



# REPORT

*From the office of the...*

## **SRA University Affairs Commissioner**

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TO: Members of the Student Representative Assembly  
FROM: Megan Hsu, University Affairs Commissioner  
SUBJECT: End of Year Report  
DATE: Sunday, March 26, 2017

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Hi fellow assembly members,

I am happy to report on all of the work that the UA Committee has done this year. Reflecting on the progress that we have made, I am so proud of the growth that I have witnessed in my committee members. Thank you to all of you for growing with me and working on these policies. I hope you have all gotten a meaningful experience from this year and I hope you continue to stay engaged with the UA Committee, whatever form it may take in the future.

### **PROGRESS ON YEAR PLAN**

#### **Project Committees**

Over the summer, I released an online survey for my Committee members to fill out to indicate which projects they were interested in working on this year. I have received feedback from most of my committee members and I have seen additional interest from new members who have recently joined the committee, which is very exciting. Throughout September, the committee has been functioning on the bi-weekly schedule that I proposed in my year plan. Based on feedback from committee members, this schedule has been effective in order for us to focus on projects and also stay updated with all of the projects happening on the Committee.

#### **Sexual and Gender Diversity Policy - Complete**

In first term, the UA Committee completed the Sexual and Gender Diversity Policy. Over the summer, I worked closely with Aly Khalifa, the Part-time Manager of the QSCC, to discuss the overall vision of the paper and student engagement. I invited Aly and members of the QSCC exec to join the University

Affairs Committee in a Think Tank to discuss an overall outline of the paper. For reference, we used the OUSA LGBTQ Policy paper and OUSA survey to help guide our direction. This Think Tank included UA policy Authors, the UA Research Assistant, members of the QSCC executive, the Community Engagement Coordinator and myself. Together, we laid out the multiple sections of the paper.

In the following week, I reached out to the WGEN Coordinator, Lainey, to discuss the outline of the policy paper. We also ran focus groups this week with a combination of facilitators from the QSCC as well as the UA Authors. In conjunction with the focus groups, we included an online survey available through the QSCC website for students who were unable to attend focus groups. Focus groups and the online survey were promoted through physical posters, online social media presence, and TV screens around campus.

During reading week, I checked in with my authors to discuss their progress on their Principles, Recommendations and Concerns. I hope to provide them with support on their sections through research and analysis of the feedback that we received from the online survey. To ensure that authors were prepared to write the policy, I held individual meetings with each of the authors as well as summarized the feedback that we received into an easy-to-read document. The policy passed at the second last SRA meeting of first term. This paper included topics like:

- Gender neutral washrooms and gym facilities
- Training for faculty
- Course content
- Health promotion and connection to the broader McMaster environment
- Gender neutral residence options
- Residence training, programming and room change policies
- Name changes on official documents
- Space and support resources

Thank you to my UA Authors - Alex, Sandy, Eric, David and Desmond who have been working hard to contribute to the Think Tank, run focus groups and listen to student feedback. Thank you to Aly and the executive at the QSCC for being a pleasure to work with and always supporting the progress of this project!

### **Food Security Policy - Complete**

This term, UA worked on the food security policy along with our stakeholders. We have been working on this policy in collaboration with Mac Bread Bin and Mac Farmstand since the summer as well. In collaboration with Mac Bread Bin, we ran the Food Security Forum in early January to get feedback on four main

topics, which will be the main pieces of our policy. We focused on food affordability, accessibility, transparency, and local food services. For those who were unable to attend the Food Security Forum, we also ran an online Food Security Survey. We received a large amount of responses – we received over 100 responses. In order to get lots of responses, we offered a chance to win a free Good Food Box and the winner has been selected and emailed. I went through this data and completed my analysis of the data. This data was really helpful in our research process and I would encourage the next UA Commissioner or Research assistant to be familiar with excel because it is very helpful in the surveys that we run.

I also partnered with Mac Farmstand on this policy. I met with stakeholders from the Office of Sustainability, Hospitality Services, Mac Farmstand and the MSU President to discuss the incorporation of local food into our Food Security Policy. Over the summer, these stakeholders worked on a Local Food Initiative document that we incorporated into our policy. It is important for our advocacy efforts to see partnership with university stakeholders and it is exciting to see buy-in from the university.

For this policy, I completed the research for the UA authors. Before the winter break, I asked authors to compile a list of research questions for their sections. Over the winter break, I put together a research package for the authors. Throughout the term, I also expanded on this research package to continue to support the authors.

At the MSU Policy Conference, we received a lot of meaningful feedback and I was happy to engage with that process. We made a lot of changes based on this feedback with the biggest change being the incorporation of three options for Paradise catering. This policy was brought forward at the last SRA meeting and has been approved.

