

*the* McMASTER STUDENTS UNION



**NISHAN** ZEWGE-ABUBAKER  
VICE PRESIDENT ( ADMIN )

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# WELCOME

With this SRA election seeing the second highest number of candidates in the MSU's history, it is clear that students are passionate about creating change on this campus. Congratulations on your election; I am so excited to see the strides you will take to change student life at McMaster for the better. Students elected you because they believed in your ideas, your drive, and your passion, so let that understanding motivate you to represent students the best way you can. As a candidate for Vice President (Administration), I have heard your perspectives, and I am beyond excited to help support you in accomplishing your goals. I cannot wait to see all the amazing things you do this year, and I truly hope to be there to see you change lives.

While I am grateful for my experiences within the MSU, I have not always felt connected to our Students' Union. Up until the end of my second year, I was not involved with the MSU outside of clubs, and I felt like I had little opportunity to change that. Entering the second term of my second year, I was awkwardly trying to navigate the MSU website to learn more about the organization when I came across the role of Diversity Services Assistant Director. Despite my limited prior experience, having the opportunity to tackle social justice issues on an institutional level was something I was passionate about, so I applied. Somehow, I was lucky enough to receive the position. Through that role, I was able to develop confidence in my abilities as a leader, learn what it meant to be a great support system, and find a home on this campus. The MSU has challenged me to grow immensely over my past two years of involvement, and I believe carrying that principle forward is how we can encourage and support all students to achieve more, dream more, and strive to shape this campus into a home for all.

I am running to be your Vice President (Administration) because I believe we all have the capacity to challenge ourselves to do more, and to grow. I believe that as an organization, we can think big and take large strides to achieve our goals. Through creating opportunities, empowering the autonomy of student leaders, and creating structures in our MSU to facilitate these processes, I believe that we can equip every student in this organization with the experiences and tools they need for success. As your Vice President (Administration), I would like to focus on the success and happiness of every individual in this organization, and I have built my platform around just that - the changes I believe can improve student life on this campus for the better.

The ideas I've centralized in my platform focus on a few key principles. Firstly, I have highlighted the need to take a proactive approach to change within the organization. I want to create accessible points of entry to involvement in our organization, and work to make sure individuals involved with the MSU feel welcomed. As your Vice President (Administration), I will work with Part Time Managers, SRA members, and Commissioners in a supportive and empowering nature. Part of taking a proactive role is creating an environment to amplify and appreciate the voices in our organization, and I will continue to push to do that. Secondly, I believe in building systems that will outlast my involvement in this organization. From ensuring we continually place an emphasis on equitably compensating our paid staff, to improving peer support for years to come, I want to make sure we can continue to create a lasting impact in the MSU that positively influences those that come after us.

The following ideas are a result of the shared experiences of students throughout the MSU; their stories have heavily shaped the approach I believe is best for the role. If you have any questions, I would love to discuss them further. I can't wait to continue these conversations with you as your new Vice President (Administration).

Yours,



Nishan Zewge-Abubaker

Vice President (Administration) Candidate

**NISHAN ZEWGE-ABUBAKER**  
VICE PRESIDENT ( ADMIN )

# RELEVANT EXPERIENCE

## MSU EXPERIENCE

Director, MSU Diversity Services	2015-2016
Member, External Affairs Committee	2015-2016
Member, Elections Committee	2015
Leadership Developer Logistics, MSU Horizons	2015
Leadership Developer Logistics, MSU CLAY	2015
Assistant Director, MSU Diversity Services	2014-2015

## MCMASTER EXPERIENCE

Residence Orientation Advisor, Hedden Hall	2015-2016
Undergraduate Rep, University Planning Committee	2015-2016
Student Vice-Chair, PACBIC	2015-2016
President, MacAfricans	2014-2015
Director, Ontario Science Students Association	2013-2014
Events Coordinator, MacAfricans	2013-2014
Cultural Clubs Divisional Chair, Clubs Executive Council	2013-2014



# TRAINING

## **Part-Time Managers**

Our Part-Time Managers have the potential to make amazing change on this campus. As Vice President Administration, I will make sure they have the tools they need to succeed. Having developed and delivered trainings such as Anti-Opressive Practices to hundreds of MSU volunteers, I believe I am well-positioned to continue to build on training in our organization.

## **Strengthening In-Person Transition**

I want to continue to create opportunities for transition beyond the transition report. Building on current VP Administration Giuliana Guarna's PTM onboarding package, I want to implement a formalized transition checklist, which outlines several ways in which incoming PTM's can be gradually transitioned into the role in-person. This would also mandate minimum requirements for transition meetings between incoming and outgoing PTM's and provide topics to discuss during transition. To further incentivize this, I believe we can add an additional half-week of pay for outgoing PTM's to carry this out. By strengthening transition in our organization, incoming PTM's can feel prepared to start their roles on day one.

