



# REPORT

*From the office of the...*

## Associate Vice-President (Services)

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TO: Members of the Executive Board  
FROM: Veronica Larrazabal Zea, AVP (Services)  
SUBJECT: DEN Review  
DATE: March 27<sup>th</sup>, 2024

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### Introduction

To the esteemed members of the Executive Board,

The following report is a review of the McMaster Students' Union (MSU) service known as the **Diversity and Equity Network (DEN)**.

The aim of this review is to give an overview of how successful the service is in fulfilling its purpose and mandate. Surveys were conducted of the general student body as well as volunteers and employees of the service to gain an understanding of how the service functions, how it is perceived, and what programming/services it delivers to the student body. This review contains an analysis of those results, as well as a summary of external research that has been done. The external research took a focus on other university student unions in Ontario to understand if they offer clubs or services with strategies which can be adopted by DEN. The result of this internal and external research is summarized to give a series of recommendations made in concert by the Services Committee, VP Administration, and AVP Services.

### Service Overview

Please see [Operating Policy – MSU Diversity + Equity Network \(DEN\)](#) for a full service overview.

The purpose of DEN is to build/maintain a campus that advocates for inclusivity and equity in areas related to race, ethnicity, culture, faith, and spirituality. This is done by an executive team.

### Internal Research

#### Executive Survey

There were no responses for the DEN executive survey.

#### General Student Body Survey

There were 80 responses to the general student body survey. The purpose of this survey was to determine feedback regarding the efficiency and role of the service. 28% of respondents had previously interacted with the service.

The majority of respondents were in their third year (31%), followed by first year (30%) and fourth year (18%). 26% were in engineering, 21% were in science, and 14% were in health sciences and social sciences.

77.3% of respondents agree or strongly agree that DEN advocates for a campus that is free from racial-based prejudice and discrimination, as shown in Figure 1.

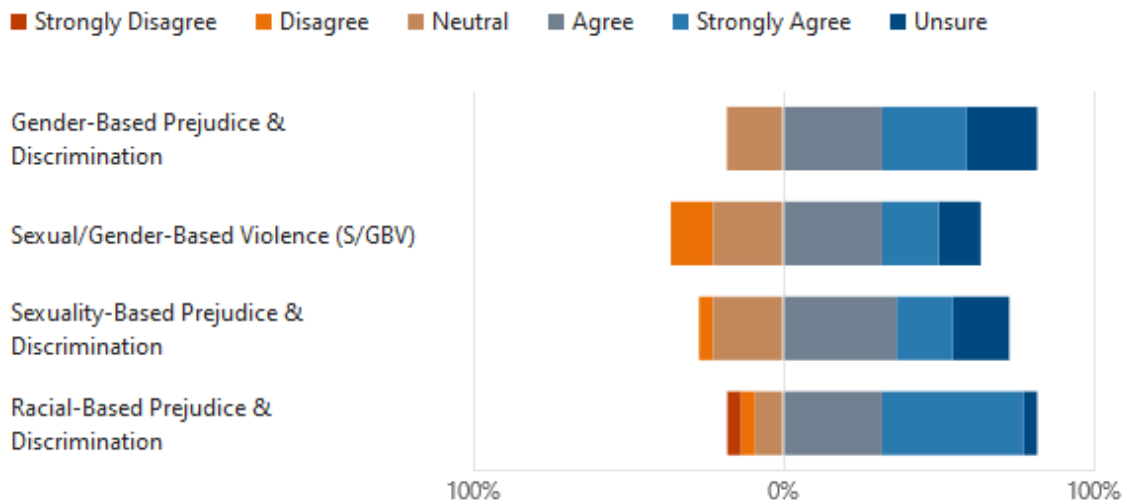


Figure 1. Responses to the question 'I feel that MSU DEN advocates for a campus that is free from.'

Most responses regarding the types of events DEN hosts are positive, as shown in Figure 2.

