



## **Vice President Education Transition Report**

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**MSU VP Education 2012/2013**

Note: This is the public version of my report; I will be furthering these discussions with the VP Ed through in person dialogue and shorter sets of emails. While the role of VP Ed is very public and transparent, the inherently political nature of it means that there are some intricate nuances that shouldn't be discussed in a completely public forum.

Spencer, Welcome to what will be one of the most rewarding, yet challenging experiences of your life. You are entering a position that will, be your primary focus and vocation for the 12 months of your life. Wanted a simple good old 9-5 job? Too late.

Being the Vice President (Education) is a 24/7 job that you take with you wherever you go. Whether you're in Ottawa lobbying MPs or helping the Advocacy street team run an event or meeting with an administrator, you are a representative of McMaster Students, always. This is something you will have some challenge getting used to since you are relatively new to the MSU world then I was; especially being a board member you never know when the next fun email from an SRA member or Administrator will show up. In the last year I have pretty much received an email every single hour of the 24 hour clock. Living in the smart phone world you will immediately be subjected to the contents of that email within a few minutes; unless you have exceptional self-control it's going to be rather difficult to disconnect yourselves. If emails don't work I've even had people approach me on facebook, text, on campus and even at my house! The MSU has a peanut gallery of several hundred people who are always up to discuss every aspect of the organization and your job after 5pm, I would strongly advise you to draw a line somewhere to ensure a balance.

I've had some difficulty framing this report because I came into the role with a very different background having spent two years as the External Affairs Commissioner and four years in the MSU which allowed me to have an active memory and a day to day immersion in the world of PSE.

But the beauty of the VP Ed role is that if the VP Ed has a vision and passion for what they would like to see for the future of Post-Secondary Education and for that of students at McMaster University and can adequately articulate that to stakeholders and students; the research and policy aspect is something that can be learnt as things come up as well as through dedicating any free time to that. I left a few articles/papers within your work computer but the rest can be requested through OUSA, CASA and by religiously reading your #onpse, #highered, #cdnpse twitter feeds, Academica Top 10, University Affairs and any articles that come out of there. You are also free to contact me for tips on any topics because chances are I might have stumbled upon it within the last three years.

This transition report will aim to help you get through the day to day activities and reoccurring aspects of being a VP Ed and a Board Member. There will be topical issues that prop up out of nowhere and you will have to respond with a very short notice, for which you will have to rely on your memory, knowledge and support of your Board and Commissioners. I am also hoping that you are finally successful in the long standing quest by VP Education's to gain Research and Policy staff support for their role. Creating that position will definitely improve your ability to be more efficient and respond on issues with a much faster turnaround time.

You are now the Chief External Advocate for the entire organization. Your role is important, but remember that it is also a partnership. There will be many times throughout the year that you and the President and especially this year other board members should be working together on issues, and while you will likely have a more

thorough understanding of the details given your additional policy knowledge garnered through OUSA/CASA as well as policy based approach to issues, working together will only enhance your legitimacy. As the VP Ed you are the primary spokesperson and subject matter expert for a variety of University academic issues and obviously provincial and federal politics since both of those levels of government directly affect Post-Secondary Education; there are other areas which are rather ambiguous. One example is Municipal Affairs, where in the last three or so years the VP Ed due to personal interests have adopted it as their sole portfolio to varying degrees but in the bigger picture I would encourage you and the board to be strategic in figuring out who should be taking on this overlapping issue, especially since yourselves, President and VP Finance have it on their platform. Does it make much sense for the VP Ed to be becoming an expert on the nitty gritty of student housing bylaws? It's something that should be discussed at an organizational level. Same applies for the realm of student experience which while having a direct connection to the Educational experience of students is another ambiguous area. I myself gotten myself strongly involved with Mental Health initiatives, Orientation week programming and the issues of underrepresented groups (Students with Disabilities etc) which is a very valid and overlooked area of interest for VP Education's but is something that overlaps with the role of the President and VP Admin. The MSU is a very flexible organization though and with the boards blessing you can continue addressing these issues from a very valuable lens of the VP Education. What I mean by that is that your job has the unique opportunity and understanding of the Strategic future and realities of the Post-Secondary Education sector and as such you can bring these external perspectives into helping improve Student life at McMaster.

