Dear Colleagues,

I am very pleased to present my first annual report as SASS Director. Shortly after having taken up my position, in August 2016, it seemed essential to me to get a better picture of the environment both within SASS and of the larger university community. This is the reason why we launched a strategic planning process, beginning with a round of consultations with the student community, SASS employees as well as SASS partners and senior management.

At the same time, an internal audit report requested by the University’s senior management before I joined the team highlighted that SASS management would have to undergo necessary improvements.

With the findings and recommendations from both these thorough information collection activities in hand, the whole SASS team has come together for the strategic planning process that we’ve titled Operation Butterfly. Connection. Innovation. Transformation.

Why such a name, you ask? It was, first and foremost, to inject some fun to a process that can unfortunately often seem tedious, burdensome and boring. The chosen name was suggested by a colleague as part of a contest for SASS employees. She was inspired by the fact that:

“As a team, we talked about how change can be a positive thing as an organization evolves. I thought about the way a butterfly goes through significant changes, how it metamorphoses into something new and beautiful. I believe that this is what the changes at SASS can bring to the university community, especially the students. I added the word ‘operation’ because I thought it would be cool, a little like a James Bond secret mission.”

As for the three following terms (Connection. Innovation. Transformation.), they were picked by the management team, who believed that these words best summed up the changes that had to be carried out at SASS.

One of the first tasks of Operation Butterfly was to redefine our mission, our vision and our values. We are proud of the work we have accomplished and which is outlined here.

Finally, if you can only set aside a few minutes to read this report, please read the section entitled The SASS Effect on Academic Success and Retention: An Observable Phenomenon in which the rigorous analysis of credible data unmistakably demonstrates that SASS adds value to the university community.

On behalf of the whole SASS team, I wish you an excellent year 2017–2018. I look forward to collaborating with you in helping our students achieve academic success.

Sylvie C.R. Tremblay
THE SASS EFFECT ON ACADEMIC SUCCESS AND RETENTION: AN OBSERVABLE PHENOMENON

The analysis carried out in April 2017 on student retention after two years of study shows that SASS has an undeniable impact on retention and academic success.

The analysis of the retention rates after two years for 33,000 students from three different cohorts admitted in 2012, 2013 and 2014 demonstrates that those students who use SASS services are more likely to persevere in their studies compared to those who do not. The SASS effect is all the more apparent in the students who use the services that are directly related to academics (academic writing and faculty mentoring) and in those who are admitted with a below 80% average. Indeed, per equal admission averages, retention rates among the students who use SASS are higher. A table outlining the data can be found on the website.

The SASS effect is therefore on the whole positive and significant, all the more so since user and non-user student profiles are similar and because the effect can be seen across all admission average categories.

STATE OF AFFAIRS

In spite of the obviously significant impact SASS has on academic success, and despite the fact that SASS services have been judged overall to be essential by the members of the university and student community who participated in the consultations carried out in the fall of 2016, these same consultations have revealed that SASS is no longer thought of as the academic success champion it once was. Consequently, its added value is perceived to be marginal.

Views From Within

Our staff members see SASS as an entity whose goals and ends are no longer clear. They carry out good initiatives, but on an individual basis and as dictated by circumstances. The various SASS units operate in silos and the services they offer are badly integrated and inconsistent. The impact of these services is not easily quantifiable.

Views From the Outside

The university community feels that SASS service quality is variable and unequal. Its members are confused about which services are available, to the point where they don’t know who can access them or how. SASS units are perceived as working in isolation and seldom communicating between themselves nor with students and professors. The service does not seem to be adapting itself to students’ real experiences. Finally, SASS is viewed as some distant, absent and unknown entity.
MISSION
We support students so that they can thrive and find their own path to academic success.

VISION
To be a catalyst for supportive, inclusive learning environments by building connections, working in synergy with our students, our university partners and the community, and adopting and furthering academic support best practices.

VALUES
Resilient Optimism
Agile Excellence
Collaborative Learning
Authentic Communication
Lucid Responsibility
Culture of Compassion

AT A CROSSROAD

The internal audit report’s recommendations, as well as those from the consultations, underscore how important it is for SASS to transform and reinvent itself so that it once again has meaning for the student and university community.

To accomplish this, it is essential that SASS:

• Set up a sound management framework, including rigorous strategic planning mechanism as well as accountability measures
• Review its mission and clarify its purpose
• Review its service delivery model and harmonize its approach as well as the quality of the interventions within each unit
• Breakup silos and increase cohesion between SASS units
• Focus on collaboration and building a constructive dialogue with our partners (students, professors, faculties, services, senior management)
• Develop proactive communication strategies with faculties, professors and services
• Shift from a service-centred approach to a student-centred approach
• Identify accountability measures and concretely demonstrate how SASS adds value
To better follow up on these observations and recommendations, the whole SASS team has come together around Operation Butterfly. Connection. Innovation. Transformation. This strategic planning process is composed of six important transformation projects.

