

Parents & Supporters Orientation Webinar Transcript

August 2021

Start of transcript: (Time: 00 hour 00 minutes 00 seconds, 00:00:00)

Slide: Student Life: Start Strong. Finish Stronger

Thank you so much for being here and for joining us today for our family and friends orientation.

We're so excited to have you here with us.

And to show support for our incoming U of T students.

My name is Savannah Sloat I use she, her and they pronouns.

And I am the Lead Coordinator for Orientation Transition and Engagement at the St George campus here at U of T.

I represent the Office of Student Life, which is a central office of the university.

We use 'Student Life' as an umbrella term for a number of offices and services for students that we are going to tell you a bit about today.

So I'm going to present some information for you, going through with some content to help prepare you for September and for the year ahead. **Slide Title: Family & Friends**

Orientation (00:01:00)

I'm going to share some helpful tips and information.

Then we do have time at the end for questions, which I'm sure folks are burning to ask.

As typically happens with parents, family and supporters.

So, we're gonna leave lots of time for that.

But thank you all for being here.

I've been a staff member at U of T for the last 8 years in a number of different student facing and student support positions.

Prior to that I actually completed my undergrad degree at U of T as well.

So, I do have a bit of that student perspective, which I think can be very helpful.

So, I'm happy to answer any questions that you have or if I can't answer them I can probably refer you to the right place.

So, I'm glad that we're all going to be here today and have some time together.

So some of the things that we're going to be chatting about today for our orientation session are, giving you some insight about the St George campus.

Providing some tips and information on how to be an effective support for your student.

Things that you might want to think about for supporting through the year.

And then we're going to talk about preparing for September as well.

Since we all know it's fast approaching.

It's hard to believe that we're in the first week of August already!

Not really sure where the summer went.

But I think we're all getting excited for the academic year to start.

So that is what we're going to be chatting a bit about today.

Slide: Welcome to U of T (00:02:40)

First and foremost, welcome to the University of Toronto!

We are so excited to welcome your students here this year!

For folks who are not familiar with the university, we're located in downtown Toronto.

The campus is really integrated within the city and the environment.

It's a really special place, if you get the opportunity to visit.

I would very much encourage it!

As of fall 2020 the University of Toronto offered 700 different undergraduate programs in Humanities, Social Sciences, Life Science, Physical & Mathematical Sciences, Commerce, Management, Computer Science, Engineering, Kinesiology and Physical Education, Music, and Architecture.

We really do have a little bit of everything here.

Which I think, makes the University of Toronto really unique.

All students in the Faculty of Arts and Science, at the St George campus, are affiliated with one of the seven colleges.

You've probably been hearing a lot about the college system.

So the seven undergraduate colleges are; Trinity, Victoria, St. Michael's College, University College, Woodsworth College, New College, and Innis College.

These undergraduate colleges have really deep roots in the university.

The college system actually dates back to the earliest days of the university.

Back when they were their own distinctive units.

Before coming together to form the University of Toronto.

And so we really maintained the college system.

And it really supports the identity of the University of Toronto today.

The way you can think about the Colleges is that they really are a home base for students on campus.

So, a student's College provides them with the advantages of a closer-knit small community feeling.

And it also provides them with all of their support services that they can access such as; Academic Advising programming and supports through their Dean's Office.

A place to call home on campus, if they're living in residence at their college, etc.

So, their services are organized there.

First-year students who are taking Kinesiology and Physical Education, Engineering, Architecture or Music, belong to what we call a professional Faculty.

So similar to a college, students who are in those faculties receive support from their faculty directly with the same services that I mentioned previously.

So, it really provides them with a smaller community that they can access.

And that they can identify with.

Which is a really great advantage of the university.

One of the benefits of being a U of T student, is that in addition to being supported by your college environment in your community there.

Students have access to all of our central offices, services and supports on campus.

Slide: Who We Are (00:05:48)

So, as I mentioned Student Life is an umbrella term that we use for all of the centralized services and supports on campus.

There's a comprehensive list here of all of the offices that fall under that umbrella of student life.

We'll talk a little bit about those, and how students can connect with them.

And engage in the programs and events and services that we offer through them.

One of the things that I want to highlight is that a student life has a really comprehensive social media presence.

You can access information about events services and things that are happening on campus by following our social media channels there.

I would really recommend it if you want to get regular updates about what's happening on campus, what students might be interested in.

But, also things that are happening in the peak periods throughout the year.

So, it really gives you a sense of the student lifecycle and our calendar by engaging regularly with our social media.

Slide: Being an Effective Support (00:07:10)

So, first and foremost, I want to acknowledge that you folks are here, attending this orientation session, so that you can learn to be effective supporters for your students.

I'm hoping to give you a bit of insight about the things that we hear regularly from students that we support.

As well as speak to some of my own experience as a student and a staff member in a way that might be helpful for you.

Some folks may have experience with other children or family members going to university.

Or, this may be the first child that you're supporting through that experience.

Regardless, I'm hoping that I can give some insight that might be helpful as you enter into this period of transition and change.

Entering the first year of university is probably one of the most significant challenges your student will face.

It represents a key point in their lives.

It brings about a lot of change, growth and development.

It is often a very important experience in their lives.

And something that they put a lot of emphasis on and energy into.

So, I imagine right now, as we're moving toward the beginning of September, there is probably a lot of excitement.

Maybe a little bit of nerves.

And a lot of feelings that are happening for them.

I want to chat a bit about what you can expect going into this academic year.

And some ways that you can kind of manage some of the feelings that are happening.

Some of the things that are coming up.

So, one of the things that I want to acknowledge first and foremost, is that your role is going to change.

And this is sometimes a difficult thing for parents to get used to.

You're probably used to intervening on your child's behalf.

Throughout your relationship with them, you've had lots of access to information.

You have received lots of notice about events, deadlines; things that are happening in their life or at school.

You've probably done, you know, parent-teacher interviews and are used to seeing progress reports, such as report cards.

Different methods of assessment that keep you informed about where their progress is.

