No EngSoc Officers Recalled

The Annual Accountability Meeting’s Suprising Outcome

ALYSON ALLEN
Cannon Editor-in-Chief

On Friday, October 30th, the Engineering Society’s (EngSoc) Annual Accountability Meeting (ACM) was held virtually with a record number of participants. To the surprise of many within the Skule™ community, no EngSoc Officers, including EngSoc President Christopher Kousinouris, were recalled.

ACMs are run midway through the Officers’ terms to ensure they are following promises and responsibilities. During these meetings, Officers present what they have been doing within the first part of their term, and members of Skule™ have the opportunity to vote to recall (essentially remove) an Officer from their position if their work is not considered satisfactory. For a recall to pass more than two thirds of votes must be in favour of it. Following the removal of the Officer, a fellow Officer assumes the responsibilities of the recalled and the position is run in the following EngSoc election.

Upon beginning their roles in April, Officers had to prepare for a truly unpredictable 2020-2021 year. With all of Skule™’s operations moving online, logistics and plans had completely re-worked for a year of mystery. With the high stakes to complete their duties and strong promises made during elections, EngSoc Officers had a lot to prove to keep their positions.

In the past decade, only one recall passed. However, the 2020 ACM was rumoured to have a second recall, this time for the student body, with many calling the new program a “scam” and a “cash grab” by the faculty. The EngSoc representatives were the primary targets of this dissent, culminating in the near recall of multiple EngSoc Officers at the Annual Accountability Meeting (for details, read “No Officers Recalled”). But how did we end up in this scenario after numerous consultation events and a general positive outlook from the community?

The Annual Accountability Meeting’s Suprising Outcome

The New PEY Program
How it Started and How it’s Going

RUKNNOON DINDER
Cannon Editor

The Faculty of Applied Science and Engineering (FASE) Professional Experience Year (PEY) program was in need of a major overhaul, until this year. Numerous issues, including a forced financial structure, outdated workshops, and a lack of diverse job options, were acting as an unintended barrier to students searching for professional development options. A plan was proposed in 2017 to rework the program to make it more student friendly.

Finally, on October 5th, 2020, after months of consultation with the Engineering Society’s representatives as well as other relevant stakeholders, this new plan finally saw a concrete structure. The FASE Council Executive Committee, led by Vice Dean Undergraduate Tom Coyle, put forward a report for the replacement of the PEY program with a Professional Experience Co-op (PEC) program. This report was passed as a motion at the Faculty Council meeting on October 23, 2020 to nearly unanimous approval.

However, it almost instantly faced widespread backlash from the greater student body, with many calling the new program a “scam” and a “cash grab” by the faculty. The EngSoc representatives were the primary targets of this dissent, culminating in the near recall of multiple EngSoc Officers at the Annual Accountability Meeting (for details, read “No Officers Recalled”).

But did we end up in this scenario after numerous consultation events and a general positive outlook from the community? Let’s find out.

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Hello quarantine pros,

The end of the semester is finally here... hooray! I’m hoping you’ll all be able to get some well-deserved rest during the break, especially from spending all day curled up in front of a computer (my back is suffering).

The past few months and, well I guess 2020, have been a lot. I don’t want to jinx anything by making some future predictions and expectations for 2021. Should I be hopeful? Discouraged? Stressed? Who knows, I’m just trying to get through each day.

This Cannon Edition, in a way, is kind of a reflection of these feelings of self-reflection and questioning. Whether it’s through articles reporting on students fighting for the PEY Program, thoughts on the pandemic, tips for school and self care, or just genuinely wholesome content (see our centrespread), we’re all trying our best to do what we can.

And doing the best we can is something I encourage you all to acknowledge with your own self. Your motivation and hard work are worth it, even if things may not appear like that. Times are tough, take a break. I wish it was easier to actually do that though. But, seriously, it’s important.

As always, my inbox is always open to any comments or good memes you may have. Or, if you just need someone to talk to. Take care and stay safe!

Writefully yours,
Alyson Allen
Self-Care 101

KIRTANA DEVARAJ
Cannon Writer

This semester has been an unprecedented one and has impacted everyone in our ways. While online learning does have its benefits, it is easy to forget to take care of yourself. It has become more important now than ever to consciously practice self-care and take regular breaks.

Get adequate sleep: While it is easy to compromise on sleep when assignments are due, sleep is very important for a healthy lifestyle and boosting productivity. The Mayo Clinic recommends 7 to 9 hours of sleep each night for adults. Try not to stockpile sleep as getting adequate sleep each night is integral.

Eat healthy: As we sit through hours of online classes, it is easy to give into the temptation of eating snacks which may not be healthy. Healthy eating is essential for good health. In turn, good health will allow you to perform better in class.

Stay connected with friends and family: I have found that staying connected with friends through virtual means leads to a sense of normalcy and somewhat replicates the in-person experience. There is also a sense of camaraderie with friends as they are going through the same online learning situation. Don’t be hesitant to reach out to your friends and family as they know you the best and can empathize with you.

Do something you love: Whether this may be picking up a new hobby or practicing an old one, doing something you love leads to a sense of peace and will help you take a break from the monotony of online learning.

Exercise: With in-person classes, we used to have the chance to stretch our legs when we went from one class to another. However, with online learning, more often than not, we sit at our desks for a long period of time. Exercising is a great way to stay healthy as well as taking a break. Since a lot of gyms are closed now, the best way may be working out at home or going for a socially distanced jog or a run.

Take a break: It’s okay to take a break. It’s okay to put aside an assignment to take a short break. Not only will you feel refreshed, but studies have shown that taking short breaks increases productivity. Furthermore, do not force yourself to study when you are not in the mood to. It is very likely that you would not absorb a lot of the information and you will have to spend more time studying the same material again later.

Take a social media break: Social media can be a fun indulgence but it can also be a form of distraction. Considering that we spend almost our entire day in front of a screen for classes, restricting social media usage also helps reduce screen time. However, make sure that you still stay connected with your friends and family.

Let go of the guilt: In my experience, the biggest impediment in self-care is the guilt. The guilt comes in many forms such as feeling guilty about taking a break while there are pending assignments, comparing your performance to that of your peers, etc. Remember that the system of online learning is new for everyone and we are all learning on the go. Everyone learns at different paces and letting go of the guilt is of utmost importance for your mental health.

Let go of the guilt: In my experience, the biggest impediment in self-care is the guilt. The guilt comes in many forms such as feeling guilty about taking a break while there are pending assignments, comparing your performance to that of your peers, etc. Remember that the system of online learning is new for everyone and we are all learning on the go. Everyone learns at different paces and letting go of the guilt is of utmost importance for your mental health. Lastly, consider dropping courses if necessary as it will help reduce workload which may be beneficial for your mental health.

