AGENDA – SRA Emergency Meeting  
Student Representative Assembly  
Sunday November 14, 2004 @ 5:00pm  
Council Chambers, Gilmour Hall Room 111

PROCEDURE

Call to Order, Call of the Roll, Adoption of the Agenda, Business, Adjournment, Call of the Roll.

BUSINESS

1. MSU-MAPS-GSA Response to the Rae Review

MOTIONS

1. Moved by Robinson, seconded by Khan that the SRA ratify the MSU-MAPS-GSA Response to the Rae Review Discussion Paper.
Call to Order @ pm

Call of the Roll
Present Bateman, Brown, Dyason, Gamble, Gillezeau, Grenier, Jones, Khan, Mohan, Murray, Osborne, Ott, Pahulje, Patel, Patel, Raina, Robinson, Sarin, Sumner, Vijayakanthan, Wong
Absent Excused Du, Klein, Moran, Piribauer
Absent Baldeo, Dinath, Kashyap, O'Neill, Qureshy, Takawy, Vanini
Late Erickson, Minard, Ramdeen
Others Present Ott (Acting Recording Secretary)
Speaker Kherani

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Moved by Grenier, seconded by Brown to adopt the agenda as presented.

Carried by General Consent

BUSINESS

1. MSU-MAPS-GSA Response to the Rae Review

Moved by Robinson, seconded by Khan that the SRA ratify the MSU-MAPS-GSA Response to the Rae Review Discussion Paper.

Discussion

- Robinson – apologize for calling the meeting and acknowledge the errors in time lines. I am asking for approval of this paper because the deadline is tomorrow. It would probably be good for us to move into committee of the whole to discuss this topic. If this doesn’t get approved, it might not hold the same weight with the Secretariat. I recognize the mistakes made. Mohan made the changes on the screen.

Moved by Bateman, seconded by Osborne that the SRA move into committee of the whole.

In favor: 21 Opposed: 0 Abstain: 1

Abstain: Brown

Motion Passes

Return to Regular Session

Rise & Report

In committee of the whole, the Assembly decided to approve the document in principle so that it is submitted tomorrow. Document will come back once finished.
Moved by Robinson, seconded by Osborne that the SRA amend the document as it has been changed during committee of the whole.

Amendment

Moved by Robinson, seconded by Pahulje to change the main motion to include “in principle”.

Discussion

- Grenier – what does “in principle” mean?
- Sunner – that we trust Robinson will make the changes.
- Dyason – I would like to see the changes before it is submitted. When will this document be done? Is there anyway for this to happen?
- Speaker – this is not an appropriate motion for pass around motion.
- Mohan – recommended that we approve the document and allow the Board to be there tomorrow to assist. The Assembly should approve this with all the changes once finished.
- Minard – the events of the past two weeks has proved that Robinson is untrustworthy. Changes should be made tonight and brought to the Executive Board tomorrow at 9:00am.
- Murray – can someone else see this? Is Executive Board approval okay with the Assembly?
- Ramdeen – what is the timeframe in which this will be finished?
- Robinson – by 4:30pm tomorrow.
- Erickson – what happens if the Executive Board doesn’t like the changes?
- Gillezeau – I do not think it is appropriate for the Executive Board to discuss. We should all be making the decision.
- Mohan – there are enough people to resolve this. If you have any input, go and see Robinson between now and 9:00am.
- Pahulje – the Executive Board has the authority so we should vote now and give the Executive Board the final say. Let’s get the ball rolling, no more personal attacks.
- Gillezeau – I do not believe this document is ready to be submitted.
- Dyason – I do not feel comfortable as an Executive Board member approving this. This should be approved by the SRA.
- Minard – the SRA should approve with the knowledge that the Executive Board will take the final look tomorrow.

Vote on Amendment

In favor: 1 Opposed: 20 Abstain: 1
Amendment Fails

Moved by Minard, seconded by Khan that the Executive Board adds the Rae Review for discussion on Executive Board agenda at the 9:00am meeting on Monday.

In favor: 23 Opposed: 0 Abstain: 0
Carried Unanimously

- Mohan – everything we have discussed will be reflected in the document.
- Gamble – are the two-committee chairs okay with this?
- Gillezeau – I am still not happy with this. This meeting should not have been for grammar changes.

Vote on Main Motion

In favor: 21 Opposed: 1 Abstain: 1
Opposed: Gillezeau
Abstain: Gamble
Carried Unanimously

ADJOURNMENT

Moved by Mohan, seconded by Minard that the meeting be adjourned.

In favor: 23 Opposed: 0 Abstain: 0
Carried Unanimously

Call of the Roll
Present
Batemann, Brown, Dyason, Erickson, Gamble, Gillezeau, Grenier, Jones, Khan, Minard, Mohan, Murray, Osborne, Ott, Pahulje, Patel, Patel, Raina, Ramdean, Robinson, Sarin, Sunner, Vijayakanthan, Wong
Absent Excused
Du, Klein, Moran, Piribauer
Absent
Baldeo, Dinath, Kashyap, O’Neill, Qureshy, Takawy, Vanini
Late
Others Present
Ott (Acting Recording Secretary)
Speaker
Kherani
The Rae Review on Post-Secondary Education

A Response from the Student Groups at McMaster University

McMaster Students Union

McMaster Association of Part-time Students

Graduate Students Association
INTRODUCTION

Higher education in Ontario is in desperate need of improvement. Students, faculty, administrators, various other stakeholders, and the government look forward to revitalizing our post-secondary education system. This response to the Rae Review Discussion Paper is the result of collaboration among representatives of the three student organizations at McMaster University: the McMaster Students Union (MSU), the McMaster Association of Part-time Students (MAPS), and the Graduate Students Association (GSA).

The MSU, MAPS, and the GSA look to the Government of Ontario to place a higher priority on post-secondary education. Higher education is a crucial driver in the development of skilled, enlightened, and inspired citizens. Things need to change. This paper reflects the priorities and recommendations for improving higher education in Ontario as identified by the leaders of the 20,000 students the MSU, MAPS, and the GSA represent.

