Hi Assembly,

This is my fall report for the Tuition Task Force. So far, the group has been meeting about bi-weekly to talk about the work that is going on in this portfolio. We have had quite a bit of turnover in this group, with a new Finance Commissioner, MSU member, and SRA member.

Attached for your reference are the action items with descriptions from our (unofficial) year plan, with a few additions that have come up as the year progressed. Here is the progress on new and old action items, with the attachment following:

**Action Item 1: Revision of the MSU's policy on Ancillary Fees.**

**Status:** Complete! At the last SRA meeting, the SRA adopted the new, much more robust policy on ancillary fees with a lot of great asks. This paper was worked on by three members of the Tuition Task Force (Esra, Blake, and Urzsu) as well as SRA members Jordan Cole and Ashley Eom).

**Action Item 2: Revision of the MSU's agreement with McMaster University on Compulsory Ancillary Fees.**

**Status:** Almost complete - the draft is completed, and the agreement itself will be presented to the SRA in the first or second SRA meeting in January. The SRA will vote to empower the BoD to sign the new agreement.

**Action Item 3: MSU authors on OUSA’s policy revision for Ancillary Fees.**

**Status:** Complete! At the OUSA GA, the delegation approved the new Ancillary Fees policy, written in part by two Tuition Task Force members, Blake and Ryan.

**Action Item 4: Work with the University on creating infographics/easily accessible information regarding breakdown of ancillary fees.**
**Status:** In progress - we have created a subcommittee of members to work on this specific issue.

**Action Item 5:** Flag all fees that students may opt-out of, and work to promote these fees during September.

**Status:** Incomplete. This is hopefully something the group can do this next term to prepare for next term.

**Action Item 6:** Highlight entrance scholarships and the Hooker and Senate scholarships in this year's MSU budget submission.

**Status:** Almost complete - this will go out by the end of December, and will include merit-based scholarships to needs-based bursaries asks.

**Action Item 7:** Work with OUSA to ensure that advocating for a tuition freeze is one of the organization’s priorities for the year.

**Status:** Complete! This is a priority for OUSA this year, and will be one of the lobbying points for the Lobby Week in Toronto this November.

**Action Item 8:** Run a campaign in the winter to raise awareness about the tuition framework and lobby for the freeze.

**Status:** Will occur next term, should the tuition framework be up for revision.

**Action Item 9:** Rewrite the MSU's policy on Indigenous Students.

**Status:** In progress - this policy is being written by the External Affairs Committee, and will be up for debate at March’s Policy Conference, and then passed by the SRA.

**Action Item 10:** Push for the PSSSP as an advocacy priority for federal lobbying organizations such as CASA and ADVOCAN.

**Status:** Complete! Both CASA and ADVOCAN lobbied on PSSSP this year in Ottawa, as well as the separate McMaster/Laurier team at Parliament Hill. Hopefully we will see recognition of this in the 2017 federal budget.

**Action Item 11:** Rewrite the MSU's policy on International Students.

**Status:** Complete! At the last SRA meeting, the SRA adopted the new policy on International Students with a lot of great asks, including specific asks surrounding financial aid and tuition for international students.
New Action Item 1: MSU authors on the OUSA International Students Policy Paper.

**Status:** SRA member David Lee will be an author on the OUSA International Students policy paper, which will be discussed at the Spring GA. Congratulations David!


**Status:** Blake will be authoring the OUSA Comprehensive Access Strategy policy paper, which will be discussed at the Spring GA.

New Action Item 3: Creating the MSU policy on Food Security.

**Status:** In progress - this policy is being written by the University Affairs Committee, and will be up for debate at March's Policy Conference, and then passed by the SRA

New Action Item 4: Going over the motion from last year’s MSU General Assembly and providing edits and recommendations.

**Status:** In progress - the motion itself had four separate points, and the group has divided into four to look at each point separately. We hope to present to the SRA about this motion next term.

Overall, the Tuition Task Force has been functioning, but I would be remiss if I didn’t suggest that this group not continue in the next academic year. Most action items are already completed by a different group or person (University Affairs Committee, External Affairs Committee, VP Education, President, etc.) In fact, the action items that are solely within the jurisdiction of this group (flagging opt-out fees, creating infographics, going through the motion) are either not completed or moving at an incredibly slow pace, and could be completed faster via University Affairs or External Affairs. Tuition, student financial aid, and ancillary fees are incredibly important topics, but in my opinion, the structure of a committee to address these issues is simply not working. My suggestion would be that in March, the SRA should rescind the Operating Policy for this group. I would love to field any questions on this should you have any.

