

STEPHANIE BERTOLO

For MSU Vice-President (Education)



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Dear Members of the Assembly,

We are all driven by the same passion to improve the lives of McMaster students. It is the reason why you have become a member of the Student Representative Assembly and why I am running to be your Vice-President (Education). Collectively, we are stronger and by working together we are able to make meaningful change not only on this campus but also at City Council, Queens Park, and Parliament Hill for the students of today and tomorrow. I would be honoured to serve as the MSU's Vice-President (Education) and advocate with you for the changes we all would like to see.

My love for community is what has led me to run to be your Vice-President (Education). I have never felt such a sense of belonging that I do on McMaster's campus. The students who both supported and challenged me drive my efforts every day to make their McMaster experience even better. As a member of the MSU's Education Team for the past two years, I have actively lobbied on behalf of students, voicing their concerns and priorities in policy papers and in City Council Chambers. Advocating on behalf of them is the greatest honour I have received. I wish to continue my work in the role of Vice-President (Education) to continue to give back to the students who have given so much to me.

My vision is for McMaster to provide an enriching educational experience that is accessible to all students. Students should have access to the necessary supports that will allow them to excel in both their academic and personal lives. It is this vision that has guided the development of my platform and I hope that my priorities best represents you and your constituents. Through extensive consultation with students, university administrators, and external bodies, I believe the goals I have outlined are ambitious yet achievable. I am excited for the opportunity to work with you to make a positive impact on the McMaster community. May we strive to push beyond expectations and make meaningful change together.

Sincerely,



Stephanie Bertolo

Vice-President (Education) Candidate

RELEVANT EXPERIENCE

OVERVIEW

- Employee of the MSU Education team for 2 years
- Lobbied to various of stakeholders at all three levels of government
- Built strong relationships with organizations on campus including MacPherson Institute and the Office of Community Engagement

McMASTER STUDENTS UNION

- Associate Vice-President: Municipal Affairs (2017-present)
- General Assembly Delegate, Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance (Fall 2017, Spring 2018)
- Community Engagement Coordinator (2016-2017)
- Volunteer, Student Health Education Centre (2016-2017)
- Events Coordinator, Student Community Support Network (2016-2017)

Policies Authored

- OUSA Health & Wellness Paper (2018)
- MSU Transit & Transportation Paper (2018)
- MSU Student Employment & Experiential Education Paper (2017)

McMASTER UNIVERSITY

- Student Research, CRUNCH Lab (2017-present)
- Student Scholar, MacPherson Institute (2015, 2016)
- Student Support Team Member, McMaster Discovery Program (2015)

EXTERNAL

- Chair, Young Canadians Roundtable on Health (2016-present)
- Summer Student Employee, Hamilton Community Foundation (2016)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

High Quality and Innovative Educational Experience

- o Advocating for restructuring of exam scheduling to reduce conflicts
- o Implementing Accessible Pedagogy Award
- o Authoring Experiential Education Resource Guide for professors

Post-secondary Education Affordability

- o Advocating for adoption of Open Education Resources in classrooms
- o Renewing stances on stabilizing tuition costs for all undergraduate students
- o Advocating for increases in OSAP grants for professional programs

Building Safer and More Equitable Communities

- o Advocating for additional funding for housing by-law services
- o Creating online MSU form for reporting crime
- o Developing a partnership with City around funding SCSN

Health and Wellness on Campus

- o Conducting a Peer Support Community Needs Assessment
- o Advocating for a No-Sick Note Policy
- o Taking a positive stance on harm reduction services
- o Advocating for OHIP for International Students
- o Conducting a Food Insecurity Climate Survey

Creating a More Inclusive Campus

- o Advocating for Reconciliation 1A03 be included on more programs' course lists
- o Advocating for increased funding for race-based initiatives with PACBIC
- o Writing a Racial, Cultural, & Religious Equity Policy Paper with Diversity Services

UNIVERSITY

Quality of Education

As the Vice-President Education, I will prioritize advocacy initiatives that ensure the best academic experience for McMaster students. In Fall 2017, the MSU passed the Academic Success policy paper that contains a number of strong recommendations that I will advocate for the university to adopt. While I will work to advocate on all of the recommendations, my top priorities will be the following:

Course Availability

One of the most important components of a positive academic experience is the ability for students to register in the courses they wish to take. There are many steps that can be taken to reduce the barriers students currently face in doing so. For students who wish to complete a minor, I will advocate for them to be able to **declare a minor before course registration begins** to allow for them to have increased access to courses. I will also work with the Deans and Associate Deans to **review the need for prerequisites in many courses**. Often, prerequisites are in place not to ensure students have the knowledge to excel in the course, but to decrease the number of students able to enroll. If it is not possible to remove prerequisites, I will advocate for the university to better **promote the ability of students to contact professors to have the requirement waived**.

