



MEMO

From the office of the...

Vice-President (Education)

TO: Student Representative Assembly
FROM: Stephanie Bertolo, Vice-President (Education)
SUBJECT: Report #2
DATE: October 24, 2018

Dear SRA,

The saying “Time flies when you are having fun” truly applies. Since I last reported, the Education Team and I has run two more campaigns, published two budget submissions, approved one ethics application, and have attended countless of meetings to progress on our year plans. Currently, we are busy planning two conferences and writing three policies while I am preparing for two lobbying weeks. I am so proud of all the work the team and I continue to accomplish. Seeing our advocacy efforts grow, strengthen, and achieve results is the most rewarding experience. I want to thank all of my AVPs, Research Assistants, Advocacy Team, and Education Team Committees for all your hard work to making this such a successful year – and we aren’t even half way done! I have outlined this report to give updates on each of my platform points that I have made progress on and also provided some other relevant updates at the end. As always, I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Year Plan Updates

Improving Education Team’s Outreach

It was my goal to work towards improving the Education Team’s outreach this year. All of the Associate Vice-Presidents worked together to create a graphic promoting their committee times, which is a great first step in increase individuals involvement in the Education Team. As well, I am working with the Advocacy Team Executives to find unique ways to promo the Education Team. The Promotions Executive is doing a great job regularly updating the MSU Advocacy accounts and now, after the MacVotes campaign, we will be looking to find ways to promote all the work the Education & Advocacy Department is working on. The Volunteer & Logistics Coordinator is also thinking about tabling in MUSC in order to familiarize students with the team.

MSU Policy Development

The entire Education Team is hard at work writing the three policies for this term! We are on track to having the papers done for the beginning of November, giving individuals enough time to review papers before Policy

Conference. Unfortunately, I was not able to advertise the brainstorming sessions to the SRA and general public since they were decided on with little time to promote. I will aim to do this next term.

Policy Conference is set for Saturday November 10th. It was originally my plan to hold it on the 11th, before the SRA meeting. However, Ikram and I are away in OUSA Lobby Con on the 11th. I apologize to those who are unable to attend this date due to religious observances.

Ombuds Review

Sean Van Koughnett and I, as the management committee of the Ombuds Office, have started a review of the office. This is a great achievement, since the MSU and Sean Van Koughnett were trying to do a review for a number of years now. We have hired Harriet Lewis, a retired University Secretary from York University and who now does consulting work, to conduct the review. As the management committee, we have now taken a step back to not influence the review process and Ms. Lewis is now conducting interviews with stakeholders across campus. She should have recommendations for the Ombuds Office by the end of the term.

Sustainability Committee

Setting the Sustainability Committee up took longer than expected. However, we are meeting Wednesday October 24th for the first time. I am excited to elect the chair of the committee and to determine our priorities for the year.

Academic Affairs Council

I had my first meeting with the Academic Affairs Council in September. They are a good group of people and I am excited to use the committee as a space where they can share best practices with each other as well as receive their feedback on MSU education advocacy. I am currently setting up the next meeting.

University Budget Submission

The University Budget Submission is complete and can be found on the MSU's Issuu. Thank you to Tasneem and Anna who did an incredible job putting this together! The submission outlines 7 priorities; 5 which require financial investments and 2 which would save the university money. The priorities are the following:

- Additional funding for EFRT
- Increased sexual violence response support in the form of hiring an additional trauma counselor and increased funding for the Equity and Inclusion Office
- Hiring a Work-Study student to allow for the earlier release of exam schedules
- More funding for the development of Open Educational Resources
- Environmental sustainable practices that reduce energy consumption and costs

- Discontinuation of PebblePad

We presented to the University's Budget Committee on our submission. They noted that we are the only group that they allow to do this, which we greatly appreciate and believe demonstrates a willingness of the university to work with students. We received feedback to follow-up with the heads of university departments, who's portfolios would include our budget asks. Tasneem and I have set up those meetings and are currently following up on them.

