

Committee on Student Affairs

Minutes of the 66th Meeting of the Committee on Student Affairs held on 19 May 2020 at 4:00pm online via Zoom.

Present : Prof Arthur Lau (Chairman), Prof Ho Bun Chan, Prof Ronald Lau, Prof Philip Mok, Prof Emily Nason, Prof Jin Wang, Prof DY Yeung, Mr Yuting Cai, Mr Haoyu Liu, Mr Alpine Mok, Mr Chun Ming Tsang, Prof King Chow (Member and Secretary)

Resource Person : DSTO: Miss Silver Chan, Ms Cheryl Lee, Miss Yolanda Wu

In Attendance : Miss Shirley Wu

Welcome

1. The Chairman welcomed a new student member – Mr Chun Ming Tsang.

Confirmation of Minutes of Last Meeting and Matters Arising

2. Minutes of the 65th Meeting of the Committee on Student Affairs (CSA) were confirmed and there were no matters arising.

Update on the Data of Counselling and Wellness Service

3. Members received an update from Miss Silver Chan on Counseling and Wellness Service. It was reported that the Center received around 1,300 clients since September 2019. About 63% of these clients are undergraduates and 45% are local students.
4. In relation to the source of referral for new clients, Miss Chan shared that most were self-referral and others were referred by classmates, schools, other units and 24/7 helpline. Comparing 2019 Sept-Oct with 2018 Sept-Oct, new clients increased by 45% and number of counseling sessions also increased by 23%. In terms of counseling nature, the top ones for our students are mood concerns, psychological disorders, anxiety and stress, study stress/worries, heterosexual relationship, relationship with parents and etc.
5. Miss Chan also shared that the Center adopted telehealth/telecare services such as Zoom, Whatsapp and Wechat to support students during the COVID-19 outbreak. The Center also promoted the 24/7 helpline to outreach the students in Hubei province and in Europe. It was expected that the demand for counseling service would continue to increase as the social movements and then coronavirus pandemic escalated mental health problems in Hong Kong.
6. The Chairman suggested the Center to arrange meetings with different schools to improve the awareness of the Center. The Chairman also encouraged student members to spread out

the message letting more peers know about the counseling service. Mr Alpine Mok commented that he referred his peers to the Center and heard good feedbacks about the counseling service.

(Miss Silver Chan was excused from the meeting. Ms Cheryl Lee joined.)

Report on Virtual Career Fair and Internships

7. Members received a report from Ms Cheryl Lee on Virtual Career Fair and Internships. It was reported that Career Center switched its Career Mosaic to Virtual Career Fair due to COVID-19. The virtual career fair was one-day event held on May 12 and the site will be available for one month after the date. Ms Lee reported that the scale of the fair was small with 26 employers as it was a pilot scheme. There were 740 students participated at the fair and about 1,400 job applications made via the platform.
8. Ms Lee shared that the virtual career fair was not as effective as in-person fair. It was expensive to pay HKD 5,000 per booth and it was challenging to work with the overseas vendor resulting in much longer lead time. Ms Lee suggested that the virtual career fair could be a backup for campus-wide fair or niche fair such as department-based or theme-based small scale fair. It was also shared that Career Center was now exploring in-house tool development to prepare for Fall Term. Prof Emily Nason inquired about the in-house tool development. Ms Lee shared that Career Center was liaising with its website developer to work out a digital platform.
9. In relation to internship updates, Ms Lee shared that internship market in 2020 was not as good as the market in 2019 but definitely not as bad as media had described. Mainland and overseas internship programs were cancelled according to travel advisory. Hence the focus was shifted to local or virtual internship programs.
10. Ms Lee reported that the government internship (PSSSIP) vacancies increased by 30% and other local internship openings also increased. It was reported that Innovation and Technology Commission (ITC) initiated a new STEM internship scheme to encourage local STEM students graduating June 2020 or later to gain related work experiences. Ms Lee shared that the total budget from ITC for all institutions in HK was HKD 40 million and HKD 6 million would be allocated to HKUST. Prof Nason inquired which party defined what STEM programs qualified. Ms Lee shared that UGC had a list of STEM programs and Career Center had submitted more STEM programs at HKUST to UGC for their approval. Prof Ho Bun Chan inquired if the application deadline for this scheme had already passed. Ms Lee clarified that it was still ongoing. Prof Philip Mok inquired whether or not ITC internship scheme was tailored for final-year students. Ms Lee clarified that the guidelines for this new scheme were not finalized yet but according to previous discussion with ITC, it was for all-years students from first-year students to graduating students. Prof Jin Wang inquired the quota for HKUST students. Ms Lee shared that it would be 600 man

per month.

11. Mr Haoyu Liu expressed his concerns that non-local students are not eligible for these local internship programs and if any internship opportunities for non-local students. Ms Lee clarified that the programs funded by the Hong Kong government set the eligibility as local students but many other programs including virtual internships were open to both local and non-local students.
12. Ms Lee reported that the new Virtual Attachment Experience Program piloted with BestTop Consulting in Singapore offered 6-8 weeks virtual project experience at the start-ups in Singapore and overseas with professional guidance three times a week. Prof DY Yeung shared that in the past few months he also received requests from companies about virtual internships but all of them were overseas. Prof Yeung inquired any observation that very few local companies offered virtual internships. Ms Lee clarified that ibanks in Hong Kong did offer virtual internships and the New World Development also offered around 100 vacancies of virtual internships.
13. The Chairman thanked Ms Lee for sharing a balance view about internship market. Prof King Chow encouraged faculty members to share this information with UG coordinators, department heads and associated deans at their schools.

(Ms Cheryl Lee was excused from the meeting. Prof King Chow was excused from the meeting. Miss Yolanda Wu joined.)

Report on Financial Hardships Resulted from COVID-19

14. Members received a report from Miss Yolanda Wu on Financial Assistance Schemes for students under COVID-19. It was reported that there were three schemes to support students with financial difficulties resulted from the COVID-19 outbreak. There were 8 applications for the regular University Financial Assistance Scheme and 4 applications for the newly-launched Emergency Financial Assistance Scheme for Exchange-out Students. As for the dedicated COVID-19 Student Hardship Relief Fund, there were 12 out of 23 applicants who have successfully received the financial assistance as of May 15.
15. Prof Jin Wang inquired why students applied for a loan besides the financial support. Ms Wu clarified that normally students were offered bursaries first but if it was foreseen that some students would have upcoming financial difficulties, these students were also considered for a top-up loan. It was up to the students to accept the top-up loan or not depending on their financial situation.
16. The Chairman commented that the application number for COVID-19 Student Hardship Relief Fund was low and inquired about the vetting process for the fund. Ms Wu shared that the vetting process was aligned with the financial assistance mechanism but the application documents could be simplified. The Chairman also inquired that the number of enquiries about the fund. Ms Wu shared that the enquiry number was consistent with the

application number.

17. Prof Philip Mok inquired that students approached Scholarships & Financial Aid Office (SFAO) by themselves or were referred by other offices. Ms Wu shared that most students applied directly by themselves and a few were referred by Counseling and Wellness Center. Prof Mok shared that school colleague advised some students in financial hardship to apply for the fund but didn't know whether or not they submitted the application. Ms Wu suggested that school colleagues could give a list of these students to SFAO and SFAO colleagues would keep checking whether the application was received or not.
18. Mr Alpine Mok inquired the reasons of unsuccessful applications. Ms Wu shared that after assessing the three cases it was concluded that there was no urgent financial need for their academic or living expenses. The Chairman pledged all members to refer any student in financial hardship to SFAO for the necessary support.

The meeting adjourned at 5:20pm.