

**think  
differently**

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VICE PRESIDENT OF FINANCE (CAN)



# Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	1
EXPERIENCE	2
PLATFORM TOPICS	
MONEY 1A03	3
HOW CAN WE HELP?	4
HOW CAN WE HELP?	5
BUSINESS UNITS	6
BUSINESS UNITS (CONTINUED)	7
LET'S GET MOVING	8
COURSEWARE FOR SALE!	9
SUSTAINABILITY	10
THE PLAN	11
CLOSING	12

# Introduction

Thank you for hearing me out throughout this year's election. This journey has been one of the most overwhelming weeks of my life at McMaster. It has been very exciting and interesting, and I hope we share this feeling of excitement and optimism.

My experience goes beyond just the MSU. Money was always been tight with my family and I remember when my mum always reminded me that if we spent too much, we'd lose the roof above our heads. I'm often referred to as being savvy with money. Savvy, doesn't necessarily always refer to be being stingy all the time, but it's about being efficient, effective, and using good judgement.

So—why vote David Cheng for Vice President of Finance? Uniquely, my experience as a student here goes beyond just the McMaster Students Union (MSU). In fact, I am experienced in dealing with finances from the perspective of the University, the services side of the MSU, and the governance side of the MSU. I have learned that understanding how the MSU works requires one to take a step back and appreciate not just the barriers of education but also those of being an everyday student. These experiences are also well-balanced with my academic experience, as I am graduating with an commerce degree, and with a minor in sustainability. In short, I have come a long way from being the kid who thought that money received for Chinese New Year's was stressful to handle in grade school - let alone thousands of the dollars in student loans.

I had the incredible opportunity of being elected as a two-year representative on the McMaster University Board of Governors, where I was a member of the University's Finance Committee. I learned that sometimes, you have to spend money to get more of it and that was the perfect example when we decided to go ahead in building the underground parking lot under the New Wilson Hall and projecting the income from parking revenues to support that expenditure.

Through the Board of Governors, I was also able to convince Craig MacDonald, Director of Maintenance of Facility Services, into allocating \$30 000 toward lift upgrades on campus. As the only undergraduate voice on the Board of Governors, I actively pushed board members to take a collaborative approach with the custodian staff's union who were threatening job action. It was disheartening that custodians on campus were about to lose their jobs because of the actions of a few union individuals. I wanted board members to remember that the University needs to stay true to its principles of inclusiveness and collaboration and that when we can't find it from each other, we find it from within ourselves.



David Cheng

# Experience

## Education:

- Bachelor's degree in Commerce (Honours), minoring in sustainability
  - Focusing on strategic operations, and project management. (2012-2016)

## Governance:

- Undergraduate Representative on the McMaster University Board of Governors (2013-2015)
- Finance Committee Member on the McMaster University Board of Governors (2013-2015)
- Finance Committee Member (Observer) (2014-2015)
- University Affairs Committee Member (Observer) (2013-2015)
- First Year Council Events Director (2012-2013)

## MSU Services:

- Mac Bread Bin Director (2015-2016)
- McMaster Meal Exchange Coordinator (2013-2015)
- Bridges Cafe Coordinator (2014-2015)
- Shinerama Marketing and Promotions Coordinator (2013-2014)

## Faculty:

- DeGroote Commerce Society Formal Committee
- McMaster World Congress Co-Chair

## External/Community:

- Living Rock Food Bank Volunteer (2013-2016)
- Royal Bank of Canada Banking Advisor (2014-2015)
- Williams Fresh Cafe Barista (2013-2014)

# Money 1A03

## Mac Money Centre 2.0

I want to expand the Mac Money Centre program and educate more students on understanding their taxes. Financial Literacy is arguably one of the leading reasons to why students face so much stress. Let alone first generation students, self-identified indigenous students, international students, and low-income students.

As Vice President of Finance I will facilitate round table meetings with the Student Success Centre, OSAP Office, the Faculty of Business, and Student Accounts and Cashiers in collaboratively running initiatives that encourage students to understand the available support, credit cards, interest rates, GIC's, mutual funds, cash advances - all without the pressure of commissions from banks. Sometimes your job after university is always relevant to your degree, but credit cards, interest rates, bank fees, taxes, and finance are always relevant.

