



REPORT

From the office of the...

AVP Provincial & Federal Affairs

TO: Members of the Student Representative Assembly
FROM: Urszula Sitarz, AVP Provincial & Federal Affairs
SUBJECT: SRA 17M Report
DATE: Submitted January 15, 2018

PROGRESS ON YEAR PLAN

Year plan progress has been going quite well so far. For the upcoming OUSA General Assembly delegation hiring, I will be implementing certain changes to delegate training and practices will at GA. These include a larger focus on the proceedings of the weekend, getting into further detail about breakout sessions, and doing more discussion-based practice. We have been making progress with our engagement strategies of local MPs and MPPs, which is difficult due to scheduling but will be very rewarding in improving the MSU's reputation at the provincial and federal levels. The Federal Budget Submission my committee will be completing this term is a great step toward improving our Federal Advocacy through our involvement with UCRU. I was also very happy with how the OPSSS promotion and engagement went and I look forward to the continuation of the Open Educational Resources #textbookbroke campaign.

PAST EVENTS, PROJECTS & ACTIVITIES

In November and December a large focus of the committee was the Ontario Post-Secondary Student Survey, run by OUSA. This was a comprehensive survey of questions related to income, financial aid, tuition, mental health, teaching and learning, experiential education, and safety. We tabled in Thode four times to give out hot chocolate and coffee to students who completed the OPSSS. These events were quite successful, I received really positive feedback from students and committee members.

The week of January 8-12 was our first full week of the Open Education Resources #textbookbroke campaign. Throughout the week we tabled from 10:30am-2:30pm, giving out rave cards, reusable bags, stickers, and information about the campaign and how students can get involved. There was a lot of tweeting and posting with the hashtag from a diverse group of students and the word was spreading throughout campus. We ran a contest during the first week that required students to guess how much a stack of textbooks cost and validating their ballot with a tweet or post with the hashtag. We got a lot of guesses and a lot of volume with the hashtag, I look forward to see what the second week of online campaigning will look like.

With exams and the winter break making up a bulk of the time since I last reported, there has been less direct activity from my committee and I. However, I spent a substantial portion of the exam and break time getting prepared for this term, smoothing out timelines for projects, doing appropriate research, and getting organized to start on the

action as soon as possible. The break was a great time for me to feel properly on my feet with everything.

UPCOMING EVENTS, PROJECTS & ACTIVITIES

The SRA meeting 17M marks the end of the #textbookbroke campaign and this week was heavily focused on online presence. There are two events, one on January 16 and the other on January 18. All Assembly members are greatly encouraged to promote and attend 'Letters to Professors: OERs', which involves tips for all students to reach out to their professors and encourage them to adopt OERs. We are providing students with the resources they need, including information about the eCampus Ontario Open Textbook Library and key points to bring up to professors. This event is from 4-6pm on January 16 in BSB B155. Our other event is focused on faculty and introducing them to OERs, the benefits of them, and the resources currently available on campus and academia. We have eCampus Ontario CEO David Porter coming in to speak to the faculty, as well as people from MacPherson Institute and a highlight of current McMaster professors who use OERs.

OUSA General Assembly applications will be going live around January 26 and will close around February 11. The MSU delegation will include myself, Ryan, Chukky, Stephanie Bertolo, and our MSU President-elect. We will be hiring three delegates to attend the Spring GA at Laurentian University from March 8 – March 11, 2018.

I am currently authoring the MSU Sexual Violence Prevention & Response policy this term. We had our Think Tank on January 10 which was very productive and insightful, I greatly appreciate the work that WGEN has and will continue to contribute. I believe this policy will be very challenging but I welcome that challenge as this policy will create great changes to our campus and beyond. I believe that I will learn a lot from this policy and I am excited to share it with you all at Policy Con on March 4.

My committee and I have a lot of projects coming up this term, including a Voter Registration campaign and a Federal Budget Submission. The Voter Registration campaign will be run in March and will involve information on how to register to vote and a Meet & Greet event with candidates from our riding Hamilton West-Ancaster-Dundas. The Federal Budget Submission will be on behalf of UCRU and will encompass the Indigenous Students and Canada Federal Student Loans Program recommendations we presented during UCRU Lobbying Week 2017. These recommendations can be found at msumcmaster.ca/ucru. If you are interested in getting involved with any of these projects or have questions, please let me know.

CURRENT CHALLENGES

With the start of a new term, challenges have been minimized; however the Ed department and I have been having some issues regarding promotions. We have reached out to the SRA several times, through personal interactions, the SRA chat, and through my committee meeting this past week. Unfortunately, despite constant reminders to share our posts, "retweet" and use the hashtag for our OER #textbook broke campaign, there has been very little volume from the SRA pages. These pages are vital sources of information for many students and so we really require the help of the SRA to get the hashtag going and to encourage attendance at our events.

Another challenge I have faced has been three SRA caucuses presenting 2 PFA related projects without any consultation with me or Ryan. After the first incident, Ryan raised

his concerns to the Assembly but there was still another occasion of this afterwards. The Education Department and the MSU have strategies for engagement with external stakeholders and have plans for this term to invite and meet with a variety of interesting and relevant individuals. It becomes quite challenging to navigate current priorities as we appear to be divided over our advocacy strategies and priorities, which is directly against the goals and skills of the MSU as an organization. This division appears weaker than our unity and I ask that the SRA please keep this in mind going forward. If you have an idea that relates to PFA in any way and want to pursue it, I am always open to new ideas and I invite you to send me an email (avproved@msu.mcmaster.ca) and we can take it from there.

VOLUNTEERS (Commissioners only)

The committee has been incredibly rewarding thus far and our meetings for this term are scheduled to be Thursdays at 9:30pm in the Committee Room. We always welcome new members and especially with the Letters to Professors: OERs Event, my committee members have opportunity to participate in some lobbying and advocacy work apart from research and policies. I am very thankful for the great work my committee did during the OPSSS and the OER #textbookbroke campaign. They did an amazing job at tabling for both of these initiatives and gave me really strong feedback during my end of term survey. I have taken all their feedback to heart and I am making every effort I can to make the committee as best as it can be. I am really looking forward to the work we will do this term.

SUCCESSES

Justin Trudeau came to campus for fun, twice, during the first year that we have an AVP Provincial & *Federal* Affairs. Take from that what you will. Also, #textbookbroke is becoming common language from what I have seen so I would like to give a huge shoutout to Atherai, our Project Assistant, Ryan, and the rest of the Ed Team for putting so much into such an important project!

OTHER

Check out eCampus Ontario's Open Textbook Library and save big!!

Best,

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