

The McMaster Students Union

PRESIDENT'S PAGE



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Say hello to Maccess, the newest MSU service. Maccess will focus on meeting the needs of students with disabilities, whether visible or invisible. The Part-Time Manager has just been hired and the service is well on its way to a September 2016 launch.

Last year, MSU Diversity Services and the MSU University Affairs committee held the first annual Accessibility Forum. This forum enabled students to engage in dialogue around the challenges they face while navigating campus with a disability. The conclusions of the discussion were used to create an Accessibility policy that contained many recommendations to make campus more accessible, in the hope of addressing the myriad concerns that students brought forward.

Many students expressed loneliness and isolation while navigating

McMaster with a disability. Students may access Student Accessibility Services (SAS) for assistance, but the SAS office focuses primarily on accommodations. SAS currently runs an ally program to help incoming students adjust to university life, but an inappropriate mandate and limited resources have been cited as barriers to the program's efficacy. While other student-driven initiatives exist, such as a confidential Maccess mailing list, the Hamilton Mad Students Collective, and various MSU clubs, many students with disabilities still perceive a gap in the services they receive.

Many students expressed the need for a peer-based and peer-run safe space where they could connect to other students with disabilities in a way that was not focused on accommodations. The MSU conceived Maccess in order to address

“...a place in which to feel safe and empowered...”

these concerns. The service will give students with visible and invisible disabilities as well as their allies the opportunity to support each other. Through Maccess, students will be able to access resources in order to help them advocate for themselves and grow together as a sustainable community. The service will provide structured programming, opportunities to raise disability awareness, and opportunities for for-

mal and informal peer support.

Perhaps most importantly, Maccess will not require a student to go through the long and medicalized process of registering with SAS. This service will provide students who experience acute disabilities with a resource, while allowing all self-identified students and their allies a place in which to feel safe and empowered while navigating university life. By providing such a space, the MSU hopes to make the McMaster community significantly more inclusive and positive for all students.

I highly recommend taking a look at the MSU services offered year-round via msumcmaster.ca/services-directory. The MSU works constantly to improve its existing services and add new ones quickly when a need is identified.



Diversity Services' accessibility pillar lacked the resources for peer support.

University Affairs & Diversity Services researched the need for a new service.



The Committee identified service gaps in the University, drafted the PTM job description, & proposed Maccess programming.

- Hire Part-time Manager (PTM)
- Build Community
- Hire Exec Team

THEN

Maccess

A brief timeline

NOW



Student feedback at the 2014 Accessibility Forum helped inform policy through recommendations.

The SRA formed an Ad Hoc committee for further research.



Unanimous approval from the SRA in Sept. 2015 ratified Maccess as a full MSU service.



A team of students will work to develop a peer support model ready for Sept. 2016.



The President's Page is a space sponsored and used by the McMaster Students Union (MSU) Board of Directors (BoD) to communicate with the student body. It functions to highlight the Board's projects, goals, and agenda for the year, as well as the general happenings of the MSU.



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