WORKING GROUP

This document was written by

Erin B. Robinson
MSU Vice-President (Education)

in consultation with the following individuals

MSU Student Representative
Assembly Members

Amanda Bateman
Faheem Dinath
Kerstin Erickson
Rob Gillezeau
Justin Grenier
Paul Jones
Lily Klein
Stephanie Murray
Barkha Patel
Greg Pahulje
Matt Sumner
Ryan Moran
Lindsay Minard

Shano Mohan
MSU President

Tommy Piribauer
MSU Vice-President (Administration)

Umair Khan
MSU Vice-President (Finance)

Jackie Osterman
MAPS Executive Director

Sam Minniti
MAPS Board of Directors

Maria Buko-Buchanan
Graduate Students Association
RESPONSE TO THE RAE REVIEW WORKBOOK

Five key areas were identified in the Rae Review—Accessibility, Quality, System Design, Funding, and Accountability. They are set out in the pages that follow, together with the responses from the McMaster Students Union, McMaster Association of Part-time Students, and the Graduate Students Association.

* Note: All italics are taken from the Rae Review website at www.raereview.on.ca.

ACCESSIBILITY

_How can we increase participation and success in higher education?_

A. **Good information for good choices:** Put in place an information clearinghouse—through government or a third-party—to make sure individuals have comprehensive information available to them on:

- Where the jobs are and what preparation and qualifications are required to fill them.
- Where the right programs are being offered and their quality.
- How much they cost and how it can be financed—what it takes in terms of money and effort.
- For the internationally-trained, how to have their training and experience recognized.

There are hundreds of thousands of documents about higher education options in Ontario; the problem is you have to know what you need and where to find it in order to get it. The right decision for a student, parent, or educator requires reliable and readily available information to support educated choices.

The development of an online resource centre, accessible in schools, libraries, and other public institutions, provides equitable access to information and opportunities. Accuracy, timeliness, breadth, and depth are each critically important facets of a successful resource centre. There is limited information available concerning program reviews, exit surveys from students, and types of employment after completion. A resource centre that stimulates informed choices about pre-study, study, and post-graduation decision-making would be a powerful tool for Ontarians. This online resource centre will require an investment, but a much smaller one compared to any other form of information distribution.

We recommend that:

**A single authority should facilitate the online resource centre.** This will ensure that information posted is in order, is easy to navigate, and is comprehensive. It is recommended that the Government of Ontario take leadership in developing an online resource centre for Ontario.
B. Helping high school students make more informed decisions: Earlier and more intensive career guidance and counselling that:

- Provides better information about the full range of choices available and the right high school course requirements/choices.
- Supports more exposure to the workplace (e.g., pathways to apprenticeship and co-op placements).

Both students and their advisors need to be well-informed to support effective decision-making. With the reform of high school in Ontario, and ultimately the elimination of Grade 13, students are required to choose the higher education option they want as early as 15 years old.¹ High school guidance counsellors need to be informed about the options for students in order to best advise them. The development of a resource centre, with information about the pathways to higher education available to students, would provide valuable information for advisors and students. Program reviews, quality reports, and graduate statistics are just some of the information products that should be made available so that students are prepared to make the best decision they can.

C. Focus on retention: Encourage institutions to pay more attention to the supports that students need to succeed, especially for underrepresented groups. This could include:

- More flexible part-time and distance learning options.
- Strengthening counselling supports.
- Stronger credit equivalency and transfer recognition.
- Higher level of language training and supports.

Part-time education and distance education in Ontario is a vital component of a society committed to lifelong learning. Every qualified student should be able to seek additional education opportunities if they choose to do so. More flexible learning options will prove that Ontario can become a province where higher education is available to everyone.

Funding incentives need to be offered to institutions that provide flexible part-time and distance learning options. Institutions that recognize the needs and demands of higher education in many forms assist in making post-secondary education possible for many more students.

Transferability within the system is a necessity, and should not force a student to repeat completed work. This, however, is a reality in Ontario today; McMaster University, for example, does not accept several level one courses from the University of Guelph, Queen’s University, the University of Toronto, and vice versa. This does not help students.

We recommend that:

All courses comparable to other institutions should be transferable. If comparable course transfers are not available, general course or program completions should be recognized on transcripts.

Competency-based entrance tests need to be developed for all higher education programs at all institutions. Should a student achieve a passing grade on a competency test, the student should not have to repeat a course equivalent to one they have already taken, but rather they should be permitted to enter into a higher level course.

With respect to colleges, it is unreasonable that under the current structure, a student could spend three years in a college program, and then want to transfer to a university only to find that their college courses are not recognized. Students need to be acknowledged for the work they have accomplished.

We recommend that:

**Competency-based entrance tests, for the purpose of system transfer, should be developed by institutions in order to facilitate easier transferability and address credit retention.**

Support to students is essential. Without the adequate assistance in apprenticeship, college, or university programs, finding the motivation to stay in a study program can be difficult. At McMaster, students can access the Centre for Student Development and Career Services, two services provided by the University’s Student Affairs division, but funded principally by compulsory, non-tuition related ancillary fees. Psychologists, notetakers, English as a Second Language (ESL) programs, career advice and preparation are among the supports that should be included in the system without any additional fees. These services provide direct support to the learning environment and should be funded as core institutional expenditures.

We recommend that:

**Student services and supports are an essential component to higher education and should not require additional funding from students in order to operate.**

**CONCLUSIONS ON ACCESSIBILITY**

We are pleased to offer suggestions to increase accessibility, however, as student organizations at McMaster University, we are extremely concerned by the absence of a fuller discussion of financial barriers to higher education in Ontario.

The cost of a university education has increased drastically in the last decade; many students are finding it increasingly difficult to afford the associated costs. Tuition is not the only cost driver for those attending a university. Textbooks, housing and utilities, food, and reasonable incidentals are all associated costs that must be considered when determining the total cost of higher education. The fact is many students cannot afford to live away from home. There are also a large number of students who do not have the financial support of family members or they do not qualify for financial assistance. Many of these students have to forgo their aspirations due to the cost of higher education in Ontario.
The MSU, MAPS, and the GSA believe that every qualified student has the right to participate in higher education, regardless of financial ability. The provincial government must recognize and address this barrier to higher education.

Therefore, we recommend that:

The Government of Ontario ensure that every qualified student has the right to attend higher education, regardless of financial ability.

QUALITY

How should we improve the quality of higher education?