Exams

Recognizing exams are often a stressful time for students, I will work with the Office of the Registrar to make **structural changes exam scheduling**. The Registrar should hire a Work-Study student who can schedule exams that will avoid the most likely situations of conflicts or two consecutive exams. For instance, ensuring exams for programs' required courses are evenly spaced out over the exam period. President Farrah's ran on **revising the examination policy** to students being able to declare a conflict if they have two consecutive exams in one day. I will advocate to Registrar with her to achieve this goal. While this may drastically increase the number of deferred exams, if the Registrar makes the necessary changes to exam scheduling this can largely be avoided. I will also sit on the Deferred Examinations Committee to highlight our priorities and also advocate for deferred exams to be written at the end of the exam period rather than the following term. Finally, I will advocate for the **exam schedule to be released when course registration begins**. This will allow students to better prepare their exam period, choose if they want to take courses with exams close together, and book earlier transportation home after their exam period.

Podcasting Courses & Notetaking

Regardless of a student's ability to physically attend lecture or take notes, they should have access to the content presented. I will work to increase access to podcasts and notes from lectures. I will advocate with McMaster's Accessibility, Disability & Ableism Working Group to the faculty Deans and Associate Deans (Academic) to **communicate the benefits of podcasting to professors**, which include increasing accessibility for students who cannot make class and contributing to the academic success of students who can refer back to lectures before midterms or exams. The provision of lecture notes also increases access to content. Student Accessibility Services (SAS) often does not receive enough note-takers to meet the demand, leaving many with accommodations without notes. I will work with professors to **encourage students to upload their notes onto Avenue2Learn**.¹ This can be incentivized by offering participation marks. I will advocate for this by speaking to the Deans and the Associate Deans (Academic) with SRA members who can speak to best practices in their faculty. Additionally, I will work with SAS to create a **note repository system for classes** that will compile all notes from past and present note-takers.

Late Withdrawal

In the MSU's most recent Health & Wellness Policy Paper, one of the recommendations was for McMaster University to introduce a Late Withdrawal Policy that would allow students to **drop one class up until the last day of class without failing**. The University of Toronto has already implemented this policy, providing precedent.² If achieved, it will reduce stress on students who may be overwhelmed with personal circumstances and school work after the course withdrawal deadline.

Accessible Pedagogy Award

Universal design is the development of a flexible learning environment that better suits all students preferred styles of learning and assessment.³ MacPherson offers a number of workshops for instructors who want to incorporate universal design and best accessibility practices into their courses. To encourage professors to recognize the value in doing so, I will work with Macademics and Maccess to **implement an Accessible Pedagogy Award and adding accessibility as a metric to all Teaching Awards**.

¹Consultation with Alex Wilson, former Maccess and Macademics Coordinator

²"Dropping Courses," Office of the Registrar, University of Toronto, accessed March 2018, <http://www.uts.utoronto.ca/registrar/dropping-courses>

³David H. Rose and Anne Meyer, Teaching every student in the digital age: Universal design for learning. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development., Alexandria, 2002.

UNIVERSITY

Experiential Education

Last year, the Government of Ontario made significant investments in Experiential Education with the goal of all post-secondary students having at least one experiential educational experience before they graduate. Having been a writer on the MSU's Student Employment and Experiential Education policy, I am confident in my abilities to advocate on the university level for the development of strong and meaningful experiential education opportunities for students.

After consultation with the Provost, MacPherson, and the Office of Community Engagement, there are a number of committees that the MSU is able to join to **provide student input on experiential education**. MacPherson Institute is also interested in working with the MSU to **jointly author a resource guide on experiential learning** focusing on the essential skills that instructors might need to incorporate this form of learning into their classes. Through consultation with the SRA and the Education Team, I will work to **create a definition for strong experiential education experience for different faculties** and use this to guide my advocacy throughout the year. I will also ask that the university consider the physical and financial accessibility when developing experiential education opportunities to ensure all students can participate.

Open Educational Resources

Open Educational Resources (OERs) are "educational resources that live online and are designed for anyone to openly share, revise and create material."⁴ The Government of Ontario is committed to increasing the amount of OERs, investing \$1 million dollars into the initiative last June.⁵ Last year, the MSU Education Team and the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance did fantastic advocacy work for increased investments and adoption of OERs. This year, I will continue to **push for the adoption of free online textbooks** by advocating to the Deans and Associate Deans (Academic) of each faculty to encourage their professors to adopt them. After speaking to the Provost & Vice President (Academic), David Farrar, he is willing to support our advocacy work and provide faculties the necessary time and resources to implement OERs in their courses and design their own!

