

LC-DC Podcast Season 2, Episode 1: Building Community with Mariana and Savannah from the DSU

Transcript

00:00:11 Ryan

Hello everyone, you're listening to the LCDC podcast, advice for students from students brought to you by the Douglas College Learning Center. I'm your host Ryan and today I'm joined by Savannah and Savannah from the Douglas Student Union. Mariana is the director of college relations for the DSU and a student in the legal studies program and she's in her second year. Savannah is the DSU women's representative and she studies international business management here at Douglas and she's in her fourth year. So Savannah and Savannah, welcome and thank you so much for joining us today.

00:00:47 Savannah

Hi, thank you so much for having us on.

00:00:49 Mariana

Hi Ryan, thank you.

00:00:51 Ryan

How do you feel about starting school again?

00:00:54 Mariana

I'm feeling a little bit nervous, not going to lie. But I'm really looking forward to the whole year. I'm looking forward to the events that we'll be having and all the new people that I'm going to meet. And yeah, learning a few things this new year.

00:01:11 Savannah

I'm super pumped for my semester. It's my last semester, so I'm very excited, but I'm going to try and take it all in, last semester as a student, hopefully for a while. So I'm excited to

take my last classes and make connections in my classes and just mingle with fourth year students as well and kind of get excited about graduation as well.

00:01:32 Ryan

Great. That makes this semester even more exciting, I guess, doesn't it?

00:01:36 Savannah

Yeah, it does. Yeah.

00:01:37 Ryan

And got to take advantage of being a student while you still can, right?

00:01:41 Savannah

Exactly.

00:01:41 Ryan

Get all those discounts in. And another way we can take advantage of being a student, which we're going to talk about today, is finding opportunities to connect with other people, other students, and build relationships and build community. So that's our topic for today's episode. Before we get into it, I'd like to just first acknowledge that we are on the unceded traditional and ancestral lands of the Coast Salish peoples, including the territories of the q'ícəy' (Katzie), q'wá:nł'ən' (Kwantlen), k'wík'wəłəm (Kwikwetlem), x'wməθk'wəyəm (Musqueam), qiqéyt (Qayqayt), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), scəw'aθən (Tsawwassen) and səliłwətał (Tseil-Waututh) Peoples.

So my first question for you 2 is, why should we build community? Why should we make connections? What are the benefits of making connections and building community in post-secondary?

00:02:27 Savannah

Well, one thing I would say is my very first semester, a friend came up to me and just sat next to me and was like, hey, I haven't made any friends. Like, can I sit here? And I was like, of course, yeah. And she's the reason that I did a lot of these things in post-secondary, so it can lead to like opportunities that you may not have known about, connecting with other students that maybe you're not in the same circle, but that friend is, and just experiencing new things through someone else because they're in a different crowd and you just may

not have crossed paths before, but That's why I'm in the places I am today because of this friend that sat next to me.

00:03:04 Mariana

The same happened to me. I think one of the most important benefits would be like the long-lasting relationships that you can create. And yeah, the people that you can meet just like building your network and you never know how these people might help you in the future and like how close you can become with them. So it's really nice.

00:03:24 Ryan

Yeah, that's so true. It's an opportunity to form lifelong friendships. And I'm still close friends with some of the people I met in college. And there's also studies that show that a feeling of belonging and having connections at post-secondary, there's a direct link between that and academic success. So making friends, making connections, that's going to help you get good grades too as well.

00:03:54 Savannah

Of course, like I had this friend that sat next to me, we would study together eventually, like later in the semester, and then we even took classes together throughout the next couple of years. And we definitely, when we took classes and studied together, we learned better because I want to hang out with her and it was just more fun and I would want to show up to class. So maybe she made me come to class a little more than maybe I would have.

00:04:20 Mariana

I would say also, I don't know, switching from high school to post-secondary education may be hard for some people. And it's always nice to have that friendly face that's able to help you through the process and make it smoother. And that's definitely what happened to me. Like it's really nice to feel like you were actually looking forward to go to school to see one of your friends or like to then grab something like grab a tea, grab a coffee after school and have a chat and meet new people. It's really nice.

00:04:51 Ryan

Yeah, totally. School can be stressful at times, right? So it's really helpful to have a support network, people you can rely on and people who can help motivate you to even just show up for class because some days maybe you just don't feel like you have it in you to just

even go to class. So it can often be difficult to make connections, especially now in the 21st century. Why do you think it can often be difficult for people to make new friends?