Best,

Blake Oliver
Vice-President (Education)
McMaster Students Union
Tuition Task Force 2016-17

Voting Members:
MSU Vice-President Education - Blake Oliver (Chair)
MSU President - Justin Monaco-Barnes
MSU Vice-President Finance - Ryan MacDonald
SRA External Affairs Commissioner - Victoria Liu
SRA Humanities - Esra Bengizi
SRA Social Sciences - Ikram Farah
SRA Science - Megan Hsu (*also holds the position of SRA University Affairs Commissioner, a non-voting position*)
MSU Member - Varun Bhardwaj
MSU Member - Urzsula Sitarz
MSU Member - Marcin Zegarmistrz

Non-Voting Members:
SRA Finance Commissioner - Yelena Banjavcic
MSU Federal and Provincial Research Assistant - Aryan Pour-Bahreini
MSU University Affairs Research Assistant - Jeevika Goyal
MSU Advocacy Coordinator - Sandy Tat

Objectives:

1) Ancillary Fee Protocol at McMaster

Compulsory ancillary fees are defined as fees "imposed or administered by a given institution, or one of its constituent parts of its federated or affiliated institutions, in addition to regular tuition fees, which a student is required to pay in order to enroll in, or successfully complete, any credit course."

Some examples of ancillary fees at McMaster include but are not limited to:

- Student Services Fee
- Admin Service Fee
- Athletics and Recreation Building Fee
- MSU University Centre
- MSU Fee
- Non-MSU, Non-University groups (Engineers Without Border, Incite Publication, Solar Car, OPRIG, etc.)
- MSU Health and Dental Plan
- Faculty Society Fee

At McMaster, depending on the faculty society and whether or not the student chooses to opt-out of some fees, each student can expect to pay upwards of $750. It is the MSU's principled stance that governance
of ancillary fees must remain in the hands of the students, and that all ancillary fees at McMaster should contribute toward a model of fair cost sharing between students and the university. With these in mind, the Tuition Task Force is prepared to take on the following action items this year:

**Action Item 1**: Revision of the MSU’s policy on Ancillary Fees.

**Action Item 2**: Revision of the MSU’s agreement with McMaster University on Compulsory Ancillary Fees.

### 2) Provincial Ancillary Fee Protocol

The current policy on compulsory ancillary fees in the province is within the Minister’s Binding Policy Directive on Tuition and Ancillary Fees. The main principle on this policy is that institutional compulsory ancillary fees may be increased or new fees added through the implementation of a protocol that has been jointly agreed to by the administration and the student government representatives.

This year, OUSA’s policy on Ancillary Fees is being revised.

**Action Item 3**: MSU authors on OUSA’s policy revision for Ancillary Fees (Blake and Ryan).

### 3) Transparency and Promotion of Fees and Opt-Out

Full-time undergraduate students at McMaster pay several ancillary fees, including but not limited to:

- Admin Service Fee
- Athletics & Recreation Building Fee
- Faculty Society Fee
- MSU University Centre Fee
- Student Services Fee
- Engineers Without Borders Fee
- HSR Fee
- Incite Publication Fee
- MSU CFMU-FM Fee
- MSU Dental Plan Fee
- MSU Health Plan Fee
- MSU Marmor Fee
- MSU Refugee Fee
- McMaster Marching Band Fee
- McMaster Solar Car Fee
- OPIRG Fee
- Student Association Fee

Some of these fees are more transparent than others - for instance, the MSU fees ("Student Association Fee", CFMU fee, Health Plan premium, HSR bus pass, Marmor fee, and WUSC Student Refugee Fee) is broken down on the MSU website via infographic (https://www.msumcmaster.ca/governance/your-money). However, University-governed fees are often not broken down in this way, making it difficult for students to know exactly where their money is going - especially for vaguely-named fees such as "Admin Service Fee".

As well, some of these fees (the MSU Health Plan Fee, OPIRG Fee, etc.) have an opt-out option, oftentimes with a deadline. However, without adequate promotion of this possibility, students may be unaware of the possibility to recover funds.

**Action Item 4:** Work with the University on creating infographics/easily accessible information regarding breakdown of ancillary fees.

