

YEAR PLAN

MSU SRA Social Sciences

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2020-2021

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OFFICE OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCE CAUCUS LEADER INTRODUCTION

Dear Fellow Members of the Assembly and MSU Members,

This year's Social Sciences caucus wants to focus on increasing transparency and accessibility between the MSU and students. We also plan to advocate for the needs of BIPOC students and taking an intersectional approach to our year plan initiatives, and ensuring that the MSU's services are also taking an intersectional approach to this year's initiatives. Given the current conditions of COVID-19 and McMaster offering its courses online, we hope to support students through this transition. We also hope to advocate for those who are victims of sexual assault, while also advocating for a reform of the current structure of security services. In addition, as a caucus we hope to work with McMaster Faculty members to create a more diverse learning experience that includes the voices outside the western perspectives we are traditionally taught as students.

These goals are meant to encourage a transparent relationship between the MSU and the student body to truly build a stronger community. We hope to build and sustain a strong working relationship with Social Science Students and MSSS this year. We hope to make sure that our constituents are fully equipped with the right resources to be aware of what the MSU is and the services it provides. As well as equip students with resources for support. We also hope to be able to learn from student experiences on campus whether that may be concerning online learning or their previous experiences on campus with members of the McMaster community in

order to facilitate positive change on and off campus. Our main goal is to have students feel safe on campus, and passionate about what they are learning.

Our virtual office hours will be heavily advertised on all our social media pages to ensure that students know there is no sense of pressure when it comes to reaching out about any issues or resolutions they have in mind. Even if they just need a safe space to discuss university affairs or personal affairs.

As this year's caucus are all willing to learn from past mistakes and successes. All caucus members are devoted to bringing an immense amount of change to McMaster in a variety of ways. We hope to work with the fellow members of the Student Representative Assembly to accomplish this years goals alongside the MSU Board of Directors to support their year plan initiatives.

Sincerely,
Amylia Mesic
SRA Social Sciences Caucus Leader

GOALS

Objective 1	Implementing an Anti-Colonial Syllabus
Description	Working to implement a syllabus that includes anti-colonial perspectives from a variety of scholars that do not take a western perspective. We hope to work with department heads across the Social Sciences faculty to create a diverse syllabus that does not only include Western white scholars to help students understand a variety of racial perspectives on the topics they engage with in class.
Benefits	Some benefits include implementing intersectional approaches to the issues and topics engaged in class. As well as can help students understand issues outside of the classic western perspective they are currently taught. Students will be able to see how race, class, gender, and sexuality are connected within the Social Sciences. Decolonizing our syllabus' works to include the thoughts and work of a variety of scholars e.g. Indigenous scholars so students can begin to understand the worlds colonial history and break away from the current structures of colonialism.
Difficulties	Due to the current conditions of COVID-19 and McMaster teaching everything remotely it may difficult to get in touch and schedule meetings with professors, department heads within the faculty of Social Sciences and the Dean of Social Sciences. This will be the biggest difficulty, but as a caucus we are determined to stay persistent and organize these discussions. Another difficulty may be implementing an anti-colonial syllabus across all departments within the social sciences faculty depending on how the professors feel about their current syllabus' and willingness to amend them.
Long-term implications	Some long-term implications of our objective will help break down the current colonial structure of the learning experience at McMaster. Another long-term implication, is that students will have a diverse perspective on the topics that they engage with and will be able to study from a more intersectional approach and learn outside of Western thought.
How?	Working as an entire caucus to help the Vice President of Education, and the MSU Education team to advocate and help decolonize our syllabus'