**PROJECT 1—REINFORCING ORGANIZATIONAL CORNERSTONES:**
- Review SASS’s purpose—its mission, its vision, its values
- Develop a dashboard including performance indicators that will assist in achieving objectives and in making informed decisions

**PROJECT 2—SETTING UP A MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK:**
- Develop an annual and multi-year planning framework
- Outline principals, management rules, systems, tools and practices
- Develop strategies to build a service culture focused on excellence and continued improvement
- Create a professional learning strategy to support staff professional development

**PROJECT 3—DEVELOPING A NEW SERVICE DELIVERY MODEL:**
- Outline a student-focused intervention framework based on the developmental approach and the universal design for learning
- Set up a central point of contact and needs evaluation
- Develop the concept of multidisciplinary, multifunctional and agile teams
- Align service delivery with what is being implemented in the faculties (the new academic counselling model at the Office of Undergraduate Programs, for example)

**PROJECT 4—BUILDING STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS WITH FACULTIES, SERVICES AND OTHER PARTNERS:**
- Build lasting bonds and partnerships with faculties, services and other partners through projects and collaboration protocols

**PROJECT 5—CREATING DYNAMIC COMMUNICATION AND MARKETING STRATEGIES:**
- Develop dynamic communication and marketing strategies that are tailored to the student community, to teaching staff members or to our colleagues in the faculties and other university services
- Rebrand SASS by highlighting, among other reasons, how beneficial using the service is

**PROJECT 6—DEVELOPING DIGITAL SERVICE PLATFORMS:**
- Set up online tools and resources for the student community, for faculty teaching and administrative staff members and for other institutional services
To acquire the means to reach its strategic ambitions and to foster collaboration and partnership within SASS, the units have been restructured and renamed as follows:

1) **SASS — Academic Accommodations** (previously Access Service) which offers academic accommodation measures aimed at reducing barriers to learning

2) **SASS—Academic Support** (merger of the Academic Writing Help Center and student mentoring).

3) **SASS—Counselling and Coaching** (previously the Counselling and Coaching Service) which offers support to students who wish to develop strategies in order to better overcome the personal challenges that impact their academic success

Each unit has been tasked with achieving objectives for the year 2017-2018.

**SASS — Academic Accommodations:**
- Develop a service culture focused on the students and their needs
- Build professional and ongoing relationships with faculties, professors and academic staff
- Simplify procedures and optimize operational processes
- Develop a sustainable and cost-effective operational strategy for the management and supervision of adapted exams

**SASS — Academic Support:**
- Unify and engage the new AWHC/Academic Support team
- In collaboration with the other units, outline and implement clear and coherent academic support strategies that optimize resources
- Oversee the development of services and activities so as to maintain the unit’s operations
- Show leadership in the development and implementation of collaborative projects that support academic success in conjunction with SASS partners

**SASS — Counselling and Coaching:**
- Align the unit’s service culture with its mission, its vision and SASS’s new intervention framework
- Develop a new business model to generate new sources of revenue
- Actively participate in and significantly contribute to the development and implementation of the institutional strategy on student well-being and mental health

**Office of the Director:**
- Implement a good governance framework at SASS, including talent management and a dashboard
- Develop an innovative and targeted global communication strategy that projects a positive image of SASS
- Establish improvement project and change management framework strategies
- Implement a dynamic and sustainable budgetary strategy
- Develop a physical environment improvement plan
DATA SUMMARY

Academic Accommodations (April 1st 2016 to March 31st 2017)

- 2,254 students served
- 7,738 visits
- 3.4 average number of visits per student

Academic Support (September 1st 2016 to August 31st 2017)

Academic Writing Help Centre (AWHC)

- 1,726 students served
- 5,500 visits
- 3.2 average number of visits per student

Student Mentoring

- 6,694 students served
- 15,963 visits
- 2.4 average number of visits per student

Counselling and Coaching (May 1st 2016 to August 31st 2017)

- 2,052 students served
- 7,229 visits
- 3.5 average number of visits per student

- 18,578 number of adapted exams
- 1,201 number of summer orientation participants
ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS FOR PRIMARY DISABILITY

- Mental Health: 28.9%
  - Acquired Brain Injury: 4.0%
  - Mobility Impairment: 2.9%
- Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder: 26.8%
  - Hearing Impairment: 2.1%
- Learning Disability (Confirmed): 15.0%
  - Autism Spectrum Disorder: 2.0%
  - Vision Impairment: 2.0%
  - Other: 1.8%
  - Learning Disability (Non-Confirmed): 1.4%
- Physical Condition/Chronic Illness: 12.6%
  - Under Investigation: 0.5%

BIGGEST CONCERNS REPORTED TO SASS - COUNSELLING AND COACHING

- Stress/Axiety: (96%)
- Academic Workload: (88%)
- Motivation: (86%)
- Depression: (84%)
- Self-Esteem: (77%)

FUNDING

- uOttawa
- Targeted subsidies (Ontario)
- Service sales and other sources