



# REPORT

*From the office of the...*

## Arts and Science Caucus

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TO: Members of the Student Representative Assembly  
 FROM: Tasneem Warwani, SRA Arts and Science Caucus Leader  
 SUBJECT: Final Year Report  
 DATE: March 25, 2019

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Hi all!

Congratulations on a phenomenal year! I can't believe we're already done, and I'm so grateful to have served on an assembly with you all this year. I've provided a summary of my platform points from the year, and the progress on my projects.

Something I've noticed consistently this year is how difficult it can be to be a one-person caucus with seats on several committees, while still trying to complete projects outlined in my year plan. This was made especially challenging given that I was working with people who were not always willing to meet or listen to new ideas. I ran into several roadblocks all year which made achieving many of my goals difficult. In addition to this, I realized many of my goals were long-term advocacy pieces that were not always achievable in one term. I do believe I've set the foundation for the incoming SRA rep to continue advocating, and I hope they can complete some of this year's goals as well as their own platform.

Objective 1	Collaborating with other faculty societies for networking events and academic resources	Progress
Description	Last year, Sunny introduced the idea of ArtSci specific networking events. With no ArtSci career department, and students who typically have no idea what they want to do post-undergrad, navigating the real world can be overwhelming. However, Sunny struggled with this platform point because ArtScis have a plethora of interests, and with an interdisciplinary program as well as the opportunity to do a combined honours degree, hosting a networking event that appealed to everyone proved to be tough. In the past year, with the introduction of the ArtSci New World of Work forum, some good progress has been made,	This year, I reached out to the World of Work forum to see if they wanted to collaborate. However, they had their own vision in mind for the year, and the conference was being held on the same weekend as OUSA, so we were unable to collaborate. This is something I hope next

	<p>but it's not enough. There's a necessity to integrate better with other program societies and faculties that already host ArtScis as part of a combined honours degree. This will allow us to organize targeted networking opportunities, outreach to successful McMaster graduates who aren't just ArtScis for the World of Work forum, and help ArtScis feel included in the academic communities they're joining.</p>	<p>year can continue.</p>
<p><b>Benefits</b></p>	<p>The running joke in the Arts and Science program is that we don't know what we want to do – not now, nor in the future. As students with many interests who study many subjects, it can be hard to find our interests and to learn how to market ourselves. Both these tasks could be made easier if we had more opportunities to network, but there usually aren't Artsci targeted networking events because of the size of our program, and we're often unaware of networking events held by other faculties. Ideally, by hosting these co-faculty networking events, we can strengthen the relationships between faculties and help ArtScis feel more welcome on campus. Networking opportunities are great in helping students identify potential career pathways, and learn about new opportunities available. They can also be potential avenues to learn about internship opportunities and job applications. Furthermore, with the current push for experiential learning, exposure to different careers and opportunities is an integral part of the university experience that we should always be looking to improve, and this is one way to do so.</p>	
<p><b>Difficulties</b></p>	<p>To integrate better with the other program societies on campus, and to host co-run networking events will prove to be logistically difficult. It'll require a lot of communication and planning. The work that is required to host such events must also prove to be worth it for students (i.e., students must actually be engaged and learn from it), in order to solidify such events for the future and one day create a network that we can easily draw on.</p>	

<b>Long-term implications</b>	Integrating ArtScis into the faculties where they're completing a combined honours, and providing ArtScis with more networking opportunities helps better prepare ArtScis for the real world. This is a value proposition that is often overlooked in the ArtSci program, with no co-op program or career office; this is a step in the right direction towards establishing either one or both of those things.	
<b>How?</b>	Collaborate with faculty societies that ArtScis often do a combined honours in as well as with the New World of Work Forum planners and ArtSci Director to identify ways in which we co-run and develop these networking opportunities.	
<b>Partners</b>	<p><b>ArtSci Director</b>  <b>Faculty of Science</b>  <b>Faculty of Humanities</b>  <b>Faculty of Social Sciences</b></p> <p>The above faculties are the faculties in which ArtSci students typically double major.</p> <p><b>ArtSci New World of Work Forum planners</b>  (the World of Work forum introduces current ArtScis to former ArtScis in an attempt to showcase different post-grad paths. It also introduces ArtScis to the changing workplace environment and jobs of tomorrow. More info can be found here:  <a href="https://artsci.mcmaster.ca/new-world-work-forum/">https://artsci.mcmaster.ca/new-world-work-forum/</a>)</p>	

