

# Academic Success Peer Mentors and Facilitators

Fall 2020 – Winter 2021



## Emma Anderson, Peer Mentor

Emma is doing her Master's of Child Study and Education at OISE, and finished her undergraduate degree this spring: she majored in Sociology with minors in Religion and Sexual Diversity Studies.

She found that her third and fourth years of her undergrad were much better than the first and second. She learned how to study, to talk to profs and TAs, and to use key resources: her skills were better developed on how to cope with the stresses of school. "It can take time, but you will adjust to the environment!"

Her favourite resources: "The Writing Centers were very helpful in getting my thoughts together and getting them onto a page in a more 'academic' way. And I visited the Registrar's Office a lot to help with my schedule, courses, and degree planning.

Fun fact: Her cat Teddy is likely to make a guest appearance on Teams.



## Christina Arayata, Peer Workshop Facilitator

Christina is a first-generation student in her final year of a Master's of Arts in Higher Education at OISE. She completed her undergraduate degree at the University of Toronto Scarborough in English Literature and Political Science.

"It took me a while to get the hang of university life. Thanks to the support I received from student leaders around me I started to understand the opportunities that the University of Toronto has to offer. I became involved on campus as the President of the Students of English Literature and Film and as the VP of Academics and University Affairs at the Scarborough Campus Students' Union. Through my involvement and my own experience as a student, I learned the importance of balancing various commitments such as work, education, and extracurriculars—especially because a bad habit of mine was always biting off more than I could chew. I look forward to getting to know you all, share experiences, and build a community where we can all achieve our goals!"



## **Shelby Davies, Peer Workshop Facilitator**

Shelby is in her second year of her Psychology undergraduate degree.

She left her career of 10 years in the insurance industry to pursue her educational goals. She hopes to eventually attain her PhD in Psychology.

Having made the jump from work to school, Shelby became a big fan of the resources and supports available through Academic Success. She is happy to report that these resources have helped her succeed thus far in her degree.



## Simran Dhir, Peer Mentor

Simran is a third-year undergraduate student, specializing in Pharmacology and Toxicology. She is also interested in psychology and education, and seeing how different fields can be interconnected.

As a peer mentor, she encourages students to always keep an open mind regarding courses and programs of study and to explore the numerous courses the university has to offer.

She lives on residence at St. Mikes, is Co-Coordinator of PAIR Mentorship, is a Study Hubs host and a part of U of T's Research Opportunities Program. In her free time, she can be found bingeing the latest Netflix show, doodling and playing online Scrabble.



## Maddy de Welles, Senior Peer Mentor

Maddy is in the second year of her PhD in the Social Justice Education department at OISE. She is studying disability studies and childhood studies.

Maddy did her undergraduate in Sociology, Equity Studies, and Education in Society. Now, she is very interested in studying children's artifacts like storybooks, dolls, and young adult novels and how these adult-generated materials represent problems and solutions to children and young adults.

Maddy enjoys helping students navigate their university experience, and is very happy to be part of the Academic Success Peer Mentor team! Maddy also enjoys tutoring, volunteering, and mentoring students of all ages.

In her free time, Maddy likes to spend time with her cats, Martin and Lucy. She also enjoys going on walks, volunteering, and being with her family.



## Lindsay Eberlin, Facilitation Coordinator

Lindsay is a first-year student in the Master's of Science in Occupational Therapy program. She completed her undergraduate degree in Therapeutic Recreation at the University of Waterloo.

“During my undergraduate degree, I was actively involved in campus life in various areas including recruitment, student advocacy, and first year orientation. I also worked part time as a dance teacher and volunteered in the community. I really enjoyed being busy and actively involved in activities that I was passionate about as they allowed me to connect with others who shared the same interests.

Through my involvement, I learned the importance of time management, balance, and organization. I always rely on my colour-coded calendar as a resource that keeps me organized and ensures that I don't miss anything. I also learned the importance of setting realistic expectations for myself and only taking on as much as I could handle. I have always relied on my social network including friends and family to help me overcome any obstacles that I have faced including the transition to online school. I look forward to sharing my knowledge and experiences with other students to help them achieve their goals!”



