

SCSN Review 2019

Service Mandate

The Student Community Support Network (SCSN) is a McMaster Student Union (MSU) service, which purpose is to develop and strengthen relationships between McMaster students and the various members of the community surrounding McMaster. This service also provides support to off-campus students including providing information, resources, programming, and community advocacy. They often collaborate with many community stakeholders including the Off-Campus Resource Center (OCOR), the Society of Off-Campus Students (SOCS), The Student Success Center, The Ainslie Wood and Westdale Community Association, The MSU Maroons, and other MSU Services.

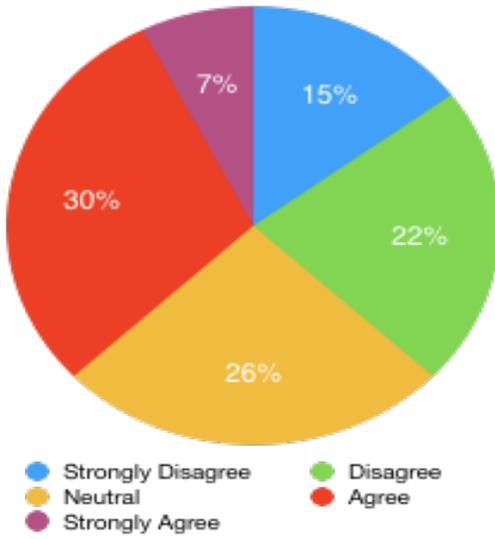
SCSN is led by a Part-Time Manager, who oversee all of the activities and initiatives held under the service. The executive team consists of the Volunteer Coordinator, Promotions Executive, the Social and Political Advocacy Coordinator, and the Events Coordinator. General volunteers are called "Community Connectors".

External Data

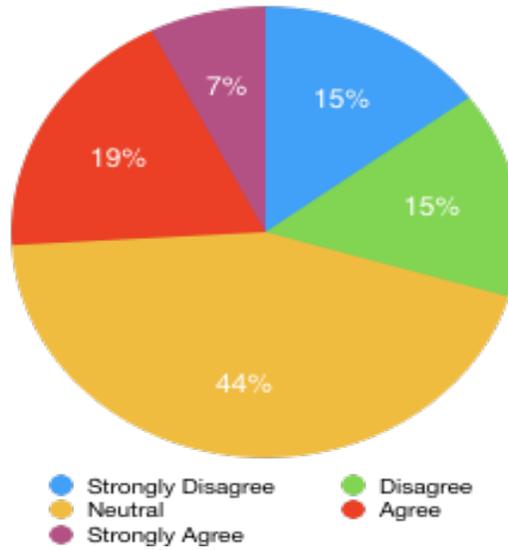
An online survey was open on the MSU website from February 21, 2019 to March 6th, 2019. Overall, 27 individuals filled out the survey. The majority of students were in fourth year off campus students living in student houses. The survey asked 18 questions regarding the service mandate and execution.

Overall respondents had mixed response when asked if SCSN is meeting their mandate. Only 37% of respondents agreed that SCSN was meeting their mandate in regard to "SCSN provides support to off-campus students including providing information, resources, programming, and community advocacy". While only 26% of respondents agreed that SCSN was meeting the second half of their operating policy "SCSN develops and strengthens relationships between McMaster students and the various members of the community surrounding McMaster".

SCSN provides support to off-campus students including providing information, resources, programming, and community advocacy



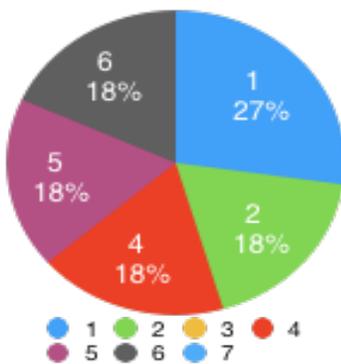
SCSN develops and strengthens relationships between McMaster students and the various members of the community surrounding McMaster



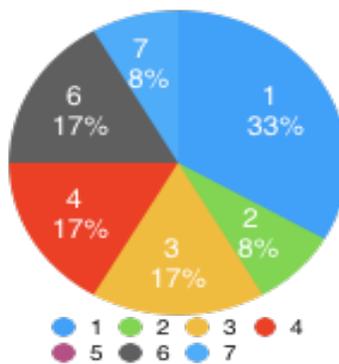
Taking a closer look, the data we can see what facets of SCSN student are uncomfortable with. Outlined below are the results from three questions revealing around interactions with the service. In the graphs below 1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree.

Overall, the majority of students either feels neutral or disagree with the statement. What is more staggering is the 15 responses for each response denoted that the “individual had never needed to engage with SCSN in that aspect”. This brings up an important question on how to make individuals feel comfortable engaging with SCSN and requires us to take a critical eye to SCSN’s mandates, and whether they are still serving a need in the community.