The understanding of personal finance will encourage students to be more aware of what the MSU and University are doing. It will engage more students to ask hard questions and voice their concerns of spending.

## Budget Town halls 2.0

Town halls will be bigger and better. We will promote Budget Town Halls through the avenues of Faculty department and Faculty Society bulletins. I ensure that we are more proactive with the communication tools that we have on campus. Faculties have an obligation to let their students know of where their money is being spent on campus - whether that be by a University department or their very own MSU.

# How can we help?

## **Financial Support for students applying to Graduate School:**

As Vice President of Finance, I would like to work with faculty associations, along the lines of the Forward with Integrity mandate, to investigate ways to provide bursaries to students on a need based scale, specifically for graduate school applications. We know that it is a lot harder for students of a low economic status to continue on the academic trajectory, and as a student union it is our job to help students succeed to the best of our ability. I would also like to work with the Graduate Student Association (GSA) and the Student Success Centre (SSC) to establish discounts on airline tickets, and organized campus tour packages, for students visiting other campuses for graduate school or professional students. This is an easy way to make sure that we are supporting the choice to continue on in post secondary education.

## **Emergency lodging system for students:**

Commuting can be difficult, especially for students with early morning tests, classes, or who are simply in a crisis with their living situation and need a place overnight. As Vice President of Finance, I will work with Residence Life and the Off Campus Resource Centre (OCRC) to investigate the implementation of an emergency lodging system, similar to the system at Ryerson University. Commuter students would be charged a flat fee for an overnight stay in residence when needed. As Vice President of Finance, I will advocate that the Living Learning Centre will accommodate residence rooms designated for this lodging program to support commuter students.

## **Union Market and Emergency Meal Plan Cards:**

Union Market potentially misses out on first year/residence students due to the lack of meal card acceptance, meaning that the business unit loses out on potential revenue. As Vice President of Finance, I will have discussions with Union Market to allow the integration of the meal card program at the business unit, similarly to how this was done at TwelveEighty. R

Allowing a meal card plan to be offered at Union Market, allows the MSU to dedicate that additional revenue toward a self sustaining bursary for an MSU emergency meal plan for students looking for food support. The meal plan cards can be used at Union Market and TwelveEighty - providing more revenue from the margins of goods sold or Hospitality Service. Union Market and Hospitality Services are open to discussions.

### Collaboration in Funding a Mental Health Counsellor:

It can take months for students to access an appointment with a counsellor at the Student Wellness Centre. During this time their situation and needs may change, and right now the system is too inflexible to adapt for this. In addition, having to wait for a month or months for an appointment means the average student would only be able to get in a few appointments each year, which is a big problem if they need regular meetings. As your next Vice President of Finance, I will work with the MSU, Student Affairs, Inter-Residence Council, and Residence Life to explore the feasibility of a jointly funded counsellor.

# Business Units

## Union Market Offerings Expansion

As we're recognizing more financial pressures on MSU business units like Union Market, we should be strategic in new product offerings. This year the Union Market was able to receive a walk-in fridge and prep space. This space will allow Union Market to offer house made sandwiches, salads, cut fruit, yogurt parfaits, and more. TwelvEighty has indicated that they are not able to help Union Market as much as they would like to because of kitchen space challenges.

TwelvEighty is able to facilitate support for Union Market in successfully implementing this strategy. In addition, this will allow students who are utilizing the emergency meal plan card to conveniently access good quality student made food.

As Vice President of Finance I will encourage better TwelvEighty and Union Market relationships to facilitate new business offerings and sources of revenue.

## AVTEK

This year, there was a lot of conversation around who is responsible for live streaming the routinely scheduled Student Representative Assembly (SRA) meetings. The Silhouette argued that it was important for them to have autonomy, and that they should be able to choose when they want to come and live stream meetings. Other areas of the university have also struggled with their ability to live stream. During Welcome Week of 2015, the Student Success Centre wanted to live stream the Shane Koyczen poetry reading, but along with copyright issues, they struggled to get access to the live stream equipment needed to do the job.