A. Focus on the student experience: Develop a common system-wide approach — for all institutions and in conjunction with students — for assessing and publicly reporting on student satisfaction and actions that improve the student experience.

The student experience needs to be the first and foremost concern of the higher education system in Ontario. A system that focuses on students would positively influence the quality of higher education. Feedback on programs, teaching quality, resources, libraries, facilities, student support programs, and extra-curricular activities would enhance our higher education system. Surveying current students, recent graduates, and extended graduates (5 to 10 years out of the institution) can attain this. Surveys can include questions surrounding the student experience, personal and professional skills gained, and overall impression of the institution. This must be done on a regular basis.

We recommend that:

Student feedback on the student experience be obtained and be available from all institutions from students at various points in their education.

B. Focus on teaching excellence: Create a Centre of Higher Education Teaching Excellence that could:

- Develop best practices for teaching, for both applied and academic subjects, and including use of new technology.
- Offer training and/or resource material, preparation and ongoing support for the teaching role.
- Assess and report on the state of teaching practice in Ontario.

Research takes precedence over teaching in the current system and this arrangement should be changed. Teaching quality and excellence must become a focal point of higher education. Teaching is what keeps the system in place for future generations.

In order to develop the best quality teaching in Ontario, institutions must directly develop and focus on the methods of teaching that work best for their students and their curriculum. There is no one correct method to teach.
Creating a centralized body to ensure teaching excellence will take resources away from institutions. Many institutions have resource centres for professors that address teaching quality. At McMaster University, the Centre for Leadership and Learning is helping to meet this need. Many institutions, however, do not have resource centres for teaching excellence, and this needs to be corrected; all institutions need to prioritize the development of teaching quality and excellence.

Existing bodies within the higher education structure, such as the Council of Ontario Universities (COU), should be empowered to share their best practices for institutions, resources, new teaching methods, and the state of teaching in Ontario.

We recommend that:

A central body above institutions not be created to focus on teaching excellence at individual institutions, but that existing bodies (such as the COU), be empowered to further explore teaching quality at institutions in Ontario.

Student feedback about the quality of teaching is important, and institutions must ensure that students have the ability to give said feedback on a regular basis and in a transparent manner. This is to ensure that students are receiving a high quality of education that focuses on teaching excellence.

We recommend that:

Institutions provide a forum for students to address issues surrounding the quality of teaching at institutions in Ontario, and that input be public and available at all times.

Increased funding to universities for the sole purpose of teaching excellence is a necessary step to improving the quality of education. With more funding, universities are able to hire more professors, decrease class sizes, offer more tutorials to students, and provide more resources to students expecting the best education possible. Institutions would also be able to recruit the best possible professors.

We recommend that:

Dedicated funding from the Government of Ontario is allocated to institutions to focus on improving teaching excellence in Ontario.

C. Focused approach to research and graduate education: Use a more strategic/focused approach to expand and fund research and graduate studies only at institutions that can offer a high level of academic supervision, research opportunities and financial support.

Research is a driving force in our higher education institutions. Students see this first-hand at McMaster University, as the institution was named the Canadian Research University of the Year on November 5, 2004. With the focus on research, however, there are problems. Focused research at the undergraduate level develops graduates with an education that is not

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diverse. Research, however, is not a negative aspect to an undergraduate education – there must be a balance.

We recommend that:

**Universities must provide a broad liberal arts education to all students at the undergraduate level, regardless of academic division.**

There are several programs that focus on the broad education, which develops flexibility, critical thinking, and analytical skills in graduates. The Arts and Science Programme at McMaster University is an example of a broad liberal arts education. Students take classes in Sciences and in Humanities and Social Sciences. This type of program develops a holistic approach to many areas of study at universities. Programs like this, however, are not restricted to undergraduate programs. The recent development of the Masters degree in Globalization studies at McMaster University indicates that both a research-intensive and a broad and diverse foundation are pivotal in creating an excellent higher education system.

On the graduate level, enrolment needs to increase in order to meet the demands of new faculty. *Refining Directions*, McMaster University’s long-term planning strategy makes recommendations for an increase in graduate enrolment to equal 20 per cent of the overall enrolment at McMaster.³ Focused high quality research at the graduate level is necessary as today’s graduate students are tomorrow’s faculty.

We recommend that:

**Focused research at the graduate level remains a constant component of programs.**

Universities that offer graduate programs must also keep up with what other institutions are offering and creating. Competition is important in a higher education system, but excessive duplication is leading to wasted public investment in institutions. For example, if every institution in Ontario offered a top-end Law School, Medical School, English Program, and Masters in Business Administration Program, institutions would receive less funding on the whole, and they would be unable to focus on the areas in which they excel.

We recommend that:

**Institutions are cognisant about fellow university programs, at the graduate level, in order to ensure that government funding is as efficient as possible.**

**D. Measure our performance and compare ourselves to the best in the world:** Develop a system-wide quality assurance process as the basis of institutional improvement. This would involve both core measures common to all institutions as well as mission-specific measures, and regular public reporting of results. Meaningful measures could include student satisfaction, teaching excellence, and research performance.

Comparison to other higher education systems is necessary to ensure that Ontario is competitive. In a brief comparison, higher education in Ontario receives the lowest amount

of government funding out of all Canadian provinces, yet it has the most institutions. Any changes to the higher education system in Ontario must be done in a step-by-step process in order to provide the necessary infrastructure for future improvement.

To make Ontario’s higher education institutions the best, we must build a unique system. We must further examine higher education systems around the world. Without analyzing our competitors, it is unclear what we need to keep, alter, or eliminate. Australia, Ireland, Switzerland, England, the United States, and even Ontario and Canada have many good qualities in their higher education system(s) that can be incorporated into a new and better system for Ontario. Not all qualities will transfer simply because of the individual jurisdictional needs, but the concepts and core principles are important and what can be adapted. This approach will make post-secondary education sustainable.

We recommend that:

**Ontario look to other jurisdictions to develop a strong post-secondary education system that is unique, meets the demands of the province, and provides sustainability for the entire system.**

We further recommend that:

**Any changes to the higher education system in Ontario must be done so in a step-by-step process in order to provide the necessary infrastructure for future improvement.**

We further recommend that:

**Competition between, and within, provinces must remain a focal point of higher education institutions, and should not be overshadowed by looking solely to international higher education systems.**

At the graduate level, the Ontario Council of Graduate Studies (OCGS) is viewed as a body that analyzes programs, disciplines, and research in a positive and accepted approach.

