



# Report

*From the office of the...*

## Vice President (Education)

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**TO:** Student Representative Assembly  
**FROM:** Blake Oliver, Vice-President (Education)  
**SUBJECT:** Final Report  
**DATE:** March 25, 2017

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Hi Assembly,

Attached is my final report to the Assembly, detailing the work that I have accomplished throughout the year as the Vice President (Education) and Corporate Officer of the organization. I have focused on work that has occurred since my last report, but tried to give a full picture of everything that I have done. Of course, not everything could be listed. Feel free to ask me if you have any questions.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention that this past term has not exactly been what I expected. There were weeks in January, February, and March in which I was one of two board members - we've been working short-staffed for significant parts of the term. While I wouldn't change a thing, it has obviously been a challenge. Despite this, I am still happy with what I was able to accomplish this term.

It has truly been a privilege to serve as this Assembly's Vice President Education and work with so many of you on your projects and initiatives. Seeing you all engage in advocacy and policy work this year has been so rewarding for me and I hope you found it valuable as well. Please keep in touch!

Forever yours in advocacy,

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 (written by myself in collaboration with EA and UA)
- 2) Sexual and Gender Diversity (written by the University Affairs Committee)
- 3) International Students (written by the External Affairs committee)

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 incorporated into this term's conference.

## **MSU Policy Conference (Spring)**

The Spring Policy Conference took place on Saturday, March 11, 2016. We had about 50 people register for the event, with a day-of attendance of close to 35. We passed three policies at the SRA the following day:

- 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)

In order to incorporate feedback from the previous Policy Conference, we updated the schedule to eliminate the guest speaker and elongate breakout sessions.

<i>Time</i>	<i>Event</i>
9:00 AM	Breakfast and Registration
9:30 AM - 10:00 AM	Orientation and Training
10:00 AM - 10:30 AM	Paper Overview
10:30 AM - 11:20 AM	First Round of Policy Breakout Sessions
11:25 AM - 12:15 PM	Second Round of Policy Breakout Sessions
12:20 PM - 1:00 PM	Lunch
1:05 PM - 1:55 PM	Third Round of Policy Breakout Sessions
2:00 PM - 2:30 PM	Conclusion

Feedback collection is ongoing; however, thus far it has also very positive this term. 92.3% of attendees that have currently given feedback said they would be interested in attending a future conference.

One of the additional feedback pieces we asked students about was which policies they would like to see next term. For the future Assembly's benefit, I would like to highlight the policies that are due to expire next year, or have already expired:

- MSU Policy on Hamilton and On-Campus Public Transit (will expire at SRA 17Q)
- Anti-Oppression Policy (expired in August 2014)
- Course Selection and Registration (will expire at SRA 17C)
- Deferred Maintenance and Sustainable Growth (expired at 15M)
- Mental Health Policy Paper (will expire at 17C)
- MSU Position Against Gender-Based Violence and Oppression on Campus (expired at 16R)

- Supporting High Quality Classroom Instruction (will expire at 17C)
- Undergraduate Course Management (will expire at 17P)
- University Sustainability (will expire at 17Q)

Ultimately, it will be up to the next Vice President (Education) and SRA to determine which 6 policies are revised or created next term. I have personally noticed some specific gaps in our policy bank: First Generation Students, Student Health, Student Employment & WIL, and Mature Students.

On the feedback form for the Policy Conference, I gave eight possible policies (including an Other category) and allowed attendees to pick as many as possible for what they would like to see next year.

<b>Paper</b>	<b>Number of Votes</b>
First Generation Students	6
Health and Wellness	5
Women and Trans Students	5
Supporting High Quality Classroom Instruction	7
Undergraduate Course Management	3
Deferred Maintenance and Sustainable Growth	4
Student Employment & WIL	9
Mature and Non-traditional students	3

In order to ensure the successful continuation of Policy Con, I am proposing changes to Bylaw 3 today that would make it mandatory for SRA members to attend. As well, I have proposed changes to the Education and Advocacy Department that outline the policy process.

### **Education Team Restructuring**

I am bringing forward comprehensive changes to the Education team through edits to Operating Policy - Education and Advocacy Department. For more details on why and what these changes are, please see the attached memo for a comprehensive analysis. Shaarujaa and I have also been working on Job Descriptions and Job Questionnaires for the new positions. This has been a long-term project with a lot of behind the scenes work, so I am excited to bring it forward to the Assembly.

### **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 in both terms, a successful first ever Wikithon, a big course evaluations campaign (with another to come), and several blog posts about how to study best. This term the service has focused on running smaller Wikithons with program societies, its annual Teaching Awards ceremony, and creating its resource hub. Thank you to all of those who were involved this year.

### **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 (University-specific)**

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. With Ryan and Lilian, we amended Diversity's OP

and Indigenous Affairs Executive job description at Executive Board to ensure that the service is reaching out to all Indigenous student groups on campus.

### **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!*

**Additionally, at the time I'm writing this report, the Advocacy Street Team is running a campaign to encourage students to use re-useable bottles rather than single use plastic water-bottles.**

### **Budget Submission**

**Unfortunately, we were unable to complete the budget submission this year due to unforeseen events with staff. However, we have compiled information on the following topics for next year's team:**

- **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

### **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.

### **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 General Assemblies**

We focused our hiring efforts this year on ensuring that delegates were equipped to comment on policy statements. This involved editing policy statements from papers coming to GA, and sending them out in advance to delegates to comment on in the interview. We also sent out all knowledge-based questions in advance to ensure fairness in the interviews.

