



# ANNUAL REPORT 2020-2021







# CONTENTS

**To Our Members: A Message  
From the Board of Directors  
and the General Manager ..... 2-3**

**Students Beyond the  
Classroom: Year in Review ..... 4**

**Strategic Direction ..... 5**

**Student Financial Relief  
During Covid ..... 6**

**Community Impact ..... 7**

*Student Health ..... 7*

*Student Social Experience ..... 8*

*Safety and Inclusion ..... 9*

*Student Rights & Academic Advocacy ..... 10*

*Access to Student Spaces ..... 11*

**Contact & Location ..... 12**





# TO OUR MEMBERS

## A MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND THE GENERAL MANAGER



To say that 2020-2021 year was challenging is truly an understatement. The global COVID-19 pandemic affected and continues to affect our student members' personal and economic well-being but the resiliency our student community demonstrated has been incredible. We know the virtual learning environment was also transformative: as our members connected with us from all over the world, we witnessed their strength, determination, tenacity and commitment to continuous learning, social justice, and necessary societal changes.

We are encouraged by the prospect of reconnecting fully on campus as we advance together our mission.

Members alongside our board, staff, community partners confronted this unique time with courage and creativity from virtual activation of our programs to student relief efforts. Our team strived to deliver extraordinary services in unprecedented times.

### 2020-2021 Key Highlights:

- We launched our 2021-2023 Strategic Direction with a proposed new mission, vision and values for our organization. We also developed the guiding principles as the platform to support decision-making at the Student Association of George Brown College (SAGBC). These principles will underpin the relationship and dialogue between Board, Staff and Community Partners. Our priorities include Build Connections within an engaged student community; Invest in people, technology and processes that lead to digital transformation; and Promote organizational learning, development and sustainability.
- In the Fall of 2020, an open letter to George Brown College for an update on Truth and Reconciliation and Anti-Racism/Diversity Action Plan was launched with a request for substantive update in the areas of anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism. We will continue to work alongside GBC and to hold our college accountable towards commitments that are stated in the GBC Anti-Racism Strategy.



# TO OUR MEMBERS

## A MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND THE GENERAL MANAGER

- Our Preparatory and Liberal Studies Education Representative launched an action to ensure that students can add their correct names and pronouns on GBC student platform- Black Board. This campaign was successful and students can change to their correct name through a self-service process on Stu-View. These ongoing victories remind us of the importance of what we do.
- A primary role of the Student Association is ensuring democratic accountability through the election process. During this time of remote learning, our online elections was truly a global experience with voting conducted in over 60 countries on all six inhabited continents. Voter turnout reached a record 9.1 % based on student enrollment in the spring election.
- As an organization, we are committed to operating in a way that creates progress towards the United Nation Sustainable Development Goals (SDG Accord). SAGBC has committed and prioritize these seven goals as a call for action (Zero Hunger, Good Health and Well Being, Quality Education, Gender Equality, Reduced Inequalities, Responsible Consumption and Production and Climate Action). We know there is much work to be done, and we commit to working with our members, GBC community and partners to achieve results in these areas.

Thank you to all our board of directors, full time, and part time staff for their tireless efforts, and our stakeholders, partners and contractors for their incredible work and continuous support. We look forward to further collaborations as we aspire to higher levels of excellence in the year ahead.





# STUDENTS BEYOND THE CLASSROOM: YEAR IN REVIEW

There isn't just one pandemic. This was a year of political rising against anti-Black racism, anti-Asian hate, and anti-Indigeneity. As schools plan and re-plan how to re-open safely, students are on high alert about unfair treatment, systemic neglect, and unjust worlds.

The Student Association recognizes how students and the student movement are not disconnected from the broader equity context around us. How were you shaped by this year?

## **MULTIPLE PANDEMICS: RACISM AS HEALTH CRISIS**

The pandemic brought on a global rush to safety – but what constitutes safety, whose safety, and speed and scale of response to anti-racism safety remain things students critically challenge.