<b>Objective 2</b>	<b>Revamping the Arts and Science Society website (sassweb.ca) to feature academic resources and an MSU Know How guide</b>	Progress
<b>Description</b>	In the past two years, sassweb (our ArtSci Society website) has been largely unused. We'll log into it to vote for our Student Society, and it's forgotten about for the rest of the year. If used effectively, it could be a really great resource for all ArtScis, with centralized information that takes away the pain of combing through the four different Facebook groups we're part of. It also presents a great opportunity to have an SRA	Initial conversations began for this. However, I was unable to sit in on SASSex meeting due to conflicting commitments so it was difficult to pursue. This is something I will encourage them to continue working on next

	<p>platform that can be a little more detailed than the typical Facebook posts, and can include documents (like this year plan or an MSU How to Guide) that people can look at whenever they want.</p> <p>(An MSU How to Guide would identify acronyms often used in the MSU, how to get involved, where to find applications, how to run an election, etc.)</p>	year.
<b>Benefits</b>	<p>By improving the website, we can create an online archive of all SRA documents. Rather than having to comb through all the Facebook posts or Tweets, people can go on the website and easily access anything they wish to see. Using sassweb rather than the MSU website also makes the accessing of information less daunting because of the fun humour sassweb uses. An MSU How to Guide on sassweb also reaches out to the students who typically aren't involved with the MSU, and helps them break down the information barrier that can exist in trying to be part of the MSU. Revamping the website to feature academic resources also helps with accessibility for students. This would be a centralized place students can choose to post their own class notes, elective recommendations etc., which helps foster a more tight knit and inclusive community.</p>	
<b>Difficulties</b>	<p>Revamping a website is a lot of work, and might take longer than a year. Since I have no coding experience, it'll also require whoever is running the website this year to be on board with putting in extra work. In addition, we'll have to brainstorm new ways to drive traffic to the website because part of the problem is that people just don't use it or know about it. I think that making it a more useful resource might solve the people not wanting to use it problem, and effectively advertising the revamp could spark interest in visiting the website.</p>	
<b>Long-term implications</b>	<p>Revamping sassweb gives ArtScis a place to call our own (one that isn't just a Facebook group). The ability to archive all the information posted, whether that's SRA related documents or academic related information, will come in handy</p>	

	for years. The other great thing is that it truly does foster a more inclusive community – not everyone has Facebook, sometimes people choose to deactivate, and it’s not fair that they’re missing out on information. Sassweb is available to all students enrolled in ArtSci, so it encourages a more tight knit community.	
<b>How?</b>	Consult with the Faculty of Science and the Faculty of Health Sciences on how they designed their society specific websites. They each have great components in their respective websites that ArtSci can learn from. Using this information, and perhaps a survey to ArtScis to see what they want to get out of a website, I can work with the webmaster to redesign the website and the content available on it.	
<b>Partners</b>	<b>SASSex</b> <b>Faculty of Science</b> (they have a great website) <b>Faculty of Health Sciences</b> (they have great academic resources on Learn Link)	