After speaking to the Provost, he said the committee was very impressed with our presentation. He also had already followed up with the relevant people under him about a number of the asks and advised them to allocate funding in their budget submission to these asks. This was an amazing win for us - it is clear that senior administrators of the university have taken our asks seriously and are working in incorporating them into the budget. This demonstrates that we had well-researched, strong but realistic asks. As well, it shows that the university sees the MSU as a respected stakeholder that they consider when drafting the budget. I will continue to follow up and inform you when it is confirmed our asks are in the final budget.

Unsettling Campus

I have reached out to both MISCA and CISSA, the Indigenous student groups on campus, to ask to meet to discuss shared priorities and areas of collaboration for the year. I will be meeting with CISSA this week and will be following up at MISCA to find a time. As we are having OUSA General Assembly on campus, I have invited CISSA to our opening ceremonies to give an introduction and speak to the importance of truth and reconciliation as post-secondary student leaders. I am excited to continue building these relationships throughout the year.

Food Security

I have been working with Meal Exchange, a national charity based in Toronto, Kate Whalen, Senior Manager of Academic Sustainability Programs for McMaster, and students from the class Sustainability 3S03 to run the Hungry for Knowledge Survey on McMaster's campus. This survey has been run at a number of university campuses across Ontario and it will be highly valuable to collect data specific to McMaster but to add the data to a larger database throughout Ontario.

Since the summer, I have been working on the ethics application for this and I finally received approval!!! This was a long and tedious process, but it feels rewarding having it done. We can now move forward to collecting data. I hope all of you will be able to help promote the survey to your constituents.

Experiential Education

I have a seat on the University's Experiential Education Definitions committee, where we are working to define different categories of experiential education. Classes offered at McMaster will be "tagged" with the applicable categories to

eventually track the number of opportunities students have during their university education.

As well, Macademics Coordinator Angel and I met with MacPherson to discuss potential areas of collaboration, including a resource guide for professor with best practices for experiential education experiences. These conversations are still in early stages and I will continue to update you as I have more details.

Open Educational Resource Advocacy

In September, we ran a very successful #TextbookBroke Campaign. Thank you to everyone who volunteered! We had a number of people coming up to our table in front of the bookstore. They really identified with the messaging of the campaign and were eager to learn about OERs. We received hundreds of ballots for our contests and selected two winners. Overall, it was more successful than last year's campaign. This was likely because of the timing of the campaign. Last year, it was held in January, when less students might have been buying textbooks. As well, since we ran the campaign last year, people may have recognized it and were more likely to engage. We will not be running it in January next year, but I would encourage next year's Education Team to run it. The results of the campaign will help with our advocacy efforts for OERs for the rest of the year since it is clear that rising textbook costs are a concern to students across campus.

I also sit on a OER Working Group, which is comprised of faculty and library staff who are also passionate about creating OERs. We had our first meeting a few weeks ago, where I provided updates on the Textbook Broke Campaign. As well, Catherine Anderson, a professor at McMaster, showed us the OER she developed for the first-year linguistics course! It is titled Essentials of Linguistics and can be found in the eCampus Ontario Library. I encourage you to check it out.

Quality of Education

MacPherson underwent a review process this year to determine how it can best serve the McMaster community. I was unable to attend, but Ikram and Angel the Macademic PTM attend, who I provided my feedback to. We have a number of policy recommendations to MacPherson surrounding increased training and resources for professors and teaching assistants to improve students' educational experience. The outcomes of the review should be published soon.

I have had initial discussion with Macademics about the accessible pedagogy award, which they are going to work to create this year in partnership with Maccess. They seem eager to implement this.

Finally, I had a meeting with the president of McMaster University Faculty Association, Michel Grignon, where we discussed shared priorities. He is hoping to review course evaluation forms, which, in their current format, are not the most useful for students or professors. I will work with the Academic

Affairs Council to collect feedback on course evaluations and welcome any insights that you have.

