

ANNUAL REPORT 2016–2017

SASS

NEW BEGINNINGS FOR SASS!



Service d'appui au succès scolaire (SASS)
Student Academic Success Service (SASS)

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WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

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

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sylvie C.R. Tremblay". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a long, horizontal, wavy line that serves as a decorative flourish.

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.

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

MISSION, VISION AND VALUES

MISSION

We support students so that they can thrive and find their own path to academic success.

VISION

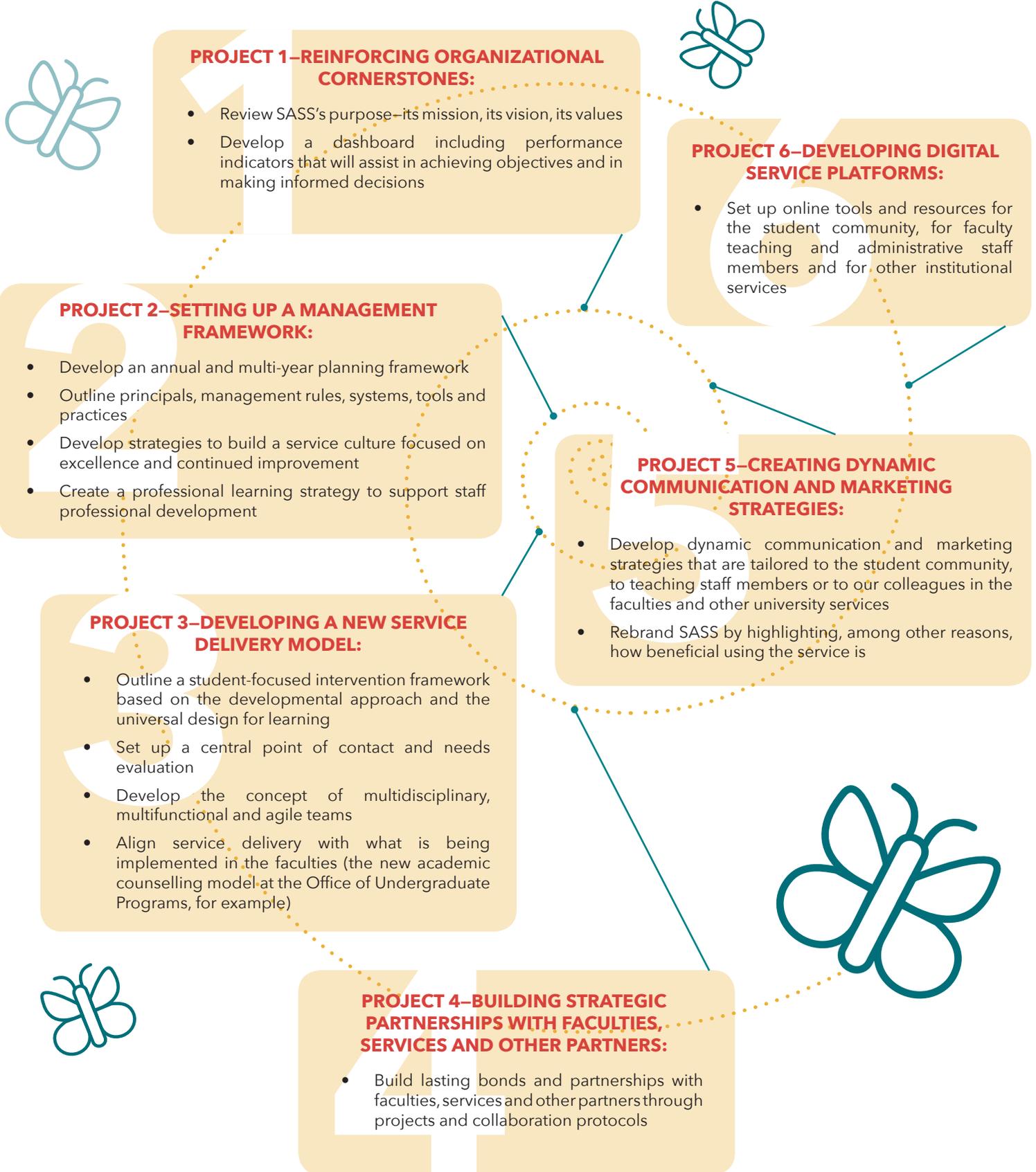
To be a catalyst for supportive, inclusive learning environments by building connections, working in synergy with our students, our university partners and the community, and adopting and furthering academic support best practices.