So, one of the changes that might be difficult to adapt to is that when your child enters University, the amount of access that you have to them and the information about their progress changes.

You might find it a little bit disconcerting that you don't have immediate access to things that you had access to in the past.

Sometimes we need to adapt to that change.

It's important to note that it is university policy and Canadian law, that the university cannot release details about a student to anyone.

Even a parent.

Without explicit permission in the form of written consent.

But what that means, first and foremost, is that you won't have access to your child's grades, unless they choose to share them with you.

You won't have immediate insight as to their progress, in classes, and how they're doing.

And so, the way that you access that information changes.

It means that your student has to communicate with you.

And also, that they need to advocate for themselves.

When it comes to engaging with the university.

Of course, you can still encourage and support.

But there are a couple of different ways that we recommend doing that.

So, it's important for you to consider the way that you might want to adapt to this change And how it might affect your relationship and communication with your student.

An important thing to note is that transition is different for everyone.

Every student adapts to this experience differently.

Some students may feel really impacted at the beginning of September.

Other students may have changes that they see later on through the year.

They might start out really excited and then experience some of those nerves or some trepidation later in the year.

It really is different for everyone.

Many first-year students are dismayed when they get their first set of grades back after midterms.

They might be lower than what they've experienced in high school previously.

And often this can cause a bit of panic.

But it is perfectly normal.

Even straight A students in high school may experience a bit of change in the grades that they're receiving.

It might, you know, make them feel discouraged.

Or make them feel a bit uncertain of themselves.

But really the difference is that they will learn to be effective learners.

And might need to change some of their habits, in order to adapt to this different form of studying.

And that's where your encouragement becomes really important.

Sometimes students might discover partway through the year that they're not really enjoying the program they enrolled in or some of their courses.

They might find something that they love even more that they didn't know existed as a discipline or program, when they were applying.

For example, sometimes students who come in who have always wanted to be a doctor might find that they struggle with the sciences.

Or discover a passion in another area, like philosophy.

It can be really confusing for students and for parents as you're going through this experience.

One thing that I want to note, is that it's actually quite common for students to change their courses.

Or even to change their programs of study.

Our research shows that about half of the students at U of T, end up switching programs, somewhere on the course of their undergraduate degree.

In fact, the university actually makes it very easy and flexible to do so.

Part of the benefit of offering so many programs is that students have the opportunity to change and adapt their degree, based on what they're enjoying and what they might want to do.

What we've noticed overall is that a student's best chance of succeeding is when they're engaging in courses in subjects that they have a passion for.

So, it's important to remember that these things are normal.

And experiencing that transition, or sometimes that uncertainty happens to everyone in different forms.

Overall, a key theme is that communication is the most important tool in your toolbox. Your communication with your child might be a bit different now that they're going to university. But it's really important to establish guidelines around what your communication will look like.

You might be used to having more direct access to them.

Or, being able to engage with them in a different way.

It's important to note that as students become more involved in activities or more engaged in their studies, they may communicate with you less or in different ways.

And again, that's a normal part of transition too.

Students who are living away from home for the first time or going to residence may experience a period of homesickness, right at the beginning of the year.

And, you know, you might feel concerned.

Are they making friends?

Are they participating in activities?

Often parents might, you know, imagine them being isolated and on their own in their residence room.

And I think it's easy to get that image when that's what you're hearing from them directly.

So, this is where communication becomes important in the form of asking good questions and being willing to listen.

It's normal for us to, kind of, take on that stress on their behalf.

But it's important to remember that we're kind of bearing the brunt of their feelings and getting a small picture of what their experiences look like.

So, a couple of things that I think are important to keep in mind is to ask really good questions.

Instead of, you know, direct kind of yes or no questions.

Like are your classes going well?

Think about asking more open-ended questions.

What's something that you learned in your class this week that you really enjoyed?

What stood out to you?

What's something that you're finding difficult to adapt to?

Questions like that give them the opportunity to share more about their experience and will often tell you more.

I would recommend checking in on a monthly basis to decide how often you want to communicate and in what ways.

Just because this will change kind of month to month.

Depending on what we call the student lifecycle.

And how busy things are.

You'll notice that when we hit October and November, and students are going through their first set of midterms, they'll be communicating with you and might sound a bit panicked, or stressed.

They could be angry or homesick.

This is often the result of a buildup of pressure and it really can come at any time.

But we find pretty frequently that this will happen during that first set of midterms.

When they're starting to feel pressure around performance.

Or might be having difficulty with managing their time or feeling like there's a high volume of studying.

They're going to have a strong urge to communicate with you.

And might be concerned about the feelings that they're having.

It's important that you are really patient and act as a sounding board.

In that case, listening becomes the most important thing.

Often times students want to express their frustration and how they're feeling.

They might be going through a bit of what we call imposter syndrome.

Wondering if, you know, they have the skills to be at university .

Or, feeling like they're making a mistake or not doing well enough.

And as a supporter to those students, it can make you feel really uncomfortable.

Or make you feel concerned.

But when we take the opportunity to just listen and hold space for those feelings.

It's really helpful for your student.

Often, I find when it comes to supporters and parents, there's that strong urge to protect and care for them.

So sometimes we jump right to solutions.

And that's not always the most helpful.

Making space for feelings and providing that opportunity to communicate, is really what students are looking for in those times first and foremost.

And that goes hand in hand with our next point around being an effective support.

Which is that we want you to encourage independence and problem solving.

One of the key aspects of being a university student is for students to develop a greater sense of independence and to promote growth.

It's a natural and necessary stage for becoming an adult.

And it allows students to engage in the university community on their own and to build some of the skills that they'll use for the rest of their lives.

For many parents that can be a challenge.

And I'm not saying that you need to throw them in the deep end right away.

And encourage them to do everything on their own.

But I think it's helpful for you to help them envision being an independent adult.

And maybe trying to problem solve something on their own first.

Before you're providing them with the answer or the solution.

And one of the resources that we have to help you with this is actually a Supporters' Handbook.

