



# REPORT

*From the office of the...*

## Vice-President (Education)

TO: Members of the Student Representative Assembly  
 FROM: Shemar Hackett, Vice-President (Education)  
 SUBJECT: SRA 19S Report  
 DATE: March 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2020

### Platform Points

Objective 1	Student Choice Initiative (SCI)
Description	The provincial government announced in January that they will now give all students the ability to opt-out of ancillary fees, commonly known as the Student Choice Initiative (SCI). The government had 5 vague categories as to what can be deemed essentially, with everything else being determined by each institution. As the MSU runs numerous services and business units, this puts many services at risk of being defunded. This is an initiative that the MSU is vehemently against, and I plan to advocate against it while finding ways to sustain existing services that we operate.
Status:	<b>Completed:</b> Over the past year, I have raised the concerns and pushed back against the student choice initiative in all of our lobby meetings. Specifically, during the summer we met with several conservative MPPs, in which we detailed the harmful affects this initiative will have on students and vital services that we offer. Due to the legal challenge submitted by the CFS, as this current time the Student Choice Initiative is deemed to be unlawful which is a great win!

Objective 2	Accessibility
Description	In 2005, the provincial government announced that they plan to make Ontario fully accessible by 2025. Since then, we have seen numerous changes, but the university and the provincial government still have significant changes that need to be implemented prior to achieving that goal.
Status	<b>In-progress:</b> There has been lots of great movement when it comes to accessibility on campus, much of which will take a few years to be fully completed. One area that I wanted to work on this year was updated our provincial paper within OUSA on student accessibility. As an author on the paper, I met with several stakeholders on and off campus to discuss Initiatives we can take to better support students on campus.

	<p>Thankfully, the Student Accessibility and Disability Inclusion paper was passed at OUSA's General Assembly In November and can be found at the following website:  <a href="https://www.ousa.ca/policy_student_accessibility_disability_inclusion">https://www.ousa.ca/policy_student_accessibility_disability_inclusion</a>.</p> <p>Another area that I wanted to review was accessibility within classrooms and pushing more professors to adopt ECHO360 within their classes. This year I partnered with the McPherson Institute to discuss ways in which this can be completed. We discussed creating an Ad Hoc committee of dedicated students, which I did in December, to advocate to faculty members on campus. While we started off strong, courses got the best of most of the students and competing priorities within my portfolio led to the project having a slower start than intended. Thankfully, Gian Carlo (President elect) was one of the students on the committee and has expressed interest in continuing the point going into next year. This will continue some of the work started this year and will hopefully lead to wider usage of ECHO 360 in future years.</p>
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<b>Objective 3</b>	<b>Sexual Violence Support and Awareness</b>
Description	Sexual violence is a prevalent issue on our campus and needs to be addressed. As the provincial government recently released their climate survey, the findings illustrate many students are unaware of university support protocols in place and many students on campus have experienced some incident of sexual violence.
Status	<p><b>In-progress:</b> I would like to start off by stating that while i did complete the points I set out to do in my year plan, Sexual Violence is a systemic issue and there is still lots of work to do on campus to better support/accommodate survivors.</p> <p>The first goal was making changes to the university's policy on Sexual Violence Prevention and Response, which was in the reviewal process at the start of our term due to the provincial mandate. I met with Arig prior to my term starting and went to the public reviewal sessions that they had at the start of September. I raised points outlined with the MSUs advocacy policy including changes to the appeal process, reducing the jargon within the policy and making changes to the self-incrimination clause. Many of these points were areas that Arig had already highlighted and are now reflected within the new policy that can be found on McMasters website.</p> <p>Another area that I focused on was advocating for additional support within the student wellness Centre, which is something the entire board has raised to EIO this year as well as in previous years. I'm very</p>