Food Security

As a basic human right, all students should have access to affordable and nutritious food. Due to the rising financial burden of post-secondary education, a growing number of students are food insecure. In the MSU's 2017 food security survey, 55% of students identified that they have worried about running out of food with no money to purchase more.⁶

Mac Bread Bin recently opened its Food Collective Centre, which provides non-perishable food and hygiene products to students at no cost. Currently, this program is funded by student dollars and donations. With Breadbin, we will apply for **increased funding sources from the University and the Community** to allow the program to expand.

To better understand the extent of food insecurity on campus, I will work with Meal Exchange to **conduct the climate survey, Hungry for Knowledge**, at McMaster. This is the largest cross-campus study on student food insecurity in Canada and will provide us with valuable and comparable data.

Hospitality Services on campus plays an important role in providing access to food on campus. I will work with President Ikram Farah and Hospitality Services on implementing the pilot project of “Tax Free Tuesdays” and increasing the number of **fast, healthy meal options on campus**. Students have limited access to meals on campus late at night. In consultation with Hospitality Services Director Chris Roberts, he has agreed to work with me to offer **more substantive meal options in The Reactor**, the café located in Thode Library. This will benefit many students who choose to study in Thode with the increase both the library’s and café’s operational hours.

Decolonizing McMaster

According to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s report, reconciliation entails “establishing and maintaining a mutually respectful relationship” between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people and building a society that will allow us to “live together in dignity, peace, and prosperity on these lands we now share.” As an academic institution, McMaster has an important role to play in fostering reconciliation. One of many steps that can be taken is decolonizing campus through the addition of Indigenous markers. These markers recognize Indigenous histories and cultures, encourage exploration and expansion of knowledge, and help educate non-Indigenous people. In consultation with the Cooperative of Indigenous Studies Students & Alumni (CISSA) and the McMaster Indigenous Student Community Alliance (MISCA) I will **continue to advocate for Haudenosaunee & Anishinaabe flags on campus and signage on campus buildings in Cayuga, Mohawk, and Ojibwe languages**. Next year will be the first year McMaster is offering Reconciliation 1A03. In order to encourage more students to take this course, I will advocate to faculties to include this course on program’s course lists as well as to include the course in the Community Engagement Studies minor.

As the Indigenous student groups continue working to create a confederacy, I will **build and maintain relationships** with them throughout this process. This will include regularly meeting with CISSA and MISCA and, through consultation with them, **supporting their advocacy initiatives** when they deem appropriate.

⁴ Lewarne, Victoria, Landon Tulk, and Danny Chang, Interim Policy Paper: Open Educational Resources. Toronto: Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance, 2017.

⁵ Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development, “News Release: Ontario Making College and University More Affordable with Free Online Textbooks,” Government of Ontario, June 2017, <https://news.ontario.ca/maesd/en/2017/06/ontario-making-college-and-university-more-affordable-with-free-online-textbooks.html>

⁶ University Affairs, McMaster Food Security Survey, raw data, (Hamilton: McMaster Students Union 2017).

UNIVERSITY

Sexual Violence Prevention and Response

In the past years, society has become increasingly aware of wide-spread prevalence of sexual violence. It is critical that as the representatives for students, that we continue to raise awareness of this issue and advocate for support and restorative justice for survivors of sexual violence.

Between February and March 2018, post-secondary students across the province completed the “Student Voices on Sexual Violence” survey conducted by the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development. With the Vice President (Admin), the Sexual Violence Response Coordinator, and an Education Team Research Assistant we will **analyze the survey results** from McMaster students, which will better inform MSU’s services, advocacy, and best practices within the organization. The data will most likely support the need for the Equity and Inclusion Office to **hire a second Sexual Violence Response Coordinator**. I will ask to the Provost for the additional funding necessary for this position. In an initial consultation meeting with him, he is willing to explore this option in order to provide the best support for students who experience sexual violence.

Finally, many students are unaware of the current resources that they can access if they have experienced sexual violence. To increase knowledge and access, I will work with the University and the Society of Off-Campus Students to **promote survivor-centric resources available both on campus and in the community**. Additionally, I will ensure that the MSU’s social media channels are promoting these resources on a regular basis.

