

CONVERGENCE

April 2020 Edition

UNCERTAIN FUTURE



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A GUIDE TO UNIVERSITY APPLICATIONS

DOS AND DON'TS FROM A Y12 STUDENT

ALEX XIANG
STAFF REPORTER

University. It's a loaded word and a topic that you, as a student at Upper Canada College, are going to have to start thinking about as you approach that all too important graduation date. For some, that process is nearing completion, while for others, it remains a giant, insurmountable hurdle that is terrifying to think about.

Having recently completed the process of applying to universities, both in Canada and the U.S., I have compiled a list of dos and don'ts when it comes to choosing and applying to universities.

Don't: Stress

At first glance, the entire process can seem overwhelming. What university should I apply to? What career do I want to pursue? Which teachers should I get a recommendation from? All these questions can pile up and sink you in a mountain of confusion and ambiguity. My first piece of advice is to relax, especially if you are in Y8, 9, or 10. No one expects you to know what career you want to pursue.

We, as students at UCC, have the distinct privilege of having a university counselling office, filled to the brim with talented and experienced university counsellors who will guide you through every step of your journey. Through career days to 1-on-1 meetings, they ensure that each step is as easy as possible, from the very first meeting to the day you receive that IB diploma from Principal McKinney.

Do: Ask Questions

This goes as a corollary to the first piece of advice. Your counsellor can only help you to the extent that you seek help. In other words, if you don't ask questions, you'll never get answers. Thinking about taking a gap year? Ask your counsellor. Considering going to university to play sports? Ask

your counsellor. Don't know what OUAC is? You know the drill.

From Y9 onwards, you will begin interacting with your counsellor more and more through advising meetings and application workshops. Your counsellor can help you with everything from picking the right university to choosing your IB courses, so it's important that you schedule regular meetings to discuss any updates.

The same goes for your teachers. If one of them went to a university that you are interested in, ask them about it. The proper tools and people are there for you, just make sure that you make the most of it.

Don't: Get Caught Up in Numbers

Wow! The University of Toronto is ranked 18th in the world! I have to apply!

This kind of logic is the wrong way of thinking. One of the primary mistakes that I, along with many of my classmates, made is worrying too much about acceptance rates and rankings. While they can be a relatively accurate indication of a school's competitiveness, they may not be an accurate representation of how good a fit the university is for you. Remember, it's not the people ranking the universities that are attending them, you are. Accordingly, it's important to go beyond the numbers and take a closer look at why a certain university may or may not be a good fit.

Factors such as location, class sizes, specific professors and programs, food, and community should arguably play a much larger factor in your decision than some number on a list. For instance, if you like smaller classes with more individualized learning, maybe U of T isn't a great fit. Go deeper than the number.

Do: Explore Your Passions

Hey you, Year 8! Yeah? What do you want to do when you grow up? A lawyer! Why? Cause I want to become a millionaire and own a nice sports car!

This is the last thing you want to do when you are picking a program. Why? Because all the money in the world won't help if you are stuck doing something you hate. When picking a program for university, make sure it's something you are genuinely passionate about. The only way to do that is to explore your passions in greater depth. Maybe you love public speaking because of that time you saw a Justin Trudeau campaign rally. Great! Join debate and pursue that passion. By pursuing your interests, you can determine if that interest is something you want to keep pursuing at the undergraduate level. If you genuinely love business, join DECA and keep exploring.

Above all, remain open to new possibilities. It's unlikely that you pick one passion in high school and stick to it for the rest of your career. By exploring your passions, not only is it easier to pick a program for university, but your application will also be stronger as you'll appear much more genuine.

Don't: Compare Yourself to Others

My last piece of advice is the most important of all. Don't compare yourself with anyone else. It's easy to see that one student who got into every single university he applied to and feel upset about your achievements, but don't. Comparison is the thief of joy for a reason. If you keep comparing yourself to others, you'll never be satisfied as there will always be that one person who did better than you. Instead, be proud of what you have accomplished and identify what you could have done better. By doing so, you will emerge from this process as a better and more successful person.