00:05:21 Savannah

I think speaking from, because I'm a domestic student, from my point of view, when I first started at post-secondary, I had a hard time balancing both personal life and post-secondary life because I had a big community. I grew up around New West, and so I had a big community and commitments before going to school. So I kind of was in the mindset of just go to school, get school done, go home, and kind of live my life that I had before. And I wasn't really in the mindset of like, I should make new friends and just kind of expand my commitments and social circle.

00:05:55 Savannah

But I would say after the first semester I was like, maybe I should actually expand and, be a little bit busier if that means, juggling a little bit more is more beneficial and you do get more opportunities from that. And I think some people may miss that from post-secondary is taking in the full experience is making connections in your classes and not just going and going home.

00:06:18 Mariana

Yeah, for sure. And as an international student, I would say that it may be closer to taking the initiative. It was something hard for me at first because, many things, maybe the language at first, I would feel like maybe I would not be able to connect with people as easily as in my mother tongue. So that was very hard at first.

00:06:43 Mariana

But I would say that's usually something that happens for all international students and we kind of always try to look for the people that closely resemble who we are. And it's harder to find that here. But yeah, once I did it, was really good and I really enjoyed my time here.

00:07:04 Ryan

What advice would you have for people who are in similar situations as you? Like I'm sure, Mariana, there's a lot of international students that are starting school and feeling similarly. What advice would you have?

00:07:17 Mariana

Well, I would definitely say like not to fear rejection because we might be, we might have this idea that people are like close-minded or that they won't like to have us approach them. But it's actually really you would be surprised with the amount of people that are willing to start a conversation with you and that are really, really happy to just listen to what you have to say or to have a small talk or to talk about your classes. So I would say just go up to people, have initiative, and just kind of enjoy the time here, I would say, because that's the most important part.

00:07:57 Ryan

Yeah, totally. I think that mindset shift that you mentioned, because often we can think negatively, people aren't going to like me. People don't want to talk to me. But it's usually the opposite, right? People do like me. People do want to talk to me. But like me, they're scared of taking the initiative and making that first step and approaching a stranger and starting up a conversation. So I like that advice. Savannah, how about you? Do you have any pieces of advice for new students and maybe thinking back to your own first semester and what you'd tell yourself four years ago, I guess, now, when you were first starting out?

00:08:36 Savannah

Yeah, I would tell myself to be more like my two friends that I made at school here, because they both came up to me. One said, can I sit here? I haven't made any friends. the other one came up to me and said, I think we took the same bus. Do you want to go home together? And I was like, sure. So just going up to them and just being super honest and just like going up to them with a friendly face because they both came up to me with a smile and I really liked the aura that they presented like at the first meeting and it was kind of inspirational.

00:09:06 Savannah

And I was like, okay, you can just make friends by literally just going up to someone and just saying, hey, you want to be friends? Because that's how now I have two of my best friends ever. So I've known them for over 5 years now.

00:09:17 Ryan

Yeah, that makes it easy, right? Hey, you want to be friends?

00:09:21 Savannah

Yeah, exactly. So just going up and having the confidence because the person that you're going up to is probably thinking the same thing and is maybe thinking of going up to you. They may just be shy. So if you go up to them, they might be like, oh, actually like thinking in their head, like how I was, going to go up to her because with my first friend that sat next to me, I was thinking the same thing. Every day she walked into class, I was like, oh, she would be a really cool friend to have. And then she sat next to me.

00:09:44 Ryan

That's great advice. What community building opportunities are there for students here at Douglas College?

00:09:52 Mariana

Well, I would say there are lots of events that you can join, networking events or even just, I would say, the DSU events that we hold usually. Those are really great places where people go. They can eat some food and they can play some games. And people are usually super nice and excited and open in those spaces. But also you would be surprised of the other spaces that you can actually get to meet new people, such as, for example, me at the gym.

00:10:23 Mariana

I went to the gym a couple of times ever since I started college. And there I've met a few of my greatest friends. And it's been great. Like people there are like so nice and it's easy to approach to them. And yeah, I would say overall, if you were looking to build community, just get involved and like go around. That's the best part.

00:10:47 Ryan

Yeah, it's great to have a gym buddy, isn't it? The gyms can be a good place to meet people.

00:10:52 Mariana

Yeah, for sure.

00:10:53 Ryan

Yeah. What about you, Savannah? What sorts of opportunities to meet people do you think?