Racial, Cultural, and Religious Equity

It is important to acknowledge the ongoing forms of systemic racism, religious and cultural intolerance on campus. MSU’s Diversity Services does an incredible job at advocating on these issues. As Vice-President (Education), I will make it a priority to support the service’s advocacy efforts and incorporate anti-oppressive practices in all of my work. I will work closely with the President’s Advisory Committee on Building an Inclusive Community Race, Racialization & Racism Working group to advocate on their recommendation for **permanent funding for race-focused groups, projects, and events**, such as Black History Month and Let’s Talk About Race focus groups.⁹ These initiatives are important to start dialogues and share information about the experiences of racialized individuals in the past and present.

After the suggestion of Ryan Deshpande at the Winter Policy Conference, I am proposing to **write an MSU policy paper on Racial and Cultural Equity**. This policy paper will be written in collaboration with the Diversity Services Director and provide recommendation on how to make campus more inclusive for all cultures, religions, and racialized individuals.

Health & Wellbeing Services

All McMaster students should have access to high-quality health services. As per the testimony of several students, peer support services are incredibly valuable. To better gauge where our services are filling a need and where there are still gaps, I with the Vice President (Admin) will conduct a **community needs assessment**. Together, we can develop strategies to address identified issues both within the MSU and the university at large. Based on the outcomes, I will lobby the university to provide **increased training resources of peer support PTMs and volunteers**. This aligns with the University's Student Mental Health & Well-Being Strategy's priority of increasing Mental Health First Aid training to student leaders who are in a role of supporting students.¹⁰

In instances where students require academic accommodations for needs related to their mental or physical health, they should not be required to present a medical note. Obtaining medical notes create unnecessary strain on students and the healthcare system. I will advocate for McMaster to implement a **no-sick-note policy**, similar to the one at the University of Alberta.¹¹ As according to our OUSA Health & Wellness policy, I will advocate for the "Government of Ontario to mandate a province-wide medical accommodations and consideration policy for all post-secondary institutions".¹² I will work with the Academic Accommodations Working Group to achieve this goal.

Currently, the MSU does not have an advocacy stance on harm reduction for substance use. This was a gap I identified when writing the Substance Use & Addictions section for OUSA Health and Wellness Paper. Harm reduction services have been proven to improve individuals' quality of life and increase likelihood of engaging in treatment.¹³ I will modify the MSU's Health & Wellness Paper to include **harm reduction recommendations**.

In all of our health and wellbeing advocacy, I will partner with the Associate Vice-President (Students and Learning) and Dean of Students, Sean Van Koughnett, who continues to prioritize improving students' health on campus. I will regularly **consult the peer support services PTMs and communicate common concerns on campus** to Sean Van Koughnett to better inform our work. By working together, we can strengthen our advocacy and ensure the best on campus supports for students.

⁹ PACBIC, "Annual Report to the McMaster Community," McMaster University, 2017.

¹⁰ Student Affairs, "McMaster Student Mental Health & Well-being Strategy," McMaster University, accessed March 2018, <http://mentalhealthstrategy.mcmaster.ca/priorities/>

¹¹ "Exam Deferrals – University Health Centre," University of Alberta, accessed March 2018, <https://www.ualberta.ca/services/health-centre/exam-deferrals>

¹² Hannah Beckett, Stephanie Bertolo, Katherina MacCabe, and Landon Tulk, Policy Paper: Student Health & Wellness, (Toronto: Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance, 2018).

¹³ Rui Pires et. al, "Engaging users, Reducing Harms: Collaborative Research Exploring the Practices and Results of Harm Reduction," United Way, 2007.

MUNICIPAL

Municipal Mac Votes Campaign

The next municipal election is October 22, 2018. Historically, McMaster students have a low voter turnout rate.¹⁴ This negatively impacts our municipal advocacy since as politicians believe we have little influence on the election. I will dedicate a significant amount of time to **increasing voter turnout in the months leading up to the election**. Doing so will drastically improve our municipal advocacy efforts for years to come. As a continuation of the efforts I began as AVP Municipal Affairs, I will advocate for a polling station on campus. To ensure students are making an informed vote, we will run a Mac Votes campaign that will **provide student-centric information on candidates and important issues like transit and student housing**. We will also host a **Meet & Greet and debate on campus with candidates**. By partnering with Mohawk College, Redeemer University, and Hamilton high schools, we will collaborate on Hamilton-wide events, increasing youth voter turnout across the city.

Housing & Mediation Services

The City of Hamilton recently increased by-law enforcement in the McMaster Communities, resulting in students acquiring large fines. To combat this program, I will continue **advocating for non-punitive mediation services in the McMaster communities**, looking to University of Western's mediation services for best practices.¹⁵ In initial conversations with Ward One Councillor Aidan Johnson, he is open to exploring this opportunity. I will continue to have conversation with the City and McMaster's Off-Campus Resource Centre to develop the best programs. The MSU's Student Community Support Network is an amazing service that educates students on by-laws. To increase outreach, I will **develop a partnership with the City to jointly fund SCSN**. These funds will increase the output of promotional materials and compensate volunteers proactively check student houses that are violating by-laws. City Manager Chris Murray is willing to look into funding opportunities with us. With continued advocacy, I strongly believe we will develop this partnership this year.

