

# ASPO 2024 Fireside Chat: Post-Event Summary

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Thank you for joining us at our Fireside Chat event on November 13, 2024, in the Hart House Music Room.

**78**

Total Attendees

**63**

In-person

**15**

Online



## Event Resources

Access the event recordings and slide deck from the event.

- [Event Recording with Slides](#)
- [Event Recording Without Slides](#)
- [Slide Deck](#)

# Summary: Access and Strategic Recruitment Practices Panel

ASPO Director, Helen Tewolde, moderated an engaging discussion on important access and recruitment topics.



**Kyomi Hastings-Duncan**  
*Associate Registrar and  
Director of Admissions &  
Student Recruitment, UTSC*



**Ryan Hargraves**  
*Executive Director,  
Student Recruitment &  
Admissions*



**June Viglatzis**  
*Coordinator of  
Academic Supports,  
First Nations House*

## Watch the event recording to hear the panelists discuss:

1. Insight into the terms “underrepresented” or “nontraditional” students.
2. Unique contexts or challenges that Indigenous students encounter as they transition into their programs at U of T.
3. Factors to consider as we design and build access programs/pathways for Indigenous students.
4. Challenges or tensions between the goals of access programs and our admissions policies, processes and practices.
5. The concept and practice of “holistic admissions”.
6. Effective student outreach and engagement practices at UTSC that have been responsive to the needs of the student population in the region.

# Summary: Conversation Circles

During the Conversation Circles, we invited attendees to discuss key questions related to the day's topics. The conversation summaries below will inform next steps in ASPO's priorities and supports.

## 1. Structural Barriers

ASPO staff reported<sup>1</sup> on structural barriers to i) access to post-secondary education, and ii) access programs, as identified by the access community in APUF applications and final reports.

### We asked

### You answered

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#### 1. What are some promising practices that have helped you address structural barriers?

- **Responsive Programming:** Designing programs to meet participants' needs.
- **Strategic Outreach:** Personalized recruitment and expanded outreach to underrepresented groups.
- **Awareness:** Increasing awareness of programs and support through various channels.
- **Continuum of Support:** Providing comprehensive support throughout participants' tenure from access to academic programs.
- **Access-First Approach:** Opt-out models for professional and second-entry programs.
- **Collaboration:** Leveraging tri-campus strengths and partnerships.

#### 2. Are there any other structural barriers that are top of mind in your work?

- **Representation:** Hiring diverse faculty and staff to reflect program participants.
- **Institutional Brand Identity:** Addressing perceptions of elitism.
- **Educational Value Proposition:** Addressing perceptions around investing in one's education and its connections to employment and other desirable outcomes.

## 2. Learning and Connection

We shared findings from our internal Access Partners Survey<sup>2</sup>, which will inform our strategy for learning and connection among our internal access partners.

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<sup>1</sup> Slide deck p.17-24

<sup>2</sup> Slide deck p.25-31

## We asked

## You answered

3. Are there any other factors that should be considered in our learning & connection opportunities?

- **Stage Setting:** Defining access and identifying stakeholders.
- **Collaboration:** Building transparent and mutually beneficial partnerships.

4. Which topics would you prioritize for greater collaboration, innovation or developing shared practices as an access community?

- **Partnerships:** Strategic recruitment and relationship building.
- **Budgeting:** Allocating funds for program needs.
- **Pipelines/Pathways:** Connecting alumni and joint programming.
- **Communications:** Methods for sharing best practices and developing a CRM system for access programs.

### 3. Partnerships

ASPO staff shared survey findings<sup>3</sup> about the types of partnerships (internal or external) and the partnership agreements (formal, informal, quasi-formal) featured in our access programs.

## We asked

## You answered

1. What challenges have you encountered in building new or maintaining existing community partnerships?

- **Political Dynamics:** Geopolitical conflicts affecting relationships.
- **Communication:** Educating partners on institutional changes.
- **Pandemic Impact:** Addressing pandemic effects on programming.

2. What are some helpful practices for maintaining longstanding community partnerships?

- **Footwork:** Commitment to foundational tasks.
- **Time Investment:** Achieving more with long-term partners.

3. What are key considerations for access programs as they build and maintain sustainable partnerships?

- **Recruitment Strategy:** Inspirational vs. aspirational approaches.
- **Cultural Congruence:** Being culturally appropriate in recruitment.
- **Relationship Dynamics:** Managing boundary tensions.
- **Staffing:** Ensuring fully funded, permanent staff.
- **Storytelling:** Sharing success stories.

<sup>3</sup> Slide deck p.32-34

# Looking Ahead

## Upcoming ASPO opportunities and resources.

### 1. Access Programs University Fund (APUF) Review Committee Membership

We are seeking three new members for our five-person APUF application review committee. APUF provides financial resources to help units develop new and/or enhance existing access programs. See the attached document for more details. Complete the [Expression of Interest Form](#) by **December 12, 2024**.

### 2. Partnerships Consultation Committee

In 2025, ASPO will create a consultation committee to discuss challenges and areas of support in building and maintaining sustainable partnerships. This opportunity is open to professionals ranging from those who are relatively new to those more experienced in the access field. We hope to bring together diverse perspectives to ideate innovative and trusted approaches to strengthen partnerships. Stay tuned for more information to come in the new year. If you have questions, contact [access@utoronto.ca](mailto:access@utoronto.ca).

### 3. Tri-campus Access Programs Database

In 2025, ASPO will launch a database listing all access programs across the tri-campus. The database will facilitate connections and help highlight the work of our access partners. ASPO staff will reach out to you to confirm your program information so that we reflect your programs as accurately as possible.

### 4. Resources Repository

ASPO is launching a repository of U of T and external resources including reports, statistics, toolkits, and professional development, to support access programs and pathways. Look out for this resource by the new year. If there are any resources you would like us to share or consider including, contact [access@utoronto.ca](mailto:access@utoronto.ca).

### 5. Access Connections Day 2025

In January 2025, the ASPO team will begin planning the 5<sup>th</sup> Access Connections Day to be held in May 2025. Stay tuned for the date announcement. You can check out a recap of [Access Connections Day 2023](#) for a glimpse of what you can expect next year. If you would like to join the event planning committee, contact [access@utoronto.ca](mailto:access@utoronto.ca).

