

INTERROBANG

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Safety of students on downtown campus a growing concern

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INTERROBANG

On Feb. 11, Skye Vidler, a first year video game design and development student at Fanshawe's downtown campus, the Centre for Digital and Performance Arts (CDPA), was on her way home when she was assaulted in an unprovoked attack.

It happened about a block from the school, at Dundas and Richmond, as she waited for the bus.

"I was just standing there and I saw that there was someone chasing someone else across the street probably about 50 feet away from me and I didn't pay that much attention," Vidler said. "She ran by me and she hit me with something really hard."

The object pierced her lip leaving Vidler coated in blood.

"She broke my tooth, it went into the roof of my mouth, and then it went through my lip," Vidler said. "I was bleeding until I got to the hospital, it was insane."

The assault left Vidler with stitches, a broken tooth that might have to be root canaled and the question of why this happened in the first place.

"I mean this happened really close to the campus and it shouldn't happen to anyone else."

Rather than being complacent, Vidler used her assault as motivation to start a conversation about the growing concerns of safety felt by students on the downtown campus.

She reached out to her student representatives, who have since reached out to Fanshawe officials, security and building supervisors for the downtown campus, all in hopes of finding a solution to this ongoing problem.

"Dundas Street is not a particularly friendly place," said Adrian Hall, the Fanshawe Student Union (FSU) student representative for video game design and development. "This is the end of the street that doesn't have a meth clinic on it...There are a lot of drug deals that go on, a lot of people [suffering from mental illnesses], people who are on drugs, there is a needle drop off bin right outside this building and people [unfortunately] don't really use it...students just don't feel safe."

The other student representative, Jennifer Lannessa, agreed with Hall

"I would really just like main campus to pay attention to what's going on downtown," Lannessa said. "Student safety should be a top priority for the college and the fact that a student was assaulted and they still have not done anything about it is just appalling."

Lannessa went on to bring another main concern to the forefront: how long it took for any action to be taken when Vidler was assaulted.

"This happened before reading week and nothing has been done at all, we've been trying to move up through the ranks, trying to get something done through our channels," Lannessa said. "Now we have had to kind of go above and beyond because the people at main campus just seem like this isn't something they need to deal with right now, which makes students at downtown campus feel like we don't matter."

But according to Michelle Giroux, supervisor for Fanshawe's downtown campus, Fanshawe is listening and it is her top priority to make sure students feel safe.

"I heard the students, I knew there were some issues before and I have been working on it since October, trying to get some resolutions and it is still my number one top priority," Giroux said.

Giroux is listening and meeting with students to try and figure out solutions to these issues.

On March 14, there was a town hall meeting between students of CDPA, faculty and administration.

According to Lannessa, 75 people were present all eager to share their personal stories, concerns and suggestions in order to fix these problems.

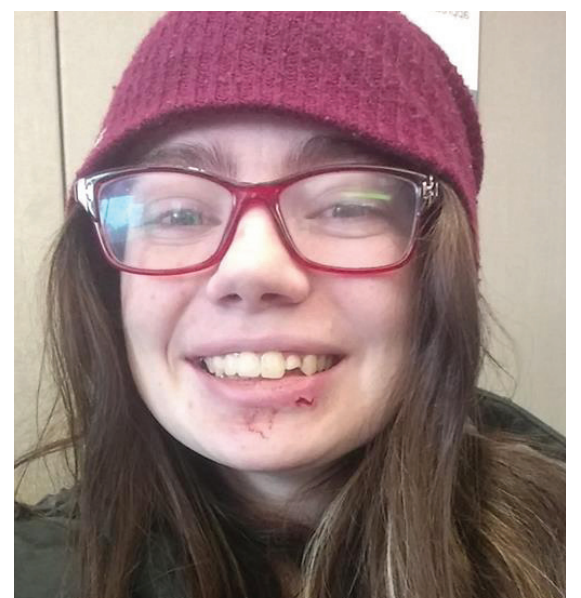
During the meeting, there were six key agreed upon points. There is an overwhelming sense of lack of security the moment you walk out the doors of CDPA. The sense of not feeling safe continues on and in some cases worsens at the bus stops. The safety concerns are not just in the evening but rather all day. The laneway right beside CDPA, Market Lane, is extremely unsafe and therefore unusable. All students in attendance have experienced these things and don't think they should have to. Finally, what was a repeated and agreed upon point were possible solutions.

When discussed with Vidler, Hall and Lannessa, it was clear that there was one solution that seemed simple and inexpensive to implement and that is the foot patrol or safe walk system.

"I definitely want the foot patrol program to be extended to downtown campus, it's a service that is offered at main campus and should be offered at our campus and any other Fanshawe campus," Lannessa said.

Giroux also agreed that the foot patrol system seemed like a good idea.

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CREDIT: JESSICA THOMPSON, BOTTOM RIGHT PROVIDED BY SKYE VIDLER
With an optimistic attitude, Skye Vidler (pictured bottom right) is hoping her story can spark a conversation about student safety at CDPA. Vidler was hit in the face while waiting for the bus beside campus.