Spring 2020 surfaced the video of George Floyd's murder at the hands of police. That spring, millions protested anti-Black racism and sparked wide recognition and reckoning. For students, this represented a heavy emotional load.

June 2020, the Toronto Board of Health voted unanimously to declare anti-Black racism a public health crisis. Given that position, students turned their gaze towards anti-racism pandemic planning in schools.

June 3 2020, the federal government passed Bill C-5 in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Final Report, marking September 30 as the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. Colonial school systems have a history of perpetuating harms, and students continue to look at how anti-Indigeneity exists at the college.

The academic year should not be anchored by this timeline of racism, hate, and genocide. The Student Association continues to make demands to end racism, and champions students' part in historic shifts for equity change-making.

## **STUDENT VICTORY: TOP ONTARIO COURT BANS STUDENT CHOICE INITIATIVE**

On January 17, 2019, Doug Ford's Provincial government announced the Student Choice Initiative (SCI), which – on its surface -- gave students an opt-out ability for certain fees deemed inessential by the conservative government. The SCI was never about saving students money though; it was an attempt to fragment the student community and defund the groups that hold governments accountable.

Students won when, in November of 2019, the York Federation of Students and the Canadian Federation of Students took the government to court over the policy. The divisional court ruled against the government, and upheld this judgement in Summer 2020 by dismissing their appeal.

The campaign against the SCI positioned students as part of a historic victory. We urge the government to not further appeal at the Supreme Court. Let's work and ready ourselves for more wins in 2021.

## **RESILIENCE & RECOVERY**

Students bring a unique optimism and hope to world change-making. After all, they've come to school to learn, which shows they believe change is possible.

This was the year Student Association set a vision, "Students are empowered to influence a just world." Keep rallying around each other with compassion and action to achieve that vision.



# STRATEGIC DIRECTION

**THE SA IS PROUD TO HAVE INTRODUCED OUR NEW STRATEGIC DIRECTION, WHICH WILL SHAPE THE FUTURE AND VISION OF THE SA**

It is with great pleasure that the Student Association of George Brown College (SAGBC) celebrated the completion of our new Strategic Direction this year; an initiative that has been in development since March of 2020 in response to large-scale changes necessitated by the COVID-19 virus and shifting policies at George Brown College. After many surveys, focus working groups, and planning sessions, we are confident that our new Strategic Direction is grounded in our core values and represents our recommitment to responsibility and responsiveness as a partner in the student movement. Implementation strategies are currently underway for a full delivery and evaluation of this plan by the end of this year.

The Strategic Direction is based in three foundational motivations:

**TO INSPIRE:**

OUR TWO-YEAR RECOMMITMENT TO CHANGE, GROWTH, AND PROGRESS

**TO ADAPT:**

IDENTIFYING STRATEGIC PRIORITIES THROUGH A SHIFTING POLICY ENVIRONMENT

**TO GROW:**

RECOMMITTING TO TRANSPARENCY, RESPONSIBILITY, AND RESPONSIVENESS

Rather than the more traditional 4-year commitment, we deployed a two-year plan to suit the quickly changing needs of the GBC student community, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. With this in mind, we developed three strategic priorities, each with specific action points, that we will address through the next two years of our programming and initiatives:

**PRIORITY 1**

BUILD CONNECTIONS  
WITHIN AN ENGAGED  
STUDENT COMMUNITY

**PRIORITY 2**

INVEST IN PEOPLE,  
TECHNOLOGY, AND  
PROCESSES THAT  
LEAD TO DIGITAL  
TRANSFORMATION

**PRIORITY 3**

PROMOTE  
ORGANIZATIONAL  
LEARNING &  
DEVELOPMENT,  
SUSTAINABILITY,  
STRATEGIC  
RECRUITMENT, &  
HIGH-PERFORMANCE  
TEAMS



# FINANCIAL RELIEF DURING COVID

## EQUITY & CARE RELIEF FUND (COVID-19)

First launched in the spring of 2020, the Equity & Care Relief Fund was offered again for winter 2021. The Student Association (SA), established this fund to prioritize care to equity groups impacted by COVID-19. This fund recognizes how traditionally marginalized, under-served, and underrepresented communities are disproportionately impacted in times like these (crisis) and have disproportionate resources and supports.

