the expansion
      1. Stephen: the light at the crossing by Forbes College is still out, creating risks for pedestrians
      2. (Q) Audrey: Are those vehicles electric?
        - a. (A) Mayu: All new vehicles added by the university all electric

### New Business

1. Discussion: Reframing approach to mental health (30 min)
  - a. (See below)
2. Student Groups Recognition Committee: Princeton Blockchain Society Approval (10 mins)
  - a. Focused on education and research
  - b. Sean Bradley motions for a vote, Stephen Daniels seconds
    - i. 21 in favor, 0 votes against, 1 abstention
    - ii. *The vote passes*
3. Survey Techniques/Data Collection (Carlisle Imperial/Ned Dockery, 10 mins)

- a. Want to ensure gathering accurate data and eliminating inconsistencies
- b. Tackle response bias in surveys
  - i. People who do and don't fill out surveys have different perspectives
  - ii. Aiming to get more data through quick questions and get more qualitative and descriptive data without preventing responses
  - iii. Could have yes or no option on newsletters to optimize how people respond
  - iv. Could use Instagram polls to gauge opinion
  - v. If we volunteered an hour from a month to collect data we'd have surprising results to find both qualitative and quantitative data about campus issues
  - vi. We'd love to hear feedback and your own experience with surveys
- c. Adam: We could track who answers and offer incentives
- d. Sarah: I liked the idea for the newsletters to add surveys. Also, Eric reminded us that not everyone is on Instagram so those polls could be biased.
- e. Carlisle: Could polling be effective for quick answers and even though it's not reliable? We could get a quick answer, what do you think?
  - i. As long as we know it's only part of the student body, it could be one metric of collection
- f. Stephen: We can cut down on parts of surveys and include estimations of how long surveys will take
- g. Isabella: Ask yourself if it needs to be a survey before making it. We could use focus groups to get feedback.
- h. Dillion: We could make it a more permanent part of USG. USG should have capabilities to run surveys without committees being involved. The Historian role could spearhead a committee in charge of surveys and archive the data to have a home for surveys to reduce responsibility of committee chairs to know stats and the library could be helpful with gathering data and structuring it.
- i. Avi: There's so many surveys and it's easy to get jaded so you might not want to do them. We could have a *The USG* survey and identify the 5 most important things so that students actually engage with it
- j. Hannah: Thank you for doing this, there are lots of great ideas but let's not all pile it on communications because that could be a lot.
- k. Mayu: Avi said great points about collecting data and being reasonable about which surveys we discharge

Projects Board: funding approval Muslim Student Association Spring Formal (\$2000) (10 minutes)

- a. Jen: Projects Board wants to fund a spring formal for MSA that will cater food introduce semester plans, and discuss Ramadan

- i. \$1500 from USG, \$500 from ODUS
  - ii. Ramadan is new for First Years on campus and it's a time of community and the event is allowing them to show them what the plans are
- l. MSA representatives: Muskan Effendi and Faraaz Godil
- m. Stephen Daniels motions for a vote, Sean Bradley seconds
  - i. 21 votes in favor, 0 votes against, 0 abstentions
  - ii. *The vote passes*

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Mental Health Discussion

- Avi Braiden Adam
  - Focused on being proactive rather than reactive
  - Instead of just responding to a mental health issue, remember to check in on people to prevent those issues
  - DEI: we can look into affinity spaces and how they operate and if they truly serve the students they are meant to
- Sarah Alen Eric
  - Looked at core of where we can approach, like removing the taboo on mental health
  - Can improve communication with faculty about the mental health of students: could do last lecture discussing mental health
  - Attending events to engage students could foster support and camaraderie, MyPrincetonU could implement a calendar to share events that people can attend
- Isabella Vian Anna
  - Talked about proactivity and using residential colleges or Academic Depts to facilitate community and well being: could be like a DSL without the power of repercussions because they also dish out punishments; this role does not need to fall on RCAs or DSLs
  - Want to model approaches on what's worked well: mentors within CAF center or if it could be expanded and also looking into organizations that do community work to get students involved
- Kanishkh Riley Madi Gisell Hannah
  - Greater coordination among parts of campus of who are responsible for mental health like RCAs, CPS, and DSLs
  - Could be like a focus group who coordinate where the gaps in their system are and brainstorm ways to improve mental health
  - They currently work separately but working together could be better
- Ned Walker Noah
  - Talked about establishing central safe space for mental wellness for destressing
    - Could have positive notes, stress toys, and just be a good space for winding down