Which will be coming out in the next couple of weeks and it will be available on our website.

One of the key features of this handbook is that we provide a calendar for the year of the student lifecycle.

So, things that you can expect month to month that will be, kind of, occupying their time or their energy.

And things that might be key stressors at different times of the year.

And along with these things that you can identify, we've provided a list of resources across campus, and in our office that you can refer students to.

So, if you're hearing things like I'm overwhelmed with the amount of reading that I have to do.

I don't feel like I can keep up.

You can look in your supporter handbook and say, 'Have you thought about making an appointment with academic success? I see they have this really great critical reading workshop that you might want to go to'.

So that would be a great resource for you to provide some of those encouragements.

And identify some of the supports and offices that we've been talking about.

We find that students sometimes need that nudge of encouragement.

Or, they might be feeling overwhelmed by the amount of programs and resources available to them.

So, it's really helpful when parents can identify that for them and encourage them to access them.

I'd also like to note that independence, really is a gradual process.

So, along with communication, how they learn to be independent and how they learn to communicate with you is a process that will happen probably over the course of their undergraduate career.

These are just tips and information to help you get started with that process.

And also not to feel surprised by some of the changes that you may be seeing or the things that you're engaging with.

Finally, we're asking that you be understanding.

I think this is foundational to all of the things that we've been talking about.

It doesn't mean that you have to know exactly what they're going through.

But it means you need to be open to listening and be open to being empathetic.

Often, one of the things that we've noted from students who are struggling.

Or, are in distress or experiencing crisis.

Is that they often feel the need to be perfect or that they need to get it right the first time.

And if they're not, then that's somehow a fault of theirs.

And what we find first and foremost, is that they're worried about disappointing their parents and those closest to them.

And so often the ability to reach out and get help.

Or the ability to admit that they might need some additional support is hampered by the idea that they're disappointing someone.

So, then we think about being understanding.

A lot of the really wonderful things that you can do for them is just affirm all of their strengths and the things that they're really good at.

And that it's okay that you're not great at everything.

For example, I really loved reading and writing.

And my first major in undergrad was English literature, which I loved.

I had a great experience.

It was a wonderful program.

In my first-year psychology class, I really struggled.

It was actually a breadth requirement for sciences.

It wasn't something that I was going to major in.

But I found this really strong association to succeed.

And every single test I had to write was a very long, multiple choice test.

And it was just something that did not resonate with me.

I could have reached out and gone to resources to learn more about how to take multiple choice tests.

Which is something the Academic Success Center offers.

I could have reached out to my academic advisor to learn about the credit no credit option.

Which, means that I would get credit for completing the class and wouldn't have a grade on my transcript.

Which would have been wonderful, because it was just a breadth requirement, I needed it for my degree.

But I wasn't going to go into that program.

So, there's lots of flexibility that students don't know about.

And should be encouraged to seek out.

And, also to let them know that education is a process.

It's something that we need to experience and learn from.

It happens inside and outside of the classroom.

And then, a lot of the most important things we learn are through our personal experiences.

And the best folks to reinforce that messaging is all of you.

Their closest supports and their biggest cheerleaders.

Slide: Safety Considerations (00:24:48)

Another concern that I just wanted to highlight, that comes up often, is safety considerations.

Overall, I always recommend that folks familiarize themselves with campus.

We have a really excellent interactive map.

That can help you play around with learning some of the different buildings, areas on campus.

Places that students might want to visit and things that they can engage with.

Which is really great.

The St George campus also has a really wonderful campus safety app.

With lots of information about how to access different safety services or safety programs.

For example, there's a really excellent program called Walk Smart [TravelSafer].

Where if a student is studying late on campus.

Or, taking a later class.

Or, participating in a sport.

They can actually register to have someone walk them back to residence.

Or, walk them to the nearest subway station from anywhere on campus.

The app is also available for parents to download.

If they want to see what some of those resources are.

And, also have access to them Which

is really great.

I also wanted to highlight our COVID-19 resources.

Obviously, it's been a hot topic.

As all of us are preparing for September.

And looking at updated guidelines from the province and the federal government.

So, for the most up to date information in relation to the university and COVID-19.

We always recommend that you visit the Vice Provost website.

They are updating it regularly with information as we get it from public health authorities.

And from our local government.

There's information there about the quarantine program and requirements.

And any of the most recent news that you might want to know about can be found there.

Slide: Support Throughout the Year (00:26:50)

Alright, I know we're all focused on September.

Because it's coming up quickly.

And there's a lot of things happening right now that we're trying to get prepared for.

It's important to remember that your student will need support throughout the year.

It will look different, month to month depending on what's going on in their schedule.

How busy they are.

How much academic work they have.

And the other things that they're participating in.

So, some things that we want you to keep in mind.

As their biggest supporters.

Are that it's important to encourage getting involved on campus.

This is for a couple of reasons.

It helps your student to build community.

It helps them with a sense of belonging on campus.

Which is really important.

Especially for those who might be commuting.

Or, living off campus during their undergraduate experience.

Some of the most important learning opportunities come outside of the classroom. And

build really excellent leadership skills that students will use throughout their lives Even after their undergraduate career.

Students will often choose not to seek out involvement activities because they're worried about how it might impact their academics.

And their ability to study.

However, research shows that the most successful students are those who are engaged in opportunities outside of the classroom.

There is a balance between our academics and the things that we're involved in, that help us build community.

And build some really great skills.

U of T actually has over 800 clubs.

So, I'm sure that we can find something that would support their interests.

That they might want to get involved in.

And a lot of these activities help to support student wellness as well.

It's important to talk with your student about something that they might want to get involved with.

Or, people that they might enjoy connecting with on campus.

It helps them understand how they might want to take on new responsibilities.

Or learn new things.

And helps to understand that there's a balance between the academic work that they're doing.

And their ability to have fun and enjoy their life on campus.

It's important for you to check in regularly, and provide support for the things that they're doing.

As I mentioned, our Supporter Handbook will help you kind of understand what's happening, month to month.