Landlord Rating System

As mentioned by Shemar in his report, we have been working with Oleg Lights who operates Yomes, an online landlord rating system. Our conversations have been going well and we are connecting with the university to inform them about the system. We are also working to collect 50 reviews before officially launching the system at McMaster. Then, we plan to hold a “Wikithon” event where we invite students to rate their houses and provide food. This will help get reviews for the system and make it a useful tool for students to use when looking for houses.

Hamilton 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 BOD met with Jesse Williamson in the summer to talk about the strategy. They wanted to come to campus to collect data from students. They set up at the sidewalk sale and then in MUSC one day and got a lot of feedback.

I attended one of the Steering Committee meetings for the strategy. Due to my schedule, it is difficult for me to dedicate the time to going frequently. If you are interested in attending on behalf of the MSU, let me know and I can connect you.

The Strategy should be presented to the new City Council sometime in the new year. We will provide feedback on the draft strategy before then.

Consistent Municipal Advocacy

I have assigned one of my Research Assistants to go through relevant council meeting agendas and alert us when there is something that the MSU should comment or delegate on. Nothing has come up since council was wrapping up for the term.

The Board of Directors met with Mayor Fred Eisenberger in the summer. As well, Ikram and I met with Aidan Johnson in the summer. Because of the election, there were not many opportunities to meet with other sitting councilors. However, we will be reaching out to the new council to set up meetings in December or the new year.

MacVotes Election

The municipal election was on October 22nd and the Education Team was running a strong MacVotes Campaign for the past three weeks. We started with a social media posts during reading week about the MSU’s stances on transit and near campus neighbourhoods. Then, we tabled the week back, handing out buttons, stickers, and rave cards. We informed people about the election and answered any questions they had. I also invited Metrolinx to table separately to provide students with information about the LRT project. Finally, on October 22nd, we tabled from 10:30am to 4pm. We went around to inform students that voting was today, offered to walk students to polls, and provided them with the paperwork they would have to fill out at the polls, which Hamilton’s election department provided to me ahead of time to speed

up the process of students voting. As well, I took over the Instagram story for the day, posting updates throughout the day. Unfortunately, I did not provide external training to volunteers due to time constraints - however, they did an excellent job throughout the month!

Outside of the MacVotes campaign, Ikram, Shemar, and I collectively meet with all 13 of the Ward One candidates. We sat down with each of them to get to know their vision for Ward One and Hamilton and informed them about our priorities. While at times this felt tedious, I saw it to be of great value since it continues to establish the MSU as a major stakeholder in Ward One. As well, it helped us build relationships with those who might be our potential councilor.

The Ward One All-Candidates Debate occurred on October 16th. All 13 candidates participated, making us the only ones to have a truly all-candidates debate! (Only 11 showed up to the Cable 14 debate and no other community association held a debate). It was certainly challenging holding a debate with 13 people, though our new format worked incredibly well. Instead of asking general questions, we asked each candidate 2 targeted questions to their campaign, which were prepared by the municipal affairs committee. This allowed us to ask candidates more challenging yet insightful questions. As well, we had a section of the debate where candidates could ask each other questions, which provided some fun debate. We received great feedback from the attendees of the debate about the structure. Several local media sources covered the debate and many local residents attended, demonstrating that we run strong, well planned debates that the city is interested in. Congratulations to Shemar, who did the majority of the planning of the debate for running such a successful event!

The MSU also received a lot of media coverage during the election. We were featured on Cable 14 twice, interviewed for CBC Hamilton, the Spectator, and Raise the Hammer. The Silhouette also did great cover of the municipal election and our campaign!

Maureen Wilson won Ward One Councillor and Fred Eisenberger was reelected as mayor! The night of the election, I went to City Hall where citizens and media were watching the results come in together. I met many of the elected candidates, where I congratulated them and told them the MSU is looking forward to working with them. I received a number of comments from people who said we ran an excellent campaign and they noticed more students voting this election! Overall, I am really excited to work with this new council. I see many new potential allies who will help us advocate for student issues.