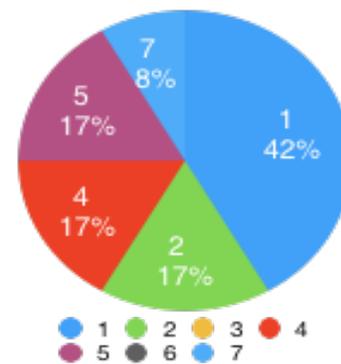
Do you feel comfortable interacting with SCSN when you have questions related exploring Hamilton?



Do you feel comfortable interacting with SCSN when you Have questions related housing by-laws?



Do you feel comfortable interacting with SCSN when you want to learn about how to get involved with the Hamilton community?



When asked about initiatives students would like to see SCSN undertake individuals suggested: community volunteer fairs, roommate network systems, housing workshops, and a landlord rating system. These functions are already done by other groups at McMaster, but it is apparent that there is a lack of awareness about them. Outlined below are other stakeholders that interact with the off-campus community at McMaster, and how their mandates compare to that of SCSN's.

Partners

Off-Campus Resource Centre

The off-campus resource centre is run by McMaster University in partnership with the Society of Off-Campus Students. They provide an off-campus housemate finder, landlord resources (such as information nights and landlord how-to's), and basic legal resources for students. This department has also joined with McMaster Residence Life to facilitate a new format for the Off-Campus welcome week. This partnership has also created a strong Mac/One program, providing another route for off-campus first years to connect to the McMaster Community.

Society of Off Campus Students

This McMaster group aims to help create community between off-campus students, though it does come with a sign-up fee. When looking at Western University, University of Waterloo, and University of Guelph, their off-campus community groups most resembled SOCS. These groups aim to provide off-campus students with a sense of community both on and off campus, with the separating factor between the two being the buy-in factor. With the student choice initiative, having two opt-in services focused on connecting the off-campus community proves to be redundant.

Other MSU Services: FYC and Maroons

The MSU Maroons have been joining with SCSN to facilitate events such as Skate Night and the SCSN Pumpkin Hike - both seeing continually high turnout. FYC has joined with SCSN to facilitate the off-campus housing information centre for first year students. The initiatives facilitated by these services also render SCSN in an event planning and community building aspect of SCSN redundant.

Student Success Centre

The Student Success Centre runs employment and volunteer fairs that focus on bringing in employers from the greater McMaster and Hamilton area. The SSC also runs extensive programming on volunteering and how to get involved in the local community.

Recommendations

1. The MSU should no longer operate SCSN as a service

SCSN is a service that has continually tried to find its scope and niche. Though great strides have been made to revamp the service, the inability to engage with the McMaster population has created a bloat that negatively impacts the ability of SCSN to efficiently educate students on off-campus living. There is a clear need and want for more education on tenant right and by-law campaigns; this is the heart of SCSN. High executive and volunteer turnover and redundancies with other University programs have dampened the ability of SCSN to educate on the values at its core.

Looking at the services, the community building aspect of the portfolio is being taken care of by other MSU services taking on a community engagement lens, SOCS, and the Mac/One program. As well, with community engagement becoming a Welcome Week strategic theme we will see the idea of engaging the greater Hamilton community become ingrained in McMaster culture. The MSU Maroons and FYC have been aiding SCSN with their events portfolio and are more than equipped to fully take on the “discover your city” event planning and engagement aspect. Still having this part of the SCSN portfolio is redundant. Removing this aspect of SCSN would leave the services to focus on off-campus community education. The question we have to ask is “does the warrant a service?”.

Services are created to fill the gaps, the needs the university is unable to meet. Yes, there is still a need to educate and support the off-campus McMaster community, but that need is inefficiently met by a service. This is why the committee suggests that the MSU no longer operate the Student Community Support Network.

Outlined below is the operating policy of SCSN, and how the relevant gaps will be filled with the dissolution of SCSN and the creation of the Community Education Coordinator (see recommendation two for clarification on this role).

2. The MSU should create a Community Education Coordinator to be housed under the MSU Education Department

It is suggested the MSU employ an Off-Campus Community Education Coordinator. This position would be similar role to the Community Engagement Coordinator, a position that was dissolved two years ago with

the creation of AVP Municipal Affairs. At the time of its dissolution, it was found that this Community Engagement Coordinator and SCSN played a reddened role as the AVP Municipal Affairs took over the municipal advocacy piece of the community engagement portfolio. We hope to revamp this role. In conversations the Vice-President (Education) of the MSU, they agree that folding the education initiatives that unique to SCSN into the AVP Municipal Affairs and the Advocacy Coordinator roles may result in the inanities being forgone or lost in the shuffle. By creating a position responsible for educating student on matters relating to off-campus housing, we can ensure that these mandates are still met within the communities transfer from the admission department to the education department.