We recommend that:

**The OCGS should continue to act as a body for measuring aspects of graduate studies in Ontario.**

**E. Internationalize the experience:** Pursue more strategically and systematically increased enrolments from international students. Ensure that all institutions actively promote and have the necessary arrangements in place so that students who wish to can gain international experience by taking part of their program in another country.

Diversity is an enhancement to any institution. International students bring with them different cultures, new methodologies, and a different perspective. This allows both international students and others to learn from each other in a higher quality environment.
International experiences are a great way to educate Ontario students about other parts of the globe. It diversifies their horizons, opens them up to new opportunities, and fosters relationships and partnerships that are not possible within Ontario alone.

All in all, this option needs to be explored further, mostly because of the costs. Funding cannot be taken away from other equally important areas, or else the infrastructure and supports available to all students will not assist them, and students will lose out on more than just a diverse experience.

We recommend that:

The options available for international exchanges to and from Ontario are explored further to ensure that funding is not redirected from areas in need.

CONCLUSIONS ON QUALITY

We are pleased to offer suggestions on improving quality. As student organizations at McMaster University, however, we are again concerned by the absence of a fuller discussion of financial components to improving quality. Additionally, we note the need for a government long-term planning document for post-secondary education in Ontario, and the need for a responsible higher education system.

Increased funding would allow for a decrease in class sizes, and in turn, it will improve professor-student ratios, which will lead to a better quality of education because of the increased direct interaction between students and professors. The resources available to students and professors would also increase with more adequate funding, which will also contribute to a higher quality of education for students. Increased funding would also give institutions that ability to find the best faculty members from around the world.

The provincial government must receive a high calibre education. Long-term planning for institutions in Ontario must be legislated by the government in order to ensure that subsequent governments do not detract from the quality of education in Ontario. Furthermore, institutions, government, and students must ensure that post-secondary education in Ontario is a system that is responsible.

A quality system is one that is responsible and sustainable. This will ensure that the quality of resources remains for future generations, and it will also help mould students into responsible citizens who take pride in the place they choose to reside. A holistic approach to building a higher education system includes the three pillars of sustainability: environmental, social, and economic. Without a balance, there is sacrifice of the other components.

The MSU, MAPS, and the GSA argue that the quality of education must improve in Ontario. The provincial government must recognize and address this component of higher education.
Therefore, we recommend that:

The Government of Ontario focus on improving the quality of higher education in Ontario by increasing funding levels, developing a long-term planning document, and focusing on developing a responsible and sustainable system.

SYSTEM DESIGN

How can we make sure that our institutions constitute a coherent, coordinated system to meet Ontario’s goals for higher education?

A. Encourage specialization and collaboration: Develop a plan for higher education in Ontario that encourages institutions to develop more specialized and distinctive missions as long as — when taken as a whole — the institutions continue to meet the full needs of individuals and the economy, from skilled professionals to tradespeople. This could include expanding the number of specialized joint or transfer college-university programs and allowing selected colleges to deliver the first two years of some university programs, like junior colleges do in other jurisdictions; and creating institutions dedicated to serving underrepresented groups.

Colleges and universities already have the ability to set their own directions, missions, visions, and goals. With that said, colleges and universities should not specialize into institutions that only offer a handful of programs, with other institutions offering another handful. Many campuses do not focus on Humanities or Social Sciences to the same extent as Sciences, Engineering and Commerce, because there is a general perception that there is not as much recognition in those fields.

If institutions are permitted to specialize, many students will be unable to access higher education for financial reasons. To reduce costs, many students live at home and attend college or university in the same city, or even in a nearby city. The costs associated with mobility to and from institutions can be equal to the price tag of the tuition, if not greater. Rent or residence fees, food, and transportation are just some of the costs that can be reduced by living at home.

Many graduate programs provide financial assistance through offering jobs such as Tutorial Assistants or Lab Assistants. Focused research, as mentioned earlier, is necessary to develop strong leaders in their respective field of study.

Universities must remain institutions that provide a broad liberal arts education to all students. Many individuals attend university to develop critical thinking and analytical skills. If universities become specialized institutions that offer only a particular type of program or cater to a particular field, there would be a lack of diversity on the campus, which would be a detriment to the university experience.

We recommend that:

Universities not be permitted to specialize and they must provide a broad liberal arts education at the undergraduate level.
Collaborative college-university programs, on the other hand, may have a promising place within our higher education system. The McMaster Nursing Baccalaureate program joins McMaster University, Mohawk College, and Conestoga College into a tri-institutional program. The benefits to the Nursing students are the broad and diverse university education combined with the practical college training. In any collaborative program, just as in any program at any institution, students must have the best experience, quality, and support available to them. This is what is currently absent from collaborative college-university programs.

We recommend that:

**All collaborative programs must focus on student experience, program quality, and support available to students.**

There are many institutions in Ontario. Creating more, or changing the focus of, institutions will not benefit students in the province. Junior colleges and specialized institutions for under-represented groups will cause discontinuity within the overall system. This will also promote a misguided use of funding at all institutions. The clarity of the institutions in Ontario needs to be redefined. Separating students into different institutions will also restrict the diversity of higher education.

Students who wish to transfer from the college system into the university system, or vice versa, should be required to take a competency entrance test in order to ensure that the student is in the appropriate course for their level.

We recommend that:

**The role of colleges and universities be explored further, that junior colleges not be implemented in Ontario but that transferability be improved by the development of competency entrance tests.**

**B. Clarify college role in skills training:** Ensure that as colleges evolve in advanced learning, they continue to provide programs and credentials in skills and apprenticeship training that directly serve labour market and student needs. This could include new strategies for developing apprenticeships, and ensuring their transferability to college diploma programs, as well as new approaches to the administration of apprenticeship programming.