- Delivered through the Community Care Centre, it's an extension of the CCC's commitment to offering low barrier access to care. On mission to support students through struggle, this fund recognizes how marginalized students often face barriers with other bursaries and applications. The application process was designed to be affirming and non-invasive.
- **\$47,175** distributed during the winter term to **379** recipients

## GEORGE BROWN COLLEGE & STUDENT ASSOCIATION OF GEORGE BROWN COLLEGE COVID-19 EMERGENCY RELIEF FUND

The SA contributed **\$350,000** to the Student COVID-19 Relief Fund which helped domestic and international students who were in urgent financial need.

## STUDENT FEES

During the pandemic, fees were reduced through a credit to our students of **\$897,956**.

## SA AWARDS, BURSARIES & SCHOLARSHIPS

The Student Association pledged to the George Brown College Foundation to provide awards, bursaries and scholarships to our students.

- This year, the SA has provided 163 awards, totalling **\$228,000**
- The SA also contributed **\$73,950.00** towards the Student Association Scholarships and Capital projects.



# COMMUNITY IMPACT

The Student Association's programs were impacted, though not slowed down, by the COVID-19 pandemic. By the start of the 2020-21 academic year, all SA programs were well accustomed to the challenges of working remotely and, with no end in sight, dedicated to making sure their services and resources reached students studying from home.

## STUDENT HEALTH

The Student Nutrition Access Program's (SNAP) services were called upon perhaps more than ever and were able to continue uninterrupted throughout the pandemic. Precarious income and job loss due to the pandemic has led to a rise in food instability, and SNAP's team has worked hard to help students stay healthy and fed with free webinars, workshops, and food hampers delivered to their homes.

Likewise, the pandemic has underlined the critical importance of students' health benefits plans. During a year of confusion, the SA's Health Benefits team has helped students navigate their benefits, figure out how to access them, and understand what is covered. From clarifying information on the benefits provided by WeSpeakStudent to providing guidance on how to add family members to their plan, the Health Benefits staff worked hard to support thousands of students during an unprecedented health crisis.