MS. RIDOUT'S 28-YEAR JOURNEY AT UCC



KEVIN LIU
MANAGER

Over a year ago, I asked Ms. Ridout for her advice about taking three science courses for Year 10, an unconventional idea in course selection. I was expecting a general answer weighing the pros and cons of the courses, but I was delighted to receive a very straight answer given my personal circumstances: "go ahead." I know this kind of experience is shared by so many students who have received valuable advice from Ms. Ridout, and that is why we all felt tremendously sad after hearing the news that she will be retiring this year.

Many of us would've loved to express our gratitude for Ms. Ridout in person, but unfortunately, current circumstances prohibit this. Therefore, on behalf of Convergence, I decided to interview Ms. Ridout so that we can all appreciate her inspiring journey at UCC and share her advice to all of us at the College.

HOW MANY YEARS HAVE YOU BEEN WORKING AT UCC? HOW DID YOU JOIN THE SCHOOL?

This is my 28th year at UCC. Although I had known since the age of five that I wanted to be a teacher, there were very few positions available when I finished my undergraduate degree, so prior to starting at the college, I worked as an assistant accountant in a bank, as a historical researcher and archivist, and as a teaching assistant at the University of Toronto. I initially joined the department of history in 1992 on a one-year contract, filling in for a teacher on leave.

WHICH POSITIONS HAVE YOU TAKEN OVER THESE YEARS?

In my time at the college, I have taught history and English and served as chair of the history department. I was the first woman in the history of UCC to be appointed as a senior housemaster (Jackson's). In 2003, I moved into the University Counselling Of-

fice, although I still taught one history class for the first five years. In terms of co-curricular responsibilities, I served as the college archivist, was the faculty advisor for several student publications and the Ontario Model Parliament as well as house soccer convenor. My biggest commitment beyond classroom teaching, however, was the over ten years I spent as advisor for the World Affairs Conference.

WHAT ARE YOUR MOST MEMORABLE AND MOST CHERISHED MOMENTS DURING YOUR CAREER AT UCC?

There are so many wonderful moments during my time at UCC that I have a hard time identifying just a few. I feel truly blessed to have worked with so many talented and dedicated colleagues across all areas of the college. Sharing my love of history and literature with hundreds of students over the years has been a great privilege. Teaching highlights included the American revolution simulation and annual trip to Boston in the US history course and braving the trials of Odysseus with my students in Grade 10 English. I have cherished the opportunity to nurture the hopes and dreams of boys as they plan their future and in many cases, to stay connected with them after they graduate. However, I must admit that my most memorable moment at UCC was the day I married my favourite economics teacher and basketball coach, Larry Lajeunesse, in the school chapel!

WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER YOUR BIGGEST ACHIEVEMENTS? WERE THERE ANY REGRETS?

As a teacher, counsellor, and colleague, I hope I will be remembered as someone who truly had an open door and an open heart, as someone who always made time to listen and offer support. I am very proud of the energy, enthusiasm, and hard work of my colleagues in the University Counselling Office that has allowed us to expand our program over the years in order to provide improved services to our families.

After so many wonderful years at UCC, the decision to retire was not an easy one. I shall miss the daily interactions with both colleagues and students. My only real regret is that these interactions in my last term are limited to a screen.

AS THE DIRECTOR OF THE UCO, YOU HAVE OFFERED VALUABLE ADVICE TO MANY STUDENTS AND PARENTS. IS THERE ANY PARTICULAR PIECE OF ADVICE THAT YOU FEEL IS IMPORTANT FOR ALL STUDENTS TO KNOW?