## **Revitalizing PTM Trainings**

Part-Time Manager-specific training happens twice throughout the summer months. I want to make sure our paid staff are prepared to meaningfully carry out their summer hours with timely and relevant trainings. I want to see this occur in the following ways:

- Move the August PTM Training to June
- Integrate 'Alternative-Start' PTM's into facilitating training
- Continue building up activity- and problem-based trainings
- Add topics for PTM's including: hiring practices, training volunteers, conflict resolution, collecting and developing meaningful feedback, and many more
- Converting the PTM binder into an online format, and circulating this prior to training

By building on training for our Part-Time Managers, service provision and management through our organization is significantly ameliorated.

# TRAINING

## **Focus on Alternative-Start PTM's**

Part-Time Managers hired in the traditional cycle benefit from up to 25 hours of training, however, PTMs hired throughout the year such as CLAY and Horizons miss out on these crucial opportunities. I want to develop a robust training for these staff, with support from traditional cycle hires. To accomplish this, I will work with the newly hired Training Resources and Research Assistant, Shruti Ramesh, to develop training modules for these individuals and host a follow-up in person training that focuses on practicing skills. This will be a wonderful test run to implementing them widely for PTM's in the following year. By bringing alternative-start PTM's up to the same level of training as traditional-start PTM's, we can ensure consistent quality of service provision throughout our organization.

## **Service Executives**

### **Organization-Wide Training**

Our services are much greater than just our PTMs. We have many strong and dedicated executives that significantly contribute to the MSU. I would like to plan a training day for these executives, complementing any service-specific training that is required. This would offer an opportunity to engage students in their roles in the MSU rather than just their service. This training would be executed in collaboration with Part-Time Managers, the Board of Directors, and other full-time staff members of the MSU. I want to include topics for this training on the following:

- Navigating the MSU
- Position-specific training and sharing of best practices (e.g. training for events coordinators, and promotions executives)
- Opt-in trainings such as SAFETALK, Accessibility 101 in Event Planning, etc.
- Building community and connections across the MSU



# TRAINING

## **SRA**

I believe the VP Administration has a responsibility to elevate members of the SRA. As a member of the University Planning Committee I know how hard it can be to navigate bureaucratic systems and make your voice heard. I plan to do this in two ways: by providing you with the resources you need, and by proactively offering support.

### **SRA Welcome and Resource Guide**

Entering the assembly for the first time can be intimidating; I want to make sure you feel confident in your position as soon as possible. The current SRA Speaker, Inna Berditchevskaia, has worked to make navigating the assembly easier. I hope to build on this work by introducing an SRA Welcome and Resource Guide. By highlighting opportunities for funding, key contacts, and further resources this guide will help you start to make change more quickly.

### **Adding to SRA Training**

Providing SRA members with a comprehensive training of the basics of the MSU will help guarantee that all representatives feel comfortable early in their term to speak up and make informed decisions. Here are a few ways we can imagine this:

- Hosting a Platform 101-style session, where we discuss the steps in accomplishing a platform point
- Build informal working groups based on common ideas amongst SRA members
- Engage returning SRA members in shaping and delivering their June training
- Collect extensive feedback post-training

### **SRA By-Election Training**

Entering the assembly on a by-election can be intimidating. I intend to work with the Speaker to develop training that is more beneficial to these incoming members. I will also assist in the integration of these members into the assembly by including a training follow-up and opportunities for conversations about larger issues, in addition to introducing the context of previous meetings to members.

### **SRA Commissioner and Caucus Leader Training**

Currently, there is no form of training to support the work that both Commissioners and Caucus Leaders are expected to do. I hope to develop a training that suits the needs of each role, including navigating MSU procedures, conflict resolution, connecting better with our services, and team management. In better training our governance side, our assembly as a whole will be well-supported, and will transition more comfortably into their roles.

# TRAINING

## **Bridging the Gap Between Services and Governance**

There is a persistent disconnect between SRA members and PTMs. However, when you collaborate, great things can happen - and I believe this starts with the MSU Retreat. As VP Administration, I would like to create the environment for this collaboration to occur. I want to further this effort in a couple of ways:

- Requiring PTM, Commissioner, and SRA year plan final submissions due after the MSU Retreat
- Integrate more icebreakers specifically on the first day of the retreat

My aim for the weekend is to create a community hack-a-thon. Hackathons are fun, intense, hands-on events where small teams tackle tough problems in a supportive community of peers. SRA members and PTM's will be grouped together to solve a common challenge identified in our organization - for example, MSU outreach. Through these group challenges, we can facilitate a sense of community and a greater awareness of the points of interaction between our services and governance side.