Change Camp

Change Camp is an annual conference started by the MSU in 2015. Its goal is to bring together students, the Hamilton Community, and the municipal government to create new partnerships and projects. In consultation with the Office of Community Engagement, who is a major partner in planning the conference, we will be **reimagining the conference** this year. It will shift to a **networking event**, where students can learn about projects in the Hamilton, providing immediate feedback and finding ways to become involved. We will ensure that we connect with those in the Westdale and Ainsle Wood, which is a partnership that has been lacking in the past few Change Camps. To encourage this, we will hold Change Camp on campus rather than downtown. Overall, this conference is beneficial to the MSU since it strengthens community relations and helps students find ways to become involved.

Building Safe and Equitable Communities

Many students living in Ainsle Wood and Westdale continue to raise concerns about the safety of their housing and neighbourhoods. Absentee and predatory landlords take advantage of first-time renters, creating unsafe living conditions. I will continue to **advocate for additional funding housing by-law enforcement to increase home inspections and decrease the response time to tenants' concerns**. Landlord licensing is one way of obtaining this funding by charging landlords a small fee to rent units. To demonstrate the benefits of licensing, I will lobby to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to conduct a study regarding the impacts of the program. I will **continue the development of the Landlord Rating System** that students can use to identify exceptional and poor landlords. Students often feel a sense of unsafety in their neighbourhoods. There have been incidences where the police have dismissed concerns or behaved inappropriately.¹⁶ I will develop a **form where students can report where they do not feel safe and instances of crime** to provide the MSU with more information when advocating to the police on their responses to student concerns.

Municipal Affairs Best Practice Sharing

As we continue to strengthen our municipal advocacy efforts, it is important that we connect with other academic institutions and cities. I will **register the MSU as a member of Town and Gown Association of Ontario (TGAO)**, which represents communities with post-secondary institutions and “shares information and facilitates connections among diverse stakeholders to promote vibrant, cohesive communities for everyone.” There is no cost to joining and it will provide immense benefits to our advocacy efforts. I will also collaborate with other student unions. In consultation with the incoming Vice Presidents from Waterloo’s Federation of Students and Western’s University Student Council, we will **organize a one-day conference on municipal affairs for student leaders** to discuss common issues and best practices. We will continue this dialogue throughout the year online, especially at critical times like the municipal election and homecoming. At a Hamilton level, I will collaborate with Mohawk and Redeemer on common issues including landlord licensing and transit which will strengthen our advocacy to the municipal government. This will take the form of regular meeting and check-ins to discuss our shared priorities.

Transit

MSU students contribute approximately 12% of the HSR’s revenue through our bus pass.¹⁷ As a major stakeholder, it is important that we get the service that we were promised in our contract. I will continue to meet with the HSR Management to ensure students concerns are addressed. Working with Manager of Customer Experience and Innovation Dennis Guy, we will create an **online and texting services to easily submit complaints and concerns** about HSR rides. As well, the HSR recently announced they will be partnering with McMaster Institute for Transportation and Logistics to **redesign transit routes** throughout the city.¹⁸ I will reach out to this institution to provide student input throughout this process.

¹⁴ Emma Reily, “City pulls McMaster polling station,” Hamilton Spectator, Oct 14, 2010, <https://www.thespec.com/news-story/2173556-city-pulls-mc-master-polling-station/>

¹⁵ Off-Campus Housing, “Mediation Service,” Western University, accessed March 2018, <https://offcampus.uwo.ca/mediation.cfm>.

¹⁶ SCSN’s Community Safety Focus Group, March 5 2018.

¹⁷ 24,473 full time undergraduate students x 187.67 bus pass fee

¹⁸ “McMaster civil engineer studying Hamilton Transit,” Faculty of Engineering, March 26 2018.

PROVINCIAL

Provincial Mac Votes Campaign

The provincial election will take place on June 7, 2018. While most students will not be on campus, it is still important that we engage students and encourage them to vote. I will run a **MacVotes campaign that runs predominantly online**. By creating informational videos, sharing links, and posting on all social media platforms, we will be able to reach students no matter where they are in the summer months. Additionally, I will run in-person events for students on campus or living in Hamilton in partnership with the surrounding community associations. This will include inviting West Hamilton candidates to campus for a **Meet & Greet and debate**. I will ensure that the event is livestreamed for all those out of the city or unable to make the event.