	<p>happy to share that the office has now expanded and there are now two individuals working within the SVPR team within EIO. There is Hagar who is the interim consultant on SVPR and provide students with disclosure support and complainant response/intake. There is also now Wil Fujarczuk who will be a SVPR coordinator, who will focus on raising awareness, education and training on campus. this is a big win and a step in the right direction to better supporting students on campus.</p>
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<b>Objective 4</b>	<b>Student Wellness Review</b>
Description	The MSU conducted a Health Services Review in 2017 that had a low response rate and did not holistically review support services on campus and areas for improvement. This updated review would ask, broadly, what barriers students experience on campus and areas the MSU and the university can improve.
Status	<b>Completed:</b> Much of the work for this point has been siloed through the university affairs committee, therefore Fawziyah can provide an update within her year end report. Overall, the survey had over 200 responses and provided valuable feedback to use for future advocacy/policy work. Big shoutouts to the UA team for all their hardwork.

<b>Objective 5</b>	<b>Academic Success</b>
Description	Within classrooms, students le numerous barriers that makes physically learning in class difficult. Students also le issues logistically enrolling in and paying for their courses. This year, I plan to work on the following to better support students within their classrooms and during enrollment
Status: In-progress	<p><b>TA Training:</b> There were a few meetings towards the end of the summer and beginning of the school term with CUPE 3906 to discuss our priorities when negotiating their contract. We mentioned training and a few different models they can use when implementing the programs at McMaster. They had done research in this area and we were excited to hear that this was a priority area for them as well. After negotiations were finished, we were happy to hear that increased training was included in the final agreement.</p> <p><b>Course Waitlist:</b> This is something that I raised with Gayleen Gray, CTO of the university. There is room for this in their current system, the decision for this would need to come from the Provost. In future years advocacy should be directed at the provost in pushing this</p>

	<p>initiative forward.</p> <p><b>Standardized Breaks:</b> This was a point I was very excited about but became difficult to achieve once in the role. This is a large project that will take long to get approval for, but there does seem to be interest. This year Fawziyah and I co-hosted an event with the McPherson Institute to discuss how to make lectures more engaging. Having more breaks are ideal, but if the content and the way a professor teaches is engaging that would also help with retention rates. The event went well and there has been interest from the McPherson institute and the Vice-Provost (faculty) to run a similar event again in the future.</p>
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<b>Objective 6</b>	<b>Exams</b>
Description	Exams are an incredibly stressful period for students, with many struggling to succeed due to high-risk exams the amount of assessments that needs to be written in a short period for time. The following recommendations are amendments I plan to lobby the university to include within the examination policy.
Status: Not Completed	<b>In-progress:</b> I had a few meetings early in the term on this point, but there wasn't a lot of movement. There seemed to be interest around policies at Waterloo that we can adopt here, but given internal structural changes there wasn't much will from the registrar at the moment to undertake implementing new policies. This is an area that can be expanded on in future years!

<b>Objective 7</b>	<b>Strategic Mandate Agreements</b>
Description	The Strategic Mandate Agreement is a partnership between the province and the university that works as a framework to guide growth, institutional excellence and promote student success in post-secondary. The current agreement is expected to expire March 31 <sup>st</sup> of 2020, which means the creation will take place over the next several months. The government has recently announced tying outcomes to the funding universities receive; initially, 25% will be tied to funding with an incremental increase over the next few years to ultimately 60%. These agreements outline the universities priorities and with a large amount of funding tied to them it's important to ensure the document is in alignment with MSU priorities.
Status	<b>In-progress:</b> The strategic mandate agreements are in the process of being ratified. There hasn't been much room for advocacy and has been difficult to get information from the university. As this is the first time, we have had to lobby the university on the SMA, it has been a

