



# Report

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

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TO: Student Representative Assembly  
FROM: Blake Oliver, Vice-President (Education)  
SUBJECT: Second Report  
DATE: January 30, 2017

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Hi Assembly,

Thank you for your patience while I was sick 2 weeks ago. I am excited to update you on the projects that I am working on this term, as well as what was accomplished since my last report. If you have any questions pertaining to this report, or anything further, please do not hesitate to contact me.

As an aside, I know that time of the year is beginning when some reading this report might be considering running for my position in April. I just want to take this space to encourage anyone interested to reach out to me with questions, or even to shadow me for a day. This job is dynamic and challenging in many ways, and I am grateful for all of the opportunities it has provided me. When I began last May, I was lucky to have a good understanding of what the role would be. I am happy to share my perspective with any who ask.

Yours,

Blake Oliver  
Vice President Education  
McMaster Students Union

## MSU Policy Conference (Fall)

Last term's Policy Conference took place on November 12, 2016 in Celebration Hall, KTH. This was the first ever MSU Policy Conference and it was very successful! We had close to 70 students register for the conference, and about 50 in attendance on the day of.

The schedule for the day included:

<i>Time</i>	<i>Event</i>
9:00 AM	Breakfast and Registration
9:30 AM - 10:15 AM	Orientation and Training
10:15 AM - 11:00 AM	Paper Overview
11:00 AM - 11:40 AM	First Round of Policy Breakout Sessions
11:45 AM - 12:25 PM	Second Round of Policy Breakout Sessions
12:30 PM - 1:10 PM	Lunch
1:15 PM - 1:55 PM	Third Round of Policy Breakout Sessions
2:00 PM - 2:30 PM	Guest Speaker: Associate Vice-President of Students and Learning & Dean of Students, Sean van Koughnett
2:30 PM - 2:45 PM	Conclusion

Along with the schedule, we also circulated in advance copies of the draft papers, and a short, 2-page guide to the Policy Conference and the process of advocacy within the MSU. All of the documentation can be found at [msumcmaster.ca/policyconfall2016](http://msumcmaster.ca/policyconfall2016).

Overall, we passed three policies at the SRA the following day, November 13, 2016:

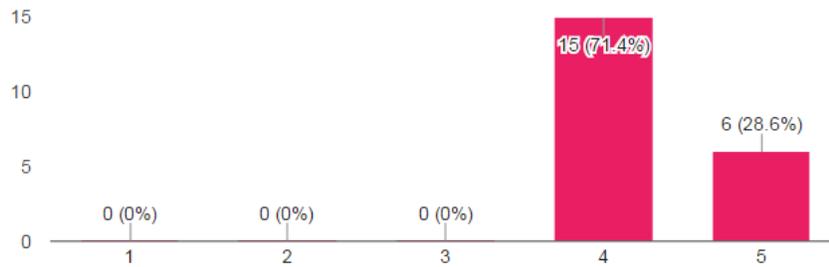
- 1) Ancillary Fees
- 2) Sexual and Gender Diversity
- 3) International Students

I am so grateful for all of the SRA members that came out to the conference to participate! And a special thank you to all of the authors: Jordan Cole, Esra Bengizi, Ashley Eom, Urszala Sitarz, Meg Hsu, Sandy Tat, Desmond Flowers, David Lee, Eric Shingleton-Smith, Alex Wilson, Vicky Liu, Aquino Inigo, Ezekiel Areghan, Ryan Deshpande, Annie Yu, Angela Ma, Joyce Chan, and Huyen Dam. Your contributions will help frame MSU advocacy for years to come.