Participate with enthusiasm and integrity in all your endeavours, both inside and outside the classroom. Such engagement will provide the best opportunities for developing the skills and self-knowledge essential to making wise decisions about your present and your future. Above all, be true to yourself. Understand that the keys to success and happiness are in your own hands. As Oliver Wendell Holmes once said: "To reach a port we must sail, sometimes with the wind, and sometimes against it. But we must not drift or lie at anchor."

WHAT ARE YOUR PLANS AFTER RETIREMENT?

Well... prior to COVID-19, my husband and I were planning trips to the Scottish Highlands, New Zealand and Australia. I think those arrangements will be on hold for a while! I will enjoy having more time for reading and walking and I hope to sign up for a few interest courses as well as engaging in some community service. And, of course, I shall want to stay connected with UCC!

AND LASTLY, IS THERE ANY MESSAGE YOU WOULD LIKE TO SHARE WITH THE UCC COMMUNITY IN GENERAL?

Always remember that the strength of any institution rests with its people and the respectful and committed relationships they have with one other. Educational trends may come and go; caring and compassion endure.

THE INCOMING BOARD OF STEWARDS

PRINCETON ZHOU AND HENRY WANG
EDITORS

In order to learn more about the incoming Board of Stewards, Convergence editors Princeton Zhou and Henry Wang asked the incoming stewards a few questions.

Henry Kellen, Head Steward

WHAT DO YOU PLAN TO DO IN YOUR ROLE WHEN WE GET BACK ON CAMPUS?

Not knowing when we'll come back makes it hard to answer this, however, I believe that the most important thing will be the reconnection of our community. Having also heard a similar sentiment from others, I personally feel that the physical disconnect due to not being on campus has been extremely difficult. We must use the CLP to stay connected virtually, stay in touch with friends and classmates, and use this as an opportunity to form greater bonds with one another once we return back to campus.

WHAT VALUES DO YOU FEEL ARE MOST IMPORTANT FOR A SUCCESSFUL STEWARD?

I think that the two most important values for every steward are integrity and empathy. On top of that, as I've said in assembly: in order for the student body to receive many of the opportunities and responsibilities we would like, we must gain the trust of the faculty and staff. This trust should work both ways.

IF YOU COULD PICK ANY PROMINENT FIGURE IN THE WORLD TO BE YOUR MENTOR, WHO WOULD YOU PICK AND WHY?

I would choose Billy Beane (VP of Oakland Athletics), you may have heard of him from the movie "Moneyball". I know he isn't necessarily a prominent figure, however, I think he has two qualities that are essential for a good leader. First, the ability to adapt and change for the better, and second, the courage to take risks and not be afraid to fail.

WHICH TEACHER HAS HAD THE BIGGEST IMPACT ON YOU AT THE COLLEGE?

I would say Mr. Heffernan. Through his coaching during the last two years, I've ex-

perienced his dedication and commitment to better the life of both the students and his fellow staff at UCC. He sets high but realistic expectations which bring the team together and ultimately leads to success. I would like to use these same attributes during my time at UCC.

WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR MOST MEMORABLE EXPERIENCE AT THE COLLEGE?

This one's easy... my first A-Day. A-Day has always been an awesome experience for the community and will continue to be in the future. I'm looking forward to working with the Board of Stewards to add a few different and fun ideas next year while still keeping the tradition that makes A-Day so special.

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Eugene Ye, Academic Steward

WHAT DO YOU PLAN TO DO IN YOUR ROLE WHEN WE GET BACK ON CAMPUS?

This year, we witnessed a number of changes concerning academics, most of which were in the right direction. However, as many students have seen, there are still problems the school needs to address: hell weeks are just as bad (maybe even worse), the transition to the IB still seems like a big jump, and the school doesn't seem to have the flexibility it needs.

I want to build on the strong foundation Ben has established and develop ideas such as the assessment calendar accounting for important days like SATs or A-Day and extending the four assessments per week limit to four assessments every two weeks. Of course, everything I plan might not work, but I'll never know until I try and I can guarantee to everyone that I'll try my best.

