



# MEMO

*From the office of the...*

## Vice President (Education)

---

TO:	Student Representative Assembly
FROM:	Stephanie Bertolo, Vice-President (Education)
SUBJECT:	Report #1
DATE:	July 11, 2018

---

Dear SRA,

The past two months have been filled with excitement with each day presenting a new opportunity! From hiring my Education Team, running our first of two #MacVotes campaigns, meeting with key stakeholders, attending OUSA conferences, to making progress on my year plan, it certainly has been busy. On top of that, I am now a proud McMaster graduate and have officially deferred my acceptance into University of Toronto's Master of Public Policy! Things are certainly going well. Within this report, you will find a summary of my work over the past two months. There are some spectacular wins already on top of the progress I have been making towards larger goals later in the year. As always, I encourage you to ask any questions you have!

### **Education Team Hiring**

Even before officially starting in the role as VP (Education), I have been working on hiring my Education Team. This includes three Associate Vice-Presidents (AVPs), three Advocacy & Policy Research Assistants (RAs), and one Advocacy Coordinator. At the time I submit this report, all but my Advocacy Coordinator have been hired. However, by the time I report at the meeting they too should be hired. We received significant number of applications for each of these roles, demonstrating continual interest in these positions from the student body. I continue to work with my AVPs and RAs to transition them into the roles, delegate tasks, and check in with them frequently on their progress. I truly have a fantastic team and I cannot wait to see what we can accomplish together.

### **Provincial Election**

On June 7th, Ontario had its Provincial Election! The Education Team ran a #MacVotes campaign and through OUSA, the #OUSAvotes campaign. Since the majority of students were not on campus, we placed most of our efforts

into an online campaign, which included platform summaries on our website, videos encouraging students to get out to vote, and regular social media posts about the election. Leading up to the election, I was interviewed on the Hamilton radio station CHML and quoted in the Toronto Star, giving the MSU and OUSA campaigns a boost!



Additionally, we hosted a local candidates debate on campus that attracted approximately 150-200 people and had a number of people tune into the livestream. While Elections Ontario does not collect data on voters' age, I am believe that there was a good youth voter turnout!

Ikram and I were also invited by the university to attend meetings with the candidates running in Hamilton and Burlington from the PC, Liberal, and NDP parties. With the university, we began to develop a relationship with the candidates, demonstrated how McMaster University was an asset to the community and province, as well as raised student priorities to the candidates.

### **Ombuds Office Review**

Working with Sean Van Koughnett, we have drafted a Terms of Reference for the review of the Ombuds office. The purpose of this review is to determine the mandate and scope of the office as well as the appropriate reporting structure and resources. Over the summer, we will be seeking out individuals to sit on the review committee. In the fall, we will begin the review with it hopefully being completed by the end of the semester.

### **University Budget Submission**

With Tasneem, Ikram, and Scott, we are creating a university budget submission. This submission outlines some of our university advocacy goals with estimated costs and is used to advocate to the university as they are determining their budget for the upcoming year. Some of our priorities include funding for a second sexual violence response coordinator, a part-time staff member for the Office of the Registrar to aid in exam schedule, increased support for Financial Aid Office, and a removal of the Learning Portfolio. Other

student unions have had great success with this form of advocacy so I am hopeful that we will also. We will aim to have this completed by the end of the summer and present it in the fall.

### **Food (In)security and Waste Recovery**

In conversations with Kate Whalen, we have decided to partner on food security initiatives on campus. Foremost, I am going to be a project lead with Meal Exchange to run the Hungry For Knowledge Survey through the Sustainability 3S03 course. The students will carry out the ethics for this survey and aid in the survey implementation with oversight from me. I will also provide necessary resources for the survey's success including promotions and prizes. This survey will provide us with valuable information about food insecurity on campus. Additionally, we have had two meetings with individuals on campus also involved in food security and waste recovery. By making these connections, we are more likely to have successful partnerships for sustainability and food security initiatives.

### **Experiential Learning Definitions Committee**

I sit on this committee that is run by the Student Success Centre. With individuals from across the university, we are defining what constitutes as experiential education. We are almost complete these definitions and will be moving onto developing the criteria by which experiences are measured to determine if it is in fact experiential. We also be thinking about developing a list of core competencies that are attached to these definitions and the criteria. With increased interest from universities and the government in experiential education it is important that the MSU is being represented at the table while these definitions are being created.

### **Town & Gown Association of Ontario Conference**

From May 8th-9th, Ikram, Shemar, and I attended the Town & Gown Association of Ontario Conference located on campus. There were a number of interesting and relevant presentations regarding communities composed of students and long-term residents. This included a presentation about the by-law program in the McMaster communities, one by OUSA about the publication Habitats, and one by the Western University Student's Council about a community-student partnership on mental health resources. It was valuable to attend this conference considering my platform point of having the MSU join the Town and Gown Association of Ontario. From this conference, I believe it would be valuable to join this organization as they have valuable discussions about issues the MSU deals with while also respecting student voices.

