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YOUR COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE:

A Conversation with Aastha Tripathi



As Vice President of Student Life at Concordia University, Aastha Tripathi helps organize events and advocate on behalf of students to the Legislature through Alberta's Executive Student Council. Her role also includes creating social and community engagement opportunities on campus. While this has been challenging during the COVID-19 pandemic, Aastha and her team have been able to find creative ways to still connect students.

"We recently ran a drive-in movie event for our students. It was a great way for everyone to connect with friends in a socially distanced way and was a big mental health boost for many." Aastha said.

Aastha, a fourth-year student, first began her journey in student politics when she decided to run as an Arts Representative for her faculty. The role sparked her interest in shaping the student experience at Concordia and this year she joined the Arts Society and ran for the position of Vice President of Student Life.

"I have gotten so much from the Concordia community and **it feels great to be able to give back to my peers** through my work as Vice President of Student Life." Aastha said.

"It has also given me a great opportunity to get involved with organizations like Healthy Campus Alberta and to gain a better understanding of student issues on a provincial level."

One of the things that Aastha loves most about being at Concordia is the small class sizes and

"The faculty are so supportive of students here."

community feel. The faculty and staff know students on a personal level and there are many opportunities to form connections with peers. She also notes how impressed she has been with the level of support she has seen for every facet of student life.

"The faculty are so supportive of students here. **They make sure we have everything we need to be successful both academically and personally.**" Aastha said.

"While the campus has grown a lot in the last few years, we have been able to keep that small community culture at Concordia and still offer a broad range of activities to get students involved such as book clubs or social groups."

When it comes to mental wellness Aastha believes that your mental and physical health are interconnected. If you are able to take care of your physical body, you are also contributing to your mental health and social well-being.

As a student, she knows the biggest challenge many students face is stress - especially during the pandemic. Whether it is course work, issues in their personal lives or making sure they have what they need to be successful beyond their time at Concordia, many students struggle with trying to manage all their responsibilities.

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"Concordia did a survey at the beginning of the school year and found the biggest challenges facing students was depression and anxiety due to the pandemic and switch to online learning." Said Aastha. "Many noted that they had increased their use of substances to help them get through this difficult period."

"Our school community wellness is about helping each other up."

Aastha believes that encouraging students to form any kind of connection this year, whether it is virtually or through socially distanced activities with their peers will definitely help those who are struggling.

"For students it is so important to have those social interactions. Our school community wellness is about helping each other up." Said Aastha.

After getting involved in Healthy Campus Alberta through the former Vice President of Student Life at Concordia, Aastha is enjoying her opportunity to become involved in the Community of Practice and learn how other campuses are tackling student mental health.

"I am looking forward to working with the Design Team and other peers to learn about what other students have been doing. **Everyone is so driven and there are many wonderful ideas to keep community engagement going.**" Aastha said.

"It shows us that these ideas can work and gives me confidence to try and implement them on my campus."

Aastha has also enjoyed learning through the various Healthy Campus Alberta webinars where she gets to discuss new initiatives with other teams in the breakout groups. She is looking forward to having in-person events again when it is safe to do so.

Since joining Healthy Campus Alberta, Aastha has continued Wellness Wednesday on her campus, which help promote ideas and discussion on student mental well-being.

"Going forward I would like to have more social events as well as activities that focus on physical health such as a yoga night." Aastha said.

"It shows us that these ideas can work and gives me confidence to try and implement them on my campus."

On a personal level, Aastha has taken up embroidery as a way to decompress during COVID-19. She has also been enjoying nature, hiking and plans to try skiing this winter.

This has been part of the Healthy Campus Alberta Project, "Your Community of Practice." To read more conversations with members of the community of practice, visit healthycampusalberta.ca/about-us/our-community.

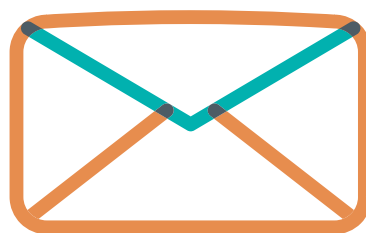
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