WHAT VALUES DO YOU FEEL ARE MOST IMPORTANT FOR A SUCCESSFUL STEWARD?

I believe that the three most important values are patience, openness, and courage. Behind every successful idea are many failure stories, so it is important to pick yourself up and stay determined. Concerning openness, a steward can't be stubborn about his ideas or even his portfolio. The Board of Stewards must support each other in all areas of the school and be open to accepting new ideas.

Finally, a steward needs the courage to implement an idea even when he doesn't have everyone's support. He must always consider the good of the entire student body, even if that means losing the support of a few.

IF YOU COULD PICK ANY PROMINENT FIGURE IN THE WORLD TO BE YOUR MENTOR, WHO WOULD YOU PICK AND WHY?

It's a common answer, but the first name that pops into my head is Elon Musk. What I admire about him is not only his work ethic but also how whenever he thinks of a great idea, nothing can stop him. While it's true that he has the resources to execute these ideas, not everyone has the determination and fearlessness to go for what they believe in, even if it doesn't seem feasible at first. He learns from his mistakes and continues to push for improvement. Last, he is never afraid of failure because he knows that the worst case is only learning what you can do better next time.

WHICH TEACHER HAS HAD THE BIGGEST IMPACT ON YOU AT THE COLLEGE?

I would say Mr. Bauld. He's taught me a lot about being a better student and a better person in general. His focus isn't on grades or achieving the highest mark, but rather on observing the world and learning from experiences. It took me a while to truly understand what he was trying to convey, but once I did, my approach to how I observe and consider even the finest details changed significantly. I've learned that it's not only about trying to achieve the highest mark but also appreciating and being proud of what you've accomplished.

WHAT'S THE HARDEST COURSE YOU'VE TAKEN?

I would say Y10 HL Math with Mr. Chun. The jump from Y9 to Y10 math was massive and I knew I couldn't handle the level of difficulty the same way I had in Y9. Mr. Chun's approach to math was different from what I was used to: he liked to push simple concepts to the edge and make us think of new ways to apply these concepts instead of regurgitating what we had learned in class. I was eager to learn and had to practice these concepts much more than I had before. I hope that more courses strive to take this idea of pushing concepts further, rather than just expecting students to regurgitate what they've learned in class word for word.

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Reid Gledhill, Athletic Steward

WHAT DO YOU PLAN TO DO IN YOUR ROLE WHEN WE GET BACK ON CAMPUS?

From an athletics perspective, the pandemic has hit us hard. Over the last few weeks, there has been a lower supply of sporting events than Kirkland two-ply toilet paper. As a means of making up for the lost time, I want to prioritize athletic involvement such as a house-wide tournament or a Friday night football game (assuming we return in September). On the whole, what I can say for sure is that nothing brings the boys together like athletics.

WHAT VALUES DO YOU FEEL ARE MOST IMPORTANT FOR A SUCCESSFUL STEWARD?

Open mindedness and the ability to listen to one another. We shouldn't be restricting ourselves to the ideas of the Board of Stewards. Through being open and listening to the ideas of the entire UCC community, we can identify reasonable goals that will have the greatest effect.

IF YOU COULD PICK ANY PROMINENT FIGURE IN THE WORLD TO BE YOUR MENTOR, WHO WOULD YOU PICK AND WHY?

Lionel Messi. Why? Just so I could say I met Lionel Messi. I don't even think he speaks English.

WHICH TEACHER HAS HAD THE BIGGEST IMPACT ON YOU AT THE COLLEGE?

To be honest, I can't name the single teacher who's had the biggest impact on my life because through my nine years here, there have been too many to count. Part of what separates UCC is our teachers, they go above and beyond to make our learning experiences as enjoyable and successful as possible.

IF YOU HAD TO CHOOSE ANOTHER SPORT TO PLAY, WHICH WOULD YOU CHOOSE?

