

## **2018 External Review- Student Activities Office (SAO)**

### **Executive Summary**

As part of ongoing assessment efforts by Student Life, the Student Activities Office (SAO) was the subject of an external review process from January through March 2018. The review was designed to objectively examine SAO programs, services, and staff, and to identify areas of strength, as well as opportunities for growth and improvement. The process included a thorough document review, as well as a campus visit by two independent reviewers with backgrounds and expertise in student activities, student organizations, and student centers.

Through the process, the reviewers concluded SAO has an effective and well planned distribution of its resources to support over 200 student organizations and provide numerous programs and activities for Carleton students. The range and depth of SAO's impact at Carleton is impressive. Nearly all Carleton students appear to benefit from SAO programs in some way, be it through attendance at large traditional events such as Midwinter Ball or New Student Week, participation in one of Carleton's many successful academic teams, or working closely with SAO staff as a member of SAPB or CSA. Additionally as impressive, are the deep and numerous connections SAO staff has with staff colleagues through collaborative efforts across campus, both within and beyond Student Life. SAO staff members are generally viewed as very responsive and supportive to student needs, as well as excellent colleagues to fellow staff.

The review culminated in several recommendations for SAO, broken down into short and long term opportunities. Short-term opportunities mainly centered on clarification of roles and responsibilities, expanding student leadership and learning opportunities, engaging in more working groups, and refining marketing efforts. Specifically, the reviewers encourage SAO to review the planning structure of NSW and engage a working group in that effort. The reviewers also encourage SAO to investigate ways to involve a larger group of Carleton faculty and staff with student organizations. This needs to be done with a careful understanding of the current and unique culture of student independence and leadership prevalent within student organizations, and should include discussions with CSA and interested faculty and staff. The reviewers also encourage SAO to foster more collaboration through co-sponsorships with other Student Life offices to create new opportunities focused on meeting evolving student needs and maximizing opportunities for leadership development, service learning, and improved health and well-being. Additionally, the reviewers see value in the continued attention being given to upgrades to campus facilities and risk management efforts utilized by SAO.

In summary, the review found that SAO is a well operated office which provides numerous interesting and impactful opportunities for students. The SAO staff has meaningful and powerful interactions with students, who benefit in a number of ways through their involvement with the office and its staff. All of this good work should continue with an eye toward expanding some partnerships and clarifying the role and goals of each SAO staff member.