Throughout the next year you will go through the highest of highs and the lowest of lows. Make sure you take time for yourself and enjoy it. Spend time with friends and family but most importantly learn to prioritize. Your job is the most unpredictable one in the board, so expect to come in and work from 9am---9pm, go home exhausted, not having completed anything in your to do list. The platform your promised to the SRA is important but it is not the be all end all, in the first half of my job I was very attached to that document and would have stopped at nothing less than a 100% completion of it as an indicator of whether I was successful in my term as the VP Education. In retrospect I'll say that the platform doesn't really matter since new ideas, priorities and opportunities always show up and the document was created when you didn't have the perspectives you do after transition and the first few months of the job. I did manage to complete a good chunk of my platform but some of my most memorable experiences and initiatives where I feel I made a bigger difference for students at McMaster were the completely unanticipated events, projects and discussions I took part in by invitation or by seeking them out.

Spend your summer months wisely. Once September hits, you'll be busy with Welcome Week, SRA Meetings, Executive Board, OUSA Steering Committee, Conferences, Addressing student concerns and authoring your OUSA policy paper. At least a couple issues will pop up that you didn't expect, so laying the groundwork for your platform points is going to be extremely important so you can feel a sense of personal accomplishment and demonstrate performance to the SRA members. I

would also encourage you to enjoy the year, you will rarely ever get an opportunity where for a year you don't really have a boss and you are allowed to say things exactly as you see them and have various stakeholders respect you for it. You will also get to meet some amazing individuals working in this sector from which you can learn quite a bit about how to do your job effectively but they will also improve your outlook on things. An example is a local lobby meeting I had with MP Chris Charlton about her parties long term vision for the Post-Secondary Education sector where she brought up how It's unfeasible to concentrate too much on productivity and labour market outcomes since many of the jobs and industries that exist today will never be the same within a couple of decades, therefore lifelong learning and a comprehensive interdisciplinary learning is a more rational strategy. This conversation and how it was framed snapped me out of a singular perspective on the issue I had developed through all the discussions on Innovation and Productivity that were happening on the provincial level. You will most likely have many such instances where you will gain a completely new insight into how you perceive not just the Post-Secondary Education sector but the wider world around you.

Don't let the administrative/logistical things get you down, I was definitely not hired for my event planning and logistical skills and found planning various events quite frustrating and stressful, I would encourage you to utilize the Admin Assistant, Advocacy Coordinator and other board members whenever you can.

I hope everything in this report and our conversations have equipped you to take over this wonderful job, once again remember that there is a support network out there of the VP Ed Predecessors and especially myself who want to see yourselves and the role of the VP Education continue to succeed, don't ever feel that you are hassling me by contacting me.

Good luck,

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#### TOPICS COVERED:

MSU Community Clean Up & BBQ

Municipal Relations

Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance (OUSA)

Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA)

Lobbying 101

On---Campus Announcements

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Relationship with Commissioners  
Building Caucus Leaders  
Academic Affairs Council  
Valedictorian Selection  
Being a Corporate Officer  
Relationship with Full---Time Staff  
Student Representative Assembly (SRA)  
Executive Board  
Presidents Page  
Associate Deans Group  
Course Evaluations  
Miscellaneous

#### MSU Community Clean Up & BBQ

This was an initiative started three years ago, while it was quite stressful for me to setup and singlehandedly run and MC since I have no event planning skills, I still highly recommend continuing it for September. It has become a mainstay of the welcome week schedule (Ask VP Admin to let you know if it ever randomly drops off the welcome week schedule at planning committee) so you'll be expected to lead it and come to the planning committee and provide periodic updates on how far planning is. In your folder in the network there are my forms/maps from last year. I think you'll be pretty well equipped to run it with your prior experience as an ROA.