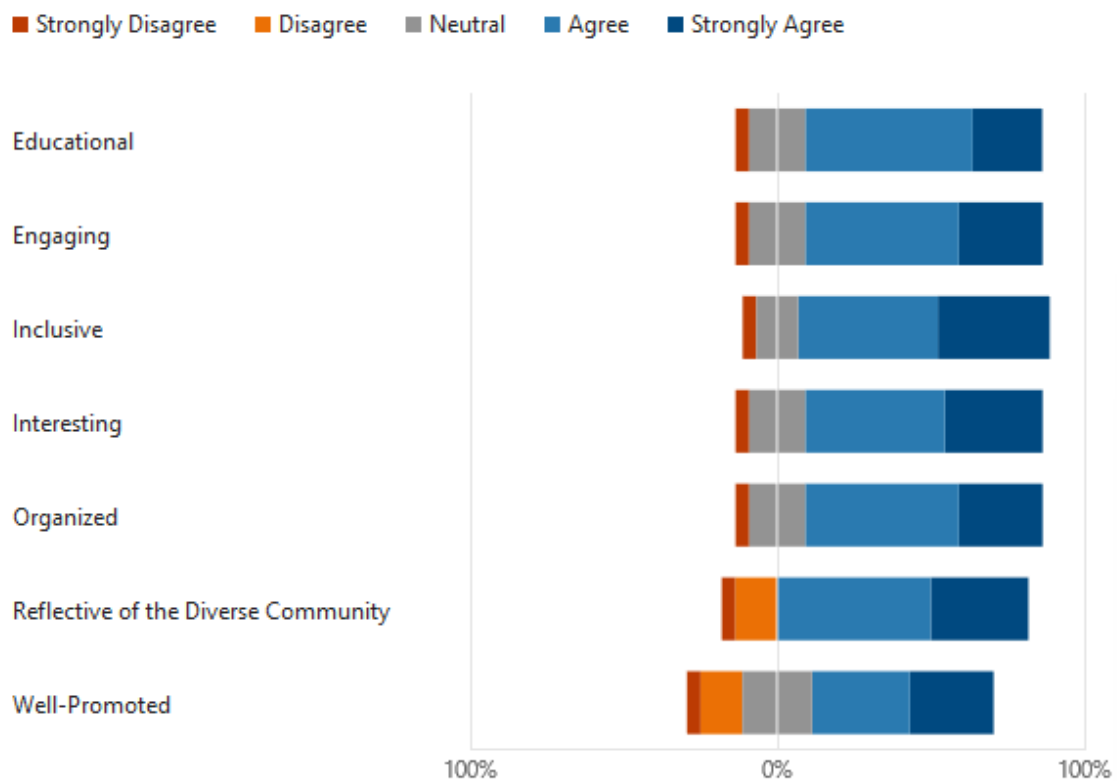


Figure 2. Responses to the question 'I feel that MSU DEN hosts events that are.'

Responses are more divided on the Bridges space, as shown in Figure 3. 45.5% of people agree or strongly agree have accessed the space for advocacy events, 40.9% for educational events, and 50% for social events. Meanwhile, only 4.5% agree to go to the space for one-on-one peer support. 14% of respondents have accessed DEN for peer support.