Remember that nothing is more important than your mental health and it should not be compromised. If you are feeling overwhelmed, reach out to your friends, family, a professional or anyone you feel comfortable talking to. While doing well at university is very important, it should not come at the cost of your mental health. Following the self-care tips will ensure that you have a good mental health and increase your productivity!

The Dos and Don’ts of Online Testing

JEREMY SHARAPOV
Cannon Editor

In my previous article reflecting on our online courses, I was taking, I said that the details of how to run midterms and exams in the most student-friendly manner was too much to fit in. Well, that’s because there was enough content to fit in its own separate (and lengthy) article, so I separated my key points here into what to do and not to do in terms of online testing, in my opinion of course.

Do: Be flexible with the timing for any examinations.

This is probably the most important, as there are students in a variety of time zones, some of which would be really inconvenient to take an exam at a given time in EST. Personally, exams, where you have the entirety of, say, 24 hours to complete, are my preference, followed by those where you choose a certain time slot within a larger window. But, professors should at the very least provide one alternative sitting, with a 12-hour time difference from the standard one seeming to work best.

Don’t: Split up the test into multiple time windows to complete and submit each question.

I recently had a midterm with this format, and it was by far the worst format I’ve experienced thus far. I ran out of time on the first part that was worth the most marks, but then finished the other two that were worth way less early. However, because of this format, I could not use the extra time on that first question unlike in-person tests, and so, bombed it.

Do: Let the students go back and double-check previous questions.

Building off the last point, another more common (and only moderately less annoying) testing format some professors have been opting for is a Quercus quiz where it only displays one question at a time, where you can’t go back and double-check previous questions. This too contradicts the conventional way of solving a test: looking through all the questions first, getting a feel for what you need to solve and then solving them based on what you know best first. Now instead, students can’t figure out how much time to spend on each question, resulting in them finishing too early or not at all, and get screwed over if they suddenly have the solution to a previous question pop into their mind while reading the next. The logic that these prevent cheating is ridiculous, as forcing students to do the exact same questions in the same order only promotes collaboration for those questions because they do not feel in control of how they solve it, versus doing everything in a preferred order.

Don’t: Mislead students about the exam format.

I will never forget one exam where the professor said that there would be a singular short, conceptual question with multiple parts, in addition to three more calculation heavy questions. I completed the three questions that I thought were the calculation ones (they each had multiple parts and involved actual numbers) and

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spent ¾ of the time on them accordingly. When I got to
the next question, which was clearly way longer and more
computationally intensive, I just froze. I had just spent ¾ of
the time on the exam for ¼ of the marks and had no way of
knowing beforehand because this was one of those tests
where you could only view
one question at a time and
not go back, and pretty much
everyone else in the course I
talked to afterwards did the
same. I spoke to EngSoc’s Vice-
President Academic and they
confirmed that this particular
exam broke several rules,
however, the department
didn’t do anything to remedy
this, and did not curve
the course to boot. Thankfully CR/
NCR existed that semester,
but if any prof tries this sort
of thing again, I’m sure the

students won’t let them off
that lightly. Another time,
a professor said a midterm
would be in the same format
as the quizzes in the course,
but the test had implemented
the “one question at a time,
no backtracking” approach
unlike the quizzes, which too
instructed me. And yet
another time, a prof said to
have this one piece of software
we use for labs open because
there will be a question on the
midterm that utilizes it, but
there was not and it just made
my laptop lag for the entire
session.

Do: Hold optional live
sessions during exams where
students can ask questions.

Sometimes when reading a
question, I find the wording
not particularly clear, so I ask
a TA in the Exam Centre to
clarify what they want us to
do. Other times the exam may
have typos, and professors
announce this to everyone.

That’s why it’s extremely
important to hold some sort of
optional session where these
exact things can be done. Just
be sure to make sure students
can unmute themselves, and
only ask questions in the chat.

Don’t: Make these live
sessions mandatory or try
to use some sort of proctoring
software.

Many students don’t have
a reliable internet connection,
so when a prof told me
that I had to stay on the
BBCollaborate session the
entire length of the midterm
or be forced to submit then,
I was quite nervous as my
internet had been unreliable
in the past. Thankfully it
did not crash. However, this
prof also insisted on having
TAs try to scan TCards to
verify our identity during this
session, yet they did not end
up getting to scan the majority
of students. What is the point
of doing this and checking
out the physical environment
when this midterm was
supposed to be open book
anyway? I personally found
the session running on my
laptop extremely distracting,
and strongly prefer only
hopping onto one when I
myself had a question. Any
corrections or clarifications
should also be sent as a
Quercus announcement for
students not on these sessions.

Do: Be lenient on late
submission penalties.

As much I understand that
lateness is usually not tolerated
in a physical exam room, as
I mentioned earlier my own
internet connection is not the
most stable, and sometimes
submissions can take longer
than I expect them to. That’s
why it’s extremely important
to be more lenient on late
submissions this year for
students with poor internet.
On some Crowdmark exams,
I’ve heard that professors take
off 5% in marks just for
submitting a minute before,
even though this was technically
not communicated to students
beforehand. In some other
courses, I’ve heard that if
you’re even a second late the
professor hands you a fat zero
just for that. This is extremely
counterintuitive; if you’re that
impossible to solve and clearly
wrong, I got zero marks for it.
Any question I thought I did
well, was a 55% on the final exam. I
meant that I had to have gotten
50% on the hour versus a
minute before, even though
this was technically not
communicated to students
beforehand. In some other
courses, I’ve heard that if
you’re even a second late the
professor hands you a fat zero
just for that. This is extremely
counterintuitive; if you’re that
harsh you just know students
are going to petition the
midterm to get their rightful
marks anyway, so why hassle
your department with more
paperwork? More fair lateness
penalties I’ve seen is stuff like
5/10% off per minute late,
which can add up, but isn’t
too punishing if someone
underestimated their upload
time by half a minute.

Don’t: Make the test
significantly harder than in-
person counterparts.

This one is all too common
from what I’ve seen; profs
expect us to perform way
better because we can look
at our notes and textbook
during exams, however, this
is not always the case. Sure, if
I don’t know something, I can
look at my notes, but it can
take me up to five minutes to
find the thing I’m looking for,
which wastes a lot of precious
time! Profs also claim this is
to counteract cheating, but all
this does is promote it because
honest students end up
performing extremely poorly,
and only those who cheat do
well, as compared to a normal
exam where an honest student
can still do well themselves.
I’ve had a prof tell me that the
average on the one midterm
we had, worth 30%, was a
30/100, and by far the worst
mark in the history of the
course. Please have realistic
expectations of us -- all of this
only adds up to our increased
stress this year.

