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The MSU President’s role is to represent students effectively. The job of MSU President calls for possessing a certain level of skills, experiences, and the ability to make tough decisions. Siobhan Stewart shares her insights on what she believes is important to look for in a candidate.

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Qualities of a President

There are no right or wrong ways to make a successful MSU President, but there are some key characteristics that students should consider. The MSU President is the same as a past President because we have all been very different people with our own unique experiences and visions for the organization. There is no perfect president, not perfect candidate. Every candidate brings something new to the table. The question is what do you want on your ticket?

Engaging with Students

The role of MSU President calls for someone who has a genuine desire to serve the student body and its collective interest. It calls for long hours, hard work, and for someone who is always willing to listen. It calls for someone with a passion for student life. A great deal of the job requires the president to go to numerous meetings to represent student interests. It is important to pick someone who you think would effectively reflect your values and key things that you want to do. What do you think has it takes to effectively communicate on your behalf? What is important to you in your next MSU President? Do you want them to be approachable? Knowledgeable? Kind? Again, these are just a few things to think about when choosing a candidate on your ballot.

Voters Get Active

MSU presidential candidates should present a strong understanding of student issues. In essence, a strong platform reflects the issues that students feel need to be addressed by the MSU. A good platform is also well-informed and well-researched with respect to the potential of the organization. What are the issues that you are currently facing? To make an informed choice, ask questions and see which candidates have concrete plans about the issue(s). Selecting a candidate with clear vision and defined implementation strategies will ensure that the issues addressed are the ones that are important to you.

Adaptability

Another thing to keep in mind is that there is far more to the role than just a platform. To give you a rough idea on what I spent the majority of my time on, I would say that 15% of my time has been spent directly working on issues that I raised in my platform, while the rest of the time is spent on a variety of other problems, businesses, and tasks. Why am I sharing this? Because platforms and campaigns are important, it is also important to recognize that you are electing more than just a platform. You are also electing an individual who has a particular leadership style, strengths, and weaknesses. Understanding their skill set, personal accomplishments and professional experiences within the McMaster community may also be beneficial when making your choice.

The MSU President should articulate a clear vision for the organization but this is not an arm chair job. A president also needs to have the ability to work democratically in order to implement their platform and other initiatives within the organization and campus community. The role truly requires a degree of flexibility as you need to adapt to the unknown and unforeseen at any time. I could never have anticipated everything I have faced since last January. It isn’t just about foreseeing every problem every time. It is about adapting quickly, decisively, and responsibly when required.

In summary, the decision is ultimately in your hands. Remember that the leadership of the organization is dependent on your choices and that you are electing a leader for the next two years. Make sure you ask questions and get engaged with the process.

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