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SUPPORT FOR GREEN ROOF GROWING

Siobhan discusses needing student input for establishing a prominent green space on campus



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As some of you may recall, one of my platform points in my election campaign for MSU President was to implement “The Green Roofs Initiative” which was a project initially proposed by a group of students from OPIRG. The Green Roofs Initiative primarily aimed to establish a green space on the third floor balcony of the McMaster University Student Centre (MUSC), adjacent to CIBC Hall.

One of the biggest challenges facing our campus is space. This is no secret. That being said, the creation of new buildings and/or spaces doesn't happen every day. It is this particular issue on which I often field questions,

so I thought that it might be good to discuss it in more depth. The idea behind the Green Roofs Initiative is to examine the spaces we already have on campus, along with how best to utilize those spaces.

During the course of the summer, a great deal of work and research was done in exploring the best practices and procedures for implementing a green space in the Student Centre. Taking a further look into this concept, Melanie Fox-Chen, who was an intern in the Office of Sustainability worked closely with me to look at the research that was available on green roofs, as well as to consult stakeholders and gain community feedback. Melanie looked at the best practices in other urban green space initiatives across the country. Her research was used to develop a report on the Five Best Practices on Urban Green Space, as well as providing the basis for the creation of a survey which garnered feedback from the McMaster community about potential green roof features for MUSC. The survey was

posted in the summer and ran through early fall. Over 600 people answered our questions and some of the key findings from the survey show the following:

67% of respondents would use the green roof for relaxing and would appreciate a calm, soothing environment.

62% of respondents would like plants native to southern Ontario to be incorporated into the green roof.

78% of respondents would like edible plants to be grown on the roof.

92% of respondents would like this area to be non-smoking.

We have now moved into the stage where we are working closely with the University's Facility Services department and have selected an engineering firm that will draft visual representations of potential MUSC green space designs. It is imperative that

we continue to consult with additional stakeholders, such as the Office of Sustainability, the administration of MUSC, MacGreen, OPIRG and other interested parties, to ensure that this project reflects collective interests and input. Upon the engineering firm providing suitable drafts of different options, we plan to circulate the drawings via a survey to gather student impressions as to which choice is most popular. Once we establish a student preference, we will take the necessary measures to advocate for the successful completion of this project. I am particularly fond of this project, not only because this was a campaign promise I made, but also for the evolution of our Student Centre. Students who came before us worked collectively to build a Student Centre, which opened 10 years ago. Now, we as students of today are working collaboratively with each other and with our campus partners to improve and enhance that space for the benefit of not only ourselves, but for the students who will come after us.

THE PEOPLE HAVE SPOKEN - AND THEY WANT A FALL BREAK!



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The data is in, and it clearly demonstrates that McMaster students are in favour of a fall break. With almost 90% of students voting for a fall break of some kind, it is quite clearly time to move forward on the issue.

In terms of what students would be willing to give up, the most popular option among responses was the assignment of specific classrooms in order to facilitate a change in the exam schedule. Basically, if the University is able to allocate more space for writing exams, it would be possible to more efficiently assign examination schedules. The ultimate goal of this is to decrease the overall length of the examination period in the fall semester, freeing time for a fall break.

When asked about the idea of a reflective week in the first semester taking the place of a fall break, the majority of students said “maybe” or that “more information was required.”

This illustrates the need for greater discussion and information on the topic, as many students might be amenable to the idea of a reflective week as first mentioned by the Student Experience Task Force of *Forward with Integrity*. This could represent a very important point of common ground upon which progress could be made in talks with the University.

Overall, voters were well-informed, with only about 5% of people not knowing about options for the break. This indicates a clear interest in the topic of discussion and the MSU looks forward to further student involvement and response as we move forward.

From the preliminary interpretation of the results, it is also possible to derive the desired form of the break. While many students said that a one day break would be acceptable, a clear majority of those who participated in the survey indicated interest in a fall reading week. This could mean that 2013 could see a one to two day break, at some point in the fall term as we work towards the potential long term goal of more time. Additional analysis of the results of this survey is needed, along with further consultation with students and specific student groups/faculties. Expect to hear and see more about #MAKEaBREAK in the near future.

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