Start by putting together a proposal to the Welcome Week Core Committee so they have an idea of what you envision the event to look like this year. They will expect you to give updates throughout the summer, but most communication will likely go through the VP Administration. Keep tabs on this as the week draws nearer. Your first step should be to contact Councillor McHattie to see if he is available for when the event has been scheduled. Last year, he wasn't able to make it at the last minute due to another event but is usually quite interested to come and give a small talk

(mostly about the importance of students in the community). I also added the AWWCA Exec to the list of judges to extend an early hand out and they really seemed to appreciate that. The VP Ed before me also partnered with the Alumni Association and a community group (Bay Area Restoration Council), but you don't necessarily have to go that same route. Alumni paid for the cost of food at the BBQ two years ago, so it was a pretty awesome deal, I contacted Anne Marie at Alumni for funding and she did promise \$500 but I'm not sure whether that funding ever made it in (Me and Accounting couldn't locate it). You'll also have to take a look at getting materials for students to clean with (i.e. bags, gloves, etc.) far in advance. City Hall will give you these materials for free, so don't worry about cost - just make sure you have enough, The SCSN Director was a big asset for this since she went out and grabbed the material from the city for me. Make sure you have a large amount of bags since technically each residence can send upto two teams of 10 each, you could easily get over 200 people.

Talk to Rick from TwelvEighty as far in advance as possible so he's available to cook and has the food necessary. Don't forget to plan for vegetarians, and more people showing up than expected since we don't really check. You could give out raffle tickets as an entry; Having a system where only those who participated get free food is a good idea to ensure that the right people are benefitting and you're keeping costs low. Make sure you engage the ROP and the ROA's throughout the week, distributing waivers, signup sheets (you could also deliver it to them during Rez Life training, arrange that with Brandon. This could be a more effective delivery mechanism to explain the event and get questions out of the way) to get first year involvement. I made an effort to visit all residences a few times to ensure they were signing people up, since points are at stake the event will be a natural motivation for ROAs but it is also on the Friday where first years and reps have become jaded and as such any incentives will help. I gave out Union Market giftcards and other random tidbits Wooder had lying around his office, make it a point earlier in the summer to obtain interesting gifts to give out (eg: for the most interesting piece of garbage). Essentially, do whatever you can to ensure atleast one full team per residence and SOCS. I also had SocSci reps randomly send two teams to help, partially because of my personal connection to the team and partially because it was alluded to them that the newly introduced campus spirit category of welcome week points will include participation in the cleanup. You'll have to decide if you want to fund additional food for Faculty Rep teams and more prominently advertise (with endorsement from Faculty Cup Committee) to them that they can gain bonus Campus Spirit points. I also asked the Maroons Coordinator to send a bunch of reps just in case residences can't send a team of 10 so they can fill in and at the same time help maintain the spirit/cohesiveness of the event, which is important since it's quite isolating to get everyone at the starting point (Mills Plaza or BSB Field, make it clear on your form) on time and in full numbers and try and control them (while they are talking/cheering) through a measly portable loudspeaker (maybe book a stronger Mic system from Avtek?); make sure you give training/instructions to the Maroons so they can help you run the event.

The reps will be your connection to engaging the first years in the CleanUp, and the BBQ part and gift items will sell itself. The day of the event is the busiest, as there are

a couple other Welcome Week events also taking place. Having your board assist will ease the burden and make it less of an isolating experience but you should be the one taking a leadership position. Set out the routes for people to clean in advance, and make sure to give each team a copy. Plan for stragglers, or teams to be bigger/larger than initially anticipated. Time appropriately as students will need to come back in time for the BBQ, as well there may be other scheduled events.

### Municipal Relations

Decide between yourself, President, EA Commissioner, SCSN and Jeff who should be handling which aspects of this area; perhaps having regular meetings of this group would ensure everyone is on the same page and everyone's input is taken into consideration. I had an odd year in the sense that Siobhan was happy to let me run with almost all aspects of Municipal Relations. The only aspect where I didn't regularly partake was the President's Advisory Committee on Community Relations, upon request you could add yourselves to the committee as a secondary MSU Rep.

As I said while the VP Ed has taken more of a leadership role in community relations, this area is typically under the purview of the President. Further collaboration with SCSN, OCRC and SOCS will be helpful especially with the housing bylaw coming up for negotiation again this fall. Throughout 2012/2013 I dealt with the current proposed framework of the bylaw, which was then sent back to the planning committee (under Joe Xamin that you've met) for a few more changes before it can come back to City Council this year. Myself and the EA Commissioner (who both were strongly involved in this project) after our research were of the opinion that a bylaw can lead to positive outcomes for students as long as some of our concerns with the financial and logistical impact on students are addressed in the new structure (I have flagged an email with the last response from the City on our questions).