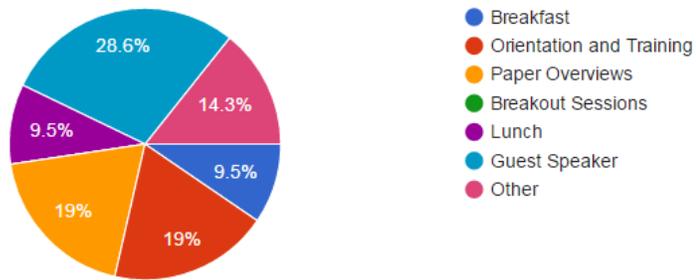
Feedback for the event was overall very positive, with 95.2% of respondents saying they would be interested in attending the March Policy Conference. The most consistent piece of feedback that we received was that delegates would have liked longer breakout sessions, something that we will be incorporating into this term's conference. Some other useful feedback pieces included:

### How satisfied were you with the overall organization of the Policy Conference?

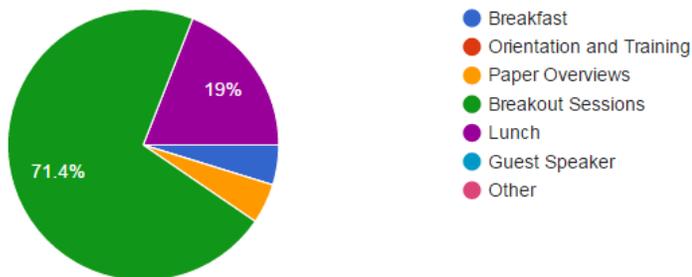
(21 responses)



### What was your least favourite aspect of the Policy Conference? (21 responses)



### What was your favourite part of the Policy Conference? (21 responses)



## MSU Policy Conference (Spring)

The Spring Policy Conference will take place on Saturday, March 11, 2016. This term's conference will focus on the following three policies:

- 1) Food Security (worked on by the University Affairs Committee)
- 2) Indigenous Students (worked on by the External Affairs Committee in collaboration with many different campus partners)
- 3) First Year Transition (worked on by myself in collaboration with University Affairs, External Affairs, and FYC)

So far, all policies are underway with a full complement of authors. The food security policy group has run a focus group and a survey to collect primary research from students. The Indigenous students policy group has run a focus group in ISP/ISS space, in addition to using focus group feedback from groups ran last year in MUSC. The First Year Transition policy will be using feedback from the First Year Feedback Forum held last year by University Affairs and Spark.

The dates to keep in mind for this term's policy conference are:

February 11 - Registration will open (please promote this to your constituents!)

February 25 - Registration will close

February 27 - We hope to circulate draft policies to delegates/SRA (this is a goal but may be pushed back if there are delays)

March 11 - Policy Conference

March 12 - SRA meeting

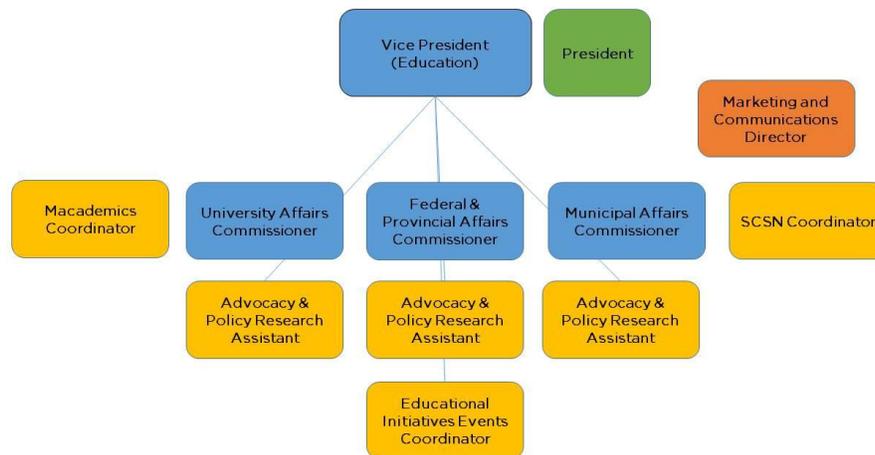
## Education Team Restructuring

In my last report, I detailed some of the overarching issues that exist within the current structure of the Education department:

1. **Overlap in the community engagement and municipal advocacy portfolio**, including the positions of External Affairs Commissioner, the Community Engagement Coordinator, the Advocacy Coordinator, and the Student Community Support Network Coordinator.
2. The creation of the Marketing & Communications Director role, which is meant to focus on **Government Relations as well as Communications** - some of which also exists within part-time roles in the Education Team.
3. Ensuring that **lobbying and advocating are conducted by our elected representatives**, and prioritizing opportunities for these representatives to lobby on their own behalf.

