



# WUSA Services Review Report

Jordan Daniels, Research Coordinator  
June 2021

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# Introduction

At the August 23rd, 2020 Students' Council meeting, the assembly approved a Services Review, the goal of which was to ensure that WUSA Student-Run Services are meeting the diverse needs of the University of Waterloo student population. The services that were included in this review are Co-op Connection, the Glow Centre for Sexual and Gender Diversity, International and Canadian Student Network (ICSN), Mentor Assistance Through Education and Support (MATES), Racial Advocacy for Inclusion, Solidarity and Equity (RAISE) and the Women's Centre. These six services provide a range of supports to students at the University of Waterloo and it is imperative that their operations are effective at doing so and that their coordinators, executives and volunteers are adequately supported to provide students with the support they need. The results of this report will be used to complete the following expected actions:

- Revised mandate for each service (if necessary)
- Action plan to implement and communicate any changes or decisions made throughout the review process
- Revisions to policies and procedures to reflect the mandates of each service
- Creation of a timeline for future review

The methods that were used to complete this Services Review are outlined in the following section.

# Methods

## End of Term Reports Review

From September 2020 to March 2021, the Campus Life Advisory Committee (CLAC) and the Internal Administration Committee (IAC) reviewed the End of Term Reports from Fall 2019 to Fall 2020 for all of the six services included in the review. In particular, CLAC was tasked with reviewing in the areas of user experience, volunteer experience, mandate review and long-term planning while IAC was tasked with the reviewing in the areas of training coordinators, executive structures, communications and service oversights. The results of these reviews were shared with the Research Coordinator and integrated into the report.

## Interviews

Between March 2 and April 15, 2021, the Research Coordinator and Student Research and Policy Assistant at WUSA conducted interviews with the Service Coordinators from each service. The purpose of these interviews was to learn more about their experience with the service and understand their perspective regarding service operations. As such, the interviews asked a variety of questions on the topics of missions and goals, impact on students, communications and outreach as well as future considerations. The interview questions are included in Appendix B of this report. Notes were taken in each interview and analyzed for major themes, then integrated into the report.

## Survey

The Services Review Survey was live from March 3 to April 16, 2021 and received a total of 849 responses; 688 were full, meaning that respondents finished the survey while 161 were partial, meaning that respondents left the survey before submitting. In addition to promotion on WUSA social media, the survey link was emailed to 34 5731 enrolled undergraduate students and with 849 total responses, the response rate for the survey was 2.46%. In order to ensure the reliability of our results, the data was cleaned up to remove partial responses prior to analysis.

Respondents were asked to indicate what year of study they are in: 28.20% were in year one, 22.82% were in year four, 21.51% were in year two, 20.20% were in year three, 6.10% were in year five and 1.16% did not answer this question. In comparison to the overall year of study breakdown at the University of Waterloo, both year one and year five are overrepresented by approximately 5% and 6%, respectively, as only 23.43% of students at the University of Waterloo were in year one and only 0.30% were in year five at the time of the survey. Moreover, year two students made up 23.40%, year three students made up 24.42% and year four students made up 26.11% of total University of Waterloo undergraduates at the time of the survey; this means that year two was underrepresented by approximately 2% and both year three and year four were underrepresented by approximately 4%.

Respondents were also asked to indicate which faculty they were in: 25.44% were in Engineering, 19.04% were in Arts, 18.90% were in Science, 18.46% were in Math, 8.28% were in Health, 7.56% were in environment and 1.33% did not answer this question. In comparison to the overall faculty breakdown at the University of Waterloo, there is minimal variation. Both Health (7.65%) and Engineering (23%) were underrepresented slightly, while Art (20.28%) and Environment were both overrepresented by approximately 1%, Science (17%) was overrepresented by approximately 2% and Math (22.55%) was overrepresented by approximately 4%.

Students were then asked to indicate which of the following WUSA Student-Run Services they had accessed during their time as an undergraduate student at Waterloo (Figure 1). An overwhelming majority of students (70.35% or 484 respondents) indicated that they had accessed none of WUSA's Student-Run Services, while 29.65% or 204 respondents indicated that they had.

**Q3:** Which of the following WUSA student-run services have you accessed during your time at Waterloo?

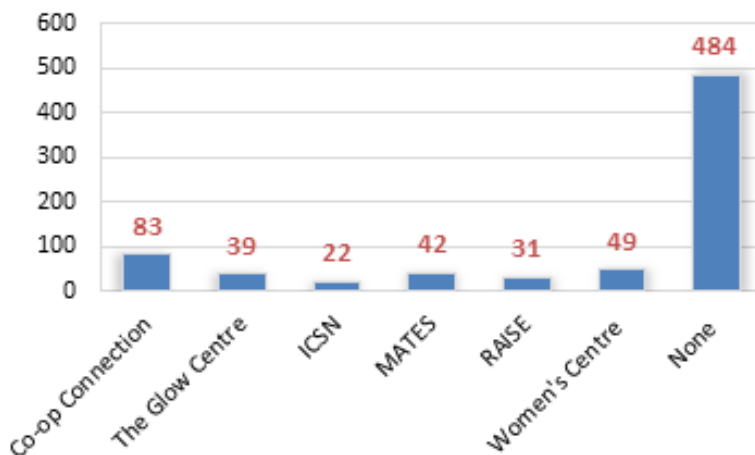


Figure 1: Responses to Q3

For those who had accessed WUSA Student-Run Services, 83 respondents accessed Co-op Connections followed by the Women’s Centre (49), MATES (42), the Glow Centre (39), RAISE (31) and ICSN (22). It is important to note that students were able to indicate that they had accessed more than one service and were displayed a separate set of questions for each service they had accessed.

Respondents who indicated they had not accessed any of WUSA’s Student-Run Services were asked why this was (Figure 2); the majority of students (52%) chose the option of “I don’t currently have a need for the support they provide.” This was followed by “I didn’t know they existed” (28%), “I’m not ready to reach out” (9%), “I’ve heard negative reviews” (7%) and “Other” (4%). Some of these “Other” reasons why students had not accessed a WUSA Service included the following:

- Live off campus or on a satellite campus
- Did not feel like they were relevant for mature students
- Unsure what services they provide
- Lack of time or other commitments that impeded them from accessing
- Found it hard to figure out how to access or reach them
- Barriers related to COVID and online learning

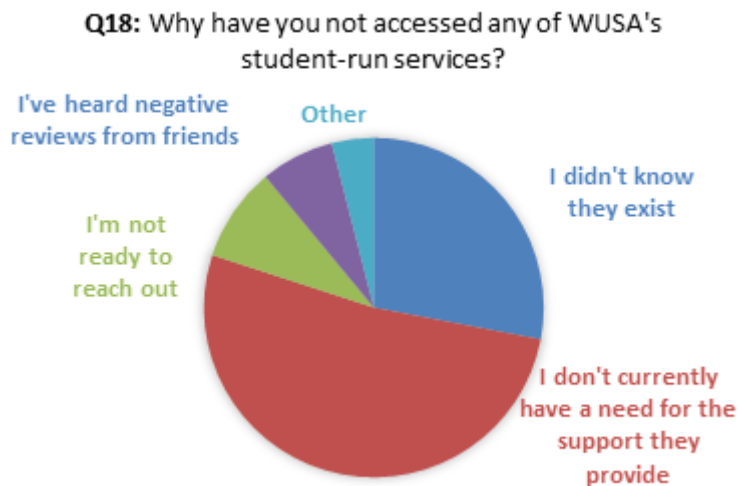


Figure 2: Responses to Q18

Since a large majority of students indicated they are not accessing WUSA's services due to simply not having a need for them, there is little that WUSA can change to existing services to increase engagement from this group of students. It should be noted that one student mentioned a need for a disability-focused services and another for an immigration-focused service. Where WUSA could focus its efforts is on increasing awareness about the services and what they offer; this not only has the potential to help unknowing students become informed about the services, but could also help mitigate some negative reviews circulating about the services and demonstrate to hesitant students that they are welcome in the space.

This issue of awareness was also discussed by students when asked if they had feedback for any WUSA student-run services they had not accessed (Q19). The most common answer (46 responses) was from students who asked for more advertisement and awareness about the services in general; including what exactly they offer as well as exactly how to access them. A few students suggested creating a consolidated list or platform with all the services and how they are operating currently. Another student mentioned that more outreach should be done to satellite campuses; this is especially relevant now that services are operating online, thus increasing their ability to access students who live outside of Waterloo.

The following results that make up the remainder of the report focus on the feedback from students who have accessed the different services.

# Results

The results are organized by each service and include an integration of the data from the various methods mentioned previously. Following a discussion of each service, some general themes across all services are noted in the final section.

## Co-op Connection

Of the 688 full responses to the Services Review Survey, 83 indicated that they had accessed Co-op Connection.

### Purpose and Goals of the Service

In the interview with Co-op Connection's Service Coordinator, it was explained that the primary purpose of their service is to help facilitate connections between co-op students and expose them to both social and professional events. Although not part of their core mandate, in recent years Co-op Connection has also provided support in helping co-op students prepare for and find a job for their co-op term, through events such as resume workshops and headshot photo sessions. They also believe the most important form of support Co-op Connection currently provides students is simply a sense of clarity and reassurance during these unprecedented COVID times. Since the audience of Co-op Connection is mostly younger students who are coming into the workforce at a weird time, Co-op Connection helps reassure them that everyone is struggling right now with finding employment. Co-op Connection does their best to provide these students with tools to help them find employment such as resume, cover letter and interview tips included in professional events.

### Communications and Outreach

To access the supports that Co-op Connection provides, the Service Coordinator explained that most students who reach out directly do so through Facebook or Instagram. Co-op Connection has a variety of Facebook pages that cater to different areas of the world where co-op students may be working. Prior to COVID, Co-op Connection even organized events that were specific to the different areas where co-op students were living for their placements.



One of Co-op Connection’s main ways to reach to students is through an email sent out via the Center for Career Action with Co-op Connection information included in it. The Service Coordinator explained that Co-op Connection can tell when this email has gone out at the beginning of the semester because there is a lot more engagement from students at that point.

The Services Review Survey (Q4) sought to identify in more detail the communication and outreach avenues by asking respondents to indicate how they found out about Co-op Connection. The outreach avenue that most students (23%) indicated they had heard about Co-op Connection from was [uwaterloo.ca](http://uwaterloo.ca); this was followed by 22% from Co-op Connection social media, 14% from [wusa.ca](http://wusa.ca), 12% from an email, 11% during Orientation, 10% from a friend, and 3% from being involved with WUSA (Figure 3).

Additionally, 5% indicated they heard about Co-op Connection from an ‘other’ source such as an academic advisor, LEADS job posting and their co-op placement. It is clear from these responses that students find out about Co-op Connection from a wide range of sources.

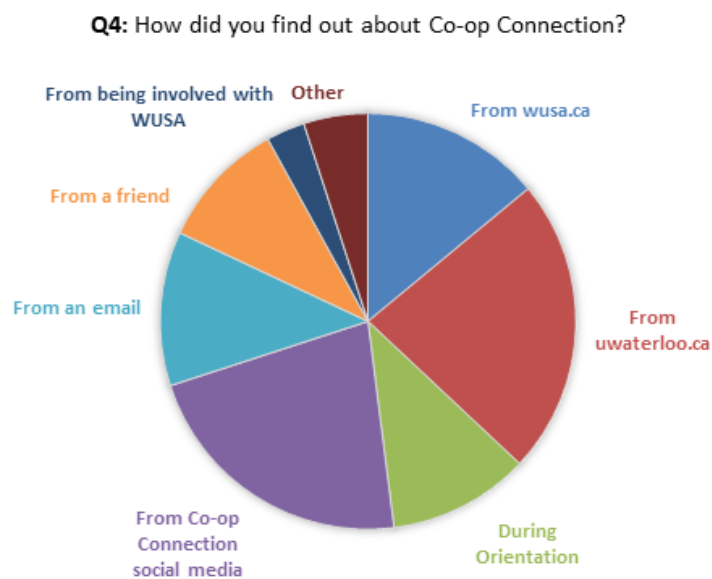


Figure 3: Responses to Q4

### Access

Once students find out about Co-op Connection, it is important that they are able to access the various supports and events put on by the service. In their interview, the Service Coordinator at Co-op Connection explained that often times, the initial reach of their events and services is a barrier as students need to be aware of what Co-op Connection is doing before they can decide whether or not they want to participate.

In the Services Review Survey (Q5), respondents were asked why they initially accessed Co-op Connection; 61 students answered this question and their reasons for accessing Co-op Connection can be broken down into four main categories:

- Networking with students and alumni
- Making connections and friends, specifically with other co-op students
- Help with job search and other preparations for their co-op term
- General curiosity about what Co-op Connection had to offer

The two most common categories were 'making connections' and 'help with job search' with 24 and 16 responses, respectively. It is clear here that there is an alignment between the reason students access Co-op Connection and the goals of Co-op Connection to provide students with both professional and social support. Students were then asked to indicate how many times they accessed Co-op

Connection during their entire time at Waterloo (Q6 and Q7), both prior to COVID and during COVID (Figure 4). In terms of in-person engagement, 49% of students indicated they had accessed Co-op Connection only once while 29% of students and 3% of students had accessed Co-op Connection a few times and many times, respectively. The remaining 18% of respondents did not answer this question. Compared to online engagement, 30% of students accessed Co-op Connection only once while 22% and 1% accessed Co-op Connection a few times and many times, respectively. The remaining 47% of students did not answer this question; this higher percentage of 'no answer' for this question could be a result of students not having engaged with Co-op Connection online at all.

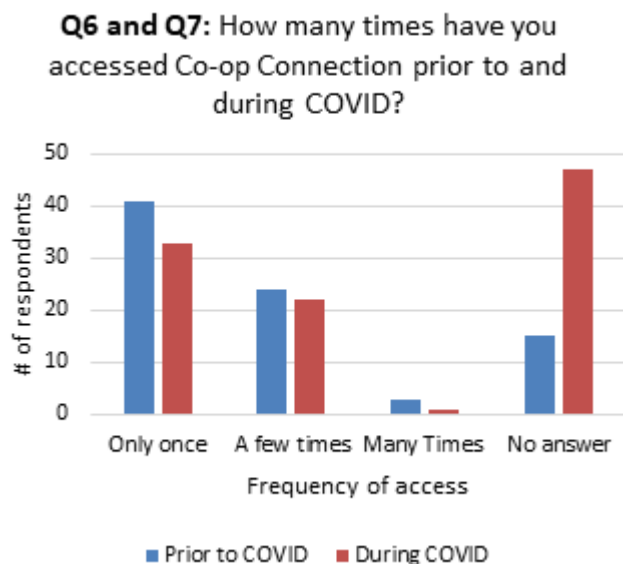


Figure 4: Responses to Q6 and Q7

Unfortunately, the survey design did not capture this scenario accurately in this question, but does so in the following question when students were asked if they still continue to access Co-op Connection (Q8). In response to this question, 20% of students indicated that yes, they do still access Co-op Connection, while the majority (73%) indicated that no, they do not still access Co-op Connection. The remaining 7% indicated an 'other' answer. Students who indicated no expressed their reasoning in the following main categories:

- Lack of community or communication (2)
- Didn't like the events or find it useful (4)
- They are done co-op (12)
- Don't have the time (5)
- Don't have the need (3)
- Didn't find it relevant online (5)
- Use other resources instead (2)

One student summed up some of the issues with accessing Co-op Connection during COVID when they explained, "ever since COVID started, I have been home so there has not been a reason for me to attend Co-op Connection. I also do not enjoy video calling so I have not sought-after Co-op Connection." This demonstrates how both changing living and schooling situations can impact a student's desire to continue accessing a given service.

