



## *Panel on Supporting Students as We Return to Campus – Presented at the fall 2022 MRFA PD Day*

### **Key takeaways - items to note that Faculty can do to support students:**

#### **Mental Health, Wellbeing, and Stress Management**

Inform students of in class folders and talk about so as to reduce stigma of dating and domestic violence and mental health challenges. It can be difficult or uncomfortable for faculty to introduce and re-introduce students to resources, but it is important in creating a normalized idea of mental health as being everyone's concern. A good phrasing you can use is: "I am not a mental health professional, but I am concerned about all of you and there are resources available..."

- Refer students to the folder of resources cards available in each classroom – these cards have a QR code that students can take if there is not enough of them for students to take extras.
- [Refer](#) students to the early support program (for a wide variety of potential / perceived needs)
- Support students in stress management
  - Inform students of the transactional model for managing stress (page 8 below)
  - Faculty can provide support for students to enhance their coping (e.g. how to prepare for exams or early referrals to SLS – these strategies will help the students know they can cope better). If they feel they can cope better, it will help them reduce their stress.
- Other things Faculty can do:
  - Encourage students to participate in the [Living Room Letters](#) project
  - Advocate for bringing back the safe space training program

#### **Academic Success, Student Experience, in Class Engagement, and General Support**

- Inform students of expectations are for in class time ratio to prep time/reading/study time.
- Use class time to practice citations on class textbooks and images. Let students work on this together (write the answers in a google form and share it). This is a chance for students to work together in class and meet someone (Refer students to [academic integrity](#) training modules)
- Consider sparing 10 minutes from class for students to brainstorm ideas for papers. This helps move them along the process of writing, it gives them a chance to talk about ideas and get feedback, and it helps to ensure that students start working on papers well in advance.
- Spare a little bit of time in the first few weeks of class to allow students to meet each other. This will help students show up. They will know someone, and they will more so want to be there and feel connected and be engaged.
- Refer students to [Student Learning services](#), recommend student involvement in the peer learning program early in the semester, and provide grade motivation to attend SLS workshops in first year courses (early connection to SLS leads to long term academic success).
- Refer students to the [Library Resources](#): classes on information literacy, research consultations, open workshops; support at the service desk, via the chat function, and the text service; support with Library spaces and technologies, IT troubleshooting for printing, formatting, and software access (including D2L support); first floor access 24 hours a day; bookable group rooms; loaning out meeting Owls, headsets, and microphones, semester long laptop loans, and wifi hotspots etc.

### ***Topics and Panelists:***

- **SAMRU** supporting student advocacy - Pamela Malec
- **Early Support** role in advising students, and strategies for faculty - Alicia Pearson
- **Counselling Services** issues students are facing, and what we can do - Michael Huston
- **Student Learning Services** supports for students, and tips for faculty - Kristin Fulton and Amy Yoshida
- **Library** services that support students with their academic goals - Katharine Barrette

### ***Topics to be covered by each of the Panelists:***

- What student needs have you noticed in the return to campus?
- What does your service do to support students
- How can faculty support Students

## **SAMRU supporting student advocacy**

Presented by Pamela Malec

In every class there is a file folder box which has three cards. These cards are here to help students with student services, mental health, and dating and domestic violence. These cards have a QR code that students can take if there is not enough of them for students to take extras.

### **Student Services Card**

- Includes all of the information and phone numbers that they need to connect with SAMRU
- This card also includes all of the information that students need about student governance and representation matters.

### **Card for Dating and Domestic Violence**

- These DDV cards provide campus and community resources and ways for students to access supports where needed
- There is information on what sexual violence is and what consent means and how to get supports
- Moving forward, MRU must provide trauma informed training for all staff and faculty positions to be able to support students on campus.

### **Mental Health Card**

- This card provides a lot of information about the levels of distress and how to respond and who to reach out to

### **SAMRU Position Statements on Mental Health and Wellbeing:**

- MRU students should feel a meaningful sense of belonging to their Campus Community.
- That MRU answers the SAMRU's Calls to Action on Dating, Domestic and Sexual Violence.
- That students should be meaningfully consulted on major changes made to Wellness Services when they affect students.
- That students have a variety of booking and delivery options for counselling services.