And the things that you might want to encourage them to engage with.

It's a great conversation starter.

And it allows you to ask them some good questions about the things that they're doing and engaging with.

Even if you can't directly relate to their experience.

For example, when I came to university I was what we call a first-generation student.

So, neither of my parents had attended university or college in Canada.

They had no post secondary education.

And I was the first person in my family to attend university.

This can often have an impact on how students might understand their experience.

Even though my parents couldn't identify with a lot of the things that I was doing.

Or, the material that I was studying.

I found that they were really helpful and encouraging when it came to telling me to explore things that I was passionate about.

Or, to find places on campus where I could engage with others and build community.

So, it's important to remember that there are lots of ways that you can provide support and encouragement.

Even if you can't identify with experience directly.

We also want to make sure that you're supporting your students wellness.

Sleep is one of the biggest factors in promoting our wellness.

And for students, it's often one of the first things that we're willing to cut out.

So, encouraging great sleep habits is always helpful.

But along with that comes, managing stress levels.

Trying to eat well and support ourselves.

And finding opportunities for physical activity.

We want to make sure that you're encouraging them to access services and support on campus.

Like the Health and Wellness Center.

And also encouraging things like joining mindfulness sessions or yoga.

Or, engaging with peer support.

Their ability to be a student depends directly on their ability to manage their own wellness.

It's often something that we don't talk about enough when it comes to our strategies for taking care of ourselves.

And making sure that we're balancing rest, with the rest of our schedule.

It's important to refer students to resources, regularly.

It's most helpful when you can throw them out as suggestions that they might want to engage with.

And plant that seed for them, so that they can access those programs, services or supports later.

We often find that if supporters are encouraging behaviors like seeking help.

Or, connecting with a campus resource.

That students are more likely to use them.

Because it normalizes, their ability to access these things.

Especially when it comes to navigating a campus like U of T.

Which, can often feel quite large.

It's very helpful when you can provide that referral.

And demonstrate an interest.

And a bit of knowledge in their experience at the University.

We hope that the Supporter Handbook will empower you to be able to use these resources.

And connect with your students about different things that might appeal to them.

And, be useful to them.

And then finally through the year.

One of the things that you should think about is expecting change.

And being ready for it.

Your student will change.

University and the experiences associated with it, promote development and growth.

It's natural, inevitable, and can often be quite inspiring.

I myself have really loved the opportunity to work with students over the course of their careers.

And to see how they develop and grow into wonderful human beings.

You can't stop change.

And sometimes it might be difficult to understand it.

But it's within your power to accept it and support it.

Growth is part of the learning experience.

So, remember to be empathetic and try to learn more.

And most importantly, don't feel concerned.

If you're noticing that change and growth is happening.

I'm going to pause for a moment there.

I know Natalie has been dropping some great links and information in the chat for you.

And I'm going to be addressing all of your questions in the Q&A.

Slide: Preparing for September (00:34:35)

I want to talk a little bit about preparing for September.

So obviously it's coming up quickly.

And there's a few things that you want to keep in mind.

Most of your students have probably activated their U of T email.

And used what we call their UTORid or their JoinID.

We want to make sure that they're taking the opportunity to get familiar with ACORN and UTMail.

So, ACORN is the web platform that they're going to use throughout their undergraduate career to manage things like their courses.

Their financial records and information.

Later their transcripts and their grades.

Everything that they would need is on ACORN, when it comes to their students system.

And UTMail they should get used to checking regularly.

The university will communicate with them entirely through the university email.

This includes all the administrative offices, their professors for their courses and all of the things happening across campus.

We want to make sure that they register for orientation, if they haven't already.

We can share a lot of great orientation information with you in the Q&A period.

It's important to note that we find students are most successful when they participate in orientation activities.

It correlates directly to their likelihood of success through undergrad.

Because they're learning lots of great skills.

They're connecting with different offices, resources, faculty and staff who are going to be supporting them throughout their career.

It's important to make a financial plan.

And to have some conversations about expenses.

And to help your students understand them.

I know that there's a different spectrum of support for students when it comes to finances.

I myself, financed, the majority of my own education.

And so, my experience was working part time throughout my undergrad.

And using my savings to pay for my tuition.

So, I had quite an involved management of my own finances.

That looks different for every student.

But for students who may be getting more support from family, it's still important to have those conversations around what they can expect.

And what that looks like for them.

And it's good to have those conversations now.

So, they're ready going into the year.

And they aren't kind of surprised by having to manage that themselves.

We encourage you to talk to your student about what they want to learn.

One of the great things about your first year at U of T is that there's a lot of flexibility to take different types of classes that you might be interested in.

You can take a breadth of things in different areas.

Especially for students who are in the Faculty of Arts and Science.

There's lots of opportunity to change your courses at the beginning of the year.

I, myself, as a first year student had an advising appointment in the first couple of weeks of starting my undergrad.

So I could make some adjustments to my timetable.

I really loved English, which I had applied for.

I hated my first year philosophy class.

I ended up taking anthropology instead.

And later had the opportunity to actually get a master's degree in anthropology.

Because I loved it enough.

So, I think the important thing to note there, is that change can be good.

And it's important to engage with things that you feel passionate about.

Talk to your students about things that might be interesting to them.

Flip through the U of T programs page to see what kind of classes are available for first year students.

There are so many things that we offer, that you probably can't imagine are classes.

Like the history of music, or the poetry of physics.

Lots of different interesting cool things that students can take to round out their experience. And help them engage with things that they're passionate about.

We want to make sure that you are reviewing important dates and deadlines, so that you're familiar with them.

Have a conversation with your students before they arrive, so they know what these dates are.

You can look over the timetable and the calendar together, so that they have some familiarity with it.

And that you're on the same page.

We also want to make sure that you're getting excited.

This is a really wonderful time.

And although there's lots of transition and change.

There's lots of things to feel great about too.

This is a wonderful experience.

And they're joining a new community.

And we hope that it will provide them the opportunity to really learn and grow.

