Welcome Back!

Welcome back to campus, and welcome to the Pres Page! Each week in The Sil, this page will feature your MSU Board of Directors. We’ll use this space to talk about things we’re working on, hot topics on campus, upcoming events and more.

Be sure to check out each week to keep up to date on what’s now in the MSU!

On that note, there are a couple of events coming up soon in which you might be interested. The Terry Fox run is this Sunday, September 15th, at 11am at DBAC. That same evening is the first meeting of the year for the SRA, an elected group of your representatives which is open to attend. Keep an eye out for the MSU’s many other services, from Terry/gigs to Mac Farmstand, which will be starting off the year strong with lots of events and specials!

Don’t forget to check out the calendar at www.msumcmaster.ca for more info on these and other events, and follow us on Twitter @MSU_McMaster. That’s all from me for now. Have a great start to the semester, and see you next week!

You’ve Paid Enough - Beware of Unfair Fees.

Welcome to September, that wonderful time of the year when undergraduates return to the university and are greeted by numerous new fees. In my previous column I wrote that the average cost of textbooks just shy of $6000 per year (on average), it’s worth taking a look at what your tuition dollars actually fund. Basically, your tuition pays for McMaster’s costs of providing your education. This means faculty, staff & TA salaries, classroom upkeep, and associated costs like supplies, materials and paper costs.

The Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities (MTCU) also helps to fund universities, and that has strict guidelines that govern how universities administer fees to students. For example, tuition is capped at a max increase of 3% per year. Universities could choose to charge less than a 3% increase, but cannot charge more.

But for every legitimate fee, there may be a hidden unfair fee.

Another MTCU rule governs how costs are passed on to students within individual courses, as well as how supplementary fees are charged. If students are levied extra mandatory course costs that should be covered by tuition, this is unfair – you’ve already paid for your education once. That same is true for textbooks. However, there are exceptions to the policy. The rule changes when students are required to buy anything that is still directly useful after the course is done. Some examples are lab kits, medical masks or paintbrushes. iClickers are also fine – though not all students will use them in subsequent courses, you can resell them after the course finishes, you can sell them, and they’re not mandatory for completing the course – though highly recommended.

For every legitimate fee, there may be a hidden unfair fee. If you’re expected to pay for anything that involves you being tested or graded, (software or print materials), any disposable materials or items you can’t keep, any material you are required to remove and submit from a textbook/course pack, or for basic teaching materials, your course fee is likely unfair and a violation. Check out the list on the side for more examples.

If you’re suspicious of a fee that you’re expected to pay, tell me! The MSU has established an anonymous course fee reporting portal on our website at msumcmaster.ca/StopTheFees, along with more information on fair and unfair student fees. If you report an unfair fee, please note that we will not collect any of your personal information. Subsequently, I will investigate the issue and speak with the instructor and University Administration in circumstances where there are violations of MTCU rules.

Let’s make sure that everyone is following the rules – it’s only fair to students.

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