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Laurier formalizes partnerships with sexual assault centres to enhance support on its campuses

WATERLOO – Wilfrid Laurier University has formalized its partnerships with the Sexual Assault Support Centre of Waterloo Region (SASCWR) and the Sexual Assault Centre of Brant (SACB) to enhance the sexual violence supports and services available to members of the Laurier community.

Laurier began a pilot project with the Sexual Assault Centre of Brant in 2015 to bring a sexual violence counsellor and advocate from SACB to the Brantford campus to increase accessible and timely support for students. The project is continuing in 2016. At its Waterloo campus, Laurier will welcome Sexual Assault Support Centre of Waterloo Region counsellors and public educators to provide on-campus services.

“Sexual violence is a universal, systemic issue,” said Sara Casselman, executive director of the Sexual Assault Support Centre of Waterloo Region. “It exists on our campuses, in our communities, and around the world. It has a profound impact on lives of survivors and their families but we know that, with the right support, healing is possible.”

At Laurier Brantford's Campus, Sexual Violence Counsellor and Advocate Hayley Moody provides on-campus services to the Laurier community 30 hours per week. Moody uses a survivor-oriented approach to support students who have experienced sexual violence, which can include one-on-one or group counselling, accompaniment to community agencies, and support in navigating university processes and policies.

“I believe that survivors are experts in their own experiences, and we will be there to support students in whatever decisions they decide to make,” said Moody. She emphasizes that students will never be pressured to take any particular course of action.

At Laurier's Waterloo campus, SASCWR will offer on-campus counselling services two days a week. The centre will also provide public education through its male allies program and workshops on topics such as responding to disclosures and consent.

“Effective public education shifts the attitudes at the root of sexual violence,” said Casselman.

In addition to the on-campus support, both sexual assault centres provide 24-hour crisis and support lines, which can be used by all members of the Laurier community.

While the agreements have now been formalized, Laurier's relationship with the sexual assault centres is a longstanding one.

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Laurier partners with sexual assault centres/Page 2

“Our partnership with Laurier isn’t new, although this service agreement is an exciting step forward in our collaboration,” said Casselman. “It demonstrates intentionality to go beyond simply complying with the Ontario government’s new Sexual Violence and Harassment Action Plan Act. It’s our hope that universities across the province will be inspired by Laurier’s commitment to survivors and to collaboration, and reach out to their local sexual assault centres.”

Laurier’s partnership with the sexual assault centres is a key part of Laurier’s broad-based and multi-faceted efforts to address sexual and gendered violence, which are supported by the staff, faculty and students who form Laurier’s Gendered Violence Task Force (GVTF). Through inclusive dialogue; training and research initiatives; accessible policies, protocols and support services; community engagement and campus collaborations, the GVTF is working toward eliminating gendered violence at Laurier — and to support the healing of those who have experienced it.

In addition to the counselling offered through SASCWR and SACB, Laurier established a [sexual violence support advocate role](#) to provide survivors and others impacted by sexual violence with a direct and accessible avenue to support and care by someone trained to actively listen, guide them through the options available on and off campus and advocate for their needs.

Sexual assault centres across Ontario are community experts in supporting survivors. Through immediate crisis support, counselling, public education and advocacy, these centres work to enhance supports for people affected by sexual violence and to shift the culture that makes sexual violence so prevalent. SACB and SASCWR have provided services to Laurier for a number of years, including assistance with prevention campaigns, sharing resources, and supporting members of the Laurier community.

Visit Laurier’s website for more information about [Laurier’s gendered violence prevention and support initiatives](#), or contact Lynn Kane, manager, gendered violence prevention and support, at lkane@wlu.ca

For assistance navigating sexual assault support services on and off campus, contact Laurier’s Sexual Violence Support Advocate, Sarah Scanlon at sscanlon@wlu.ca.

To book an on-campus appointment with a counsellor from SASCWR contact intake@sascwr.org

To book an appointment with SACB’s sexual violence counsellor and advocate, contact Hayley Moody at hayley@sacbrant.ca