## **Working with the Training Resources and Research Assistant (TRRA)**

The TRRA role was created this year by VP Admin Giuliana Guarna to better address the needs of peer support and training in our organization. In meeting with the new TRRA, Shruti Ramesh, we share the belief that the training we offer through our organization should be more evidence-informed and rigorous. Here are a few things they can tackle over the summer and throughout the year:

- Developing Training Modules for Peer Support, PTM's, and SRA members
- Working with the McMaster Institute for Innovation and Excellence in Teaching and Learning, to discuss best practices in material delivery and pedagogy
- Working with Peer Support PTM's to confirm training targets and researching best practices for these
- Develop a separate training for PSL volunteers to maintain anonymity
- Establishing and maintaining community partnerships to evaluate trainings, specifically the Adolescent and Mental Health Unit at St. Joseph's Hospital
- Creating research briefs systematically comparing different models of peer support
- Evaluating and Developing Peer Support Training for September and January, in addition to supporting the development of monthly top-up training
- Developing an online comprehensive Support and Wellness Guide that covers defining types of peer support, specific MSU-offered and university-housed wellness supports, in addition to identifying community resources

As this is a brand new position, I hope to work closely with Shruti to set common expectations, and regular check ins. With my experience in qualitative and community-based research, I am well-positioned to support the role of the TRRA and understand the pace of their work. If elected, I hope to co-create a yearplan and prioritize tasks throughout the summer to ensure the success of the role. Once the summer is over, I hope to work with the TRRA to evaluate the need for the role in the following year.



# SUPPORT

## **Part-Time Managers**

### **One on Ones**

One on ones are a wonderful opportunity to proactively check in on service managers and give support. This past year, VP Administration Giuliana Guarna re-established these in first term, and I have really valued these opportunities to touch base as a PTM. I hope to continue with these opportunities and build in monthly one on ones throughout the year, in addition to a one on one at the beginning of the summer. To ease the process and consistency in setting up one on ones, I will schedule these meetings at the beginning of each term evenly spread out throughout the month.

### **Feedback**

Feedback is an invaluable tool to learn about our efforts and changes we make within the MSU, and allow us to make more informed decisions on the direction of our organization. In order to create better opportunities for evidence-informed decisions throughout the MSU, I want to emphasize stronger feedback mechanisms in several ways.

- Train our PTM's on how to collect and provide feedback - be that in hiring, volunteer management, or in service users
- The VP Administration carries out a mid-year evaluation on supervising board members, PTM's, and service executives. I would like to evaluate the questions being asked to tie them to tangible recommendations
- Find creative ways to increase quantity of feedback

In collecting and providing stronger and more tangible feedback in the MSU, we can improve services for the student body at large.

### **Reimagining PTM Meetings**

Part Time Manager meetings are valuable spaces to for managers to connect with one another and learn from each other. Having had the opportunity to attend these monthly meetings for the past two years as a Part Time Manager, I see areas we can continue to build on. I want to see PTM's taking the lead on facilitating specific discussions and skill building activities in monthly meetings, and working together in this process. By challenging our managers to teach and learn from each other, we can better support our services.

### **Targeted Opportunities to Share Best Practices**

I want to ensure skill-building with PTM's occur at relevant times of the year for their service. One example of this is a hands-on hiring practices workshop in September, where we can cluster services with similar hiring processes to give PTM's a comprehensive understanding of the best ways to hire. With these approaches, and continual feedback, all of our services can have better tools for success.

# SUPPORT

## **Executive Board**

### **Working with PTM's**

Currently, PTM's are often unaware when EB is discussing their service. This can lead to a disconnect, and often limits the ability for EB's suggestions to create change within a service. By ensuring that PTM's are present for these discussions, and implementing a formal follow-up process, we can ensure not only that EB is able to understand the PTM's perspective, and that services will be held accountable for the conversations had at EB.

### **Ensuring Effective Hiring Boards**

Executive Board members provide a unique perspective on hiring boards. However, if they fail to have sufficient background knowledge of a service their ability to contribute to the hiring process is greatly reduced. I want to codify a process for selecting EB members for hiring boards that will ensure all who are present have a sufficient working knowledge of the service.

## **SRA**

### **Formalizing Caucus Leader Role**

The current role of an SRA Caucus Leader primarily includes attending faculty society meetings, reporting to the assembly, and holding the key to the MSU Committee Room. Vague expectations around additional responsibilities makes it difficult for an SRA member to understand what it means to fulfill the role of a strong Caucus Leader, or to hold others accountable to their responsibility as a Caucus Leader. I want to update Bylaw 3, which governs the SRA, to include further expectations of Caucus Leaders. This includes chairing caucus meetings at least once a month, facilitating the creation of the caucus year plan, and meeting with other Caucus Leaders once a term to share best practices.