We do not have the poll by poll data for Ward One to see if turnout was higher in Ainslie Wood and Westdale. However, voter turnout was up 2% in Ward One! So that is a promising sign. I will update you once this data is released.

Revamp Change Camp

As per my platform, I am looking into re-evaluating the role of Change Camp in the Education Department. While Change Camp has been a great event to bring community members together across Hamilton, each year it is taking up consistently more and more time and resources in terms of the planning. The Office of Community Engagement has been a major partner in planning the event, providing a lot of the human resources necessary to run this event. In conversations with the OCE, they are not able to provide the same level of resources this year. While they are able to financially contribute, they want the majority of the planning portion of the event to be the responsibility of the MSU. To put this into context, last year when I was AVP, I spent the majority of my hours in the summer (May-September) on planning Change Camp. I was also planning it with two people from the OCE who spent even more time planning the conference. If we were to plan it, it would be the AVP Municipal, Advocacy Coordinator, and myself dedicating a large portion of our time to the event. With a number of other priorities, this will not be possible. As well, Change Camp, while a great community engagement event, does not advance the advocacy of the organization, which is our main goal. As a result, I do not believe moving forward with Change Camp this year is the best option for the MSU.

Instead, we are finding new ways to partner with the OCE. The OCE has now been operational for 5 years and is doing a review to see how they can better serve the McMaster and Hamilton community. They are eager for student feedback so we will partner to achieve that. As well, they have connected me to an individual who produced a report about the world of work for millennials and is hoping to host an event on this in January to hear students thoughts on this report. I think this is an interesting opportunity for the MSU to get involved with and I will be follow up on this opportunity.

Another alternative to Change Camp is holding a meet & greet with local politicians and community organizations. This is still a working an idea but this would better connect students to the leaders that represent them and align with our advocacy initiatives. Western does a similar event and it has great success. The Municipal Affairs Committee, Shemar, and I will continue to brainstorm on this idea.

Join the Town and Gown Association of Ontario

This platform point has been achieved! Joining TGAO is free for Student Unions across Ontario. The process of becoming a member was very simple and mostly just signs us up for webinars and newsletters. However, it does demonstrate a commitment on behalf of the organization to improve community relations within Hamilton, which is a symbolic step forwards in our efforts.

OUSA Tuition Policy

As mentioned in my last report, Urszula and I are authors on the OUSA Tuition Paper. I have been co-writing the section on the Tuition Framework Policy with Danny Chang. We have proposed to recommendations for this section:

Recommendation(a): The provincial government should freeze tuition for all students under the new tuition framework.

Recommendation(b): Increases to tuition each year should be capped at the Consumer Price Index for Ontario for all students in post-secondary

I will be asking the McMaster delegation to vote for Recommendation A, which is in line with our policy stance. This is a reasonable policy ask, which does not dramatically reduce the budgets of universities or require large investments from the provincial government. Instead, it will lead to more predictable tuition fees for students across Ontario.

Tuition Advocacy

I was published in OUSA's annual publication, *Educated Solutions*, with an article titled "Addressing Root Causes: Why International Student Tuition Needs to be Regulated in Ontario." I argued that regulating international tuition fees at the same rate as domestic tuition would attract the top talent across the world, increase the likelihood of students transitioning to become permanent residents, and overall build a stronger economy. This publication is distributed to universities' presidents and vice-presidents as well as to government officials. This is a great start to our advocacy work that will continue during lobby week.

OHIP+ for International Students

I presented at OUSA's Policy Symposium about International Student Healthcare as part of a panel on Safe & Healthy Campus. I received a lot of positive feedback from both people within OUSA as well as others attending the event. Many members of Steering Committee told me that they are very excited for us to lobby on this advocacy priority during lobby week.