Colleges can and should be recognized as institutions for skills and job training; universities as institutions for critical thinking and analysis development. Nonetheless, as the MSU, MAPS, and the GSA represent students at the university level, it would be inappropriate to comment further on the role of colleges within the system.
C. Recognize learning and qualifications: Establish a body that would support guaranteed recognition of achievement earned in institutions or the workforce, facilitating transferability into and out of institutions by: setting out standard levels of achievement for courses and programs; and evaluating and giving credit on a consistent basis for learning previously achieved, including international training. For example, Ireland's National Qualifications Authority sets out standardized levels of achievement for courses and programs, allowing for easy movement between institutions and the workforce. Internationally-trained students too, could use the system for recognition of their education achievements.

Transferability into and out of higher education institutions should be flexible. It should be designed to reflect the needs of Ontario, and not mirrored after another country, which is designed much differently and may have very different needs. A further explanation on the MSU, MAPS, and the GSA position surround transferability, please refer back to our comments on Accessibility: Focus on Retention on page 4.

Addressing the needs of individuals that come from other countries and the qualification that they bring with them is also vital to the success of our province. The demographics of the province are changing, and our higher education system must assist in making the transition as smooth as possible. For example, many faculty members will be retiring in the next few years, which will require an increase in graduate enrolment to be able to replace current staff members. In the near future, the majority of our population will also reach fifty years of age or older.

We recommend that:

Foreign credentials should be recognized at a higher standard than they currently are, and competency entrance tests should be developed and given to all foreign-trained professionals aspiring to work in their preferred field of study.

D. Other Possible Approaches:

Environmental sustainability must be recognized as a critical factor in the system of higher education in Ontario. Institutions of higher education have been the forerunners and advocates of societal change. The government must commit to funding sustainable practices at all institutions in Ontario. In order for post-secondary institutions to provide this vital role, we recommend that:

Government policy should be created that supports green buildings on campus for post-secondary institutions in Ontario. For example, the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification in the United States promotes sustainable building practices. The "Green Building Rating System® is a voluntary, consensus-based national standard for developing high-performance, sustainable buildings."^4

We recommend that:

The Government of Ontario should only invest in sustainable buildings for university campuses.

Post-secondary institutions also need to align with the Kyoto Protocol. On the Federal level, the commitment has been made to drastically reduce carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions. This commitment should be translated into action within the post-secondary education system in all provinces. Ontario has the opportunity to be a national leader.

Additionally, the fostering of a culture dedicated to cycling and recycling of materials within post-secondary institutions will reduce waste and encourage environmentally sustainable management.

We recommend that:

**The Government of Ontario place a strong emphasis on regulations for environmental sustainability that will ensure the preservation of our universities for future generations.**

**CONCLUSIONS ON SYSTEM DESIGN**

We have been pleased to offer suggestions to enhance the system design of post-secondary education in Ontario. As student organizations at McMaster University, however, we are again concerned by the absence of the financial component to improving our system. Additionally, we note the need for government long-term planning, transparency, university priorities, or overall sustainability. System design refers to a holistic approach to revitalizing the higher education in Ontario.

Post-secondary education needs adequate resources, without question. Resources available to institutions, and more specifically programs, also need to be adequate for the number of students in attendance. A higher education system that lacks infrastructure, quality resources, and facilities does not give students the post-secondary education that is expected. Ontario needs to meet, if not exceed, the Canadian National Average in terms of government funding to fix this problem. Higher education institutions need to be recognized as public institutions, and in order to ensure this, the system must be considered on the holistic level.

A long-term strategy for colleges and universities needs to be addressed by the creation of an act of legislation. This will ensure that the overall direction for institutions cannot be altered with a subsequent government. In doing so, governments would be recognizing the need for higher education in Ontario as a priority for the province.

A higher education system must be a transparent one. Universities do not currently fall under the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act. With the ability to allocate and spend millions of public dollars, information surrounding decisions, monies, and other relevant information should be easily accessible to the public.

University priorities in recent years have been focused on capital projects such as new buildings. In recent years at McMaster University, we have seen more construction on our campus than ever before, and plans continue to come forward for new capital projects. There must be a focused mandate for universities to refurbish old buildings in order to
maximize and use space efficiently. There is a severe problem with deferred maintenance issues in universities across Ontario.

A sustainable system is necessary in order for higher education institutions to remain in Ontario for future generations. The decisions that are made today affect the type of institutions and the calibre of post-secondary systems we will have tomorrow. Sustainable practices at universities are needed, in all areas - funding, quality, long-term planning, and the environment in which an institution lives. We must work to build a system worth preserving, and that preserves itself.

The MSU, MAPS, and the GSA argue that the post-secondary education system in Ontario must be a holistic one, that is sustainable through growth, finances, and responsibility. Without a conscious approach to higher education in Ontario as a system, many problems will arise that cause the system to shutdown, become inaccessible, difficult to navigate to or get quality experience from. Education shapes the citizenry of Ontario, and the system needs to be fixed.

Therefore, we recommend that:

The Government of Ontario provide adequate resources and funding to institutions, develop a long-term planning document that is legislated by the province, include universities in the scope of the Freedom of Information Act, make deferred maintenance a priority for universities, and require institutions to adopt sustainable practices.

FUNDING

How do we pay for higher education to ensure opportunity and excellence?

A. More progressive student assistance: Make sure all student assistance, whether grants, loans or tax breaks, is aimed at all students facing financial barriers to higher education. This could include changing certain tax measures that primarily benefit higher-income families, and providing some form of loan assistance to middle income families.

We recommend that:

Government financial assistance be fixed for all undergraduate, graduate, and part-time students.

Assistance does not come close to reaching the number of students it needs to, nor do all students in need of assistance receive any support. In numbers received from the Student Financial Aid and Scholarship Office at McMaster University, 7172 students applied for the Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP), only to have 5502 receive some form of assistance. A total of 1983 students are receiving the maximum loan limit of $9075. It is likely that many other students in need are attending McMaster University.

5 Personal communication. October 29, 2004.
Non-repayable assistance must be a focus on all students in need, but with particular emphasis on students from lower-income and under-represented groups.

We recommend that:

Non-repayable forms of assistance be available to students, and this component to government financial aid must comprise a significant portion of the assistance offered to students.