- That all faculty should undergo mental health and disclosure training and all faculty are prepared to communicate safely with students when it comes to topics of mental health.
- That BIPOC students should be compensated and their mental health supported when they provide the emotional labour of sharing their experiences as racialized students.
- That all students should receive content warnings regarding triggering content on campus and in the classroom (e.g. domestic, dating and sexual violence, graphic protests).
- That up to date mental health information, especially including suicide prevention information, should be a communication priority to students.
- That Wellness Services regularly reviews the effectiveness of their communication strategies.
- That Counselling Services understands that it has a duty to care for students when they are in crisis.
- That International students do not experience exceptional barriers to accessing mental health support.
- That International students are supported in creating stronger support systems due to their unique situations

### **SAMRU Position on EDI**

- That students who have faced discrimination based upon race, national or ethnic origin, gender, sex, sexual orientation, age, ability status, or any other protected grounds should be supported in amplifying their experiences.
- That all ethno-cultural identities of students should be respected, recognized and celebrated, including the wide mosaic of Indigenous nations across North America.
  - Conversations that Matter: this is a new initiative being started through Moussa Magassa's office, and more information will be available soon.

### **Living Room Letters**

- This is an initiative to get students involved in activities and getting recognition for these activities.
- October 17 – October 21 Living Room letters continues. This is an opportunity to sit and talk with students and get feedback about campus activities
- Feedback gathered so far regarding Student Participation on campus
  - Students want MRU to communicate to them to let them know of events happening on campus
  - Students are also willing to attend events on campus if they have a friend willing to attend with them.

### ***What can Faculty do?***

- At the start of each semester, when faculty go over the syllabus, the syllabus could include mention of mental health and wellness, and it is also good for these to mention the DDSV folders / cards in the folders in the classroom.
  - Talking about dating and domestic violence helps remove the stigma and makes people more able to reach out
- Sometimes faculty can recognize where and when students are starting to crumble. It is helpful for faculty to reach out if they can.

- Faculty can let students know that they are safe and that they are in a safe space
- Faculty can inform/encourage, kindly, that students can seek information and support from wellness services “you can seek support in how to manage your stress and workload levels”
- Faculty and staff should work to support student initiatives where we can.
- Faculty can advocate for bringing back the safe space program
  - There was safe space training and faculty who took the training put the sign on their door and this provided students with a connection to reach out to faculty.
  - In this training there was learning of terminology and intervention. It was run by the CEMI office and it was amazing and we should bring this back.
  - Safe Space training still continues as an external organization

## Early Support role in advising students, and strategies for faculty

Presented by Alicia Pearson

### What is the Early Support Program?

This program was put together to help students navigate the resources on campus and in the community. There are so many resources that some students do not know where to go so they do not reach out. So, Early Support is the first place to send them as they can refer them anywhere.

Faculty can encourage students to visit early support for a wide range of needs:

- |                 |   |  |
|-----------------|---|--|
| ● Academic      | ● Financial (this is a big concern right now)     | ● Feelings of stress and being overwhelmed |
| ● Mental health | ● Anxiety   | ● Time Management                          |
| ● Connections   | ● Personal needs                                  | ● Concerns                                 |
| ● Friendships   | ● Food security (this is a big concern right now) | ● Grief                                    |
| ● Wellbeing     |   | ● Etc.                                     |

There are two specialists in early support and they meet with students one on one to discuss students’ challenges and to connect them with the people they need to see to have the best possible experience they can have while at MRU.

Academic success is affected by all the things that are affecting students’ lives. There can be a wide array of struggles and barriers and the current context of returning from pandemic restrictions may cause added layers of difficulties.

The specialists in Early support have training in financial literacy and they can provide additional support for students in this way.

### ***What can Faculty do? What is the role of Faculty with the early support program?***

- Faculty and staff are the first line of defence in terms of knowing, seeing or learning of student challenges in the class and when the students are not showing up to class. Faculty are in close contact with students and faculty can recognize when there is a need (e.g. when a student is not attending or is showing up with dirty clothes or undone hair).

- Faculty talking with students everyday or every other day have the ability to see a concern and can refer students to the Early Support program.
- By referring students to Early Support it will really help to further connect students to everything that is on campus as well.

### **How does it work?**

Notice → Ask → Refer

### **Red Flags:**

- Student sitting at the back of class sitting on phone for the whole time
- Students leaving class early regularly
- Poor class attendance
- Missed assignments
- Low grades on assignments or tests
- Signs of distress (visible emotional distress)
- Disclosures of non-academic concerns

### **Key words to use when talking to a student you are concerned about**

Show your concern and care and this will make it more likely that they will reach out to the services

- “I’ve noticed...”
- “I’m Concerned”
- “you look like ...”