## **Kelsey Gatta, Peer Mentor**

Kelsey is doing her Master's in Social Work, focusing on eating disorders in female youth. Born in Niagara, Kelsey began her academic career at the University of Guelph with an undergraduate degree in Nutrition, and did a second Bachelor's degree in Psychology at Brock University.

Throughout her undergrad experience, Kelsey struggled with being able to ask for help. Gradually, she learned ways to study effectively and how to manage her time through trial and error.

Now, Kelsey would like to use her knowledge and lived experiences to guide other students to available resources and to find their own success.



## Sadi Loai, Senior Peer Mentor

Sadi is currently doing his PhD at UofT in Biomedical Engineering, focusing on medical imaging and heart disease. He completed his undergrad at McMaster University in Chemical & Bio-Engineering.

Sadi loves the diversity at U of T and getting to meet new people from all around the world. He also thinks the facilities at U of T are amazing and there is so much potential to explore many fields of interest.

Sadi thinks the Math and Science Aid Centres were a great resource in his first year, to help with the transition from high school learning to university learning. “Lots of supports are available for students in all courses, through TAs and office hours.”

Mentors for academic and career advice were essential for helping him figure out his career path and how to navigate through university life. Applying to grad school was nerve wracking for Sadi, since many schools wanted a perfect GPA—but he learned that participating in extracurriculars could help his application, and recommends that others do the same.

In his spare time Sadi loves to bake all kinds of desserts from different cultures and to try new recipes. One of the very first things he learned how to make was an apple pie!



## Lee Nguyen, Peer Mentor

Lee is a fourth-year undergraduate student specializing in Physical & Environmental Geography.

Originally from Etobicoke, Lee moved to Toronto in their third year to live with roommates closer to campus. They have found greater success in third and fourth-year studies, as opposed to first and second, due to better personal circumstances. Balancing part-time work and full-time studies during university has been a challenge for Lee, but through figuring out effective and efficient ways of studying, they have found how to do both without jeopardizing their mental health.

Lee is very interested in supporting academic success and is excited to share some of the resources available at the University of Toronto: “reaching out for help can be difficult and I hope to aid others in doing so!”



## **Fawn Rasquinha, Senior Peer Mentor**

Fawn is currently pursuing a Master of Social Work at the University of Toronto and earned her BSc in Psychology and Health Sciences. Throughout the years she has spent at U of T she has held various mentor and peer advisor positions with the Department of Student Life, the Academic Advising and Career Centre, and, most recently, Academic Success.

One lesson Fawn learned while pursuing her undergraduate degree was to take advantage of the many and varied academic advising- and career-related resources available to students. She learned that these services are able to help students from the moment they transition into university up until the moment they are ready to plan their next steps in career or education.

She is excited to connect with students who are hoping to explore their options and make the most of their time at U of T!



## Serena Thapar, Peer Mentor

Serena is a third-year undergraduate student studying Psychology and Health Studies as a double major. Currently, she is involved in the MacDonald Lab as part of the Undergraduate Research Opportunity Program. Serena believes that all students should take advantage of the unique opportunities that U of T has to offer.

Through her experiences, Serena has come to understand the pressure that students face to maintain a high GPA while still finding time to maintain their relationships and wellbeing. She has learned how important it is to have strong time management and organizational skills. As a peer mentor, she is eager to guide and support students in whatever challenges they might be facing.

When she is not studying, you might find her spending time with her cat Oliver, baking desserts, or colour-coding her Google Calendar.



## Margaret Zhang, Peer Mentor

Margaret is a fourth-year undergraduate student double majoring in Chemistry and Biochemistry.

She joined the team in 2020 as an Academic Success Peer and is very excited about it! She wishes to pursue a graduate degree after her undergrad, and her future goal is to become an R&D scientist.

In her free time, she likes to draw, watch and make animation, and solve Rubik's Cubes.