Thank you to the authors and collaborators of this project – David, Alex, Eric, Urszula, Preethi, Veronica and Kaitlyn. In its final form, this policy included topics like:

- Food prices
- Paradise catering
- Ingredient transparency
- On-campus and off-campus meal plan
- Local food sourcing
- Climate survey
- Educating students on combatting food insecurity
- Dietary restrictions

## **OPSSS Review - Complete**

This project was on my year plan because I had hoped to conduct a comprehensive review of the data that we received from the Ontario Post-Secondary Student Survey that was conducted by OUSA last year. This survey provides important insight to lots of our post-secondary education issues and had a higher response rate than almost any of our surveys with over 2000 responses from McMaster students.

This report was brought forward to the SRA a few meetings ago where I presented the findings. This document touched on topics like:

- International students
- Indigenous student
- Student financial aid
- Credit transfers
- Work-integrated learning

These issues are important in the current political landscape and I hope advocacy efforts moving forward are shaped by the results of this data based on all the student feedback we received. In collaboration with OUSA home office staff, we were able to gather the McMaster specific data and create this report.

We experienced a bit of a delay in this project in first term as some authors on the UA Committee had dropped their seat and hence, dropped this project. I want to thank certain members of UA who stepped up to help – thank you Urszula, Eric, Alex, Andrew and Katie for helping this project.

This was a project that was on my platform for UA and I hope it shapes advocacy efforts moving forward as it draws to light some of the important issues that students are faced with today.

## **EFRT Budget Submission - Complete**

This project has been one of the most challenging. I have expressed at this assembly multiple times the challenges that I have faced. I am happy to report that this project is now complete. Although we will not be submitting a budget submission for the 2016-2017 year, I hope that this will be incorporated in the 2017-2018 budget submission with the next Board of Directors and Education team.

This project is to outline the importance of the EFRT and the responsibility of the university to more significantly contribute to its financial stability. In this document, I outline a few key arguments for the university to cover the budget of the EFRT. Specifically, I use research from other first response teams across Ontario to highlight key differences and trends in decreased funding for these

first response teams. I also break down the budget of the EFRT in order to analyze the largest areas of spending and how decreased and unstable funding will be unsustainable in the long run.

This was the most challenging project but I have learned a lot from it. Thank you to Genya and Aryan for your data collection and research. I appreciate the help and I can certainly say that this would not have been possible without the two of you.

### **Extended Library Hours - Complete**

This project ended up taking a different direction than I had originally thought and after my two years on the assembly, I realize that this is often the case. Early in the year, Blake and I met with head librarians about this project to extend the library hours in Thode. We were provided with a quote of \$5,000 per term to extend the library hours to 3 am from Sunday to Thursday starting after reading week.

From here, I worked with Blake to try to find funding. We explored many avenues including the Student Life Enhancement Fund, the faculty societies and the MSU. I brought this idea up to the Academic Affairs Council as well with all the VP Academics of the faculty societies.

I met with the MES and MSS president in hopes of finding funding for this term. We discussed our proposal at the Presidents Council meetings with the different presidents and I have followed up via email. We received some responses with contributions to the project but it was not enough to cover the costs associated with this project.

We tried to make this project a reality this term in the short run but due to communication barriers with the librarians and slow response times, we were unable to find a time that works for all of us.

However, to ensure implementation in the following year, members of the UA committee and I worked on an application to the Science Initiative Fund (SIF) to secure funding for the following year. We submitted a rough copy for feedback. Based on this feedback, we made revisions to the application and we are expecting to hear back in the middle of April. Hopefully, this funding will ensure extended Thode hours for the following year.

For their work on this project, I would like to thank Urszula, David, Eric and Desmond for your contributions to the SIF Application.

In order to make our plan more sustainable for future years, I have been working with incoming MSS President-elect and MES President-elect to ensure this is a

focus for future years. I also hope this will be a priority for the next UA Commissioner because it will be their role to carry this work forward.

### **Health Services Review – In progress/Incomplete**

The Health Services review project is the only project that I will be unable to complete within my time as UA Commissioner. Early in the summer, I reached out to the SHEC Coordinator, Sutina, and the Services Commissioner, Kevan, to collaborate on this project. We developed a direction and set of questions for this survey.

A large delay in this project also came from scheduling conflicts. We struggled to find a time to meet with Michael Wooder to perfect the survey questions. This was delayed into second term before we could find a time that worked for all of us. From this meeting, we decided that the best course of action was to meet with partners from the Student Wellness Centre (SWC) to answer some of our questions about their operations. However, we had some difficulty in getting a response from the SWC and we asked the VP Education to help out with getting in contact with them. I hope this is a priority for the next VP Education, Education team and UA Commissioner because this is an important area of student life that remains to be thoroughly worked on.

