

How to Grow Student Community

Inspired by an interview (Dec 2021) with a student leader from LFS, including their quotes.

Student Leader

Some things just need to be student run.

"If [a communication platform] is mediated by a prof then it is not effective"

A student leader is invested in building community. It takes a lot of work with the results not being immediately visible. They are motivated to bring people together because they see the potential for community, appreciate people, and want to foster valuable connections.

"I just did it because I wanted"

Action

1. Start a communication platform (i.e., host a discord server)
 - o Ensure it's accessible (technically and emotionally such as pronouns)
 - o Ensure people feel welcome
 - o Reach out to people who are not yet in the community
2. Organize events
 - o "If nobody plans stuff, nobody will do anything."
 - o Scheduling events
 - "No time will work for everyone, just find a good time and stick it in the calendar."
 - o Structure and consistency is important
3. 'Break the Ice' with activities
 - o Get-to-know-you games such as 'We're Not Really Strangers'
 - o Polls can be run and shared (anonymously) for the group to get a sense of one another (i.e., how many are queer, religious, neurodivergent, etc.)
4. Reach out to individuals (and facilitated others to reach out to others)

Support

A student leader may not know the value of facilitating community, have the know-how, or know appropriate resources for themselves or others (ex. Access to tools and information on counseling, housing, events, workshops, etc.). As such, the motivation to build community may dwindle before the community has reached critical mass/participation.

Just-in-time support for a student leader may be the best intervention that the Learning Centre can provide. It is paramount to identify emerging student leaders early and to diagnose any hurdles that they meet.