As Vice President of Finance, I want to increase revenue by marketing the new recording equipment that AVTEK has. This can then use at each SRA meeting, as well as rent it out to different departments (i.e. Campus Events or the Student Success Centre). Videos are a huge part of getting students engaged, and live streams are a great way to outreach. Renting this equipment out to different departments will generate revenue for the organization and allow us to take responsibility for the transparency of our meetings.

# Let's get moving

## **HSR Agreement Negotiations:**

The HSR will eventually be integrated with Metrolinx. As this will possibly impact student fees, these negotiations will need to be closely monitored. As Vice President of Finance, I will make sure to be present and at the decision making table, along with the General Manager of the MSU, during these conversations and negotiations. I will conduct focus groups research among students and community members to determine the needs and priorities of HSR in Hamilton. This process will allow all stakeholders to be engaged with these negotiations, aware of transition costs, and other potential discussions

## **SoBi Bikes:**

This year, the Student Representative Assembly (SRA), voted in favour of moving forward a SoBi Bike referendum that would allow students the chance to vote on whether or not they wanted to pay to receive SoBi Bike usage at a cheaper rate. Personally, I'm tired of hearing how biking and public transit are seen as "alternative mode of transportation" - It's not, and we need to invoke a culture among our peers that getting around in these forms is simply just considered as a mode transportation. As Vice President of Finance, I will work to ensure that the SoBi Bike negotiations, if the referendum passes, are fair and equitable.

# Impactful Financing

## **Better Clubs Funding:**

Currently, clubs are eligible to receive funding from two different pots set up by the MSU, They can apply to receive Special Projects Funding, which has a budget of \$9000, or club grants. A third prong of funding I would like to introduce to clubs, as Vice President of the MSU, would be a Food Grant For Clubs. We all know that it can be difficult to run proper events on campus, if most of your budget continuously goes toward food. I want to show clubs that I am listening to their food costs when they are forced to buy it from Paradise Catering.

## **Better Services, Clubs, and University/Community Partners collaboration:**

Service budgets have been reduced significantly next year. We can save costs and be efficient by promoting inter-service collaboration on events that overlap. Mac Mind Crawl is good example where we had 27 different services, clubs, university partners, and community partners doing 27 different events under the core foundation of mental health and mental well-being - Economies of Scale. We need to reevaluate the duplications of some events and services in the Student Success Centre and see whether we can be more efficient. As Vice President of Finance, we will work with Student Affairs to determine areas of duplications and how we can effectively consolidate and improve student offerings to make them more effective.

## **Provincial, Federal, and WorkStudy grant programs into MSU hiring practices:**

With declining enrolment of students on the horizons and the impact this will have on the MSU, we need to be able to sustain the financial responsibilities of the organizations. As Vice President of Finance, I will hold discussions with the OSAP office to begin Work-Study grants for MSU student positions. I will also apply for Canada Youth Employment Grant (applicable for all employed staff with ages ranging from 18-24) to support summer research positions further alleviating wage responsibilities from the MSU.

E.g., Meal Exchange Canada provided a Grant to the Meal Exchange Coordinator to support Mac Bread Bin in 2014/2015 and 2015/2016.

# Courseware for sale!

## **Cheaper Courseware through the Underground:**

As highlighted by our president-elect, Justin Monaco Barnes, courseware presents a huge financial strain on students. As the incoming Vice President of Finance, I will work with the MSU Underground to make sure that courseware is being provided at a lower cost. As Justin highlighted, the money students pay for courseware can be given back from the Underground to the respective faculty societies. This would allow these faculty societies to have higher budgets and provide more services to students, creating a free flowing cycle of revenue that would allow students to pay less for courseware and be provided with better experiences.

## **Library Resources:**

Libraries across McMaster are able to utilize their copyright agreement, the Fair Dealing Policy, to scan course material and send them back to professors to upload them on Avenue to Learn where they can be viewed electronically or printed out at home. The policy allows for librarians to scan one article per book per course code. Often, courseware material has multiple articles from multiple books. Ultimately, we can eliminate the need for students to pay for courseware or at the very most - significantly reduce printing costs as content will be available online. As Vice-President of Finance, I will ensure that Faculties encourage their instructors to utilize this service and ensure that students are also placing necessary pressure towards their respective faculties to facilitate this.

