



REPORT

From the office of the...

AVP Provincial & Federal Affairs

TO: Student Representative Assembly
 FROM: Urszula Sitarz, AVP Provincial & Federal Affairs
 SUBJECT: SRA 18P Year End Report
 DATE: Submitted March 19, 2019

Dearest Assembly,

It has been such a pleasure working with all of you this year. As I'm writing this, I'm thinking about the moment I first found out that I was hired to be the AVP Provincial & Federal Affairs in 2017. Almost two years later, I can't believe what a journey this has been. Half of my undergrad has been dedicated to working with such a dedicated group of students to improve post-secondary education at home, in Hamilton, in Ontario, and across Canada.

I have had endless positive experiences, with several hiccups of course, but overall, this has been such a wonderful opportunity of change and growth. I thank you all from the very bottom of my heart for your patience, contributions, kindness, and for having faith in me. Together, we have so much to be proud of.

I wish you all the best of luck in your future endeavours! I can't wait to see the impact you have on your future communities.

Warmest regards,

Urszula

PROGRESS ON YEAR PLAN

Objective 1	UCRU Budget Submission in Advance of Budget 2020	Updates
Description	On behalf of the Undergraduates of Canadian Research-Intensive Universities, the Provincial and Federal Affairs Committee will prepare a Budget Submission to the federal Standing Committee on Finance in advance of Budget 2020.	As UCRU continues to develop and formalize, it's important to adapt. The UCRU executive decided that it would be best to do the 2020 Budget submission within the organization once we have set a longer term vision, outlined policy stances, and created more formal structures.
Benefits	An official budget submission to the Finance Committee is the most direct method of advocacy at the Federal level. Submissions are reviewed by the	

	committee, with the possibility to present the submission to the committee. As an experienced writer of federal budget submissions and policy knowledge, the Provincial and Federal Affairs Committee is well-suited for this task.	Unfortunately, this means that PFA wasn't able to take on this exciting task.
Difficulties	The Fall 2019 Federal Election creates some uncertainty in advance of Budget 2020; however, our evidence-based methodology provides strong arguments for our recommendations.	
How?	After UCRU Lobbying Week 2018 in Ottawa, the UCRU Steering Committee will decide on the recommendations to be put forth in the Pre-Budget 2020 Submission. This project will be completed in the Winter term, with ample time for the outgoing executives to review and revise the submission.	
Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provincial & Federal Affairs Committee • UCRU Steering Committee 	

Objective 2	Plan and execute #textbookbroke campaign with OUSA	Updates
Description	After the inaugural #textbookbroke campaign in Winter 2018, we will run the campaign in September 2018. In partnership with OUSA, the Campus Store, and McMaster's OER Committee, we are encouraging professors to adopt/adapt OERs while raising awareness of the eCampus Ontario textbook library. The key messages of this campaign are: informing students of OERs and the textbook library, which is ideally searched before students purchase their textbooks; that OERs are peer-reviewed, quality, and adaptable; and that open textbooks can reduce the financial barrier of textbooks. Following up with professors will be a key part of this campaign to ensure that they feel supported and have the resources necessary to adopt Open Resources in their classroom.	The OER campaign was such a success! Running the campaign at the beginning of the school brought great awareness to their existence and brought a lot of participation from students. OERs will continue to be a hot-topic, especially with the dedication from the MacPherson Institute and Dr. Anderson from the Department of Linguistics. Dr. Anderson published an introductory linguistics textbook (an OER) this year and is an excellent champion for open education on campus. The committee, the Ed Team, and the SRA were the reason that this campaign was a success! From online
Benefits	The second #textbookbroke campaign in one calendar year will build on the momentum built from the first campaign. As different partners become more	

	invested in OERs, such as the MacPherson Institute and the librarians, Open Access will become more prevalent at McMaster.	campaigning to tabling, both outside the campus store and during the Homecoming festival, the campaign would not have succeeded without all of you!
Difficulties	As this campaign occurs at the beginning of the school year, we won't have our Advocacy Ambassador volunteer base. We will have to rely on the members of our Education Team Standing Committees. This means that our volunteer base is smaller, but it is quite dedicated.	
How?	Through the OUSA campaign package and working with our partners, we will develop a tabling schedule for the week of September 10-14 and social media schedule from September 10-21. We will adapt the OUSA resources and work with the Campus Store to best suit the campaign to McMaster.	
Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VP Education Stephanie Bertolo • OUSA • Advocacy Coordinator Elisha Martin • Campus Store • MacPherson Institute 	