With soccer season taking place in the fall, I've never been able to get into the football program here at UCC. I enjoy watching it on TV and playing the occasional touch game back in Mr. Hutton's gym class, but I've never actually played "real football" and I'd love to give it a go someday.

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Kene Ochuba, Community Service Steward

WHAT DO YOU PLAN TO DO IN YOUR ROLE WHEN WE GET BACK ON CAMPUS?

I have a lot of things in the works and I plan to deliver on my promises. I have connections with other schools in Toronto and am going to coordinate with them to bring more events where we can all volunteer at. I'm branching out for us to have more volunteer opportunities that we take interest in and am working on an efficient way to deliver them to you. For CAS, information needs to be easily located and presented in a concise manner. To that end, I plan to give you all the online steps and past CAS projects to inspire ideas on Managebac support pages.

WHAT VALUES DO YOU FEEL ARE MOST IMPORTANT FOR A SUCCESSFUL STEWARD?

I believe that a steward has to be reliable and committed to their role by always being there when needed. They need to be organized and manage their time efficiently, as at UCC, there is always so much going on and it's easy to lose track of things. They also need to be able to communicate effectively, whether it's in presenting an idea or showcasing a new project to the student body.

IF YOU COULD PICK ANY PROMINENT FIGURE IN THE WORLD TO BE YOUR MENTOR, WHO WOULD YOU PICK AND WHY?

I would choose LeBron James because of what he has become. He didn't have the best circumstances during his upbringing but he took full advantage of all the opportunities he was given. He's also someone who has had to work very hard to get to where he is now, with harsh criticism at every corner of his life. Last, he limits his distractions and focuses on what means the most to him and what actually matters.

WHICH TEACHER HAS HAD THE BIGGEST IMPACT ON YOU AT THE COLLEGE?

I would say Madame Gauthier. When I entered UCC in Y9, my French skills were subpar to put it lightly. But she always encouraged my classmates and I to work hard and trust that we would see improvements. Whether it was through flashcards or a catchy conjugation song, I always learned something and my skills have improved

significantly. Another thing is that she's so dedicated and passionate about teaching French to her students and has inspired me to put my best foot forward in whatever I do.

WHAT VOLUNTEER WORK DO YOU THINK STUDENTS SHOULD TRY OUT? DO ANY ORGANIZATIONS STAND OUT?

I think that students should try volunteering in activities where they can help younger students such as Horizons or activities at a local recreation center. You can really make fun connections with these students and have a large impact. I would also encourage guys to volunteer at any UCC events they can, whether it is the Terry Fox Run or Festive Marketplace.

Volunteer Toronto is a great organization that provides volunteer opportunities to people across the city and I encourage you to attend their Volunteer Expo in the fall. Honestly, just try to find an activity doing something you like as you'll be helping others and having fun at the same time!

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Connell Cusinato, Creativity Steward

WHAT DO YOU PLAN TO DO IN YOUR ROLE WHEN WE GET BACK ON CAMPUS?

Make Friday assemblies the cherished events they once were and continue to promote arts-related activities at UCC. As basic as these ideas may sound, they are vital to building a strong sense of community while also being the core elements of the creativity steward's role.

WHAT VALUES DO YOU FEEL ARE MOST IMPORTANT FOR A SUCCESSFUL STEWARD?

Communication is the key to success for any great leader: a well oiled machine is far better than a rusty one. Whether it be in a discussion during a board of stewards meeting, implementing new policies, or giving a speech at assembly, strong communication skills are vital for all stewards.

IF YOU COULD CHOOSE ANY PROMINENT FIGURE IN THE WORLD TO BE YOUR MENTOR, WHO WOULD YOU CHOOSE AND WHY?

I would choose Bill Gates. Bill is one of the greatest minds of his generation and is continuously evolving. Not only do I want to learn his knack for business, but more

importantly, I want to understand his problem solving skills. If you've seen the Netflix special on him, you know that his mind is wired differently — essentially being superior than the minds of us commoners. If I had the chance to be mentored by him, I would simply try to understand how he approaches foreign ideas.

