



REPORT

From the office of the...

Student Health Education Centre (SHEC) Coordinator

TO: Members of the Executive Board

FROM: Sydney Cumming (She/Her)

SUBJECT: SHEC Report (III)

Year plan Update

Since submitting the second SHEC Executive Board Report at the end of August, we have been very busy **onboarding** our team of Peer Support Volunteers. We managed to complete hiring smoothly despite a slight delay in sending out official position offers (by one-day). We have also set our official SHEC Warmline operating hours this term and released our shift schedule to ensure that there are 3-4 volunteers (plus an Executive On-Call) during each hour! The **official operating hours** are as follows:

| Day(s) of the Week | Hours of Operation (EST) |
|--------------------|--------------------------|
| Monday - Thursday | 9:30 – 11:30 am |
| | 3:30 – 9:30 pm |
| Friday | 9:30 – 11:30 am |
| | 3:30 – 6:30 pm |

Unfortunately, we are slightly behind on our promotions plan and on ordering more health supplies. Only \$14 was spent since our last EB meeting; it was used to promote SHEC's fall hiring post to new McMaster students over social media ([see challenge C](#)). Unfortunately, I was also not able to meet my personal goal from the Year Plan to "*hopefully reduce hours of work per week to match those of the job description*".

Service Usage

The SHEC Warmline is up, but we have been too busy to promote it on social media ([see challenges](#)). Instead, we have had several folks reaching out for **health-related information** on the social media platforms they already use daily (i.e. Instagram, Facebook, etc.). Online engagement has been relatively high on these platforms due to a recent Silhouette article, and the MSU Instagram account, sharing information about our service.

Past Events, Projects, & Activities

Alongside several returning volunteers, our executive team had SHEC representatives at a variety of events throughout **First-Year Orientation** this year!

Highlights include our collaboration with MSU Spark on the two “Food for Thought” webinars, the SSC’s second virtual “Student Services Fair”, and SVPRO’s “Consent & Creativity” event.

The official application period for new McMaster undergraduates (first-years and new transfer students) to become SHEC Peer Support Volunteers (PSVs) was from August 27th - September 10th. We received **53 applications** from qualified students during this time, about 20 more than we had expected! Approximately 25 solo interviews were held over the span of September 14th – 17th, with 13 official position offers being made on September 20th. This brought our team to a total of 62 volunteers: 54 PSVs and 8 SHECxecs (originally 55:7).

Currently Working On

While much of our **SHEC-specific training** has already been shared online with our volunteers, some material is still missing. Specifically the content that I was assigned to create; as I have yet to be able to finish recording and/or transcribing said content despite having to book multiple “out of office” days to work on these only (see challenges A, B and D).

I am currently working with the Volunteer Coordinator and Promotions Co-ordinators to build **clear instructions for services users** to follow to access peer support virtually. We have some concerns with the functionality of the chat platform we’re using now but are currently experiencing more issues with the restrictive meeting settings on our MSU MS Teams accounts (see challenge B). Our chat widget also still needs to be embedded onto selected SHEC-MSU webpages (pregnancy tests, ordering supplies, resources hub, etc.) for ease of access.

In recognition of the fact that many students cannot easily or safely get to campus to receive one of our resource packages, or those offered in collaboration with FCC’s Lockers of Love, SHEC will be providing select **gift-cards upon request**. Gift-card values will range from \$10 – 75 each with priority being given to students that (i) live regions of Canada that have been designated “food deserts”; (ii) are isolating due to the current pandemic; (iii) are lacking transportation; or (iv) have young children in their care. We have set aside \$300 under the “Health Supplies” budget line for this initiative (to start) and have more money under the budget line that can be re-allocated if these are in high demand. See the list of available gift-cards on the table on the next page.

SHEC’s Gift-Card Options:

| Retailer/ Store | Minimum Value (\$ CDN) | Purpose | Notes |
|---------------------|------------------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| Buy Buy Baby | 5.00 | Pregnancy/ Baby | EC |
| Children’s Place | 15.00 | Pregnancy/ Baby | EC |
| Babies R US | 25.00 | Pregnancy/ Baby | EC |
| Joe Fresh | 5.00 | Personal care | EC, RC - <u>NVO</u> |
| T.J. Maxx / Winners | 5.00 | Personal care | <u>NVO</u> |
| Ardene | 10.00 | Personal care | EC |
| H&M | 10.00 | Personal care | EC |

| | | | |
|----------------------------------|-------|---------------|-----------------------|
| Reitman's (RW&Co) | 10.00 | Personal care | EC |
| Indigo / Chapters / Coles | 5.00 | Multiple uses | EC, RC |
| Rexall | 5.00 | Multiple uses | NVO |
| Walmart | 5.00 | Multiple uses | EC, RC |
| President's Choice | 5.00 | Multiple uses | EC, RC - NVO |
| Shoppers Drug Mart | 25.00 | Multiple uses | EC, RC - NVO |
| Costco | 50.00 | Multiple uses | NVO (unless a member) |