It is clear from these responses that both on campus and online operations saw the majority of students only accessing Co-op Connection once. And, although the majority (53%) of students no longer access Co-op Connection, the responses have more to do with external factors (i.e., done co-op, don't have the need or time) as opposed to students not accessing the service solely because of a negative experience.

## Overall Experience of Users

The overall experience of Co-op Connection users was captured in a question (Q9) asking respondents to rate various aspects of Co-op Connection on a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being poor and 5 being excellent. The 7 different areas of the service included: hours of operation/availability, friendliness of volunteer staff, helpfulness of volunteer staff, ability of volunteer staff to provide resources, ability to access Co-op Connection both prior to and during COVID and overall experience (Figure 5).

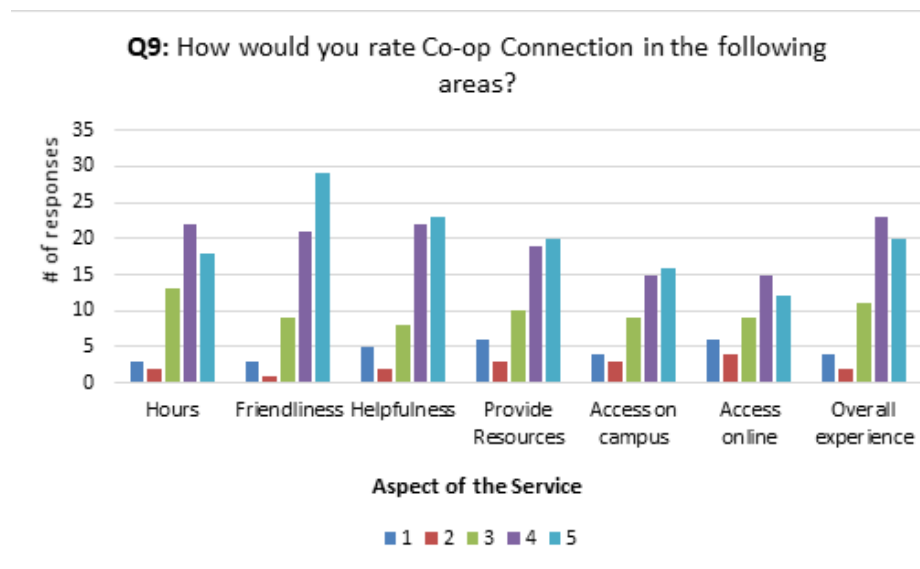


Figure 5: Responses to Q9

In summary, all aspects of Co-op Connection received a rating of 4 or 5 from the majority of respondents. The aspect that received the highest average rating was friendliness of volunteer staff with 4.14 and 46.3% of respondents rating this a 5. The aspect that received the lowest rating was ability to access Co-op Connection during COVID with 3.5 and 13.04% rating this a 1. This is not surprising given the challenges in transitioning to an online format for a service that is strongly founded on the importance of social connections and in-person events for co-op students living in different cities. Besides ability to access Co-op Connection during COVID, ability of volunteer staff to provide resources was the next lowest average rating at 3.76.

Moreover, in an open format, students were then asked to indicate what they liked best about Co-op Connection (Q10). The most common response from students was that Co-op Connection provided them with the ability to make connections, build a network and form a community. Respondents also indicated that they liked the events, thought that the service was accessible and convenient, found the volunteers to be friendly, had good communication experiences with the service and found the resources to be helpful.

Once again, it is clear that the ability to make connections and form a community is a strong component of Co-op Connection's services. In addition, 70% of students indicated that they would recommend accessing Co-op Connection to a friend, while 10% would not and 30% were unsure (Q13). All of this indicates that Co-op Connection is able to provide an overall positive experience to their users, the exact nature of this is examined in the following section.

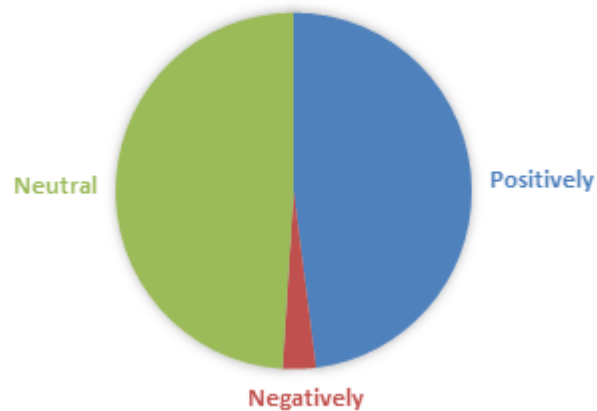
### Impact on Students

The Service Coordinator explained that through Co-op Connection, students are able to improve on written, oral communication and presentation skills. They also noted that students often want tips on how to improve their resume and cover letter so it is these beginning stages of the job search process that Co-op Connection tries to cater to. This is important because, as the Coordinator explained, a lot of the professional advice out there is pretty generic which makes it frustrating to navigate from a student-perspective. Co-op Connection provides students with a beginning phase of where to start and how to find the best way to present themselves on paper. It is also apparent from the previous discussion that connections, network and community have the potential to be an important impact.

In the Services Review Survey, students were asked to indicate whether Co-op Connection had impacted them positively, negatively or neutrally (Q11). Most students (49%) indicated that Co-op Connection had impacted them neutrally, followed closely by positively (48%). Only two students indicated that Co-op Connection had negatively impacted them (Figure 6).

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**Q11:** In which of the following ways has Co-op Connection impacted you?



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Figure 6: Responses to Q11

In the following question, respondents were asked to expand on their answers by indicating exactly how they had been impacted, for example, whether it was academically, mentally, emotionally or something else (Q12). In terms of academics, one student explained that "... I would say it has encouraged me to plan ahead more. I have begun preparing for grad school at the recommendation of co-op connection." Students also explained that Co-op Connection gave them more overall confidence in the co-op process. For example, one student explained how "it help[ed] me understand how the system works because as a first year not on campus there can be some challenges. By clearing some questions, I have decided to do co-op in Winter 2021. I feel confident with the resources that they provide." Students also expressed how they had been emotionally and mentally impacted, for example, by attending events that made them happy and by making them feel less stress. One student explained how "it made me realize other people had the same uncertainties as me. Made me less stressed and more confident in the process." Making connections as well as professional skills and career help were two additional commonly noted impacts.

## Summary and Potential Changes

Overall, Co-op Connection seeks to provide co-op students at the University of Waterloo with both professional and social support. However, the professional support offered by Co-op Connection is not currently part of their core mandate and since the survey responses revealed that this aspect of the service was actually very important to the users, Co-op Connection's mandate should be revisited to include this.

It is clear from the survey responses that both social and professional support are the general reasons why students choose to access the service. For both on-campus and online engagement this access was limited as most students indicated that they had only accessed the service once. Moreover, the majority of students indicated that they did not still access Co-op Connection and although no students disclosed any particular negative experiences that lead them to stop accessing Co-op Connection, it will still be important to consider how to increase the retention of service users moving forward.

In terms of students' overall experience with Co-op Connection, all aspects of the service received a rating of 4 or 5 from the majority of respondents, with the ability to access Co-op Connection during COVID receiving the lowest average rating. Despite this, respondents were still able to identify the best part about Co-op Connection, the most common answer being the ability to make connections, build a network and form a community through the service. In addition, students felt that Co-op Connection impacted them academically, emotionally and mentally through increasing their overall confidence in the co-op process, attending events that made them happy, making them feel less stressed, helping them make connections and receiving professional and career help.

Responses from the survey relating to supports and events students want to see can provide Co-op Connection with a starting point for developing future programming.

For example, when asked what additional supports they thought Co-op Connection could offer (Q14) and improve on (Q17) students stressed the following:

- Better communication
- Discord groups for co-op students living in the same area
- Mentoring opportunities
- More events with alumni
- Weekly updates
- More awareness and better outreach
- More flexible hours

Specifically, in terms of events (Q15), respondents suggested more events at the beginning of the semester when students are trying to meet people as well as guest speakers, networking events, outdoor activities, panels with upper year students, resume workshops and a variety of social events including escape rooms, game nights, group dinner or outdoor potluck when possible, karaoke, rock climbing, city tours and casino cafes. Most responses related to these social events, which aligns with the fact that many students join Co-op Connection in the first place because they want to make connections.

In terms of advocacy, Co-op Connection admittedly does not focus on this and instead chooses to put their effort into student support. In the future, avenues for advocacy that Co-op Connection can engage in will be important to identify to ensure that they are supporting co-op students in this way as well. Moreover, while Co-op Connection partners with other clubs, services and organizations on an event-by-event basis, more long-term partnerships could be formed to support advocacy efforts at Co-op Connection. This may also be done by drawing on the long-term goals at WUSA as well. When asked how Co-op Connection related to broader long-term goals at WUSA, the Service Coordinator was unable to identify any connection. To ensure that goals of WUSA and Co-op Connection are aligned moving forward, this will need to be made more explicit.



## The Glow Centre

Of the 688 full responses to the Services Review Survey, 39 indicated that they had accessed the Glow Centre.

### Purpose and Goals of the Service

In the interview with Glow Service Coordinators, they indicated that while their mandate has changed over time, their current purpose focuses on providing resources and a sense of community for 2SLGBTQ+ people and allies. The Glow Centre seeks to provide a safe and comfortable space for folks to get together on campus. To meet this purpose, Glow used to typically run an event every night of the week on a different theme or topic. Over the past year, of course, events have transitioned to an online format and are now run once a month instead of nightly. The goal of Glow still remains to build a community, even in a virtual space. In addition, peer support is an important service that Glow provides and although – according to the Service Coordinators – numbers are lower since transitioning to online, students are still using this service. Prior to COVID, Glow also provided students with a variety of resources such as safe sex supplies, information and maps to gender-neutral washrooms on campus as well as a lending library of queer literature, books, magazines and movies.

### Communications and Outreach

During the interview with Glow Service Coordinators, it was explained that to communicate with their users, Glow predominantly uses Facebook and Instagram. These platforms are used by Glow to advertise upcoming events and any resources they want to send out to their users. Social media is also used for outreach and for executive take overs where students can ask questions about Glow. In their review, IAC recommended that Glow include more educational and resource related content on their social media platforms.

The Service Coordinators explained that they believe students usually become informed about Glow through word-of-mouth from friends. Moreover, they identified that WUSA Clubs and Services day during Welcome Week at the beginning of the term is where they are able to outreach to a lot of first year students who are looking to meet people and get involved. The Service Coordinators also mentioned that having regular connections with WUSA marketing has really helped with their outreach and kept everything on track as it allows them to make changes more quickly and efficiently.

The Services Review Survey (Q4) sought to identify in more detail the communication and outreach avenues by asking respondents to indicate how they found out about the Glow Centre. Most students (35%) indicated that they had heard about Glow during Orientation, which aligns with the statement from the Service Coordinators that Welcome Week is where they are able to outreach to a lot of first year students. In addition, 18% heard about the Glow Centre from a friend, 17% from the Glow Centre social media, 10% from uwaterloo.ca, 8% from wusa.ca, 7% from being involved at WUSA and 5% from 'other' avenues including signs in the bathroom, WUSA social media and the Women's Centre. No students indicated that they had heard about the Glow Centre through email (Figure 7).

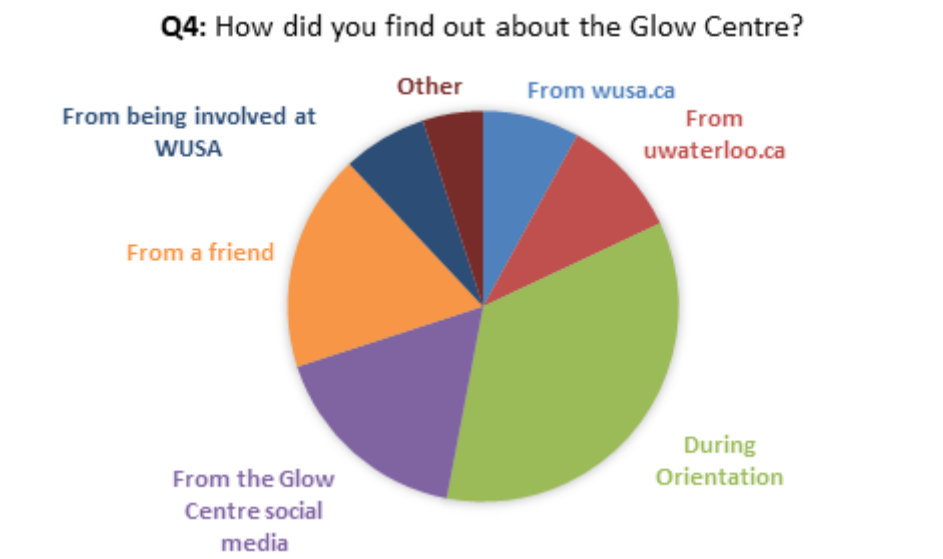


Figure 7: Answers to Q4

## Access

While awareness and outreach are important for attracting students to their service, the Glow Centre also needs to ensure that students feel comfortable accessing their space and service. The Service Coordinators at Glow explained that students with mobility issues may find it hard to access Glow in person as the ramp is not very accessible. The furniture in the Glow Centre is also not very mobility friendly. Moreover, folks at Glow explained that they are aware that some students do not feel comfortable using Glow because they do not feel represented in the volunteer and executive's make-up, specifically as it relates to BIPOC students. In addition, they explained that since a lot of queer and trans friend groups hang out at the Glow Centre, this may make younger students nervous to use Glow because they may feel uncomfortable meeting new people who already know so much about one another.

Of course, the reasons for students to actually continue being involved with the Glow Centre after they are aware of it also depends on why students chose to access the service in the first place. In the Services Review Survey (Q5) students were asked to elaborate on this. The most common answer among the 31 total responses was the desire to meet new people, especially those with a queer identity, as well as to find a community. For example, one respondent explained that "I was a part of my LGBT+ community in high school and was nervous to lose that social connection so I asked in the unofficial orientation Facebook group if anyone was interested in starting a LGBT+ group chat & someone who was in their 2nd year in that group helping future first years told me I should apply to volunteer with Glow." It is clear that there is alignment between the reasons for students access to Glow initially and the sense of community that the Glow Centre Coordinators seek to provide.

Students were then asked to indicate how many times they had accessed the Glow Centre during their entire time at Waterloo (Q6 and Q7), both prior to COVID and during COVID (Figure 8). Prior to COVID, 32% of students indicated that they had accessed the Glow Centre only once, while both 'a few times' and 'many times' received 34% of the responses each.

