

The McMaster Students Union

PRESIDENT'S PAGE



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As midterm season slowly fades away like a bad dream, students knowingly or unknowingly enter into an unspoken season on campus. Though, that seasonal change has nothing to do with the colour of leaves, nor the temperature outside. No announcements are made and papers aren't due. To those aware of the process, this season is known as *presidentials*. 'Tis the season of coffee dates in MUSC and private hikes in Cootes. It is the season of unsolicited Facebook likes and reconnecting with old acquaintances. The news will probably drop about half way through the latté your friend bought you.

This is the season of the electoral cycle beginning to renew itself. Change is an obvious and inevitable song on the lips of several hundred Marauders. Presidential aspirants begin to organize students under their banners, as

student leaders across campus gear up to change the face of the MSU.

For students who would consider taking on such a task, first of all, I applaud you. Second, I respectfully suggest that there are two fundamental questions to ask yourself. Are you interested in serving McMaster students through the presidency of the student union? Are you qualified to do so? If you answer 'yes' to the former, than your answer to the latter is inconsequential. Dedication *is* the qualification for this role. Unfortunately, responses to the question of qualification range on a noticeably gendered spectrum. Men and individuals who have lived most of their lives with unacknowledged advantage are much quicker to respond affirmatively to this question.

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Frankly, I doubt any of us know a young twenty-something *qualified* to oversee the affairs of a \$16 million operation, boasting three dozen distinct service offerings, alongside and simultaneous to a robust advocacy wing. For this, there are thirty-seven seasoned full-time staff capable of running such an operation. The questions that deserve more exploring by potential candidates are: *Why do you care about your communities? What are you willing to do about it? How much are you willing to sacrifice to ensure the people you care about are supported?*

As you prepare for this season you must hold this truth in your gut - your identity, your relationships, and your experiences are valid. Whatever community you come from, whatever your background, these are wells from which you can pull, to claim your strength, and build resilience as you take on this arduous task. Campaigns are a public performance of self, while the role of the politician is public service. The point is not how well you can fake being a politician during a campaign, or fake being a happy, perfect person with all the right answers. It really is a question of how comfortable you are being yourself when more people are watching. It is less about putting on a show, and more of a demonstration of how prepared you are to be the

best version of yourself. Which, I believe, should include all of your awkwardness and your charm.

Campaigns do not test your popularity, but they will test your relationships. They ask everyone you have ever spoken to or interacted with to give an account of their experience with you. People remember how you treated them, how you make them feel, and if they felt a genuine connection with you. When you ask for help, how many of your friends will leave their priorities to come support you? What do the people in your class think about the

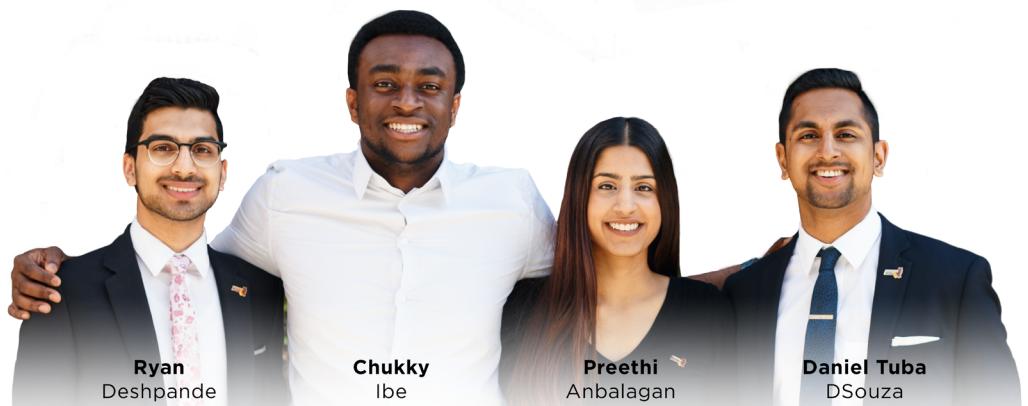
way you ask and answer questions? These are fair indicators of whether or not people who do not yet know you, would put their trust in you. How strong

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are your relationships, and will these people vouch for you in the public sphere?

In any jurisdiction, resources are finite and priorities compete. Democracy is the political mechanism by which a populous engages in the process of decision making. Consider engaging with the McMaster Students Union and contesting for the presidency. Take on this responsibility, or support someone who will. In the same vein, be fully aware of the burden you choose for yourself. Campaigning and the subsequent leadership responsibility will prove arduous. But know this - you are qualified. The nomination period for MSU President typically begins in December. Campaigning and voting will take place in mid-to-late January.

For those looking to engage in other aspects of the MSU's democratic structure, there is a by-election currently underway for seats on the Student Representative Assembly for Social Science and Kinesiology students. Visit msumcmaster.ca for more information about this by-election and other opportunities.



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The President's Page is a space sponsored and used by the McMaster Students Union (MSU) Board of Directors (BoD) to communicate with the student body. It functions to highlight the Board's projects, goals, and agenda for the year, as well as the general happenings of the MSU.