00:10:59 Savannah

I would say the classic one, volunteering. You just kind of get familiar also with like, oh, if you're volunteering like later in the evening for an event, like you kind of get to, you're on campus a little bit longer maybe, like hours that you aren't on campus normally for. And for me, when I would volunteer, that's how I actually got my job at the Future Students Office. And through the Future Students Office, I'm always on campus now, so I get to see familiar faces, people recognize me.

00:11:25 Savannah

It feels more of like a community rather than I'm just going here for class because I have this job and because I volunteered. So getting involved in Douglas is a really good opportunity as well. And like working on campus, the jobs are flexible and it's a good opportunity to make friends as well. I would say also, what Mariana said, hang around the gym. if you go to these spaces enough, you'll make friends that are like you. So I would say, go around the spaces that you like, the gym, maybe you want to go take a class, maybe you do intramurals, that kind of thing. So yeah.

00:12:02 Ryan

Definitely. There's all sorts of events and activities and teams and clubs on campus through the DSU, right? So chances are you'll find something that you're interested in and find people who share those same interests as you.

00:12:20 Savannah

One random fact is if you like to study, a good area is enrollment services because you get a lot of traffic. And so whenever I sit there, I always see my friends going by. I'm like, oh, hey, and then they kind of sit down for a little chat. And it's, I mean, it's a good way to see your friends, but it's also a good way to, like, you could sit next to someone that maybe is in your class and then you can kind of spark a conversation and you are always in such a high traffic area.

00:12:46 Mariana

I also have another suggestion for that. Like places for you to study. I was the biggest fan of going to the DSU to study because there's the pool tables, the foosball. And even though I didn't know lots of people there, I would say it's a pretty open space, really comfortable.

And for example, I didn't know how to play pool, but then a random person just offered to teach me how to do it. And it was nice. Yeah, it was definitely a new friend.

00:13:11 Ryan

Yeah, good. Okay, so you learned how to play pool as well.

00:13:15 Mariana

Exactly. You can learn a new skill, you don't know when or where, but yeah, definitely just be open to meet new people. And yeah, go to this sort of spaces, like within the campus, you can find a lot of things.

00:13:27 Savannah

Like if you're going into these study rooms alone, probably not likely to make friends, but if you go into the open spaces like library, DSU and Enrollment services 100% you'll say hi to someone along the way.

00:13:38 Ryan

Yeah, lots of high traffic spaces to hang out and bump into people and maybe not get so much studying done when you're there, but sometimes that's not the point, right? Sometimes the point is to build community.

00:13:51 Savannah

Exactly.

00:13:52 Ryan

So yeah, and we do have lots of events through your organization, the DSU. We have lots of events here in the library. Student Life has a ton of events, so there's just seems like there's always something happening on campus. So to your point, just staying on campus and finding spaces that you like, that's a good place to start.

00:14:18 Ryan

So we talked about starting up those conversations and starting those relationships. How can students make sure those relationships last even beyond graduation?

00:14:30 Mariana

I think it depends, of course, on the people. But I would say just check on the friends that you make along the way, because of course it's easier once you have courses with them, once you're taking classes with them. But for example, for some of the friends that I've made in certain classes, later, I don't know, I've DMed them or I've like texted them, like asking how they're doing, how their program's doing. Or even if I just see them on the hallways, it's really nice to say a little hi, hug them, and ask how life's been going.

00:15:04 Mariana

And then I don't know, like planning to meet outside of the college, it always goes a long way. So if even though we're here both because we are interested in the class or in a certain program, like there's life outside of the college, right? And if, for example, with you, with Savannah, even though we started just as coworkers, now we're like hanging out outside of work. And it's really nice because we've found new places to connect and meet.

00:15:35 Ryan

That's great.

00:15:36 Savannah

Yeah, I would probably, I don't have a specific advice, but I have an example. I met a friend in a law class, I think two years ago, just kept in contact with her over Instagram and kind of saw what she was up to, saw that she moved to Whistler. And so always just thinking about like, oh, like, so I was going up to Whistler, so I just DMed her being like, I'm going up to Whistler, like, are you going to be there? I just popped in, said hi at her workplace.

00:15:58 Savannah

And then that honestly kind of turned into friendship over the last like just three weeks it kind of formed because she just moved back to the lower mainland and now we've been hanging out and I just took her spin class so just kind of like always thinking like oh like you know keeping in contact over Instagram is a great way because you can kind of see what people are up to without asking all the time because it can kind of be a lot of work if you're just asking a lot of people but just thinking about like oh I'm going here maybe I should just DM them and just reach out and don't be scared to reach out.