Partners	Vice President of Education AVP University Affairs
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Objective 2	Research Concerning Online Learning
Description	The Social Science caucus aims to conduct a survey that analyzes how students are engaging with online learning and other platforms such as Echo360 & Proctor U. We hope to acquire various feedback from MSU students regarding the potential positives and barriers with online learning while identifying the gaps in online learning and researching support systems.
Benefits	MSU surveys have been consistent and effective in collecting emotional feedback from undergraduate students. They are able to extract data that correlates with the larger population.
Difficulties	There are several difficulties in developing the research pack. Because surveys generally have a high level of capability in large populations, it is important to have a sample size that adequately represents the findings. That being said, it is important to find a medium.
Long-term implications	As McMaster University transitions to remote learning for the fall semester, and there is a possibility remote learning will continue for the winter semester. Thus it is important to understand how students engage in an online learning environment. This way we can work to understand the gaps in the current system of online learning and close them for future courses. The goal is to have online learning be run more effectively.
How?	Our caucus will publish two surveys: for Spring/Summer 2020 and Fall 2020. The first survey will be distributed to the students who have enrolled in a spring and/or summer course. Moreover, our caucus will consider various ways that give students an incentive to participate in our survey such as gift cards, giveaways, etc.
Partners	Vice President of Education

Objective 3	Conduct a New Service Review of and a Rebranding of the Maroons
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Description	Push for a new systematic review and rebranding of the Maroons due to the sexual assault allegations towards the club as a whole. With this new review, we hope for it to be conducted in a way that eases constituents' minds, which would include increased transparency and removal of all parties with conflicts of interest from positions of influence surrounding it.
Benefits	The main benefit concerning this objective would be easing the worries and anger many students have surrounding how the first review of the Maroons was conducted. As a result, this step forward would help in repairing the very disconnected relationship and views many students currently have of the MSU. The repairing of this relationship is vital and it will make students more comfortable on campus and more inserted in using MSU services. As well, by conducting a review that is free from any bias' creates suggestions we can be sure are trustworthy steps to repair the broken culture of the Maroons. Moreover, being extremely transparent about this review and changes to come in the Maroons will inform the student body on what is actually happening which easily leaves no room for a half-truth or confusion on this important subject.
Difficulties	Some of the difficulties come from the circumstances of COVID-19, and the fact that there has been a service review already done on the Maroons last year by the AVP Services.
Long-term implications	Some long term implications of an updated Maroons Review will be the start of mending the distrust and disconnect that currently exists with the MSU and McMaster students. As well, this can increase transparency as the MSU could look into which ways increased transparency works for them and bring it into all areas of the MSU to increase student knowledge of the organization. Moreover, a complete rebranding of the Maroons would aid it in helping to break down the toxic current culture of the Maroons and this bad association on Campus.
How?	Work with the current Board of Directors, especially the Vice President of Administration, and the Services and University Affairs teams to advocate for a new and unbiased review.

Partners	Board of Directors - Vice President of Admissions AVP of University Affairs and University Affairs council Services council
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Objective 4	Demand a tuition breakdown per student from McMaster, and Advocate for lower costs in an online era.
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Description	With the number of constituents expressing their concerns regarding tuition costs for the 2020/2021 year, and the frustrations of not knowing what they are paying for, it was be a disservice to ignore them. We will work to advocate to McMaster University and the McMaster Student’s Union to release a tuition breakdown so students know what they are paying for, and exactly how much those specifics cost.
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Benefits	Students will know exactly what they are paying for, and how much those specifics cost. This can 1) inform students and create active change in our community and 2) effectively reduce the cost of tuition. With the movements across North America to defund the police, McMaster Students have demanded the firing of Glenn De Caire, and the removal of constables, as members of the BIPoC Community are targeted and harmed by them. However, each person pays for them in our tuition. By understanding the exact cost each person pays, we will be able to properly advocate them further. Additionally, McMaster spends a great deal in oil shares, which we also pay for in our tuition. Thus, the more knowledge we have of what we pay for, the more we can advocate to not pay for things we do not believe in, effectively reducing the costs. Furthermore, this will raise awareness to positive benefits student pay for (such as the dental plan) that can help them in their future. Lastly, no student should have to pay for services and/or spaces that are not open for us this term (for example, the gym membership that will be closed in the Fall 2020 term). Therefore, students should not have to pay for a service/space they do not have access to, which will reduce tuition costs allowing those harmed from COVID to have a more equitable chance for schooling.
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Difficulties	This may be difficult to advocate for (planning meetings with the proper people and getting our voice heard) as McMaster is going fully online in the Fall 2020 term, and possibly the Winter 2021 term. Additionally, there may be costs that the university does not want us to know (for example, how much of our tuition covers the security services, and how that would create frustrations from people that are targeted and harmed by them).
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Long-term implications	Our objective will strengthen a trust between the university and its students, and allow students to continuously be informed of what they are paying for. Hopefully, this will allow students to access the benefits they have but do not know, and reduce the cost of tuition, allowing more people to gain an undergraduate education without as many financial troubles.
How?	Working as a caucus to advocate to the university, and working with the university affairs and finance committees, alongside the VP Education and VP Finance of the McMaster's Students Union we plan to make this objective possible. Additionally, we will research tuition costs at McMaster to further our understanding of what we pay for.
Partners	VP Education, VP Finance, AVP, Finance, University Affairs Committee, and Finance Committee

