Within student health, the major aspects of the paper were campus health services, mental health, accessibility services, first-year transition, international student health, as well as the needs of Aboriginal and LGBTQ+ students. Each OUSA paper is comprised of principles, concerns, and recommendations that we utilized to lobby the provincial government. In particular, some of our key recommendations included the creation of a comprehensive strategy on enhanced health service provision that includes institutions, student organizations, and other sector stakeholders, as well as dedicated government funding for student health clinics on campus. The paper went on to cover the importance of funding for system-wide initiatives aimed at improving the mental health of post-secondary students and enhancing the transition phase from secondary school to post-secondary education. Finally, one of the most important considerations in the paper was the recommendation to have the Ontario government change the definition of disability to better reflect the episodic nature of mental illness and ensure students suffering from mental health can still benefit from accessibility services, appropriate academic accommodations and student financial assistance.

The discussions surrounding student mobility focused heavily on credit transfer between universities and from college to university, with particular emphasis on facilitating a simple, easy, fee-free system in the post-secondary sector. Currently in Ontario, there is no standardization when transferring institutions, and it is up to the individual student to appeal when credits are not transferred over to the new institution. More often than not, institutions are unwilling to transfer credits from a different school based on varying sets of criteria, fostering a system of mobility that is completely inaccessible. Specifically, minimum grade requirements sometimes prevent students who have demonstrated sufficient knowledge to successfully complete a class from transferring earned credits to their new degree. Currently, the Ontario Council for Attainment and Transfer (ONCAT) is working to facilitate and support academic collaboration and the development of transfer pathways amongst Ontario’s publicly funded colleges and universities. Our policy paper cites a commitment to working together on that front.

Following the breakfast sessions where we discussed our policy papers, there was also a visit from local MPP and Minister of Agriculture, Food & Rural Affairs Ted McMeekin, as well as MPP Rob Leone, PC Critic for the Ministry of Training, Colleges & Universities. Discussions on the Drummond Report, future policy for the organization (northern & rural students, student financial assistance and students with disabilities) and a presentation on the survey results from the Quality of Education Assessment were all large priorities of conversation throughout the three-day conference weekend. The weekend was a clear indication that the McMaster Students Union is committed to putting forward educated solutions for a more accessible, affordable and higher quality post-secondary education system.