I would continue meeting regularly with Councillor McHattie alongside the President and VP Finance this time involving your External Affairs Commissioner as well since their committee seems to have a strong Municipal focus and they can be a big asset for the MSU, this past year EA ran a survey on Student Housing which was entirely a self-developed process and the results of which were an asset during our City Council presentation, an MSU member from EA also helped me present to city council.

The Your City Survey and efforts by the MSU in the past few years have also set us up as important stakeholders for those in the know. You have great momentum going into your year for the board to really get solid results from the recommendations of the Your City Survey and subsequent EA Youth Retention Policy. While I wasn't able to arrange it in my year, getting a meeting with Mayor Bratina is also essential for this year since while he hasn't shown a direct interest in Youth Retention in his term so far, there are many stakeholders within City Community (eg: Economic Development, Chamber of Commerce) who are very interested on this file. As I mentioned before, Brian McHattie was also instrumental in arranging a meeting with myself and over 10 city departments (Transit, EcDev, Labour Planning, Human Resources, Culture etc) on the topic of Youth Retention and

the takeaway from that was that while they were all interested, it was difficult for them to move ahead due to many structural barriers (eg: Union collective bargaining agreements preventing the city to create many new student jobs and internships); It would be useful to individually follow up with these departments since they can open up more doors. For example, Arts & Culture is really interested in working with the MSU and you'll find an event invite for workshops on the creation of the next City Cultural Plan, If you can't personally attend these, make sure anyone else from the Board or EA Commissioner goes.

### Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance (OUSA)

Try and make OUSA a top priority this year. It can be an incredibly consuming part of your job, but the impact that this organization has on government policy is huge. From an issue and policy based perspective, you will decide what you want your focuses to be during the Strategic Planning conference. OUSA Home office staff are also an asset in whatever internal lobbying or meetings you are having which might have a connection to something provincial or existing OUSA Policy (which most of them do since the Government does have strong regulation in almost all aspects of governance If you decide to author a policy, try and involve your Commissioners, Standing Committee members and students at large if possible, for example Jeff Doucet gave me a writeup for the Students, University and Private Sectors paper I coauthored last year since this was an area of personal interest for him. Give them deadlines, and work collaboratively. Working inside a bubble is not a wise way to approach anything in this position, and although it can appear to be easier - consultation is an important facet of the job. This last point it applies to a lot of decisions you make at OUSA. Even though it can get quite tiring to talk in length about your week during Board, SRA and EB meetings since compared to other board members the VP Ed usually has tons of detailed issues to talk about, make sure you do it anyways to see if anyone is interested in providing a perspective. Which is something I found interesting since while it might seem that a lot of what you talk about as VP Ed is heavily technical in nature, in reality it all filters down to tangible impacts and effects on all students, yet VP Ed's have always had a difficult time getting people excited about their work. A solution could be putting more emphasis on explaining the impact of your work to SRA members and students with varying degrees of technicality. Having said that, you will sometimes need to make decisions related to your portfolio that nobody else has had a chance to peruse - don't be afraid to make a difficult call if you think it's the right one. Always trust your gut. You were elected to this position for a reason, so don't compromise when you know something is right. Having said that, don't be afraid to change your mind if you become aware of more information that shines a different light on an issue. Stubbornness will get you nowhere. This year, I hope that as a Steering Committee you come up with a new campaign that unites the 9 member institutions. Blue Chair is was rather popular at McMaster and I quite liked it as an event, but the issue of accessibility isn't necessarily something that resonates with other member schools and for that reason OUSA didn't have it last year. OUSA campaigns on campus are often one of the only direct way they interact with individual students and McMaster

has always been a campus where small fringes within the SRA and Student body question it's value and as such always keep member relations within your thoughts whenever you are making a decision at Steering Committee or deciding how you are going to spend your Educational Initiatives budget.

