



# REPORT

*From the office of the...*

## Health Sciences Caucus

---

TO: Members of the Student Representative Assembly  
 FROM: SRA Health Sciences  
 SUBJECT: 19S Report - Year End Report  
 DATE: March 17, 2020

---

Hello everyone! As our term draws to a close, we would like to thank everyone for their contributions and support to our caucus objectives for the year. Reflecting on our term, we found that as we grew into our roles as SRA members and learned about the scope of our positions, it was only natural that our year plan changed as the year progressed to reflect this. This enabled us to shift our priorities as needed while both of us worked to participate in over 5 committees, inform and engage with our constituents, and ultimately work towards continually improving the life of students within our faculty. Our year plan acted as a guideline and platform upon which we could build upon the work of our predecessors, Devin and Tushar. We feel as though we were able to carry out our vision to the best of our abilities, and that this has ultimately resulted in tangible change. We are excited to see what the future holds for this caucus and hope to continue to support and transition Bethel and Zoe into their roles, enabling them to build upon the work we've done this past year.

Objective 1	Ensure MSU Service Involvement
Description	Historically, BHSc students have remained active members of the university community and are often eager to give back to it. We hope to channel this energy and encourage more students within the faculty to become involved with MSU services and relevant groups. Students have commented on the difficulty of navigating the application process in order to get involved with MSU services and groups, as well as when these opportunities become available. We plan on promoting these positions through the creation and improvement of pre-existing resources in an effort to centralize information.
Updates	Through our existing and new social media channels, we were able to promote MSU service recruitment periods. While it was ultimately deemed unfeasible to host Q&A sessions with these services, we were able to gather them together during events like our Mental Health & Wellness Fair (see Objective 3) for students to ask relevant questions. Additionally, due to the Student Choice Initiative, the BHSS Welcome Week Coordinators ultimately opted to discontinue the use of the Welcome Week guidebook for this school year. Thus, our plans to include a section on MSU Governance and MSU Services were altered and should be considered for future implementation. Finally, we had previously outlined our goal to give short 5-minute "Intro to the MSU" talks in 1st year HTH SCI 1E06 classes. After extensive conversations with faculty members, we decided to shift our focus

	to giving these talks in HTH SCI 1G02 classes. However, due to the novel nature and irregular scheduling of the course, it was ultimately deemed unfeasible to do this within this school year and during our term. We have high hopes that the next caucus will move forward with this objective.
--	--

Objective 2	Enhance Engagement in MSU Student Governance
Description	The 2018-2019 election year saw an unprecedented number of candidates running in First Year Council (FYC) Elections and SRA Generals. We hope to continue this momentum into the upcoming year to spur further engagement in student politics and governance among Health Sciences students. Whether this be through encouraging students within the faculty to join SRA committees as non-voting members, continue promoting elections, or increasing BHSc student representation in FYC elections, we plan on attempting to make student civic engagement a priority this year.
Updates	Enhancing student engagement in MSU Governance has always been a challenge, but we believe we made significant progress in this realm. This year, we actively promoted all elections (FYC, Presidentials, and SRA Generals) as well as standing committee seats, through our existing and new social media platforms. We hosted a "How to Run in an Election" event during the SRA election period to discuss the basics of running in an election and answer any questions students may have. Due to our active promotion strategies, Health Sciences was one of the only two faculties with an election during SRA Generals; a total of 7 candidates ran for 2 seats!

Objective 3	Improve Knowledge Surrounding Mental Health Resources
Description	As the dialogue surrounding mental health awareness continues to be initiated, we feel as though we hold some responsibility in our role as SRA Health Sciences to maintain this conversation. While many of the issues surrounding access to mental health resources in university settings are highly systemic, we believe that it is in the best interests of students to look for short-term solutions in addressing the root of the problem — a fundamental lack of awareness surrounding how to best go about handling mental health challenges.
Updates	<p>We were able to successfully run our Mental Health and Wellness Fair in collaboration with SRA Nursing and SRA Arts &amp; Science. This was ultimately part of the larger initiative, MacTalks, run by the Provincial and Federal Affairs Standing Committee. During this campaign, we helped to create various graphics highlighting common topics that many students remain in the dark about or seem particularly daunted by, such as "how to go about getting an intake at Student Accessibility Services (SAS)", or "how to approach the SWC for counselling". These graphics were promoted through MSU channels and can likely be recycled in the future for relevant purposes.</p> <p>Additionally, we were able to make significant progress on advocating for the inclusion of a short statement and list of mental health/peer support</p>

	resources at the end of all course outlines. This project will be piloted in BHS Sc Fall 2020-2021 course outlines, up to the instructor's discretion. Additionally, we have also partnered with MacPherson Institute, as a part of their course outline consultancy stakeholder group. With our terms ending, we hope that the next caucus will take on this project.
--	--