Objective 3	Preparation for Federal Election 2019	Updates
Description	In Winter term, the committee will prepare for the MacVotes campaign to be run during Fall 2019. In partnership with our Advocacy Coordinator Elisha Martin we will design the campaign, including any advanced logistical problems, including an on-campus voting booth, candidates' debate, and so on.	PFA and our advocacy coordinator Josh Marando are working to ensure that the federal #MacVotes campaign is budgeted for and has a framework for our successors to inherit. Some of the proposed ideas include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A candidates' debate - Debate-watching parties in the MUSC atrium/in lecture halls - Heavy physical promotion through posters, stickers, buttons, etc. - And so much more!
Benefits	The 2019 Federal Election will be in October at the latest and to be best prepared, it is important to start planning early. This provides ample time to be well-prepared, especially if the election is called earlier than expected. The 2015 Federal election was largely decided by the youth vote. A high youth voter turnout is incredibly important for our advocacy efforts and a well-run campaign greatly helps with that.	
Difficulties	To ensure that the next AVP Provincial & Federal Affairs and Advocacy Coordinator have autonomy, the	

	campaign plan will have a great deal of flexibility.	
How?	I have experience planning MacVotes and in partnership with Stephanie, Elisha, and the committee, we will develop a campaign outline by the later half of the Winter term.	
Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • McMaster Elections Committee • VP Education Stephanie Bertolo • Advocacy Coordinator Elisha Martin • MSU Communications Department 	

Objective 4	Student Perceptions of Data Collection	Updates
Description	Use the survey developed by the 2017-2018 Provincial and Federal Affairs Committee to determine student perceptions of data collection, particularly with regard to demographic data. The data from this survey will be compiled into a report.	During the Fall term, PFA in collaboration with the MSU and SRA social media accounts, promoted our survey on student perceptions of data collection. The survey was open for over a month and collected more than a hundred responses from a diverse audience. With the other projects that were wrapping up in first term, we decided to push the analysis and report-writing of the survey results to second term. Takhliq, one of our wonderful research assistants, has worked hard over the Winter term along with three PFA committee members to analyse the data and finalize the report.
Benefits	The report that results from the survey can be used to support lobbying efforts for data collection with the Ontario Education Number (OEN).	
Difficulties	The future uses of the report will be determined by the outcome of the survey. Student mistrust in data collection speaks to a greater problem and will require further understanding of where the mistrust comes from and how to gain trust.	
How?	The survey questions were written by past committee members, but the Education Team should be consulted on them before the survey is released. Work with the Underground, Stephanie, and the advocacy team to promote the survey. Leave the survey open for approximately three weeks (or have it open for a while and do promotions at different times).	
Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MSU Education Team • The Underground • Advocacy Coordinator Elisha Martin • Education Team Research Assistants 	

Objective 5	Plan and execute OUSA Experiential Education campaign	Updates Unfortunately, given the province's announcements to introduce the Student Choice Initiative and the cuts to OSAP, OUSA decided to not go through with this campaign. We were in favouring of cancelling the campaign given the circumstances. PFA had done some brainstorming around an experiential education campaign, which will go in the Education Team OneDrive for future years.
Description	OUSA is executing an Experiential Education campaign in the Winter term and to prepare for it, our committee will map out what experiential education looks like at McMaster. This will highlight gaps in opportunities and successes across campus. The information will be used in the campaign to inform students of the opportunities available to them, as well as in lobbying efforts to reduce the gaps.	
Benefits	Experiential education is an incredibly important part of the current post-secondary landscape and with the current government, employability is a critical outcome of post-secondary education.	
Difficulties	There are significant gaps in experiential education at McMaster and highlighting these gaps can be difficult. Further, reducing the gaps is a lengthy process. However, the gaps cannot be closed without understanding them and where they come from.	
How?	The committee will complete a report, which will involve student testimony and consultation with faculty partners. We will work with Elisha, our Advocacy Coordinator, and with OUSA to prepare for the campaign execution on campus.	
Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • McMaster Experiential Education Offices • OUSA • Advocacy Coordinator Elisha Martin 	