VALUES

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

OPERATION BUTTERFLY. CONNECTION. INNOVATION. TRANSFORMATION.

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.



STRUCTURAL METAMORPHOSIS

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
Number of students served



3,4
Average number of visits per student

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

Academic Writing Help Centre (AWHC)

1,726
Number of students served



3,2
Average number of visits per student

Student Mentoring

6,694
Number of students served



2,4
Average number of visits per student

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

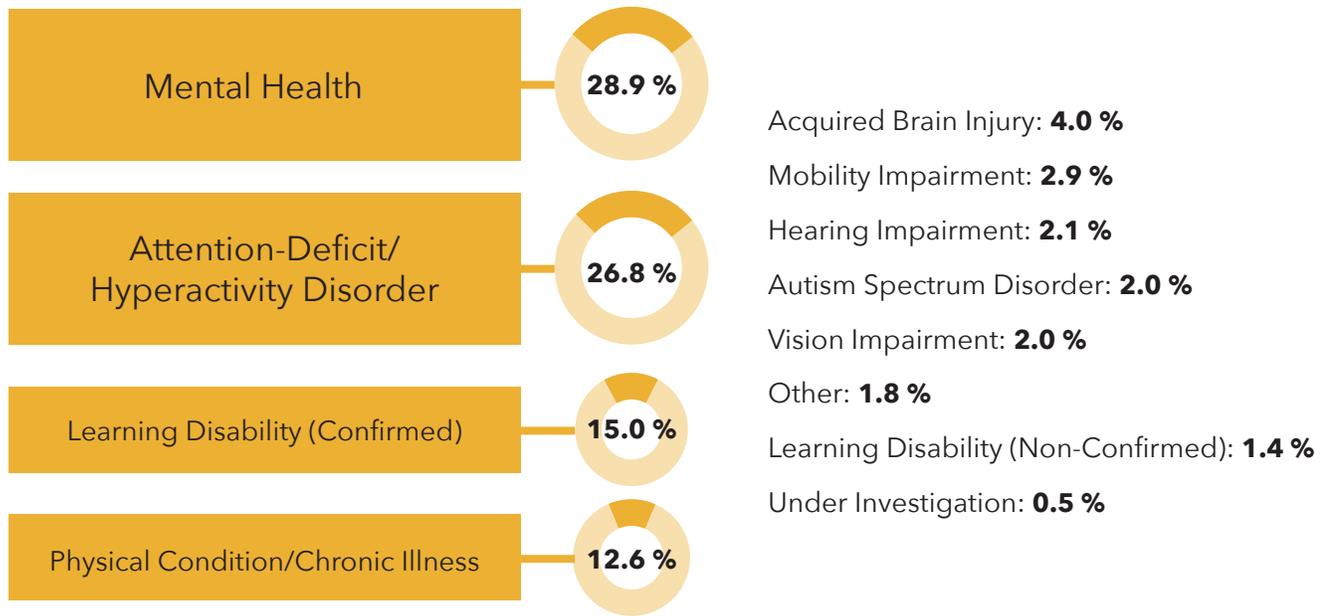
2,052
Number of students served



3,5
Average number of visits per student



ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS FOR PRIMARY DISABILITY



BIGGEST CONCERNS REPORTED TO SASS - COUNSELLING AND COACHING



FUNDING