# Sustainability

## **Food waste reduction plan:**

On average, this university wastes thousands of dollars in food that gets thrown out at the end of the day, simply due to not being purchased. The very idea that the community has multiple food banks shows that rising costs of living. As the Vice President of Finance, I will hold discussions with Hospitality Services and Public Health that would allow Hospitality Services to donate un-purchased goods to the community. In addition, the Food Donations Act will release liability from the school when donating this food.

## **Water bottle free campus:**

Bottled water production is not sustainable, because bottles cannot be reused. They end up in landfills because most of them are not recyclable plastic. Water bottles are also regulated federally and are monitored under the Food and Drugs Act, which means it has less stringent regulations than tap water does. The MSU has taken the right step in the approach, by implementing a Water Bottle Free Zone policy in its office, but this is not enough. More outdoor water fountains during welcome week I will hold discussions with Administration, Facility Services, and Hospitality Services to increase the number of water fountains available throughout campus and begin a phase out plan of plastic water bottles, to make sure that drinkable water is always accessible to students at all times.

## **Implementation of Green roofs:**

As highlighted by Justin's platform green roofs, which are a highly innovative and relatively recent green technology that have been shown to have substantial benefits. As Vice President of Finance, I want to continue to work on Justin's long term plan of having green roofs implemented into the Living Learning Centre. These green roofs will help lower cost and decrease dependence on heat energy to regulate temperature within these buildings. I will make sure that this project is properly reflected, financially, in budgetary processes of the planning and implementation of this centre.

I plan on developing a business case and advocate the University tap into the recently announced infrastructure spending commitment by the Federal government.

# Timeline



UM EMER **Meal Plan Card**  
Health Integration **Network**  
**Starting** a Green roof in MUSC

**SPRING 2016**

Speaking to Profs  
about cheaper  
**coursewares**

**SUMMER 2016**

**Financial** literacy  
and accountability  
**Budget** town halls

**FALL 2016**



more  
**counsellors**  
through  
partnership  
and dialogue

**FALL 2016**

Clubs funding,  
graduate school  
grants, needs based  
scholarships, and  
advocate for Work-  
study programs

**FALL 2016**

Establish **lodging**  
at residences

HSR focus groups

**FALL 2016**



**apply** for grants from  
the Canada Youth  
Employment Grant

**WINTER 2016**

Stop selling water  
bottles in **MUSC**

**WINTER 2016**

Advocate to the  
University that  
green roofs are a  
priority in the Living  
**Learning** Centre

**WINTER 2016**

# Closing

Congratulations!

You made it to the end of my platform. Thank you again for taking the time to read it, and for contributing your ideas and commentary.

In developing this platform, I focused on the concepts of thinking differently and collaboration. I did this through consulting with many students, MSU staff, and University Administration to gather a variety of perspectives on solutions to common financial struggles, whether they affect the MSU directly or student pockets directly.

As the Director of Mac Bread Bin, I spearheaded the service growth through innovative ideas, changing it from a service that gave students food from lockers to one that offered a grocery style food centre called the Food Collective Centre. Being the director of this service also taught me about the financial stressors that students face, and gave me the skill sets to understand budgeting, being creative with funding, and financial accountability. Through this service, we have supported more than 50 students seeking for food support also able to secure more than \$3200 in external funding for the service.

Because of all of these experiences, the approach I took in developing my platform revolves around thinking differently and focuses on collaboration. By sharing resources and the determination of change, we can ensure that the ideas I propose are both affordable and tangible. I have learnt there are no black and white answers to a lot of issues that arise, especially when discussing finances. With enough creativity and critical thinking, we can work outside of the box. Education nurtures opportunity and chance. Let's run with that and do things differently.

With my experience on University Finance Committee of the Board of Governors, and through dealing with the services sector of the MSU, I have learned all of the intricacies and nuances that are important to this role. Because of this, I am confident that I am the most qualified candidate for this role. With creative solution to common issues, I am sure we can move forward in creating a collaborative, shared economy within the McMaster Students Union and the Hamilton community.

If you have any other questions, please don't hesitate to contact me at: 416 833 9319

With thanks,



David Cheng

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