Objective 6	Metrolinx and Provincial Transportation	Updates This project had its challenges. For the most part, Ikram and Steph engaged with Metrolinx. To my understanding, it has been difficult to effectively contact and communicate with Metrolinx. They seem to be happy doing their own thing.
Description	Get in contact with Metrolinx to see when they plan on visiting McMaster University. The purpose of this relationship is to obtain data specific to McMaster University and the use of Metrolinx by MSU members.	
Benefits	Provincial transportation is an issue relevant to many McMaster students, specifically as a high-commuter	

	campus. An established relationship with Metrolinx can help with access to McMaster-specific data, which can further any transportation-related advocacy.	
Difficulties	In the past, developing a relationship with Metrolinx has been a challenge. However, the relationship would be mutually beneficial. It is critical to emphasize the mutual benefits that can come from the relationship and to establish goals for the partnership, including a better experience for McMaster students using Metrolinx services. Metrolinx comes to campuses with GO stops at least once a year and through shared efforts, we can collect more comprehensive data.	
How?	This begins with reaching out to Metrolinx and working to develop shared goals. This will be a dynamic process and I will work closely with Stephanie to make the most out of it.	
Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VP Education Stephanie Bertolo • MSU President Ikram Farah 	

Objective 7	Feedback on Post-Graduation Work Permit Program	Updates
Description	International students who finish at Canadian institutions can apply for an open work permit to allow them to work in Canada. The work experience gained from this program is put towards the Express Entry Program for Permanent Residency, if desired.	These focus groups will run on March 27 from 10am-12pm and March 28 from 3-5pm in the Student Success Centre. The purpose of the focus groups is to understand international student challenges with the post-graduation work permit program. The focus groups will also include opportunities for students to receive more information about the program and have their questions answered. Ana and Lajipe from International Student Services will be there to address concerns and debunk misinformation.
Benefits	Students with Canadian degrees are eligible for an easier process to transition into the Canadian workforce, if they desire. This program helps students who want to stay in Canada obtain permanent residency and enjoy a more stable transition from student to employee. With the upcoming Federal election and our relationships with platform developers within the major political parties, testimonies of the student experience with the program will inform our advocacy efforts on the topic of immigration and citizenship for	

	<p>international students. The benefits of collecting information through focus groups are vast, but the most important benefit is the partnership with International Student Services. Specifically, the presence of experts in Canadian immigration law and programs allows us to both understand the problems with the current program and provide accurate information to students (mis)understandings and questions with the program. Ultimately, the focus groups will provide valuable information to the students who attend.</p>	
Difficulties	This project came up a bit later in the term, after my year plan was submitted.	
How?	Working with ISS to coordinate the dates and times to hold the focus groups. PFA Committee will write base questions, to be reviewed by Steph, and the committee and I will facilitate the discussions. We will promote it through social media and so will ISS/SSC. Once we have the sessions, I will combine the data and write a report based on the findings with advocacy recommendations.	
Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VP Education Stephanie Bertolo • International Student Services 	

Objective 7	LGBTQ2SI+ Student Consultation	Updates
Description	<p>Part of preparation for OUSA General Assemblies is consultation surrounding the policy papers that are being presented. For the Spring 2019 General Assembly, OUSA is presenting a policy paper on supporting LGBTQ2SI+ students on university campuses. To best represent McMaster students who belong to the community, we will conduct meaningful consultations with our students.</p>	<p>The survey was available for about a week prior to the general assembly in early March. We were very happy with the 61 responses we got. All of the responses were insightful and helpful. I went through our google doc of the policy and wrote notes about what the survey responses thought on the relevant issues. This was an effective tool and allowed us to speak to our consultations while discussing the policy.</p>
Benefits	<p>Our mandate and responsibility as delegates of the MSU to the OUSA General Assembly is to represent the needs of MSU students. This is especially relevant when working with identity-based papers. Meaningful consultation enhances the paper and</p>	

	provides opportunities for students to have an impact on advocacy, regardless of their involvement within the Ed Team.	
Difficulties	The topics discussed within the policy were not well-known prior to the writing of the survey, which made it difficult to ask specific questions. This was handled by writing a mix of open-ended and specific questions on certain topics to get a broad idea of thoughts and concerns regarding certain issues.	
How?	I will write the survey questions based on the available information and from consultation with PCC executives. The survey will be reviewed by Stephanie and the PCC to ensure that it makes sense and achieves what we want it to. We'll promote it through our various social media accounts, as will the PCC and SRA pages.	
Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VP Education Stephanie Bertolo • Pride Community Centre executive team 	

And that's just the work that I did with my committee! If I had more time, you know I would flex on all the other cool things I did this year with my lobbying responsibilities (like the big wins in the Federal budget, writing some pretty cool reports, skirting some ~ wild ~ lobby meetings, and much more). But alas! My thesis awaits and I can't keep it waiting too long.

Best,

Urszula Sitarz
 AVP Provincial & Federal Affairs
 McMaster Students Union
avprovfed@msu.mcmaster.ca