It is imperative that the distribution of non-repayable student financial assistance not be tied to a provincial loan program, because many students, who do not qualify for OSAP currently, are also not eligible for a bursary at McMaster. In fact, 3872 students on OSAP received an average bursary of $1916. A total of 4072 were given out.6

Furthermore, if OSAP is the student financial aid system that remains in Ontario, or a similar system is developed, we recommend that there be two funding options – one for tuition and another for living costs. Tuition funds must be payable directly to institutions, and students must be required to provide proof of necessary living expenses for substantial items, such as housing. This ensures that students who are in need of assistance are using the funds appropriately and are not taking the opportunity away from other qualified students.

We recommend that:

Government financial aid must be split into two categories in Ontario - tuition assistance and living costs assistance. Tangible measure needs to be in place to ensure that public funds are used appropriately.

Many parents cannot afford to assist their children, especially when there is more than one child in a higher education institution. Additionally, parental income levels do not always translate to assistance for children.

We recommend that:

Parental income not be the sole deciding factor when it comes to determining financial assistance.

Students who have the funds to attend university should be able to access government financial aid.

We recommend that:

All assistance must be needs-tested.

B. Give students the money: Redirect additional public funding from institutions to students and their families in order to make the institutions more responsive to student needs.

6 Ibid.
Taking public funds and distributing them to students of the system would not be a wise
decision for Ontario. Institutions are not equipped to handle the shifts in market forces
surrounding the interests of students. If funding to institutions was completed in this
manner, colleges and universities would not be able to entertain long-term planning
documents, retain faculty members on a permanent basis or have the necessary space for all
students wishing to attend, if market forces were in their favour.

In order to ensure that students attended a particular institution, campaigning for student
dollars on behalf of the government would begin at an extremely early level in high school,
or even sooner, and place a great deal of pressure on students. Market campaigns are not
the focus of higher education and it would decrease the quality of institutions, along with the
goals. Additionally, this would put many smaller institutions at a risk of closing simply
because resources would be not able to keep up with larger institutions.

We recommend that:

Government funding to institutions not be given to students.

C. Go now, pay later: Students would not be required to pay tuition until after graduation. Student
loans would be available to students from lower-income families to help with living costs while in school.
Tuition fees may be discounted or subsidized for needy students and repaid based on an affordable share of the
student's income.

Students should never have to pay for their loans while in a study period. A student should
also not have to pay for their student loans if they return to study after a period away.
Furthermore, a student should not have to pay for their student loan until they reach a target
income, which needs to be regulated by the government with an act of legislation.

Loans need to be available for all students in need and more non-repayable assistance is
needed. The focus cannot solely be on the lower-income demographic within Ontario, as
many students who come from a middle-class family are not eligible for assistance in the
form of loans or bursaries. The standards need to be reviewed to get assistance to more
students who need it. Family income should not be a deciding factor on whether one is in
need. Furthermore, the system needs to take into account fellow family members attending
institutions of higher education and it should not force a student to relinquish all their
savings to attend higher education, for example RSPs and GICs, which can be taxed.

The MSU considers a 'go now, pay later' approach as a potential element of a revamped
student financial aid system in Ontario, with a possible income-contingent repayment option
for students. This qualified support is subject to a broader funding framework that would
include regulated tuition, interest rate relief, and loan repayment that does not exceed current
aggregate student contribution levels. It must also be recognized that other jurisdictions that
have programs, such as Income-Contingent Repayment Plans, will not have a model that
suits Ontario perfectly. Enhancements, program creation, and overall details cannot make
students suffer. Any government financial aid model must be designed, with consideration
to other jurisdictions, for how to make it the best for Ontario.
Given the MSU's qualified support for further consideration of this option, it should be noted that the MSU does not support the conclusions in the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance (OUSA) policy paper, "The Hot Potato: Income Contingent Repayment Policy".

The MSU recognizes that any option of 'go now, pay later' is subject to a large financial contribution. If the government is committed to changing the financial assistance program for students in Ontario, there must be a significant commitment from the government. This needs to be ensured by an act of legislation.

The MSU recommends that:

The option of 'go now, pay later' option must be explored further and supported with details specific to Ontario.

The MAPS and the GSA oppose the 'go now, pay later' option with respect to income-contingent repayment plans, believing that they will serve to shift a greater proportion of the cost of higher education to the student. For MAPS and the GSA, design and outcome based considerations are the primary concern, rather than the abstract concept.

The MAPS and GSA recommend that:

The 'go now, pay later' option, with respect to income-contingent repayment plans, not be implemented in Ontario.

D. Flexibility on tuition fees: Allow colleges and universities to set tuition to reflect the costs of delivery or market demand, as long as measures are in place so that higher education remains affordable for all. This could include a scenario where institutions who choose to set higher tuition also assume full responsibility for student loans and bursaries/scholarships related to tuition. Government would continue to be responsible for student assistance related to living costs.

Tuition in Ontario must remain regulated. Currently, deregulated programs must re-regulate in order to make all programs and institutions accessible to all qualified students.

Deregulation is not something that any stakeholder should support. Higher education would become extremely inaccessible for students, as the cost of education already hinders many students. Deregulation would take the public good of higher education and create a two-tiered system, or even a private higher education system, in Ontario.

In a deregulated system, student assistance would need to be significantly more to cover the costs of tuition, not to mention the living costs. Universities are currently struggling for funds and there is not a realistic way to believe a deregulated system would allow for universities to prove the necessary funding for students, while maintaining current enrolment levels. Should student spaces drop, accessibility into higher education in Ontario would be severely jeopardized by those without the top academic merit and financial ability. Shifting tuition and student assistance responsibilities onto institutions will make certain programs and universities inaccessible for students in Ontario.
Student financial aid would also have to increase drastically, which puts students in a better position in the long run. Students would incur more debt, have a harder time paying it off, or simply not attend higher education because of the cost.

We recommend that:

**The Government of Ontario must regulate all programs and re-regulate all currently deregulated programs.**

**E. Pay for delivery of key results:** Provide predictable, multi-year government funding to institutions to support the delivery of key results (for example, meeting access and quality targets or meeting graduation targets for teaching and health care professionals). The purpose and use of the funding would be transparent to all.

No funding framework that is based on key results should be implemented in Ontario. The existing key performance indicator (KPI) framework is ineffective. With the lack of a holistic approach to criteria, the indicators only provide a small view about higher education in Ontario. The framework also promotes disparities between institutions and provides no support to improvements or enhancements to institutions.