### **Referral process**

1. The faculty member submits the [referral](#) to the Early Support Program
2. Student is invited to book an appointment by email
3. On-on-one appointment is booked (either in-person or online) to discuss the situations, barriers, and assess needs and connect the students to the services needed.
  - The specialists are not counsellors but are willing to listen to the concerns.
  - The specialists can then bring the student to counselling if needed. It helps to have someone with them to bring them to counselling if this is needed
4. At the end of the meeting, the specialist will send an email to the student with all the links they need to access the further resources and information they need for their situation

### **Outcome of Referral Submitted**

- Even if the referral does not lead to the student accessing the early support services, it is still helpful for the student to know that someone cares.
- The referral is communicated by email and it is worded in a positive way with the aim to meet to discuss what is going on.
- For students who are not showing up to class, it can also just be that students’ lives are overtaking their goal to be in class.

### **Early Support class visit**

- Early Support representatives can come to speak in your class to let students know about your services

### **Physical location of Early Support**

- The location of the office is in F103 (the hallway by the bookstore)
- It is a quiet and secluded space where students can have immediate refuge

### **Discussion:**

- Problem of 2 factor login authentication – this can cut students off from these types of supports

## **Counselling Services issues students are facing, and what we can do**

Presented by Michael Huston

What we see the most of in Counselling is Stress, Anxiety, and Depression. These are the mental health problems we see, and 60% of students experience these mental health problems.

### **Stress and Perceived Ability to Cope:**

- Stress is balancing the things we are facing: there are the important things we see that we see have consequence on the future and these can cause relatively more stress than others.
- If you think you can cope with the demands you have then there is relatively less/no stress.
- Your perceived ability to cope can also be unrealistic: a student can be completely stressed about an exam, worried they are going to fail, and then they get an A.
  - There are so many different approaches to student stress and these are a matter of balance between demands and coping

### **Anxiety**

- People suffer from anxiety when they worry about themselves, their relationships, their futures. There is a sense that they are not enough and that something bad will happen to them.

### **Depression**

- Difficulties finding meaning and motivation.

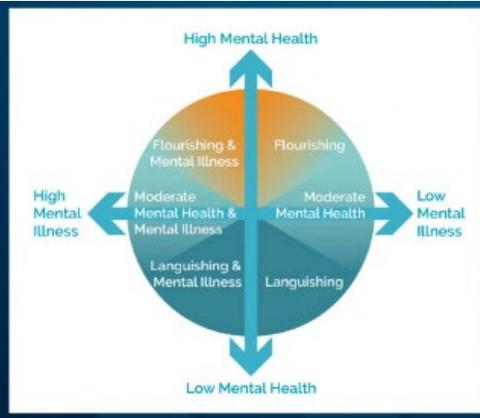
### **Developmental Challenges**

- Concerns about careers, relationships, identity, learning
- Students experience substantial stress about what they are going to do about their futures.
- Students' stress over the future is, for some, a traumatic experience

### **External Factors**

- Isolation, media, climate change, global conflicts, economy, finite opportunities. These are factors that apply to the current generation in a different way than they have in the past. Everything that is happening, pandemic, isolation, social media, climate changes, wars.. &c. All of these things lead to stress and exacerbate anxiety and depression

- Corey Keyes
- Mental health co-exists with mental illness
- Mental health mitigates frequency, duration and severity of mental illness symptoms



## Mental Health and Mental Illness

If we can improve individuals' mental health it can serve as a buffer against mental illness. You can use mental health to mitigate and reduce onset of severe mental illness

**Our opportunity as faculty is to think of our students from a stress perspective – what can we do as faculty to deal with their stress symptoms.**

**Past practices to address stress targeted the physical impacts of stress:**

- Breath
- Yoga
- Meditation
- Exercise &c.

Excessive Stress: Health, Mental Health, and Mental Illness	
Health concerns	Mental illness
High blood pressure	Depression
Heart disease	Anxiety
Diabetes	Others as a trigger
Accelerated aging	
Chronic pain	
Obesity	
Gastrointestinal disorders	

**Moving forward – new approaches to stress:**

- We need to help students see their lives as a **balance between demands and opportunities.**
- What is stress?
  - It is a reaction we have when we feel we cannot cope.
  - It has physiological symptoms of insomnia and fight/flight
  - It has cognitive effects wherein we tend to exaggerate the demands and minimize our sense of our ability to cope.
- Perception here is at the centre – how we perceive. **If we think we are going to cope then there will be less stress.**
  - If you have resources for coping then you are more likely to think that you can cope.