	bit difficult. On the OUSA front, we are planning on rewriting our paper on Accountability to firm up our provincial stance on the SMA's and will begin conversations about advocating against it next year.
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<b>Objective 8</b>	<b>Employment Opportunities</b>
Description	<p>Employment opportunities, whether that be during a student’s undergrad or post-grad, are difficult to come by. Given the changes to OSAP and tuition, more students will be forced to work a part-time job, with many working an increasing number of hours each week.</p> <p><b>Urban Fellows Program</b> – This is an initiative I took on during my term as AVP: Municipal Affairs. This is a one-year internship that municipalities can offer to recent graduates and I believe the City of Hamilton should adopt a similar program moving forward.</p> <p><b>Work Study Program</b> – Any student who receives OSAP is eligible to apply for the work study program on campus. With the changes in who is deemed to be eligible for OSAP, the definition of what it means to be in financial need has changed. This shift should be reflected within the criteria for the program, with an overall increase in average hours students are allowed to work.</p>
Status	<p><b>In-progress:</b> Had conversations with Libraries early on in the year on this point, but there was difficult with stakeholder engagement. Also, with the cuts in funding to the university, it was difficult to lobby on increasing funding towards the program this year. Hopefully with SCI no longer existing, we may be able to raise this in subsequent years.</p> <p>when it comes to the urban fellow’s program, there have been a handful of City Councilors who have been receptive to the point. I recently met with the City Manager, Janette Smith, who I will be following up with as she expressed interest and will be connecting with city staff internally to gather more information for us. This should be a continued advocacy priority for the municipal affairs team in future years.</p>

<b>Objective 9</b>	<b>Student Safety</b>
Description	Students, especially those from marginalized groups, have historically reported feeling unsafe on and off campus, which speaks to the needs

	<p>for systemic changes and a deeper understanding to the current issues’ students are facing. To address students’ issues, here are the two approaches I will take:</p> <p><b>Online Reporting Tool:</b> Last year, Kristina Epifano, Vice-President (Administration), created a tool for members of the Maroons to report any internal issues they faced with the service. I believe this is an initiative that can potentially be under the university or expanded within the MSU.</p> <p><b>Discrimination Survey:</b> In the fall term, I plan to hold a feedback session to better understand the complex issues students are facing and use that data to better inform our advocacy efforts and potentially create an online map highlighting areas students frequently feel unsafe.</p> <p><b>Lighting:</b> A lighting audit was conducted earlier this year but did not have a significant number of students contribute to the process. Another audit should be conducted, with student feedback, to illustrate their experiences/areas they feel unsafe when going home at night.</p>
<p>Status</p>	<p><b>In-progress:</b> The lighting survey was conducted by the municipal affairs committee this term. The survey went well and well over a hundred responses. Ryan, the AVP: Municipal Affairs, also did a walk-through of Ward 1 with our councilor, Maureen Wilson. Much of this will be discussed in Ryan’s final report.</p> <p>For the online reporting tool, after consulting with the Equity an Inclusion office and weighing the liability risks, I decided not to move forward with this. I looked into what tangible actions can be taken from having an anonymous service and legally we are constrained to do very little with anonymous reports that are constantly open. We are reviewing other options to ensure students and staff constantly have an outlet of reporting any incident they have on campus. The discrimination survey had similar concerns. The purpose of the survey would be to affect the future of the HCCI and influence our advocacy efforts, but with it being entirely anonymous this opened the door to many other concerns. As there were overlapping priorities, I choose not to move forward with this point and will note to my successor that this is an area for further research.</p>

<b>Objective 10</b>	<b>Waste Management Campaign</b>
Description	During my time as AVP: Municipal Affairs, I received numerous complaints from residents and city officials regarding the waste management practices of students. Though I don't agree with the often-negative characterizations of students living off-campus, I do agree that we can do more when it comes to sustainable practices. Students often aren't aware of what items go in what bin, which is why I plan to run a waste management campaign in second semester.
Status	<b>Not completed:</b> this was to be completed near the end of second semester. As other projects came up (such as hiring and valedictorian) it became hard to organize. In addition, COVID-19 has limited our ability to organize and run campaigns so this is not a project that has happened this year.

