

YEAR PLAN
MSU Horizons Conference
Christine Yachouh
2017-2018
(submitted June 18)



OFFICE OF THE HORIZONS CONFERENCE COORDINATOR INTRODUCTION

Hello,

My name is Christine Yachouh and I will be the Horizons Conference Coordinator for 2017. I am extremely excited to plan this conference since my first experience with it in the summer of 2014 as a conference staff member. I continued to be a staff member for the 2015 conference as well, and I am looking forward to building on the success of the 2016 conference to make Horizons 2017 the best conference yet.

This year, Horizons will be celebrating its 15th anniversary as a service. As such, this year will represent the progress and growth the conference has experienced since its first year, and the huge potential to improve our programming to be the most effective and valuable for the delegate transition, and staff experience.

In this year plan, you'll find a large number of goals that stem from my past experience with the Horizons Conference, as well as my planning team experience with the CLAY Conference. Though they have very different goals, I believe there is a lot the two can learn from each other. I look forward to implementing clear protocols, processes and expectations to maximize our efficiency. I hope to be more thoughtful with our events and sessions programming to ensure delegates are learning at all times and able to have apply their learning to social settings over the weekend. I am excited to incorporate the Hamilton community in our conference programming to allow delegates to become more comfortable with venturing off-campus and exploring all this city has to offer them. Finally, I hope to create a structure to keep conference connections consistent throughout the academic year.

I am always open to feedback and your opinions. If you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact me via email at horizons@msu.mcmaster.ca.

Warm Regards,

Christine Yachouh
MSU Horizons Conference Coordinator

GOALS

Objective 1	<i>EXECUTIVE RESTRUCTURING</i>
Description	To create two positions exclusive to sponsorship and fundraising, re-name and change the responsibilities of the Publications Coordinator, removing the External Relations position and to make the roles clearer to improve understanding and accountability (last updated in 2013). Also adding LD roles to the Fundraising and Sponsorship Coordinators and Sessions Coordinators.
Benefits	To increase sponsorship and fundraising dollars by having a larger team of dedicated executives to that task, and create more organization amongst the team
Difficulties	Increasing the size of the team may make management more difficult
Long-term implications	Reflection must be done at the end of conference to see the impact of the new positions on Conference planning and to see if the structure should stay this way long-term.
How?	Working with the MSU HR Coordinator and editing the job descriptions, and getting them approved by the Executive Board.
Partners	Executive Board and MSU HR Coordinator

Objective 2	<i>COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT</i>
Description	Increasing the number of community partners at Successfest, improving the “place” session, hosting an off-campus event during conference, and booking a local professional for our guest speaker.
Benefits	Students aren’t just coming to study at McMaster, they are also coming to Hamilton. Students should learn about the McMaster community and grow comfortable with the Hamilton community to be exposed to all the opportunities available to them as an undergraduate student.
Difficulties	Community partners will likely have limited availability because the conference takes place in the middle of summer when most people are on vacation. Logistics for a downtown event will also be very different from one on campus and we will need to do extra preparation. Finding a place for 270 people downtown may also be a challenge.
Long-term implications	N/A

How?	Reaching out to community partners early to check their availability. Brainstorming with executive members potential places we can take the conference, checking availability and asking for quotes. Finding transportation to and from the off-campus location. Finding a speaker with a message that resonates with the Horizons Conference themes and goals.
Partners	Events Executives, Volunteer and Logistics Executive, VP Finance, community partners

Objective 3	<i>INCREASE OUTREACH</i>
Description	Since Horizons is a summer service, it strongly relies on social media to promote opportunities. This year, I'd like to advertise those opportunities earlier so that students may hear about it while on campus.
Benefits	Expanding our outreach to those who may not follow us on social media can attract new potential staff members and showcase another opportunity to get involved with the MSU.
Difficulties	The planning team will still be transitioning and it will be difficult to organize an event or other programming to achieve outreach beyond posters. This poster cost has also never been incurred in past years and will be an additional cost for conference this year.
Long-term implications	N/A
How?	Working with my Media and Design Coordinator and coordinating with the MSU Communications Officer to ensure designs meet MSU standards. Posters will then be printed and posted by MSU Underground.
Partners	MSU Communications Officer Media and Design Coordinator MSU Underground Media and Design