4. Defining **support roles** within the team - including support for our **events and campaigns**, logistics, and **full research support** for policy creation.
5. Running campaigns that are **advocacy** focused, and that include clear outcomes and student demonstration for a specific change.
6. The **project-based nature of research**, which is often at odds with the current division of our research assistants.

This week, I presented my proposal to the BoD on what I recommend for the new structure. This proposal will also be coming to Executive Board and the SRA within the next few meetings with full documentation. For reference, the proposed structure will likely look like this:



## MSU Macademics

As I've already reported on, I worked with the Executive Board over the summer to expand the offerings of the Teaching Awards Committee, ultimately resulting in a brand new service: MSU Macademics. Macademics reports to Executive Board now, so if you are interested in what they have accomplished thus far, you can find Rohoma's reports at [msumcmaster.ca/eb](http://msumcmaster.ca/eb). Just to highlight a few accomplishments, the service saw record high nominations for Teaching Awards, a successful first ever Wikithon, a big course evaluations campaign, and several blog posts about how to study best. This term the service will continue to expand the course wiki, focusing on quality of course evaluations,

## TA Training

I met with CUPE 3906 in the summer before they began their bargaining process to ensure that TA training was a priority. While they assured me that it was something they were looking for, they mentioned that there are other priorities that their membership deemed

more important to them personally. As of January, CUPE 3906 and McMaster University signed a 3-year collective bargaining agreement that unfortunately does not include TA training.

Although this is unfortunate for our members, I want to highlight this so we can ensure to advocate on this priority at the next collective bargaining cycle in 2020. Since my time in the MSU, I have seen many SRA and faculty society candidates run on the idea of TA training - it is clearly a priority of the student body. However, with the current collective bargaining agreement, there is absolutely no room for paid, mandatory TA training.

### **Indigenous Students**

As I reported in my last report, I now sit on a committee struck by Patrick Deane known as the "Indigenous Administration Consultation Group" which has thus far had 1 meeting. As the University of Toronto has recently released their report with recommendations as a response to the TRC, this committee will be exploring McMaster's response and the relationship between Indigenous students, staff, and faculty on campus and the administration.

As well, I have been entering discussions with Diversity Services and other groups on campus about what the service provides for Indigenous students. Currently, the service includes an executive position known as the "Indigenous Affairs Liaison", which has traditionally sat on MISCA and done programming solely through MISCA. We will be continuing to discuss how Diversity Services can better serve the entire Indigenous student population at McMaster.

### **Plastic Water-Bottle Free Campus**

We have phased out plastic water-bottles at Union Market! Here is an excerpt from my President's Page on this:

*Last January, Justin Monaco-Barnes was elected MSU President on a platform of environment sustainability. Since then, we as your Board of Directors have been working on various different projects to ensure that sustainability is at the heart of the work that we're doing here at the MSU. Part of that is looking at our own services and making change from within. With that being said, you will no longer see Union Market selling single-use plastic water bottles.*

*While this may seem like a small change, it's something we think is significant. Almost half of Ontario's post-secondary institutions have a total ban on single-use plastic water bottles, and we know the student population at McMaster cares about sustainability. So we're asking for your help: we want to see McMaster join other institutions in the province and implement a single-use plastic water bottle ban. You can prove that this is possible with your spending habits. These single-use plastic water bottles make up a sizeable profit for business units on campus, but students can*

*show that they are willing to forgo this convenience by bringing their own reusable bottles.*