<b>Objective 3</b>	<b>Lobbying for Arts and Science students to have a more student focused space</b>	Progress
<b>Description</b>	Before my time, the Arts and Science office was available for ArtSci students to use past office hours. However, that’s no longer the case, and ArtScis have no place to call our own past office hours. Most faculties have rooms they can book in advance, and book outside of office hours (e.g., Engineers have Hatch, HealthScis have HSL and their lounge, iScis have their room in Thode, Humanities and SocScis have LR Wilson). ArtScis have their office in LR Wilson but are still turned away from booking LR Wilson study rooms (even if they’re doing a combined honours in Humanities or Social Science). ArtScis deserve a space that they can access until at least 7pm (when the last class of the day starts), and it would be great if we could also get a space that we can book in advance.	My SRA observer, Angel, began the initial lobbying process for this. She’s the incoming SRA representative so this aligns really well for continuation!
<b>Benefits</b>	Having a place outside office hours (at least until the last class starts) and a place to book in advance helps foster a tight knit academic	

	community. It gives ArtScis a place to go to bond, to ask for academic help, and to work on projects together.	
<b>Difficulties</b>	The ArtSci space also features the offices of the academic advisors and director, so it may be a liability issue. However, steps can be made to regulate how the space is used and rules can be put in place. It may be hard to get access to LR Wilson study rooms due to the sheer number of people who than be using the rooms. However, there are very few ArtScis so it's not a drastic jump in number of people.	
<b>Long-term implications</b>	In the long term, this helps foster a better community and academic environment. It's a small thing that will help ArtScis feel more attached to campus.	
<b>How?</b>	Meeting with the ArtSci director to see if they're willing to keep the space open longer and the logistics of how that would work. Also meeting with the Humanities Office to see if it would be possible to include ArtScis in the students who can book LR Wilson rooms.	
<b>Partners</b>	<b>Director of ArtSci</b> <b>Faculty of Humanities</b> <b>Humanities Academic Advising Office</b> (they regulate the booking of LR Wilson Undergrad Study Rooms, where the ArtSci office is located) <b>SASSex</b>	

<b>Objective 4</b>	<b>Advocating for a student voice in ArtSci professor meetings</b>	Progress
<b>Description</b>	Relative to most programs, the Arts and Science program is small. In first and second year, most of our courses are mandatory ArtSci specific courses. Yet, midterms tend to overlap, and there are no opportunities – except for an end of year written class evaluation – to express our academic concerns. ArtSci profs meet once a term, and in the past, there used to be a student voice at these meeting. However, there no longer is one. It's important that we advocate to bring	Completed! In my meetings with Dr. Wilson, she expressed that this was also important to her. As long as next year's SASSex ensures to follow up and reminds the ArtSci office of their promise to engage students in these

	<p>this seat back for two major reasons. First, there should be no reason for ArtSci courses to have midterms on the same day. Many of our professors have expressed their apologies when they find out they've accidentally double booked us, and said they would have avoided it had they known earlier. If we have a student voice in professor meetings, we can remind professors to communicate midterm dates amongst one another, to avoid double booking midterms. If needed, the student can facilitate such a process. Second, there should be a way for students to express their academic concerns to professors in a collaborative way (not just via a written form). As a small program, there are so many opportunities for us to continuously improve the academic experience, and encouraging open communication is an easy first step to take.</p>	<p>meetings, it should happen.</p>
<p><b>Benefits</b></p>	<p>Encouraging professors to communicate and better plan midterm dates help reduce academic stress for students, which is important for better mental health. This also allows for students to express their concerns in a productive manner as the frustration with written evaluations is that it often seems like nothing's ever done. Meetings help with accountability and ensuring our professors are listening to what we have to say.</p>	
<p><b>Difficulties</b></p>	<p>Sometimes, professors discuss private matters, so a student cannot be there. However, this concern can be mitigated by scheduling a portion of time in which the student can attend, and having the student leave after their scheduled time. Midterms also typically fall in the same weeks for the entire university just based on how course content is taught, but this should not mean that professors should not make the effort to make student lives easier. If the pushback is that it creates too much work for professors, we can formulate a solution that involves a student helping facilitate the process.</p>	
<p><b>Long-term implications</b></p>	<p>Encouraging for student voices at professor meetings sets the precedent that students should take charge of their educational experience. It encourages ArtScis to be more engaged in the way they learn. We're always taught to question</p>	