In the Fall GA, we passed three papers: Ancillary Fees, Rural & Northern Students, and Sexual Violence Prevention and Response. The latter was essentially a new policy to OUSA, and I was proud to have our University Affairs Commissioner, Megan Hsu, as an author on the paper.

In the Spring GA, we again passed three papers: A Comprehensive Access Strategy, International Education, and Housing, Transit, and Community Development. The final policy was a new one to OUSA's policy bank and will now allow us to lobby to the province on issues affecting students in their municipalities. As well, David Lee, our Bylaws and Procedures Commissioner was an author on International Education and I am so proud of his contributions!

Again, you can find all of these policies in full at [ousa.ca/policies](http://ousa.ca/policies).

### **(Vice) President (Education)'s Page**

Now that the year is coming to a close, I can feel good reporting about this. There have been 23 President's pages this year, of which I have authored 13 (over half!). Hence I have earned my nickname, "The girl in the Sil". It feels good.

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Topic</b>
March 30	Participatory budgeting (SLEF and Ward 1)
March 23	VP and Speaker Elections
March 17	General Assembly
March 9	Valedictorian Nominations
February 16	Policy Conference
February 2	Teaching Awards
January 26	Boxed Water at UM

January 12	Municipal Advocacy Week
December 1	Provincial Advocacy Week
November 24	WIL (OUSA campaign)
November 17	Federal Advocacy Week
October 20	Policy Conference
September 22	OUSA General Assembly Applications

## **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 with regards to experiential education and work integrated learning
- Our Hamilton Post Secondary Advisory Group, where we lobby Ted McMeekin on provincial issues. This term, the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Development, Deb Matthews joined us in our meeting, which was a huge accomplishment due to successful government relations work. In this meeting, we focused on:
  - Funding for more essential student services, particularly OSDs
  - The need for more work-integrated learning opportunities
  - Sexual violence prevention at Universities
- OUSA steering committee meetings
- PiHED is coming up next week!
- Working with OUSA on a submission for the Futuring initiative that the COU is doing - we are also attending a COU event on April 5

In addition, I can't speak on this in my report, but I do know of an announcement coming from MAESD soon in relation to one of our priorities. Keep an eye out for this in the coming weeks!

## **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 intervention
  - 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.

On March 22, the federal budget was released. The budget included \$90M over the next two years into the PSSSP, which we have been

advocating on all year (see above, or my federal advocacy week report). It is a huge win to see this investment into the program.

### **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, while Stephanie, the Community Engagement Coordinator, has been sitting on the community-engaged education working group.

### **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. In the future, I believe it would be worth it to explore membership on the Ainslie Wood Community Associate (AWCA) as well.

### **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. 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**

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

We have had issues this term regarding transit in Ward 1 (I'm sure most of you saw my tweets) with Council considering reducing the frequency of the 51, 52, 5A, and 5C busses. Happy to report that this will not be happening this year. Let me know if you would like further information, as I have been in contact with both Aidan's office and the HSR's office on this.

### **Board of Directors**

Sometimes I do things just as a board member, and not as the Vice President Education. As I mentioned in my foreword, this has particularly been the case this term with the absence of many other board members. In fact, I am the longest standing BoD member for 2016-17 with a *full* 52 weeks under my belt! Below are some general things I've been working on as a BoD member, feel free to ask me if you have any additional questions.

- Hiring for Part Time Manager positions - SHEC, QSCC, Macademics
- Hiring for SOP positions - Campus Events Office Manager, Communications Officer
- Hiring Full-time staff - Underground Media and Design Manager
- Full-time wage reviews for various positions
- State of the Union - video, event, etc.
- Acting in a super cool video to promote the referenda in January
- President's Page (in the earlier section)
- Meeting interested candidates for my position, and meeting candidates for the other BoD positions
- MSU & You radio show - Brockville news!
- Presenting to the Assembly on the MSU's Harassment Policy
- Admin Con - updating the University administration with what we're doing
- Sitting on various awards committees within the University (President's award, MUFA Award, etc.)

- Sitting on the Ombuds Management Team
- General support to PTMs/part-time staff while other BoD members were away

### **Valedictorian Awards**

This was way more work than I expected, but finally Valedictorian nominations have closed. I coordinated with faculty offices, students, MAPS, and the GSA to set up selections committees and interviews will start this coming week. We promoted widely through our social media and President's page.

### **For Ward 1**

The Participatory Budgeting in Ward 1 is opening on Monday. In December, we encouraged students to submit ideas via our "Cupcakes for Community Change" event. This term, we'll be encouraging students to vote through pop-up events and a big social media push. You'll actually be able to vote in Union Market! Hoping to see a lot of student input in this cycle.

### **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 has several meetings in April, in which many decisions will be made regarding course evaluations.

### **Strategic Mandate Agreement**

I have spoken to the Provost and President regarding the SMA, however the timeline has been delayed and it will likely be on the next VP Education to provide student input on the SMA. However, I have been in contact with Allison Sekuler, the Strategic Advisor to President, Vice Presidents about engaging McMaster students in the futuring initiative and using that feedback for McMaster's SMA, which I think is a good idea.

## **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!