Focusing on affordability and quality are "sexier" issues and have the potential to reach more students that are actually already at university. Being a Steering Committee member you will also have a weird conflict where at times the interests and policy stances of OUSA aren't something you yourselves or members of the MSU fully agree with, you must balance these interests with the notion that your primary and foremost commitment should always be to the MSU and McMaster Students. While it's also pretty exciting for VP Ed's to really get involved with OUSA and its conferences, remember that you have a pretty substantial University related platform and there are times where your own Board will need your support to deal with crises.

#### Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA)

Pockets of members on the SRA have always questioned whether we should be members of CASA or not, but as you know I am a huge believer in the philosophical and principled responsibility of the MSU to take a leadership role with Federal Lobbying as opposed to free riding on the back of other affiliated members and saving the \$50-60,000 we invest into CASA which isn't that big a cost when we compare it to the overall spending practices of the MSU in the Service/Business side. While it might not be immediately obvious, both provincial and Federal Advocacy is invaluable for students with the positive outcomes it has had towards the affordability of education. CASA has come a long long way since MSU decided to join as full members in early 2011, it has gone on to solve many of the governance and membership issues it faced as the CASA Review I gave you contains. It is now in a very good spot for members to move it towards a direction of productive policy generation and more active lobbying as a result of the policy. It is also the only organization that can provide the MSU effective access to over 150 MPs during their annual Lobby con. One of my larger frustrations working with CASA were the divides between graduate students and undergraduate students. There is sometimes need for compromise if we wish to move the organization forward, where for example Credit Transfers are better for the former while research shows that upfront grants are more beneficial for the latter, so which led to some very testy and passionate discussions from each group. There are a few such debates where the different demographics and regions of CASA due to their natural differences will disagree but in my experience with efforts from both sides to come to a middle ground, CASA has been able to move forward and as a student union of a large reputable University and given our efforts in the past the membership will naturally look at McMaster as consensus builders so utilize that power.

Discussing the issues with your OUSA Steering Committee before moving forward at CASA might be beneficial as there is strength in numbers and we tended to be on the same page for the most part. but You will also do a lot of travelling, so make sure you work with Jessie to book your hotels, cars, plane tickets for yourself and the others coming with you and take a lead in organizing that to ensure the other delegates feel comfortable and welcome. The current CASA Bylaw mandates that

the VP Education and External Affairs Commissioner attend all conferences, but I would recommend taking the President as well, especially to the Lobby Conference in Ottawa.

## Lobbying 101

As one of the most overused words in the MSU, you will quickly learn that lobbying is an art. Feel free to ask OUSA Home Office for their presentations and documents on this topic. While everyone has a different style, there are a couple key things that you should always remember. 1. BE PREPARED. Put together a brief on the issue you are going to discuss and make sure you know what you are talking about, again getting a researcher will be a godsend for this. Nothing is worse than walking into a meeting and attempting to bullshit your way through an issue when you could have had the opportunity to understand it prior, a lot of these administrators have been around for a long time and tend to be quite good judges of character and quite well versed on this issue, they are in their position because just like yourselves they are the best of the best. While a year might seem like a long time for you, for these administrators they have seen a long line of your predecessors and as such you only have limited opportunity to earn their respect and prove your mettle.

2. DON'T MAKE THINGS UP. In the event that you are asked a question that you cannot answer, don't make it up. Be honest, say that you don't have that particular statistic on you at the moment, but can get it for them as soon as you get back to your office.

3. ALL POLITICS IS LOCAL. Whether you're talking to an administrator, politician, or community member – stories are important. They give the human angle to your discussion and are likely to persuade someone more than anything else, student stories and surveys are really important since they make it a larger issue than it just being a policy pet peeve of the VP Ed being discussed. SRA members, Faculty Societies and Students obviously are a big asset for you to obtain this information.

4. KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE. As you will learn, you have to interact with people in different ways. The way you approach a Liberal is different from a Conservative or NDP. Furthermore, lobbying an administrator can be different than dealing with a community member or the director of a service from within student affairs.

5. BE CONCISE. Take your points and simplify them. You won't have a lot of time to persuade the individuals you are meeting with, so take the time and learn how to take complex issues and make them simple. I made it a principle to never have a meeting longer than 30 minutes and to set clear objectives for myself to ensure we don't run in circles

6. FOLLOW UP. ALWAYS. Whenever you finish a meeting, send a follow-up email thanking them for their time and try to rehash some of the things you discussed and indirectly remind them of some of the deliverable items they promise, same for if you made a promise to them. This holds them accountable to the promises made.