Building Relationships with MPPs and MPs

We are beginning to set up meetings with Hamilton MPPs and MPs for first term. This month, I went to Filomena Tasi's nomination event to represent the Liberal Party in the upcoming federal election for the Hamilton-West-Ancaster-Dundas riding. Tasi is the current MP for HWAD and the Minister of Seniors. I had a productive conversation with her after the event and she is excited to meet with us in Hamilton and Ottawa. Additionally, Andrea Horwath, the leader of the NDP and opposition, has agreed to speak at OUSA's General Assembly next month!

UCRU Advocacy

On the federal advocacy front with the Undergraduates of Canadian Research-Intensive Universities, I was acclaimed as Vice-Chair of the organization! We have expanded the organization by having McGill join as a member school. Currently, we are working on setting up our lobbying week for the first week of December.

UCRU Federal Budget Submission

The UCRU Pre-Budget Submission has been submitted to the federal government! Congratulations to Urszula, Takhliq, and Tereza for writing a great report. It outlines one ask of reallocating tuition tax credits into upfront grants for post-secondary students. This is similar to what the provincial government did in order to achieve “Free Tuition.” Unfortunately, we were not invited to present to the committee. There were over 400 submissions from many high-profile organizations across the country and only a handful were selected to present – none of which represented students. However, I contacted Standing Committee on Finance to ask for feedback. They advised me that next year we should contact individuals on the committee to put our name forward to present. This was a great step forward in UCRU’s advocacy, which will only be strengthened in the coming years.

Other updates

Valedictorian

The valedictorian selection process falls under the VP Education’s portfolio. I have been working with Liam Sykes to remove the 7.0 culminative GPA requirement. There is resistance from the deans who believe that valedictorians should have a degree of academic excellence. One possibility is to change the GPA requirement from being one’s culminative GPA to their GPA in their final year. I am still asking why it is arbitrarily 7.0 and find a solution that works for all parties.

Also, past VP Educations have noted that being in charge of the administrative tasks of the valedictorian selections process takes a significant amount of time. Over time, this no longer seems to fit the VP Education’s portfolio and I am looking to other individuals in the MSU and the university who would be able to assist me in these administrative tasks. While there is value in the MSU being involved in the selection process, it requires review if it needs to be the VP Education and what in what capacity the MSU should be involved.

Freedom of Speech

I have been working with OUSA to present a document outlining OUSA’s stance on Freedom of Speech for discussion and to be voted on at General Assembly. There has been significant resistance from others on the Steering Committee from taking a strong stance against the issue. However, I was still able to have a similar recommendation be put forward as the one the SRA passed at the last meeting. I will continue to fight for OUSA to adopt this stance and keep you updated.

Rental Housing Sub-Committee

This is a municipal subcommittee that the MSU has a voting seat on and which I attend. A Rental Housing Licensing Report was put forward by staff, which made 3 recommendations of a pilot project in Ward 1 and 8:

- To increase education around by-laws
- To create a mandatory landlord registry

- To create a mandatory Licensing program

The Licensing program would charge landlords a licensing fee and require inspections of the units. This is most in line with the MSU's stance and ensures safer housing conditions. Councillor Johnson moved that we move forward this option, and which I voted in favour of. Ultimately, this motion passed. Now, this report will go to the new council with the recommendation from this committee. We will continue to lobby to councilors to vote for this motion to allow the pilot project to move forward.

Advocacy Team

Last year, the Education & Advocacy Department's Operating Policy was revised to add two volunteer Advocacy Executives and a volunteer base (similar to the former Street Team). The two execs have been hired along with 9 Advocacy Ambassadors. We are still looking to recruit more Ambassadors to increase the volunteer base. Overall though, they are doing a fantastic job! Unfortunately, the Advocacy Coordinator has removed themselves from the position and I am rehiring. In the meantime, I am taking on additional planning tasks, which has been a challenge. As well, it may be challenging to transition a new coordinator into the role over half way through the year. However, I am certain whoever is hired will be able to overcome these challenges with me.

Warm regards,
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