

## **SRC Reflections on a Transformative Student Experience**

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One cannot write down the guidelines of how to achieve a transformative student experience as it is not a moment that will be the same for everyone. Transformation is rooted in the inclusion of different racial, gender, religious and socio-economic identities and even within those groups, the student experience is not homogenous. A transformative student experience is one that allows all students to feel safe, seen and welcome, and if they are not, acknowledging that it is not perfect, a transformative student experience is however dynamic and will change depending on the needs of the students in the institution at a given time.

In the past, students who are part of marginalised groups have felt like symbols of diversity where the institution uses them to claim diversity, whilst those students made spaces diverse but experienced no actual inclusivity in their communities. A transformative student experience protects its students so that every single individual can have a chance to not only excel academically but also mentally, emotionally and socially as who you leave this institution to go into the world as is almost just as important as the degree you leave with.

Our vision this year as the SRC is to strive to be a productive and integrated structure that encourages holistic student success and produces tangible results. Broken down, we want to contribute to an SU that does not treat students from its different campuses as students from different institutions. We cannot only feel a sense of comradeship at Danie Craven during Welcoming, and never interact with our peers from the Military and Medicine and Health Science campuses – integration begins with intra-varsity collaboration. As mentioned before, we cannot only place importance on academic excellence, as once a student is not mentally, physically, or emotionally sound, they will not have an opportunity to excel academically. Promoting holistic student success means offering mental health support, protecting students from racism, queerphobia, ableism, gender-based violence, sexual harassment and assault, classism, and all other forms of discrimination. With regards to tangible results, it is very important to critically engage and continue to have difficult conversations as well as to identify issues that exist on different campuses. However, we cannot stop there. Long-term goals like Vision 2040 are important but they are pushed forward by short-term goals and results. We cannot only start seeing a change in 2040, there are small things that will make huge contributions to students' lives that can be done today.

To begin with, DSAf can assist student leaders and the SRC in achieving a transformative student experience modelled after our vision. The expectation from the student leaders to DSAf and any other university structure, on how to achieve a transformative student experience is to listen to students. An institution does not exist without students. No matter how much every decision made was made with students' best interest in mind, if students were not part of the decision-making processes it is a decision that does not value the students.

A transformative student experience needs to be dynamic and must be able to change with every group of newcomers.