00:16:29 Ryan

Yeah, totally agree with that. Don't be scared to reach out because chances are we all appreciate being reached out to, right?

00:16:37 Savannah

Yeah, for sure.

00:16:38 Ryan

So yeah, great advice. Okay, so we've talked a little bit about international students and some of the challenges they face. Can you think of any other groups of students that may face additional challenges and how they can build community here at Douglas?

00:16:57 Savannah

No, I was just gonna think of like the people that come here for night classes only.

00:17:01 Ryan

Yeah.

00:17:02 Savannah

Because I've had those people in my classes because I have just taken night classes because those work better with my schedule. And I always hear about like, oh, I just came from work 30 minutes ago and then they're at this three hour class. I'm like, oh my goodness, I don't know if I could do that ever because you go from an 8 hour work day to a three hour class and you go home and you kind of repeat that three times a week.

00:17:20 Ryan

Yeah.

00:17:21 Savannah

So trying to engage with them too and like see like, oh, what maybe what are they in? Like I know one person was in my communication class. She was a manager at some big company and it was interesting to talk to her about her company because she's a little bit more advanced from where I am right now. So connecting with her. But I would say for the people maybe that are here for night classes, try and make use out of the time that you are here, even though you may be exhausted because I can only imagine.

00:17:52 Ryan

Yeah. Shout out to the part-time students coming in from their nine to five and studying for three hours. I don't know how you do it.

00:18:01 Mariana

Very strong. A lot of commitment. Like respect.

00:18:03 Savannah

And this woman had a child too, so I was like, I don't know how you do this.

00:18:08 Ryan

We're talking a lot about building relationships with other students, but there's other people on campus who you might want to form relationships with and build connections with, such as your instructors. What do you think students can do to build relationships with their instructors? I know it's intimidating sometimes.

00:18:28 Mariana

For sure it is.

00:18:29 Ryan

They're authority figures, right? But yeah, do you have any advice?

00:18:36 Mariana

Well, personally, I found that going to the office hours of instructors is really, really helpful. Because, well, yeah, first of all, you would try to create a relationship with them. Like instructor-student relationship and you can also make use of, for example, if you don't really understand a certain topic or if there's something that you need, they're always open or most of the times they're open to help you out and that's I would say my main advice.

00:19:06 Savannah

I would personally say like showing up on time to class and showing your commitment to their work. So like their classes, say if it's a law class, like showing up 5 minutes before maybe having like a little chat, being like, oh, hi, how are you, whatever, something like that. And then going up to them at the end of the class and always having a question about

their lecture and just being interested in their lecture. Some of my teachers, I actually still follow on LinkedIn because of this.

00:19:33 Savannah

And sitting not at the back of the class and not taking notes and always leaving, but maybe in the middle of the class, if you're not super comfortable or at the front if you are really eager. But I always find like sitting in the middle, being engaged and always having a question at the end of the class and being engaged in the content that they just taught is very helpful. And just asking questions if you don't know and, you know, participating in the conversation during the lecture, maybe like, you know, if the instructor says at the beginning of class, like, oh, interrupt me if you ever have any questions during my lecture, asking questions if you need that, helps build connection 100%.

00:20:07 Mariana

Yeah, I would say the baseline is just to be respectful with them and kind of appreciate the work they're doing. Because we should also remind ourselves that they're human beings, that they've actually prepared for these classes, that they're very educated people. And yeah, just respect the work that they do and grab as much as you can learn from them.

00:20:29 Ryan

Yeah, I totally agree with that. As an instructor myself, I don't teach courses right now, but when I taught courses, I always remembered the students that asked questions about the material I was teaching because that showed, hey, you're interested in something that I really care a lot about and I'm really interested in. So I definitely agree that asking, just simply asking questions is a great way to just build, start that connection and build a relationship with your instructors. Are there any other members of the Douglas community that you think students should form connections with?

00:21:05 Savannah

Yeah, like maybe at the gym, like the front desk person. Yeah just always asking their name and just stuff like that and service people, like even at the library I'll kind of not like it's not like a huge connection but I'll just form like a little bit and now they know me so the certain people.

00:21:23 Mariana

So no it's actually great just to go and talk to people and it's really nice because usually when you think about building community at school, it's what we talked about, like students or instructors, but there's a lot more people that we're not taking into account, like that are here constantly. I'm pretty sure that whenever you ask for their names or you just thank them for the work that they're doing, they're going to be really happy. You're really lighting up someone's day.