Do: Admit if you messed up,
remedy that, and be lenient on
students.

In that course I just
mentioned, the prof curved
everyone’s midterms by 30
marks and said hell shift
around the weighting of the
midterm for people who do
well on the final. In another
course, after a particularly
bad quiz, the prof announced
that they would drop the
lowest quiz mark. These sorts
of accommodations go a long
way in making students feel
less stressed in the course,
instead of relying on a large
curve at the end, which does
nothing for our stress during
the semester. Recently, I had
a midterm with multiple
typos that made the questions
impossible to solve and clearly
contradicted the provided
solutions. The prof refused
to post the average, acted
passive-aggressive in emails,
and shut down our Piazza after
students were understandably
upset. Don’t be that prof.

Do: Allow students to upload
their work for questions.

Last semester, I was doing
really well in a course until I
got back my final mark which
meant that I had to have gotten
a 55% on the final exam. I
thought I did well, but it was
all multiple choice and fill-in-
the-blank, so if I got a question
wrong, I got zero marks for it.
My department has recently
said that if any prof needs
extra TA resources to mark a
midterm, they would provide
that to them, so please ask
the department and do allow

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students to upload their solutions and not just final answers. While we’re on this topic, if we’re asked to upload each question individually, please separate the PDFs per question and give us enough space on them to do the solutions, for us tablet users.

Don’t: Equate a single midterm with multiple smaller “quizzes.”

This is something that is also very prevalent this semester; as instead of high weight on the final or a single midterm, many courses are instead opting to have 3-4 “quizzes” throughout the semester. I hate using the term “quizzes” because when they’re worth 15%, they’re basically the same as a midterm. The critical error many profs are making this semester is assuming students would be spending the same amount of time to study for those 4 quizzes as a single midterm in a regular semester. This is not true, we typically study about as much for each quiz as we would a midterm because of the high weight, which although it does seem to be better for retaining more information, still increases our overall workload tremendously. It can be extremely hard to juggle three quizzes and two labs in a single week, as I have experienced firsthand, and this sort of week can happen multiple times in the semester for some students. There is no ideal solution, as I personally did way better on these smaller tests than the usual big midterms this semester, but I hope this would be some food for thought.

Do: Give students timely individualized feedback on their midterms and have a clearly outlined remarking process.

What’s the point of testing students without letting them know what they did wrong? That’s part of why allowing them to upload their work is so important. I have found that Crowdmark works so much better for uploading solutions than Quercus, as you can see what you have submitted afterwards, and the TAs can comment directly on that submission. In one of my courses, it took so long (3 weeks) for the TA finally upload their comments on my solution that I just forgot what I did for several questions that I would’ve liked to get a remark for. And in some courses, the procedure for remarking is extremely unclear. Remark is especially important because I, and many of my friends, have gotten many errors fixed and our marks significantly improved.

Don’t: Make multiple versions of exams that are extremely different.

While it is more understandable to do so when there are two sittings, making them extremely different just frustrates students and makes them think the process was unfair. This happened in one of my courses, where there were two versions of the midterm (taken at the same time). All my friends who took the other version seemed to do way better than the ones who got mine. The prof, when he announced the averages, didn’t even acknowledge that the two versions might have had different averages, which is incredibly frustrating. Other courses with multiple versions did show the different averages, and the profs promised to curve differently, yet, there is no avoiding a sour taste in one’s mouth. One solution that I found especially smart was asking students to use some digits of their student number in part of the question, making them unique to each student to prevent cheating. However, it is important to only consider one or two digits at a time, because having to solve a circuit with 10-ohm resistors is very different from having to solve on with 827-ohm resistors.

Just to wrap up my thoughts here, I do want to reiterate that all of these recommendations are of my own opinion, no matter how objective some of them seem to me. If the tone of this article was a bit passive aggressive, it was because I had personally experienced everything I wrote about, both the good and the bad. While those exams that hit a lot of my ‘don’ts’ frustrated me to no end, there were many that went quite well in terms of format, even though I may not have done particularly well on them myself. I hope that this shows that there are indeed ways to make online testing less cumbersome for both professors and students, and really do think it would be in everyone’s best interest if some of these recommendations were implemented on a larger scale. And to other students reading this, if a test hits a lot of these don’ts and feel unfair, do reach out to your profs and ask to have them rethink the test.

EngSoc President’s neglect of student opinions of PEY changes. Students proved they were ready to challenge EngSoc’s operations.

It all started on October 22nd when VP Academic Mirjana Mijalkovic posted on the Skule™ Facebook group with the agenda for the October 23rd Faculty Council Meeting, instantly sparking commotion. Her post announced:

“We are FINALLY voting on the new proposed PEY/Coop program. This proposal has gone through many amendments since the Summer of 2019, and Christopher and I are very excited about the changes/additions that have been added to it in order to make it a plan that will benefit our community.”

This was the first time many Skule™ members were informed about the PEY/Coop Program negotiations since last mentioned in Winter 2020, despite the information being sent out to a small number of students on the EngSoc Governance Mailing list. And this caused a lot of concerns, complaints, and questioning throughout the online community.

Students were quickly upset about the lack of communication on EngSoc’s part to notify the community in advance and, more notably, about the proposed PEY changes themselves (for details, read The New PEY Program). The main frustrations with these changes, for context, surrounded the tripled increase in fees and the lack of trust towards the Engineering Career Centre (the ECC, which runs the PEY Program) ability to provide relevant and beneficial professional assistance.

Within the timeframe between Mirjana’s post and the Faculty Council Meeting, concerned students flooded the Skule™ Facebook Group, it being one of the easiest ways to reach a large portion of the Skule™ community. Discussions took place about what the PEY Program could have included instead and the issues students have had with the ECC and during their PEYs.

Many students shared a resonating thought: Why wasn’t the student community’s input involved in negotiations?

Tucked within the comments of many anger-filled threads, Chris Kousinioiris, President of EngSoc, posted a response document, Chris’ Reply to Student Concerns on EngSoc’s Handling of the PEY Deal. In an attempt to appease the situation, Chris emphasized, “this program was going to move forward in its general structure no matter what” and announced that agreement had been made between the Faculty and the ECC.

He also acknowledged that EngSoc had not provided timely details of the plan nor about the negotiation process.

This did not appease the situation. With the response being rather difficult to find, students yet again pointed out the lack of communication from Chris’ part. And, with the Program supposedly agreed upon, apprehensive students yet again took to social media to share further issues they had with the program, especially since 2Ts hadn’t been informed that they were to be the first to begin it.