EC = Electronic card available
PC = Physical card available
NVO = Not valid for online purchases

Upcoming Events, Projects & Activities

The proposal for our physically-distanced **resource circulation program** is expected to be completed before our next EB report. This was originally meant to be done in July, but there were delays (see challenge A and D). We will be collaborating with MSU WGEN and the McMaster Library has offered to assist with funding for packaging supplies and to safely distribute them to students.

Now that we have a second Promotions Coordinator, we will be **increasing our social media presence** over the next month and working on placing orders with the Underground for design materials.

Over the next few weeks, our team will also be planning out our **SHEC Cares programming** which will primarily feature online giveaways to address the additional stress caused during exams in a more holistic manner. We will have several larger valued prizes that consist of expensive personal care items and multiple gift-cards to grocery stores to offer - thanks to the kind folks at the Student Wellness Centre who are giving us some extra money to help facilitate this! SHEC will also be teaming up with MSU Maccess to help bridge the gap between Disability Justice and Health Activism within our own student body.

Budget

| ACCOUNT CODE | ITEM | BUDGET / COST |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------|---------------|
| 6501-0116 | - | 21 |
| ADVERTISING & PROMOTION | TOTAL SPENT IN LINE | 21 |
| | REMAINING IN LINE | 2,740 |
| 6494-0116 | - | 0 |
| VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION | TOTAL SPENT IN LINE | 265 |
| | REMAINING IN LINE | 750 |
| TOTALS | | |
| TOTAL BUDGETED DISCRETIONARY SPENDING | | \$8,450.00 |
| TOTAL ACTUAL DISCRETIONARY SPENDING | | 60 |
| REMAINING DISCRETIONARY SPENDING | | \$8,390.00 |

Our service has spent \$21 this year - this is not a cause for celebration. Nor is it an indication that our service doesn't need the funding (see challenge C). During this time, \$14 was spent on advertising Fall PSV hiring online and I personally spent another \$7 - which VP Finance approved for reimbursement later.

Volunteers

Upcoming opportunities for professional development include the chance to join one of our **volunteer-led committees**! Both our Events & Outreach and Resources & Advocacy teams plan on posting information by the end of the week on how to join each committee for the semester - with meetings starting after reading week! Mandatory **SHEC training** is also currently on-going. Delivery of training materials was significantly delayed (see challenges A, B, and D) and materials are still being slowly uploaded to the designated Google Folders for our volunteers to review.

Volunteer engagement strategies have begun. We are currently in the process of planning our first full-team social of the year. This was postponed so we could focus on remedying immediate issues as they arose (see challenge A). We recently announced our **eight pods**; each pod leader is to reach out to the 6 – 7 PSVs that are in their pod to assess which platform they'd like to use for intra-pod communications. Pods are an integral part of SHEC as they provide a quick place to ask questions that other PSVs might be able to answer, a smaller group of people to ask to swap shifts with, and a group of like-minded students to build bonds with! This year, we had volunteers fill out a questionnaire that matched them with their Pod Leader (an exec) and other pod members based on common interests. We are also planning on sending our volunteers **\$5 electronic gift-cards** as a token of appreciation for their patience over the last four weeks and for completing the mandatory training. The request was tentatively approved by VP Finance, but I am currently waiting on further verification and instructions after answering her last email which asked for slight clarification (see challenge C).

Current Challenges

- A. **Fractured and inconsistent communication.** Throughout the last couple of months, things have gotten to a point where we are becoming exceedingly behind schedule because of the amount of time invested in decoding messages coming from the MSU's BoD.
 - i. The SHEC executive team was very proactive in telling our volunteers what was required of them and what was going on before and throughout MSU-mandated training. It simply didn't matter; the messages the volunteers were receiving during this time from the VP Administration created a **sense of panic** and nothing could remedy that. We ended up spending a lot of time consoling and helping volunteers that were repeatedly being given conflicting information about the training. In addition to guiding my own team of 61 volunteers through this very hectic time, I spent a lot of time helping 20+ students from other services (consoling them; helping them connect to their PTM; helping them join the Avenue course and the synchronous training

sessions; accessing the online quizzes and various other features; etc). *This goes along with Challenge D.*