### **Board Support**

In addition to supporting our PTM's, I believe it is important for the Board of Directors to give individual support to assembly members. One way I want to see this happen in the upcoming year is through a casual mid-year individual check in between each SRA member and a board member. I envision this happening as a week where SRA members can get coffee and conversation with a board member of their choice, and talking about their experiences on the assembly, giving feedback on challenges and successes they've experienced, and even how they're balancing their different responsibilities through the year. Through establishing stronger relationships and getting feedback from assembly members, we can strengthen the dynamic of the assembly as a whole.



# SUPPORT

## **Improving Reporting**

Services currently report to the Executive Board every few weeks. This report includes sections that ask about updates, current projects, current challenges, and successes. I would like to incorporate similar sections to caucus and commissioner reports so that they can be better utilized to update the assembly. Through this, it is easier for assembly members to discuss every report that comes forward. As a result of this change, we are able to feed into a greater culture of feedback and accountability on the assembly floor.

## **Services Commissioner Support**

The Services Commissioner is a critical position for helping hold our services accountable. However, this year we've seen confusion surrounding the role, and I believe in the upcoming it is important for the VP Administration to give continual and close support to this role. A few ways that I want to accomplish this include establishing biweekly meetings with this individual, working closely with them to define the core responsibilities of their role, and providing relevant feedback to them. In addition, I believe that in order to bring the Services Commissioner in closer communication with MSU Services, we should change Bylaw 6 - Executive Board to include them as an official observer on Executive Board.

# POINTS OF ACCESS

## **Popping the Bubble**

President-Elect Justin Monaco-Barnes ran on a platform that placed an emphasis on increasing accessibility of involvement throughout the organization, and I am excited to help make this a reality through the role of VP Administration. To me, 'popping the bubble' represents increasing awareness and understanding by all students of the MSU, and generating a perception that if any individual chooses to get involved in the organization, it will occur through a fair and just process. I believe it is important to value non-MSU work experience, widely promote opportunities, and create clearer channels of decision-making. I look forward to building on this in several tangible ways to create a more welcoming organization.

## **Improving MSU Outreach**

In order to take the first step in popping the bubble, I believe we can start by creating better awareness of the MSU. I want to work with the MSU's Communications Officer, Sarah Conrad, to promote an online version of the MSU Guidebook through Residence Life and Faculty Societies on the MSU's Issuu account. In addition, I would like to collaborate on the email MSU Horizons sends out to every first year student and create a 'Welcome to the MSU' email that links to this Guidebook, the Horizons page, and other opportunities to learn more about our organization. By widening the reach of the MSU, we can allow individuals to make an informed decision in getting involved.

## **Promoting the MSU Employment Tab**

VP Administration Giuliana Guarna has worked towards improving HR practices in the MSU in several ways, one of which involved changing the 'jobs' tab on the MSU website to fully encompass employment. As it was recently added, we anticipate including resources on complaints, but also valuable information on writing cover letters and resumes. I would like to better promote and populate this tab so that it is not only valuable to students looking not only for employment opportunities, but for more transparent points of access into our organization. Some specific ways in which this can happen include:

- Permanently uploading all job descriptions for roles in the organization and approximate times at which they hire
- Adding the Part Time Manager roles booklets recently created through MSU Wants You
- Linking to other resources that create a greater understanding of how to get involved in the organization.

By pushing for this tab to be well-equipped with resources, we can reduce the perceived barrier of the 'insider advantage' students view to getting involved.



# POINTS OF ACCESS

## **Clustering Services Effectively + Operating Policy**

Addressing the availability of executive positions within defined service clusters is something students believe in and voted for. By establishing that a maximum of one executive position can be held within a cluster of MSU Services, the perceived and actual barriers to involvement can be directly addressed. The way in which I plan on accomplishing this idea is twofold:

- Consult with PTM's on creating clusters of services in a hiring operating policy
- Develop a training session for PTM's over the summer on the implications within their services
- Creating clear instructions how to implement this policy through their hiring instructions and practices

It is important that we are taking a proactive approach in our organization in discussing and outlining plans for navigating resulting complications in hiring. In the future, there is a possibility that we can move towards better align executive hiring within a cluster of MSU Services.

## **Organization-Wide Hiring Practices**

There are several ways we can continue to improve our hiring to make it easier for people with experiences outside the MSU to get involved. This year, Giuliana took valuable steps in creating hiring practices that have been instrumental in better and more equitably equipping applicants for success, in addition to levelling out the decision-making processes. I would like to continue to build on these efforts in a few ways. First, I will introduce training for Part-Time Managers to develop hiring competencies and stronger interview questions for their executive team. Second, I will dedicate at least one PTM meeting towards a hands-on facilitated workshop on hiring practices for general volunteers, where managers can share their best practices. I would also like to extend these opportunities to full-time staff who manage student staff, as they receive no training on these topics.