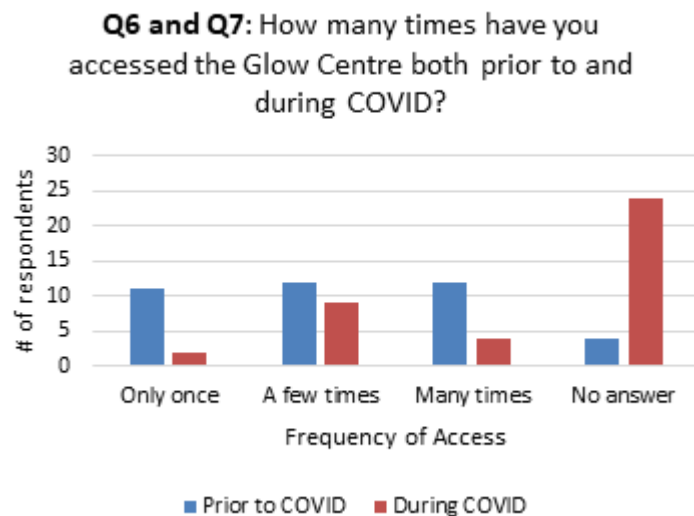


Figure 8: Answers to Q6 and Q7

In terms of online engagement, 23% of students indicated that they had accessed Glow a few times, followed by 10% accessing many times and 5% accessing only once. The remaining 62% of students did not answer this question; again, this higher percentage of 'no answer' for this question could be a result of students not having engaged with Glow online at all. Unfortunately, the survey design did not capture this scenario accurately in this question, but does so in the following question when students were asked if they still continue to access Glow (Q8). In response to this question, 39% of students indicated that yes, they do still access Glow, while half (50%) indicated that no, they do not still access Glow and the remaining 11% indicated an 'other' answer. Students who indicated no expressed their reasoning to be something related to COVID or that they were not aware Glow is operating currently, that they were graduating, no longer interested or chose to use another resource. Some students also indicated that they felt Glow was not inclusive. On the topic of inclusivity, one student explained "... If you're in science or engineering or math, you're really not welcome in their facilities. They're not supportive, they don't care, and all they do is complain about people in STEM... I felt like I wasn't welcome and was just hated on constantly. And I've had friends that had similar experiences. After that I started going to engineers because they were better and more supportive..."

In addition, one of the 'other' responses included the following comment: "I follow the Glow Centre on social media and read their posts, unsure if that would count as 'accessing' the Centre. I have attended Glow Centre events in the past and find that sometimes they are more welcoming than others - sometimes it seems like everyone there already knows each other and is mostly there to talk to each other rather than meeting new people." It is clear from this response that what is considered 'accessing' the Glow Centre, especially during COVID is hard to define. Moreover, this student demonstrates another example of not feeling included at the Glow Centre.

### Overall Experience of Users

The overall experience of the Glow Centre users was captured in a question (Q9) asking respondents to rate various aspects of the Glow Centre on a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being poor and 5 being excellent. The 7 different areas of the service included: hours of operation/availability, friendliness of volunteer staff, helpfulness of volunteer staff, ability of volunteer staff to provide resources, ability to access the Glow Centre both prior to and during COVID and overall experience (Figure 9).

In summary, the most common rating for all aspects of the Glow Centre was 5, except for the ability to access during COVID. This aspect received an equal amount of 3, 4 and 5 ratings, the lowest average rating at 3.37 as well as the highest percentage of 1 ratings at 18.52%.

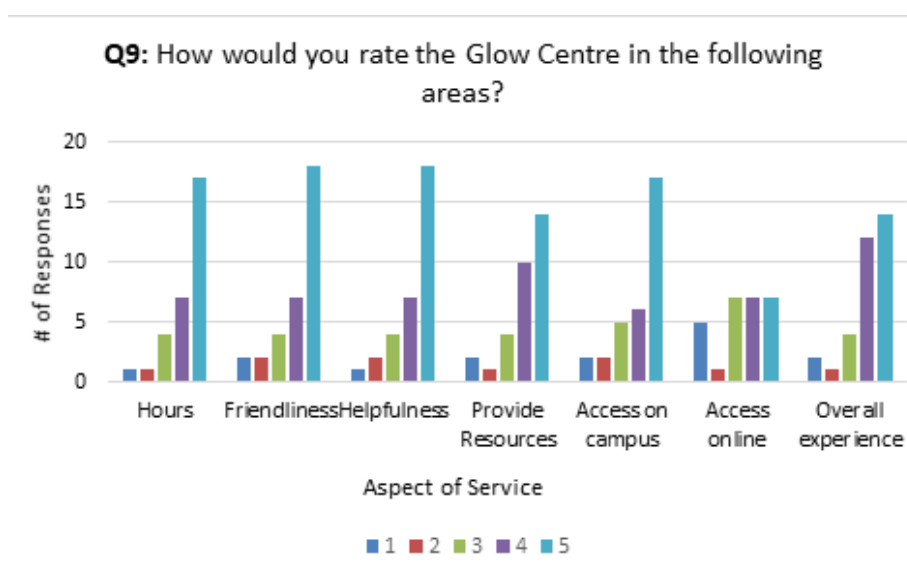


Figure 9: Responses to Q9

Again, this is not surprising considering the challenges in transitioning to an online format for a service whose purpose is to provide a comfortable physical space for students on campus. Besides this, ability of volunteer staff to provide resources and ability to access Glow prior to COVID both received the next lowest ratings at

4.06 each. Moreover, the aspect with the highest average rate was helpfulness of volunteer staff at 4.27; this aspect also received the highest percentage of 5 ratings at 56.67%.

Students were asked to express what they liked best about the Glow Centre in an open format (Q10). The most frequent answers revolved around the community and safe space that the Glow Centre provides as well as the friendly people. Others also appreciated the resources and events that the Glow Centre provides. In addition, 76% of students would recommend accessing the Glow Centre to a friend, while 15% said they would not and 9% were unsure (Q13). Together, these results indicate that Glow is able to provide a positive experience to the majority of its users, the specific nature of which is detailed in the net section.

### Impact on Students

In the Services Review Survey, students were asked to indicate whether the Glow Centre had impacted them positively, negatively or neutrally (Q11). The majority of students (61%) indicated the Glow Centre had impacted them positively, followed closely by neutrally (31%). Only three students (11%) indicated that the Glow Centre had negatively impacted them (Figure 10).

In the following question, respondents were asked to expand on their answers by indicating exactly how they had been impacted, for example, whether it was academically, mentally, emotionally or something else (Q12). For students who felt that the Glow Centre impacted them negatively, two explained that this was because, again, they did not feel included; one due to their STEM background and the other because as they explained, "I felt excluded... they focus so heavily on sexuality and forget about gender unless you are trans. [Their] office is so intimidating when you walk in... it's like being the outsider and they don't really try to include others."

Q11: In which of the following ways has accessing the Glow Centre impacted you?

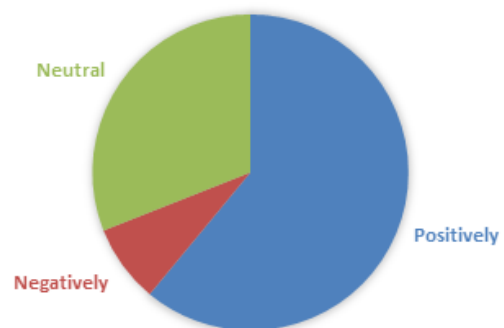


Figure 10: Responses to Q11

Nevertheless, other students felt positively impacted by the Glow Centre for a variety of reasons. One common response related to building friendships and meeting new people. In the same vein, students mentioned how the Glow Centre provided a sense of community, support and people to share their experience with. For example, one respondent explained that “it’s nice to have a space to interact with queer classmates and talk about our experiences.” Similarly, another student mentioned that “It gave me a sense of community, purpose, and support. I got to meet amazing friends and peers at Glow. I also was able to have the space [to] learn more about myself on my journey of personal growth with supportive friends and allies by my side.” The Glow Centre also impacted students emotionally, for example, by making them feel less lonely as well as mentally, for example, through mental health support. Students also appreciated the resources and the space to work and rest between classes that the Glow Centre provides. One student expressed a variety of impacts when they explained that accessing Glow was an “all around positive experience. Mentally and emotionally I’ve been able to develop strong friendships and hold engaging conversations. Academically, when campus is open, Glow is a great place to get work done while feeling connected to my peers.”

### Partnerships and Advocacy

In terms of partnerships, Glow consistently meets with the Equity Office and with other equity services on campus, such as RAISE and the Women’s Centre, to help enhance their advocacy efforts. Glow makes sure that the concerns of LGBTQIA+ students are brought up in these meetings to ensure that they are adequately advocated for in all campus spaces. Glow also works with Health Services and Counselling Services to make sure that preferred names and pronouns are used in those spaces as well. Glow is always advocating to make events more inclusive, and this includes keeping intersectionality in mind. The Service Coordinators explained that Glow continues to collaborate with RAISE as well as Queer and Trans BIPOC to ensure that their work is inclusive of folks with intersecting racial, sexual and gender identities. Glow also continues to keep those who are asexual and a-romantic in mind to make sure they are comfortable, as they may not be comfortable being involved in some of the work that Glow does around sex.

## Summary and Potential Changes

The Glow Centre identified their purpose as providing resources and a sense of community for LGBTQIA+ people and allies at the University of Waterloo through both peer support and events. Moreover, one aspect of Glow's mandate focuses on creating a campus culture that is more aware and accepting of diversity through education the campus community on issues pertaining to the queer community, which is done through the above-mentioned partnerships and advocacy efforts.

The survey responses indicate that most students found out about Glow through Orientation week, so this avenue of outreach will be important for Glow to continue focusing on moving forward, in addition to enhancing their outreach in other areas as well. The most common response students provided for why they accessed Glow was to meet new people, specifically those with a queer identity, and to find a community. This demonstrates a strong connection between why students access Glow and what the service seeks to provide them with.

Half of students indicated that they actually no longer access Glow, mostly for external reasons outside of the control of Glow such as students that were graduating, because of COVID, because they had no interest or reason to or because they were unaware that it was even operating during COVID. This last point is unsurprising given that Glow is known for the physical space it operates on campus. Moreover, although Glow is cognizant of their need to be more inclusive; one response shed light on the fact that one student no longer accesses the service because they felt unsupported due to their identity as a STEM student, while another explained that because of the tight-knit group of friends already at Glow, they felt unwelcomed joining. This highlights the need for Glow to continue self-reflecting as a service on how they can ensure that all students at Waterloo feel comfortable in their space. However, the fact that Service Coordinators were able to identify these concerns is noteworthy and demonstrates Glow's awareness and commitment to these issues moving forward.



Overall, the most common rating for all aspects of the Glow Centre was 5, except for the ability to access during COVID which saw the highest percentage of 1 ratings. Again, this is not surprising considering the challenges in transitioning to an online format for a service whose purpose is to provide a comfortable physical space and sense of community for students on campus. Despite challenges engaging students during COVID and issues of inclusivity, students still provided a number of examples for what they liked about Glow, which centered around the community and safe space it provides along with the friendly people. Others also emphasized that they appreciated the resources and events that the Glow Centre provides. In addition, the majority of students indicated that Glow had a positive impact on them, again, because it provided them with a sense of community and someone to share their experiences with which in turn supported them emotionally and mentally.

To improve their supports and events moving forward, the Services Review Survey asked what type of events students would like to see (Q15) and responses included ideas such as mental health focused events, game nights, movie nights, sex toy bingo and drag nights. The Service Coordinators also mentioned that they hope to continue to make sure that the service is accessible for all people by keeping the cost for large events, such as attending Pride, low or even free so that more people can engage with Glow. In addition, students were asked what supports they thought the Glow Centre could offer (Q14) and improve on (Q17). One student mentioned that brochures on campus might be helpful to provide information to students who are too shy to ask, and another asked for more virtual education material to help people who are new to the community. Both of these suggestions emphasize the need for Glow to provide more educational materials, which also aligns with Section 3 of Glow's mandate. Other students mentioned a drop-in online space, more female contraception, resources for gender and sexuality-related therapy, better outreach and more inclusivity, including more discussion of intersectionality. For example, one student explained the following:

"Glow is still severely lacking in its approach to intersectionality. It needs to better build on and grow its connection to QTPOC and other equity seeking services in order to support 2S and queer and trans Indigenous peoples and other queer and trans people of colour. We have long been tackling this issue, but I think many of us who were in leadership felt powerless to make true change. The change must come from us though, and we must improve Glow so that it is truly a safe space for all students that have queer and trans identities".

**Similarly, another student explained:**

"Intersectionality. Build relationships in solidarity with the other equity seeking services for lasting working relationships. And be willing to offer time/space/resources to support each other. Actually go to other services events and support them with presence, not just boosting their posts."

This student emphasizes the importance of intersectionality, and the importance of collaborating with other equity seeking services to help with this. As mentioned previously, Glow has built partnerships with other services to enhance their advocacy efforts. Moving forward, Glow will need to continue with these advocacy efforts and self-reflecting on how they can be more inclusive and welcoming to all students at Waterloo.

## **International and Canadian Student Network (ICSN)**

Of the 688 full responses to the Services Review Survey, 22 indicated that they had accessed the International and Canadian Student Network (ICSN). It should be noted that compared to the other services, ICSN had the lowest number of respondents; this, combined with the fact that many students chose not to answer many of the questions resulted in a smaller sample pool to draw results from and this limitation should be considered when reading the results.

### **Purpose and Goals of the Service**

In the interview with Service Coordinators at ICSN, they explained that their service strives to promote diversity and break down barriers between different cultures and countries. The focus of ICSN is about building a community where people can come to share concerns, talk about issues and meet with both other international students and Canadian students. This semester, for example, ICSN launched their social night initiatives which provides a platform for students to interact and connect with other international students. ICSN is also launching a podcast called Diversity Dialogue where a panel of students discusses different topics concerning international exchange students. Most of their initiatives right now are focused on increasing engagement across social media platforms especially for first year students who need support. The Service Coordinators noted that although the program is not restricted to first years, ICSN does try to target their outreach to them. The Service Coordinators at ICSN also identified that they are going through a period of restructuring right now.

### **Communications and Outreach**

Similar to both Co-op Connection and Glow, the Service Coordinators at ICSN explained that Instagram and Facebook are the main avenues they use to build connections with their student users. ICSN wants their social media be a place where the student body can ask them questions, provide feedback and have their input heard about what events and services ICSN offers.

This focus on social media aligns with the results from the Services Review survey (Q4), where 33% of respondents indicated that they had found out about ICSN through ICSN social media; this was followed by 17% of respondents who had found out through [uwaterloo.ca](http://uwaterloo.ca), another 17% who found out during orientation, 13% found out through [wusa.ca](http://wusa.ca), 7% from an email and 3% from a friend (Figure 11).

