Community engagement has been a growing topic at McMaster over recent years. Guided as a priority through Patrick Deane’s Forward with Integrity letter, the Office of Community Engagement has grown in meaningful ways that have connected students to Hamilton. With the creation of the interdisciplinary minor in community engagement, the launch of CityLAB, the McMaster Research Shop, along with the many clubs on campus who work in the community, McMaster and Hamilton are becoming increasingly integrated.

The MSU and the Office of Community Engagement have numerous partnerships, with various student-driven initiatives leading the way.

One way that students are able to engage with Hamilton is through Change Camp. Launched in 2014 through the MSU, Change Camp has acted as an avenue to connect students throughout Hamilton to community members in order to generate ideas targeted at building a better community. Since then, it has grown into an initiative that incorporates McMaster University, Mohawk College, Redeemer University College, the City of Hamilton, and several social organizations in the city. Change Camp fosters collaboration and understanding between students and the community. Personally, my experiences with Change Camp furthered my investment in Hamilton’s social and economic development. The ways in which the community values student input, combined with how we collectively care about the future of our city, has made this event a continued success.

We are moving beyond idea generation and into action

This year, Change Camp is focused on neighbourhood development. With five pre-selected community projects, we are moving beyond idea generation and into action. This year, the themes are Food Insecurity, Transportation, Community Print Shop, Affordable Housing, and Space Animation. These student and community identified themes have the ability to address key issues in Hamilton that affect all of us. Whether it is the presence of food deserts, increased rental prices, the prevalence of empty storefronts throughout the city, or better transit - there are a multitude of ways for students to become involved in our community. I encourage you to take advantage of them.

McMaster and the MSU provide ample opportunities, but there are even more throughout Hamilton or whichever city you call home. The important thing to remember, is that change always begins with an idea.

Fantastic community building ideas will be discussed at Change Camp, taking place on September 25 at 5:30pm. Visit changecamphamilton.com for registration and event details.