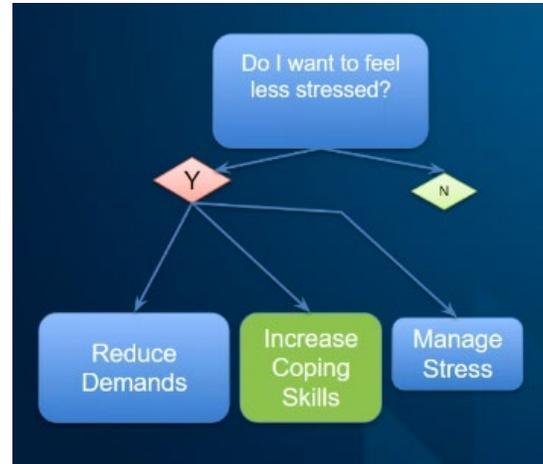
## Transactional Model of Stress:

From the students' perspective they need to ask do they want to feel less stressed and usually the answer is yes.

Then you need to determine where your highest effect/impact would be immediately.

Here is where we can make the biggest impact on our stress and wellbeing:

1. Reduce demands
  - This is the easiest way to reduce stress – remove the demands that you can.
  - Students could reduce a course load or ask for an extension
2. Increase coping skills
  - Once you have reduced demands then you can look at increasing coping.
  - Students have access to supports from Counselling, Accessibility Services, from faculty, and from Early Support services.
  - There may be ways faculty can frame things to inform students of the resources they have for coping. **Faculty can provide resources for preparing for exams and refer them to student learning services – these strategies will help the students know they can cope better. If they feel they can cope better it will help them reduce their stress.**
3. Manage Stress
  - This is where the past practices come in (like yoga and meditation etc.)



## The Mental Help Folder

This is in the classrooms and was spoken to earlier and is available to faculty as a resource as well.

### Counselling:

- There are drop-in times every afternoon from 2:00 – 4:00pm.
- A spot will be saved for students if they call ahead before stopping by the office.
- Faculty can walk students over or security can do this for students as well if you are concerned.

### Discussion:

- Faculty cannot be the counsellor in the classroom
- It is important for faculty to introduce and re-introduce students to these resources is great, but how do we do this well?
  - We have a normalized idea of mental health as being everyone's concern then this is not a concern. The more it is talked about the less stigma there will be.
  - "I am not a mental health professional, but I am concerned about all of you and there are resources available..."

## Student Learning Services supports for students, and tips for faculty

Presented by Kristin Fulton and Amy Yoshida

### Overview of Student Learning Services

- SLS helps students cope and succeed with the academic side of their life. The mission of SLS is to develop self-directed learners, and they offer services for all student levels/years and programs.
- There are appointments with Learning Strategists, course-specific workshops and open workshops, and the Peer Learning Program offering course-specific support.
- The services are offered online and in person.
- The two areas of SLS share a common framework of student learning and learning theories.

### Peer Learning Program

- Matches students with successful student volunteers. They work in small groups on course specific materials. Normally get 400 requests and this year we have 700 requests. Students are really reaching out for support this year. We are also lower on volunteers so the volunteers are very busy and they have committed a lot of time to support this program.
- This does help students in developing their leadership training. The training provided to them is based on well established theory and they have a chance to reflect on what they are learning and they have a chance to reflect on what they have learned in their experience as a leader with SLS. They are also supported in how they can articulate this as they move forward in life and future academic or career goals.
- The Peer Learning Program is big on keeping students accountable. The volunteers and the students participating are required to come every week and support their own learning. They learn through experimenting and trying out the materials and talking it through.
- For volunteers they reflect weekly on what went well, what challenges they faced, and what activities were used and how they worked, and what support they need.

