



REPORT

From the office of the...
**SRA External Affairs
Commissioner**

TO: Members of the Student Representative Assembly
FROM: Victoria Liu, External Affairs Commissioner
SUBJECT: SRA 16N Report
DATE: Feb. 5th, 2017

NOTE TO THE READER

This report is meant to outline the progress that the External Affairs (EA) Committee has made throughout the last part of 1st term and the first part of the 2nd term. Currently, we have made progress on a lot of projects, and are working on a few final projects.

I hope that this report provides a comprehensive summary of our progress, but please do not hesitate to ask questions or find out more about the committee.

PROGRESS ON YEAR PLAN

Objective 1: Policy Updates

Throughout first term, the EA Committee worked to complete Access Copyright Policy updates and the International Students Policy. Currently, and throughout the last part of the first term, the focus has been shifted to work towards an Indigenous Students Policy.

At the end of last term, External Affairs took part in consultations with Indigenous student groups including the McMaster Indigenous Student Community Alliance (MISCA), The Cooperative of Indigenous Studies Students and Alumni (CISSA), and the Haudenosaunee Student Alliance. After the consideration of many student groups, the approach to the policy was altered to make sure that there was greater partnership from Indigenous Students and all contributions were credited.

That being said, I will describe the progress on this policy and the changes that were made to the typical policy process.

Last year, a report of recommendations was created by the MSU in partnership with MISCA. Focus groups held in MUSC were also conducted, and the notes will be used within this policy. Due to the conversations had at the beginning of the policy process, we will be ensuring that all contributions (no matter how minor) are credited. This means that unlike past policies, we will

be crediting contributions including, but not limited to, authors, with files from, focus group contributions, special thanks to and consultations.

To start off the policy, the EA committee hosted an Indigenous Students focus group in the Indigenous Studies Program ceremonial space to learn more from students in an effort to inform the policy. These notes will be integrated into the policy.

To ensure that the policy is not only informed by students, but truly represents students from McMaster who are faced with the challenges written about in the policy, there are many Indigenous authors working on the policy. To encourage participation from non-Indigenous and Indigenous Authors, we did not limit the number of authors as much as we have in the past. Instead, we are working on sections of the policies in partners and small groups to have as much student input as possible. These groups are comprised of at least one Indigenous and one non-Indigenous student. The purpose of these groupings was to ensure that aspects of the policy would be accurately conveyed, students would be more involved in the policy process, and there would be more room for feedback.

There are a couple of important dates in the policy process that the group will follow. The first is PCRs due which is Monday January 30th, 2017, and rough drafts will be due on February 25th, 2017 so that they can be ready to be sent out to Policy Con delegates in the next week. The policy conference will be held on March 11th, 2017. The team is hoping to work hard to stick to these dates and deadlines so we have many opportunities for feedback.

Objective 2: Student Housing in the Surrounding McMaster Community + Campaign

In December, Student Community Support Network (SCSN), EA, and Advocacy Street Team (AST) successfully completed the Students in Neighbourhoods campaign.

The purpose of this campaign was to raise awareness of key bylaws that students may not know much about, to work toward improving relations with the community. The campaign originally started off as a selfie campaign, but then morphed into a post commenting campaign to achieve more student engagement. Overall, we handed out many magnets containing 3 key bylaws, and worked towards educating students who stopped by tables. Posts on the key bylaws were also made on Facebook to raise awareness of how students can be more mindful within the community.

Student engagement in this campaign was a challenge. In future campaigns this year, hosted by SCSN, we hope that we can achieve more student engagement by reaching out to residence life and other contributors on campus.

Alex Wilson, continues to be the liaison between EA and the Ainslie Wood Westdale Community Association. From this we keep contact with the AWWCA, and work towards keeping open communication between the association and the MSU. We hope to keep this relationship into the following years.

Objective 3: Sustainability Campaign

The sustainability campaign will be one of the larger projects that the External Affairs Committee takes on this year, in partnership with the Sustainability committee and AST. This project is in the preliminary planning stages, with interest from EA committee members including, but not limited to, Katie Pita, Saima Ahmad, and Ezekiel Areghan.