WHICH TEACHER HAS HAD THE BIGGEST IMPACT ON YOU AT THE COLLEGE?

Y8 math class with Mr. Mirkovich. In case you didn't know, it is 51% math, 49% life lessons. Entering in September with a complete lack of maturity, this class taught me what I needed to do in order to be successful in the upper school. Most importantly, it taught me what would be demanded of me. His philosophy was simple: if you don't act like a goofball and you work hard, you'll get along fine. Although I follow the former more than the latter, this message helped me immensely in the years to come.

WHO IS YOUR FAVOURITE MUSICIAN? WHICH SONG OF THEIRS DO YOU MOST RECOMMEND?

Tim Bergling, also known as Avicii, is one of the best DJs of our generation. His music has shaped the EDM world into what it is now. His lyrics have also been thought of as being some of the most meaningful in the industry, as they're often regarded as strong support for people struggling with mental health issues. I'd recommend the song "Hey Brother", as not only is it an absolute banger, but it also has a powerful message.

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Finn McDermott, Social Steward

WHAT DO YOU PLAN TO DO IN YOUR ROLE WHEN WE GET BACK ON CAMPUS?

I'd like to organize my social council and set an outline of what needs to be accomplished during the year. I'll begin with putting together the Y8/new boy welcome day. After that is done, I'd like to have the spirit day idea with our sister schools pushed through so I can start organizing the logistics of the event. Last, I'll plan the Y9/10 semi. That's about all I can promise for when we get back on campus but these events could be delayed given the current circumstances.

WHAT VALUES DO YOU FEEL ARE MOST IMPORTANT FOR A SUCCESSFUL STEWARD?

I believe that it's vital to possess collaborative, organizational, and public speaking skills. The time you put into your steward role and exceeding expectations is what you'll get out of it — you'll accomplish more than what you thought you could. It's important to be transparent in what you say you are going to accomplish and be realistic. Further, we must be proactive advocates for the student voice.

The great Maya Angelou once said "I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel". I would like to adhere to this quote as your social steward, as I could talk about all these events I want to organize and may or may not be able to follow through with them, but people will only take away the experience in organizing or participating in these events.

IF YOU COULD PICK ANY PROMINENT FIGURE IN THE WORLD TO BE YOUR MENTOR, WHO WOULD YOU PICK AND WHY?

Nelson Mandela has been someone who I've admired due to his strength to persevere and ability to forgive.

WHICH TEACHER HAS HAD THE BIGGEST IMPACT ON YOU AT THE COLLEGE?

Mr. Beaudoin has been the one who has always kept me accountable. I'll always remember what he says in our Wedd's house meetings from time to time: "You can either be the example or lead by example". You obviously don't want to be the example because there are negative consequences, so try to create small changes in your community and step out of your comfort zone.

WHAT HAVE BEEN YOUR FAVOURITE QUARANTINE ACTIVITIES?

My favourite quarantine activity has been playing board and card games with my family in the evenings. I've also enjoyed creating and performing home workout circuits with my siblings.

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Jay Kim, Sustainability Steward

WHAT DO YOU PLAN TO DO IN YOUR ROLE WHEN WE GET BACK ON CAMPUS?

My main priority would be to work with my fellow members on the Board of Stewards to help facilitate the student body's adjustment back into normal school life from the pandemic.

WHAT VALUES DO YOU FEEL ARE MOST IMPORTANT FOR A SUCCESSFUL STEWARD?

I believe that being reliable and open-minded are key values to becoming a successful steward. It's a steward's duty to represent the voice of the entire student body. However, this duty can't be successfully accomplished without having understood the varying voices of the student body and earning the students' trust to represent them.

IF YOU COULD PICK ANY PROMINENT FIGURE IN THE WORLD TO BE YOUR MENTOR, WHO WOULD YOU PICK AND WHY?