- ii. There has been a concerning **lack of consistency** in terms of what is being communicated to the PTMs. It's become evident that, if PTMs don't share the information that was given to them with their peers, the next person to discuss the same topic with a member of the BoD will be a given completely different responses. Yet, I'm keenly aware I won't be given retro-pay to spend time translating the details of my meetings to the rest of the PTMs. This is more than a little frustrating considering that our **services all run on completely different timelines** and thus the rules will arbitrarily be changed months-deep into projects.
 - *This has directly or indirectly impacted our ability to hire volunteers, upload our SHEC-specific training materials, set up our online service platforms (and troubleshoot on-going issues), promote the service, begin work on the committees and start on our year-long volunteer engagement strategies, begin regular executive team meetings, update job descriptions, create specific online protocols, order health supplies, etc.*
 - *It has also affected my personal ability to meet my own basic needs, attend to family emergencies, maintain healthy relationships, replace my broken laptop (re: email from May), find a thesis supervisor, apply for important funding, apply for SAS accommodation, start classes, etc.*

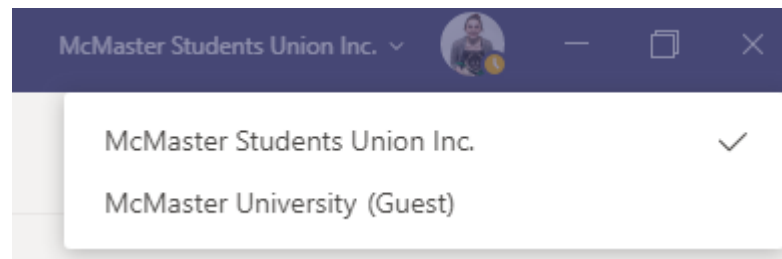
Proposed Response:

Part of the issue is clearly the lack of **proper documentation of online meetings**. In this time of increased stress, a lot of folks are experiencing brain fog and short-term memory lapses. It's understandable given the overwhelming effects of the current situation, however, there must be a way to make the information that is being given more consistent – potentially there needs to be an additional staff member present to help take notes during meetings. Especially those involving members of the MSU's BoD. I don't see a better immediate solution (that would be accessible) as it's extremely difficult to take notes while actively participating in a meeting and most folks don't have the extra time to turn their call transcript into simplified notes afterwards. There is not a cheap solution to this issue, in my opinion.

- B. **Overly strict collaboration settings on MS Office 365.** Our MSU accounts have stricter collaboration settings that the McMaster accounts – creating a huge nuisance and preventing easy management of communications.
 - i. To meet volunteers where they would be comfortable and where they would be able to separate their personal lives from their volunteering duties, SHEC created a MS Teams group for our full volunteer team. This has been an

amazing asset, replacing our normal Facebook groups. However, MSU accounts cannot join any MS Teams groups that have been created outside of our organization without being made a Guest account. Moreover, anytime someone messages you from a Mac account, the message will be received through the Guest account. These **Guest accounts won't allow full functionality** of the Teams app though and the notifications from them are not integrated into our normal accounts, meaning that we regularly miss notifications from our volunteers. We have confirmed that these issues are specific to the MSU's privacy settings and not those of the McMaster accounts.

- *Each member of the executive team now has 4 MS Teams accounts that they must regularly switch between to ensure they aren't accidentally ignoring a volunteer during this amazingly stressful time. Two on their MSU account and two on their Mac account; specifically, due to these restrictive privacy settings.*



- ii. We are using Microsoft Teams to facilitate audio and video peer-support, but to join anonymously folks have to sign out of their Mac accounts or use an incognito browser because the organization's privacy settings won't allow us to change the meeting options to permit folks to **join a Teams Meeting anonymously** from a register account (i.e. a Mac account). However, many important features are not available if you join these ways – most significantly the automatic closed captions and chat function!

- *Students using their Guest accounts are unable to bypass the lobby even when we have set the meeting options as such, which has required executives to be hypervigilant throughout their executive on-call shifts for seemingly preventable technical issues.*
- *Volunteers living outside of the GTHA, those living in student housing, and those who have financial barriers have all had had **complications with Zoom** overwhelming their internet and thus having it cut in-out constantly (outside of SHEC). Moreover, many people find that having closed captions displayed on a different screen is disorienting. There have also been mentions of issues with the lack of privacy control for Otter.ai transcripts. Generally, our*

volunteers have had less issues with Microsoft Teams and come to prefer its integration.