## **Expanding Applicant Workshops**

This past February, MSU Spark, CLAY, and Horizons hosted a highly successful workshop for students interested in getting involved on campus. In order to create a more open and inclusive environment in the MSU, I want to invite Part-Time Managers with September hiring opportunities to develop a second Applicant Workshop in the fall that will give newcomers tips and tricks to help them excel in their interviews. This will help level the playing field for those without prior experience, while also providing individuals with a strong understanding of the MSU.

These workshops will help students practice one-on-one and group interviews, while also helping participants develop a basic understanding of services they might want to engage with. Further, I want to see the takeaways of these events published on the MSU's Employment Tab, so that you don't have to be present to benefit from this workshop. By providing a comfortable space to learn and grow, we hope to help develop a more inclusive culture within the MSU.

# POINTS OF ACCESS

## **MSU Wants You Revamp**

MSU Wants You is a campaign born out of the 2014-2015 DRO and Services Commissioner's efforts to increase diversity in elected positions. This year, a formal working group consisting of PTM's, SRA, and MSU members was struck to further continue efforts of creating programming that aimed to raise discussion around barriers to better representation, and empowering marginalized groups to overcome them. Despite extensive discussions, few deliverables were produced. This year marked an excellent beginning to the committee, but I am excited to see where it can go next. I want to implement several changes in this group to allow them to better accomplish their mandate, and take evidence-based practices towards more effectively reducing barriers to diverse representation throughout the entire organization.

## **Shift Scope to Policy, Campaigns, and Equity**

The focus of MSU Wants You over the past two years has primarily been on delivering programming around highlighted barriers in the organization - however, this primarily benefits those who attend the events, rather than the student body as a whole. In order to extend the potential of this group, we can shift its mandate to researching and addressing specific systemic barriers in governance and services. Examples of this can range through creating an operating policy on accessible and equitable hiring practices in the MSU, to changing feedback mechanisms in our organizations to include questions on experiences of inclusion. Through changing the scope of this group, we can now place an emphasis on equity and inclusion throughout the MSU.

## **Housing Chairship with One PTM**

Currently, the operating policy mandates that a chair is elected at the first meeting in the fall - leaving the responsibility of the group varying from year to year, with the workload inevitably failing to remain a priority amongst the other responsibilities of a manager. I want to propose that the role is housed as a part of a specific PTM's responsibilities, and that this responsibility is also reflected in the hours they work. By ensuring a specific PTM is responsible for chairing the committee from year to year, the vision they bring in for their service will also encompass their goals for this committee, and allows equity within the organization to continually be a priority.



# POINTS OF ACCESS

## **Including More Voices**

With the mandate of MSU Wants You increasing, bringing more voices to the table will allow for more relevant perspectives to be encompassed, in addition to increasing productivity. Particular individuals who I think would be valuable to bring in include Jess Bauman, the MSU's Administrative Assistant, who has significant experience in HR practices. In addition, extending the invitation to Elections Committee members can empower more MSU and SRA members to engage in bringing a greater equity and inclusion lens to the entirety of the MSU.

## **Organization-Wide Sharing of Best Practices + Year-End Report to SRA**

In order to ensure compliance of organizational shifts towards inclusion, it is important that MSU Wants You places an emphasis on disseminating the work and recommendations that stem from the committee throughout the year. To ensure this happens, I will revise the operating policy governing the group to mandate an annual report to the SRA that encompasses this, in addition to delivering compiled best practices to relevant groups within the MSU.

# FORWARD THINKING

## Space for Our Services

Over the past few years, the MSU has expanded our service provision significantly, and it is clear that we have a need for space more now than ever. With Maccess pushing to have an operational space for September, Mac Breadbin looking to physically house their Liberty Kitchen program, and discussions around a Peer Support Network requiring a space in the future, it is critical that we are coming forward with a strategy to provide adequate spaces for our services. This upcoming year will be an opportune time for engaging in this conversation. My consultation the AVP (Students and Learning) and Dean of Students, Sean Van Koughnett, pointed to emerging discussions on expanding service provision by Student Affairs, and inviting the MSU to help define where these increases should be. I am committed to ensuring our services have an appropriate space for their operations by leveraging these changes to incorporate student need. I want to start by improving the tools used for a Space Audit, before moving forward with a formalized evaluation. Once a space audit is completed, I hope to work with the VP Finance to get our services the space they need.