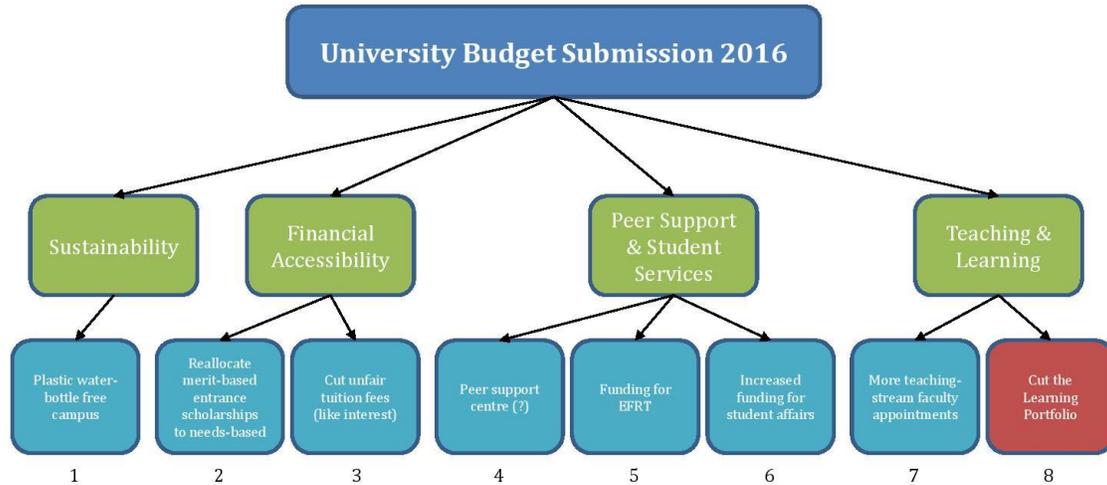
*As an alternative to single-use plastic bottles, we have also been piloting boxed water at Union Market. So if you're on campus without your reusable bottle, but want to make an environmentally friendly choice, please come check it out! Change starts with you. We can make change at McMaster, but we need your help. As the box says: Boxed Water is Better!*

## **Budget Submission**

This has been a major project throughout the summer, and one that is ongoing. Through working with the board, various commissioners, and my research assistant, we have done considerable work to prepare for the budget submission. The graphic below outlines the four key areas of the budget submission, with a total of eight asks underneath.

For clarity, the asks are:

- For the University to become a plastic water-bottle free campus (see Plastic Water-Bottle Free above)
- For the University to reallocate merit-based scholarships to needs-based
  - Second year Hooker and Senate scholarships (250k)
  - Some entrance scholarships
- Cut unfair tuition fees - for instance, the "flex plan" fee which charges students \$35 to split up their payment into two terms
- Hire a full-time staff to coordinate training and oversee peer support services on campus
- For the University to fund half of the costs of MSU EFRT
- Increase funding to the Student Affairs department (this will allow services such as Student Success, Student Wellness, Athletics and Recreation, and Student Accessibility Services)
- Increase the amount of teaching-stream faculty appointments (vs. research stream) at the University
- Cut funding to the Learning Portfolio project



- 1 - Justin
- 2 - Blake
- 3 - Blake
- 4 - Shaarujaa
- 5 - Matt Brodka & Meg Hsu
- 6 - Ryan
- 7 - Blake
- 8 - Blake/Justin

## Compulsory Ancillary Fees Agreement

Myself, along with other members of the BoD, have been working with Student Affairs to develop a new Compulsory Ancillary Fees agreement with the University. This agreement is what outlines the terms and process by which the University consults students on ancillary fees (for instance, the Student Services fee, the Athletics and Recreation fee, the Student Wellness fee, etc.). We have been working with complex issues, such as how much money should be allocated to SLEF (Student Life Enhancement Fund) versus student services, as well as how much fees can be raised without going to referendum. I will be presenting soon to the assembly to go over the proposed changes to the CAF agreement - likely at the next SRA meeting!