Fanshawe delivers promise of free tuition for 10 Syrian refugee families



CREDIT: PROVIDED BY JOHN SING, CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS PHOTOGRAPHER

Wendy Curtis, executive director at Fanshawe International, speaks with two Syrian refugees at a Fanshawe College information session in April 2016.

CHRISTOPHER WALKER INTERROBANG

Fanshawe College has kept its promise in supporting the City of London's plan to help Syrian refugees who came to Canada during the Syrian Crisis.

In doing so, Fanshawe pledged to give free tuition, as well as any related fees, to 10 Syrian refugees, in order to support them getting settled in Canada and help them earn an education in their new found home. Fanshawe successfully kept their promise, with the help of private donations and fundraising efforts from the Fanshawe College Foundation, according to a college news release.

Fanshawe president, Peter Devlin, provided his comments in the news release confirming the news.

"Fanshawe is committed to providing pathways to success, and we're thrilled to help empower 10 new families settling in London," Devlin said. "The students' resilience is inspirational. They have thrown themselves into their studies and are all doing very well, de-

termined to unlock their potential and contribute to their new community. We're proud to see them finding hope and building futures through a Fanshawe education."

With Fanshawe celebrating its 50th anniversary this year, the college will be looking over the fact that it has attracted over half a million students from 70 different countries each year for the ability to educate, engage, empower and excite students' minds.

According to the release, London has been accepting government-sponsored refugees since 2015, which was the same year the college announced their support to help Syrian refugees through the free tuition. A mix of male and female Syrian refugee have registered for a wide variety of programs in both the fall 2016 and winter 2017 semesters.

According to the news release, since December 23, 2016, the federal government reported that London has taken in 1,638 refugees.

Lynn Koudsi, a Syrian student is an example of how support from the college is helping the Syrian refugees.

Koudsi, a Fanshawe student since January 2017, is in the computer programmer analyst program and on top of that has been helping her parents settle in to their new community.

"When I first arrived to Canada, I found the perfect combination of diversity and equality, which made it easier to blend in and feel like I am home. Yet, I was extremely worried about continuing my studies in a completely foreign country," Koudsi said. "But all my worries dissipated when Fanshawe generously offered me the opportunity to follow my dreams and passion, allowing me to pursue my education. And ever since I started attending, I felt fortunate to be part of this loving and helping community, surrounded by professional teachers and co-operative staff. Fanshawe College is truly the ideal start for a happy and successful life," Koudsi said in a press release.

There is one thing for sure, Fanshawe continues to create excellent opportunities for students from all around the world.

Student safety on campus

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"I have done some investigation into that, so we are working on seeing how quickly A. if it's possible and B. can we implement as soon as next week, this is my top priority," Giroux said. "It's a simple and easy thing to do to have a student feel safe when they are leaving the building."

After the successful meeting, Giroux is planning on taking all of the talking points to main campus to try and put something into action.

According to senior manager of Corporate Communications, Elaine Gamble, Fanshawe is working with their partners to try and combat the growing issue of safety at CDPA.

"We are talking to our advanced police foundations program to see whether it might be feasible to have the students do their volunteer hours downtown to help the students get back and forth to the bus stops once they leave the building."

Gamble also put forth the idea of discussing the issue with Campus Security Services to take in their ideas.

"It's really working closely with our partners to make sure that we are addressing concerns and dealing with them in a timely way," Gamble said.

Reaching out to the FSU president, Carlie Forsythe, she was shocked to hear of the assault that occurred, but was not surprised to hear the safety concerns.

"I'm honestly not surprised that we are having these incidents occurring downtown at that location," Forsythe said. "I have concerns over the safety of all stu-

dents at CDPA, as well as the new Kingsmill's location opening soon. I know Fanshawe security and the City of London are looking into making London's downtown a safer place for citizens, and ultimately, students."

As for right now in order for students to feel safe, Steve Hartwick, crime prevention and community programming lead with Campus Security Services, has some tips.

"The biggest piece of advice for students leaving the campus and travelling to bus stops is to try and travel with a friend if it is at all possible because numbers make a difference," Hartwick said.


He also urged students to stay in public areas, register for self-defense classes and again only use paths that are frequently used, rather than back alleys.

According to Gamble, she wants to make sure that students know, regardless of what campus they're on, their voices are being heard.


"We take [student] concerns very seriously, we are dealing with them as quickly as we can and the supervisor of the downtown building will continue to meet with them on an ongoing basis to make sure their concerns are being heard and addressed."

As for Vidler, her face is healing, but she still remains a little fearful when walking around outside of campus. The most important thing to her, however, is for her attack to prevent future attacks from occurring.

"The main campus just needs to realize that this is a serious issue that puts the safety of the students in jeopardy," Vidler said. "I don't think we should have to deal with this."



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