Data collection to ensure that students are receiving a quality education is a component that can, and should, be addressed within stakeholder groups of the higher education system. It cannot be tied to funding institutions. All data should be available and accessible, and reported on regularly.

We recommend that:

**Funding of institutions based on targets of any type be discontinued in the province of Ontario.**

**CONCLUSIONS ABOUT FUNDING**

We have been pleased to offer suggestions to fix the funding of the higher education system in Ontario. As student organizations at McMaster University, however, we are tremendously concerned by the fact that the majority of funding options were directed to students. Additionally, we note the need for a sustainable funding mechanism that is based on a per-student multiplier, the need for adequate funding from the provincial government, and the need for a dedicated education transfer payment from the Federal Government.

**Why were four out of five of the options for funding post-secondary education in Ontario directed towards students?**

As the guest speaker for the Industry-Education Council of Hamilton Annual Partners in Education Breakfast, Bob Rae stated that “students will have to pay more, governments will have to pay more, and businesses will have to pay more.” None of these options address

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how governments will adequately fund post-secondary institutions, or the contribution of businesses. Students must not take on any more cost to their education than they currently do. Doing so will only make the system inaccessible to a greater number of students.

Funding of universities needs to be based from a multiplying mechanism, rather than a dividing mechanism, such as the current Base Income Unit (BIU). In the current structure there are many students that are unfunded entirely, causing a great strain on institutions, professors, and fellow students. In order to provide the high quality education, all students must be adequately funded.

Post-secondary education must remain a public good in Ontario, and in order to do that, the provincial government needs to contribute more. The system is chronically under-funded and it needs to be rejuvenated. Ontario must commit adequate funding to bring the province to meet the Canadian national average. This should be done on an incremental basis.

Corporate funding of universities is a necessity in order to provide students with adequate resources. Any and all funding must not be tied to conditions surrounding academics at institutions. For example, many students in Science programs are not able to publish findings of products unless it is in line with the corporation mandate. This can lead to problems surrounding course, or even degree, completion. Any corporate funding must not reduce the government funding of institutions.

A dedicated education transfer payment to all provinces and territories in Ontario is necessary. Splitting the Canadian Social Transfer into two transfers will prove the commitment of the Federal Government to higher education. It is recommended that Ontario focus on making this transfer arrangement a priority. It is also recommended that any contribution from the Federal Government not decrease the provincial contribution. This aspect must be guaranteed by an act of legislation.

The MSU, MAPS, and the GSA argue that the funding of post-secondary education needs to be fixed. It is clear that the topic of funding for post-secondary education is a difficult one, especially considering the many stakeholders that are involved. These stakeholders recognize that a new system needs to be in place in order to ensure access to all individuals who qualify to attend a post-secondary institution. Many of the recommendations here are not solutions on their own but avenues to consider. In order for any remarkable and beneficial change to occur to the system of funding, both tuition and student financial assistance need to be addressed without focusing specifically on one or the other. Improvements in one of these areas while ignoring the other will not suffice. An effective system must look to the system as a whole.

We recommend that:

The Government of Ontario ensure that students do not pay more for their education than they currently do, that universities be funded based on a student multiplier formula, that higher education remains a public good, that corporate donations to institutions be made without conditions to academics, and that the development of a
dedicated education transfer payment be advocated for with the Federal Government.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Do we have the right structures in place to know our system is achieving the results we want?

A. Coordinated by government: Government works with institutions directly to design and implement a framework to promote accountability through coordination and system development.

This is the structure that is currently in place, and this is a structure that is obviously not working. Additionally, there are not enough resources within the government, or more specifically, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, to effectively design and implement a new framework. Accountability is more than just the government demonstrating that it is responsible. Institutions, students, administration, and many other stakeholders are accountable and responsible to the system.

We recommend that:

The Government of Ontario not work to design and implement an accountability framework due to the lack of resources available.

B. An independent body, or bodies, with responsibility for planning, monitoring, and advising government: A central advisory and monitoring body would work with all the institutions to design and implement an accountability framework. It could look at the system as a whole, and provide advice and recommendations to government and institutions on system design, performance and accessibility, develop and disseminate best practices related to broad issues such as quality and financial health of the higher education system, and report to the public on progress.

This was a component of the higher education system years ago in Ontario, and the possibility of its return is a favourable one. A permanent body that holds responsibility for planning, monitoring, advising government, and reviewing the overall post-secondary education system on a regular basis is necessary for a system that is crumbling.

The composition of this body is the main concern for the MSU, MAPS, and the GSA. It should include students, faculty, administration, government, lobby organizations, and members from the citizenry. Without this diversity, the independent body would have a narrow focus on all issues and would not be able to ensure that all the visions set forward would be right for Ontario. Knowledge is crucial, and every group holds a different piece of the puzzle.

It is recommended that the independent body be commissioned by the government to report on the status of higher education in Ontario on a regular basis via papers and reports on Ontario’s programs, colleges, and universities. These would also ensure that the information that is necessary for Ontarians to have is available and readily accessible.

We recommend that:
The Government of Ontario establish an independent body comprised of government staff, students, faculty members, administration, lobby organizations and members from the citizenry.

C. An independent body, or bodies, with additional responsibility for operational matters: A body would have responsibilities outlined in (B) above with additional responsibilities for operational matters like allocating funding to individual institutions.

The hybrid buffer body that we have mentioned above, is one that we suggest should only advise, monitor, plan, review, and propose suggestions. There should be no authority over funding – this must be an allocation that is made directly by the government. Advice from the hybrid body would be encouraged.

Precedence of a buffer body is not recognized as favourable, and institutions take pride in the independence they have. Any development of an independent body is one that must be carefully designed and implemented. The MSU, MAPS, and the GSA support the development of an independent body because it would ensure there is constant examination of post-secondary education in Ontario without weighing the body down with responsibilities beyond its focus.

We recommend that:

The Government of Ontario continue to control the allocation of funding to institutions.

CONCLUSIONS TO ACCOUNTABILITY

We are pleased to offer suggestions to improve the accountability of the higher education system, however, as student organizations at McMaster University, we are concerned by the fact that transparency of the accountability measure was not addressed. The issues of student representation and sustainability were also not mentioned.