## OUSA Ancillary Fees Policy

This paper passed at OUSA Fall General Assembly on November 6. I authored this paper with our VP Finance, Ryan MacDonald. Ryan and I mainly focused on the policy surrounding fair-cost sharing, which included:

- Course-specific fees (textbooks, physical and digital learning materials, course ware, field trip fees, etc)
- Student contribution to operating funding of universities

- System-wide exemption under the provincial ancillary fee framework
- Vendor-wide exemption under the provincial ancillary fee framework
- Work-integrated learning placement fees
- Funding for essential student services
- Funding for capital projects

You can find a completed copy of this paper at [ousa.ca/policies](http://ousa.ca/policies).

### **OUSA Comprehensive Access Strategy Policy**

I am also an author on an OUSA paper for this term: A Comprehensive Access Strategy. This paper looks at the barriers that underrepresented groups face to accessing post-secondary. In my sections, I focus on what the province's access strategy should look like, what access is and how it relates to differentiation, data collection, and mature students. This paper will be passed at the OUSA Spring General Assembly on March 5, 2017.

### **OUSA General Assembly Hiring**

We are currently hiring for this term's General Assembly. Important dates to keep in mind:

February 6 - OUSA General Assembly applications close  
February 7 - 10 - OUSA General Assembly interviews  
February 22 - March 1 - Training for OUSA General Assembly  
March 2 - 5 - OUSA General Assembly

This term's general assembly occurs at Queen's University. The three papers that we will pass are:

- 1) A Comprehensive Access Strategy
- 2) International Students
- 3) Municipal Issues

This term we are hiring six delegates to bring to GA, so I am really looking forward to hiring. Please pass on this opportunity to anyone you think would be interested!

### **Provincial Advocacy**

Since my last report, I attended some meetings with regards to provincial advocacy. This included:

- Meeting with the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development and the Ministry of Education with regards to non-financial barriers to access to post-secondary education

- Meeting with the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development with regards to experiential education and work integrated learning
- Our Hamilton Post Secondary Advisory Group, where we lobby Ted McMeekin on provincial issues. We mainly talked to him about:
  - Data accessibility, and what was formerly Bill 127, the Pathways to Post Secondary Act (before parliament was prorogued)
  - Funding for more essential student services, such as Student Wellness, and Student Accessibility Services
  - The need for more work-integrated learning opportunities
- Speaking at an echo announcement for free tuition with Eleanor McMahon
- OUSA meetings:
  - Steering committee meetings
  - Lobby Con (will have its own section)

## Provincial Lobbying Week

In November, I travelled with Justin to Toronto to partake in OUSA's annual lobbying week. We met with many stakeholders, including MPPs, staff at the Premier's office, the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Development, and the Council of Ontario Universities. The topics we lobbied on included:

- Tuition framework:
  - Regulating international student tuition - this would mean that international student tuition would have a cap on how much it could increase each year
  - Freezing tuition - disallowing universities from increasing tuition under the duration of the framework
  - Per-credit billing - we are already under a system of per-credit billing at McMaster, but some schools still use per-term billing, which charges students the same amount regardless of number of courses
  - Tuition set aside - we advocated for an increase in the amount that institutions have to set aside from their tuition revenue to put towards student financial aid
- Data collection: we advocated for Yvan Baker's private member's bill to be implemented (Pathways to Excellence in Post Secondary Education)
- Sexual violence:
  - Smart serve training - we pushed for smart serve training to include bystander invention
  - Oversight at the government level - we advocated for the government to oversee prevention programs at universities
  - Data collection - with the implementation of Bill 136, universities will now have to report data - we want to

ensure the data is used to show trends and actual statistics of sexual violence on campus

## **Federal Advocacy**

In addition to advocating to our MPP at HPSAG, we also now advocate to our MP, Filomena Tassi. These are the topics we brought up with her:

- Incentives for sustainable infrastructure in capital projects
- Expanding eligibility for grants for students with disabilities
- Lifting the cap on the Post Secondary Student Support Program (PSSSP) to allow more Indigenous students to access post-secondary education

In November, I travelled to Ottawa with Justin and Vicky to lobby the federal government. A full report has been released that goes in depth on this week (Federal Advocacy Week report) which you can find in the documentation for SRA 16K.