### **Pride Crosswalk**

This was a project started last year by David Lee, AVP University Affairs. Tasneem and I were continuing the project, looking into having the Pride Crosswalk completed on campus. We learned the cost of painting the sidewalk



would be rather high and not something the MSU would be able to pay for without significant contributions from university partners. With Shemar, we reached out to the City of Hamilton to see if there was interest in partnering on this project. Ward One Councillor Aidan Johnson and Mayor Fred Eisenberger announced in June, Pride Month, that they would be painting a pride crosswalk at the Sterling and Forsyth intersection as well as a pride and trans crosswalk in front of City Hall. As stated by Councillor Johnson, “the crosswalk is a good way for the City to welcome all students, queer and trans an straight and cis, to the City from campus and vice-versa”. I am still waiting to hear when the crosswalk will be painted.

### **Change Camp**

Change Camp is an annual event hosted by the MSU and the Office of Community Engagement. Last year, it was held in September since that seemed to be the ideal time to engage students and get them involved in projects early in the year. This year, we have decided to move the event to second term since first term will be busy with the #TextbookBroke campaign, #MacVotes campaign for the municipal election, and hosting OUSA fall GA. Scott and I are discussing how we can incorporate Change Camp into Life After Mac.

### **Youth Strategy**

The City of Hamilton is creating a 5 year Youth Strategy, which is being developed with extensive engagement of youth from the ages of 14-29. The Board met with Jesse Williamson, Project Manager Strategic Youth Initiatives to discuss the progress on the Hamilton Youth Strategy. We discussed ways to gather McMaster student feedback that can be incorporated into the final strategy.

### **Hamilton Transit Coalition**

This coalition was formed late last year and is composed organizations across Hamilton that have shared transit advocacy priorities. It includes the Hamilton Chamber of Commerce, Social Planning and Research Council, YWCA, Mohawk Student Association, among others. We had our first meeting in June to discuss our vision for the group and how we can work together during the municipal election to raise awareness on the topic of transit. This is a great way to amplify our transit priorities moving forward.

### **City of Hamilton Rental Housing Sub Committee**

The MSU was invited to sit on this committee last year. Its purpose is “to work with interested stakeholders to assist with the implementation of an approach to enforcement and legalization of appropriate rental housing including, but not limited to, process, fees and by-law regulations.” Primarily, we are discussing the possibility of implementing landlord licensing in Hamilton. Landlord licensing is when Landlords pay a small fee to the City to legally rent out their units. This money is used to do yearly inspections

As of now, a pilot project is being proposed in Wards 1 and 8, which are the two wards with the largest student populations. Landlord licensing in other cities often target areas with high volumes of students. While landlord licensing can create safer units, I want to ensure the pilot does not unfairly target students by decreasing the amount of dwellings able to be student rentals. This is unlikely to happen, but it is something I am weary of given the fact that students seem to be targeting by this program.

### **Informational Door Hangers**

After conversations with Councillor Aidan Johnson, we are collaborating to create informational door hangers that will educate students on their rights as tenants and resources that they can access. The text is done and will hopefully be printed by the end of the summer and the MSU will distribute them at the beginning of the school year.

### **OUSA**

My work with OUSA thus far has mostly been summarized in my two conference reports from SRA 18D. To summarize, I ran for OUSA President after being advised by the SRA, tied, and then lost. But I am exciting to be a strong advocate on the Steering Committee and fight for MSU priorities to be OUSA priorities – something that would have been more difficult to do if I was facilitating conversations as the president of OUSA.



OUSA priorities for the year are Tuition, Experiential Education, Technology-Enabled Learning, Sexual Violence Prevention and Response, Mental Health, and International Student Healthcare. We are running a total of four campaigns this year; OUSA Votes (provincial election), Textbook Broke

(September), Students Vote (municipal election), and Experiential Education (second semester). If you are interested in being involved in designing and being involved in these campaigns, I highly recommend joining the Provincial & Federal Affairs committee. As well, this term Urszula and I will be authors on OUSA's tuition paper.

The annual publication Habitats: Students in their municipalities was released with an article by Ryan Deshpande, Shemar Hackett, and me titled "Increased Proactive By-Law Enforcement in Student Neighbourhoods". Most excitingly, my name is first on the entire publication, which means I have a Bertolo et al. citation!

Upcoming events include the Policy Symposium, where I will be sitting on a panel to discuss International Student Healthcare, and Best Practice Sharing Day which will be held at McMaster. I will be a member on OUSA's Strategic Planning Committee that will work to determine OUSA's long term advocacy priorities over the next four years. This is a great opportunity to influence the direction of the organization. Finally, I am writing an article for Educated Solutions on International Student Healthcare.

## UCRU

The Undergraduates of Canadian Research-Intensive Universities is our federal advocacy group composed of eight student unions across Canada. Western University's Student Council President Mitch Pratt was acclaimed as President of UCRU through a vote of confidence. A call is scheduled for next week where we will begin to determine our priorities for the year.

I am interested in running to be UCRU Vice-Chair. The time commitment will not be that intensive and will not require frequent travel (as compared to

OUSA president). With a strong Provincial & Federal Affairs Committee who has already been involved in writing UCRU's budget submission, I believe the MSU is ideal to take a leadership position in UCRU. If you have any questions or concern, please let me know!

Warm regards,  
Stephanie Bertolo  
Vice President (Education)  
[vped@msu.mcmaster.ca](mailto:vped@msu.mcmaster.ca)