Objective 4: Tuition Campaign

Ontario's current tuition framework (3% cap) will remain for another two years. Due to this decision that was noted at the end of last year, the tuition campaign will not be held this year, but instead, can be something that can be kept on the radar of incoming Commissioners in the next couple of years.

Objective 5: Working off Change Camp Recommendations + Continuing Change Camp

Please see SRA report 16K.

Objective 6: Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance (OUSA) Blogs and OUSA Awareness

The EA Committee is continuing to publish OUSA blogs, and hopes to work to increase the number of blogs published by OUSA in the next part of the year. Recently, OUSA published a blog written by Baraa Aydan about accessible transportation around McMaster. The blog highlights some of the issues surrounding transportation in Hamilton, and highlights other key priorities.

Applications to OUSA's Spring General Assembly were also released this week, with applications due February 6th. The Committee will be working towards making this opportunity known to students, and we hope to garner a lot of interest. Hiring will take place in February, and the conference will be held March 3rd to 5th. The three policies that will be discussed are: A Comprehensive Access Strategy, International Students, and Municipalities. If there is anyone who is interested in attending, and would like to learn more, feel free to contact me at [sraexternal@mcmaster.ca](mailto:sraexternal@msu.mcmaster.ca).

Objective 7: Federal Advocacy

Please see SRA report 16K.

Objective 8: Hamilton Advocacy week

Special thanks to the Community Engagement Coordinators Stephanie and Labika for making this week a success.

Throughout the week, EA members, and MSU representatives met with a variety of politicians and stakeholders to discuss priorities of the MSU. Throughout the week students were equipped with the resources and briefs to engage in meaningful conversations with individuals including, Councilor, Aidan Johnson, Councilor, Matthew Green, City Manager Chris Murray, and The Hamilton Chamber of Commerce.

There were many priorities that were discussed, including by-law enforcement, transportation, sexual/gender diversity, and student involvement in decisions. After meetings took place, students were asked to create reports which will be compiled.

Now that we have engaged in meaningful conversations with members of the Hamilton Community, we need to continue the conversation and work with participants of Hamilton Advocacy week to achieve some of our recommendations. Some of these recommendations may come to play in the future, while others involve contacting community members or politicians when their support is needed. During my transition, I will introduce the incoming External Affairs Commissioner to the purpose of Hamilton Advocacy week, and ensure that some crucial conversations are continued.

Objective 9: Engaging Students (committee and MSU population)

Please see SRA report 16H and 16K.

In addition to some of the work that has been done throughout the year, the EA Committee is now working on a way to make meetings and time on the committee more valuable throughout the next part of the term. Committee members value discussions that we have in the group, and are willing to have discussions about Municipal challenges (possibly outlined on City Hall Agendas or other resources). The idea for this stemmed from feedback that was received at the end of last term expressing the need to make meetings more worthwhile and engaging.

In addition to engaging the committee, it has been important to engage with students and groups outside of the committee who express an interest in advocacy. When creating the framework for the Indigenous Students policy, it was important to engage students in discussion to ensure that advocacy efforts are led by the ideas of the population that the policy is meant to address. This principle should be consistent throughout all advocacy efforts, and I hope that we can continue to engage students throughout the policy process.

PAST EVENTS, PROJECTS & ACTIVITIES

In the 'Progress on Year Plan' section, it is evident that a lot of projects have been completed, and some are well underway. The SRA 16H and 16K report outlines some past activities that have been completed.

Some notable events and projects that have been completed in the past couple of months are:

Students in Neighbourhoods Campaign

- Hosted November 28th- December 2nd 2016
- Hosted in partnership with SCSN and AST
- Focused on educating students about 3 by-laws: Clearing snow from sidewalks within 24 hours after snowfall, being mindful of noise that might disturb neighbours, and removing bins from the curb by 7pm on pick-up day.