3014

students supported  
with food hampers

6900

students assisted by  
Health Benefits team

535

students supported at  
SNAP tax clinic; a new  
record



35

online events  
focusing on  
health, nutrition,  
and diet

22,808

students covered under the  
health benefits plans



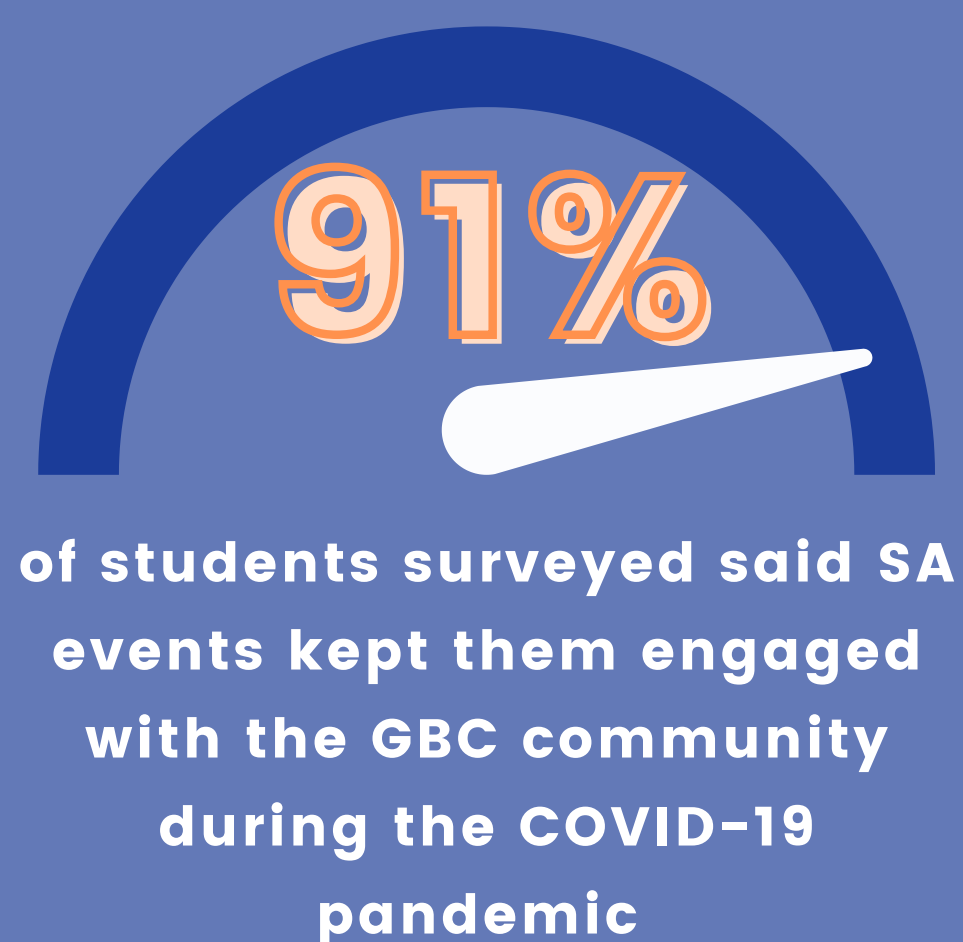
# COMMUNITY IMPACT

## STUDENT SOCIAL EXPERIENCE

Despite major changes to event logistics, the Events and Recreation program has used the challenges presented by COVID-19 protocols as opportunities to create connections, experiment with new technologies, and reimagine the potential of virtual spaces. With a focus on creating collaborative relationships between institutions and imagining creative ways to foster togetherness online, the Events and Recreation program has helped thousands of students find their community at GBC.

For their part, the Clubs and Student-led Networks program were champions of student connection during the pandemic. Through support for students with interests varying from dragon boats to robotics to anime, Clubs & Student-led Networks helped students find shared interests and stay connected with the college and each other while studying from home.

Maintaining connections amongst the GBC student community is foundational to the Dialog's mandate, too. Without students filling the halls of GBC's campuses, the Dialog pivoted unwaveringly to a digitally focused publication schedule. With stories covering the COVID-19 crisis and GBC's reaction to it, to the retirement of the college's long-standing president, to the decision to lay off in-person transcribers and the union pushback that followed, the Dialog's editorial staff made sure there was always something new for students to read.



3018

students participated in Events & Rec initiatives

187

news stories published in the Dialog

4370

Frosh Kits distributed

4

collaborations with other student unions

409

students welcomed back to school with free, on-campus lunches

29

clubs and student-led networks



# COMMUNITY IMPACT

## SAFETY AND INCLUSION

Prolonged campus closures posed significant challenges to SafeWalk's typical services. Nevertheless, SafeWalk successfully transitioned to providing services within virtual space and pivoting their programming to reflect a virtual campus. Through their online workshops and trainings around Understanding and Managing Aggressive Behaviour; Basic First Aid Theory; Cyber Violence; and Technology and Safety, SafeWalk was able to continue to offer valuable programming focused on safety awareness and skills training unavailable elsewhere at George Brown College.

The Community Care Centre (CCC) distributed the Equity & Care Relief Fund this year in recognition of the particular impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on marginalized groups. With a focus on providing low-barrier access to care and relief, the CCC supported hundreds of students from recognized equity groups: Black; First Nations, Inuit, Metis; 2SLGBTQIAP+; Students with Disabilities; International/Racialized; and Women and Trans students. Moreover, the CCC was able to shift their peer support groups into virtual space and also introduced monthly Care Kits, in which care and wellness items were distributed to students via post.