Objective 4	Improve Intra-Faculty Relationships with BHS Sc
Description	<p>The Faculty of Health Sciences encompasses a wide variety of programs, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Bachelor of Science Nursing Program</li> <li>● Bachelor of Health Sciences Program</li> <li>● Biology and Pharmacology Co-op Program (BioPharm)</li> <li>● Biomedical Discovery &amp; Commercialization Program (BDC)</li> <li>● Integrated Biomedical Engineering and Health Sciences (IBEHS)</li> <li>● Midwifery Education Program</li> </ul> <p>As representatives of the Faculty of Health Sciences, we have a responsibility to ensure that students' voices from across our faculty are heard — regardless of program. It is for this reason that we plan to collaborate with the different program societies in our faculty to brainstorm and plan collaborative events to allow students to get to know one another and fortify ties within our faculty.</p>
Updates	<p>While attempts were made to reach out to other program societies towards the beginning of the school year, this platform point was ultimately put on hold. This was primarily due to the demanding nature of our other objectives and shift in priorities. With that being said, we made a great effort to sustain our relationship with the Bachelor of Health Sciences Society by attending meetings when possible, supporting events such as Life after BHS Sc, and advertising relevant events. Furthermore, we made an effort to remain inclusive of all programs within the Faculty of Health Sciences by reaching out to program societies to distribute relevant surveys in order to gain a diverse array of perspectives. We have high hopes that the incoming caucus will prioritize this platform point to effectively strengthen ties with other programs within our faculty.</p>

Objective 5	Increase Transparency and Outreach
Description	<p>The role of SRA members entails accurately representing the opinions, thoughts, and concerns of the members of their respective faculties. Therefore, it is imperative that constituents are aware of the decisions made by the MSU and how they affect them. Transparency goes hand-in-hand with increasing outreach. We can be as transparent as possible, but if constituents are not interacting with our work, then these efforts may go wasted. Thus, it is vital for us to maintain a strong online social media presence to ensure our constituents are staying engaged and informed.</p>
Updates	<p>We feel as though we made great strides with this particular objective, given that both of us made it a priority from the forefront to maintain transparency with the MSU. We were able to start an Instagram account in order to better interact with</p>

	<p>first-year students; this account currently maintains a following of 385 followers. Similarly, we were able to increase our like count on our Facebook page by hosting a Union Market gift certificate giveaway. We were able to work extensively with the Communications Officer (Connor MacLean) to create meeting minute infographics to be posted every month, summarizing our accomplishments and goals, as well as relevant highlights from SRA meetings. Lastly, we were able to distribute an SRA Feedback Survey and collect information regarding our performance and guide future efforts.</p>
--	--

Objective 6	Advocating for Accessible Education: Podcasting & LearnLink Alternative
Description	<p>As it stands, only some courses offered by the Health Sciences department are podcasted, such as HTHSCI 2F03 and 2FF3. Many students have expressed concerns in regards to the lack of podcasted lectures for other courses, such as HTHSCI 2A03 and 2G03. For the upcoming 2019-2020 year, these courses will be undergoing significant changes as HTHSCI 2A03 will now be combined with HTHSCI 2G03 to create two hybrid courses: HTHSCI 2G03 and 2GG3. We hope to use this moment as a fresh start to implore these professors to podcast their lectures.</p> <p>On a separate note, since the inception of the BHSc Program, LearnLink has served as a centralized platform where students could find virtually anything related to BHSc. Since the discontinuation of it this past summer, the search for another centralized platform where students can share course reviews and academic resources begins. We hope to collaborate with the BHSS and Health Sciences Senate Representative to explore alternative platforms where students can collaborate and share resources.</p>
Updates	<p>As we began communicating with relevant stakeholders this year, we found that instructors for HTHSCI 2G03/2GG3 were already planning on podcasting the course. We saw this as a success, based off of past advocacy efforts, and thus decided we did not need to make any more changes. Additionally, we hoped to help the BHSS in their efforts to promote and alter the BHSS website to create a centralized platform to share resources and tips. However, due to minimal progress being made on this project, we were unfortunately unable to promote it. We hope that the next caucus will continue to collaborate with relevant stakeholders to ensure that this objective is completed in the future.</p>