## Peer Support

The Peer Support Network has been a topic of discussion led by our current VP Administration over the past year and beyond. The services encompassed in this definition include: WGEN, PSL, QSCC, Maccess, and SHEC. With the existence of multiple services that provide peer support, it is critical that we develop a plan that extends into the next few years that positions our organization well with respect to peer support, while bolstering services over the next year. I will touch on both aspects in several following ways.

## Long Term

When it comes to discussing the future of peer support in the MSU, I want our organization to spend the next year laying a foundation for peer support and developing a plan for the following three years that can tangibly address the idea of a Peer Support Network in collaboration with the Training Resources and Research Assistant in addition to Peer Support PTM's. First, it is important that the university commits resources and space to support and better value the work being done by our organization. This can be through committing to hold spaces in the basement of MUSC or providing expertise on training and service provision. Conversations I have engaged in with Sean Van Koughnett, AVP (Students and Learning) and Dean of Students, have pointed to a greater need in evaluating overlap between the Student Wellness Centre and what Peer Support services can provide in order to maximize professional student supports on campus.



# FORWARD THINKING

## Short Term (Next Year)

For the upcoming year, there are many ways in which we can improve the quality of peer support offered by the MSU, ranging from providing a bare minimum of support skills for all MSU volunteers and non-peer support services, effectively utilizing the Training Resources and Research Assistant, and better supporting Peer Support PTM's.

## Supporting Peer Support PTM's

- Accessing drop-in peer support can be intimidating, particularly if the individual reaching out is familiar with service volunteers. Creating more points of access for peer support by opening an option for private appointments outside the space or outside operating hours may reduce this barrier. In consultation with incoming Peer Support PTM's, they have all indicated that they are open to offer these appointments.
- There has been a push for formalizing the relationship between Peer Support PTM's through an operating policy that mandates regular meetings throughout the year. As the chair of these meetings, I want to leverage these spaces to encourage experience sharing and problem-solving between these managers that are unique to peer support, and integrate the Training Resources and Research Assistant.

## Peer Support for Non-Peer Support Services

- When students reach out for support in the MSU, it is important that regardless of the point of entry, they never leave unassisted. I want to implement a 'No Wrong Door' policy throughout our organization and train all MSU staff and volunteers on referrals, so regardless of where a student turns, they will be directed to the most appropriate source of support.
- As indicated by our current VP Administration, volunteers in our organization should be expected to complete AODA training, however that currently does not happen. I want to leverage this opportunity to create a module that packages in AODA training in addition to a brief module on active listening and peer support. By giving these training resources to MSU volunteers, a minimum level of support is created throughout the organization. Through ensuring a basic level of peer support skills in every MSU volunteer, we know that our organization as a whole is strongly positioned to support students.

# FORWARD THINKING

## University-Provided Resources

- Peer Support PTM's currently receive the same level of training as all other PTM's. It's important that we equip these managers with the resources and training to ensure that they can be experts in their relative fields. This should occur through strong connections to the university, particularly in the Student Wellness Centre and Human Rights and Equity Services. By receiving training from these partners, our Peer Support PTM's are well-equipped for success and our peer support services are establishing clear and strong channels to professional wellness supports.
- With the creation of Maccess, and the recognition from several Peer Support PTM's that we do need to put a strong emphasis on developing rigorous and evidence-based practices in peer support, it is important that the university provides expertise in protocol development for these services. Currently, these protocols on dealing with crises and confidentiality are created individually by Peer Support PTM's and executives, with little opportunity for support. Over the summer, I hope to bring in expertise to help train Peer Support PTM's and give feedback on developing their service's internal protocols.

## Effectively Integrating TRRA

The newly hired Training Resources and Research Assistant, Shruti Ramesh, will be invaluable in improving peer support throughout the following year. I want to ensure the TRRA develops research briefs on comparing models of peer support between student unions, and work with each Peer Support PTM in strengthening their training. Through taking an evidence-based approach that Shruti and I both support, the work this individual will do in the upcoming year will significantly strengthen the provision of peer support.



# FORWARD THINKING

## **Sustainability**

Earlier this year, MSU MACgreen was rescinded as a service, as it was perceived that significant overlap in service provision rendered an entire service dedicated to sustainable initiatives unnecessary. President-Elect Justin Monaco-Barnes ran on a platform of reprioritizing sustainability on our campus, and I believe our organization can find effective structures to reflect that.

## **Establishing Sustainability Committee**

In the final meeting of the 2015-2016 SRA year, an Operating Policy defining the parameters of a Sustainability Working group chaired by the Advocacy Coordinator was passed. I have discussed the new structure with both Christine Yachouh and Blake Oliver, the respective outgoing and incoming Advocacy Coordinators, to see how I could best support the committee as the Vice President Administration. Through our discussions, we identified that we would like to evaluate the best way for the MSU to house sustainability priorities. As someone who sits on this committee, I want to work in the summer and the fall with the Advocacy Coordinator to ensure we are structurally addressing sustainability priorities in our organization in the best possible way.