The committee believes that education initiatives and campaigns do not require a full service to ensure they are properly researched and implemented. By removing the community building needs that are being met by other university facets, SCSN is left as an education body. The committee believes that this can be done far more efficiently by one individual who operates within the Education team. Similar to the Advocacy Coordinator role, this role would be housed under the education team. Giving the them access to the Advocacy Promotions and Logistics Coordinator, as well as the AVP Municipal Affairs will allow them to work in-tandem with position that have similar roles, creating a more holistic and seamless off-campus advocacy and education initiatives. More information on this role can be found under suggestions two.

The revamped role would incorporate important aspects of the SCSN Social and Political Advocacy Coordinator roles, who's main objective was to research and create campaigns that focused on education students on issues surrounding off-campus living. This would include by-law awareness campaign, community clean ups, and tenant rights campaigns. These are initiatives that are unique to SCSN and are at the heart of the services. The committee has been unable to find another stockholder that caters to these essential needs. By having one individual who operating under the Education department take on these campaigns not only can we ensure that these communities are still catered to in an efficient and effective way, we can better support this individual by allowing them easier access individuals who operate in similar scopes (such as the VP Education, the AVP Municipal Affairs, the Advocacy Promotions Coordinator, and the Advocacy Logistics Coordinator).

Overall, it is clear the SCSN mandates is still relevant today; the off-campus community still requires support in the form of education about by-law, rights, and functioning within the surrounding McMaster community. By giving a voice to these needs through the Off-Campus Community Education Coordinator we can ensure that the interests of the off-campus community

are still held in high importance in a more efficient and effective manner than SCSN was able to do.

Attached to this report is a draft job description for the Off-Off-Campus Community Education Coordinator for context to the mandate and impact of this role.

2.a) A portion of the SCSN budget should go be allocated to the education department to support the expanded scope of the Education Department.

3. The “Discover your City” Events Function of SCSN should be moved to the MSU Maroons

This will be expanded upon in the Maroons Review. The MSU Maroons will be mandated to carry out four “discover your city” events a year, two per semester. The objective will be to connect students to the greater Hamilton community. The Maroons already play a large role in these events, making the transfer of reasonability seamless.

Appendix

A. Operating Policy – how the operating policy mandates will still be filled in other places within the MSU and/or University

Operating Policy for SCSN

2.1 SCSN will cater to all students in the greater McMaster community, which includes the immediate surrounding areas, such as Ainslie-Wood and Westdale, as well as those areas from where students commute;

The new Off-Campus Education Coordinator will be mandated to serve the immediate surrounding areas through education related to aiding students as they function with and integrating into surrounding communities. Holistically, all of our services aim to service the greater off campus community whether it be through food drive, Discover your City sessions, or other community engagement centred initiatives. The MSU Education team, specifically the Associate Vice President (Municipal Affairs), also strives to provide support to off campus students through municipal advocacy. At the university level, the Off-Campus Resource Centre, the Society of Off-Campus Students and the Student Success Centre are also well equipped to provide niche support to off-off-campus students. The committee does not believe rescinding will SCSN cause off-campus students in the surrounding McMaster community to be left without support.

2.2 SCSN shall be a completely student-run service dedicated to improving the image of McMaster students in the community, providing support for off-campus students, and education on municipal bylaws and community engagement initiatives;

We will be dividing this mandate into two. The proposed Off-Campus Community Education Coordinator will work to educate and provide support to off campus students through education campaigns and providing a student voice at a community level. The MSU Maroons will be mandated to create and execute four 'discover your city' events (two a semester) in aims to engage students in community initiatives and events. Through these practices, the MSU will continue to improve the image of McMaster students in the Hamilton Community.

2.3 SCSN shall facilitate training sessions for the Community Connectors before the end of September;

Though attempts have been made to redefine the Community Connector role to make it more engaging, SCSN has not been able to attract and retain volunteers in this role for several years. Their main function was to act as a support function that these volunteers provided to the SCSN executive team will be mimicked by engaging the education department with the MSU Maroons when needed. This has proven to be an effective strategy thus far for the Education Team.

2.4 SCSN shall work with various University departments and relevant stakeholders to ensure a high quality of student life within the community;

2.5 SCSN shall represent McMaster students on relevant University, municipal, or community committees, in coordination with the MSU President, the Vice-President (Education), and the Associate Vice President Municipal Affairs;

Collaboration and communication with relevant stakeholders will move to the Off-Campus Community Education Coordinator, as they will work in tandem with the AVP Municipal Affairs and the Vice-President Education to ensure that the voices of Off-Campus Community is heard on the Ansilewood and Westdale Community Association, the Neighbourhood Advisory Council and other relevant bodies. The Off-Campus Community Education Coordinator will also be matted to remain in contact with the Ward One councillor, relevant city official, the OCRC, SOCS, the SSC and other relevant bodies.