## Satellite Lobbying

Try and set up as many satellite meetings as possible, this past year through my own efforts and through both OUSA and CASA lobbycons the MSU met with every single one of the eight Hamilton area MPPs and MPs. Not all local MP/MPPs will be available for Lobbycons so don't just rely on that as your only opportunity to meet with them. It takes a bit of time to set these up, but with concentrated pestering you can get meeting with all of them since you technically represent your constituents, most of them are also quite vested in the progress of the citizens in their riding so if you can tie in your policy based recommendation and lobbying points with stories of McMaster students, they are more likely to take on your issue and move it up the chain. Satellite lobbying is also useful for ensuring that some specific McMaster related issues are brought to the attention of politicians since Lobbycons only cover specific three topics. Examples include issues like Deferred Maintenance and Mental Health which while being external issues had a direct impact at McMaster. Similarly, I started a move towards creating an internal Policy Bank and a number of items in these policies were created through investigation of on campus issues that would be useful for the local Politicians to know about. For example while it might be easy for politicians do dismiss calls for deferred maintenance funding, if you tie that into students on wheelchairs having trouble accessing buildings, this will combine two separate policy cases and provide a human interest story for the politicians.

These meetings should include both yourself and David, possibly the EA Commissioner and you should put together the lobbying brief in advance, then prep the other two for the meeting and bring Wooder into the loop so he can advise you folks on lobbying strategies. Important individuals to meet with prior to LobbyCon if you can't get all eight include Chris Charlton, David Christopherson, Andrea Horwath, and of course locals David Sweet & Ted McMeekin. Send out letters inviting them to the office for a meeting and move from there, it's also okay to visit their offices. With a potential election upcoming, it is likely that they will be interested in meeting with you more so than usual, however that also means you should be careful about Photo Ops since in the 2011 Election the VP Ed got in trouble with a few members of the SRA since a photo appeared of them with two Liberal Politicians (Who were on campus to address a lecture) in front of the MSU office sign in the Silhouette newspaper within weeks of an election, AVOID AT ALL COSTS. MSU prides itself in its non-partisan nature and you would have to be politically savvy to ensure we adhere to this.

## OnCampus Announcements

Randomly throughout the year, MPs or MPPs will be on campus to make provincial/federal announcements. Do your best to attend all of these events and let OUSA/CASA Home Office know when they are happening, since they might recommend certain talking points to bring up and ask clarification about the initiative. Often you will have an opportunity after the event to talk to some of the politicians present, and this is a perfect chance to make them aware of OUSA/CASA and get a point or two across,. Home Office will give you a brief idea of how to approach the situation, but these are great lobbying opportunities where you will have to learn to condense your point into 2 minutes or less. Develop an active

relationship with the University Advancement and Public Relations office since they are the department that do the event planning for these events and are your key to ensuring there is a student voice at these events. There were a few federal announcements this past year I did not find out about until the Daily News article the day after, while to be fair some of the announcements weren't items the MSU or any external organization we are a member of had any standing policies on, with the recent passing of the student employment and Public Private Partnerships paper as well as a more proactive participation in the dialogue on Economic Development by OUSA, there are many segways you can find for your voice to be a necessary addition.

## University Relations

You and David will spend a significant amount of time meeting with university administrators, so make sure to nurture these relationships. Get to know the administrative secretaries, learn their names and treat them with respect. They are the gatekeepers and can be a significant resource to you throughout the year. We already did a significant breakdown of the university administration and their portfolios during our Board Transition Weekend, so I won't regurgitate it here. Make regular meetings with the AVP Academic and accompany David to her meetings with the Provost, possibly the President and other appropriate administrators, VP Ed usually gains additional insight into issues due to their external relations and research focus that could be an asset, even if you are more of a listener than a talker in these meetings. In the past the MSU would have regular meetings with the Provost but due to the transitional period we weren't able to have that this year

AdminCon takes place 2--3 times per year and can be a great avenue to update yourself on issues by asking admin specific questions (They tend to be more open to discussing various items, especially if they need our support), but usually it is also a great opportunity for the VP Ed to lobby the administration on a more professional and less intimate setting, your one on one meetings with them should be more of a dialogue and discussion within a relationship of trust to see what their barriers are. But Admin con can be a more formal setting and I brought up at least 2-3 items at every single one of them. However, never hesitate to set up meetings with admin as often as you see fit, many of them have open door policies where you can get a meeting within a few days or even the same one.