On October 25th, with high tensions and the looming ACM, Chris attempted another statement on Facebook, now titled EngSoc Presidents’ Statement on the new PEY Co-op Program. Yet again, Chris attempted emphasizing that “We clearly and repeatedly communicated to the faculty that students were unhappy with the proposal in its current form,” and “I supported the deal at faculty council in order to begin repairing strained relationships between the faculty and myself following months of negotiation and to put us in the best possible position for future negotiations.” He strongly promised that he would continue negotiations and improve communications.

Nearly all seventy-seven replies to the Facebook post opposed and doubted the new statement. Some noted again that the statement, at the time being only on Facebook, was poorly located for all students to gain access to. Others again shared more frustrations, now towards Chris himself, since realizing many of the PEY negotiations were from his part.

On the eve of the ACM, tensions were still brewing, especially after a student
...students voiced their opinions and concerns, begging for more clarification, wanting to know whether they should trust Chris to handle the situation during the rest of his term.”

ACM continued from page 5 posted their document, *Beyond the PEY ECC Crap*, regarding general concerns about all EngSoc Officers. This document’s aim went beyond concerns with Chris and targeted the actions of any EngSoc Officer that deemed questioning, such as Skule’s planners printing and typos, the lack of information regarding Pit renovations, and the usage of EngSoc finances on various items including business cards. By sparking conversations in preparation for the ACM, the thoughts of recall were brewing.

Chris prepared one final response and, again, tucked it in the middle of the comments to the post. With the assistance of the rest of the Officer team, factual inaccuracies regarding the claims in the document were addressed. Along that, a few other students provided links to the right facts that had sparked misunderstanding. Yet again, this attempt of communication wasn’t positively received, with various students claiming the language used was “unprofessional”, “inflammatory”, and “pointed fingers”. At this point, it seemed like the myriad of Facebook posts and comments had fully strained, with the vote just a few hours away.

Students came prepared to the ACM with what they had seen unfold in the previous week. This meeting started off with an additional item however: *The Investigation Report on Christopher Kousinoris, October 2020*, written and presented by Ombudsperson Saskia van Beers and Speaker Zahir Firoze. The investigation, approved by Chris, displayed “…the complaints against the Engineering Society President, Christopher Kousinoris, (henceforth, Chris) alleging he did not fulfill his duty of representing student concerns in discussions with the Faculty of Applied Science and Engineering (henceforth, Faculty) on the new PEY Program proposal.” Student allegations were investigated, including (1) that Chris seemed to express support for the new program and that the student body supported well and (2) he had a lack of consultations and used his own self to represent the student body.

Proof of improper communication and failings during the negotiation process were now available for the whole student body to see and assess. The to the Skule community to get a better idea of student perspectives about the PEY Program before the ACM. The 985 responses received proved that most first years were not aware of the PEY program changes and that most students were against the program changes.

After the investigation was presented, the motion to recall Chris was set in motion. Chris presented what he had done during his term and a new plan for future negotiations. He explained how to ensure that more PEY Program negotiations would be made, but with better communication, in an attempt to convince students he would learn from his mistakes. Following the presentation, students participating in the meeting had the opportunity to question Chris about his roles.

For over 2 hours, tensions were high as students voiced their opinions and concerns, begging for more clarification, wanting to know whether they should trust Chris to handle the situation for the rest of his term. Eventually, the time for voting had begun. A Microsoft Form was sent to students attending the meeting to recall Chris. With 65% of votes for a recall, the motion failed with just less than 1%. Chris was to remain EngSoc President.

Students didn’t want to agree and demanded proof of the results. Moments after, it was revealed that the proxy votes were not losing vote credibility. It was noted that students are typically supposed to be transitioned into their role as soon as possible. Another form was sent after, it was revealed that the proxy votes, students were apprehensive that voting members who had voted the first time were not going to now, seemingly were raised from the student document presented the day before. After a gruelling 7-hour meeting, the ACM ended with an anticlimactic ending.

With the ACM out of the way, the tension from that week shifted to monitoring the EngSoc team’s actions under a harsher light. Chris is now under a microscope where students with students are to take action if anything is deemed unacceptable.

So, what has happened since?

To the relief of many, PEY Program negotiations are not over and the EngSoc team is working to address issues brought up at the ACM. The ACM and a document titled *Official EngSoc Stance and Plan on the New PEY Deal*, Chris made promises outlining next steps, including promises for direct negotiations, protests and PEY boycotts if needed. Since then, some PEY agreements have been reached based on key student input and two PEY Program Representatives have been elected and will be transitioned into their role as soon as possible.

Alongside Chris’ promises, project plans for various Officer portfolios have been shared for student input, such as Pit renovations, Student Choice Awards, and EngSoc Mental Wellness Bursary.

Overall, the 2020 ACM proved that students of Skule are passionate and will take action on changes for the better, even if it doesn’t affect themselves directly. The student body wants to be involved in discussions and puts high standards in elected Officers to fulfill these duties. Even in these trying times, students are motivated to stand up for what they believe can make their experiences at U of T better and more fair. Only time will tell if these demands will be met.
How an Accidental Invention Evolved into Modern Day Collateral

NAFILAH KHAN
EXTERNAL: CAFE

Introducing CAFE’s newest project: The Engineer’s Bite!

This year, CAFE (Canadian Association of Food Engineers), along with a dedicated group of undergraduate students decided to create an exciting and informative magazine that delivers interesting articles about the impacts of food engineering throughout the world. CAFE chose the theme of International Agriculture for the first edition of The Engineer’s Bite, which sheds light on the profound ways that food engineering has had meaningful effects on our day to day lives.

The Engineer’s Bite delivers powerful articles about food engineering from across the globe, along with highlights of CAFE’s events and initiatives throughout the year. The first edition of The Engineer’s Bite will be published in late December, so keep an eye out!

No matter where you are in the world, CAFE is sure that you will find something in The Engineer’s Bite that resonates with you! Here is a sneak peek at what you can expect in the magazine:

Parmigiano-Reggiano, an Italian cheese known globally for its distinct taste and smell, has a history just as rich and diverse, spanning continents. While most may be familiar with the name, what is lesser known is that there is sensitive science involved in the production of this precious cheese, which allows it to not only reach the dining table, but also the business world and Italian culture at large.