- iii. We are also unable to share content that is **recorded on MS Stream from an MSU account** to a McMaster account without sharing to everyone in the company (a risk to the confidentiality of students). Yet MSU accounts can see content McMaster students have recorded if we use an incognito window. This issue has required us to spend extra time downloading and re-uploading content into a separate Google drive for volunteers to access.
 - *We thought about uploading the content to Avenue2Learn. However, Graeme mentioned something along the lines of him uploading the content for us, which would have created additional time delays that we simply did not desire.*

Proposed Response:

I would suggest having Pauline, the **MSU's Network Administrator**, review the **collaboration settings** and possibly discuss the issue further with her counterparts at McMaster University Technology Services or with a MS Office 365 representative. This seems like a very rudimentary problem, but we've heard multiple complaints about wonky MSU MS Office 365 collaboration settings.

- C. **Lack of clarity for spending procedures.** The process for requesting to use the money from our budget lines is very unclear and is causing planned expenses to snowball as they are repeatedly postponed due to this disarray.
 - i. In practice, the Purchase Request forms aren't well made. They lack information that Jessica is usually going to ask before approving them and other information seems redundant. I am confused about how long this process is meant to last or what the next steps should be as I have made it here multiple times and never successfully made a purchase through Finances. This lack of accessibility has made me **anxious to submit any further requests.**
 - *The \$21 that have been spent so far were through communications with the Communications Director to pay for service promotions on social media or expenses pre-approved for reimbursement. Not through the normal avenues.*

Proposed Response:

I can't say what is needed because it is unclear to me - especially while everything is online. Please note that having me make purchases from my personal account is not an appropriate solution as I'm a broke first-generation student. I am also unable to visit physical stores due to my disability and lack of transportation due to the cancellation of the MSU Bus Pass. Potentially information on how to use the FedEx business

account to pick up parcels from your house for delivery would be helpful for SHEC in specific (other Mac offices use this). Moreover, **a clear stepwise process** should be outlined for placing online orders – I can't work within your conditions if I don't know them ahead of time.

D. The Marginalization Tax. Originally coined cultural taxation, the Marginalization Tax is “an array of additional duties, expectations and challenges that accompany being an exception within white male-dominated institutional environments... While these extra responsibilities are both important and necessary for the expansion of diversity... they are intensive and often detract from the time spent on traditional promotion-granting activities”.

i. Our team of 62 full-time students is built almost exclusively of students with lived experiences of **all forms** of marginalization... Those experiences are not isolated from their roles as volunteers and in some cases are exacerbated by it. The list of demands from the MSU Administration that keep coming seem never ending and I'm worried that the 'solutions' that are being created behind closed doors are **increasing the Marginalization Tax**.

➤ *The New rule for meetings with the VP Administration every 2-3 weeks; had previously been told these 1-on-1's would occur once per term unless the PTM requested additional ones. New rule for approval of lieu hours with the VP Administration; I habitually go over my hours by Sunday evening or Monday afternoon just from responding to emails and dealing with confidential SHEC-related issues. I then continue to usually work another 25 – 40 hours per week. Graeme is also overly busy; this all seems like it will be very chaotic.*

ii. There is **only one paid staff member in the SHEC team**, yet a lot of things keep being designated as things that only the paid workers can do which places an unfair burden on me.

➤ *We had been told “no” in many situations. The FCC has been told “go on ahead” for these same things, yet SHEC helped them create their proposal; we supply many of their products for free; and we distribute more than 8-fold the supplies they do within a given academic year. Our service is nearly 50 years old and ever-expanding. Why are we not met with the same level of support? Why does SHEC not deserve more labour support or paid contracted hours?*

Proposed Response:

I'm not sure what the appropriate response is to this challenge beyond **the proposed structural changes** that I've discussed with Graeme and Anika throughout the year.

The point is that myself and other marginalized PTMs shouldn't have to know the solutions to problems that have been long-existing and that are already consuming much of my "free" time. This is part of the reason my position is not highly sought after, despite the service being extremely popular.

Successes

We recently promoted one of our returning volunteers, Ilziba Yusup (she/her), to the position of **SHEC Promotions Co-Coordinator**! She will work alongside Josie Kearney (she/her) to create marketing materials for the service and to help advertise the wonderful work of our two volunteer-led committees. She has been a natural extension of our executive team so far and we're excited to have a fresh face at the [virtual] table!

Our current executive team received multiple compliments by first-year students for the **accessibility and relatively simplicity of our Fall application** process. Once the Microsoft Form was linked into the body of the job posting, applications picked up rapidly. Interested volunteers were able to apply without providing a resume or cover letter; instead, any pertinent information that one would usually find there was integrated as questions into the application form (i.e. Program, Year, Unique Qualifications, etc.). This minimized confusion around our policies and encouraged more students to apply as they were not penalized for the opportunities (or lack thereof) that have been available to them during high school or their previous undergraduate degree. This also generally helped me to redact information from applications quickly and accurately. The amount of time that the executive team had to spend reading applications was also reduced as each question had a 300-word response limit. This is a process we would recommend repeating in future years.