Dear Assembly,

I’m excited to be updating you on the projects that University Affairs has been working on this term. We are busy trying to wrap up our large number of projects, and a few of our final products (the Washroom Audit Report and the Accessibility Policy) are coming to you this week! Without further ado, here is what we have been working on:

**Washroom Audit Report & Gender Neutral Washroom Advocacy**
Over this year, the University Affairs committee has been working hard to visit buildings all across campus. In total, we visited 36 buildings – all buildings that contained washrooms that students could access – and audited each washroom in the building, taking note of the type of washroom, what gender it was, whether or not it was accessible, and what the signage was like on each door. Attached is our report with a detailed summary of each audit, as well as a summary of the audit as a whole and our committee’s recommendations for changes to signage going forward. Ehima is working to send a letter to the Provost as well as different faculties concerning this advocacy effort and the changes we would like to see, which will be sent out soon. Thank you to all committee members for completing your audits, and special thanks to Katie Pita, Meg Hsu, David Lee, and Ruchika Gothoskar for your hard work on the report.

**International Students Policy**
With the External Affairs Committee, we have been working on writing the MSU’s first ever International Students Policy. So far, we have created PCRs, done preliminary research, and held focus groups. We have data from the OPSSS survey completed in 2013 specific to International Students at McMaster which we will also be using in our research. The policy is in the final editing stages and will be brought to the final meeting.

**MacTalks**
With the Advocacy Coordinator, Christine Yachouh, along with many of the PTMs and executives of our Peer Support Services, we have completed our Mental Health Awareness Week, MacTalks. The campaign this year ran over two weeks. At the time that I am writing this report, only the first week has actually occurred. We have received
moderate attendance at most of our events and have achieved significant traction on social media. As the week will have been completed by our actual meeting, please feel free to ask any questions and I can give a more detailed update on how it went. The calendar of events with descriptions can be found on [www.msumcmaster.ca/mactalks](http://www.msumcmaster.ca/mactalks).

Unfortunately, despite a wide promotional effort, there was very low attendance to our main advocacy event, “Where are the Counsellors?”. I am currently looking for other ways to engage students in the issue of long wait times and low capacity at the Student Wellness Centre. We are considered posting Sean Van Koughnett’s prepared presentation online and asking students to direct questions to his email directly. I will update further on the progress of this at the meeting.

**First Year Forum Report**

On February 1, we collaborated with Spark and FYC to hold the first ever First Year Feedback Forum. The event was a great success with almost 100 first and second year students in attendance to provide feedback. The event was round-table style, with each table consisting of both a student and staff facilitator, and a student note-taker. The table topics included Mentorship on Campus, On Campus Food Options, Arrive and Thrive, Mental Health Support Services, Off-Campus Experience, Student Financial Aid and Assistance, Pedagogy and Blended Learning, the Role of the MSU, and Welcome Week. There is more information on this event in previous reports, however we are now focusing on completing the report to outline the feedback received at the forum for each of the table topics. The report is being compiled by a few committee members and will be released at the final SRA meeting.

**Accessibility Policy**

We have been working this term to revise the Accessibility Policy. Essentially, this general policy contained a significant amount of recommendations that would be put to much better use in an Operating Policy. As such, we have worked with the Operations Committee to ensure that those aspects of the policy are included in a new Operating Policy. We have also updated the policy to include more feedback and recommendations from this year’s MSU Accessibility Forum. We are bringing this to the Assembly at this meeting. It is nice timing as we are passing the Students with Disabilities policy at OUSA General Assembly in two week’s time, which will provide a provincial parallel to our institutionally-based advocacy as outlined in this policy. Thank you to Alex Wilson, Maccess Coordinator, for his tireless work in helping to update this policy.

**Dietician Advocacy**

We have been investigating the scope and usage of the dietician available to students in the David Braley Athletic Centre to determine what our further priorities could be for advocacy. As of right now, the committee is of the opinion that we should continue to make additional counsellors an advocacy priority as opposed to extending dietician
hours or availability. However, we are continuing our research into what is currently offered and how we can advocate for improvements to the service.

**Indigenous Students Policy**
Throughout the year, Spencer has been working with MISCA to conduct focus groups and come up with recommendations for advocating for Indigenous students on campus. We are now in the process of using these recommendations to become the basis of our policy paper, in collaboration with the External Affairs committee. We hope to bring this to the final meeting of the assembly, however we are bound by our consultation process as we want to ensure that MISCA and other relevant groups on campus are happy with the recommendations for this paper. If the paper cannot be revised in full this year, we hope to at least have a completed list of Principles, Concerns, and Recommendations for the next committee to complete.

**Anti-Oppression Policy**
We have been in discussions with Diversity Services on how we can better structure and revise our Anti-Oppression Policy. The potential scope of the Anti-Oppression Policy is very wide and it has made it difficult to begin defining what the Principles, Concerns, and Recommendations for this policy are. We hope to complete Principles, Concerns, and Recommendations for this policy for the incoming Commissioner to continue work on.

**Food Security Advocacy**
The Advocacy Street Team is working on a project on food security which some of our committee members have reached out to them about and are collaborating on. We are investigating the possibility of the MSU taking a principled stance on food security in the near future.

**Course Wiki**
As spring and summer courses will be open for enrollment soon, we are doing a social media campaign starting on Monday, March 7 to promote the Course Wiki tool that the committee has been working on all year. Please promote anything that you see online and let your friends know to access the tool to write about their courses and check out any that they are interested in taking! You can find the tool at [www.msumcmaster.ca/wiki](http://www.msumcmaster.ca/wiki).

**Course Evaluations**
We are working to determine what the future is of last term’s #EvalsMatter campaign, and how to proceed with course evaluations next term. One of our committee members has attended meetings of the Teaching Evaluations Committee, which is a body made up of mostly University staff, who are interested in collaborating on further promotion for the upcoming course evaluations period. We will be working further with this committee as well as the Academic Affairs Council to determine our next steps.
TwelvEighty Nutritional Information
The committee members working on this project are meeting with TwelvEighty to gather missing information in order to continue to work on this project. Our long term plan for this project is to find a permanent home for the maintenance of nutritional information. The mandate of the University Affairs committee is to advocate to the University on behalf of students, not to maintain information banks about the MSU’s own business units. We hope that we can find a place that the project can continue outside of our committee.

Online Presence
Since January 5, our committee has had its own Facebook page to promote the activities of the committee as well as share any relevant information to University Affairs. The page has been successful with over 100 likes! We find the page to be very useful, particularly when the committee is hosting event pages or promoting a particular campaign. Please like the page if you haven’t already, and invite your friends!

It’s hard to believe that this is my penultimate report to the Assembly, but it’s been a great semester so far and has been very gratifying to see so many projects blossom into final products. I wanted to extend an invitation to anyone reading this report who is interested in running for this position next year to contact me should you have any questions on what my job is like or what the potential scope of the committee is – I’m more than happy to meet with anyone to discuss!

If anyone has any questions or comments regarding anything in this report, you can contact me via email or at the Assembly.

Warm regards,

Blake Oliver
SRA University Affairs Commissioner
McMaster Students Union
srauniv@msu.mcmaster.ca