So, we want to support that.

Slide: Get Ready for September! (00:39:55)

I also wanted to note that we do have a summer calendar and checklist.

Folks may have seen this already.

For domestic students, I believe it was mailed out.

And for other folks, it was sent via email to your student.

But this summer calendar and checklist provides a breakdown month by month.

Of things they should have been thinking about, looking at.

Or, things that they can do in advance of arriving in September.

So, if this is something that you haven't seen yet.

We'd strongly encourage you to visit the summer checklists web page.

Take a look at it and some of the resources there.

Because it can really help you get started, and prepare for the next couple of weeks.

Wonderful.

Slide: Questions (00:40:47)

So that brings us to questions.

I know this is every Supporters' favorite part of this session.

I know that Natalie has been dropping some things in the chat for you.

I'm going to go ahead and review some of the questions to see if there's things that I can answer.

I'm happy to have folks raise their hands using the zoom function.

And hop on if there's any questions they want to ask.

You're also welcome to continue putting them in the chat, if you feel most comfortable doing that.

And a huge shout out to Natalie, for answering lots of these questions and providing links and resources.

I see some folks asking about the recording.

We will send the recording out via email to everyone.

After it's done.

And it will be posted on our website.

That'll probably be in the next couple of weeks.

Because we are going to have it captioned and a transcript created that can be provided.

The Supporter Handbook for this year.

The current version will be available in the next couple of weeks as well.

Although, I know Natalie has shared the 2020 version.

If anyone's curious to look at that.

Seeing some questions about dining locations.

And if it will be limited, or not.

All of that information is available on the Food Services website so ueat.utoronto.ca.

Natalie can pop that in the chat for folks.

Colleges and residences who have their own dining facilities, will post that information on their websites.

So, that people can access them there.

I don't know yet if all of the food trucks that we're used to seeing parked on St George Street will be there.

I will be starting to return to the office in September.

So, I'm very invested in finding out if we're going to see them or not.

But that's a great question.

A challenge right now is finding staff to talk to about course enrollment advisors release booking times on a weekly basis.

Looking at pre-required courses that aren't available, and the waitlist.

Yeah, this is a great question.

So, each division, the colleges or the professional faculties have their own registrar's office, and academic advisors.

So, each division is responsible for how their advising schedule works.

So, that will look different between the different colleges.

It's kind of up to them to set their schedules.

What I will say is that when it comes to waitlist specifically right now, they're probably quite full.

But when we get to September, they'll start to move pretty fast, as folks schedules change.

Usually people go to kind of their first class, decide how they feel.

And then the waitlist moves.

And academic advisors can support in letting you know what the likelihood is of getting off of a waitlist.

Or looking at your prerequisite courses.

Six courses is also quite a huge course load for reference for folks.

The average course load is five, which we tend to recommend.

I myself as a student did my undergrad over the course of five years so I could take four courses each year.

Because I was working part time and involved in a lot of activities.

And that offered more flexibility for me to be successful academically.

So, there might be a consideration there with the timetable.

Are there resources and information for international students?

Yes, absolutely.

The Centre for International Experience on campus is phenomenal.

We also call it the CIE.

So, you might see it referred to as that.

They actually have an immigration advisor, who is housed in CIE, that you can connect with.

So, we'll share their website and information.

I know there's a lot of conversation right now around study permits.

And so, you can connect with them to get more information and support around that.

Advisors can help with timetable adjustments.

They can typically support that.

I know that using ACORN.

For the first time for core selection, can sometimes be a bit stressful.

So, they can absolutely help you out.

I'm seeing some questions about residence and room assignments.

So, each residence is managed, typically, by its own division.

So, college or faculty.

And they provide the information for all of those assignments.

So, if you haven't received them yet.

I imagine it will be coming in the next couple of weeks.

Or, you can contact the residence directly to get that information.

I've seen some questions around vaccinations.

So, for folks who didn't see that the news update in the last week or so.

U of T released some information around the vaccination policy.

You can find that on the Vice Provost website.

When it comes to any updates about COVID-19.

I also wanted to mention because Natalie shared it here.

Some information about health care and the student health and dental plan, overall.

So, for students who are covered by OHIP, the Ontario health insurance plan for domestic students.

Once, they have arrived at U of T they'll get information about their student health care plan.

If they have OHIP coverage and benefits through a parent or family member.

They can actually opt out of the health plan and get some money back.

For students who aren't covered by OHIP.

You'll be covered under U of T student health care plan.

So, Natalie shared the link to that in the chat.

That provides you access to all of your health and dental services.

And is part of your student tuition fee.

For international students, you are covered through what we call the UHIP plan, the university health insurance plan.

It provides all the same services that you see here.

But is administered through a different plan.

For those students who may have Canadian citizenship.

But have lived internationally or in another country and don't currently have their OHIP.

There is a period where you are initially covered by UHIP when you arrive.

And then need to register and get your OHIP.

And at that point, you'd be taken off of the UHIP plan.

But there is a period where you need to transition from one to the other.

So, we want to make sure that you have your health coverage there.

Seeing some questions about the waitlist and how that works for registration.

If a student is on a waitlist for a class on ACORN and they move off the waitlist and are admitted to the class.

ACORN automatically sends them an email letting them know that they got into that class.

They're welcome to log on to ACORN and check their status on the waitlist, at any point as well.

And as I said, right now we probably won't see a lot of movement on that waitlist.

But probably a little bit more in September.

Seeing some more about health care and mental health services, so I love to speak to that.

In terms of our health care services, we are very privileged to have a lot of resources available to us.

So, for students on the St George campus, the main office that they'd be interacting with is our Health and Wellness Centre.

So, the Health and Wellness Centre provides, doctors, nurses, and also mental health practitioners to allow students to engage in any aspect of their health that they need support with.

So, students are able to make appointments at Health and Wellness, based on what they need.

In addition to that, you can also access walk in clinics, hospitals, and any kind of emergency care facility that you'd like to, with your student health plan with UHIP or with OHIP.