### Ongoing work – What Faculty can Do:

- SLS may be reaching out to instructors for targeted recruitment for student volunteers. A student will certainly appreciate it if their professor recommends that they connect with SLS to serve as a Learning Peer

### Learning Strategists Academic Success Workshops:

- Year over year the provisions from this part of SLS were increasing by 30% a year (with the exception of 2020-2022 – covid years where services were maintained at about the same level).
- Academic workshops last year covered 16 topics about math, study strategies, referencing, statistics, reading journal articles, and writing strategies.
  - There were almost 3000 attendances in the workshops last year.
  - This year so far attendance is great - we are already on track to exceed last year's number.
- *Workshop Reflection and Participation Grades*
  - Students who participate in a workshop have the option to complete a "Reflection and Participation" Google form. It shows what they learned, it gives students the

opportunity to reflect on their own skills and practices, and it can be used as a "proof of participation."

- A nudge from faculty to attend these workshops (faculty referral) can make a big difference in their long-term success.
- **What Faculty can do – think about giving an incentive for attending 1-2 workshops. Offering an extra credit incentive encourages students to attend. Our data shows that many students who attend that 1-2 continue to attend another sessions on their own.**
- Challenge: The problem of meeting increased demands at specific times (SLS workshops can seat 38 - 60 students, although we have been doubling our online capacity to 120 to meet demand)
  - How can faculty support students' ability to attend workshops when there is limited capacity in SLS at peak interest times?  
*-Please set the deadline to attend for the end of the semester (not the first 2-3 weeks of workshops, since there may not be enough seats for all your students to attend in that limited time frame).*  
*-Be flexible with topic choices. Some students may have already attended a specific session - can they attend the APA level 2 workshop or advanced writing topic instead?*  
*-Consider offering an extra credit type of incentive instead of making the points part of their actual grade requirements. (even 1-3% of extra credit added to an assignment or to their final grade, the option to drop one low quiz mark, or resubmit an assignment)*

### **Student Appointments**

- Students can book 30 min 1-1 appointments (up to 2 times/week) to discuss specific assignments, study strategies, and academic concerns. The goal is to help students become more successful self-directed learners
  - We teach students how to edit their own writing
  - We don't help with exams or take-home exams (except to discuss writing or test-taking strategies)
- Last year the LSs did about 2,300 appointments and are expecting as many again this year.
- Students need to plan ahead, book appointments in advance to make sure they can get an appointment

### **In-Class Workshops and course/programs**

- Learning Strategists often work with Faculty to design a workshop that will help students prepare for their major assignments. This strategic collaboration with a program can help meet student needs in a program and support faculty. Rather than "one-off workshops," our goal is to offer a tailored workshop that is integrated in all sections of a course - this creates a "trickle up effect" of skills learning that helps students in the later years of a program.
  - We book these workshops in spring for the following year and usually try to work with all sections of a course. With the increase in number of requests, we are currently working with programs to find innovative and timely ways to provide support.

- We have also worked with course coordinators and faculty to develop asynchronous resources from which students in all sections of a course can learn from videos and texts and a compilation of deliverables. These are course-integrated materials and students earn course credit for doing the assessments in that module work.

### **Considerations:**

- The right topics at the right time
- Help students access services early to provide the most support for them in the years to come.
- Working strategically with an academic program to provide targeted, tailored support for their students (vs. dozens of "one-off" workshops). This year SLS is meeting with academic programs specifically to work together on ways we can support students in that program with our current capacity.

### ***What can Faculty Do?***

(We do understand how busy every semester can be and that it can be challenging to go through all the course content in each class session, but we do have some tips that could help with student engagement.)

- There could be conversations with students to talk about realistic study/homework time: in-class time ratio to prep time/reading/study/writing/research time.
- Students are terrified about making mistakes in referencing – it would be helpful for students to go to SLS and get support from the Library as well, but it would be great to take 5-10 minutes during some classes to do referencing together:
- If you are using a textbook, article, photo, or video in class, take a few minutes to build the references together.
  - Let students work on this in pairs, and write their answers in a google form and share it (build a shared Google doc course reference list together).
  - This is a chance for students to work together in class to meet someone AND ask questions about referencing.
  - Also, do this with images, videos, websites as they can be difficult.
- Consider sparing 10 minutes from class for students to brainstorm ideas for papers.
  - This helps if you take time in class well before the due date to help move them along the process of writing.
  - This is giving them a chance to talk about ideas, discuss, and get feedback which would then help them start the process and then plan ahead to get the writing going.
  - This helps to ensure that students start working on papers well in advance.
- Students often have a hard time making friends – we hear "they are surrounded by each other, but they are alone." It would be good to spare a little bit of time in the first few weeks of class to allow students to meet each other (not necessarily to do course work, just get to know each other) .
  - This can help students show up. They will know someone and they will more so want to be there and feel connected and be engaged.
- SLS developed a new MRU [academic integrity](#) training module; it's available for you to refresh your knowledge, and refer students to as well. (45 minutes of interactive content with built-in assessments)

