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Jeff Wyngaarden
VP (Finance)

Huzaifa Saeed
VP (Education)

Siobhan Stewart
President

David Campbell
VP (Administration)

GIVING STUDENTS A VOICE

Siobhan reviews OUSA General Assembly and discusses the importance of student involvement in the future of post-secondary education



Siobhan Stewart
President

president@msu.mcmaster.ca
ext. 23885

As stakeholders in the post-secondary education (PSE) sector, it is incredibly important that McMaster undergraduates are represented to the provincial government. It is for this reason that the McMaster Students Union holds membership within the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance (OUSA). OUSA serves as an important voice for students at the provincial level, expressing student issues and working to improve undergraduate education across the province. OUSA represents over 150,000 students at nine institutions in Ontario.

This past weekend, OUSA hosted its semi-annual General Assembly. The General Assembly brings together delegations from member institutions to discuss and debate policy papers. Each university member sends a delegation to promote or discuss their unique viewpoint on PSE and their students' vision for the

future. Together, they craft policy papers which outline the specific points that OUSA will lobby to achieve. These policy papers reflect OUSA's mandate and goals which – created and approved by students – gives the organization a unified direction when engaging with the government.

Recently, OUSA spent the week at Queen's Park, meeting with members of provincial parliament at OUSA's annual lobby conference. During the week, OUSA focused on three top priorities:

A tuition freeze, more mental health support for Ontario campuses and a more robust credit transfer system to improve access across the province.

McMaster was represented by a diverse group of students from a variety of academic backgrounds including the faculties of Social Sciences, Humanities, Sciences, Health Sciences and Arts & Sciences. Our delegation worked over three days to develop and shape OUSA's latest policy papers, including online learning, public / private partnerships in PSE and student employment. Though the details of each paper were different, all three encapsulated a similar theme of reaction to a changing post-secondary education sector.

In *Online Learning*, OUSA calls for increased investment in online education. In doing so, the organization would like

to see universities across Ontario develop course-to-course equivalencies for a large number of classes, and make them available to students across the province. This creation of online courses, coupled with a more robust credit transfer policy, would improve access to post-secondary education for undergrads in Ontario. This would allow for a student at McMaster to take a large number of online courses at other institutions while graduating from McMaster University.

In developing the policy paper *Students, Universities and the Private Sector*, OUSA makes a case for private investment in universities, albeit under certain conditions. Private investment is welcomed if the donor respects all institutional autonomy and academic freedom. In addition, the paper calls for increased investment in local knowledge clusters and the development of entrepreneurial skills amongst undergraduates, to meet the needs of today's dynamic labour force.

Finally, in *Student Employment*, OUSA raises concerns that certain underrepresented groups do not have equal access to job opportunities, both during their time in university and upon graduation. The paper calls for increased government action on this subject including government investment into summer employment programs that target

underrepresented groups. In addition, the paper promotes the idea of wage subsidies for companies that hire summer students and tax cuts for businesses that either hire or provide on-the-job training to new graduates.

These three subjects highlight the changing role of universities and the government's role in ensuring a quality and accessible undergraduate education. Moving forward it is vital that McMaster students remain engaged with their faculty, student representatives and university administration to ensure that their voice is heard on these incredibly important issues. These issues will likely affect students at McMaster in a different way than our peers at other institutions. That is why sending strong delegations of motivated students from McMaster will grow ever more important, in order to ensure that McMaster remains well represented at the provincial level. OUSA presents an opportunity to give McMaster students the voice they deserve. However, to actualize our voice, it takes people willing to speak on our behalf, with an understanding of the needs of McMaster students. If you would like to learn more about OUSA, its structure or how policy objectives are created by this member driven organization, please do not hesitate to contact me.



McMASTER STUDENTS UNION
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

BURRIDGE GYM
MARCH 26TH | 4:30 – 6:30PM

Would you like to make a tangible impact on your students union?

Submit a motion to GA!

SHOW UP. SPEAK OUT.

Contact/submit motions to:
MSU Speaker, Simon Gooding-Townsend
speaker@msu.mcmaster.ca



MSU Award winners announced at annual Student Recognition Night



David Campbell
VP (Administration)

vpadmin@msu.mcmaster.ca
ext. 23250

This week, the MSU hosted its 33rd annual Student Recognition Night. It is an event held each March to celebrate the hard work done on campus to improve the lives of undergraduate students. As well as a dinner and reception, the evening includes the presentation of several awards. These awards are one of the most tangible ways in which we get an opportunity to acknowledge the dedication of students and student groups, and I would like to share the winners here.

The *Honour M Award* has been presented annually since 1932 in recognition of outstanding leadership, volunteer service, contribution and/or special achievement in extra-curricular activities. The recipients are:

Lisa Bifano
Jeff Wyngaarden

Rudy Heinzl Award of Excellence has been presented annually since 1997 in recognition of an outstanding one-year achievement which improves the lives of students at McMaster University. This year's recipient is:

Lisa Bifano

The *MSU Merit Scholarship Award* is a recognition of outstanding and valuable service to university, student, or residence governments, departments, clubs, societies, charities, or athletics. The winners are:

Michael Hewlett
Matthew Ing
Monica Molinaro
Sarah Silverberg

J Lynn Watson Award for Community Service has been presented annually since 1983 by the MSU and the Inter-Residence Council to the campus group that has made the greatest one-year contribution to charitable giving. Congrats to:

Asian F.O.C.U.S.

The *MSU Spirit Award* is presented to the campus group that has best demonstrated superior spirit on campus. Congrats to:

McMaster Athletes Care

The *Part-Time Manager of the Year* recognizes the MSU Part-Time Manager who has best excelled in the management of his or her service. Well done:

Jyssika Russell, QSCC Coordinator

SRA Member of the Year is given to the Student Representative Assembly member who has made the greatest one year contribution to students and the work of the SRA. This year's recipient is:

Simon Granat

A special mention is the presentation of honorary MSU membership to Dr. Phil Wood, McMaster's AVP (Student Affairs) and Dean of Students, to celebrate his career of working to improve student life.

GREEN ROOF INITIATIVE UPDATE: DESIGN CONCEPTS ARE NOW AVAILABLE FOR STUDENT REVIEW AND FEEDBACK

www.MSUMCMASTER.CA/GREENROOF



The President's Page is sponsored by the McMaster Students Union. It is a space used to communicate with the student body about the projects, goals and agenda of the MSU Board of Directors.

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