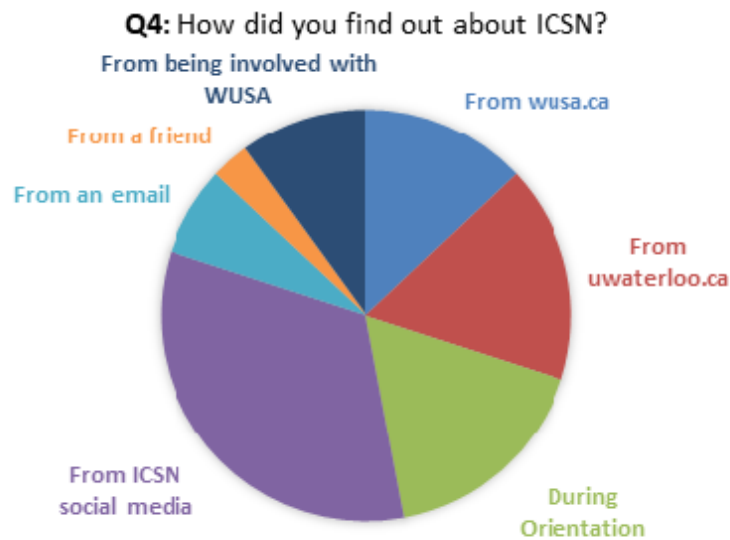


Figure 11: Responses to Q4

## Access

When asked about access to their service, the coordinators explained that some cultural barriers may impede students from accessing ICSN. In addition, they explained that first year students who are transitioning from secondary to post-secondary education may not have the knowledge to reach out to the service, which is one of the reasons they try to target ICSN outreach to first years. In terms of COVID and the online environment in particular, the Service Coordinators noted that there may be an “account overload” with all of the transition to social media. The Service Coordinators at ICSN worry that since everything is going online, the distinct purpose and unique services offered by ICSN are getting lost in the shuffle with all the WUSA services. Moreover, with online learning, students may be focused on completing their assignments online and logging off, rather than spending additional time trying to engage with more services and clubs online.

When asked why they initially accessed ICSN (Q5), only 11 students responded. However, a clear trend in their answers was a focus on their identity as international students and their desire to connect with other students, both Canadian and international. As one student explained, "I was an international student! During the international student orientation ICSN participated [it really made] me welcome to campus. I'm really pleased with the service even if it's mostly social, it offers me a place to not worry about not being from Canada."

Students were then asked to indicate how many times they accessed Co-op Connection during their entire time at Waterloo (Q6 and Q7), both prior to COVID and during COVID. In terms of in-person engagement, 7 students indicated that they accessed ICSN a few times, 3 students accessed only once and another 3 students accessed many times. On the other hand, 3 students indicated they had accessed ICSN during COVID only once, 4 indicated a few times and 2 said many times (Figure 12).

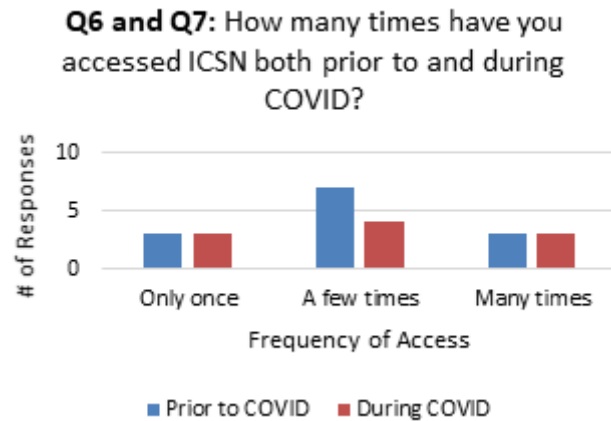


Figure 12: Responses to Q6 and Q7

When asked if they still continue to access ICSN (Q8), most students (11) said that no while only 3 said yes. Of those who said no, their reasoning ranged from COVID to having no interest or need for the service, all of which are external factors. However, one student did explain that "the events were not as accessible or did not involve the international student community as much." This response indicates that perhaps there is potential for ICSN to do more outreach amongst the international student community on campus and collaborate with other services who serve them.

## Overall Experience of Users

The overall experience of ICSN users was captured in a question (Q9) asking respondents to rate various aspects of ICSN on a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being poor and 5 being excellent. The 7 different areas of the service included: hours of operation/availability, friendliness of volunteer staff, helpfulness of volunteer staff, ability of volunteer staff to provide resources, ability to access the ICSN both prior to and during COVID and overall experience (Figure 13). Similar to both Co-op Connection and the Glow Centre, ability to access the service during COVID received the lowest rating at 3.63. Besides this, however, the next lowest rating was overall experience at 4.18.

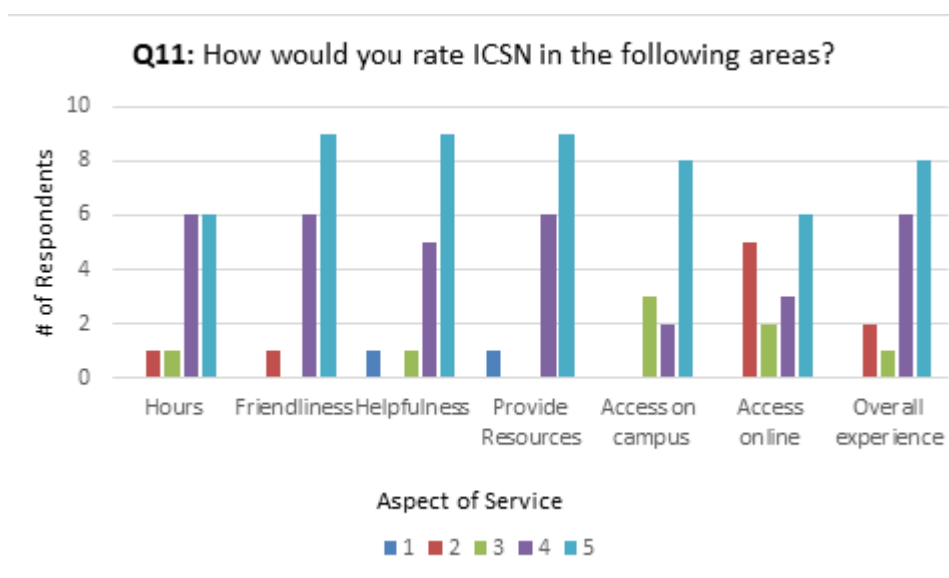


Figure 13: Responses to Q11

Moreover, in an open format, students were then asked to indicate what they liked best about ICSN (Q10). Although only 6 people responded, their answers captured a range of experiences such as the network ICSN create, engagement with other students, free food and how friendly and helpful everyone was. One student explained that “it’s a welcoming place for international students who aren’t quite at home in Canada.” In addition, of the 17 students to respond to the question, 15 (88%) said they would recommend accessing ICSN to a friend, while 1 (6%) said they would not and 1 (6%) was unsure (Q13).

## Impact on Students

In the Services Review Survey, students were asked to indicate whether ICSN had impacted them positively, negatively or neutrally (Figure 14). Most students (11) indicated that ICSN had impacted them positively, followed by neutrally with 6 student responses. Only one student indicated that ICSN had negatively impacted them. In the following question, respondents were asked to expand on their answers by indicating exactly how they had been impacted, for example, whether it was academically, mentally, emotionally or something else (Q12). Students explained that ICSN had impacted them mentally and emotionally by providing them both with help and connections. As one student explained, “Very positively! I feel like it was a home away from home, and I made new friends during international orientation and then kept those friends through ICSN even though we were in different faculties.” Similarly, another student stated that “in first year, it definitely impacted me positively emotionally as it helped me connect to other international students which gave me a sense of comfort.” Both of these responses demonstrate the positive impact that meeting other students in their same circumstances can have on international students.

**Q11:** In which of the following ways has ICSN impacted you?

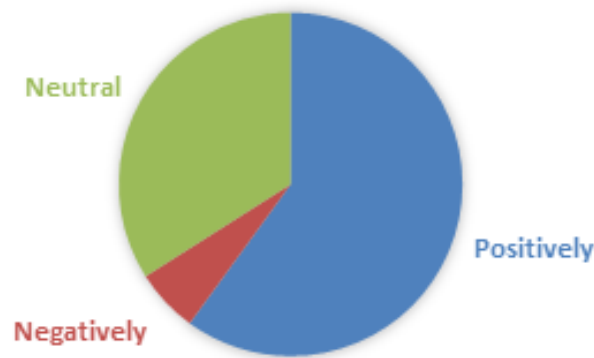


Figure 14: Responses to Q11

## Summary and Potential Changes

Overall, ICSN strives to provide a platform for both international and Canadian students to interact and connect. With the transition to online, the Service Coordinators are concerned that students may become so overwhelmed with all of their online priorities that it may prevent them from accessing ICSN. Indeed, a common response for why students no longer accessed the service was because of COVID. Similar to both Co-op Connection and the Glow Centre, the aspect of ICSN experience with the lowest rating was the ability to access the service during COVID. Regardless of these challenges with an online transition, students still had positive things to say about ICSN specifically noting the network ICSN has created for them, the ability to engage with other students and how friendly the volunteers were.

In terms of advocacy and partnerships, ICSN collaborates with other resources on campus such as Health Services, other WUSA services and more recently, the Student Success Office, but their advocacy is lacking. Service Coordinators also mentioned the possibility of advocating more for mental health of international students and increasing their ability to provide these supports to students. There is also a strong potential for ICSN to engage in advocacy efforts on behalf of international students, especially as issues surface related to their return to campus after COVID. Moving forward, ICSN will need to draw on other services at WUSA to enhance their advocacy efforts while also making sure that their mandate and purpose remains clear.

The issue of collaboration is also mentioned by one student when asked what additional supports they thought ICSN could offer (Q14) and improve on (Q17):

“Collaborative things with students on co-op especially... Or alternatively if students are working on co-op in Canada, and [they’re] international, getting them together for social atmospheres and support. On the flip side I’d really like to see when students do co-ops in my country, they learn about the culture and about the language and have opportunities to engage and do stuff like that... Language classes or visiting national monuments or things like that would be really cool if they were organized by ICSN collaboratively with co-op connection”



Similarly, another student stated that they wanted to see ICSN “engage more with Waterloo International and try to participate more in international orientation to form friend groups and things like that for people who are out of place early on.” It is clear that collaborations with both WUSA services and other departments on campus could help provide more relevant services to ICSN users. Moreover, some of the ideas Service Coordinators at ICSN had such as connecting undergraduates with alumni to help with networking, a database of all international students to help with outreach and English language support, could also benefit from collaboration with other services in these areas.

## Mentor Assistance Through Education and Support (MATES)

Of the 688 full responses to the Services Review Survey, 42 indicated that they had accessed MATES.

### Purpose and Goals of the Service

In their interviews, the Service Coordinators at MATES indicated that the main operation of MATES is peer-to-peer support which they offer at certain hours throughout the week by appointment. During these appointments, it is important that students know that they are in control of the session and are able to drive the goals and format of the session based on their needs. MATES volunteers engage in a debrief every week to compare notes and discuss different ways to approach their peer-to-peer sessions. Overall, MATES tries to find a balance between the educational and resource component of MATES and social wellness events.

### Communications and Outreach

Similar to the other services, Facebook and Instagram are the two main communication outlets that MATES uses to engage with their users. This includes posting polls, self-care posts and administrative posts with drop-in hours. MATES tries to find a balance between posting about MATES services and more general mental health awareness and well-being content. For more formal purposes such as booking appointments, email communication is used. In their review, IAC discussed the importance of ensuring that personal and confidential information that comes through Facebook, Instagram, email and Teams is handled properly by MATES.

On their appointment form, students are asked to indicate where they found out about MATES. During COVID, the Service Coordinators at MATES have noticed that wusa.ca, social media and word-of-mouth have been the most common whereas booths and drop-in areas were a popular way for students to become informed about MATES prior to COVID.

In the Services Review Survey students were also asked to identify how they found out about MATES (Q4). Most students (19%) found out about MATES through wusa.ca, followed by uwaterloo.ca (17%), MATES social media (15%), during orientation (12%), from an email (12%), from a friend (9%) and from being involved with WUSA (8%). The remaining 8% of respondents indicated that they had heard about MATES through 'other' avenues such as a table set up at an event, counselling services, LEARN and residence (Figure 15). Similar to Co-op Connection, it is clear from these responses

### Access

Barriers to accessing MATES is something that the Service Coordinators noticed especially during the pandemic. Prior to COVID, MATES used to host drop-in sessions in a variety of different faculty buildings. Online, however, they are not able to host drop-in sessions

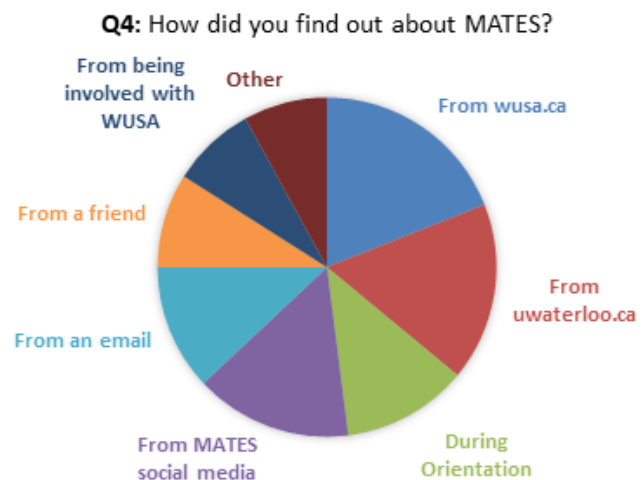


Figure 15: Responses to Q4

simply because of the logistics of ensuring confidentiality. The online process of booking an appointment has also been a big barrier to getting students to engage in a timely fashion.

One positive aspect about the transition to online is that MATES can now engage with co-op students who are not currently living in Waterloo, something that was not possible when MATES only operated on campus. Moving forward, MATES plans to continue offering virtual appointments even when we eventually return to campus.

Similar to what was mentioned by ICSN, another impediment associated with online support that Coordinators at MATES mentioned was “zoom fatigue,” where students are simply tired of always engaging via video call. They have noticed that students are less willing to fill their schedule with even more video calls and appointments than is necessary. MATES has tried to mitigate these barriers through “video off” calls. Moreover, there are also privacy issues associated with online peer-to-peer support as students are often in close proximity with roommates or family members who they may not want to hear their session with MATES.

In the Services Review Survey (Q5), respondents were asked why they initially accessed MATES; 30 students answered this question and the most common response was wanting support, advice or someone to talk to. For example, one student explained: “I was struggling with the semester and I felt that I could maybe relate to and find support in peers who were going through the same experience.” Another student stated that they specifically were looking for academic advice such as help with better study skills. Others were simply curious, feeling stressed or actually wanted to learn how to help others.

Students were then asked to indicate how many times they accessed MATES during their entire time at Waterloo (Q6 and Q7), both prior to COVID and during COVID (Figure 16).

In terms of in-person engagement, the majority of students (55%) indicated that they had accessed MATES a few times, followed by only once (42%) and many times (3%). For online engagement, the majority of students (52%) indicated that they had accessed MATES only once, followed by a few times (35%) and many times (13%). Interestingly, more students indicated they had accessed MATES many times online than in person. However, due to the low response rate to this question, this actually only equates to three people.