**\$50,000**

from Equity & Care Fund distributed to almost

**400**

students from marginalized communities



Care Kits distributed to students each month

**288**

GBC community members supported with in-person walks (SafeWalk)

**148**

training certificates of participation issued via SafeWalk workshops & Trainings



A stylized, handwritten signature in blue ink.



# COMMUNITY IMPACT

## ***STUDENT RIGHTS AND ACADEMIC ADVOCACY***

Sweeping changes to course delivery and campus access drastically impacted the need for Academic Support's services during the pandemic. Students came to Academic Support to receive information about new processes, amended policies, and their academic rights. In addition to this, Academic Support developed and released educational content around students' learning styles and hosted monthly webinars to address knowledge gaps pertaining to GBC's academic policies.

The majority of the SA's Student Financial Legal Services continued to be done remotely this year, as our legal and financial experts supported students over email and Zoom calls. Where in-person meetings were deemed necessary, the Student Financial Legal Services team met with them with comprehensive safety precautions in place. Hundreds of students received support as a result of these efforts.

**220** students supported  
through Academic  
Support's case intake

**700+** students helped via  
Student Financial  
Legal Services

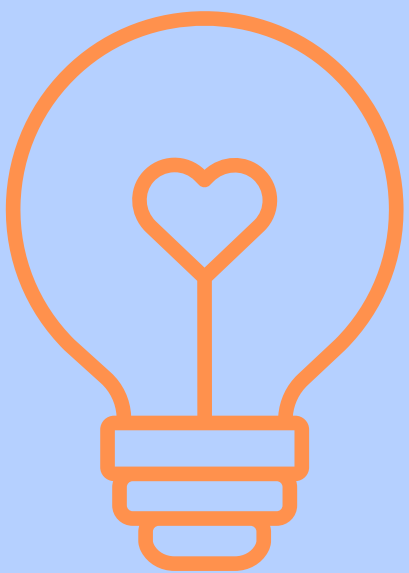




# COMMUNITY IMPACT

## ACCESS TO STUDENT SPACES

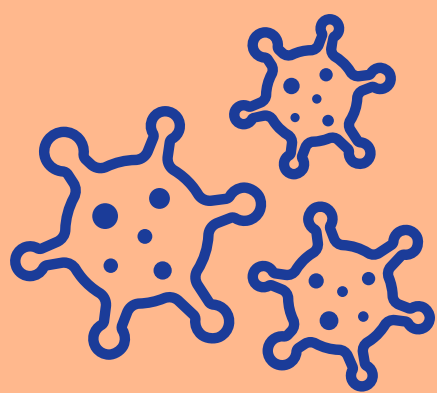
The response to the COVID-19 pandemic has ultimately led to the need for campus space upgrades to allow more regular cleaning and sanitation. The SA's Building & Facilities team successfully adapted and restructured office, lounges, student centers and washroom spaces to accommodate enhanced cleaning protocols and stringent health and safety measures. While major renovations and construction upgrade to SA spaces were put on hold in March 2020 due to COVID-19, the Building Capital team has used this quiet time on campus to complete necessary space renovation and upgrades. More than \$429K has been spent to support SA student spaces renovation and reconstruction to increase campus safety measures and develop ambitious and exciting plans for the next year



**Moved towards greater sustainability by upgrading lighting fixtures at Waterfront and St James campuses from fluorescent bulbs to LED**



**All Casa Loma washrooms renovated for better accessibility and given a cosmetic upgrade to replace flooring, stalls, sinks, lighting and wall treatments**



**All SA spaces including students centers and spaces have been adjusted and restructured to increase safety and include COVID-19 controls and measures**



# CONTACT & LOCATION

## **CASA LOMA CAMPUS**

142 Kendal Ave. – Room E100  
(416) 415-5000 ext. 4730

## **ST JAMES CAMPUS**

200 King St. E. – Room 147  
(416) 415-5000 ext. 2455

## **WATERFRONT CAMPUS**

51 Dockside Dr. – Room 033  
(416) 415-5000 ext. 5360

## **RYERSON CAMPUS**

99 Gerard St. E. – Room 614  
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