	<p>everything, and look for ways to improve current processes, and this extends the classroom learning we do to real life. It shows that ArtSci cares about their students, and creates an environment that's more conducive to learning. It also helps with improving the program over the years. ArtSci may be a great program, but there's always new information, and changes to the way we learn, so it's important we're proactively keeping up with that.</p>	
<b>How?</b>	<p>During the summer, I'll be emailing all first and second year professors to encourage open communication between them about midterm dates. The first step during the school year will be to set up a meeting with the program advisors (who currently aren't giving the jurisdiction to do much) to see their plans for the year and how they wish to execute them. Setting up a meeting with the Director of ArtSci to advocate for a student seat at professor meetings would be the next step.</p>	
<b>Partners</b>	<p><b>Director of ArtSci</b>  <b>Program Advisors on SASSEx</b>  <b>ArtSci specific professors</b></p>	

<b>Objective 5</b>	<p><b>Lobbying for ArtSci specific courses to be podcasted or recorded, and for professors to make their lecture slides or notes available online</b></p>	Progress
<b>Description</b>	<p>At the moment, most ArtSci professors fail to post lectures slides or notes online, so if you miss class, you're banking on someone being kind enough to share their notes with you. This is an accessibility and inclusivity concern; people can't always make it to class for various reasons. Sometimes, people need to revisit what was said in class. Podcasted or recorded classes, as well as lecture notes being posted online help with creating a more inclusive community.</p>	<p>In progress. I had initial conversations with our program office about increasing podcasting/recording in classes. I was also working on this through the University Affairs committee. This is a long term advocacy goal that next year will also need to advocate on!</p>
<b>Benefits</b>	<p>Students can revisit content their misunderstood or couldn't hear in class if it's recorded. If</p>	

	students miss a class due to unforeseen circumstances, they can still access the information they missed easily, without having to bug people to share their notes. In addition, people learn in different ways, and this helps ensure that for people who don't learn by being lectured at for three hours straight with no accompanying visuals are also being supported.	
<b>Difficulties</b>	Professors sometimes push back with concerns of students not attending class. This can easily be solved by implementing a participation component to the class. However, this also has some accessibility concerns, so it cannot be the only solution they implement. Professors worried about academic property and copyright can go through the Legal and Copyright Office at McMaster who have previously expressed willingness to help professors add clauses in their course outlines regarding academic property.	
<b>Long-term implications</b>	Podcasted and recorded classes foster a more inclusive environment. Students often face unforeseen circumstances, and they should not be punished academically for this. Podcasted/recorded classes and posted lecture notes will improve the academic experience, and will help ArtSci work towards being a program focused on having a positive and healthy environment.	
<b>How?</b>	This project will be worked on with the AVP University Affairs and UA Committee as this is one of their goals for the year. There's also been lots of research done by the Science Caucus, and MacPherson that can also be drawn on. All this information can then be taken to the ArtSci Director and ArtSci professors.	
<b>Partners</b>	<b>AVP University Affairs</b> <b>Science Caucus</b> <b>MacPherson Institute</b> <b>ArtSci Director</b>	

<b>Objective 6</b>	<b>Advocating for the Arts and Science supplementary application to be name-blind</b>	Progress
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<b>Description</b>	The Arts and Science program is one of three programs at McMaster that requires a supplementary application. These applications are read over by faculty administration as well as upper year Arts and Science students. Of the three supplementary requiring programs, the Arts and Science program is the only one that does not currently name-blind the application. While there are some measures in place to ensure a fair process, such as multiple scorers, in order to ensure that the application is completely equitable and fair, it is necessary for the application to be name-blind.	Complete! I'm so excited that Arts and Science now has anonymized supplementary applications, and I look forward to seeing how this changes the diversity of the program in the coming years 😊
<b>Benefits</b>	With a name-blind application, we can ensure that the process is as equitable as possible. It reduces the risk of any nepotism or prejudice against culturally diverse names. A name-blind application also ensures that all the supplementary requiring programs are judged in a similar way, and provides the ArtSci program with greater legitimacy	
<b>Difficulties</b>	This has been a project that many past SASSex presidents have tried to take on, but have been unable to accomplish. It may also be difficult for this goal to be accomplish for this year's application because of the length of time such a project may take.	
<b>Long-term implications</b>	In the long run, this is a small step towards making the Arts and Science program as equitable as possible.	
<b>How?</b>	In order to show that a non non-blind application can result in biases (whether intended or not), it'll be important to be present research. I also intend to consult with the Dean of HealthSci and Director of iSci to discuss why they chose to make their supplementary applications name-blind. All this information can than be presented to the Director of the Arts and Science program, and we can discuss how we collaboratively want to move forward.	
<b>Partners</b>	<b>Director of ArtSci</b> <b>Provost</b> <b>SASSex</b> <b>VP Education</b>	