Tuition

This year, both the MSU's and OUSA's policy papers on tuition are set to expire, giving us the opportunity to renew our advocacy stances on how tuition should be set. I will **advocate for the tuition increases to be capped at 2% annually for domestic students in all programs** to slow the drastic rises in the cost of post-secondary education. Additionally, I will advocate for the Government of Ontario to **implement a cap on International Student fees of 5% a year**. This will allow for international student fees to be more predictable and decrease the financial burden on international students who choose to study at McMaster. At the present time, tuition increases are cap at 3% for most undergraduate programs and 5% for professional undergraduate programs (Engineering & Business programs).¹⁹ The cap does not apply to International Students. Instead, Universities can increase the first year tuition at their discretion and the total annual increases cannot exceed 20% over their degree.²⁰ This means tuition continues to rise each year, and the difference between tuition most undergraduate students compared to those in professional programs and international students continues to grow. It is important that the Vice President (Education) advocates for stabilized tuition rates for all students.

GO Transit

Interregional mobility is very important for students who commute between Hamilton and other cities they live in. This year, I will **strengthen our advocacy efforts towards Metrolinx**. Using the data collected from the Your City Survey, we will be able to make strong data-informed asks this year. Some of my priorities will be advocating for the Government of Ontario for **increased investment in interregional transit**, especially between Hamilton and parts of South-Western Ontario, including the Guelph, Kitchener, Waterloo, and London regions. With President Farah, I will advocate for **Metrolinx to extend GO service** to allow commuter students to remain on campus longer and for provide better communications about delayed or cancelled buses. Finally, I will develop a relationship with Metrolinx which will allow us to provide input on future GO Transit services changes to the lines McMaster students use.

Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance

The MSU is a member of the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance, an advocacy organization that lobbies to the provincial government and represent 150,000 university students across Ontario. OUSA sets 5 strategic priorities, which the Steering Committee, including the MSU, lobbies on throughout the year. I will advocate for the following 3 priorities to be adopted.

Increased base funding for universities

As we advocate for the stabilization of tuition fees, it is important the government increases the amount of funding they provide to universities. Provincial contributions as a percentage of Ontario universities operating budgets have steadily declined, making up only 40% in 2015-2016.²⁰ To maintain the quality of education while simultaneously decreasing reliance on student fees, OUSA should lobby on the Shared Responsibility for University Funding recommendations outlined in OUSA's System Vision policy paper. These recommendations include **increasing the government's financial contribution to universities** by increasing per-student operating funding, indexing the base operating grant to inflation each year, and providing funding to institutions to support resources that improve the quality of education.²¹

Program-based OSAP Reform

I will support President Farah platform point of **increasing program based OSAP funding**. In 2017, the Government of Ontario announced "free tuition" for students with a parental income of under \$50,000.²² This is delivered through OSAP, which provides eligible students \$6,700 in grants, which is approximately the cost of tuition for arts and science programs. However, students in professional programs, such as business and engineering, do not receive additional grants to cover the cost of their tuition. OUSA should lobby to increase the amount of grants students in professional programs receive to reduce the financial barriers for students.

OHIP+ for International Students

International students currently have to purchase the University Health Insurance Plan for \$612 a year.²³ This unregulated private insurance plan provides less coverage than OHIP, preventing international students from receiving the same access to healthcare as domestic students. As per the recommendations in the International Students policy paper, OUSA should **advocate for international students to be able to opt into OHIP** by paying a premium for the coverage of approximately \$600.²⁴

¹⁸ Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities, Tuition and Ancillary Fees, [Toronto, ON]: Government of Ontario, 2013.

¹⁹ Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities, 2013.

²⁰ Council of Ontario Finance Officers, "Financial Report of Ontario Universities (Table 2), 2011-12 to 2015-16."

²¹ Clubine, Andrew, Victoria Lewarne, Vipin Chandra Narra, Brittany Pantaleo, Mary Zhu, and Marc Gurrisi. Policy Paper: System Vision. Toronto: Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance, 2017.

²² Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development, "Ontario Provides Free Tuition for Eligible Students in London: New OSAP is Removing Financial Barriers to College and University," Government of Ontario, July 2017, <https://news.ontario.ca/maesd/en/2017/01/ontario-provides-free-tuition-for-eligible-students-in-london.html>

²³ Aitchison, Colin, Leah Brockie, Bianca Chauhan, and David Lee. Policy Paper: International Students & Education. Toronto: Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance, 2017

²⁴ Aitchison et al., 2017

FEDERAL

Strengthening Federal Advocacy

The MSU is a member of UCRU (Undergraduates of Canadian Research-Intensive Universities), which represents student unions from some of Canada's largest research-intensive universities. I will choose to remain a part of this organization and continue to advocate during **federal lobbying week** with them. Additionally, I will **meet regularly with Member of Parliaments in the Hamilton area** throughout the year including Filomena Tassi, David Christopherson, Bob Bratina, Scott Duvall, and David Sweet. I will discuss our priorities as McMaster students and remain connected on ongoing federal initiatives. Finally, I will continue the work of the Provincial/Federal affairs committee of creating and submitting a **Federal Budget Submission**.

International Students

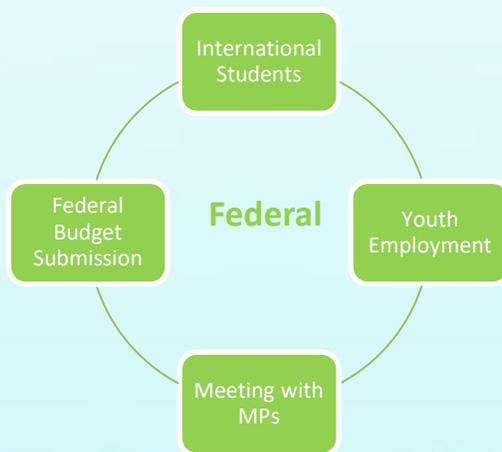
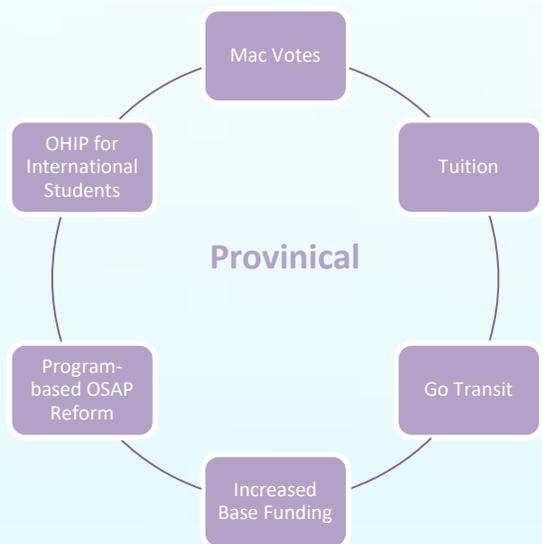
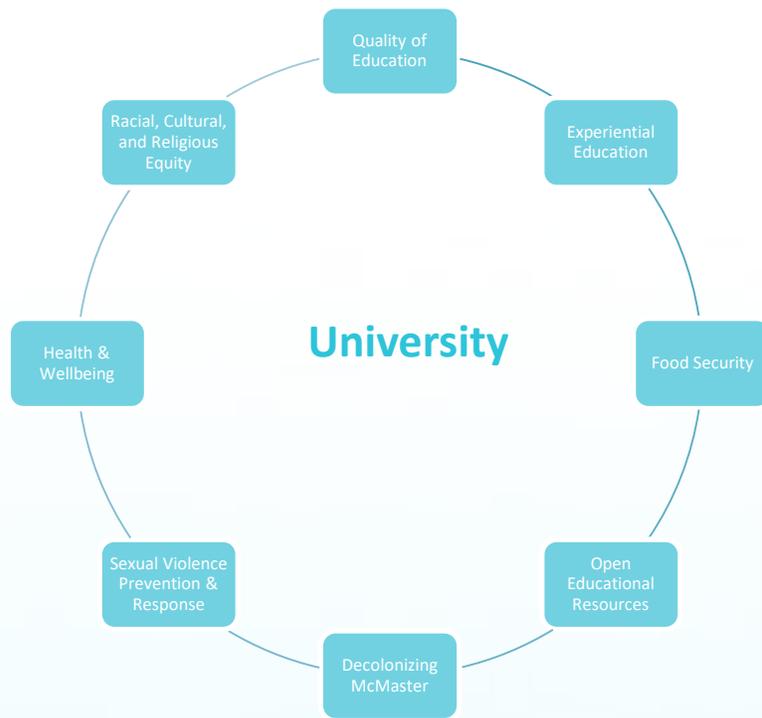
International students who have completed their university degree are eligible to apply for a three year Post Graduation Work Permit.²⁵ The application process to apply is long and cumbersome. I will **advocate for the application for the Post Graduation Work Permit to be streamlined or removed entirely**, immediately providing every International Student with the work permit. This will encourage international students to stay in Canada, and better supporting the process of immigration if they wish to pursue it. I will raise this priorities to both Hamilton MPs and during the Federal Advocacy Week with UCREW.