One of the most surprising parts of its history, is that cheese, the originator of Parmigiano-Reggiano, was created by accident. Legend has it that an Arabian merchant used a pouch created from a sheep’s stomach to store milk for his journey. As he travelled across the desert, Rennet, an enzyme present in the pouch’s lining, along with heat provided by the sun, caused a separation of the milk into a liquid (whey) and solid (curd). At night, the merchant fulfilled his thirst with the whey and his hunger with the pleasantly-tasting curd.

It is thought that travellers brought cheesemaking to Europe from Asia. Once brought to Europe, the Roman empire was thought to be the first empire to mass produce cheese. Aged cheese and smoked cheese, a Roman invention, extended the shelf life of cheese, which proved beneficial as a portable protein carried by their armies. From there, cheese (and therefore cheesemaking) spread throughout the European continent.

Today, Europe is known to house some of the finest and greatest of cheese in the world. Italy, known for its substantial use of cheese in its renowned and loved cuisine, is the birthplace of the “King of Cheese”, Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese.

The creation of Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese took place in the Middle Ages. Benedictine and Cistercian monks utilized cow milk from farms owned by the monasteries and salt from salt mines in Salsomaggiore (a town in the province of Parma, located in northern Italy) to produce wheels of a dry paste cheese which could be preserved for long periods.

Parmigiano-Reggiano is a Product Designation of Origin (PDO); only cheese which follows strict rules during production and which is produced in the Italian provinces of Bologna, Modena, Mantua, Parma, and Reggio Emilia can be named Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese.

While creating this specific cheese and earning its title is complicated and strict, Parmigiano-Reggiano is actually only made of three ingredients: milk, sea salt, and Rennet. Milk from cows that only consume grass from the provinces listed above is used. The cheese uses two types of milk: fresh whole milk collected from the cows in the morning and naturally-skimmed milk collected from the previous evening.

To begin the cheesemaking process, pumping of the latter milk into copper-lined vats takes place. Rennet is added when the temperature of the milk reaches 30 degrees Celsius which causes the separation of the milk into whey and curd, similar to legend. After a couple of minutes have passed, a large whisk is used to break the curd up into grain-like pieces. The curd mixture gradually reaches a temperature of roughly 54 degrees Celsius, after which it is then left to settle. After 45 to 60 minutes of settling, a large cheesecloth is used to collect and further separate the curd after which the curd is then portioned, with each portion placed in a separate cloth.

The portioned curd is then placed into round, spring form molds which are sealed shut, with a weight placed on top of each mold. When a cheese wheel has undergone enough solidification for it to support itself, the cheese wheel is left in a salt-water brine mixture for 20 to 25 days. From here, the wheel is stored and aged between one to three years. Once the one-year aging mark has been reached, the cheese wheel is given a Parmigiano-Reggiano DOP approval upon successful inspection by the appropriate governing body.

This intricate and long process makes Parmigiano-Reggiano so valuable, that it is accepted as collateral for loans at the Credito Emiliano bank in Montecavolo, Italy since 1953. An average 80-pound wheel of Parmigiano-Reggiano can range from $900-$2500.

Often, farmers experience a bad fiscal year due to decreased sales of other products, which is why out of financial necessity, they may liquidate their Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese wheels before the wheels are fully mature. Credito Emiliano loans 70-80% of the value of Parmigiano Reggiano cheese wheels in exchange for the cheese wheels to farmers who choose to use their cheese wheels as collateral. This allows farmers to gain immediate cash, rather than waiting for the cheese wheels to mature, which could take years.

Once the cheese wheels have been exchanged, they are stored in the Tagliate General Warehouse, which is home to around 300,000 cheese wheels. The wheels of cheese stored in the warehouse are subject to regular inspection done by experts in a carefully controlled environment. The ratio of degradation in this warehouse compared to cheese wheels not stored in the warehouse is 1 to 10, emphasizing how important it is to store these wheels carefully for aging. If loans are not repaid, the cheese wheels are sold by the bank, as a means of recovering its investment, with the difference being returned to the produce.

The next time you purchase a wheel of Parmigiano-Reggiano, you can enjoy it knowing that it has just as rich a history as it does flavour. Further, you can be satisfied knowing that it has undergone a long, intricate, and strict production process - one emblematic of Italian culture and at the heart of Italian cuisine - before reaching your dining table.
Quarantine Pals

Danielle Cortez

Ollie & Lilo

Sunny

Milo Osi

Caramel Swirl

Moo & Poopie

Kai

Jace

Lorne Hamilton

Alisha Mohammad

WE GOT YOU TO SEND IN YOUR PETS THAT HAVE BEEN KEEPING YOU COMPANY DURING THESE TIMES!

Sarah Kennelly

Leo (Catto)

Annam Shamas

Olive & Lilo

Oreo

Patch

Alyson Allen

DECEMBER 2020

Fariha Ahmed

DECEMBER 2020
Quarantine Pals

WE GOT YOU TO SEND IN YOUR PETS THAT HAVE BEEN KEEPING YOU COMP ANY DURING THESE TIMES!

Maggie

Jeff

Winki

Amber

Amanda Plotnik

Niño & Jackie

Natalia Espinosa-Merlano

Jack

Katie Vranesic

IG:@jack_shizhu

Missy

Minha Khan

Lolo

Gabriela Savva

Ty

Chester

Joanna Kolodko

@i.deserve.lettuce

Bailey & Newbie

DECEMBER 2020
cannon.skule.ca • 9
My Experience with the T-Program

VAMA DAVE
Cannon Writer

I can still vividly remember the day when I told all my friends and extended family that I had been accepted into the Computer Engineering Program at the University of Toronto. Just the name of UofT was enough to impress all of them. Little did I know at that time that making a place for myself at this University, studying with some of the world’s brightest minds, and surviving the day-to-day toll that academics take on you, wasn’t as easy as I had thought it would be.

It’s natural to lose your balance when you enter into a new world, far away from the comfort of your home and your loved ones. As for me, the transition from a life where for 24 hours a day I was completely dependent on my parents, to one where I had to live 7000 miles away from them, was insanely difficult, yet made slightly tolerable because of technology. But sometimes, even technology can’t help when conflicting time zones and piles of pending assignments come into play.

When you used to be a student who scored a 90+ on every test throughout their schooling, it becomes difficult to accept the fact that you have reached a point where you have started failing tests. My profound ego would not let me believe that I could be struggling with academics. It takes time, but it soon hits you that every single student at this University was a top ranker at their respective schools, and every single one of them is putting in major effort to sustain themselves in this highly competitive environment.

Yet again, this doesn’t mean everyone will be able to deal with the overwhelming pressure of rigorous academics, and nobody’s life revolves solely around it either. Everyone has a lot more going on in their lives than what appears, battles they may be fighting that the world knows nothing about, making it even harder to cope with the workload at University. Hence, owing to multitudes of possible reasons, a lot of students end up failing classes despite doing the most that they could get themselves to do.