<b>Objective 11</b>	<b>Transit and Transportation advocacy</b>
Description	Transit is an area that consistently needs improvements. There are numerous changes happening this year in regard to transit. With the impending LRT begin built and the MSU renegotiating their transit pass, we have a unique opportunity this year to have needed conversations with HSR staff regarding improvements to transit. This year, I plan to advocate for the following items when meeting with the HSR: Correlating HSR 'peak' times with student peaks times, to ensure articulated bus are en-route at the appropriate times, Advocating for summer service for the HSR, Increasing the amount of <i>safe</i> bike lanes across the city, Eliminating area rating across Hamilton.
Status	<b>In-progress:</b> transit advocacy is a priority every year for my role as well as the AVP: Municipal Affairs. In our budget submission, we highlighted the need for increased service of bus routes near McMaster and the elimination of area rating. We are happy to see that there will be increased service in Ward 1 based on the HSR referendum that ran in January. Unfortunately, our conversations around area rating haven't been as fruitful and it seems as though we won't be seeing the elimination of area rating anytime soon. We planned to meet with Metrolinx within march, but with COVID-19 ramping up, those meetings have been postponed to a later date.

<b>Objective 12</b>	<b>Landlord Accountability</b>
Description	A large number of students will live in student housing throughout their undergraduate career, but unfortunately, they won't have access

	to credible avenues to hold their landlords accountable. Building upon the work done last year, I plan to work towards various systems to ensure students are living in safe housing.
Status	<b>In-progress:</b> A major project while I was AVP: Municipal Affairs was the Landlord Rating System. Sadly, the rating system website that we have been promoting over the past year has shut down. After we were notified, I brought this conversation back to the university to discuss (again) if they are able to develop a similar system. As they are in the process of revamping the off-campus housing website, they were interested in adding a piece on landlord accountability, and this is currently in progress. So far, we have agreed to a short quiz/info sheet that will pop up anytime students go onto the off-campus housing website to look for housing. The sheet/quiz will include information on the standard lease, what to be cautious of and things a landlord should never ask from you prior to move-in. This should hopefully be done before the end of our terms and if not, my successor can take this on.

<b>Objective 13</b>	<b>Bylaw Education</b>
Description	Students have been unfairly targeted in Ward 1, with an increased amount of bylaw enforcement officers than any other ward in Hamilton. There is the rhetoric that students choose not to follow bylaws, but in reality, many are unaware of the rules they must follow. Working with the Community Education Coordinator, I will advocate for reducing the amount of bylaw officers in our ward and run an educational campaign on bylaws off-campus.
Status	<b>In-progress:</b> At the start of the year I wanted to give out the leftover door hangers from last year. Due to complications in getting volunteers, this was not achieved this year as well. We organized to have some of them distributed in person and put them out at events throughout the year. The recommendation I have is for their to be a full bylaw education campaign next year.

<b>Objective 14</b>	<b>Financial accessibility</b>
Description	Due to the government changes, financial aid in Ontario is in a precarious position. Many students may no longer qualify for assistance, while others may qualify but no longer receive the amount they need to get by. The financial accessibility of post-secondary is very important to me and will be a priority during my term.

Status	<b>In-progress:</b> advocating for increased funding towards financial aid has been the number 1 priority this past year. In every meeting, at both the provincial and federal level, financial aid has been prioritized. Provincially, there have been conversations around amendments being made to some of the OSAP changes that happened last year. Federally, the budget will be released soon, and we will see whether or not any of our recommendations have been included.
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<b>Objective 15</b>	<b>Developing federal advocacy</b>
Description	The MSU is a part of a federal student advocacy organization, the Undergraduates of Canadian Research-Intensive Universities (UCRU). Though it is a great organization, we could benefit from having a stronger website and a series of operating policies and bylaws.
Status	<b>Completed:</b> Federal advocacy week this past year wasn't very organized and our meetings throughout the entire year have been a mess. I reached out to a consulting firm that is willing to help us out and provide our organization with continuity and support during our lobby week at a reduced cost. I have started planning for changes that can be had next year – much of the conversation though will have to be had in the summer. As UCRU is not able to meet due to COVID-19, we will be postponing most of this conversation until end of April, early May.