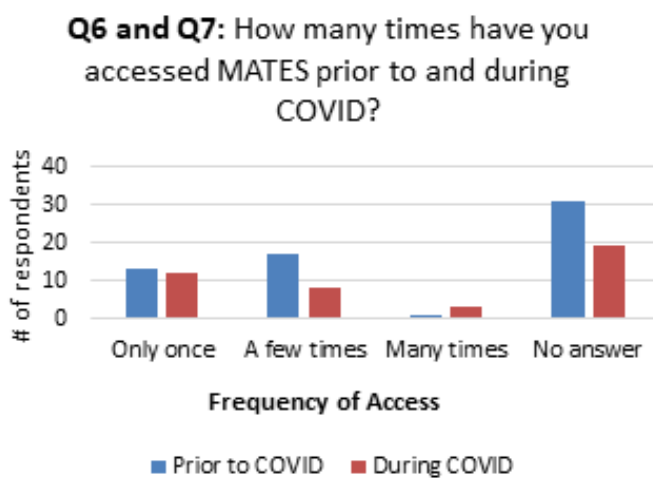


Figure 16: Responses to Q6 and Q7

The final question on the topic of access asked students to indicate whether or not they still continued to access MATES (Q8). The majority (54%) of respondents indicated no, 40% indicated yes and the remaining 6% chose the 'other' option but did not elaborate. For those who do not continue to access MATES, the reason that received the most responses related to having no interest or need, for example, because they are graduating, no longer a student or already have a good support system. Other reasons that included only one response each included the following:

- Chose to use different resources instead
- Prefer in-person
- Were unaware of online support
- Felt volunteers were not properly trained or helpful

One student mentioned that they felt it was inconvenient and explained that MATES “didn’t give me help right away, after the email, I had to find times to book for a meet with a mate member which would then refer me to someone else. I lost interest because it was inconvenient and I didn’t know about any success stories anyone else had.”

### Overall Experience of Users

The overall experience of MATES users was captured in a question (Q9) asking respondents to rate various aspects of MATES on a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being poor and 5 being excellent. The 7 different areas of the service included: hours of operation/availability, friendliness of volunteer staff, helpfulness of volunteer staff, ability of volunteer staff to provide resources, ability to access the MATES both prior to and during COVID and overall experience (Figure 17).

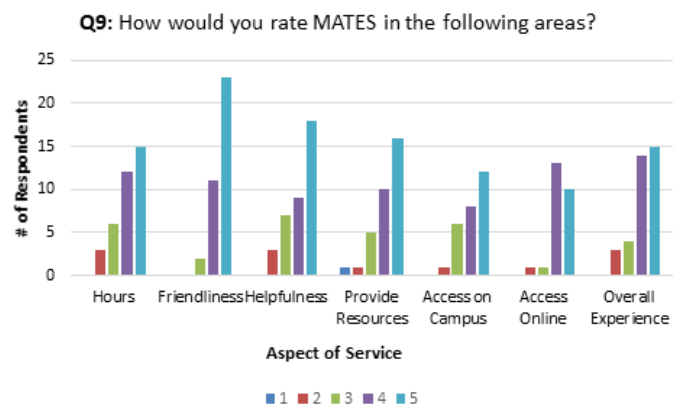


Figure 17: Responses to Q9

In summary, all aspects of MATES received a rating of 4 or 5 from the majority of respondents. The aspect that received the highest average rating was friendliness of volunteer staff with 4.58 and 63.89% of respondents rating this a 5. The aspect that received the lowest average rating was hours of operation/availability with 4.08.

Additionally, students were asked to indicate what they liked best about MATES (Q10). Contrary to the opinion of the previously quoted student, others found MATES to be very accessible and available. One student explained "I was able to speak to someone pretty soon after I submitted the form." Others also found that MATES was friendly, helpful, welcoming and inclusive. For example, one respondent explained that "the workers are very friendly and respond to all questions with enthusiasm which makes me feel welcome and not judged" and another mentioned that "they have a huge range of languages they provide sessions in, which is really inclusive!" Students also stated that a positive aspect of MATES is simply the fact that it is peer-to-peer support; a one respondent put it: "students often have a better understanding of the problems that other students go through. Plus, it's too hard to get a meeting with a therapist on campus." Another student explained: "I liked that the volunteers did not have any professional training (as opposed to the training healthcare professionals such as therapists or psychiatrists would have). This allowed for more genuine conversations."

Moreover, when asked if they would recommend accessing MATES to a friend (Q13), 74% said yes, while 8% said no and 18% were unsure.

### Impact on Students

The Service Coordinators explained that the impact that MATES has on its student users depends on the type of session that occurs because, as mentioned previously, the peer-to-peer support is very student-driven. Some common impacts that Service Coordinators have noticed are related to communication, social, conversation and emotional skills. In addition, students are provided resources during their session which is an important outcome for students as it leaves them with resources that are relevant to their issues that they could use after the appointment.

In the Services Review Survey, students were asked to indicate if accessing MATES had impacted them positively, negatively or neutrally (Q11). The majority of respondents (59%) stated that MATES impacted them positively, followed by neutrally (36%) and negatively (5%) (Figure 18). Students were then asked to elaborate on how exactly they had been impacted, for example, mentally, emotionally or academically (Q12).

**Q11:** In which of the following ways has MATES impacted you?

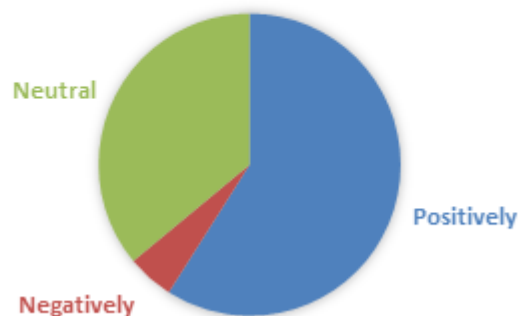


Figure 18: Responses to Q11

In terms of academically, students explained that MATES helped with their time management skills as well as provided motivation and resources. For example, one student explained that “It helped me push through difficult times during my first year in academics with it being all online. I felt more grounded after accessing services.” Another student mentioned that “When I reached out to MATES for support, they helped me tackle some academic concerns and helped me feel less stressed.” Similarly, another student explained how “accessing MATES has helped to answer many of my questions about academics and campus life; as a result, it impacted me positively in a mental and academic way.”

As the statements above indicate, there is a connection between academic and mental impact. It seems as though accessing MATES to get some clarity around academic issues leaves users feeling less stressed. This connects to the theme mentioned above where many students indicated that their favourite part about MATES was the fact that it was peer-to-peer support as students are better able to relate to the struggles other students are going through. Additionally, respondents also indicated that MATES was able to provide them with resources that were helpful in providing support to others.

## Partnerships and Advocacy

The Service Coordinators at MATES explained that they work closely with Glow, the Women's Centre and RAISE. Overall, they enjoy collaborating with other WUSA services but mentioned that sometimes it is difficult as everyone is busy. In terms of services outside of WUSA, MATES partners with Counselling Services as they have two counselors who attend their volunteer debriefs each week to give volunteers feedback and support. Counselling Services is also involved in helping to train MATES volunteers and is there if those volunteers need support themselves after a peer-to-peer session with a student.

In terms of advocacy, the MATES advocacy director makes presentations on campus or on social media to talk about MATES and the importance of mental health. The executive in this role spends a lot of time reaching out to clubs and societies to talk about mental health and the support that MATES provides to students. As such, one major way in which MATES engages in advocacy is through presentations to in-person classes as well as booths around campus that talk about mental health. In the future, MATES wants to reach out to faculty specifically to help them be more informed about what MATES does and the resources they provide so that professors are able to refer students to MATES.

## Summary and Potential Changes

Although the main operation of MATES is their peer-to-peer support, the service also plans events and activities for their users which balance between educational and social wellness events. The responses indicate that students find out about MATES through a variety of communication outlets and MATES should continue to focus their awareness efforts broadly.

Students indicated that they accessed MATES for a variety of reasons, both personal and academic in nature which speaks to the user-driven peer support environment that MATES seeks to offer students. For both online and in-person engagement the majority of students indicated that they accessed MATES only once or a few times. Interestingly, there was a higher percentage of students who accessed MATES online than there were those who did prior to COVID. This could potentially demonstrate the importance of ensuring that online peer support continues to be offered after a return to campus. In addition, the majority of students indicated that they no



longer access MATES, the most common reason being that they had no interest or time, rather than having a specific negative experience that prevented them from continuing with MATES. However, the aspect of MATES that received the lowest average rating was hours of operation and availability which suggests that MATES should consider broadening their available time slots for peer support moving forward. The overall feedback for MATES, however, was overwhelmingly positive and many students explained how they were able to find support for academic issues they were having, which impacted them mentally as well through a reduction in stress.

Collaborating with other services such as RAISE, Glow and the Women's Centre are key for MATES' advocacy efforts, so it is important for these partnerships to continue moving forward.

In terms of connections to WUSA, the Services Coordinators at MATES expressed that while they felt connected in some ways, they felt that being more aware of what the actually long-term goals and priorities of WUSA are would be beneficial to them. The Service Coordinators at MATES also feel as if they do not get as much face-to-face time with WUSA executives as they would like and as a result, they feel like there is a bit of disconnect. MATES feels it would be beneficial to talk to the executives more to understand their goals and to understand if there is potential for MATES to help them achieve this. The Service Coordinators suggested a newsletter with executive updates or a connect once or twice a term would be helpful to keep the services in the loop.

The transition online has introduced unique challenges for MATES due to the personal nature of their service and the issues of privacy and confidentiality that come along with it. One positive aspect of this online component is the ability of MATES to reach students regardless of their geographical location. MATES has also been thinking of different support options for students that are not video-based such as a chat box function. Answers from the Services Review Survey can also provide guidance for where MATES may want to focus moving forward. Students were asked what additional supports they thought MATES could offer (Q14) and improve on (Q17). Students mentioned the ability to request specific people to talk to, resources for coping strategies and more availability or resources for instant support, such as

Discord chat or drop-in zoom. MATES move towards a chat box clearly aligns with this need for instant support that their users are asking for. Students also asked for more support for folks with neurodivergent issues and a tutoring or study buddy program. Similar to other services, there were also comments from students about the need for MATES to collaborate with other services not only for events, but also but also collaborative training with other services that offer peer support. Specifically, in terms of events (Q15), respondents suggested having group sessions for those interested, a panel with University of Waterloo students and more social events in general.

Moving forward, MATES wants to focus on trying to prepare for a return to campus so that all students still feel supported. For example, this could mean making sure that online services are still offered and that in-person volunteers feel safe on campus. The Service Coordinators stressed that they want to make sure that they will have access to their in-person space to set everything up and get comfortable before all students are back in person. One concern that MATES has is the transition of volunteers, since most of them have never volunteered in-person with MATES and it is very different from online; they want to ensure that volunteers are supported and feel connected.

## **Racial Advocacy for Inclusion, Solidarity and Equity (RAISE)**

Of the 688 full responses to the Services Review Survey, 31 indicated that they had accessed RAISE. In addition, it should be noted that when students were asked for feedback for any WUSA student-run services they had not accessed (Q19), 26 responses received were about RAISE, the majority of which were negative in nature. It is clear that the actions of RAISE have evoked a strong reaction from some students at the University of Waterloo and this should be considered when reading the following results.

### **Purpose and Goals of the Service**

In the interview with RAISE Service Coordinators, they explained that their four main pillars were education, advocacy, community building, and peer support and that they are motivated to both educate people and to advocate for marginalized students. Prior to COVID, RAISE hosted a variety of events to meet this purpose. In COVID times however, RAISE hosts weekly web events to discuss certain topics, play games and have study nights. There are also usually two or three bigger events per term as well. In Winter 2021, these big events were the Xchanges Conference and the Climate Action Speaker night. The Service Coordinators with RAISE explained that some events are geared towards education and informing while others are to create a safe space and to bring people together. Hosting events and creating a platform where information can be shared is very important to RAISE. Peer support is also an important service provided by RAISE but it has a smaller reach and engagement than larger events. Moreover, they explained that community building is central to all events as they involve connecting people to anti-racism.

### **Communications and Outreach**

Similar to the other services, Instagram is the primary social media platform used by RAISE, although Facebook takes on a smaller role, along with Twitter. In their review, IAC expressed concerns about the ways in which RAISE chooses to present themselves online and what is appropriate to be coming from the social media of services. They recommend that further discussion is needed to determine the appropriate scope of commentary for RAISE.

Prior to COVID when they were on campus, RAISE had more of an opportunity to interact with people and reach them through that avenue more. Currently, the Service Coordinators believe that students become aware about RAISE through social media and people re-posting RAISE content, but it could also be through word-of-mouth or the WUSA website.

The Services Review Survey (Q4) sought to identify these exact avenues of communication and outreach by asking respondents to indicate how they found out about RAISE. Most students (22.5%) found out about RAISE through their social media, followed by from being involved with WUSA (17.5%), from wusa.ca (12.5%), from uwaterloo.ca (12.5%), from a friend (12.5%), during orientation (10%) and from an email (2.5%). The remaining 10% indicated an 'other' avenue including Leads and other social media (Figure 19).

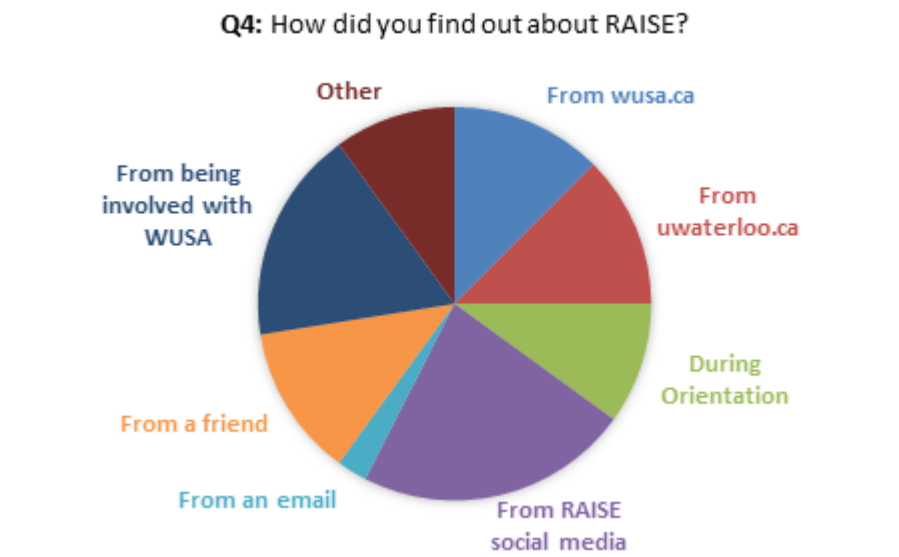


Figure 19: Responses to Q4

### Access

The Service Coordinators at RAISE felt that students may be discouraged to access RAISE because of their preconceived notions about the service. Similarly, they explained that there is often a misconception from students that RAISE is not a part of WUSA and is actually a full-time service. This also coincides with RAISE's observation that there is a lack of awareness about RAISE and what they do among students. For example, it was explained that a lot of students think that RAISE is a reactionary response service and will have cliché reactions to issues and problems,

when in reality RAISE is more focused on looking at the foundations of the institution and ingrained racism. Overall, RAISE wants to be a proactive force. In the Spring, RAISE plans to sit down as a team and have a formal mandate review to look at what the foundations of the service are and what they actually stand for.