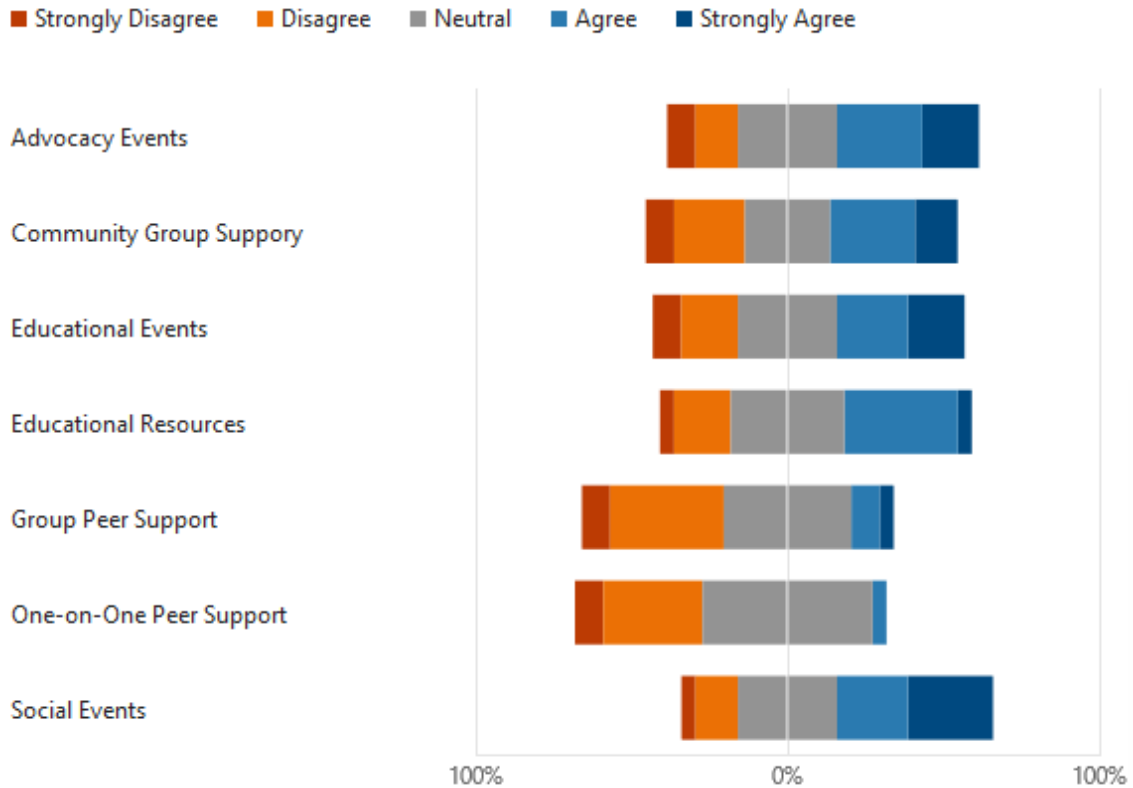
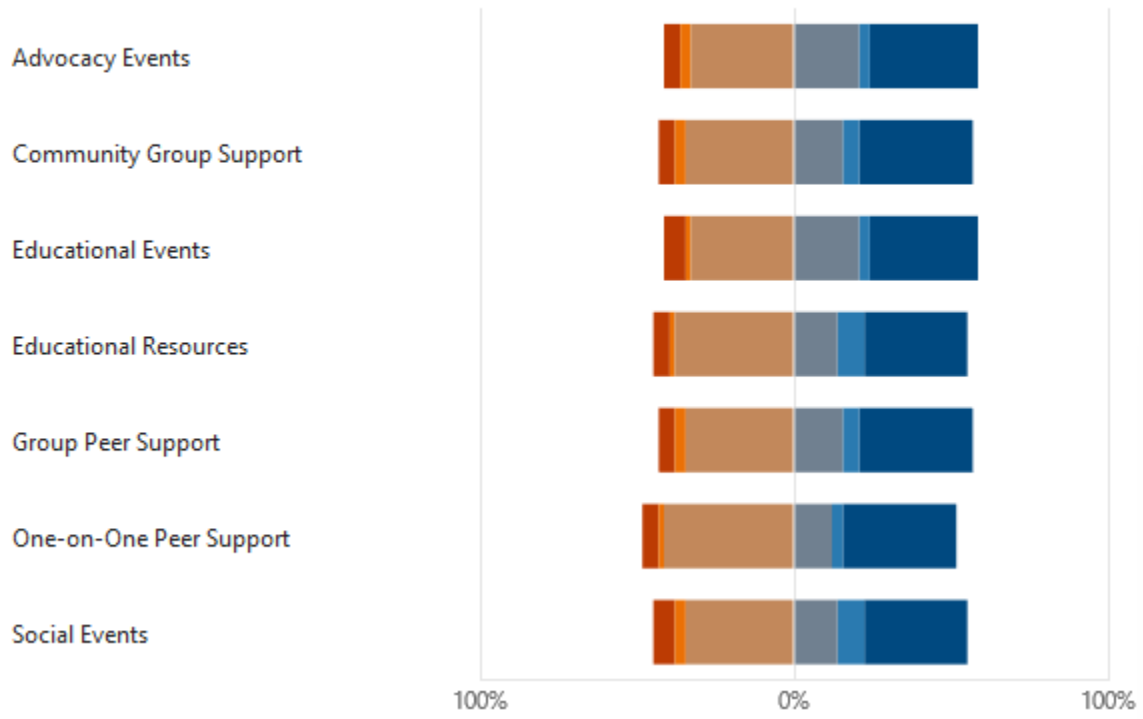