Objective 7	Continue Improvements to the Health Sciences Library
Description	<p>Improvements to the Health Sciences Library (HSL) have been an ongoing conversation for several years. The 2018-2019 Health Sciences caucus planned to increase student study space and extend hours. For the 2019-2020 year, we hope to continue working on their project for extending HSL hours on Saturday. Advocacy is long-term and often takes a lot of perseverance to bring forth change. We hope to build upon past ideas and continue the efforts of our predecessors to bring these ideas into fruition.</p>

Updates	Through early meetings with HSL Director, Jennifer McKinne, we managed to bring the work of our predecessors to fruition and extend HSL hours on Saturday by one day. We also distributed a survey to gain feedback on the new hours of operation and ongoing renovation plans. We will pass on the survey responses to the incoming caucus and encourage them to continue strengthening the relationship between SRA Health Sciences and HSL administrators.
---------	---

### Long-term Planning

Overarching Vision 1	Creating a Centralized Research & Community Engagement Database
Description	<p>The BHSc program requires all third-year students to take a project course (HTHSCI 3H03/6); many students also undertake thesis courses in various fields in their senior years. A concern we have heard voiced frequently involves the lack of centralization surrounding where information about said opportunities exists, as well as the difficulty involved in finding a supervisor. Often, students hear about relevant opportunities through sporadic posts on LearnLink, various Facebook groups, and OscarPlus, or by word of mouth.</p> <p>While faculty societies and faculties themselves are independent from the MSU, through the SRA we hope to pilot a centralized repository for research opportunities and community engagement in multiple disciplines - a platform that several universities currently have. Ideally, the individuals involved would begin by getting in touch with interested professors or graduate students at McMaster, as well as local community-based organizations looking for students. Job, volunteer, and project opportunity postings would follow a standardized format.</p>
Updates	<p>In consulting with Stacey Ritz, it was determined that it may not be feasible to create a separate platform entirely for this purpose. We learned that the BHSc Office actively speaks to faculty members in order to gain project and thesis opportunities for students; after the transition away from LearnLink, these are now all placed under the BHSc Community folder. Stacey mentioned that they would try to make a better effort to centralize said opportunities from both students and faculty members moving forward.</p> <p>Instead, after consulting with relevant stakeholders, we found that the best alternative involved simply reorganizing the BHSc Community folder to include four separate “threads” - one of which is titled “Opportunities” for students to peruse. This information has now all been outlined on the official BHSc website as well within the Project/Thesis Courses hub.</p>

Overarching Vision 2	Improving the BHSc Lounge
Description	The Faculty of Health Sciences Student Home Base, or “lounge”, is a central multi-purpose space for students to take breaks between classes on campus,

	have meetings, and host small events. It is currently equipped with desktop computers, a television, couches, tables and basic appliances to make student life more convenient. In the long run, we hope to maximize the use of this space to make it as accessible and functional as possible.
Updates	After meeting with our Program Manager, Teresa Basilio, we were able to bring some updates to Home Base, such as replacing the light bulbs, fixing the outlets, as well as ordering additional gadgets for the desktop computers. We also distributed a Home Base survey for students to provide their input on what changes they would like to see. We highly implore the incoming caucus to read the results of this survey and work with the Program Manager to implement as many student suggestions as possible.

It has been an honour and a privilege to be members of the Health Sciences caucus on the Student Representative Assembly this year. We have great hopes and cannot wait to see what the future holds for the incoming caucus!

Best,

Arzoo Alam and Rhea Jangra  
SRA Health Sciences  
McMaster Students Union  
[srahealth@msu.mcmaster.ca](mailto:srahealth@msu.mcmaster.ca)