In the Services Review Survey (Q5), respondents were asked why they initially accessed RAISE. The most common answers included those where students specifically mentioned their BIPOC identity and the subsequent need they had for community and support. For example, one student explained “I’m a BIPOC and needed someone to relate to during George Floyd’s death.” Other students accessed RAISE because they wanted to attend their conference, were curious about their services as well as wanted to learn and volunteer. Students were then asked to indicate how many times they accessed RAISE during their entire time at Waterloo (Q6 and Q7), both prior to COVID and during COVID (Figure 20). In terms of in-person engagement, 39% of students said they accessed RAISE a few times, 33% said they accessed RAISE only once and 28% said many times. For online engagement, 56% students indicating that they had accessed RAISE only once and 44% students indicated they accessed RAISE a few times, with none having accessing RAISE online many times.

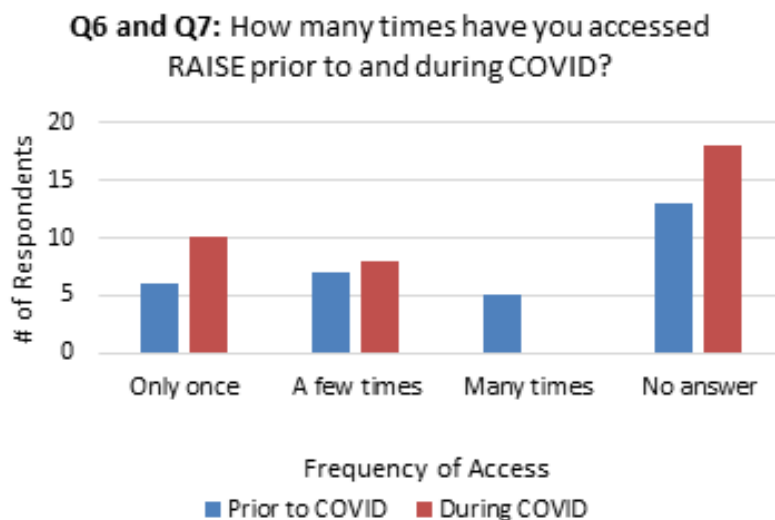


Figure 20: Responses to Q6 and Q7

To determine the current use of RAISE, respondents were then asked to indicate whether or not they still continued to access RAISE (Q8); 32% (8 respondents) stated that yes, they did still access RAISE while 68% (17 respondents) stated that no, they did not still access RAISE. Of those students who chose to elaborate on their reasoning, the two most common responses were feeling unwelcomed, not included or uncomfortable as well as overall unimpressed. For example, one student explained the following:

“Although as I identify as a POC, I did not feel welcome at all at RAISE. I felt very out of place instead of included. I tried to check on social media to see if I would feel more included more but none of it reflects my personal background. Being as there are no clubs on campus that are specifically geared towards my ethnic background, I felt disappointed the service wasn’t more inclusive.”

Similarly, another student expressed the following opinion:

“I found they weren’t very tolerant to stem students, much like glow. STEM students were often referred to as the problem, and we were told that we didn’t belong there and that our issues weren’t as important. But really they were just stereotyping us to what they imagined to be the average stem student experience. I didn’t feel welcome there at all... And I ended up engaging with my societies more because they had society level department clubs where I felt more welcome”

Other students noted their reason for no longer accessing RAISE as related to a lack of time, no need or that they preferred in-person engagement with the service. Compared to other services, the overall reasons for no longer accessing RAISE are less external and more so to do with students’ negative experience with the service.

### Overall Experience of Users

The overall experience of RAISE users was captured in a question (Q9) asking respondents to rate various aspects of RAISE on a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being poor and 5 being excellent. The 7 different areas of the service included: hours of operation/availability, friendliness of volunteer staff, helpfulness of volunteer staff, ability of volunteer staff to provide resources, ability to access the RAISE both prior to and during COVID and overall experience (Figure 21).

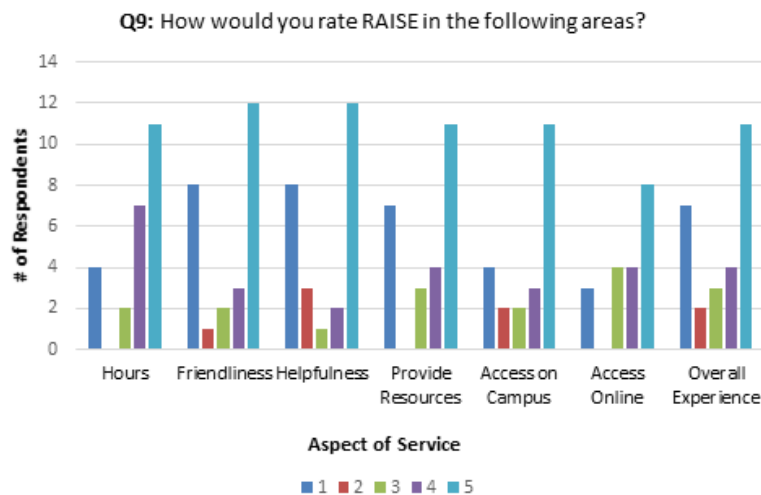


Figure 21: Responses to Q9

Compared to other services, where ratings of 4 and 5 were consistently most common for all aspects of the service, RAISE had much more variability. While all aspects of RAISE had a rating of 5, they also all had a much higher proportion of 1 ratings compared to other services. For example, while their average rating was slightly different, both friendliness of volunteer staff and helpfulness of volunteer staff both received the most 1 ratings at 30.77% each. Hours of operation/availability received the highest rating at 3.88 and unlike the other aspects of RAISE, the majority of their ratings were 4 and 5, with only a small proportion of 1 ratings. The aspect with the lowest rating was helpfulness of volunteer staff at 3.27.

In an open format question, students were asked to indicate what they liked best about RAISE (Q10). The three most common responses were their advocacy efforts, the community and safe space they provide, and the overall important cause they represent. For example, one student explained that “RAISE’s events are always interesting, informative, and welcoming. RAISE provides a safe space for Black, Indigenous, and other POC on campus, which is essential.” Another student mentioned how they liked “that [they] could find a community of people who can understand the specific intersectional struggles that [they] go through.” Others mentioned the accessible volunteer opportunities they provide, how passionate and helpful the people are, their Instagram and the collaborations they do with other organizations and services.

One student summarized a lot of these experiences when they explained “what I like best about RAISE are the people who are involved with the service, and the sense of community and belonging I feel when I’m in the office or at their events. It can be difficult navigating the university experience, so knowing there is a service that not only provides community, volunteer and mentorship opportunities, free educational and joyful events, and resources, has really made my university experience so much better.”

In addition, 61% of students would recommend accessing RAISE to a friend, while 36% would not and 3% were unsure (Q13).

### Impact on Students

Service Coordinators at RAISE indicated that they impact students by providing them with a safe space, awareness, education and a place to debate and discuss difficult topics where people have various views on an issue. They explained that RAISE is very welcoming of differing opinions and having debates as long as people come from a respectful place and are respectful to others. This statement contradicts some of the previously mentioned experiences that some students have had with RAISE.

In the Services Review Survey, students were asked to indicate whether RAISE had impacted them positively, negatively or neutrally (Q11). Most students (50%) indicated RAISE had impacted them positively, followed by negatively (36%) and neutrally (14%) (Figure 22). Compared to other services, RAISE received the highest percentage of negative impact.

Q11: In which of the following ways has accessing RAISE impacted you?

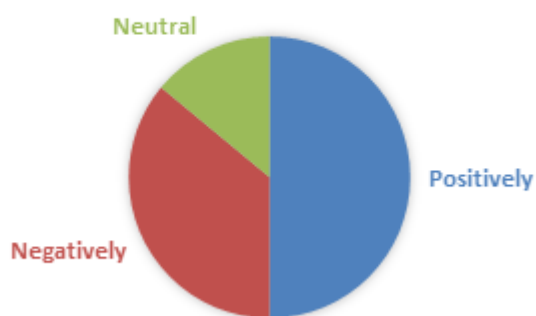


Figure 22: Responses to Q11

In the following question, respondents were asked to expand on their answers by indicating exactly how they had been impacted, for example, whether it was academically, mentally, emotionally or something else (Q12). Some of the positive impacts that students mentioned were emotional and mental health support, an overall sense of being included and heard and help with learning. As one student explained,



“RAISE’s XChanges conference this year provided me with the educational opportunities to learn about and unpack whiteness and racism, as well as understanding my role as a white Settler in unloading the burden of that education by sharing what they have taught me with others. RAISE has given me tools and skills that will go beyond school and work and reach into the depths of my daily life, where I am continuing to do the work of challenging systems.”

**Other students also felt that RAISE’s ability to help students make connections and build community was another way that they were positively impacted; as one student explained:**

“RAISE helped me connect with a variety of other clubs on campus that catered to the Black and African community. In that way, I was able to make more friends and find a sense of home in Waterloo. I was able to connect with upper years that became not only my mentors, but my friends. They helped me navigate university life and answered my questions with an understanding of my religious and cultural background, and limitations. When I had issues in my classes, or needed an event to destress, I had people to go to. RAISE helped me find these people.”

**One student summed up a variety of positive impacts when they stated the following:**

“Accessing RAISE has impacted me in many different ways. I’ve been a volunteer for RAISE for multiple terms, as well as an exec member and part of their mentorship program. These opportunities have allowed me to expand my network and helped me learn important skills in terms of teamwork, event planning, and leadership. Also, knowing that there are Peer Support hours and a mechanism to report incidents involving racism makes me feel mentally calmer and safer knowing that there are people who will listen to me and help me when I need them. Going to events like vibes nights have helped me emotionally feel positive as it was always fun to drop by the office and say hi to people or just take a break from studying. The environment always felt welcoming to me and was just a great space to be in, especially during stressful times.”

For those who were negatively impacted, most students who chose to elaborate fell under the general theme of feeling unwelcome. The following quotations from students demonstrate this:

“Quite frankly, RAISE exhausts me, I feel like I constantly have to be wary of their content or posts on social media because there have been some antisemitic tropes used in the past. I completely and 100% support the idea of RAISE and a safe space specifically for BIPOC students on campus but there is some disconnect between what RAISE says they stand for and what they actually do/act like.”

“I felt left out. They had a clear group of friends and I wasn’t apart of it. I was never included and I was treated like an attendee rather than an equal.”

“I felt like I was ostracized because of my program/faculty. They assumed that just because I was in STEM I was like the “average stem student”, But I’d argue that [there] really isn’t an average stem student... We’re all different and unique and they kind of lumped us together in a box and stereotyped us. And that’s why I engaged with my society more and stopped participating with Raise.”

Overall, the user experience with RAISE is clearly mixed, some students expressing positive experiences filled with inclusivity and community, while others expressing those which are negative and unwelcoming.

### Partnerships and Advocacy

The Service Coordinators at RAISE explained that they have had a lot of other WUSA Services reach out to them and ask for suggestions and recommendations for what they can do to support the work of RAISE and marginalized students. In response, RAISE provided each service with customized suggestions, which were well received. This demonstrates the strong partnerships that RAISE is involved in.

Moreover, RAISE Service Coordinators indicated that they have had conversations and made connections with a variety of different organizations such as Health Services, Renison College, Equity Office, Sexual Violence Response and Prevention Office, Graduate Student Association, Indigenous Student Association, Counselling Services as well as various external services in the broader Waterloo Region. Overall, RAISE has found that their connections with faculty and other organizations have

better supported RAISE than WUSA has. RAISE stated that they believe WUSA has some policies in place that prevent WUSA from unapologetically supporting RAISE and their coordinators.

### Summary and Potential Changes

Through events of various sizes and opportunities for peer support, RAISE is able to engage in education, advocacy and community building for marginalized students at Waterloo. Similar to other services, the outlets in which students find out about RAISE vary, making it important to ensure that their communications and outreach efforts continue to be diverse moving forward.

It is clear from students' disclosure of their negative opinion and experience with RAISE that there has been a strong reaction to the actions of RAISE by Waterloo students as of late. These experiences include feeling unwelcomed at RAISE as well as issues with their stances on particular issues. To address these concerns, it will be important for RAISE to clarify what their scope and mandate are while also communicating this with students so they do not have unrealistic expectations for the service.

Despite negative criticism by some students, it is important to note that many students have positive things to say about RAISE and the impact it has had on them. These impacts range from emotional support to mental health support to generally feeling included and heard to making connections and a community.

Of all the services, RAISE demonstrated the strongest commitment to partnerships with other services and organizations as well as advocacy efforts through education and awareness. One student did mention that they felt RAISE could advocate more for therapy support when they explained the following:

"I would love if RAISE would have a hand in therapeutic services offered at UW. In first year I really struggled with my mental health and it was a struggle trying to find a black therapist on campus. Furthermore, being on the wait list put me at the disposition of whichever therapist was available, and not one that was the best fit for me. If RAISE could leverage therapists of colour, this would lift a barrier that many students of colour face when trying to seek help. Seeing people that look like us in health extends far beyond finding comfort in familiar faces; it means not needing to overcome the cultural barriers and other prejudices that stop us from seeking help in the first place."

In terms of their connection to WUSA, RAISE has expressed previously that WUSA needs to incorporate equity issues into all executive and student portfolios so that RAISE is not overloaded with all equity-related issues. In the past year, RAISE has faced a lot of backlash and have felt like they were not supported adequately by WUSA. In their review, IAC also raised this concern and mentioned how WUSA should reconsider what it is asking RAISE to do and what WUSA as an organization should be taking on better.

Moving forward, the Service Coordinators at RAISE indicated that they are in the process of creating a RAISE magazine where students can submit poetry, prose, photos, and other art. They plan for the magazine would be online based for the first few terms and then go into printing afterwards. This term, RAISE also launched a peer mentorship program between students, alumni, faculty, staff and external people in the Waterloo Region and they hope to expand this program in the future. When asked what events they would like to see from RAISE (Q15), students mentioned career and academic events, continuing vibes nights, cultural met ups, speed friending, more social events in general and more conferences.

Those who responded to the Services Review Survey also had the opportunity to indicate what additional supports they thought RAISE could offer (Q14) and improve on (Q17). Students mentioned they wanted to see RAISE be more inclusive, as well as have better outreach and communication. In addition, connecting the ideas mentioned previously, one student reflected on the importance of RAISE clarifying their mandate when they explained:

“I would like RAISE to clarify who and what their service is for. The coordinators and volunteers at RAISE seem to cater only towards specific BIPOC or POC and are, in my opinion, very hostile towards those who do not fit their idea of who should access their service. I have several POC friends who would never access RAISE because they feel unwelcome there, like they aren't POC enough for the service. I think RAISE needs to specifically say they are for BIPOC specifically, all POC, or any combination but don't say you stand for all POC on campus and then turn around and create an unwelcoming environment to POC who the volunteers think don't fit the mold.”