Figure 3. Responses to the question 'I have accessed the MSU DEN/Bridges space for the following reasons.'

A majority of respondents were neutral or unsure about the accessibility of the Bridges space, as shown in Figures 4 and 5. Written responses state that they are unaware of the location of the Bridges space or find it difficult to find. Similarly, most people who have not interacted with the service say it is because of lack of promotions and awareness.

■ Strongly Disagree  
 ■ Disagree  
 ■ Neutral  
 ■ Agree  
 ■ Strongly Agree  
 ■ Unsure or N/A



*Figure 4. Responses to the question 'I have accessed the MSU DEN/Bridges space for the following reasons.'*

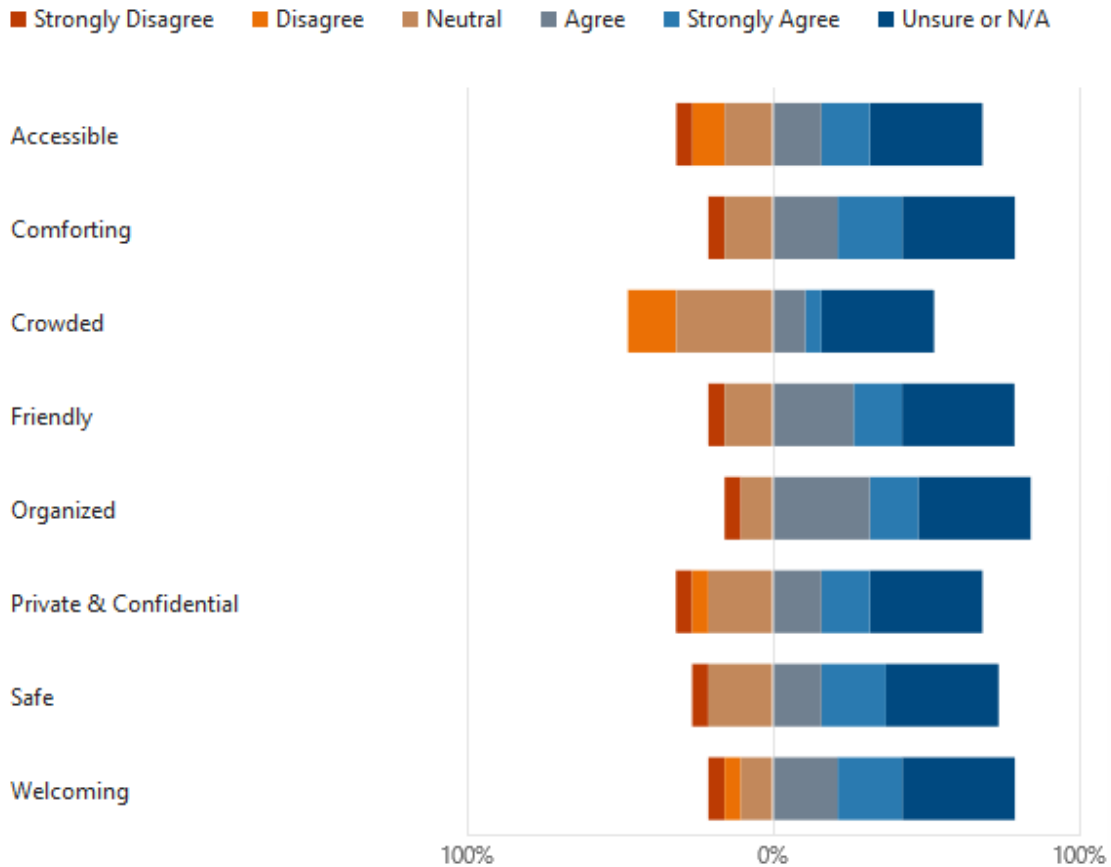


Figure 5. Responses to the question 'The MSU DEN/Bridges campus space felt.'

### External Research

The following services have similar mandates and purposes to MSU DEN:

- The Carleton University Students' Association offers a service called the Racialized and International Student experience, which aims to be a safer space to encourage diversity, peer-to-peer support, and more for students with diverse racial and ethnic identities.
- The Lakehead University Student Union has the Multicultural Centre, which hosts events that celebrate Lakehead's cultural diversity. Events include concerts, workshops, and cultural dinners. MCC also works to support social justice and humanitarian causes. They provide an open and safe space for cultural identity, racial and international development discourse to take place.
- The Guelph Central Student Association had a campaign called United for Equity, that educated students on barrier-free access to post-secondary education regardless of race, sexual orientation, ability, gender identity, religion, age and socio-economic background.
- The University of Ottawa Student Union has multiple centers such as multifaith and bilingualism centers.
- The University of Toronto Students Union has a campaign called United for Equity which aims to challenge all forms of discrimination and oppression on campus.

- The University of Toronto Mississauga Students Union has a general Peer Support Program for students.
- The Waterloo Undergraduate Students Association has a service called Racial Advocacy for Inclusion, Solidarity, and Equity, which serves to address racism and xenophobia on campus with the pillars of education/advocacy, peer-to-peer support, and community building.
- The University of Western Ontario Students' Council offers a general peer support service and a service called Ethnocultural Support Services, which strives to embrace and bring awareness to a multitude of diverse racial, Indigenous and religious issues and groups on campus.