<b>Objective 16</b>	<b>Advocating for Increased support for Indigenous Students</b>
Description	In the recent Federal budget, the liberal government announced \$327 million to be allocated towards the Post-Secondary Student Support program, a financial aid program for indigenous students. During the last election cycle, the government announced a similar initiative but did not allocate the entirety of the funds that they said they would.
Status	<b>In-progress:</b> This was a priority during our Federal lobby week. The conversations around this point have been beneficial. Even if there aren't financial investments, we did have recommendations around language revitalization that many MPs appreciated.

<b>Objective 17</b>	<b>International Student Support</b>
Description	International students are forced to pay more than 5x what domestic students pay for their education. In addition, there are strict limitations to the number of hours they are allowed to work;

	International students can work 20 hours a week during the school year and 40 hours during break period. If a student ever works more than the aforementioned hour limit, they will be investigated and likely deported. This upcoming year, I plan to prioritize the number of hours international students can work and will use it as a priority during our Federal Lobby week later this year.
Status	<b>In-progress:</b> Providing increased support to international students was another priority during lobby week, in which the conversations had were good. In terms of the workable hours, this was not raised as the group didn't make it a priority for our lobby briefs. However, there were a few meetings that I had in which this was raised and Also amended the MSU policy on international students to have this concerns included so that it can be an official recommendation to advocate on n the future.

<b>Objective 18</b>	<b>Board of Directors Transparency</b>
Description	In previous years, many students highlight the disconnect between board members and the student body; The elected representatives chosen to advocate on behalf of students don't regularly interact with students. During my term, I will work on regularly interacting with students and ensure they are updated on everything that I, and the rest of the Board, are currently doing.
Status	<b>Completed:</b> The Board ran office hours throughout the yea to increase our engagement with students. While they didn't have the highest number of students, I do feel this is a point that should be continued in the future. Next year, there should be more strategic themes for the office hours and potentially a giveaway of sort to get more people to come out and ask questions.

<b>Objective 19</b>	<b>Federal Macvotes Campaign</b>
Description	In October of this year, there will be a federal election! We have been really fortunate in getting a polling station on campus, which means we need to work twice as hard to illustrate that students do vote and are politically engaged to ensure we get them for future elections. This year, there will be an elongated presence for the election. Typically, we have run strong campaigns in the months of the election but this year I plan to start earlier, right when students get on

	campus. This will give students more than enough time to familiarize themselves with the federal government and make an informed decision come election day.
Status	<b>Completed:</b> Mac votes campaign went very well!! I recapped this in my January report, but we ran a number of events and had an increase in students who voted in this riding. Very happy with the work of the education team and the PFA committee.

<b>Objective 20</b>	<b>Hamilton Post-Secondary Advisory Group (HPSAG)</b>
Description	A few years ago, Ted McMeekin, our former liberal MPP for our riding, created a post-secondary advisory group that brought together Redeemer, Mohawk and the MSU to discuss student issues that should be prioritized. As Ted is no longer our MPP, these meetings have begun to die down. This was a beneficial avenue for students across Hamilton to coordinate our advocacy efforts and I plan to bring back this initiative.
Status	<b>Not completed:</b> I tried to revitalize this group early in my ter and organized an initial meeting with all the relevant schools. We had a great conversation but organizing a second meeting was difficult. As Mohawk changed presidents halfway through the year that also halted the group from moving forward. This can be a great group but doesn't seem to be an immediate priority between all of our organizations.