**Similarly, another student explained:**

“As mentioned before, I think that RAISE should clarify with the public exactly what their purpose is (is it advocacy? is it peer support? is it helping students take action against racist incidents on campus?) and who exactly their service is catered towards. If RAISE wants to be specifically for black students that totally fine, they should have that space, but it should be clarified so that other POC who on paper should be welcomed into RAISE spaces aren’t left feeling uncomfortable and unwelcome.”

**These students both emphasize the ways in which a clearer mandate from RAISE could help deal with issues of students feeling unwelcome and uncomfortable accessing the service.**

## The Women's Centre

Of the 688 full responses to the Services Review Survey, 49 indicated that they had accessed the Women's Centre.

### Purpose and Goals of the Service

The Service Coordinators at the Women's Centre indicated that their primary goal was to create an inclusive space for all women in the widest sense of the term including trans, non-binary folks and women of colour. They explained that this is particularly important since the Women's Centre has been a white feminist space in the past, and working towards a more intersectional space has been the goal over the last couple of years. In their review, CLAC mentioned the Women's Centre mandate may need to be updated to expand their focus to intersectionality. The Women's Centre does this through both peer support and events. For International Women's Week, they brought in two different professors and an alumni panel to show different perspectives on women's issues. For example, one of the events discussed how we can use intersectionality to create sustainable institutional change. There has definitely been more of a focus placed on events that are inclusive from an intersectional lens. For example, the alumni panel focused on the challenges of women with intersecting identities in both the workplace and school. Overall, the Women's Centre seeks to create a casual and comfortable space where you can forget about the world around you. This space provides students with an opportunity for self-reflection, peer support and education.

### Communications and Outreach

The Service Coordinators at the Women's Centre explained that since COVID, it has been especially important to keep students involved on social media. They specifically do this through polls and "Ask Me Anything" sessions on Instagram, while Facebook is usually used for events so that students can easily invite others. The Women's Centre also tries to post other services' events and campaigns; doing so helps reach a wider community and make sure that the word is getting out about other services. Having WUSA and other services promote the Women's Centre content really helps with their engagement. In addition, collaborations outside of WUSA Services with different faculty and departments and the other women centers clubs has been really helpful in spreading the messages to other audiences.

The Services Review Survey asked students to indicate how they had found out about the Women’s Centre (Q4). The most common way students found out about the Women’s Centre was during orientation week, with 23% of responses. This was followed by from a friend (21%), from the Women’s Centre social media (16%), from wusa.ca (15%), from being involved with WUSA (9%), from uwaterloo.ca (7%) and from an email (1%). The remaining 8% indicated an ‘other’ avenue such as LEADs, walking past in the SLC, events on campus and a first year Women’s Studies course (Figure 23).

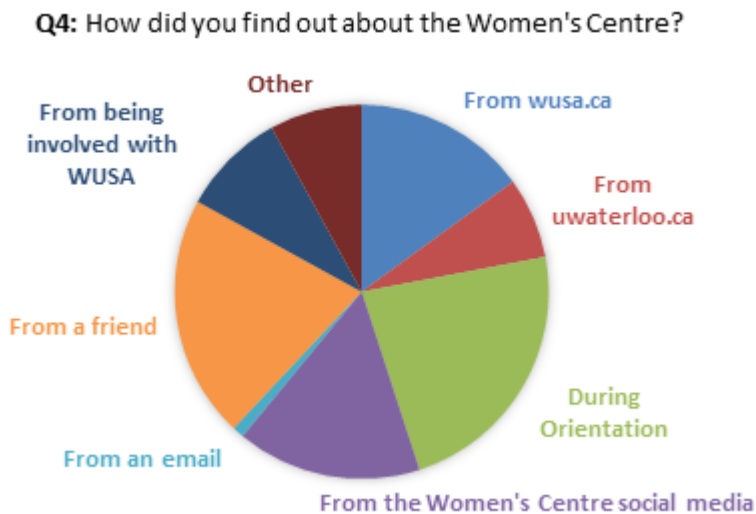


Figure 23: Responses to Q4

### Access

Folks at the Women’s Centre mentioned that there is not really a lot of awareness of WUSA Services overall, which can create a large barrier for students. There is also no wide spread understanding of what peer support is and how the Women’s Centre offers this service. They explained that usually MATES is thought of when it comes to peer support but other services (I.e., Glow and RAISE) also offer this service which is particularly important as they cater to certain identities.

When asked why they initially decided to access the Women’s Centre (Q5), students responded with a variety of responses, the most common of which were a general curiosity about the service and the resources such as menstrual products, condoms and pregnancy tests. One student explained “I feel anxiety about pregnancy but when I buy a test then I get anxiety about money because they are usually 8-10\$. Free tests are extremely helpful.” Other students said they accessed the Women’s Centre for a

specific event, to find a community and safe space, because a friend recommended it to them and because of the overall cause that the Women’s Centre ascribes to.

Students were then asked to indicate how many times they accessed the Women’s Centre during their entire time at Waterloo (Q6 and Q7), both prior to COVID and during COVID (Figure 24).

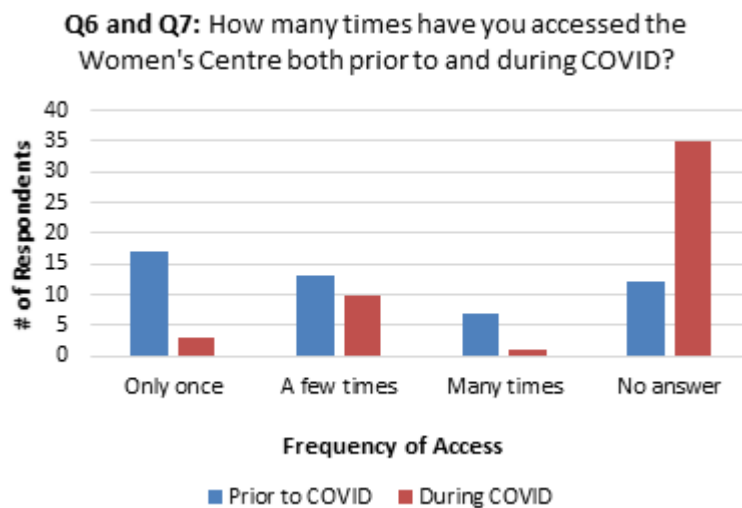


Figure 24: Responses to Q6 and Q7

In terms of in-person engagement, 46% indicated that they had accessed the Women’s Centre only once, while 35% had accessed it a few times and 19% many times. Only 14 students responded to the question regarding their access to the Women’s Centre during COVID; 3 indicated they accessing only once, 10 said a few times and only 1 said many times. The fact that 35 students did not answer this question could be a result of students not having engaged with the Women’s Centre online at all. Unfortunately, the survey design did not capture this scenario accurately in this question, but does so in the following question when students were asked if they still continue to access the Women’s Centre (Q8). In response to this question, 30% of students indicated that yes, they do still access the Women’s Centre, while the majority (70%) indicated that no, they do not still access the Women’s Centre. Students who indicated no expressed that this was because of a lack of time no need or interest, for example, because they were graduating. Others found it not to be relevant online, for example, because they went for physical resources while others were unaware that the Women’s Centre was offering online supports at all. Awareness is important and making sure that the services are relevant to what students need right now.



## Overall Experience of Users

The overall experience of the Women's Centre users was captured in a question (Q9) asking respondents to rate various aspects of the Women's Centre on a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being poor and 5 being excellent. The 7 different areas of the service included: hours of operation/availability, friendliness of volunteer staff, helpfulness of volunteer staff, ability of volunteer staff to provide resources, ability to access the Women's Centre both prior to and during COVID and overall experience (Figure 25).

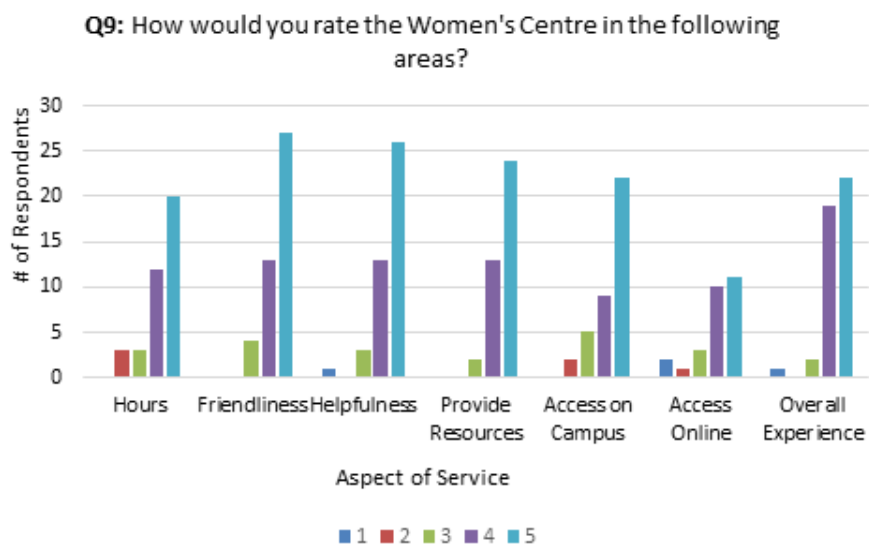


Figure 25: Responses to Q9

In sum, ability of volunteer staff to provide resources received the highest average rating (4.56), which is not surprising considering that the majority of students mentioned that resources were the main reason they accessed the Women's Centre in the first place. In addition, ability to access the Women's Centre online received the lowest average rating (4). Again, this is unsurprising given that many students felt that the Women's Centre was simply not relevant to them in an online format. Besides ability to access the Women's Centre online, hours of operation/availability received the next lowest average rating at 4.29. This implies that access and availability may be an overall issue for the Women's Centre, rather than something pertaining only to online service delivery.

In an open-answer format, students were then asked to explain what their favourite part about the Women's Centre was (Q10). The two most common answers were that it is welcoming and the resources provided such as menstrual products, pregnancy tests and condoms. One respondent summed up both of these themes when they explained "I like that they are very welcoming to whoever

comes through the doors regardless of cultural experiences of how a specific gender is supposed to present. I also really appreciate the resources available by their in-person office (hygiene products, STI info, safe sex materials).” Other notable responses explained that they found the Women’s Centre to be a helpful and information space to learn, that the people were kind, that the space was inclusive and that it was a safe space to relax on campus.

In addition, 84% of students would recommend accessing the Women’s Centre to a friend, while 2% would not and 14% were unsure (Q13).

### Impact on Students

The Service Coordinators at the Women’s Centre explained that they felt their greatest impact on students was providing them a space to learn and ask questions, especially about the education they have received on certain topics. They explained that historically speaking, universities have not been an inclusive space and the Women’s Centre provides students with a chance to hear the perspectives of others and check themselves to see what they can change to make other students comfortable and included.

The Women’s Centre not only has an impact on its users, but also on the folks involved on the executive and volunteer team. For example, the executives learn management skills through running events and workshops and the volunteers learn how to support one another which is a good skill to have moving forward.

In the Services Review Survey, students were asked to indicate whether the Women’s Centre had impacted them positively, negatively or neutrally (Q11). The majority of students (76%) indicated that the Women’s Centre had impacted them positively and 21% indicated it had impacted them neutrally. Only one student indicated that the Women’s Centre had negatively impacted them (Figure 26).

Q11: In which of the following ways has accessing the Women's Centre impacted you?

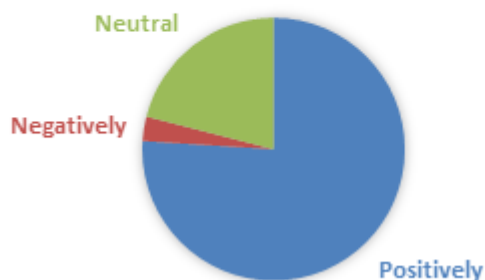


Figure 26: Responses to Q11

In the following question, respondents were asked to expand on their answers by indicating exactly how they had been impacted, for example, whether it was academically, mentally, emotionally or something else (Q12). One student explained that the Women's Centre has impacted them by helping them learn about intersectionality and diverse experiences. Other students mentioned a positive impact as being related to meeting people and finding support in them. The most common response centered on the impact of providing mental and emotional support, specifically due to the resources and safe space that the Women's Centre provides. The following quotations from students demonstrate this:

"I really liked the peace of mind of knowing there was a female safe space to access on campus that was judgement free."

"It gave me a space to have conversations about feminist topics when that's not really something that came up in my class and I found very good friends there that were like minded"

"Having the women's centre, even if I have only accessed it a few times has made me feel very safe and supported on campus as a woman. I like knowing the centre is there if I need it and that it supports all women on campus if they need help. The intersectionality factor of the centre is so great, it makes me proud to have that centre on campus. Also all of the women's health information they provide is so helpful."

"I was able to receive peace of mind due to the products provided by the Centre"

**One student's comment emphasizes the continued importance of considering the diverse audience that accesses the Women's Centre and the importance of providing an inclusive space:**

"I'm at a weird relationship with this service as a trans person! To some degree my needs fell under this service, but I am decidedly not a woman. That made it difficult for me to ever really feel comfortable entering the space or seeking resources and support from it. On the other hand, the working relationship I had with those at WC [because] of my time at Glow meant that I felt a deep appreciation for what it could do for those who do know themselves to be women. So, the impacts have been mixed."

## Partnerships and Advocacy

The Service Coordinators at the Women's Centre explained that they engage in a lot of collaboration with WUSA Services such as MATES, Glow and RAISE. Outside of WUSA, the Women's Centre has worked with the Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Office as well as other women clubs such as Women in Healthcare and Women in STEM. They explained that they are always trying to develop new partnerships but also strengthen the relationships they already have.

The Women's Centre engages in a lot of social media educational campaigns which is a way to advocate for different causes and share a message. In the past, WUSA was undergoing changes to their GBSVPR policy so the Advocacy Director reviewed it and created changes that are representative to all women on campus. The Women's Centre is also very vocal about women's health and how it is very geared towards female born women and not necessarily all women which creates barriers in the healthcare industry. They are working with Glow to ensure inclusivity in student health care as well.

## Summary and Potential Changes

Along with their array of events, the Women's Centre provides Waterloo students with a safe space for self-reflection, peer support and education. Collaborations with other WUSA services and organizations on campus have been helpful in extending the reach of these services. One piece of awareness for the Women's Centre that is important to enhance moving forward is their peer support, as most students think of MATES when it comes to peer support even though this is something that the Women's Centre offers too. Of course, this is assuming that it is indeed beneficial for the Women's Centre to continue offering peer support; in the future, it will need to be determined if this is the case or if this role should solely rest on MATES.

Similar to the other services, the majority of students indicated that they no longer accessed the Women's Centre and all of the answers provided referred to some external reasons rather than anything related to a negative experience. This aligns with the fact that the majority of students mentioned that the best part about the Women's Centre was the physical resources (i.e. menstrual products, condoms) which obviously cannot be provided in an online setting. Some also mentioned that they were unaware that the Women's Centre was operating online. Awareness will

be important moving forward. Not surprisingly, ability to access the Women's Centre online received the lowest average rating.

