



REPORT

From the office of the...

Advocacy

TO: Members of the Executive Board
FROM: Sandy Tat
SUBJECT: Advocacy Report 2
DATE: November 1, 2016

UPDATE

Since I have last reported, the Advocacy Street Team has hired its Street Team members, completed training and set outlines for campaign preparation, released the Mental Health Survey, and continued planning for the MacTalks campaign.

SERVICE USAGE

Throughout October, Advocacy has focused on online outreach in promoting Street Team Volunteer applications, the Mental Health Survey to inform the MacTalks campaign, MSU Policy Conference registration, and general awareness of MSU opportunities and news. Below is an overview of the outreach and engagement through our online presence:

Reach

October 2 - October 29

13,005



Post Engagements

October 2 - October 29

4,396



Reach involves the number of individuals who come across MSU Advocacy posts through Facebook and post engagements involve likes, shares, comments, and more.

The Mental Health at McMaster Survey was published on October 7th, 2016 and has received over 100 responses.

The Student Wellness Centre has also reached out to Advocacy to discuss collaboration and access to the findings from the survey to help improve the services provided by the Student Wellness Centre, particularly their counselling services and programming. Furthermore, peer support services, such as Maccess and the Women and Gender Equity Network, have also reached out and expressed interest to receive relevant feedback from the survey to improve their services and spaces.

PAST EVENTS, PROJECTS & ACTIVITIES

As aforementioned, the Mental Health Survey received extensive feedback and Advocacy Logistics Executives summarized the findings to inform programming for MacTalks. Responses emphasized focus on issues such as financial resources and so collaboration with the Mac Money Centre has been made for the mental health campaign.

We received 45 Advocacy Street Team member applications, which is the highest number of applications in recent years. This success can be attributed to the promotional strategy employed by the Outreach Executives; the 'My Advocacy Street Team Story' was personable and featured students of different educational backgrounds and interests, allowing for the volunteer promotional campaign to reach a wider demographic. Class talks were also successful and received keen interest and follow-up from students. A total of 29 volunteers were hired after group volunteer interviews were conducted. The Executive team sought candidates that expressed passion for post-secondary educational advocacy, communication and interpersonal skills, and diversity in leadership and personality. Volunteer training for the Advocacy Street Team has been completed. Training involved an introduction to the MSU (pillars of services and advocacy, role of the board of directors and SRA, etc.), an open discussion on the expectations for the executive team and volunteers, a summary of their role as volunteers, the role of intersectionality and anti-oppression within Advocacy, an overview of the campaigns this term, and role playing to practice skills and conduct during Advocacy campaigns. Training was well-received and volunteers seem to feel more comfortable on the team.

Much headway has been made for preparation of MacTalks, involving consultations, confirmation of partnerships and programming, as well as the role of lobbying within the campaign, which will be discussed in the next section.

UPCOMING EVENTS, PROJECTS & ACTIVITIES

The MacTalks campaign will be occurring on November 7th to 11th. Informed through one-on-one consultations with McMaster students, feedback from previous years, the Mental Health Survey, collaborative meetings with peer support services, and more, the strategic themes and priorities have been established. The MacTalks campaign will focus on a discussion about mental health and illness on campus, address the stigma around mental health and illness, the resources and communities available for students to access support, as well as the institutional barriers and structures within McMaster that cause students with poor mental health and mental illness undue difficulties. Furthermore, programming will be intersectional and cover a wide range of experiences that McMaster students are familiar with. Programming involves, but not limited to: free snacks by MacBreadBin to address the intersection food security with mental health, an event on how perceptions and expectations of masculinity prevent men from accessing mental health resources by the MSU Club jack.org, and a collaboration with the Mac Money Centre to promote financial advising services and an event on how to navigate scholarships. Much success has been seen from students and partners responding positively to the strategic priorities and principles of the campaign. Barriers have resulted from the delay in partners in confirming programming. Delays have resulted in promotional materials being necessitated as rush-orders and limits the timeline for promotional efforts ahead of the campaign week. However, quality, well-planned programming and effective partnerships with MSU Services and Clubs are integral to the success of the campaign. The resulting delays will be dealt with to ensure the success of the week. Each of the events will reflect in a policy/university ask, which will be put forth at the end of the week. For example, the Diversity Services and McMaster

Indigenous Student Community Association events will reflect in a recommendation for the Student Wellness Centre to hire counsellors from Indigenous backgrounds, as well as counsellors who hold an understanding of Indigenous mental health and intersectional and anti-oppressive practices.

The MSU Policy Conference is set to occur on November 12th, 2016. Booking space has thus far been successful. Barriers have been encountered in that registration has not yet reached the full capacity yet and the lack of a finalized registrant list can cause inconsistency with catering requests.

The Work Integrated Learning Campaign will occur on November 21st to 25th. I have attended the last Academic Affairs meeting to discuss experiential education across different programs and faculties. Many academic VPs have expressed interest and commitment to the campaign and my Executive team will follow up on next steps for campaign preparation.

The Community Engagement Campaign will occur on November 28th to December 2nd. The campaign will encourage McMaster students living within the Hamilton community to get to know their residential neighbours, engage in a discussion of responsibilities as a good neighbour, and provide educational resources for by-laws. The campaign hopes to improve student-resident relations through promoting positive interactions by incentivizing students with prizes which their residential neighbours can also receive.

BUDGET

In October, funds have been allocated to cover costs for promotional design from the Underground for the Mental Health Survey and MacTalks, volunteer appreciation (i.e. lunch during training weekend), and PolicyCon catering and AVTEK rentals.

VOLUNTEERS

Adopting a person-centered team management style has so far been very effective. While maintaining an expectation for the Executive team to complete tasks in a timely manner, communicating that I believe their well-being should be a priority has been very well-received. The Executive team has appreciated my approach and has allowed them to engage in honest communication with me. Feeling comfortable and engaged on the team, the volunteers are enthusiastic and take initiative on tasks.

CURRENT CHALLENGES

Current challenges have been the delays in responses from campus partners. Though the Advocacy team has attempted to have early contact and provided a buffer time, slow responses and interruptions such as from the email server being down has delayed our timeline in finalizing promotions. The Advocacy team expects to resolve the issue by expediting promotional design work through a rush order.

SUCSESSES

Successes include the sincere engagement, enthusiasm, and insightfulness from this year's team of volunteers. Both the Executive Team and the Street Team members have

gone above and beyond in their roles. This year, I have decided to create subcommittees to plan and organize the different campaigns. This step will help that volunteers can make meaningful contributions to the campaigns while also providing leadership and team management opportunities for my Executives.

My team and I, as well as McMaster students that I have conducted consultations with, believe that the outlook for the MacTalks campaign has greatly improved from past years. Grounding the strategic priorities in intersectionality and addressing institutional barriers has garnered support for community partners. The potential for achieving “tangible asks” is new for the MacTalks campaign and proves to truly embrace the mission of the Advocacy pillar.