Youth Employment

In the recent federal budget, the government dedicated funding to modernizing the Youth Employment Strategy, which is committed to help youth successfully transition into the workplace.²⁶ Since students are a major stakeholder in the redevelopment, I will with UCRU to **provide input on the Youth Employment Strategy through consultations with MPs and the public service staff**. In these consultations, I will advocate for increased grants for employers to hire recent undergraduate students. This will help increase post-graduation rates and transition students into the workforce.

²⁵ "Determine your eligibility – Work after graduation," Government of Canada, March 27 2018, <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/study-canada/work/after-graduation/eligibility.html>

²⁶ "Progress," Government of Canada, 2018, <https://www.budget.gc.ca/2018/docs/themes/growth-croissance-en.html>





Supporting SRA & PTM Advocacy Initiatives

As Vice President (Education), I will work to support both Student Representative Assembly members and Part-Time Managers on their advocacy projects. A number of SRA members ran on platforms with advocacy priorities. Additionally, some MSU services have taken on an advocacy role in the past years, such as Mac Bread Bin, Student Community Support Network, and Maccess. In the summer, I will provide **advocacy training to all SRA members and interested PTMs**. This training will provide them the tools to effectively lobby to stakeholders and plan successful campaigns. Throughout the year, **I will be a resource for SRA members** by connecting them to relevant stakeholders, helping them write briefing notes, and collaborating on shared priorities including OERs and podcasting courses.

Leading the Education Team

Having been a staff member of the Education Team for the past two years, I observed how the past two Vice-Presidents have lead the Education team. This has provided me with a unique perspective on how to manage this year's team this year, continuing the best practices and incorporating new ideas to improve it further. Whether AVPs, Research Assistants, or Committee Members I will work to make **all members of the Education Team feel included** and provide them with the opportunity to share their ideas to shape the work of the Education Team.

This year, the Project Assistant role will transition back into the Advocacy Coordinator, who will manage two volunteer executives. General volunteers, called Advocacy Ambassadors, will be hired on an as-needs basis. I will work closely with this team to ensure the **new structure is successful and volunteers have an enriching experience**.

Expanding Advocacy Reach

Many students are unaware of the great advocacy work that the MSU does and the opportunities to get involved. I will better communicate the work of Education Team to the student body through **monthly one pages published on our website**, outlining the student body on our progress, upcoming project, and advocacy wins. Additionally, I will **promote the opportunity to join the Education Team committees** on University, Municipal, and Provincial Federal Affairs to better involve all students. Through a comprehensive promotion strategy developed, this information will be available on the MSU's social media platforms Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

Proposed Policies

This year, I will propose three policies, illustrated below, and allow the rest of the Education Team, in consultation with the SRA, decide on the remaining three. This model will better represent student priorities. Additionally, in order to better capture the experiences and opinions of all students, **I will work with interested SRA members to consult their constituents.** This could take place during their office hours or in focus groups that they could host. The data collected will help inform the beginning stages of the policy writing, creating stronger recommendations based on the experience of all students.



TIMELINE

Ongoing

- o Support SRA & PTM Advocacy
- o Lead Education Team
- o Municipal Affairs Best Practice Sharing
- o Decolonizing McMaster
- o Expand Advocacy Reach
- o Building Safer Communities
- o Racial, Cultural, & Religious Equity

Summer

- o Provincial Mac Votes Campaign
- o SRA and PTM Advocacy Training
- o Academic Success: Modify Exam Scheduling, Course Availability
- o Open Educational Resources Advocacy
- o Mediation Services
- o Transit

Fall

- o Municipal Mac Votes Campaign
- o Federal Advocacy Week
- o Provincial Advocacy Week
- o Food Security Advocacy
- o Change Camp
- o Experiential Education

Winter

- o GO Transit Advocacy
- o Physical Accessibility
- o Sexual Violence Prevention and Response
- o Health & Wellbeing
- o Academic Success: Podcasting Courses & Notetaking, Late Withdrawal

THANK YOU,

To every individual who I have met with over the past month, your time, feedback, and support mean more to me than what I can express in words. I continue to be inspired every day by the passion students have to improving this campus and I hope this platform captures even a fraction of that energy.

It would be an honour to work alongside you this year and serve the students of McMaster. With the support of the SRA and a strong Education Team, I am certain that I will accomplish the projects outlined in this platform and make a noticeable change on this campus.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to me at bertolsm@mcmaster.ca.

Warmest regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephanie Bertolo". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial 'S'.

Stephanie Bertolo
Vice-President (Education) Candidate