At the beginning of our First Semester of First Year, we are made aware about the existence of the T-Program. In simple words, students need an average mark of above 60% for all their courses in order to proceed to the next semester. An average less than that would require them to be enrolled in the T-Program.

The regulations of the T-Program state that you need to repeat any course in which your mark was below a 50%. Apart from this, if the average semester mark is between 55%-60%, the student is put on academic probation. In order to be promoted out of academic probation, the student is required to score an average above 60% for the following two consecutive semesters.

For an average mark between 50%-55% the student is required to repeat any individual courses they may have scored below 50%, as well as any other courses wherein they scored less than 55% that are crucial for forming the foundation for upper years. An average less than 50% requires you to withdraw from University for the rest of the year, and apply to UofT once again for next year’s Fall Term.

There are a few other guidelines and exceptions that come with the T-Program, all of which you are made familiar with at the start of your First Semester in your First Year. I never paid close attention when we were being told about the T-Program during Orientation Week, because I thought I wouldn’t ever need to be enrolled in it anyway. Clearly, life had different plans for me. Once my results (an average of 52% for anyone who’s curious) came out I had made up my mind to quit UofT. I just didn’t think I belonged.

As cliché as it sounds, giving up is the easiest thing you can do. And in true honesty, life will not shy away from giving you numerous opportunities to do so. You will have moments of darkness, times that will test you, but in the end it’s up to you to find the strength and courage to move forward, and prove to
They used to run. All we mere mortals could do was take out our 720p HD camera, savouring the disappointment we had grown accustomed to, and point it at the ever distant board praying our multitasking skills had somehow evolved overnight, lest we should further feed the beast that was this vicious cycle.

Wondering what I'm talking about?

Going into first year, I assumed people would be pretty enthusiastic about their career; after all, they chose to be attending the "#1 engineering school in Canada" for a reason. And yet, I never expected my fellow peers to lean towards the psychotic end of the scientist scale: at the end of every lecture, students would stampede towards the next lecture room, making it absolutely impossible to secure front row seats for those of us who didn't sign up for a gym class. And hey, good for them, I'm sure their enthusiasm paid off during their optometrist appointments, or 20 years down the line when they develop absolutely no cardiac problems, but this slightly worrisome quasi-animalistic ritual put a small dent in MY learning. So it was that two, three, six months passed by, and I would gaze longingly at the ever-eluding blackboard from afar, hoping for some miracle that would change my fate.

That's when the coronavirus attacked.

Now, as a disclaimer, I don't welcome the coronavirus in any way shape or form. I don't applaud its existence or forgive it for having killed thousands of people. Yet, a part of me can't help but revel in the fact that my professor's mirrored screens are so crisp and clear and close I can almost taste the electronic ink. Controversially perhaps, I must say: COVID-19 has truly blessed my learning.

I mean, think about it: what true downside is there to online learning? Okay, fine, so I can't exactly get cool labs in which I grab those deliciously engineered ball bearings, and I don't get to 3D print a figurine of Groot pretending it's for school. Fine. But would you rather a) spend money on getting to school - avoiding eye contact with tired commuters, pretending you don't smell the dubious odours of the sweaty man beside you, choking back tears at the third announced transit delay - or b) just stay in the sanctuary that has become your home? Voila.

No more waking up at 7 to get to a 9 a.m. class: at 8:55 I wake leisurely and log on to a functional- albeit glitchy - BBCollaborate class. No more ignoring my grumbling stomach after 4 hours of lectures: every food item I possess is mere meters away, teasingly at my disposal. No more longing for my miniature schnauzer at home during tutorials: my doggo insists on disrupting lectures through sneak attacks or demands of belly rubs.

Sure, I may just have purchased my seventeenth succulent, baked my twenty-fourth loaf of bread, and worn the same outfit for the fourth day in a row, but you know what?

At least I can see the damn board.

Out of the Wild

NATALIA ESPINOSA-MERLANO
Cannon Writer

DECEMBER 2020 cannon.skule.ca • 11

"#1 engineering school in Canada" for a reason. And yet, I never expected my fellow peers to lean towards the psychotic end of the scientist scale: at the end of every lecture, students would stampede towards the next lecture room, making it absolutely impossible to secure front row seats for those of us who didn't sign up for a gym class. And hey, good for them, I'm sure their enthusiasm paid off during their optometrist appointments, or 20 years down the line when they develop absolutely no cardiac problems, but this slightly worrisome quasi-animalistic ritual put a small dent in MY learning. So it was that two, three, six months passed by, and I would gaze longingly at the ever-eluding blackboard from afar, hoping for some miracle that would change my fate.

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for co-op jobs. Staffing structure to reflect student needs, better professional development events, and resume and interview support were areas the Engineering Career Centre (ECC) was falling behind compared to rival universities and they did not make up for that in employer relations. Often there were no incentives for the employer to hire a UofT student, students were not supported when negotiating with potential employers and any failure was blamed directly on the student.

Furthermore, there was no failure was blamed directly on the student. A quick hiring focus. A quick

The goals for the Faculty were to create a new staffing structure and address these issues, including upgraded job descriptions and enhanced support of students during applications, interviews, and the work experience. The new structure was also to include a greater diversity of work opportunities for all engineering and related disciplines. Staffing levels to support the program were to be tweaked to provide full support for both the 4-month summer work and the 12-16 month work experiences.

So, what happened?

For this section, it was best to separately analyse the new program with a pre-work term and post-hiring focus. A quick disclaimer: these changes will not affect anyone who will apply for PEY before the class of 2T4. The Faculty wanted to start a new Professional Experience Co-op Program designed on the request from the students for better professional development resources to provide progressive skills building in an experiential learning context. Applicants to FASE can indicate their interest in the new program on the Engineering Applicant Portal as they apply for university or can indicate their interest at any time up to January of their second year directly to the Engineering Career Centre. It is not specified if changing your mind later to opt out would be an option or if the transition to opt in would be difficult later on.