- The campaign changed from a selfie campaign to a commenting on social media campaign to ensure more student engagement

Indigenous Students Focus group

- Hosted Wed. January 11th, 2017 in the Indigenous Studies Ceremonial space
- Students discussed ideas, concerns and recommendations to add into the policy.
- A contributions sheet was passed around to ensure that student contributions could be recognized

Hamilton Advocacy Week

- Hosted January 9th -January 13th (with some meetings held in the following weeks based on external schedules)
- Huge thanks to the community engagement coordinator and VP Ed. for organizing the week.
- Meetings with: Hamilton Chamber of Commerce, Matthew Green, Aidan Johnson, EverGreen, Planning and Economic Department, Chris Murray, Hamilton Hive, Sustainability Professionals Network, Fred Eisenberger

Indigenous Students Policy Think Tank

- Hosted January 17th, 2017
- Introduction to policy, and authors discussed the organization of the policy
- Assignments of policy sections

UPCOMING EVENTS, PROJECTS & ACTIVITIES

There are a few major events happening this term:

OUSA General Assembly

- Hosted at Queen's University March 3rd to 5th
- Please see objective 6 under 'Progress on Year Plan' for more details

The Spring OUSA GA is fast approaching, and applications will be due February 6th. Due to the short deadline, it will be important to ensure that students are aware of this opportunity. I encourage the SRA to share this with students as this is a great opportunity to be engaged in student advocacy.

Interviews will be held for successful candidates soon after applications are due.

Indigenous Students Policy + Policy Con

- Policy due Feb. 25th, 2017
- Policy Con March 11th, 2017

Please see Objective 1 under 'Progress on Year Plan' for more details.

For this policy, we are working with a slightly larger team than usual which may pose many challenges in terms of organizing efforts. However, at this point in the process, all members are engaged and have contributed great

ideas to the policy. We hope to continue with this trend and ensure that the policy accurately represents Indigenous Students.

Implementing feedback from last term's policy, we have started this policy process earlier than last year. This will ensure that there is time to achieve feedback on the policy, and engage students in the process. Only a month in, we have already had a focus group, discussed the purpose and structure of the policy, and created the Principles, Concerns and Recommendations that will form the outline of the policy.

Huge congratulations to the authors and contributors on this policy so far.

Sustainability Campaign

- Date TBD

The sustainability campaign is still in the preliminary planning stages. Reports on the progress of this initiative will come in later reports.

CURRENT CHALLENGES

This month, the EA committee was actively looking for initiatives to engage in during committee meetings to make meetings worthwhile. To learn more about Hamilton and engage in meaningful discussion, the committee will be looking for relevant items on City Hall agendas etc. We welcome any External Affairs related topics of discussion from SRA members.

Sticking with the short policy deadlines has proven to be a challenge faced by the committee in the past. To mitigate this challenge during the Winter 2017 policy cycle, the committee and interested student advocates have begun to work as early as possible. We hope that this change to the schedule offers more time for feedback, and leads to a less rushed process.

In addition to this, the policy will be addressed by a larger team this year, with students working in pairs. Often, the workload of a policy can be quite large. Working in small pairs will help to decrease the demand for student time and ensure quality of the policy sections, through group collaboration.

VOLUNTEERS

Please visit the SRA 16H and 16K report for more details on how volunteers have been engaged throughout the year. Please also refer to Objective 9 within 'Progress on Year Plan' for more information.

SUCCESES

The committee has had many successes in the past few months, as evident throughout this report. Huge congratulations to all committee members, and student advocates who have taken part in some of the External Affairs Committee's projects. The work would not be possible without your contributions.

OTHER

Thank you for taking the time to read about the progress that the External Affairs Committee has made since report 16K. If you're interested in dropping by our committee sessions, we meet in the MSU committee room boardroom (MUSC Rm 201) on Wednesdays from 5:00pm-6:00pm (variable dates). Please make sure to check out our Facebook page, 'SRA External Affairs Committee', and do not hesitate to ask us any questions.

Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Victoria Liu". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "V" and a stylized "Liu".

Victoria Liu
SRA External Affairs Commissioner
McMaster Students Union
sraexternal@msu.mcmaster.ca