- Since new residential colleges are here and new frosh will be on campus we can expand CPS to have more staff and and to make it more widely known could have a video discussing what CPS does
- Dillion Audrey Carlisle
  - Communication is key: we want individual committees and teams to have conversations about mental health to address our own mental health
  - We can use our platforms to advertise community events like campus rec activities to get people moving and boost physical well being which translates to mental well being
- Austin Cynthia
  - Talked about Academic matters
    - Health report came out and we want to make sure the recommendations on the form receive uptake in faculty
    - Need to have broader conversation about students having space to take time for mental and physical health
    - Grading: Dean Dolan and Dean Fowler talked about grading and we need to understand the impact of grading by gathering information from students to tailor recommendations going forward
- Stephen, Sean, Elliot
  - Have large events where CPS messaging is included and informs students about mental health resource
  - Need to talk about why mental health matters because we talk about the matters involved but not why
  - We could share our own stories of why this matters and this could draw students with more perspectives and improve the conversations going forward
- Steps forward for your recommendations
  - Self actionable
    - Take action
    - Assess impact
  - Another USG member
    - Reach out
    - Discuss implementation
  - Beyond USG (admin or other partners)
    - Get in touch with Mayu and Hannah
    - Think about first steps
- Will discuss further at the April 3rd meeting
- (Q) Carlisle: (To Austin Davis) I'm curious about the discussion of grading, are there things you plan on implementing right now?
  - (A) Austin: There's nothing right now, any recommendations would come out of the conversations we want to have. The Academics Committee hasn't had a

formal conversation with students; it's a work in progress that we want things to come out of.

- (Q) Austin: Stephens points about perspective and relationships with USG is important. The Princeton Perspective Project would talk about those aspects and break the image of a perfect Princeton student and talk about what that looks like and establish that a perfect student doesn't exist
- (Q) Dillion: I'm interested in the last lecture thing, for sharing perspectives. Would it be helpful for students to come together to discuss what is going on or having a vent session, what would this look like? Sometimes we have a CPS member there but people might be afraid to talk if that's the case.
  - Noah: A project we've worked on is having student discussion groups. I talked to the head of CPS as they said they don't need someone there. For Academics, we could implement mandatory late days to help students if they have a bad day or bad week. We don't want to just mitigate, we want to eliminate the sources, it's an administrative issue to make that happen.
  - Ned: FYRE Task Force has talked about imposter syndrome and addressing it. We want to tweak questions students are asked instead so instead of potential majors we talk about passions so students don't get overwhelmed
- Adam: Remember that a lot of these conversations happen organically between friends and it can be difficult to force them so just keep that in mind
- Carlisle: How do we distinguish between real mental health issues and being in college and it being really hard because there is undue stress and its very hard so I'm hesitant to advocate for something that will make the growth experience easier but I'll back something where we voice our thoughts and openly talk about our stresses
- Audrey: It's important to address that Princeton is difficult and semesters are short and it's tough and there a lot to do here but we also put stress on ourselves, so having that safe space Noah talked about is important because staying in rooms can make you go crazy and it could be a place for friends to go to facilitate conversations
- Mayu: Princeton is challenging and we aren't aiming for comfort. In USG we are individuals but also representatives so we need to think about how can I as an individual implement this and also set boundaries and work within USG to advocate for students
- Hannah: This discussion was amazing and it was great to hear everyone's voices at the meeting. We can all play a role and our group highlighted was that there are programming initiatives but also things that are unique to us that we can do to improve mental health all around

## Mental Health Actionables

Sean Bradley

- Promotion of mental health resources at major USG/ODUS events.
  - For example, at the recent Hasan Minaj event if we had an administrator or student leader speak prior and explain the availability of mental health resources, that would have reached a massive audience. I would generally like to see more targeted outreach such as working with leaders of large student groups or professors with large courses to give out those resources. If we have groups of students who are already tuned in and listening to a person, that presents a huge opportunity for raising awareness.

Audrey Zhang

- Share guided meditations with SusCom
- Share self-care tips with SusComm
- Ask teammates to either do something that makes themselves feel good or someone else feel good every week and then every day.
- Encourage active listening and mindfulness during meetings by putting screens away
- A positivity padlet
  - Padlet is a site where people can write on virtual post-it notes. I made a Positivity Padlet my senior year of high school to encourage everyone to write positive words for others to read. For example, "You can do it!," "You're beautiful", and "Look at this purrfect cat video!" I've made one here.