	<b>Deans/Directors of HealthSci and iSci</b>	
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<b>Objective 7</b>	<b>Participating in the implementation of programs in response to the ArtSci Health and Wellness survey results</b>	Progress
<b>Description</b>	Last year, the ArtSci office formed a board to discuss the creation, deliverance, and implementation of Health and Wellness based projects. They released a survey, and intend to discuss the results of this survey and identify areas and ways in which the ArtSci program can improve. I hope to gain a seat on this board, and be able to bring ideas that the MSU or faculties currently use. With the provincial government's allocation of more money for universities to target mental health campaigns and projects, this will be a huge focus of the coming year.	This is something I was unable to get a chance to work on at all due to timeline. In addition, I did not hear of any progress being made on this project within the office either.
<b>Benefits</b>	While there is currently a student who sits on this board, I think it's important to have an SRA presence as well to bring forward and discuss the ways in which the MSU is trying to help improve health and wellness on campus. Many ArtScis have spoken of struggles they've had within the university regarding health accommodations, so it's important to see how we can better improve the experience for our students. As a small faculty, the ArtSci program should be at the forefront of mental health initiatives and should be the model for other faculties in the support it provides for its students. This, however, can only happen with student voices on board.	
<b>Difficulties</b>	It may be difficult to implement these programs or initiatives this year. The board, having been established last year, has already done a lot of work, so it may require an adjustment and catch up period as well. Lastly, there may be push back on including another seat on this board for fear of it becoming too large of a group. This push back may focus on the fact that there is already is one student seat on the board, but I think that the	

	value and perspective an SRA presence brings outweighs these concerns.	
<b>Long-term implications</b>	Health and Wellness has recently been a major focus of the government, as well as the university. We're slowly pushing for changes that reduce the unnecessary bodily and mental stress that university can sometimes cause. The survey that was released within ArtSci as a first step to addressing health concerns in the program was exactly that, a good first step. However, it's not enough, and the way that the survey results will be approached in the next year will set a precedent for how ArtSci values its students. If the initiatives implemented are strong and not just band-aid solutions, it'll help improve the ArtSci experience as a whole, creating a stronger community culture. This creates students who will maintain their connections with the program post-grad because they look back on their experience in it fondly.	
<b>How?</b>	The first step is joining the board that discusses the implementation of initiatives to address health and wellness concerns identified from the survey. In order to ensure well thought out solutions, I think it's important to consult with groups like SHEC and Maccess who deal with health and wellness concerns on campus, and have research that identifies best practices. The MSU policy on health and wellness is another great resource to access as well. Other conversations can be held with Rosanne Kent from the Student Wellness Centre, to seek a professional view on best practices for health and wellness initiatives, as well as to identify if ArtSci concerns are similar to the concerns of the student body as a whole.	
<b>Partners</b>	<b>SHEC</b> <b>Rosanne Kent - SWELL</b> <b>Director of ArtSci</b> <b>Maccess</b> <b>SASSex President</b>	

Lastly, I'd like to point out that through continuous postings, emails, and engagement with constituents, I believe that I've worked towards establishing a well-known presence for the SRA within ArtSci. I saw a lot

more students engage with the SRA and MSU than we have in the past, and I strongly believe that the (relatively) large candidate pool was a product of this!

With that, I am so humbled to have served as the 2018-2019 SRA Arts and Science. It's been a fulfilling experience, and I look forward to seeing all the incredible things Angel accomplishes next year.

Yours Truly,



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