This evaluation should include training, pregnancy testing, blood tests, long-term nutrition, counsellors, confidentiality satisfaction, medical prescription/referrals and sexual violence response.

### **Academic Services Review - Complete**

Over the summer, I discussed this new project with the Macademics Part-Time Manager, Rohoma. We collaborated on this project with the Macademics team. We had a planning meeting where we met to set a structure for the project as well as set some deadlines.

In collaboration with the Macademics exec team, UA Committee members and the Macademics PTM, we released a survey to facilitate student feedback on current satisfaction with our academic services that are provided by the university. After feedback meetings with Michael Wooder, we made revisions to the survey questions. This survey was released earlier this month and I have completed the data analysis and report for this survey, which will be presented at this SRA meeting.

This project included reviews of the following topics:

- SSC improvements (transition into and out of university, stream-based workshops, peer tutoring network model)
- Academic advising

- Blended learning models
- Inquiry-based courses
- Podcasted courses
- Effectiveness of tutorials
- Student satisfaction with TA's
- Library services satisfaction
- Course evaluation process

Since this project took place at the end of my term and we were working with a short timeline, unfortunately, I did not have the flexibility to empower committee members to work on this project. However, I hope that the results from this report are carefully evaluated in the future to expand on this work and make changes based on the student feedback we received.

For their contributions to this project, I'd like to thank the Macademics team, especially Rohoma. Thank you for working on the survey questions and the survey with me on a shorter timeline than we expected but we got it done in the end!

## **UPCOMING EVENTS, PROJECTS & ACTIVITIES**

End of the year – no more upcoming projects! The last thing that I will be doing this term is a volunteer appreciation event for my committee members for all of the work that they have contributed to the progress of advocacy this year.

## **CURRENT CHALLENGES**

### **Time constraints**

As you can see, there were a lot of projects that were done by the UA Committee this year. It is unreasonable to expect commissioners to complete this work in 6 hours per week. Even a commitment to the MSU Policy conference exceeds the 6-hour commitment. I am excited to see some much needed changes in this structure moving forward.

### **SRA Supervision**

It was incredibly frustrating this year to be supervised by the SRA. As commissioners, we put a lot of work into the projects that we do and it is a common complaint that the SRA does not do a good enough job of holding our commissioners accountable. However, it should also be noted that we don't do enough to recognize the work that our commissioners do and the hours that are put in. I hope revisions to this structure may change and improve this appreciation and supervision aspect of the job.

## **UA Research Assistant**

As mentioned in the EFRT Budget Submission, one of the continued challenges I faced throughout the year was the University Affairs Research Assistant. In working with this individual, I have had trouble getting in contact with them, which has led to significant challenges with completing some projects.

## **VOLUNTEERS (Commissioners only)**

Volunteer management has been successful this past year with the implementation of a changed structure. We had bi-weekly meetings as an entire committee with focused meetings during the other weeks so that we could focus on making progress on the specific projects. Although we have experienced some setbacks with volunteer retention for attendance purposes, I am so fortunate to have a few very committed volunteers. The work we have accomplished this year reflect more on the success of these volunteers than on myself. If I can help my volunteers succeed in the future, please reach out and let me know.

## **SUCSESSES**

### **MSU Policy Conference**

This year, the MSU Policy conference was a success. We engaged students with the policy writing process and I think authors and student contributors had a much more meaningful experience as a result. This success really goes out to Blake and Sandy for their work on the conference. It has been meaningful as a commissioner to engage with this conference and I am glad to see this implemented in the MSU. We have made significant changes to the policies based on feedback from students.

### **OUSA General Assembly**

This year, I had the opportunity to attend both OUSA General Assemblies. I would strongly recommend anyone who is interested in post-secondary education issues to apply to this opportunity. I have seen so many people (myself included) fall in love with policy and PSE from this event and it has been one of the most meaningful experiences I've had at McMaster. Specifically, at the last GA, I had the opportunity to fight for the MSU stance on international students with the fellow delegates. Sad to see this be my last GA but grateful that I had these past three GA's to contribute to OUSA policy.

## **Completion of projects**

As you can see from above, there are a lot of projects that we have completed this year on UA. I consider all of these projects to be a success. None of these projects came smoothly and without challenges and I am proud to say that the committee as a whole contributed to these successes.

## **OTHER**

### **UA Commissioner**

Many people who are interested in UA Commissioner have already reached out to me which is awesome to see. If you are interested in university issues and want some insight into the role, please reach out! Every year, the commissioner role is a little different and I think that is one of the coolest things about the position. You can make it your own and work on projects that you are passionate about. Let me know if you're interested and I'd be happy to answer any questions!

If you have any questions about this report, I look forward to answering them!

Cheers and thanks for a great year,

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