When it comes to our mental health services specifically.

There is a lot of support through psychotherapy services at Health and Wellness.

Students can book appointments to engage with someone if they are interested in counseling or therapy.

We also have a number of peer support programs.

So, these are facilitated by trained staff.

It's kind of group activities to engage with peers around conversations about mental health and those supports.

And in addition, I would really love to highlight our wonderful mySSP app.

So, that's the My Student Support Program.

It's an app that students can access on their phone, and it provides them with 24-7, mental health support, at any point that they'd like to access it.

Either, over the phone speaking to someone directly, or via text.

And one of the great things about mySSP is that they can actually schedule regular therapy appointments, wherever they are in the world.

The service also provides them the opportunity to engage in, I think it's 175 different languages.

So, if they feel more comfortable expressing themselves in a language that's not English.

They can receive support by booking appointments through that.

Which is really great.

Seeing a couple of notes about, residence, and the Chelsea Hotel.

So, I understand that the university is using the Chelsea Hotel for some overflow from the residences.

And then I can see maybe some concerns around safety and commuting, that folks are noting.

So, I will say this is actually something that has happened before.

That I've seen in my career as a staff member.

Typically, students who are staying at the hotel, do so for a couple of weeks until spaces become available in residence.

And then they move from the hotel into residence on campus.

There are also staff assigned to the hotel who are there to support students directly.

So, similar to Dons or Residents' Assistants.

At the residences they may be living at, the University provides those services and supports in the hotel, as well.

Is it possible to switch from one college to another within U of T?

It has happened.

It doesn't happen often.

If that's something that you're investigating, you'd have to connect with the college you're interested in directly at their Registrar's Office.

And speak to an advisor there around what that process looks like.

Mailing address.

It's a great question.

So, most residences will provide you with information on what your mailing address is.

But yes, typically it's just the student's name and their room number at their new residence.

And then the address of their residence.

Where possible really important to include the room number.

Where to file health care proxies?

Great, so we refer to this as an emergency contact.

So, in the event that there is a concern.

Where we would need to connect with a contact.

We refer to that information on ACORN.

So, your student has the opportunity to complete information about their emergency contact on ACORN.

And I would advise that you encourage them to fill in that information on ACORN.

If there's a situation where an emergency contact needs to be engaged.

Perfect, finding more information about OHIP and UHIP, seeing that as well.

We can drop the information there.

I think Natalie has shared it

But otherwise I am also happy to connect with anyone who wants to chat over email.

Or, missed any of the links or need some additional resources.

I'm always happy to connect with folks directly.

And provide you with the information that you need.

If there are any direct mailings to parents that would be through Colleges.

Specifically, the Division or either the Faculty or the College.

And you would sign up with them.

As I mentioned earlier, the U of T Student Life, social accounts have lots of great information.

And updates with things that are happening on campus.

So, you might want to follow them.

Great question about students transferring from another university.

So yes, we do have transfer student orientation.

There is one happening the beginning of September.

I believe it's September 8th.

Trying to pull that from my memory.

So, I would love for you to encourage your student to attend that.

So, that we can talk about their unique experience as a student coming from another university.

And, we can include that in the chat.

Most of the programs and events that we've been talking about can be accessed through what we call CLNx.

So clnx.utoronto.ca.

It's the system that basically manages all of the events, the job board and the co-curricular record across campus.

So, you are able to see all of those things there.

It gives students the opportunity to search through activities, opportunities, events, and often book appointments directly through the system.

If you're covered under another provincial health plan.

You are considered to be active under the University of Toronto's student health plan.

So, you still have access to all the same services.

And, it's included as part of your student tuition fee.

So, no concerns there.

Couple of folks asking about the fall study break.

So, what we call Fall Reading Week.

Typically, that happens in November.

I would say for the most part, students will stay on campus.

Some students choose to go home if they have the opportunity to do so.

But, usually it provides a really great opportunity for them to take a bit of break.

Catch up on some of their studying and do some of their academic work for midterms.

So, students can decide how they want to use that time.

And residences are open throughout, the fall, reading week.

One thing to keep in mind for residence through December, is that some residences do close over the December break.

And so, it's important to read your residence contract so that you know what those dates are.

And you can clearly see them.

Some questions about some of the services and supports we have around health.

We don't specifically have an eating disorder clinic on campus.

We do have a nutritionist who meets with students.

And I do know of students who have gotten support around eating disorders through Health and Wellness.

But one of the great things about being at U of T is that we have a lot of access to community services.

So, if anyone wants to talk about specific service, you're welcome to connect with me directly and I'd be happy to share.

Talking about orientation, which is a big one.

So Orientation Week, typically is organized by the College or the Faculty that students belong to.

So, they may have gotten some of that information already via their email.

Or, it will be coming in the next couple of weeks.

And typically, orientation is about four days long.

And provides a lot of different activities they can participate in that promote social activities, community building, academic support and really getting to know campus better.

This year, given our context for COVID-19, there is a hybrid approach for orientation.

So, a lot of the larger scale activities will be taking place virtually.

And then, there will be some opportunities for smaller in person activities like campus tours and things like that to help get them oriented.

But, all of that information depends on your specific division.

So, if you haven't registered for orientation already, I would recommend it.

Or, checking out your colleges orientation website to get some more information about the schedule, and what's happening.

Students are also welcome to participate in any of the orientation opportunities happening at Student Life, centrally.

And all of those activities are free for them.

So, for example, Academic Success, hosts an orientation program throughout August.

That's all about learning effective study skills and study habits.

It's our University Prep Course that they might be interested in.

It's more focused on academics, but does have some orientation flair to it.

Our office also offers a number of programs through September that students can participate in.

So, we would love for them to check those out on the CLNx site.

And register for any of the things that look interesting to them.

"So, my understanding is a student can access health care on campus, but will need to use their card either OHIP or UHIP".

That is correct.

So they will have to have a student health plan in some form to access care.

For most students, they like to use the Health and Wellness services on campus.