Futhermore, as opposed to holding T-card swiping events known as Pathways to Success on paper, the ECC will now conduct modules starting in second year, leading all the way up to the final semester before the PEY term. These will allegedly cover different professional development strategies much more effectively. These modules will include: Job strategy search (includes professional networking and info about industries), Professional Branding and Performance (includes Cover letter, resume workshops and mock interviews), Workplace Dynamics (teaching professionalism, communication and conflict (teaching professionalism, communication and conflict), EDI, discrimination and harassment). Additionally, post hiring, the strategy was to help the students learn the ropes faster and increase the chances for them to provide and incorporate feedback. These include:

- An additional early-self reflection assignment
- A mid-term evaluation, including student input about work being done and anticipated outcomes
- A one-on-one check in by PEY staff
- An end-of term evaluation by supervisor also includes students experiences

From what I have noticed on a personal level as someone currently on PEY, the effectiveness of the 3 modules and final report we have recently is dubious, as usually managers base their opinions on personal interaction with their employees and will consult the PEY student before reporting to the ECC. If the student has not built a good relationship with the manager, the report will generally be negative. It is not an academic institution that your professors are forced to award you grades for great performance even if they don’t have positive interactions with you. Just increasing the number of reports will not change anything except increase fatigue for all parties involved, especially managers who already have very busy schedules. And this brings us to my next point.

What went wrong according to students?

Negating the minority of students who immediately received jobs
PEY Program Student Input Survey Results

985 responses // October 29, 2020

<table>
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<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>93.4%</td>
<td>first year students were unaware of the new changes</td>
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<td>75.7%</td>
<td>first years were unaware of the new cost</td>
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<td>49.1%</td>
<td>did not believe they had sufficient knowledge about the program</td>
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<tr>
<td>42%</td>
<td>responded &quot;likely&quot; or &quot;very likely&quot; to join new program</td>
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<td>35%</td>
<td>would be unable to access the program due to financial constraints</td>
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<tr>
<td>65%</td>
<td>responded “strongly against” or “against” the new changes</td>
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**PEY continued from page 12**

with no hassle and little communication with the ECC, most students on PEY have stated to have extremely poor experiences with the ECC. As such, there were resounding complaints against the Faculty for placing greater responsibility upon an already underperforming organisation. A survey titled PEY Program Student Input Survey was sent to the Skule™ community on October 26th with completion by the 29th, a day before the Annual Accountability Meeting (ACM). This survey was to “collect official data from the student body to numerically assess the validity of the complaints” regarding the handling of communications during PEY Program negotiations, of which the answers were to be shared at the ACM. The survey yielded some quite shocking results: most students in the know were unhappy with the changes after all the consultation and a great number of students did not realise a change was taking place.

Firstly, the new financial changes of the program will likely disadvantage students based on income. The original PEY program required an initial $125 registration fee followed by a $975 fee once employment was secured. This totaled to a $1100 total cost. The new program will have an estimated cost of $3600, over 3 times the current amount. And while the argument was made that this will be to hire more staff members and a bursary will be available to students in need, it is worth debating whether this justifies an imbalance in equity for one of the most funded faculties in the country given the ECC’s track record. A number of students interviewed around the Skule™ community shared these concerns.

Truman Yuen, a Chem 2T1 working at Apotex Inc. for his PEY term was upset at the financial implication of these changes. “I don’t believe in imposing even more fees on all 4 years of your education especially for a program that is not part of the academic curriculum”, he said. “You’re asking someone coming out of highschool to do co-op and not giving them a different choice. [In my year] even 2 weeks before signing up, people didn’t know [if they wanted to do PEY]. You’re forcing people to do it now.”

Another PEY student, Calvin Kendrick, who spent multiple work terms at RBC looks at it from a monetary standpoint. “Are we paying [the] ECC to work in student interest or as a profit making machine for the university? We are paying some of the ECC employees the same as Executive officers at big firms”, he complained. “It is necessary to justify the reasoning behind this. [To me] it feels like the ECC was worried about losing revenue because not many students will go on PEY this year following COVID-19 (...)Timeline to choose creates a higher sunk cost where I have to pay close to $2000 where I only paid $125 before. Also you are forced to use the portal and if you don’t, you don’t get accreditation. I could have had my certification already then. No [other university] does that.”

Secondly, there is still no flexibility in how you spend your 16 months between companies or how you can break down this time, as is offered by most other Ontario University with a co-op program to some degree. If the ECC wants students to entrust them with additional resources, students should be put first. As it stands, the current structure of the PEY and ESIP programs gives all the negotiating power to the employer rather than the student with a very small acceptance window and often non-negotiable terms. Students have brought up their concerns on various levels from companies or how
did not believe they had sufficient knowledge about the program

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**EngSoc’s Response**

In responding to the student opinions, EngSoc President Chris Kousinioris released a statement admitting his shortcomings in negotiations, but also promised the student

**PEY continued on page 14**

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**Changes Made so Far**

- **Fees ($3600 total) split by semester** and paid through ACORN
- **No fees in the first year**
- **$1800 to be paid after obtaining 12-16 month placement**
- Bursary and scholarship program available
- Payments **no longer** required if student doesn’t continue the program
- Payments can be **deferred** during PEY
body he will do everything in his power to ensure a transparent and accessible financial summary and progress report on the new program. In the November board meeting, the EngSoc board also voted to create 2 new PEY representatives/ negotiators positions with executive power over decisions made in regard to the new program. They have now been elected, and will soon be conducting future negotiations with the faculty, taking over that authority from the President and VP Academic.

The upper year representative is Armin Ale, an EngSci 2T1 who has been extremely vocal in PEY negotiations over the past year. He is quite critical of the direction the new program is taking and sees his work cut out for him. “Making a better PEY program is about delivering high-quality, student-centered services at a fee that makes sense, with a fee schedule that makes it accessible to everyone”, he attested. “Many Ontario Universities strike this balance using a variety of models. I think our best bet is learning from McMaster University, i.e. open the portal to students in all years, allow work terms of 4, 8, 12, or 16 months at any year, and charge a small yearly fee plus a per-4-month fee while on coop. This flexible system will give our students more shots at getting jobs, more flexibility in deciding when to take which jobs, and make it much easier for ECC to expand the portal, as many companies have a strong preference for 4-month internships.”

When asked about what else he hopes to achieve, he responded, “Additionally, with a well calibrated fee structure, this system can be much more accessible than the proposed one without significantly changing the total fee. It’s a reasonable system that’s already in place in Ontario, and doesn’t need any changes to our academic calendar, and we can approach the negotiation without touching fees, which is a touchy subject for the Faculty. Separately, I’ll be pushing for stuff to limit the fee (i.e. figuring out what people will be doing and limiting the scope of ECC before we hire new ECC staff so we end up needing fewer people).”

The first year representative, Maryam Younis, requested the students’ support in the upcoming months of negotiations. “Only last week, Armin Ale and I were elected in the newly temporary role as PEY negotiators after the PEY program revamp. As new PEY negotiators we do not get to start fresh.” she explained. “We are handed a full plate of student backlash, ECC changes and faculty negotiations. The 2T4s will be the first cohort affected by the new PEY program, but they are the ones who are the least aware about these impending changes. Our first and foremost task is in making sure that the student body is up to date with all the changes happening, while continuing to take feedback, suggestions and concerns.”