Objective 5	The Elimination of the special constables program
Description	Our caucus will work closely with the McMaster Student Union's Board of Directors to advocate for the full removal of the special constable's program and for the termination of Glenn De Caire's (McMaster's Head of Security and Parking Services) contract.
Benefits	The presence of constables on our campus actively harms BIPOC students. The full cancellation of the special constable's program at McMaster is a first step in the process of repairing the harm that that has been caused to BIPOC students. BIPOC students deserve a safe campus and as long as there's a presence of constables on our campus, students are not safe.
Difficulties	The largest difficulty of eliminating the special constables is the university's current over-reliance on these programs. As a result, we as the SRA, in working with the university, will have to create no programs that better fit the diverse needs of McMaster students to properly and safely respond to any emergencies we have on campus. As well, the new realities COVID-19 has faced us with acts as an obstacle. Due to the online nature of the first semester of the school year, it is more difficult to arrange meetings with individuals and actually implement physical program proposals.
Long-term implications	The long term implication of this removal is a safer campus. This removal can begin a process of repairing the damaged relationship between IBPOC students and the university.

How?	Working closely with student organizations and clubs that are working to eliminate the presence of constables on campus. We will also offer resources and spaces for students to speak about their experience with campus constables and suggest programs that could replace them.
Partners	Board of Directors University Affairs Committee

Long-term planning

Overarching Vision 1	<i>Transparency and Accessibility</i>
Description	Ensuring that the MSU and ourselves as a caucus advocate for complete transparency and accessibility throughout our term. It is important for students to be aware of the actions of the MSU, and the Student Representative Assembly. We plan on posting informational graphics about our previous meetings, share resources as often as possible and hold the MSU and its services accountable when necessary. We also hope to make more documents that should be provided by the McMaster University easy to access this includes and is not limited to the details of students tuition. We plan to hold a strong presence on all of our respective social media pages to increase transparency and accessibility. We hope to have more students become familiar with the role of the SRA and feel comfortable in communicating their needs and or issues to us as a caucus. Given the circumstances of COVID-19 we plan to take this time to hold virtual office hours and create a safe place for students to come and chat with us when they would like to do so.
Benefits	Students feel equipped with the necessary resources needed to make informed decisions about their education and equipped with the resources necessary to understand the inner workings of the MSU and the discussions held within the SRA Meetings. We hope to increase our transparency in order to have students feel more comfortable in reaching out to us and involving themselves with the MSU.