I would choose Bill Gates as he is a highly renowned climate activist and is simply one of the most influential figures in the world.

WHICH TEACHER HAS HAD THE BIGGEST IMPACT ON YOU AT THE COLLEGE?

Although countless teachers have had a large impact on me as a coach, mentor, and teacher since coming to this school seven years ago, Mr. MacKay has had the largest impact on me. From my years playing for him on the Tier 1B hockey team and his weekly presence in Seaton's House, he's helped me develop into the person I am today.

WHAT ARE YOUR FAVOURITE SCHOOL WELLBEING ACTIVITIES?

My favorites would be floorball, Steward's Madness, and the extra sleep-ins. Although playing floorball or in Stewards Madness is exciting, having a few extra hours of sleep is invaluable for students when battling through stressful weeks. Whether it is for our mental and physical health or increased concentration during academics and co-curricular activities, I believe that sleeping is key to improving our wellbeing.



The Blue Page

Unfiltered voices from the UCC community

Continuous Learning Plan:
An **Administrator's** Perspective

Even in these uncertain times, there has been a steady stream of information from school administration. Here's a dive into the rationale behind the new Continuous Learning Plan with Mr. Bardai and a distilled version of tentative plans for future Y12 events.

For updates, check: <https://www.ucc.on.ca/continuous-learning>

Transitioning to Online Learning

As schools closed in other parts of the world, Mr. Bardai and the Senior Leadership team (led by Mr. McKinney) first discussed the possibility of school closures in Canada on February 27th. To prepare, on March 6th (PD day), faculty discussed the logistics of learning virtually in the event of UCC's closure.

He noted that, while the difficulty of transitioning has varied from teacher to teacher, each and every member of faculty has risen to the challenge. It is a true testament to the strength of our community to hear that faculty members have been able to support students and one another.

Focus Day Every Day

The Senior Leadership Team designed the CLP after reading through feedback from faculty and connecting with school leaders in China, Hong Kong, Japan, and Saudi Arabia. The plan encourages active participation "to promote positive emotion towards learning, attachment to community, and overall engagement."

The Focus Day schedule was adopted to accommodate different situations at home, including those overseas, while still keeping us connected. Afternoons

are an asynchronous time where students can continue the day with independent work at their convenience. Most notably, since 45 minutes is too short to maintain a reasonable pace of learning, students can expect that the assigned work will take longer than just the asynchronous learning time (12:45 - 3:30 pm).

Upcoming Student Events

While community events have been cancelled for the foreseeable future, Mr. Bardai emphasized that "wherever possible, we will look to find ways to adapt our student events online. For significant events that mark the journey of our Year 12 students, we will find alternative times to honour and celebrate them. While it is hard to say exactly when that will happen, we will likely look to a date in the Fall for events like the Leaving Class Ceremony to take place."

Grading Policy

There have been major changes to the marking policy. Here's a breakdown, year by year:

Overall, June report cards will still be issued, however, final grades are based on marks from up until the March Break and during the CLP. During the CLP, only grades that indicate improvement (higher than your current mark) will be counted. Students seeking extensions for extenuating circumstances should email CfL Director Ms. Barnes.

Years 8-10

Each strand no longer needs to be assessed twice this year to fulfill MYP requirements. For final grades, teachers will use their professional judgement and formative work if a 2nd summative

is not possible. June exams remain cancelled.

Year 11

There is a strong possibility of abridged June exams to prepare Y11s for Y12. IAs will still be collected and submitted to the IB, but they will not be counted in the June report.

While I'm sure that everyone appreciates the new marking policy, it's important to discuss the rationale as well. When I spoke to Mr. Bardai, he remarked: "from illness in the family to reliable access to the Internet, the challenges are vast." As pluralism is one of the core values of our community, this policy will support students impacted by uncontrollable factors. The hope is that no student will be "unknowingly disadvantaged for these reasons."

