Last semester, a student asked to meet with me. We sat in my office as she enthusiastically described an idea about which she was very excited. She began the conversation with a phrase I hear so often in my role: “I’m not political, and I don’t like to run in elections, but I have some ideas I would like to share with you that I think will benefit students.” She envisioned a platform that improves existing technology by making it easier for students to access services and resources on campus. After we debated and discussed her ideas, I encouraged her to submit them to the Student Life Enhancement Fund (SLEF).

There is no idea too big or too small to submit to SLEF. By providing seed capital and financial support for student-run and University-based service providers, SLEF allows for the expansion of programming, infrastructure and/or operations. The fund is intended for initiatives that demonstrate a commitment to improving and enhancing student life. SLEF is administered by the Student Services Advisory Committee (SSAC). The SSAC consists of elected student representatives, the Dean of Students and members of the Student Affairs team. This committee is ultimately accountable to full-time undergraduate students for the governance of the Compulsory Ancillary Fee Protocol and the use of student fees levied by the University.

As a result of the ideas and subsequent voting by McMaster students last year, there is new seating, lounge space, microwaves, and electrical outlets installed in the Student Centre. Composting initiatives, charging station installations, and enhanced resources to student services were also funded. In addition, the Outdoor Activity Space installed at the north end of the Mona Campbell Track was funded by SLEF in the 2015 cycle.

SLEF is funded through a portion of the student ancillary fee, paid to the Office of Student Affairs. The fund is in excess of $100,000 annually. The grant money is available for ideas of all sizes to be transformed into reality.

SLEF is now taking submissions for ideas to help enhance student life and student services on campus. The SLEF portal will open on the 10th of January and will close on the 10th of February. All you need is a short paragraph describing an idea, which is to be submitted via enhance.mcmaster.ca. Submissions will be synthesized, grouped into themes, and costs will be established by the SSAC. In March, students will be presented with a list of ideas and given the opportunity to vote for their preferences. All ideas are welcome. I’m looking forward to the great student-led ideas SLEF will materialize at McMaster this year.