Year 1	Increase social media presence, release informational graphics concerning SRA meeting information, and topics discussed. Release resources for students continuously through our respective social media pages.
Year 2	Work with PTMS' and the following years BOD to share as much information as possible online concerning the MSU, its advocacy goals etc. We also hope to create more transparency between students and McMaster University itself as we plan to advocate on behalf of students in order to have McMaster be transparent about tuition costs, the work of security services etc.
Year 3	Ensure that all students are equipped with resources that can help aid them to success at McMaster and have students feel comfortable with reaching out to their respective SRA caucus. We hope to be able to have more students attend the General Assembly, be aware of the role of the MSU and be aware of the discussions held in SRA meetings.
Partners	SRA Assembly 2020/21 Board of Directors

Overarching Vision 2	<i>Taking an intersectional approach and prioritizing BIPOC students</i>
Description	We will work on elevating BIPoC voices and issues within our campus, to create a safe and comfortable space for those students. Currently, the majority of members within the MSU and MSSS are white individuals, and its services/events tend to focus on white individuals in a non-intersectional approach. Due to this, many BIPoC students have felt alienated, and have a hard time trusting and seeing themselves as members of the MSU/MSSS. However, because of the closure of campus in the Fall 2020 term, we will work towards creating spaces for BIPoC students for the following year. We will do this by working with PTMs of the MSU and members of the MSSS to maintain accountability, respect, and prioritization of these spaces.
Benefits	This will create a more equitable campus, and allow more students to 1) feel welcomed and a part of their university/student's union, and 2) feel safe in a space that prioritizes their needs. As a university with a vast array of cultures, we all need to take an intersectional approach, so our services can aid all students in the way they need.

Year 1	With the campus closure in the Fall 2020 term, we cannot physically create BIPoC spaces. However, we will coordinate with the Board of Directors of the MSU, and the Executives of the MSSS, to focus on prioritizing BIPoC Students through future services, events, spaces, etc. Additionally, we can elevate BIPoC concerns and voices through our social media platforms. Lastly, we would recognize the harm that has been done, and announce/ work on building the trust.
Year 2	Start implementing the ideas our caucus has created with our partners (the MSU and MSSS), and create and maintain spaces that prioritize BIPoC students. Keep in touch with PTMs to ensure they are creating such spaces, creating services that prioritize and aide BIPoC individuals, and change services to have a more holistic and intersectional approach.
Year 3	Have and uphold BIPoC spaces, have more BIPoC representation in the MSU and MSSS through the intersectional approaches to our services in the preceding years, with a no tolerance for a non-intersectional approach that prioritizes white individuals.
Partners	The MSU, BOD, the MSSS, and the University Affairs Committee.

GOALS to strive for

List 5 things that you would like to have prepared for the beginning of September

- Begin researching/ surveying students on their online learning experiences with McMaster University
- Begin to reach out to University stakeholders and different members of the MSU to obtain a full price breakdown of students tuition
- Begin working with the VP Education, Fawziyah Isah and the AVP of University Affairs, Brittany Williams to begin to advocate and implement an anti-colonial syllabus
- Begin reaching out to the VP Administration in discussing the necessity to have a new service review done for the Maroons.
- Successfully transition into our role as SRA members for the social sciences caucus

List 5 things you would like to have completed during the fall term (1st)

- Hold Virtual Office Hours and increase our online presence on all of our social media pages
- Release resources for students concerning SRA meetings, MSU information and other resources to contact for support whether that may be for academic support or mental support

- Begin to work and reach out to different faculty members within the University to advocate implementing an anti-colonial syllabus
- Working to have more accessible testing options for students given that school will be taught online this year
- Collect, analyze and disseminate information about students experiences with online learning to understand if there are any gaps in the current system

List 5 things you would like to have completed during the winter term (2nd)

- Begin to research and analyze student experiences with Security Services and research how other schools security services operate
- Advocate for a new service review of the Maroons and advocate for a no-tolerance to sexual assault on behalf of the MSU
- Build a strong relationship with the MSSS and have more students attend GA
- Work with professors, department heads, VP Education and AVP University Affairs to implement new course syllabus for the 2021-2022 school year
- Help the 2021-2022 transition smoothly into their roles as SRA members