As it is the most accessible to them.

But students are also welcome to use community health services if they prefer.

Are TTC student ID cards available on campus.

This is a great question.

I don't believe that we do the ID cards on campus.

I think they have to go to a TTC location specifically in order to get those.

Recreational fitness opportunities gym memberships, intramurals, etc.

Natalie shared a link to recreation.utoronto.ca.

One of the great things is that as part of their student fee they have access to all of the athletic facilities on campus, which are extensive.

A fun fact is that Hart House actually has an archery range in the basement that students can access.

Which is a pretty fun recreational activity.

There's lots of classes and other things that they can engage with as well.

And then as you mentioned intramurals.

We have a lot of team sports that students can participate in to have some fun build some community and stay active.

And so intramural information can be accessed through the recreation website as well.

A fun one that I had never heard of before coming to U of T, is actually inner tube to water polo.

So that's a cool intramural that that students can participate in.

So, questions around international students.

Most of this information is available through the CIE website.

Especially, the UHIP information we have a dedicated web page with steps and information to walk them through the process.

So, I'm sure that Natalie can share that in the chat.

I don't know about the airport pickup.

It might depend on the quarantine program, if that applies.

So, we can link the information about U of T quarantine and how that works.

And one of the things, I will recommend if someone is not quarantining or required to quarantine.

But, coming from the airport or perhaps when they're traveling back to the airport.

Or, if they are going home for break, is the union Pearson Express.

It's a train that goes directly from Pearson Airport to Union Station downtown.

Takes about 25 minutes, and it's really accessible and wonderful.

So, I know a lot of students will use that as a resource.

A great question about what it's like to live in a College residence, that is not the college that you belong to.

This is a great question.

I think that it allows students to have a different kind of community that they can have access to.

So, I think that's a really cool thing about U of T.

Is that there's lots of pockets of community and experiences that students have and can engage with.

Which, is really great.

So, for students who you know live at one college and have services and supports on another.

They're kind of getting the best of both.

Because they have access to a lot of things through their residence.

And then, also have access to things through their college.

So, I think some openness to that experience and willingness to get to know that community can be really wonderful.

And although you know students are assigned to a College at U of T.

That's where all of their services are in their home base.

You can have classes or participate in clubs and activities that can be located anywhere on campus.

So, it's a really unique and interesting experience that way.

Natalie shared some of this CIE information around arriving in Toronto, and the pre-arrival and welcome in the chat.

For folks that are interested.

"Please summarize some security measures at residences". "Some parents are not able to visit in person." For sure.

So, one of the benefits of living in residence is absolutely the community and the safety.

Each residence is a little bit different in terms of how they're administered.

So your specific residence will probably share some information with you around the safety and security.

But, I can speak generally to the residences.

And, I actually worked in residence for a number of years.

So, I'm fairly familiar with this.

But there are dedicated staff at each residence, who work full time to support student well being and safety in residence.

Some residences have a security desk with security staff there 24-7.

Others, have what we call, desks with front desk porters.

Often, these are highly trained upper student staff, who help with things like lock outs, mail, guests and that kind of thing.

So, there's a lot of monitoring kind of happening in terms of coming and going from the building.

All of our residences also have what we call Residence Dons.

So, these are trained upper year students and graduate students who live in the residence community who are trained in a lot of communication, conflict resolution and intervention skills to be able to support students.

So, if your students living in residence, you will probably hear them talk about their Don.

And that's someone that they can connect with, to get some support.

And they also promote community building.

Which is pretty great.

One thing that I will say is that, when it comes to residence, we trust and promote a student's independence.

So, there is not a curfew.

Sometimes to parents dismay, we don't always check to make sure that students are coming in every night by a certain time.

So when we talk about change and transition and getting used to some of those things.

It's just something to note.

And keep in mind for you.

Natalie shared some links and information in the chat around security, campus safety and also some information about residence Dons, and what they do.

Just checking in on our time.

I know we have a bit of time left together.

Folks are welcome to hop on and ask a question.

Or, put a question in the chat if there's anything we can answer for you.

I also want to note that when we end this meeting, you will lose access to the chat.

So if there's any kind of links, or information that you'd like from there.

Make sure that you copy that now.

Or, open them so that you have access to them.

Question about Family Day.

So, Family Day is a Canadian holiday that we celebrate in February.

So typically, it's a day where the university is closed.

And usually is the first day of the winter reading week in February, for students.

So, Family Day usually coincides with the reading week.

So, students don't have to take classes that week.

Campus tends to be closed on Family Day.

But we are usually open for the rest of reading week.

So, that students have the opportunity to go to appointments, if they'd like to.

Or, connect with staff or participate in programs.

I will also have Natalie just share my email [savannah.sloat@utoronto.ca] in the chat for folks.

So, if after the session you'd like to connect about anything.

You are more than welcome to email me any of your questions.

I can likely answer them or connect you with the office that you need to speak with.

Or, refer you to any of the services or information that you're looking for.

I know it can feel like a lot to navigate all at once.

Is there a list of all the clubs on campus?

Yes, there is.

So, we have a website called ULife.

And these are all of the registered clubs at U of T.

And so, students can actually filter them based on their interest area, based on the time of day that they might want to participate in an activity, or based on openings and availability.

So, I'll share those, there's lots of really excellent clubs.

And when we say there is a club for everything on campus, that definitely holds true.

There's lots of things for students to get involved in.

So, we can share that there as well.

More about what happens on Family Day.

That's a great question.

It's not one I've had before.

Typically, it's just the university is closed.

So, it's a provincially recognized holiday in Ontario and I know in some other provinces.

So, it's a holiday where things close.

I think the intention is that you connect with your family.

But, it's basically just a free long weekend in February.

So, the universities closed that day.

On making a financial plan, can you provide more general information on what a student should expect to spend, per month, per week.

Yeah, excellent.

This is a great question.

And there are a lot of resources available for students at their College who are looking to specifically engage with a financial advisor.

Most Registrar's offices have an academic advisor who specifically deals with finances.

