



REPORT

From the office of the...
Vice President (Education)

TO: Student Representative Assembly
FROM: Blake Oliver, Vice-President (Education)
SUBJECT: OUSA Strategic Planning Conference Update
DATE: July 18, 2016

Hello members of the Assembly,

On Monday, July 4 - Thursday, July 7, I attended OUSA's annual Strategic Planning Conference in Blue Mountain with the other OUSA Steering Committee members and home office staff. At this conference, we made critical decisions for the organization over the next year, including annual priorities, the finalized budget, policy paper authors, and dates for conferences and events.

Sessions included:

- Steering Committee and Home Office Expectations
- Strengths Finder
- Conferences & Events
- Research Workshop
- Research Updates
- Opportunities and Risks Analysis and Annual Plan
- OUSA Budget
- Blogs
- Lobby Training
- OSAP Submission
- Media Training
- OUSA Policy
- Human Resources Update
- Campaigns
- Annual Priorities
- Steering Committee Meeting

The major decisions that were made at this meeting are as follows:

- **Annual Priorities** - these are the six advocacy issues that OUSA will be lobbying on in the upcoming year. They change from year-to-year based on the priorities of the member schools and the political landscape in the province. With the latter being extremely crowded this year, we had a difficult time narrowing down our priorities, but we eventually decided on (in no particular

order):

- *Work-Integrated Learning (WIL)* - this has been an OUSA priority for the past three years, and it encompasses opportunities for co-op, experiential learning, and internships. This priority aligns well with the provincial government's recent announcement to support the Premier's Highly Skilled Workforce Expert Panel's recommendation to make WIL available to all students in Ontario. We will be advocating for more opportunities to be available for students through avenues such as upfront grants to small and medium sized businesses. Our stance to ensure that unpaid internships are eliminated will also be at the forefront of this discussion.
- *Funding for Student Support Services* - you might recognize this from my platform! This includes advocating for increased envelope funding for student health services (such as SWC) as well as accessibility offices (such as SAS). We are currently working with the Council of Ontario Universities (COU) to collect data on student usage of health centres in order to make a compelling case to the Ministry that additional funds are needed.
- *Tuition Framework* - this year, the tuition framework will be revised. The tuition framework determines, in layman's terms, how much Ontario universities can raise tuition by each year. OUSA will be advocating for tuition to be frozen under the new framework. This is consistent with the MSU's policy (can be found in the MSU policy Tuition & Post Secondary Education Affordability) as well as OUSA's policy (Tuition).
- *Prevention and Response to Sexual Violence on Campus* - as many of you are probably aware, the provincial government recently passed Bill 132 Sexual Violence and Harassment Action Plan Act (Supporting Survivors and Challenging Sexual Violence and Harassment). This has mandated all Ontario universities to create a policy in response to sexual violence. We will continue to advocate for sexual violence prevention as well as improved response on campuses.
- *Data Collection* - this is largely based on a private member's bill (MPP Yvan Baker) - Bill 127, the Pathways to Post-secondary Excellence Act (Post-secondary Educational Report). The bill is currently referred to the standing committee on finance and economic affairs. Basically, what we want is for the government to collect uniform data on admission requirements, costs, student aid, class sizes,

demographic information, student satisfaction, graduate satisfaction, employment and education status of graduates, average annual compensation of graduates, and many other things. Then, we want that information to be widely accessible to applicants and students. This will be something that we advocate to pass in the upcoming year.

- *Ontario Student Grant implementation* - with the new Ontario Student Grant (some of you may have heard it called "free tuition" colloquially, as it will cover the cost of average tuition for Arts & Science programs for students whose combined household income is less than \$50k/year), there will be changes made to OSAP and some technical decisions to be made on how the new system for financial aid will work in Ontario. We will be making this a large priority for the organization by having a submission with our stances on some of the big questions ongoing about the implementation. Some of these issues include scholarship exemption, tuition waiver exemption, student access guarantee distribution and tuition set-aside, aid for students with disabilities, issues related to withdrawals, issues related to social assistance, distribution of aid in the absence of verified income, and an overview of all the firm design issues.

I know this is a lot of information all at once that everyone may not be familiar with. There will be blogs coming soon from OUSA to unveil all of the priorities in depth, but until then, please do not hesitate to ask me about the priorities, what stances OUSA has on each of them, and how the advocacy process works. Some of these priorities are more specific (for instance, we have very specific asks for data collection), whereas some are more broad (sexual violence prevention and response), so they will vary in the way that we advocate for them.

In case anyone is curious, other potential priorities that did not make the final cut (honourable mentions if you will) included the university funding formula, sustainable infrastructure development, and international students. The process for picking these priorities was by consensus of the steering committee, and they were later officially voted on by the steering committee in a meeting at the end of the conference. Just because something is not a priority does not mean that OUSA will not advocate on it - it just means that it won't be the focus of a campaign, lobbying during our advocacy week, or included in our annual budget submission, for instance.