2.6 SCSN shall work collaboratively with McMaster's Off-Campus Resource Centre to facilitate and disseminate services to off-campus students;

Similar to 2.2, this function will be taken over by the Off-Campus Community Education Coordinator, with the MSU Maroons aiding in the facilitation of relevant information as well.

2.7 SCSN shall work collaboratively with the Society of Off-Campus Students and the Commuter in Residence Experience (CoRE) program to coordinate events and programming to engage off campus students;

The Commuter On-Campus Residence Experience program is functioning under the name Mac/One. SCSN has not been a liaison with this community, as the Off-Campus Community Advisors and MSU First Year Council provided the support necessary to engage of campus students first year students. MSU FYC and Mac/One have both seen fantastic engagement, making SCSNs role with redundant. If collaboration between McMaster Residence Life, SOCS, and the off-campus first year experience the Off-Campus Community Education Coordinator act as a liaison.

2.8 SCSN shall assist in the creation and maintenance of a landlord rating system

The landlord rating system was created and is maintained by the MSU Education Department, specifically by the AVP Municipal Affairs, AVP University Affairs, and the VP Education.

B. Proposed job description outlining the recommended position of the Off-Campus Community Education Coordinator



JOB DESCRIPTION

Hourly Staff

Position Title: Off-Campus Community Education Coordinator

Term of Office: May 1 - April 30

Supervisor: Vice-President (Education)

Remuneration: Under Review

Hours of Work: Under Review

General Scope of Duties

The Off-Campus Community Education Coordinator is responsible to assist in the coordination and development of initiatives between the Hamilton community, McMaster University, and the MSU. They will also perform research on issues surrounding the Hamilton Community, McMaster University and the MSU. Research gathered will be used in policy papers, reports, advocacy works and to support projects related to community engagement. The Off-Campus Community Education Coordinator will also represent the MSU's community

engagement interests within McMaster University and the City of Hamilton at the direction of the Vice-President (Education).

Major Duties and Responsibilities		
Category	Percent	Specifics
Research Function	30%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Keep current on community-based issues between the MSU, McMaster University and the Hamilton community ▪ Develop and conduct surveys and focus groups for data collection as required ▪ Prepare briefing notes and reports as directed by the Vice-President (Education) ▪ Assist the Vice-President (Education) in collecting primary and secondary research for any relevant projects related to the advocacy work at the Hamilton community level ▪ Summarize and analyze research results and findings in a user-friendly way ▪ Circulate information to all relevant parties

Communications Function	30%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Attend and advocate for student needs at community meetings and municipal meetings (including but not limited to Off -Campus Experience, PACCR, and the Community Accountability Program committees AWWCA meetings, City Hall) ▪ Maintain relations with community figures and groups (e.g. Ward 1 Councillor, AWWCA, OCRC, and SOCS) ▪ Research and stay updated on current events related to municipal advocacy ▪ Collaborate with other relevant campus groups ▪ Maintain strong communication with the Vice-President (Education), Associate Vice President (Municipal Affairs), and other members of the Education & Advocacy Department ▪ Support projects and initiatives related to student life and community engagement at the direction of the Vice-President (Education)
Education and Events Function	30%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Assist other members of the MSU with community engagement initiatives ▪ Act as the primary point of contact for Off-Campus Community education campaigns ▪ Work with the McMaster and Hamilton community to generate ideas for Off-Campus Community Educational events and campaigns ▪ Handle space bookings and other logistical items associated with campaigns ▪ Fill out the appropriate event risk management forms ▪ Work with other campus groups and stakeholders to facilitate collaborative initiatives
Other	10%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Other duties as directed by the Vice-President (Education) ▪ Attend community events as an MSU representative as required

Knowledge, Skills and Abilities

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- Excellent writing skills, including proofreading and editing
 - Capacity for research, consultation, and analysis of data
 - Knowledge of issues within the Hamilton community
 - Knowledge of groups working towards improving the relationship between McMaster and the Hamilton community
 - Interpersonal skills required in order to set up focus groups and survey people as required
 - Strong verbal communication skills

Effort & Responsibility

- Ability to work independently
- Ability to carry out research projects from start to finish
- Working within deadlines on a regular basis

Working Conditions

- Hours of work are extremely variable
- Time demands may exceed stated hours of work
- Access to shared work space in the MSU Committee Room

Training and Experience

- Previous research experience an asset
- Previous work with and within the Hamilton community an asset
- Understanding of the working and role of the MSU an asset
- Understanding of how to engage students with the surrounding community

Equipment

- Use of personal computer preferred
- Shared office computer available