## Discussion

- Why do students need to access the Peer learning program in the first three weeks?
  - There was assessment done on the program and it was determined that if we take them into the peer learning program too late they will not reap the benefits of the program.
  - They are put into small groups and this helps them create a social network and helps them make friends
  - Is there an alternative?
    - They can meet with the writing and learning strategist to help them get the skills they need to successfully move through their programs

## Library services that support students with their academic goals

Presented by Katharine Barrette

This year has really been a concerted effort to welcome students back more fully than we were able to last year. Students this year are more engaged and physically present.

The faculty and staff in the Library are there to help students in any way, they are a welcoming space and ensure that students know that they are there to support them.

They can help with citation, refer to other resources, they can provide information etc.

### Welcoming our students back

"Each encounter is an opportunity to establish a safe and welcoming environment for learning and inquiry. Each encounter is an opportunity to support that student to persist."

Winston, W. (Ed.) In Support / For the Academic / Library Support  
Student Persistence CAPA, 2015.



### What the Library can do to support students

- Faculty Librarians attend classes on information literacy,
- Students can book research consultations with librarian faculty (based on availability or based on discipline specific librarian) – these appointments can be done virtually or online
- Open workshops (beyond classroom-based classes) – there is an increased uptake on this
- There is an effort to ensure that there are folks available always: there are people at the service desk and there is a chat function on the library website, and there is a text service which continues to be very popular.
- Spaces and technologies in the library with resident experts who can support students in their use of these technologies.
  - Faculty are not always assigning a paper for an assignment. There are other ways that students are able to show evidence of their learning and the Library supports student efforts to do this in the spaces in the library
  - Student support for technology – students often come to the Library for tech support on campus rather than going to IT. The Library provides troubleshooting for printing, for formatting, how to access software, how to do data management etc.

- This year the Library is also the support location for students with challenges with D2L transition.

### Spaces and Collections

- Students are filling the library to capacity. All spaces are being utilized and this is great – we see students working together and independently and using the available spaces.
- The first floor is open 24 hours a day with campus card access – they need a clean and quiet space where they can focus away from their personal spaces.
- The bookable group rooms are hugely popular. The booking system opens a week in advance, and these are booked right away.
  - There are some students booking these spaces to be physically together in a room where they join their online courses.
  - Students crave connection and togetherness – they want to be in rooms with other humans.
  - Students are having challenges in moving between the in-person/online courses. They would rather be in a room with their friends.
  - We are trying to ensure that the resources are being allocated equitably so we cannot pre-book these spaces for these students.
- The Library loans out headsets with microphones so students can attend online classes
- The library does have semester long laptop loan outs for those who are not privileged to have their own laptops
- There are wifi hotspots for students to facilitate their joining their online classes.

The Library is “constantly morphing and shifting, aligning itself with whatever the community needs. A Library is the materials it houses, but it’s also the people who use it.” – Kristin Arnett

### New and Coming Soon:

- 2021 personal librarian program
  - A direct email reach out to every incoming student from the librarian for their program providing tips for studying and methods and where to find resources.
  - Students reported that, even if they did not reach out to their librarian, these emails were found to be helpful and very few students unsubscribed. This helps students understand that there is a dedicated person in place to support their program.
- After Hours Robot Minion
  - There is an AI chat bot to provide 24-7 responses to students
- Trying out new technologies
  - Meeting Owl. This allows a group of students to attend an online class that has multiple cameras and allows everyone to speak in the online space
  - There are two of these being loaned out
- Library support to help students print when they are locked out of their accounts.

Discussion:

- What types of computers are loaned out to students? Are there options to put specific programs on these computers?
  - Most of them are Lenovo think pads some are dell. Most are windows based (there are not any Macs)
  - There is a pool of laptops dedicated to accessibility (rewrite/Jaws and pother accessibility software).
  - Students cannot load software onto the machines – they would need to bring these requests to the Library. Typically, when this is done we need to ensure that the licensing permits this. When we cannot put it on the laptops available, we do ensure that these software programs are available on the physical / dedicated machines in the library commons.