- **Policy Papers and Authors:**
I highlighted MSU authors in yellow!

- **First Term** - these papers will be going to the fall general assembly at OUSA, and will outline the organization's stance on a variety of issues within the scope of the paper.
 - *Response to Sexual Violence:*
 - Julia Wood (Brock University Students Union Vice President External Affairs)
 - Sarah Wiley (University of Waterloo Federation of Students Vice President Education)
 - Antonio Brieva (University of Waterloo Federation of Students)
 - Megan Hsu (McMaster Students Union University Affairs Commissioner)
 - *Ancillary Fees:*
 - Blake Oliver (McMaster Students Union Vice President Education)
 - Ryan MacDonald (McMaster Students Union Vice President Finance)
 - Colin Aitchison (Wilfred Laurier University Students Union Vice President University Affairs)
 - Phil Marfisi (Wilfred Laurier University Students Union Associate Vice President University Affairs Waterloo)
 - Leah Brockie (Queen's University Alma Mater Society Academic Affairs Commissioner)
 - *Rural and Northern Students:*
 - Kraymr Grenke (Laurentian University Students' General Association President)
 - Abraham King (Laurentian University Students' General Association Vice President Policy and Advocacy)
 - Mauricio Diaz (Western University Student Council Associate Vice President)

- **Second Term** - we will be presenting four papers as an option, and the delegation at the fall general assembly will be in charge of selecting three papers to be debated at the spring general assembly. The papers we are presenting as options are as follows:
 - *Indigenous Students* - if this is chosen, I will be an authors on this paper in addition to authoring Ancillary Fees
 - *Municipal Affairs* - this paper currently does not exist, unlike all of the other papers on this list. If chosen, this paper would focus on provincially-focused recommendations surrounding students in their municipalities (for instance, the Landlord Tenant Act might be a topic for recommendations)
 - *A Comprehensive Access Strategy*

- *System Vision*

Let me know if you have any questions about the policy writing and passing procedure - it can definitely be confusing to understand if you haven't engaged in it before. What the authors mean to you is that the people listed here are intimately involved in shaping the principles, concerns, and recommendations to do with each student issue. For the MSU, we have authors on both ancillary fees and sexual violence response (as well as Indigenous students, if that comes up next term). What that means for you as an SRA member is that if you have concerns regarding these issues, the MSU authors on the papers would be great people to bring these concerns up with.

- **Conferences and Events:**
 - Training Day (applies to a few staff at each campus, for the MSU it mainly means my research assistants): **September 26 at Trent-Durham campus**
 - Fall General Assembly: **November 4 - 6 at Western University campus**
 - LobbyCon (myself and Justin will go to Toronto and lobby MPPs): **November 28 - December 1 at Queen's Park**
 - Spring General Assembly: **March 3 - 5 at Queen's University campus**
 - Partners in Higher Education Dinner (the MSU typically purchases 1 - 2 tables and brings some staff/SRA members - let me know closer to the date if you would like to come): **March 28 - 30 depending availability of venue**
- **Campaign:** we will be doing a campaign this year on Work Integrated Learning (WIL) sometime in November. More information on this TBA!
- **Budget:** we finalized the budget for the year - if anyone is interested in seeing it, let me know and I will get a copy for you. There are not a lot of changes from the previous year. One notable change is that we have allocated \$12,000 into the design of a new website (which will be a huge improvement to our current website, which is hosted on WordPress). Otherwise, the budget is relatively consistent from past years.

Overall, I felt as though the conference was extremely well-run and was happy with the decisions that we made as the Steering Committee.

Something else I wanted to highlight in this report is **OUSA blogs**. If you are unfamiliar with these, please check them out at www.ousa.ca. Blogs are written by steering committee members, students, experts, home office members, etc. and they do not represent official stances that the organization holders - rather, they are an opportunity to engage in a particular issue in post-secondary. At the conference, I signed up to

contribute many blogs throughout the year. If you are particularly passionate about an issue and want to write about it, please do not hesitate to ask. As an SRA member last year, I wrote two blogs (one on campus local food and the other on differentiated evaluation) and I had a great experience writing both of them. These blogs are seriously read by people in the sector - decision-makers, even - and are a really cool thing to do. I encourage you to get involved if you would like!

I did my best to break down the jargon in this report, but if there's anything that you are confused about or need further information on, please let me know. I am always happy to elaborate further on OUSA and provincial advocacy work! The next big OUSA event will be the fall general assembly in November. If that's something you're interested in attending, please keep your eyes peeled in late September/early October for information on how to apply to be a delegate. In the meantime, let me know if you have any questions.

Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bl Oliver". The letters are cursive and somewhat stylized, with the first letter of each name being larger and more prominent.

Blake Oliver
Vice President Education
McMaster Students Union