Objective 3	<i>INCREASING ACCOUNTABILITY OF STAFF</i>
Description	Developing a staff contract for conference, similar to those contracts signed by Welcome Week representatives, and to implement a staff performance review.
Benefits	There is currently no performance review system for the conference services, and past part-time managers almost never involved in hiring the new executive and/or volunteers with the incoming part-time manager, so there is no insight on past performance notes for returning conference staff. This system will support staff throughout the weekend,

	provide accountability for staff, and inform next-year's Horizons team of past-staff performance when hiring.
Difficulties	Unlike other MSU services, conference is three days long which means our volunteers are only working intensively for 3 full-days versus moderately over an academic term/year. The amount of time to assess performance is limited, and the executive team is not always present when staff are working to observe their performance (ie. In sessions).
Long-term implications	This performance review will be the most impactful for hiring in the future if it is adopted by both MSU conferences.
How?	Consulting with MSU Services that already have performance reviews to determine questions and considerations for creating this. Including a mandatory feedback form which includes peer reviews in the staff contract, and finding time to do reviews in the conference schedule.
Partners	Volunteer and Logistics Coordinator, SHEC Coordinator, MSU HR Coordinator

Objective 4	<i>IMPROVING THE SET EXPERIENCE</i>
Description	Giving SET more leadership during the conference weekend when planning events, and making the conference experience levelled out for these team members.
Benefits	Improving the quality of the volunteer experience for SET members.
Difficulties	SET members can only do so much under the direction of the Events Coordinator and there is not enough money in the budget to provide them all with radios to take greater leadership.
Long-term implications	N/A
How?	Giving the conference logistics team (Coordinator, Volunteer and Logistics Coordinator, Events Coordinators and SET) a different coloured shirt than LDs and delegates. Giving SET greater responsibility with Hamilton programming and logistics. Work with Events Coordinators to discuss management of the SET team.
Partners	Events Coordinators

Objective 5	<i>CREATING NEW PARTNERSHIPS</i>
Description	Reaching out to organizations and creating long-term partnerships to support the Horizons Conference.
Benefits	Consistency year-to-year from partnership benefits, and making the partnership mutually beneficial.

Difficulties	Finding new partners who align with conference values/want to engage with students.
Long-term implications	Partnerships can be strained with transition over time as new Coordinators and executives enter these positions. This will be mitigated by sending thank-you notes and briefing the incoming coordinator of these partnerships and past expectations and working relationships.
How?	Find out what partnerships already happen with other MSU services, on and off-campus groups, and reach out to those groups and find a mutually beneficial partnership.
Partners	LIFT Church Tourism Hamilton The Student Success Center McMaster Student Recruitment Office Executive Team

Objective 6	<i>LEARNING BY EXAMPLE- IMPROVING TRAINING</i>
Description	The quality of training has been inconsistent between staff positions in the past. This year, I would like to ensure all conference staff are being adequately trained on all aspects of their role, with a good balance of team bonding and socializing.
Benefits	A more thorough, experiential and problem-based learning staff training will result in a more prepared, stronger staff team to be successful in their roles come conference weekend.
Difficulties	Extra time will need to go into planning this training and all executive members will need to take leadership on different aspects of the training and assist in facilitation at times.
Long-term implications	N/A
How?	Working with MSU Diversity Services to include an activity for staff to apply their learning. Training Media SET by preparing them with the programs and equipment they will be using, the shots they will need and the video they will produce. Training SET members by walking them through event venues for conference, walking through set-up and take-down, and assigning tasks based on interests and strengths. Training sessions thoroughly and by including tips on adaptations and variations of sessions.
Partners	MSU Diversity Services Conference Planning Team TRRA

Objective 7	<i>ADAPTABLE SESSIONS</i>
Description	Sessions have typically been designed to run in a specific way. This year, sessions will include extra activities and tips in order to adapt sessions to cater to your specific session group while still achieving the session goals.
Benefits	LDs will be more confident in their sessions facilitation and delegates will be more comfortable participating in sessions while still reaping the benefits of sessions.
Difficulties	These new activities and tips/tricks adaptations will take up more space in the staff manual and will lead to increased printing costs.
Long-term implications	N/A
How?	Work with Sessions Coordinators to give feedback on sessions and brainstorm ways to adapt them for various types of delegates and sessions group dynamics. Work to include them briefly in staff sessions manuals and incorporate these points in training.
Partners	Sessions Executives MSU Diversity Services