00:21:50 Savannah

I know for me, people at enrollment services, I see them all the time because I'm constantly in and out of enrollment services passing through to both my offices. So now I know a couple of people in enrollment services, so I just give them a wave. So stuff like that, just small, quick connections that you can make.

00:22:06 Ryan

Yeah, 100%. We are human beings here. We're not just employees of the college.

00:22:15 Mariana

Exactly.

00:22:15 Ryan

Yeah, definitely. We're people too. We like being friendly with students and often we enjoy it. That's part of what we enjoy about the job is meeting students, meeting people. So definitely take the opportunity to make a connection with someone working the library front desk or working in enrollment services. And yeah, that'll go a long way towards building your community here at Douglas College. Do you have any other advice about how students can build community here at Douglas? Anything we haven't covered yet?

00:22:49 Savannah

I would just give one last piece of advice if I could tell four years ago, just be super outgoing and just be uncomfortably outgoing because I was too shy in my first year. I mean, it's pretty given, but because everything was new and I didn't really know, but just be like super outgoing because no one here really knows who you are. So you can kind of remake an image for yourself. whether you liked your image before, whatever, but you can kind of make like a whole new personality here and no one knows that you're shy. So if you're just

super outgoing, people are like, oh wow, they're just super outgoing all the time because they don't know you before. So just be outgoing and just honestly put yourself in uncomfortable situations to meet people. And yeah.

00:23:34 Mariana

And to add on to that, I would say to be confident in yourselves, like actually believe it, believe it that you're this very, very amazing person to meet, that people would be happy to meet you, to spend time with you. And yeah, just like be open to the new experiences that you may be able to live in here. Because you'd be surprised, you'd really be surprised of how long a small chit chat would take you.

00:24:03 Savannah

Yeah, like come early to class and stay a little bit later, like 5, 10 minutes before and after class, and that can go a long way.

00:24:09 Mariana

Yeah, or go check out, I don't know, if you were walking by the concourse and you saw this thing that maybe caught your eye, and you, I don't know, there was someone tabling. You just asked a few questions and then you realize that there's this thing that's going on, this event that connects you to a workplace or to somewhere that might lead you to a different and more advanced place in the future, then take advantage of that. You never know. You never know where people might take you. It might take you a long way.

00:24:41 Savannah

Yeah, you never know.

00:24:42 Ryan

I love that. That's beautiful advice. Thank you so much. And hopefully the students listening appreciate that. Last question. What is one thing our listeners can do right now after this episode finishes to start building their communities here at Douglas?

00:25:00 Savannah

I mean, if you're on campus, go say hi to the person next to you if you don't know them.

00:25:05 Mariana

I would say just challenge yourself. Like, do this little thing, this little game with yourself the first week, let's say, in each class, just say hi to someone. That's what I did when I first started here, when I first arrived. I was super nervous, didn't have any friends, and I just went ahead and sat next to someone that I found like somewhere with a friendly face. I just said, hi, how are you doing? What program are you in? And then?

00:25:32 Savannah

Yeah, start a small conversation with them and make it feel personable.

00:25:36 Mariana

Compliment them. That goes a long way.

00:25:37 Savannah

Yeah. And hopefully they stay in that class so you kind of are forced to sit together anyway. So hopefully you have something in common over the next like 12 weeks is it?

00:25:46 Ryan

Great. Awesome.

00:25:49 Savannah

I would say just look out for the DSU events. We have a lot in the fall. It's our busiest semester. There's a lot of opportunities for games, prizes, free food, and a lot of people don't know about that. I didn't know about it in my first year. So just check up on the DSU.

00:26:07 Mariana

I'd say the Fall Fest is really, really exciting. I'm looking forward to that.

00:26:11 Savannah

Yeah, and follow the DSU @theDSU6 on Instagram.

00:26:17 Mariana

So if you have any other questions or if you want to learn more information, you can always go to the DSU.ca.

00:26:23 Ryan

Awesome. Well, thank you so much for coming in and talking to us today about how we can build community, make friends, form lifelong connections. Thank you so much, Mariana. Thank you so much, Savannah.

00:26:35 Mariana

Thank you, Ryan.

00:26:36 Savannah

Thank you.

00:26:37 Mariana

It was great.

00:26:38 Ryan

That's it for today's show. Thanks for listening.

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For those about to learn, we salute you.