In an accountable framework, transparency is imperative. Without knowing what is being done, or what the data is based on, it will be difficult to assess the post-secondary system for what it is worth. Regular papers and reports from an independent body will ensure that there is a consistent focus on higher education in Ontario. Universities, again, must fall under the Freedom of Information Act.

Representation of students is imperative at the university governance. Student seats on university bodies needs to be increased to allow more students to have a stronger voice for the constituents they represent. Specifically, the McMaster University Act needs to be amended to provide additional voting student seats to represent undergraduates who are not otherwise represented by existing student representatives from the six Faculties. Additionally, students, in all academic divisions, should be proportionately represented by the size of the student population at each institution.

With respect to the Board of Governors, the McMaster Association of Part-time Students is the only group that does not have a voting seat at this level of university governance.
fact, a submission to McMaster University's Senate recommended more student seats on the Board of Governors.8

An accountable higher education system is one that is sustainable. The system needs to be preserved and in order to do that, higher education must be a priority for all stakeholders involved, particularly the government. The accountability component of the system will ensure that the system is a sustainable one.

Therefore, we recommend that:

The Government of Ontario include universities under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act and increase the number of seats on university governing board to students groups.

CONCLUSION

There is a broad consensus that the post-secondary education system needs to be fixed. There is not adequate funding and all stakeholders are looking forward to a meaningful start to fix higher education in Ontario in the provincial budget in 2005.

Below is a summary of our recommendations to improve and fix higher education in Ontario:

Accessibility

1. A single authority should facilitate the online resource centre. This will ensure that information posted is in order, is easy to navigate, and is comprehensive. It is recommended that the Government of Ontario take leadership in developing an online resource centre for Ontario.
2. All courses comparable to other institutions should be transferable. If comparable course transfers are not available, general course or program completions should be recognized on transcripts.
3. Competency-based entrance tests, for the purpose of system transfer, should be developed by institutions in order to facilitate easier transferability and address credit retention.
4. Student services and supports are an essential component to higher education and should not require additional funding from students in order to operate.
5. The Government of Ontario ensure that every qualified student has the right to attend higher education, regardless of financial ability.

Quality

1. Student feedback on the student experience be obtained and be available from all institutions from students at various points in their education.

8 "Take Force on the Quality of University Life". Submission to the McMaster University Senate. p. 14: 1996.
2. A central body above institutions not be created to focus on teaching excellence at individual institutions, but that existing bodies (such as the COU), be empowered to further explore teaching quality at institutions in Ontario.

3. Institutions provide a forum for students to address issues surrounding the quality of teaching at institutions in Ontario, and that input be public and available at all times.

4. Dedicated funding from the Government of Ontario is allocated to institutions to focus on improving teaching excellence in Ontario.

5. Universities must provide a broad liberal arts education to all students at the undergraduate level, regardless of academic division.

6. Focused research at the graduate level remains a constant component of programs.

7. Institutions are cognisant about fellow university programs, at the graduate level, in order to ensure that government funding is as efficient as possible.

8. Ontario look to other jurisdictions to develop a strong post-secondary education system that is unique, meets the demands of the province, and provides sustainability for the entire system.

9. Any changes to the higher education system in Ontario must be done so in a step-by-step process in order to provide the necessary infrastructure for future improvement.

10. Competition between, and within, provinces must remain a focal point of higher education institutions, and should not be overshadowed by looking solely to international higher education systems.

11. The OCGS should continue to act as a body for measuring aspects of graduate studies in Ontario.

12. The options available for international exchanges to and from Ontario are explored further to ensure that funding is not redirected from areas in need.

13. The Government of Ontario focus on improving the quality of higher education in Ontario by increasing funding levels, developing a long-term planning document, and focusing on developing a responsible and sustainable system.

System Design

1. Universities not be permitted to specialize and they must provide a broad liberal arts education at the undergraduate level.

2. All collaborative programs must focus on student experience, program quality, and support available to students.

3. The role of colleges and universities be explored further, that junior colleges not be implemented in Ontario but that transferability be improved by the development of competency entrance tests.

4. Foreign credentials should be recognized at a higher standard than they currently are, and competency entrance tests should be developed and given to all foreign-trained professionals aspiring to work in their preferred field of study.

5. The Government of Ontario should only invest in sustainable buildings for university campuses.

6. The Government of Ontario place strong emphasis on regulations for environmental sustainability that will ensure the preservation of our universities for future generations.
7. The Government of Ontario provide adequate resources and funding to institutions, develop a long-term planning document that is legislated by the province, include universities in the scope of the Freedom of Information Act, make deferred maintenance a priority for universities, and require institutions to adopt sustainable practices.

Funding

1. Government financial assistance be fixed for all undergraduate, graduate, and part-time students.
2. Non-repayable forms of assistance be available to students, and this component to government financial aid must comprise a significant portion of the assistance offered to students.
3. Government financial aid must be split into two categories in Ontario - tuition assistance and living costs assistance. Tangible measure needs to be in place to ensure that public funds are used appropriately.
4. Parental income not be the sole deciding factor when it comes to determining financial assistance.
5. All assistance must be needs-tested.
6. Government funding to institutions not be given to students.
7. The MSU recommends the option of 'go now, pay later' option must be explored further and supported with details specific to Ontario.
8. The MAPS and the GSA recommends the 'go now, pay later' option, with respect to income-contingent repayment plans, not be implemented in Ontario.
9. The Government of Ontario must regulate all programs and re-regulate all currently deregulated programs.
10. Funding of institutions based on targets of any type be discontinued in the province of Ontario.
11. The Government of Ontario ensure that students do not pay more for their education than they currently do, that universities be funded based on a student multiplier formula, that higher education remains a public good, that corporate donations to institutions be made without conditions to academics, and that the development of a dedicated education transfer payment be advocated for with the Federal Government.

Accountability

1. The Government of Ontario not work to design and implement an accountability framework due to the lack of resources available.
2. The Government of Ontario establish an independent body comprised of government staff, students, faculty members, administration, lobby organizations and members from the citizenry.
3. The Government of Ontario continue to control the allocation of funding to institutions.
4. The Government of Ontario include universities under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act and increase the number of seats on university governing board to students groups.