The University budget reflects the priorities and plans of the institution. It allocates resources to departments and projects, allowing stakeholders to accomplish their intended goals. Throughout the year, the MSU advocates on behalf of students to ensure that the priorities of undergraduates are reflected in the University decision-making process. The University’s recently implemented budget model has given the flexibility to invest in issues they consider to be of primary concern. Within the McMaster Students Union, we hope they use that flexibility to continue to be a research intensive, student-centered institution.

As the 2014-15 budget is finalized, the MSU recommends the University focus on five areas of investment that would benefit undergraduate students, if adopted by the University in their upcoming 2014-2015 budget.

Full-time undergraduates at McMaster pay ancillary fees to the University in conjunction with tuition. Many students (and some University administrators) are not aware that when these fees were adopted, the MSU negotiated specific parameters for their inception. For example, within the Student Services Fee ($4.32 per unit to a maximum of $129.60), the University agreed to match student contributions to the Student Affairs department. These programs are vital to the undergraduate experience and both the University and students have a vested interest in ensuring that resources are made available to these programs.

That said, the University has not held up their end of the agreement. As more students arrive on campus, there is an increase in demand for important services such as the Student Wellness Centre. Unfortunately, University contributions to the Office of Student Affairs have decreased proportionally over time. The University needs to prioritize investment into Student Affairs, guaranteeing adequate resources are available to support undergraduate students.

Throughout the year, the MSU has recommended that McMaster adopts a thoughtful and high-impact approach to training our teaching assistants and professors. In today’s dynamic economy, university students are best equipped for success when they are able to take the competencies developed in the classroom and apply them to a number of different practical opportunities. This is why the MSU is asking the University to invest in entrepreneurship programs and space, giving students from different academic disciplines the opportunity to collaborate and develop innovative solutions. Students at university need to gain skills both within the traditional academic setting, but also within a space that is conducive to innovative thinking, partnerships with colleagues and student-driven learning.

Experiential Education
As a research-intensive, student-centered university, experiential education is one of the most embraced concepts within the McMaster community. The term ‘experiential education’ means any work done in the broader learning environment: co-ops, internships, community improvement projects, service learning, capstone projects, theses and more. Experiential education is an important component of the University’s mission because it develops the skills that students need to gain career success. For professors and teaching assistants, a lack of training, preparation and background knowledge on teaching and learning pedagogy fosters a disconnect with the ways that students actually learn best.

McMaster’s Budget Should Be Student-Centred

The MSU is recommending five areas of investment that would benefit undergraduate students, if adopted by the University in their upcoming 2014-2015 budget.

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Student Space
It is no secret the space on campus is hard to find. The University Library has worked diligently on this front in terms of study space, however there is only so much space available on campus. The lack of new space pushed the University to purchase 88 Forth St, with plans to convert the house into an off-campus commuter lounge and space for student groups. Regardless of the outcome of this plan, the MSU believes that the University should continue to invest in multi-purpose space for undergraduate students. Whether it is study space, space for student programming, or general leisure space, students are hard pressed to find areas on campus to meet their diverse needs.

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