## **Long-Term Sustainability Advocacy Plan**

In order to continue making sustainability a priority for our organization beyond next year, I believe we need to make a plan for the next three years that addresses our long term goals and develops tangible steps to get there. I want to work with the incoming Advocacy Coordinator over the summer to ensure a well-outlined yearplan is developed, and that they aim to create a three-year Sustainability Advocacy Plan. This plan includes proposing advocacy pieces and campaigns. By developing a plan that carries beyond next year, we can ensure sustainability continues to stay a priority in the MSU.

# ORGANIZATIONAL REVIEW

## Part Time Staff Review

Currently, the only way the wages of part time staff in our organization are adjusted occur when PTM's bring forward a review to Finance Committee often in a piecemeal manner. This often requires initiative on the PTM's behalf, and simply ties wages to the listed responsibilities in the job description. We need to start taking a more holistic approach to evaluating wages in the MSU, so we can understand relatively why each staff gets compensated for the work they are doing.

I believe the best way to address this is by completing an organization-wide job description and wage review that first takes into account fully the responsibilities of their role before evaluating their pay. This includes the following:

- Taking a standardized approach to evaluating job descriptions to ensure all of the responsibilities of our paid staff are reflected on paper
- Draw a clearer distinction between what constitutes as paid and non-paid work in our organization
- Tie these distinct responsibilities to wages clearly
- Develop an Operating Policy outlining the steps and partners involved in a part-time staff review, and mandate through this policy that the review occurs every three years

Through building in structures for success throughout our organization, we can ensure we are continually moving forward and providing the most excellent standards of service to our staff and students. By taking this approach, part-time staff in our organization are recognized more fairly and equitably for their work.

## Evaluating Commissioners

There have been multiple discussions surrounding the future of commissioners and governance structures in our organization, leading to several changes proposed to the assembly. Despite these proposed changes not passing, it is clear that a critical evaluation of Commissioner scope and mandates will benefit our organization significantly. Parallel to our part-time staff review, launching a structured review of commissioner roles and aligning their outlined responsibilities with their wages will allow for governance channels in the MSU to be clarified and well-supported. I believe this starts with challenging the elected commissioners from their first day to take responsibility for defining their roles and to not shy away from proposing significant changes.



# AREAS OF SUPPORT

Having been a Part-Time Manager for the past two years, I have had the opportunity to work closely with the managers of our other services in training, and throughout the year. In conversations with incoming and outgoing PTM's, the following services have been identified as areas for support:

**Maccess:** Having worked on creating the operating policy for this service and presenting it for ratification to the SRA, it is incredibly exciting to see Alex Wilson launch the service in September. With a push towards getting a space ready for the fall, we have discussed several spaces appropriate for the service and approaches. The service will have three areas of focus: community programming, campaigns, and peer support with online resources. I am excited to continue supporting Alex in their work, and evaluating the services' success.

**Mac Breadbin:** In conversation with the incoming and outgoing Directors of Breadbin, it is clear that the service has undergone massive growth over the past year. The focus of the service looks towards addressing food security on campus through the creation of the Liberty Kitchen program and the Food Collective Centre - and carrying through restructuring will be an emphasis this upcoming year. In addition, there has been an increased need to better equip volunteers with peer support skills and referrals through the service, and I look forward to connecting Veronica Van Der Vliet with the new Training Resources Research Assistant to support this.

**Advocacy Street Team:** With the rescinding of MacGreen as an MSU service, the onus of addressing sustainability on campus has been housed within Advocacy. With the Advocacy Coordinator now responsible for chairing the Sustainability Committee, I am excited to work in evaluating how well the structure supports sustainability advocacy work. In discussions with Blake Oliver, she looks forward to reviewing the effectiveness of the committee.

**Diversity Services:** Diversity Services has undergone a complete restructuring, moving from their pillar system to focus on community building, resources, and education. Ryan Deshpande, the incoming Director, is incredibly excited to emphasize the service as a resource and education hub to the McMaster community. In addition, there has been a shift to house Anti-Oppressive Practices training within Diversity Services over the past year. Looking forward, different levels of the training will be developed to reflect differing knowledge levels. In addition, Ryan has expressed interest in monetizing the training for external groups. As an outgoing PTM for the service, I have worked with Ryan over the past year and am excited to continue supporting his goals for the service's success.

Several other services will also require support in the upcoming year, as a result of the service requiring a formalized review, or significant changes in their function. This includes the QSCC, PSL, TAC, and MACycle.