<b>Objective 21</b>	<b>MSU Policy Development</b>
Description	<p>Every year, the MSU writes numerous policy papers outlining our stance on a contemporary issue. The previous VP Ed changed the structure of the policy process, reducing the amount of policies we need to write each year from 6 to 3. The three policy papers that the education team will be writing this year are: Ancillary Fees, Sexual and Gender Diversity and Indigenous Students. These papers will be written throughout the year and passed at the Winter Policy Conference.</p> <p>As a few other MSU policies are also expiring, we will also be updating existing policies. Policies under review are International Students, First Year Transition and Food Security. These will be reviewed during</p>

	the summer months and will be brought to the first SRA meeting in September.
Status	<b>Completed:</b> The policies are all finished and will (hopefully) be passed soon. Great work on behalf of the Research Assistants and the authors on their papers.

<b>Objective 22</b>	<b>Mental Health Support</b>
Description	<p>Students are incredibly stressed during their undergraduate career, which takes a strain on their overall mental health. This year, I plan to work on the following to alleviate some of the stress many students face:</p> <p><b>Online Booking System:</b> Students report feeling uncomfortable booking appointments in person or on the phone. An online booking system will ensure students are correctly identifying their issues prior to shedding an appointment and will increase anonymity.</p> <p><b>Diverse Representation:</b> Students would benefit from seeing a racially diverse set of councilors who better understand their lived experiences. This isn't something that can be done in one year but will be a conversation raised with the heads within the Student Wellness Centre.</p> <p><b>Increasing the support within the Student Wellness Centre:</b> Students have been asking for additional councilors and psychiatrists within the SWC for years. After having an introductory meeting with the SWC, I believe that there may be room for additional support downstairs. Based on our conversations, this can come in the form of doctors, psychiatrists, councilors or even receptionist. More support to handle intake overall will be beneficial and alleviate a few of the issues the SWC and students currently experience.</p>
Status	<b>In-progress:</b> this past year I sat on the SWC subcommittee to review the operations and discuss any issues that we, as students, have with the SWC. The committee met twice this year, once in September and once in March after they moved to PGCLL. At our most recent meeting, we discussed a number of changes that have been made

	<p>including a larger waiting area with increased space between seating and reception for ore privacy, increasing the amount of councilors and having more break rooms for students who are in distress.</p> <p>For the online booking system, this is a point mentioned during the meeting as well as something I mentioned in my own lobby meeting with the SWC Director. There is much interest now, but in the future a concrete plan on how to transition as well as other schools with an online system should be presented. I believe this will encourage the SWC to move towards this model.</p> <p>For diverse representation this was mentioned prior to hiring and was well received and for more counsellors, they have recently increased the amount of support persons to address the influx of students using the Centre.</p>
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<b>Objective 23</b>	<b>Provincial Advocacy</b>
Description	The MSU has been a part of the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance for over a decade. For a majority of that time, we were advocating to a Liberal government whose party’s values and goals were aligned with OUSA’s priorities. The current government has Priorities that aren’t in alignment with our goals and are at times in direct opposition. This is a time for OUSA to make significant changes to how we lobby to ensure students concerns are being met.
Status	<b>In-progress:</b> I have been critical of our membership within OUSA and frequently brought the concerns/critiques of the organization to Steering Committee. This prompted a conversation this year about what our membership should be with the organization. OUSA was going to present at the final SRA meeting this term, but with COVID-19 closing most universities, we have decided to indefinitely postpone them coming to an SRA meeting.

### Additional Projects

#### Mailing List

The MSU mailing list was an initiative I thought of over the summer. Thankfully, we were able to work out an agreement with the registrar’s office and have been sending out MSU updates via mail to students since earlier in the term. The mailing list has been beneficial thus far and the pilot program will continue for the next year, at which point a cost benefit analysis will be done to determine if this is a worthwhile investment.

## **Valedictorian**

Valedictorian has taken up a significant amount of time this year. Every year this is said to be one of the worst parts of the VP Education portfolio and there are always conversations with the university to take it back from us, in which they are resistant to. As of this semester, I firmly explained that my role will no longer be organizing and that alternatives need to be found. We are currently looking at the McMaster Part-Time Association and transitioning them to take on valedictorian moving forward.