Carlisle Imperial

- Notify orientation event leaders that they should be mindful of what questions they ask during the "getting to know you" events.
  - This is something that can be done quickly because it would simply require a few emails to specific deans or event coordinators. It is particularly important that we do this because asking questions like "what are you planning to major in" can put unnecessary and premature pressure on first years. It also perpetuates the toxic culture that we should have our lives together, when in reality, first years should be taking their time to unapologetically explore and NOT have a specific path planned out. This is specific to my role on the First Year Task Force.
- Work with communications lead and CampusRec to increase visibility of physical activity initiatives.
  - The direct relationship between physical and mental health is very well documented. Thus, I propose we help CampusRec advertise their events to boost turnout. I do not regularly see information about the events that CampusRec holds, but if I did, I would likely attend. I think that a more physically active student body will result in one that has better mental health.

Kanishk Kanodia

- (i) Have a Focus Group with people from different groups on campus that are responsible for the well-being of students on campus. Currently, there is no coordination/single consultation body among the various actors on campus that are supposed to be taking care of students on campus. In the absence of this coordination, there is no systematic way for these different actors to relay their concerns to each other and collectively brainstorm what can be done to improve mental health on campus.
  - Who can be a part of this: Dr. Chin, Dr. Marks, Dean Thompson, a couple of DSLs, a couple of RCAs, Peer Health Advisors etc.
  - This can be done as early as April - if we make a list of people and reach out to them. Would just require an hour a month or smthg, but can be super beneficial in starting a dialogue.
  
- (ii) Promoting Self-Care on Campus through various steps:
  - - What is the idea: Self-Care is a huge part of mental health relief that we often neglect. The only solution we think of, when it comes to mental health, is talking to a therapist - which is obviously the biggest step. But, you talk to a therapist for an hour a week. At other times, if you need immediate help and relief, self-care techniques can go a long way in not only providing momentary relief, but also developing long-term habits that provide respite. However, currently, there is no infrastructure on campus to support this.
    - What can be done?
      - a) Res colleges must have a self-care space - with things like adult coloring books, origami paper, tea, squishy toys etc. - that students can readily make use of if they are in need. NCW might already implement it as early as next semester - we are in conversation.
      - b) Workshops led by professionals that help students come up with their own self-care routine/ideas that can benefit them. McGraw helps you develop academic strategies; similarly, CPS or other workshops can help you develop self-care strategies.

Avi Attar

- Promote mental health by improving student life at Princeton.
  - Mental illness results from a complicated mix of several factors, personal, biological, environmental, and more. While the USLC cannot address these factors on an individual level, we can try to make Princeton a place where it is easy to be happy.
- Promote mental health by alleviating burdens of COVID when possible.

- COVID has negatively affected the mental health of many. The USLC intends to address isolation processes and clarify certain policies in order to alleviate some of the emotional burden of COVID.

#### Caitlin McNally

- We are often encouraged to focus on the positives when discussing mental health, so I believe we can interpret this a different way and focus on the progress that we have made.
  - I hope we can have some discussion that recognizes how we have been capable of expanding the conversation on campus. This will show that there is meaning to our efforts and will encourage people to not become discouraged.
- Another way to use the past as a tool is to have a look at what initiatives really positively impact students.
  - Does CPS really show results? Do certain activities or study breaks have a positive affect? Is there certain groups that students turn to for support? By evaluating all of this, we can continue to expand the positives.
- We need to work with connecting students of FLI backgrounds with resources.
  - I personally tried to go to CPS last year when I was having a tough time and once I heard that I would only have 6 free sessions I gave up on it. I knew that 6 sessions would not be enough for what I needed at the time and I didn't want to waste the time explaining so much to one person just to have to figure out someone else to talk to after those 6 sessions. This is something that definitely needs to be addressed.

#### Charlotte Selover

- Go more into depth on the process of using CPS during FYRE and orientation events
  - While FYRE events discussed recognizing mental health crises and options for seeking help, I was still unfamiliar with how the process of using CPS works. Any kind of mystery within the system may deter students from using that service. It could be beneficial to lay out a detailed plan (potentially a flow chart-esque document) that talks about the initial consultation and what happens afterwards.

#### Tiffany Cheng

- In order to provide all students with accessible mental health resources, we propose establishing a mental wellness space on campus.
  - While there are various safe spaces on campus, there are not any spaces in which the student body can take time to themselves and destress. There are study spaces which promote focusing on work, public spaces, a focus around socializing, and dorm rooms which are not always the optimal space for students to destress. None of these spaces allow students to take some time to wind down, destress, and focus on *their* mental health. Creating a mental health space would provide mental relief for all students, regardless of class, major, or even state of mental



health. In this room, various wellness items could be provided. Mental health resource pamphlets would be out, relaxing music could be played consistently, and various stress relief items like stress toys, coloring paper, relaxing body lotion, or tea could be provided. Additionally, parts of the room could be sectioned off to have more of a private quiet space in addition to a more public common area. This would allow students who need to destress privately feel as if they *also* have a space.