**Action Item 5:** Flag all fees that students may opt-out of, and work to promote these fees during September.

4) Transitioning Merit-Based Scholarships to Needs-Based Bursaries

At McMaster, there are several opportunities for students to receive merit-based scholarships (all entrance scholarships, Hooker scholarships, Senate scholarships, etc.). There are also opportunities to receive needs-based aid, such as the student access guarantee, work-study program, etc. From an access perspective, it is far better to designate money into needs-based bursaries than merit-based scholarships. There is a lot of evidence to suggest that merit-based scholarships go predominantly to students from high-income families that do not require aid in order to access post-secondary education.

Last year, the University announced that they would be eliminating the Hooker and Senate scholarships for level one students, amounting to $250,000 being allocated from that program into needs-based aid. This year, we would like to advocate for the University to similarly eliminate the Hooker and Senate scholarships for level two students, with an additional $250,000 being allocated into the needs-based bursary program. As well, we would like to look at the issue of entrance scholarships, which are all merit-based.

**Action Item 6:** Highlight entrance scholarships and the Hooker and Senate scholarships in this year’s MSU budget submission.

5) Tuition Framework
This year, the tuition framework will be renegotiated by the provincial government. The Tuition Fee Framework Guidelines for Publicly-Assisted Universities sets the rate of increases under the tuition fee framework, the application of the tuition fee framework, the tuition fee set-aside policy, the policy on other fees, and the reporting and compliance with the tuition fee framework. Under the current framework, the overall average rate of tuition increase across all publicly funded programs at an institution is capped at 3.0% per year. For professional programs (such as Engineering and Commerce), the maximum allowable increase in tuition fees is 5.0%.

It is OUSA’s policy, as well as the MSU’s policy, that tuition should be frozen (i.e. the maximum allowable increase in tuition fees for all program should be 0%).

Action Item 7: Work with OUSA to ensure that advocating for a tuition freeze is one of the organization’s priorities for the year (Blake).

Action Item 8: Run a campaign in the winter to raise awareness about the tuition framework and lobby for the freeze (Sandy and the Advocacy Street Team).

6) Indigenous Student Financial Aid

In Canada, one of the largest providers of financial aid to Indigenous students is the Canadian government’s Post-Secondary Student Support Program (PSSSP). The PSSSP has been capped at a 2% increase since 1996. This cap prohibits the funding from growing with actual costs (tuition rises at a much higher rate than 2% per year) and enrollment increases. The current Liberal government was elected on a platform of investing an additional $50 million into the PSSSP over the next four years, but in the 2016 federal budget, no additional funding was added to the PSSSP and the 2% cap remained intact. It is one of our advocacy priorities to ensure that the government follows through on their campaign commitment to increase funding into this program.

Action Item 9: Rewrite the MSU’s policy on Indigenous Students (Vicky and the External Affairs Committee).

Action Item 10: Push for the PSSSP as an advocacy priority for federal lobbying organizations such as CASA and ADVOCAN (Justin and Blake).

7) International Student Tuition

Under the current tuition framework in Ontario, tuition for international students is exempt from the 3.0% and 5.0% caps on increases per year. This causes international student tuition to rise irregularly and erratically from year-to-year, oftentimes used as a revenue-generator for the
institution. This year, we as the MSU will take a stance on deregulated international student tuition.

**Action Item 11: Rewrite the MSU's policy on International Students (Vicky and the External Affairs Committee).**

**New Action Item 1:** MSU author on OUSA's policy on International Students.

8) **More robust financial aid options**

Access to post-secondary education in Ontario continues to be a larger conversation, largely defined by financial access and affordability. This year, the provincial government is beginning consultation on an access strategy to remove barriers for underrepresented groups in PSE. As well, OUSA is rewriting its policy on a Comprehensive Access Strategy.

**New Action Item 2:** MSU author on OUSA's policy on a Comprehensive Access Strategy.

9) **Food Security**

According to latest studies, 2 in 5 university students struggle with food insecurity, largely due to financial hardships. While the MSU provides some relief in the form of the service Bread Bin, we have not taken any formal stances or done advocacy work related to food security.

**New Action Item 3:** Creating the MSU policy on Food Security.

10) **Future advocacy in Tuition**

Last year, the SRA approved unanimously the Tuition and Post Secondary Education Affordability policy, as worked on via the External Affairs Committee and the Tuition Task Force. This policy paper was meant to serve as the MSU's structure for tuition advocacy over the next three years. However, at General Assembly last March, a member submitted a motion with a new and different “framework” for tuition advocacy. This passed without quorum and then was tasked to this group by the SRA.

**New Action Item 4:** Going over the motion from last year's MSU General Assembly and providing edits and recommendations.