Despite this, students were still able to identify the positive impact that the Women's Centre had on them for example, by providing them with learning opportunities, meeting new people as well as mental and emotional support. Moreover, while inclusivity wasn't mentioned as much as in Glow and RAISE responses, it is still something that the Service Coordinators at the Women's Centre are aware of actively trying to integrate into their programming, for example, by putting on events focused on intersectionality.

One issue that has come with COVID is that resources, books, pregnancy tests and menstrual products that were readily available in person are no longer accessible. Having books and pamphlets available online would be a good idea. These are all aspects that the Women's Centre has had to consider over the last year or so as they transitioned their service online. In addition, when asked what additional supports they thought the Women's Centre could offer (Q14) and improve on (Q17) students mentioned group peer support, mentorship opportunities, continued collaborations with other services, pamphlets about feminist issues, sexual health support, better outreach, informative online content and wider variety of menstrual products. A few students also brought up issues of trans and non-binary inclusion. For example, one student explained "I think to some extent the women's centre is still very cis-centric and could do better with trans inclusion. Now keeping in mind that I spent more time at Glow than I did there, I fully realize perhaps they are addressing this!"

Also on the point of inclusivity, another student explained:

"I think there is always room for improvement, especially in providing more gender neutral/nonbinary spaces for people who's gender identify fluctuates or for people who experiences periods but do not identify as female. I am hesitant to use such gendered language because gender is a social construct, but sometimes the women's centre presents itself very fem, which isn't a bad thing, I myself am very fem and enjoy colors and aesthetics closely associated with femininity, but that presentation could be off-putting to someone who needs the resources offered by the centre but doesn't enjoy or align themselves with fem things."

Specifically, in terms of events (Q15), respondents suggested women's health trivia, body positivity workshop and self-care night.

The Services Coordinators at the Women's Centre would like to see WUSA do more in the transition process for coordinators; they think it is important to be clear on what the goals of past coordinators were and allow the incoming coordinators to determine how they want to follow through with them. This is important so that long-term goals can be advanced rather than starting from scratch. Since Coordinators are now in their position for a minimum of 8 months, more focus and commitment can be made to long-term goals at the Women's Centre.

# Overall Themes Across Services

Although each service is unique in its purpose and supports offered, some common themes throughout all services were revealed and will form the foundation of the recommendations in the following section.

## **More awareness and advertising**

When students were asked why they had not accessed any WUSA student-run services, the most common answer besides not having a need for the support they provide, was because they did not know these services existed (Q18). In addition, when students were asked if they had any feedback for services they had not accessed, the most common issue raised by students was more awareness and advertising. In addition to student responses, many Service Coordinators also mentioned the challenges they faced in attracting students to attend their events and engage with their supports. The results of the survey indicate that all services reach students through a variety of avenues such as from being involved with WUSA, from [wusa.ca](http://wusa.ca), from [uwaterloo.ca](http://uwaterloo.ca), during orientation, from the services' social media, from an email or from a friend; some more dominant than others for each service. It will be important that all services continue to focus their awareness efforts broadly, and learn from particular services who seem to have better success in some areas than others.

## **Importance of cross-service and campus collaboration**

All of the services included in this report indicate that they engaged in some degree of collaboration with other WUSA student-run services. Many students who responded to the survey specifically expressed wanting to see continued and even more collaboration as well. This could be an important factor in contributing to more awareness about the individual services, as students who usually only access one service may be exposed to others through collaboration events and activities. In fact, the Service Coordinators at the Women's Centre specifically mentioned that having other services promote the Women's Centre content really helped with their engagement. This is also especially important in terms of inclusivity and advocacy, as services such as RAISE and Glow who engage in a lot of advocacy work can support others such as ICSN and Co-op Connection in understanding how this can be done for their users.

In addition to WUSA student-run services, all of the services also collaborate with other organizations on campus and even some within the community. Not only is this important not only for sharing the work of the WUSA student-services and helping with outreach to folks who might want to get involved, it is also important for providing support and resources to the coordinators, executives and volunteers at each service so that they can properly support students themselves. This can be seen, for example, in the strong connection between MATES and Counselling Services.

### **Concerns about transition back to on-campus**

It goes without saying that this year has been particularly challenging for all services due to COVID-19. Nevertheless, all services have been able to adapt to delivering their service online, albeit in different and creative forms. The next challenge will be transitioning the services back to on campus, whenever that may be. In their review, CLAC mentioned that online support is most likely to continue in some form, so it will be necessary to determine what this will look like and how to balance both online and in-person operations for each service; this balance may be difficult to achieve, but it will ensure that all students remain comfortable accessing the services.

### **More consistent volunteer experience and training**

In their review, IAC noted that it is important to have some sort of consistency with volunteer experience between the services; this includes the expectations placed on them and their overall feelings of connection to the service. For example, one respondent explained that their volunteer position at RAISE has “allowed me to expand my network and helped me learn important skills in terms of teamwork, event planning, and leadership.” If this experience can be provided to all service volunteers, it may help attract more volunteers and thus increase the capacity of the services. In addition, it is crucial that all volunteers receive the same training as well. This issue of training is especially important for services that offer peer support. In their review, CLAC mentioned the stark contrast that exists between MATES peer support training and the training of other services that offer peer support.

### **Stronger emphasis on long-term planning and goals**

When asked about the WUSA Long Range Plan, all Service Coordinators were unaware of its details or scope. As services operating under WUSA, it is crucial that they are aligning with the long-term goals of the organization. In addition,



understanding what the goals of WUSA are may help the services narrow down what types of goals they should be focusing on as a service and engage in more long-term planning themselves.

### **More effective internal service coordinator transition**

Since Service Coordinators are often only in their terms for four or eight months, it is important that the goals of previous coordinators are transitioned to their successors in order to ensure that long-term planning is continued. This is something that was mentioned by IAC in their review, as well as by the Service Coordinators themselves. In addition, CLAC mentioned in their review that a Transition Director was hired at the Women's Centre for s20 which helped alleviate pressure on the current coordinators to train incoming executives and coordinators. In order to ensure effective transition for all services, the responsibilities covered by the Transition Director will have to be more effectively incorporated into the structure of each service.

### **Clear expectations for Vice President Student Life involvement**

It was clear from interviews with Service Coordinators that there were differing expectations for how much engagement the services felt they needed with executives, specifically the Vice President Student Life (VPSL). CLAC also mentioned the need to set clear expectations for VPSL involvement with individual services.

# Recommendations and Conclusion

Overall, this report demonstrates the importance of WUSA Student Run Services for students at the University of Waterloo and provides insight into the positive experiences that students have with these services. Although the nature of student experiences varies from service-to-service, students reported a variety of impacts, from opportunities to make connections and form communities to mental health support to tangible resources. However, it is important to note that student experiences with each service were diverse, and there were some students who maintained a more critical perspective towards the particular service they had accessed. Students whose experiences with the services were negative in nature are important to consider as a starting point for future changes. These anecdotes from students have been included throughout the report and common criticisms have been summarized in the 'Summary and Potential Changes' section of each service. Although negative comments were limited, they do present the full picture of student experiences for each service and are important to consider on a service-by-service basis to ensure that each is meeting the diverse needs of students at the University of Waterloo. These criticisms from students, combined with ideas expressed by Service Coordinators along with both IAC and CLAC were outlined in the previous section on 'Overall Themes Across Services' and provide the starting point for a variety of next steps that can be acted upon to improve the overall operation of these services. These next steps are detailed in the following recommendations.

## Recommendation 1: Awareness

- To address the issue of overall awareness of WUSA student run-services among students, it is recommended that some sort of consolidated platform with information for each service be created, in addition to what already exists on [wusa.ca](http://wusa.ca)
- This will provide students with a one-stop place to learn exactly what the services are offering, steps for reaching out, upcoming events, hours and contact information
- This may take the form of a new 'WUSA Services' Instagram page or a revamp of the 'Services' page on [wusa.ca](http://wusa.ca) to include an interactive matrix of the scope and activities of each service

- The addition of this consolidated platform will address the need, as mentioned by many students in the survey, for an easy and accessible way to decide which services to access
- However, it is also important that students are aware that this platform exists; as such, continued efforts to advertise the services broadly is needed to complement this

## **Recommendation 2: Collaboration**

- Collaborations amongst WUSA Student-Run Services in the form of events and advocacy campaigns is one way to advertise throughout the student population, as it exposes students to services they may not have considered accessing and provides them with the knowledge to share with other students
- In order to facilitate more consistent collaborations amongst services, it is recommended that monthly meetings with all service coordinators are organized
- These meetings will provide the opportunity for service coordinators to compare ideas, plan upcoming events and share other learnings
- In between these meetings, it is also recommended that Service Coordinators make better use of the Services Teams Channel to share ideas and updates on a more frequent basis as well

## **Recommendation 3: Transition Back to Campus**

- To address concerns surrounding the transition of services back to campus, it is recommended that the Services Coordinators, VPSL and Services Manager collaborate on a guiding document that outlines best practices for the transition
- This could include topics such as COVID protocols to consider, potential awareness marketing campaigns and ideas for how to manage their capacity for potentially both online and in person service operations

## **Recommendation 4: Consistent Volunteer Experience**

- To ensure a consistent experience for volunteers across services, it is recommended that regular events or check ins are scheduled for volunteers

- Specifically, in terms of peer support training, it is recommended that all peer support volunteers are centrally trained with MATES, and other services can provide any additional context training as they see necessary to serve their specific users.

### **Recommendation 5: Long Term Goals**

- To enhance the Services' engagement in long term goals and planning, it is recommended that the VPSL and Service Manager schedule a goal planning workshop with each Service Coordinator at the beginning of each term
- Moving forward, it is also recommended that a new Full Time Staff member be hired to support the goal development and the overall vision of each service as well. This will relieve the burden from the VPSL and Services Manager and ensure that each service is adequately supported in their long-term planning

### **Recommendation 6: Coordinator Transition**

- To ensure that long term goals are continued to be addressed with each incoming Service Coordinator, it is recommended that either a transition director executive be hired for each service or that the responsibilities covered by this role are incorporated into the structure of each service

### **Recommendation 7: VPSL Involvement**

- To address differing expectations for VPSL involvement with the services, it is recommended that a clear schedule is established for when Service Coordinators can expect to meet with the VPSL each term
- This schedule will be determined by the VPSL and Services Manager at the beginning of each term

### **Recommendation 8: Structure of WUSA Support**

- To address the growth in services, it is recommended that the structure and capacity of support that WUSA provides the services is updated as well
- In particular, it is recommended that a fulltime Equity Manager is hired to support the advocacy-related services

## **Recommendation 9: Future Reviews**

- To ensure that the results of this report are mobilized, it is recommended that all Service Coordinators read through the report and develop individual plans for how to address the issues raised for their particular service
- Moving forward, it is also recommended that CLAC and IAC determine a plan for when the next review of services will happen
- These future reviews will help to determine the progress made on addressing the above recommendations

# Appendix A: Survey Questions

## Demographics

1. What year of study are you in? [List (radio)]
  - a. One
  - b. Two
  - c. Three
  - d. Four
  - e. Five+
  
2. What faculty are you in? [List (radio)]
  - a. Health
  - b. Arts
  - c. Engineering
  - d. Environment
  - e. Math
  - f. Science
  - g. Other
  
3. Which of the following WUSA services have you accessed during your entire time at UW? Please check all that apply [Multiple Choice]
  - a. Co-op Connections
  - b. The Glow Centre
  - c. International and Canadian Student Network (ICSN)
  - d. Mentor Assistance Through Education and Support (MATES)
  - e. Racial Advocacy for Inclusion, Solidarity and Equity (RAISE)
  - f. Women's Centre
  - g. None

## Service-Specific Questions

4. How did you find out about this service? [Multiple Choice]
  - a. From wusa.ca
  - b. From uwaterloo.ca
  - c. During Orientation
  - d. From the service's social media
  - e. From an email
  - f. From a friend
  - g. From being involved with WUSA
  - h. Other [Text box]
  
5. Why did you initially access this service? [Long Free Text]
  
6. How many times have you accessed this service during your entire time at UW prior to COVID (I.e., in-person)? [List (radio)]
  - a. Only once
  - b. A few times
  - c. Many times
  
7. How many times have you accessed this service during COVID (I.e., online)? [List (radio)]
  - a. Only once
  - b. A few times
  - c. Many times
  
8. Do you still continue to access this service? [Multiple Choice with comments]
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. Other

9. How would you rate this service in the following areas? (1 = bad, 5 = excellent)  
[Array (five-point choice)]
- Hours of operation/availability
  - Friendliness of volunteer staff
  - Helpfulness of volunteer staff
  - Ability of volunteer staff to provide resources
  - Ability to access the service on campus (prior to COVID)
  - Ability to access the service online (during COVID)
  - Overall experience
10. What do you like best about this service? [Long Free Text]
11. In which of the following ways has accessing this service impacted you? [List (radio)]
- Positively
  - Negatively
  - Neutral
12. How exactly has accessing this service impacted you? (i.e., mentally, academically, emotionally) [Long Free Text]
13. Would you recommend accessing this service to a friend? [List (radio)]
- Yes
  - No
  - Unsure
14. What additional supports do you think this service could offer? [Long Free Text]
15. What events would you like to see this service offer? [Long Free Text]
16. Is there anything you feel this service should stop offering? [Long Free Text]
17. Is there anything you think this service could continue to improve? [Long Free Text]



## None

18. Why have you not accessed any of WUSA's student-run services? [Multiple Choice] - Only show if they answered 'g' for Question 3.
- a. I didn't know they existed
  - b. I don't currently have a need for the support they provide
  - c. I'm not ready to reach out
  - d. I've heard negative reviews from friends
  - e. Other
19. Do you have any feedback for any WUSA student-run services you have NOT accessed? [Long Free Text]

# Appendix B: Interview Questions

## Defining the Mission (based on Program Evaluation Guide Step 2)

1. What is your service's primary purpose?
2. What does your service provide students with to meet this purpose?  
Defining the Goals (based on Program Evaluation Guide Step 3)
3. Describe the most important form of support or assistance provided by your service?
4. How does this service connect to the broader goals of WUSA? (I.e., according to the 2020-2025 Long-Range Plan)
5. What additional functions can your program provide to contribute to the larger WUSA goals?

## Impact on Students

6. What outcomes/skills do you think your service provides students with?
7. What do you think may impede students from accessing your service?
8. Does your service engage in advocacy work?
  - a. How would you like to see your service engage with advocacy work in the future?

## Communications and Outreach

9. How do you communicate with students?
10. Can you describe what your presence on social media is like?
  - a. Which platforms do you use?
  - b. How often do you post?
  - c. Do you track your engagement?
11. Are you aware of how students become informed about your service?

## Future Considerations

12. Do you partner with any other services/programs?

- a. On or off campus?
- b. Is this something you think could be beneficial to your service in the future?

13. How could your service be better supported by WUSA?

14. What changes would you like to see made to your service moving forward?

15. What additional support would you like to offer students?

## Closing

16. Is there anything else you want to discuss that we haven't yet?