- Students' mental health can be improved by requiring classes to provide late days.
  - The faculty asks students to spend most of their time on PSETs, papers, or readings, only for some to still curve to a B or B+ average, causing students to believe that they are *not good enough and are incapable of performing well*. While some faculty are entirely kind and respectful to students, many classes still forbid late work and missed classes without exception at the expense of students' grades. Professors ought, at the very least, to afford students the ability to take some late days on *some* assignments. This will allow students to focus on their mental health when it fluctuates, and have the time to go to places like CPS, UHS, and other wellness resources.
- There needs to be more administrative events that promote student mental health.
  - The administration is struggling to assist in supporting student wellness, let alone addressing students' *needs* for mental health. This has been clearly seen in Princeton's treatment of the COVID-19 pandemic. During the spike of CPS requests in the spring of 2021, the school's advice to students was to "finish your work this semester," in order to "continue toward your degrees". This has been further reinforced in recent COVID updates. The administration's attitude towards helping students is to remind them that they must do more work if they want to do well at Princeton. This is hardly acceptable, and seems to demonstrate to the students that the administration does not care about their wellness. By having University-sponsored events which promote happiness (like a field day), students will be able to spend more time focusing on their wellness and realize that the school cares for them and are here to support them.

Stephen Daniels

- One way I can help mental health is by making sure that people understand the "why" of the people trying to make a change.
  - Although I don't think it is this administration's fault, I think that USG currently has a legitimacy problem. Therefore, in order to get buy-in on something as personal as mental health, I think we need to be willing to share our own stories. I think this will help people feel like USG is going to try to actually do something and feel more comfortable sharing their own thoughts and experiences. We are unable to actually represent people unless they feel comfortable being represented and this is a way to make that happen on an important topic.

- Another thing I can do to help mental health is by ensuring community dining happens.
  - One way to help improve students' mental health is by giving them opportunities to get away from the typical Princeton schedule. Although there are many ways for USG to pursue this goal, I have already started working on community dining so that is the one I will focus on. Our survey data showed that having the chance to eat in town without spending extra money was really valuable for students and I think that effect would only increase if all students on unlimited meal plans had that opportunity. Therefore, one of the ways I will prioritize mental health is by focusing on making this goal a reality.

#### Ned Dockery

- Implement more meaningful mental health programming within FYRE, focusing not only on the stigmatization of mental health issues but also on more clear steps to access CPS
  - Talk with Dr. Chin about creating a video for CPS (I believe Walker is working on this project through the mental health task force)
  - Discuss with Dr. Chin how CPS plans to accommodate the larger number of students beginning next year
- Address feelings of imposter syndrome for first-year students by tweaking the questions students are encouraged to answer
  - Shift focus away from “what are you majoring in” to “what are you passionate about”, for example
  - Ensure that students have access to clear/concise resources about what to bring to campus and what to expect from orientation so that they don't feel behind from the beginning
- Institute a more formal way for rising sophomores to give advice—especially focused on mental health—to rising first-years
  - Could be a discussion with Dean Thompson and/or RCAs

#### Mariam Latif

- The creation of a mental health survey.
  - Similar to the one the academics committee did pertaining to sickness on campus.
  - Both a form of data collection and a way for students to voice concerns.
  - This would likely fall under the mental health working group, but all of USG could push it and work on the construction and breakdown, as it will likely be pretty lengthy.

#### Alen Palic

- Keep mental health in conversation at every CPUC meeting
  - As U-Councilors, the monthly CPUC meetings provide us a unique opportunity to ask University administrators the most pressing questions pertaining to the student

body. While mental health is sometimes touched upon during these meetings, we can use our role to ensure that the central topics of each meeting are considered from a mental health perspective.

- Continue advocating for the expansion and improvement of CPS services
  - The central efforts of the Mental Health Resources Task Force is to equip students with not only more resources but also better ones. Oftentimes it is inevitable to avoid challenges to mental health, so it is crucial that students are equipped with a wide array of appropriate resources to turn to in time of need, which requires continuous and consistent efforts to achieve.

Mohamed Jishi

- I was thinking we could increase signage on campus about what care from CPS looks like beyond just providing the phone number. Information including what kind of problems people can see cps for, what kind of doctors/therapists work at cps, long treatment options, etc. And we could put these in bathrooms like with the share and title ix posters as well as other locations around campus!