However, assessments are an important way for students to receive feedback. While they can't negatively affect your mark, they will be considered on the June report. Most importantly, the material taught in the MYP lays the groundwork for Y11 and Y12. Completing formative work will only increase your mark now and into the future. It's a win-win and an opportunity for learning.

Supporting Students

With social distancing, it's important for UCC as a community to stay connected and maintain a strong bond. Club meetings are proceeding and the virtual LD and Student Centre have opened. Club meeting info is available in a spreadsheet created by Mr. Babits. As always, Health Centre personnel are available via email for general inquiries about health, and the CfL will continue to support students.



The Blue Page

Unfiltered voices from the UCC community

Continuous Learning Plan:
A **Student's** Perspective

In these unprecedented times, each of us is going through one of the most drastic transitional points in our lives — from on-campus school to online school. Thankfully, UCC has adapted well with the CLP, allowing UCC to resume normal school activities at almost exactly the same time as when we would have normally returned. Only days after we all went on Google Meets for the first time, we got a further return to normalcy with the return of advising, house meeting, and, of course, extracurriculars. The efficiency which allowed this transition to happen is a testament to the flexibility and resilience of our community.

Focus Day Every Day

As pointed out by Mr. Bardai, the CLP's synchronous and asynchronous elements were implemented after consulting with the global education community and emphasizes engagement with the content we learn. The most notable change in the new schedule is that every day is now a focus day, with "afterschool" time dedicated to asynchronous learning and extracurriculars.

It can be argued that the shortened classes as a result of focus days have had benefits even beyond helping those with different situations at home. In my Y11 classes, at least, the 30-45 minute classes mean that the class focuses much more on the content and moves at a much faster pace than we would otherwise do if it were a 90 minute class. Consequently, I've observed that classes are much more efficient. The drawback, of course, is that we often have to reinforce our learning during asynchronous time. Nevertheless, the newly proven increase in efficiency that comes with shortened classes is

perhaps something that the school can explore further.

It seems that the emphasis of the CLP is to ensure that students do not fall behind and are still engaged with everything that UCC has to offer, even in the era of social distancing. The challenge for students, especially with asynchronous learning, is to combat the tedium and temptations of being at home all day and fully complete all asynchronous work.

While asynchronous work may resemble homework, I believe that there is a key difference in their characterizations; homework is almost exclusively based on previously taught content, while asynchronous learning often involves teaching new content that is difficult to teach online in 45 minutes.

Grading Policy

A very detailed overview of the marking policy has already been written in the administrator's perspective. Briefly summarized, your marks cannot decrease, and formative work can now have a possibly beneficial impact on your final mark.

The new mark policy, therefore, means that this uncertain term is now one of each student's greatest opportunities to boost their mark. While the Spring Term usually means a busy schedule with perhaps a reduced timeframe for studying, quarantine means that time is in ample supply. This means that we truly have the opportunity to perform to the best of our abilities on assessments without the distractions of extracurriculars.

Probably everyone feels the desire to "coast" in courses which they already are doing well in, since their mark won't change. In Y11 especially, however, this

mindset will come back to haunt us. Only the Y11s will be tested on content learned during quarantine, on our final IB exams in May of next year, when we inevitably return to school. Now isn't the time to fall behind.

On a broader note, the primary reason for this new policy — to accommodate students with uncontrollable challenges to online learning — should be applauded. No boy should be left behind academically as a result of conditions beyond their control, and the new mark policy is a giant leap in the right direction.

Online School Hacks

Here's a list of things that you might find helpful in dealing with online school:

1. Set up a spreadsheet of your schedule with hyperlinks to all your classes
2. Don't spend your breaks at your desk; changing your setting is a much-needed psychological break
3. Exercise and stretch regularly
4. Drink lots of water and eat breakfast
5. Connect with friends in the virtual meeting spaces
6. Health care personnel are available via email if you should require their assistance
7. The CFL, Peer Tutoring, and all other academic supports that you may have used are still there to provide support

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