Objective 8	<i>INCREASE FUNDRAISING EFFORTS</i>
Description	In the past, Horizons has raised most of its external funding through internal sponsorship. This year, I would like to experiment with fundraising in order to decrease delegate registration costs.
Benefits	There are creative ways we can execute this that could be successful, and decreased delegate costs provides access to a greater number of incoming students.
Difficulties	Horizons operates in the summer where it is difficult to host anything on-campus.
Long-term implications	N/A
How?	Work with Textbooks for Change to run a Horizons Textbooks Drive to raise money for conference. Also consider pizza sales during exam season.
Partners	Textbooks for Change Sponsorship and Fundraising Coordinators Lava Pizza

Objective 9	<i>STRENGTHEN FACULTY PROGRAMMING</i>
Description	At Horizons 2014, delegates had the opportunity to participate in Faculty tours where they toured buildings, spoke with faculty societies and/or faculty reps, and asked questions to upper years and mingled with their classmates. I would like to bring back this programming to Horizons 2017.
Benefits	Delegates will be able to build meaningful relationships with students in their program, ask specific questions to upper years in their program, and become more comfortable on campus and with their choice of program come September.
Difficulties	Delegate numbers across faculties will not be equal which makes planning how many reps difficult. The programming is also co-organized by faculties and Events Coordinators, so expectations will need to be clear and communication will need to be regular.
Long-term implications	N/A
How?	Working with Events Coordinators to contact Faculty Society Presidents to coordinate programming to occur during Friday-day of Conference.
Partners	Events Coordinators Faculty Society Presidents and Welcome Week Planners

Objective 10	<i>STRENGTHEN PARALLEL PROGRAMMING</i>
Description	Parallel programming is what has happened in the past while the Toga Night dance party was happening. In the past delegates have had the choice between the dance party in 1280, or painting/board games in Clubspace. This year, I'd like to reduce the physical separation of the activities and put a greater effort into non-dance portion of the night.
Benefits	Logistics will be easier to coordinate with all of us in the same space, and delegates will have more activities to choose from so that they are more likely to find something they would enjoy to make their night more fun.
Difficulties	There are not a lot of spaces that are near each other that can accommodate the number of staff and students participating in Horizons. Improving parallel programming has the potential to increase cost. Using more space may mean it is not MSU space and may also increase the cost of operating the conference.
Long-term implications	N/A

How?	Brainstorm ideas with the Events Coordinators and find spaces close to CIBC Hall and 1280 (where the dance party may take place) to limit the physical separation of programming.
Partners	1280 MUSC Administration Events Coordinators

Objective 11	<i>RE-INTRODUCE POST-CONFERENCE PROGRAMMING</i>
Description	In the past, delegates wrote letters to themselves in their last session, which the planning team keeps until March. In March there was an end-of-year hurrah and delegates were able to collect their letters and reflect on their contents. I would like to introduce this component, and more events to create formal opportunities for staff to check-in with delegates and for delegates to reconnect post-conference. I would like to
Benefits	Staff are not pressured to keep searching for times that work for their groups to check-in and socialize since there are formal opportunities to do so. We are able to provide support for delegates and follow-up post-conference. Delegates are able to reconnect and keep in touch.
Difficulties	Logistics for these events need to be done in advance and told to staff and delegates by the end of conference. My planning team and I will also be done with our formal positions but will need to be available to still facilitate these Horizons reunions.
Long-term implications	N/A
How?	Complete EOHSS and room bookings now. Evaluate budget at the end of conference to try and get snacks or something to serve at these events.
Partners	Planning Team VP Admin for EOHSS

GOALS to strive for

- Build on past conference success to make this the best experience for staff and delegates
- Make the best use of the resources that we have
- Explore new ways to enhance the Horizons Conference and keep momentum going after July

Master Summary

February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create budget with the VP finance • Begin researching community partners • Contact Textbooks for Change for fundraiser • Change Job Descriptions • Advertise Planning Team positions
March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hire Planning Team • Train and transition planning team • Textbooks for Change Fundraiser • Change LD and SET job descriptions
April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete Year Plan • Ask for “year plans” for planning team members • Launch staff applications • Launch staff application promo
May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekly Exec Meetings begin • Begin reaching out to community and campus partners • Complete Sponsorship package and disseminate • Prepare for Delegate Registration • Prepare for May at Mac
June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare for staff hiring • Finalize sessions • Finalize events • Preparing conference logistics
July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare conference training • Finalize conference details • Confirm partnerships with partners • Conference • Pay for services
August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflection and feedback

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Transition Reporting• Manage clothing sale
September	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Nigh Before Classes event• Distribute clothing sale items
January	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Welcome Back Reunion
March	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• End of Year Reunion with Conference Letters