Braiden Aaronson

- Advocating for affirming and supportive University infrastructure to systematically support mental health.
  - One of the primary focuses of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion committee is to foster dialogue with the Administration on how to improve University infrastructure and initiatives. Fundamentally, it is my belief that supportive systems and programming across campus translate directly to benefits for student mental health and general well-being. Ways in which the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee plans to work toward this advocacy is through sustaining conversations around accessibility to culturally affirming and competent resources (especially in CPS), gender inclusive housing and facilities, and improving physical affinity spaces on campus. Relevant administrators the Committee is working with include Vice Provost Michele Minter of the Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI), ODI Associate Provost Shawn Maxam, ODI Assistant Dean and GSRC Director Kristopher Oliveira, and additional administrators. Furthermore, this conversation especially implicates the Mental Health Resources Task Force to work with CPS to advocate for enhanced dedicated resources that support students of diverse backgrounds, identities, and experiences.
- Approaching committee administration from a horizontal leadership framework to internally support mental health within USG.
  - I believe that another factor to consider for refocusing the conversation around mental health is ensuring that our internal structure fosters a supportive environment for everyone affiliated with USG. I think that this is especially

relevant because us committee chairs can put our “people first” vision to action. One way of achieving this is minimizing hierarchical structures in the committees by viewing our roles in committee meetings primarily as facilitators. A way to approach this is setting the agenda for the meeting and then giving our committee members the opportunity and flexibility to be innovative and openly creative in meetings through frequent discussion. Facilitating an environment of greater open communication can foster an even more supportive community and environment within USG’s internal work, possibly minimizing potential stress from committee work as well.

#### Isabella Shutt

- Build relationships with organizations that are working to build healthy communities in the surrounding areas to learn from their experiences and support one another
  - Partners: PACE! ORL
  - Recognizing the folks that have been doing this work for decades in Trenton, Philly, NYC, etc. and we are stronger for it
- Offer opportunities for students to rest and relax; plan programming that requires minimal social/mental energy
  - Rough Idea: take inspiration from the Nap Ministry
- Host monthly one-on-ones with CCA Committee Members so they know they are heard, can adjust their commitments if necessary, and we build community
  
- Advocate for policy changes that increase support staff within Residential Colleges and Academic Departments that receive specific training for mental wellness and emotional well-being – these conversations should not depend on other students with their own personal struggles and time constraints (RCAs, etc.) or be restricted to CPS appointments
  - Partners: EVP (Calhoun), ResCollege Deans, potentially staff at the CAF who already do this type of work & see the need for it

Not fit to the prompt but a big idea that could greatly improve students' transition experiences and help them develop good practices for mental well-being: Push for all first-semester/year classes to be PDF only

#### Austin Davis

- Like with the USG’s current view on mental health, all academic issues normally require a mental health lens. Thus, the practice of the Academics Committee for some time now and going forward will be to distill issues and policies through the lens of mental health.
  - For specific policy matters, the Committee proposes:
    - The continued review of policies pertaining to health and attendance, particularly given our context amid the Pandemic.

§ Students should feel that they can put their physical and mental health before academics, otherwise they cannot prosper as students.

§ Working with ODOC to implement the findings from the recently published health report to improve teaching practices and center student wellbeing pedagogically.

§ Brainstorming new ways to institutionalize this approach to student wellbeing in the policy of the University, aspiring to change the “culture” element around health (read the report).

o Understanding how students interpret and understanding grading and assessment on campus.

§ Commissioning a survey and holding focus groups to gather both qualitative and quantitative data about student’s views on grading, featuring a specific emphasis on its mental health effects.

§ Using this information to tailor recommendations / policy suggestions on grading, as other members of the Senate had with some of their other thoughts on mental health.

#### Walker Penfield

- Making mental health resources more accessible to first-years and the overall transition to college smoother through the First Year Experience Task Force
  - A key aspect of improving the first year experience is increasing access to mental health resources. The transition to college can be a difficult time for many, so it is critical that first years know how and where they can seek help. We hope to do this through new FYRE programming, which in the past has focused on destigmatizing mental health, but hasn’t made it as clear as possible on how students can actually seek help. Some of our goals are to make a video explaining the logistics of using CPS resources and facilitate a panel discussion of students speaking on their experiences seeking help.
- Working on the mental health resources task force to improve CPS services, funding, and accessibility
  - Through advocating for increased funding and helping implement new resources that will make CPS easier to navigate, I believe the mental health resources task force can work with the administration to improve student mental health. Some key action items in our work will be to create a mental health report using CPS data that has previously only been shared internally, pass a referendum calling for more resources for CPS, and advocate for the institutionalization of satellite counselors to help reach various campus groups.

