

The McMaster Students Union

PRESIDENT'S PAGE



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While the planning and preparation for Welcome Week is conducted primarily over the summer months, the process of collecting feedback, evaluating impact, and making the necessary changes is continuous.

Welcome Week lays the foundation to the student experience at McMaster, as an opportunity to become familiar with a new community. Strategic themes help shape how Welcome Week is designed, acting as pillars that consider how we support first year students in the current academic system. As the variety of programming throughout Welcome Week suggests, it is important to think about solutions that are concerned with the unique experiences and needs of particular students.

The three strategic themes of Welcome Week have historically been *Responsible Drinking*,

Sexual & Gender-Based Violence Prevention, and *Mental Health & Wellness*. Intuitively, these themes make sense, because we should always be focusing on how students are interacting with the environment we created for them. However, it is important to constantly ask questions in order to progress and evolve. Are we considering the social and cultural environment we place students in and how it may contribute to improved learning skills and academic success? Are we designing an introduction to university in such a way that considers multiple perspectives?

We investigated how our current themes could become more inclusive, by adopting a participatory, human-centered process of planning. This year, three committees comprised of student leaders, campus stake-

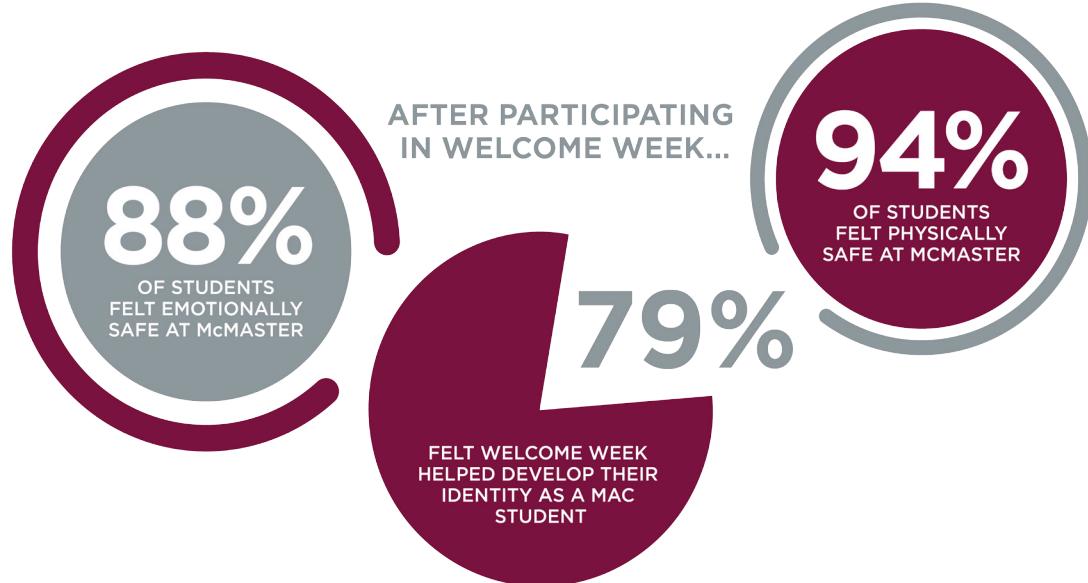
holders, and off-campus partners carefully examined our themes. Specifically, the committee wanted to explore how the themes can alter perspectives on substance use, highlight healthy and positive relationships, and better address mental health support and campus outcomes.

Student voices are critical to the design of Welcome Week programming, operations, and messaging

After widespread student consultation, Welcome Week 2018 will include a new strategic theme, *Community Engagement*, in addition to the previously listed three. This theme will uniquely address how students are integral members of the Hamilton community. I am excited to

think about the meaningful connections between students and the city as a result of this new Welcome Week approach.

Student voices are critical to the design of Welcome Week programming, operations, and messaging. Listening to stakeholders ensures that planners avoid making assumptions as to what students want, need or like. We are continuously looking at ways to create dialogue that meaningfully engages a range of partners and students – not just the ones whose voices are heard most often. That is why focus groups and committees that draw on different perspectives are fundamental to ensuring the success of strategic themes, and Welcome Week as a whole. As planning continues for next September, I look forward to watching the ideas from student consultation morph into reality.



Data collected by the Student Success Centre, as published in the Silhouette on January 11, 2018.



VP (Education)

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The President's Page is a space sponsored and used by the McMaster Students Union (MSU) Board of Directors (BoD) to communicate with the student body. It functions to highlight the Board's projects, goals, and agenda for the year, as well as the general happenings of the MSU.