## **Network for Campus-Community Partnerships**

The Vice-President Education sits on McMaster's Network for Campus Community Partnerships (NCCP), which aims to further community engagement initiatives within the University. It is also related to Change Camp as much of the membership overlaps. The vision and purpose of this group has greatly changed within the past year, with the largest change being the addition of working groups. These working groups include:

- Community-engaged education
- Community-engaged service
- Community-engaged research
- Poverty and inclusion
- Healthy spaces and communities
- Knowledge sharing and open access

I now sit on the community-engaged service working group. One thing that I am working on as a part of this group is introducing clubs training for community engagement. This was something that was highlighted at last year's student summit on community engagement - we have many clubs that participate in community engagement, but we many do not have the skills to create lasting partnerships within the community. We will be looking to reach out to clubs that currently do community engagement in order to assess what type of training might be best.

## **AWWCA - Ainslie Wood Westdale Community Association**

Justin and I attended the Annual General Meeting of the AWWCA in order to meet some community members and participate in discussion.

As well, we purchased memberships for some EA and SCSN members, in order for the MSU to have more of a voice at this table.

## **Learning Portfolio**

Justin and I have been sitting on the Provost's Committee on the Learning Portfolio. As it stands, we have many concerns with the Learning Portfolio, and thus we will likely be recommending that it is cut in our budget submission. We attended meetings for the committee over the summer and were not convinced that this tool added any value to students, even with the new PepplePad software.

## **Municipal Advocacy Week**

We held the second annual Municipal Advocacy Week the week of January 9 - 13. This year, we focused on providing training to EA members and Education team members and lobbying on specific asks. These asks surrounded these themes:

- Student engagement
- Transit
- Housing
- Student retention

A full report will be circulated later in the term with detailed summaries of all of the meetings from municipal advocacy week!

## **Board of Directors**

Sometimes I do things just as a board member, and not as the Vice President Education. Some of these include:

- Hiring for Part Time Manager positions - SHEC, QSCC, SCSN, DRO, Macademics
- Hiring for the new Underground Media and Design Manager
- Preparing for the State of the Union
- Acting in a super cool video to promote the referenda
- Generally providing support while Shaarujaa and Justin were on a leave of absence

## **Teaching Evaluation Committee**

I sit as the student representative on the Teaching Evaluation Committee, which seeks to improve the way the instructors are evaluated at McMaster. One large way is via course evaluations. In December, this committee held a large retreat to tackle the first phase of this project, due to be completed in April. Out of this retreat, I have been working on making recommendations to the University in regards to how to improve the course evaluations completion rate, as well as

which questions should be used in course evaluations. This committee will continue to meet throughout my team and will present to the Provost in April.

#### **Upcoming Events and Initiatives:**

- *Teaching Awards - open from January 30 - February 17*
- *OUSA General Assembly applications close - February 6*
- *Policy Conference Registration - open from February 11 - February 25*
- *OUSA General Assembly - March 2 - 5*
- *Policy Conference - March 11*

#### **Upcoming Projects: objectives outlined in my Year Plan that I will be taking on throughout the rest of my term**

- Long-Term Plan - something Ryan and I are both interested in creating, him more so on the long-term vision for services, and myself more so on the advocacy priorities
- Working on getting earlier exam schedules - working with the University to release exam schedules earlier
- Strategic Mandate Submission to the University - our SMA will be updated this year, and the MSU will do a submission to highlight important aspects to students
- The first ever municipal HPSAG - a Hamilton Post Secondary Advisory Group (Redeemer Student Senate and Mohawk Students Alliance) with city councilors and the mayor

#### **Conclusion**

This report is a snapshot of what I've been working on since my last report but I'm sure that I have missed things. Please let me know if you have any questions or anything you'd like for me to further elaborate on!