She also said there is a lot to achieve in a short deadline: defining the portal’s job ratio by allowing equal job opportunities for all engineering disciplines, PEY program cost changes and service delivery (like technical interview prep) from ECC for the PEY program. “The PEY program is not perfect, [however] Armin and I will strive to make sure it reaches its maximum potential to ensure University of Toronto’s students’ success in the work field.” she promised.

What about non eng students?

As we know, a number of non engineering students also benefited from using the PEY program. The future for their participation seems unclear. They will not fall under the new program and will have a new agreement for them later. Until then, the current program will be in place for them. This points to 2 things: first, the current program will run in tandem with the new program and it will cause inefficiencies in the ECC’s operation. Secondly, this hints at the fact that non engineers will no longer be a part of the mainline PEY program and could be left with an inferior system later on.

As another PEY cycle approaches us, students will be looking at the ECC and the new program changes with a critical eye. But with everything said and done, some of the upcoming changes are promising a step in the right direction. The faculty is creating a advisory committee to reach agreements based on key student input. Rebates for students who find their job outside the portal, rebates for 2T4s if their first year in the program doesn’t meet metrics, technical interview support and visa support for internal students are now included. There are also promises to ensure accessible financial summary and performance metrics and to review the program in 2025.

This year has been full of ups and downs within the faculty, with the PEY Program being one of the most divisive points within the student community. Let us hope the positive changes are a precursor of better things to come. But let us also be vigilant about any changes that are of detriment to us and raise questions to ensure fair and equitable opportunities at the Faculty of Applied Science and Engineering.
270 Days and Counting

ANONYMOUS

For those who have lost count, we’ve been in this mess for 270 days. That’s two hundred and seventy days. As the numbers rise, and as the death count doesn’t seem to stop climbing, you’d think that a global pandemic such as this would be enough to join humanity together to fight with a united front against this virus.

Apparently not.

At the beginning of this pandemic no one knew what we would be in for, and the select few that had some idea, well, not a whole lot of people were listening to them. Things began to close, people were getting infected in cities way closer to us, our hospitals began to report (that)maybe this virus entered Canada a little earlier than we all thought. But we were still okay, right? I mean, Canadians are generally healthy and have good health care, of course, everything was going to be fine. Except it wasn’t, it still isn’t, and to those of you reading this who are still a little skeptical about the plausibility of this virus, I’ve got the families of over fifty million people who’ve been infected and the families of over one million people who have died who would tell you to smarten up.

It was excusable in the beginning when we would watch celebrities talk to us about how difficult everything has been and how hard it was to be stuck at home not knowing the future, while the sun danced over the water of their crystal blue pool and the grass of their acre estate swayed in the wind behind them. Sure, people were losing their jobs, their homes, but we forgave the celebrities because no one was really sure how to act, how to approach this tough topic of the hardships of the common folk. Now, it’s not so excusable.

What I don’t understand is how these celebrities don’t know how much of an influence they have over people. Look around! People pay attention to how you act, so if you go on acting like there isn’t a pandemic happening, most likely the least strong-minded fans of yours will mirror your actions. Apparently, a few weeks ago, it was uber important that a certain celeb family had a little party celebrating who knows what, who really cares. But don’t worry, they rented out an entire island to make sure that they were being safe and weren’t around others so as to not spread germs. Sure, okay, but it’s a tad tone-deaf no? People are struggling to pay for rent, for food, trying and failing to see their grandparents, their parents, but you thought it was okay to go on social media and brag about how lucky you were to rent out an entire island just so you and your family could have a safe extravagant party.

But this is where I stop right? I mean, surely it’s only these celebrities that are so far removed from reality they couldn’t possibly understand how to act, who aren’t following proper procedure and doing everything they can to shorten the time we spend isolated. Sorry, but it’s not the end, not even close.

Choose to see friends without socially distancing. Choose to wear masks incorrectly or not at all. Choose to ignore the fact that it is humanly possible to delay a dinner at a restaurant in hopes that doing so will lower numbers. And choose to disregard the grim reality that the longer we put the needs of one before the needs of many, the longer essential workers risk their lives.

What I can’t apprehend is how people don’t get it. Wear your mask! You’ve had 270 days to figure out how to put one on, so do it. And don’t complain about it; “Oh it’s uncomfortable, oh it hurts my ears”, suck it up. Would you rather have a breathing tube to help you breathe? Would you rather your back hurt with bed sores from not being able to get out of bed? Be isolated in a strange and scary white room because your family can’t come and visit you? Because that’s the alternative, and that’s what millions of people are facing right now. And while I’m on the subject, not sure if this isn’t common knowledge, but air and particles come out of both your mouth AND nose. I shouldn’t even have to write this out.

Your mask needs to cover your mouth and nose. Both. Of. Them. Not just one or the other (I seriously felt a few of my brain cells die writing that).

Your actions have consequences, didn’t anyone teach you that? We all hate this, it’s not just you. We are all missing our friends and non-immediate family. Most of us have probably had a milestone by now that has just come and went, not being able to truly celebrate with the people we love. It’s not just you that’s suffering.

Grow up, and realize that if we all work together, this will be over faster. It can’t be everyone for themselves, it’s not going to work. The longer people are being selfish the longer we’ll be in this mess, the longer we’ll be apart from family and friends. The sad fact of it all is that those who are listening, who are wearing a mask, socially distancing, giving up chances to hang out with friends because they know it’s for the betterment of humanity, are the ones getting the brunt of this horrible feeling of being unable to surround themselves with people they care about.

I don’t care if you miss your gals, bros, and pals. The longer humanity only thinks “me me me”, the longer some socially responsible young person is unable to hug their grandparent who may not make it to next Christmas, and by the way, things are going, we won’t be able to see them this Christmas either. This could have been over if we would’ve just nipped it in the bud. In the beginning, we could’ve just not gone anywhere, left our houses only for extremely essential reasons, not given the virus a chance to spread. We could’ve gotten rid of this much faster. We could’ve understood the severity of not following the rules the government so urgently gave us.

Humankind needs to start thinking about one another, think about the doctors and nurses, the long-term care workers who are putting their lives behind everyone else’s, who are putting themselves in danger every day to make sure more people don’t die. Think about those who are sick, struggling to breathe, eat, trying to not feel completely defeated. All you have to do is make sure you aren’t closer than six feet to other people, put a loop behind each ear and make sure the fabric is covering both your nose and mouth. That’s literally it.