- The University of Windsor Students' Alliance has an Equity Collective, which is a safe(r) space and aims to combat oppression, educate the campus community, and improves the student experience for their marginalized community.
- The York Federation of Students offers an Equity Handbook, which is designed to introduce issues of equity to students.

## **Conclusion**

### **1. *Continue the transition into a peer support service by incorporating peer support volunteers into the team.***

Currently, DEN is run by an executive team, as shown in Section 3 of the Operating Policy. However, as the service continues the transition into peer support, consider expanding the team by adding peer support volunteers. The role of these volunteers would be to provide a safe(r) space for students. It may be worth adding an executive role to oversee these volunteers as well. This would follow the example of other peer support services (Student Health Education Centre, Pride Community Centre, and Women + Gender Equity Network).

### **2. *Determine an accessible physical space for events and peer support.***

In the past year, the Bridges coordinator role was removed from the DEN executive team and is now running under Clubs. It may be worth considering other spaces for the service, such as in MUSC or in the Hub. As a network, this would look like booking rooms in MUSC for weekly peer support or collaborating with other services to share their spaces. This would be in communication with Clubs to book spaces for events.

### **3. *Increase promotional material.***

There are many ways to increase awareness of the service and have more student interaction. Posting interactive content on Instagram (such as interactive stories and reels in addition to posts about upcoming events), could drive engagement and expand the audience. Physical promotions in the form of posters around campus (not limited to MUSC) may engage students from different areas of campus. Furthermore, engagement during events like Welcome Week or collaboration with first year groups can engage first year students.

### **4. *Consider relevance of Indigenous Liaison position within the executive team.***

The Operating Policy cites a position dedicated to promotions and collaborations with Indigenous groups on campus. This is an important position, and it appears to have been underutilized in the past. Revisit the role of this executive within the DEN team to see if it is possible to grow this relationship between DEN and the Indigenous campus community.

Best,



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