And there are some resources for that.

We can link you to U of T's website for some information around making a budget.

I think the most important thing is just have a conversation with students around making a budget and sticking to it.

It's very tempting to, you know, go out buy coffee every day.

Go grab lunch, do things with your friends.

Just being mindful of money and what you're spending.

And I think also having a conversation with your students about the kind of funds that they will have access to.

So, if you are supporting them financially.

In what ways or how much, what's the expectation for them to contribute.

If there is any, do they want to consider getting a part time job.

Questions like that, and we can share some, some budgeting information there.

But I would really strongly recommend connecting the financial advisors in the registrar's office.

Because those folks are fantastic, and they can give you lots of great information about that.

My son is moving from Vancouver, from a BC health plan to an OHIP health plan.

I believe that the way that process works, is that typically it's a process that takes, I think, 8 to 12 weeks if I remember correctly.

And they will just use their BC plan until they have activated their OHIP plan, which is fine.

If they have benefits through you.

Then they'll have the opportunity to opt out of their health plan.

If they don't currently have access to benefits through you.

They will have benefits through their student tuition, and the student health plan.

So, we can share that link for the UTSU health plan, with folks asking about the UHIP coverage.

Yes, correct.

Students on UHIP are under the UTSU health plan.

But you have to make sure that you activate your UHIP card.

Basically, your UHIP card is the ID that shows that you have health plan coverage through the university.

That would be the ID that you use when you're accessing any health services where they asked for a health card.

Question about a music student placed at Chelsea and accommodation for practice rooms.

I'm not sure.

Specifically, if Chelsea will have music rooms.

That's not information that I have access to.

However, there are a number of practice rooms available to them on campus.

And I will say that for students at Chelsea.

They will probably hear back pretty quickly about moving into residence on campus.

Once spaces become available, and those residences will have information about practice rooms that they can access.

"Are there changes to tuition due to COVID?" No,
not that I'm aware of.

There are no changes in tuition due to COVID-19.

Natalie has also shared the link that you folks can see here.

ULife with all of the clubs, information, and organizations that students can get involved in.

Which is really great.

Information about balancing varsity sports and academics.

I think balance overall is a skill that students learn.

When attending university, I think, first and foremost the thing to be aware of is to really effectively schedule their time.

And to think about how much they're spending in each area.

One of the things I will recommend is the Academic Success Center has a wonderful workshop on time management.

That allows students to directly go through their schedule and plan out all of their time week to week.

It's an excellent resource and I can't recommend it enough.

Those folks do really great work.

When it comes to preparing students with the skills that they might need to be successful.

So, I would recommend checking that one out for sure.

Is there a parent's tour available before the start of the school year?

So, all of the campus tour information can be found through the campus tours office.

Natalie has shared that link there for folks who might be interested in that.

I have also noticed there's a lot of great tour videos available on our website in different places that show you a little bit of campus.

But, if you're looking for a more comprehensive tour, definitely visit the link that Natalie mentioned.

Those folks have the resources for you.

Oh, the information about the academic counseling for sure.

So, the Academic Success Centre, Natalie can put their information in the chat.

They are a wonderful service and office on campus.

They offer a variety of things so lots of resources on their website that are around academic skills.

Specifically, they're running a program in August, around preparing for university.

And building some of those learning skills.

They run a number of workshops through the year that students can attend at any time.

Natalie just shared the link for that office in the chat.

They also provide the opportunity for students to meet one on one with a Learning Strategist.

Which I think is a really excellent resource.

So, they meet with a staff member who can connect with them about both their learning experience and help them with anything related to academic skills Which is great.

Are parents allowed on campus during orientation week and during relocation?

So, for residences, specifically, they will each have their own rules about guests in those buildings particularly.

So, please review the information that the residence sends you about being able to be present in residence.

The great thing about campus, it is really integrated into downtown.

So, you're always welcome to walk through campus and take a look around.

Some of the really wonderful buildings and architecture that we have.

Which is great.

You just have to follow the general guidelines for buildings when you're entering them.

So, masking will be required.

And the buildings have signage.

As we've all probably gotten familiar with in terms of spaces that you can or can't access.

So, you can see them there.

“Do students stay for summer classes?”

Yes, there are lots of classes that have been in the summer.

And I will say that some of my best class experiences actually happened during summer school.

For myself, I think it's nice because you take less classes in the summer if you want to stay.

And it's also really lovely to study outside on campus when the weather is beautiful and sunny.

There are also lots of departments that run really cool classes during summer that they don't run during the rest of the year.

So, for example, as an anthropology student, I got to take an archeological survey course on campus.

Where we actually did an excavation on a part of front campus.

Which, was really cool and you get credit for that.

So, lots of cool things that happened in the summer, for sure. “Can International Students work on or off campus on a student visa?” Yes, absolutely they can.

Our office actually hires a number of student positions, as well as lots of offices across campus.

So, there's a couple of ways that you can do this.

There are on campus jobs at places like libraries, dining halls, and food service.

There are places off campus that students can apply to if they're interested.

But, we also have the work study program.

Which is a really fantastic program.

Where offices on campus, apply to have work study student positions that work directly in their office.

The great thing about them is that they're flexible.

The hours are varied.

It's never more than, I think, 15 hours a week.

And it is an on campus role that gives them exposure to different offices.

So, definitely recommend that if anyone's interested in looking at the work study positions or other jobs that might be available to students.

Those are all available on the CLNx site.

Lots of great questions.

So, we've got a couple more minutes together.

I want to say thanks to everyone for being here and participating.

It's so heartening to see you folks here and supporting your students.

And we're really excited to welcome them to campus in just a couple of weeks.

So, please tell them to connect with our office.

And any of the offices that you see here on the screen.

And please feel free to send me an email if there's any questions that you still have or that we can answer for you.

So, thanks so much for being here folks.

Thanks everyone for coming.

We really appreciate it.

We will close the chat at 6:30pm.

So, grab any of those links if you want them now.

End of webinar transcript (01:23:25)