# WELCOME WEEK

Welcome Week is a significant part of the role of the Vice President Administration, and is an experience close to my heart. The Vice President Administration sits on Welcome Week Planning and Implementation Committee, and co-chairs the Welcome Week Advisory Committee to make high-level decisions about Welcome Week. As a result of my experiences as a Residence Orientation Representative for two years in a row, and most recently as a Residence Orientation Advisor this year, I have built up strong and relevant experiences to succeed in this area. My experience as a planner in Welcome Week is a strong asset to the planning and execution of the week. I hope to bring these experiences to support the week in several ways.

## **Emergency Financial Supports for Reps**

Taking a leadership role in Welcome Week can often present a financial barrier. As one of the co-chairs for Welcome Week Advisory Committee, the VP Administration is in a unique position to push for greater financial accessibility for Welcome Week reps to be a priority in the allocation of the Welcome Week levy. This starts with an emergency bursary fund for volunteers who may not be able to participate in Welcome Week otherwise, administered through the MSU. By positioning our organization as a support to reps across campus, stigma around accessing supports is alleviated, and lighten the financial burden placed on Welcome Week representatives.

## **Faculty Society Supports**

The MSU has an opportunity through Welcome Week to help other student groups succeed, and protect their autonomy as student leaders. After discussions with the Welcome Week Faculty Societies Coordinator who also sits on Welcome Week Planning and Implementation Committee, Patricia Kousoulas, the MSU is beginning to shift into a supportive and advisory capacity to Faculty Societies. A few specific approaches we discussed can facilitate this shift.

## **Supporting Faculty Planners**

In conversations with Patricia, she is excited to continue to build strong supports for faculty planners. By sharing best practices, providing feedback on hiring processes, and implementing a novel training for planners on a range of relevant topics, Faculty Planners are well-equipped by the MSU to achieve their goals in a more prepared way.



# WELCOME WEEK

## **Incorporating Rep Feedback**

The Welcome Week Faculty Societies Coordinator is looking forward to implementing roundtables in June to gather feedback from faculty reps on different events in Welcome Week. Through bringing this feedback to WWPIC to shape some of the events' implementation in Welcome Week, the voices of experience in Welcome Week are valued and listened to.

## **Off Campus Students**

We know that from Welcome Week analytics, off-campus students are 50% less likely to participate in this week. I want to make sure that students who spend their first year off-campus have a supportive transition into university. Welcome Week Advisory Committee, which the VP Administration co-chairs, has invested effort in communicating the value of this programming to students by holding events over the summer in communities which have a high commuter population prior to Welcome Week. As the VP Administration, I hope to work with SOCS to ensure a strong connection between reps and incoming students as they feel better supported in accessing Welcome Week. By putting a greater emphasis on commuter students, we hope to help reduce barriers to receiving transition support.

# THANK YOU

Thank you for taking the time to learn more about me, my experiences, and ideas for the next year and beyond. It is no easy task to represent such a diverse group of constituents on a daily basis, and I appreciate so much the effort you have put forth in making this hard decision. In meeting with all of you, I have seen the wealth of creativity and care that next year's assembly holds. I am so confident in your ability to build an MSU for all students.

The detail and depth encompassed within my platform reflects the approach I hope to take in this role. From the conversations I have had with every incoming and outgoing PTM, in addition to commissioners and SRA members, I have developed a firm understanding of the changes we can make to build up our organization. I believe that by engaging in forward-thinking, comprehensively reviewing the practices and policies of our organization, and creating strong points of access, I have developed a tangible and solution-oriented approach to each need highlighted in my platform that is entirely feasible.

I know I am uniquely equipped with all of the skills and experiences that will allow me to excel in every facet of the Vice President Administration's portfolio. My experience as a Part-Time Manager for the past two years has shaped my perspective on the value of listening, and being adaptable. The work we've able to do with Diversity Services has changed the way I approach training large groups of people, and given me invaluable experiences in creating new services from the ground up. I've also been incredibly lucky to be heavily involved in Welcome Week, first as a rep, then as a Residence Orientation Advisor. Aside from gaining a strong foundation knowledge of how high level decisions stem down to a planning level, I developed the approach I take to working with others: through challenge and support. From representing undergraduate students on the University Planning Committee, I have understood the importance of effective representation, and reaching out for help. I am incredibly excited to work with you to bring these ideas and structures to reality. Trust in your own capacity to lead and represent students, and the MSU will take significant strides next year as a result of your work.

Best,



Nishan Zewge-Abubaker

Vice President (Administration) Candidate

**NISHAN ZEWGE-ABUBAKER**  
VICE PRESIDENT ( ADMIN )

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