You may need to interact with the Directors of various student services, deans, associate deans, faculty or other administrators from Alumni or other parts of the university. There are a few meetings I'd recommend setting up ASAP. First, Rosanne Kent, She is the Director of the Student Wellness Centre, and will be an incredible resource and is extremely open to getting the input and support of the MSU, under her leadership the MSU has enjoyed an unbelievable amount of support and flexibility for our projects like the Mental Health Training and Peer Support line, there are also several senior staff below her that can be useful. Secondly, a piece of unfinished business I had is my desire to author a policy paper on Students with Disabilities, I regret that I hadn't met with the Director of SAS Tim Nolan earlier in the year since

he is very knowledgeable and interested in finding allies to help implement major policy changes with how faculty and facility services for example cater to students with disabilities. He has also been at McMaster for over 30 years and as such knows quite a bit about the emerging landscape of accommodation services. With these service providers and others like Library I found that they were quite interested in giving you an honest insight into the challenges faced by their department since they all are facing financial constraints for their desire to expand service. Don't ever approach meeting them with an antagonistic attitude if you foresee gaps in their service since similar to anyone from Civil Service in the government they can only expend whatever they are allotted from the University Budget. I've usually have had mostly positive relationships with various administrators where unlike what I've heard at other Universities are quite willing to implement your proposals. For example the CIO at McMaster pretty much okay'd the Google/Gmail project in one meeting and a few emails when I was simply an SRA member. Instead position yourself as an ally who is willing to go push the upper administration (Provost, President etc) to enable them to provide more service.

Another trick to push your agenda is to identify the long term goals of each department and the University as a whole (FWI + Board of Governors published a public job goals evaluation for each of the senior admin) and see how you can frame your lobbying goals in that context.

I would have liked to go into more detail but you are facing a very very unique situation where you will be orienting and setting the groundwork for MSU's relationship with three new AVP's and a new Librarian, which means you will have to demonstrate additional effort to show that the MSU is a highly effective stakeholder that can provide research based solutions and suggestions that will help improve student life and that these solutions are actually representative of the needs of students. These admins are usually also looking for quick wins to counteract how given their yearlong orientation it will be hard for you to get things done so that angle could be a mixed bag.

**THOUGHT TO ACTION** Taking your ideas and making them reality require persistence.

Emails, meetings, phonecalls, following up, writing briefing notes, getting buy-in from faculties, the SRA, administrators, politicians, media (VERY important) are just some of the tools. University is a very frustrating environment to work in sometimes since it is prone to very very slow change since there are committees after committees, senate policies, bureaucracy and an extremely decentralized governance structure. It's hard to put down an effective magical solution on how to navigate this but this is something you'll have to figure out as it comes, aka seeing who all the relevant stakeholders are and what concerns if any they might have to your proposal. It's a process that doesn't happen overnight. It is also something that can take years so you might even find yourselves working on something in March/April that will absolutely not get implemented during your year, if at all. Instead of giving up like many folks in student government often do, I would still suggest leaving behind the foundations with the hope that your successor will see the value in and continue the projects. This role and what you do in it has aftereffects for years to come and

remember that a lot of the successes you will have this year will probably be partially due to the efforts of your successors. It doesn't and shouldn't matter who gets credit for it and gets to check something off their platform when they got elected, this is me being a bit preachy but for me a successful term as VP Ed is only something you yourselves will decide and can decide. I personally don't particularly care that a few items on my platform were not completed since I found bigger and better things during the year to address.

### University Senate

The University senate is responsible for determining academic policy and regulating the entire educational system at McMaster. This includes the introduction of new academic programs, changes in curriculum, standards for admission to the University, exam policy, academic regulations, conferring of degrees, criteria and procedures for granting tenure, and promotion of faculty. The MSU President has official observer status here and the meetings take place on the second Wednesday of every month. Decide between yourselves who will attend these meetings. Due to the million other things that the President has on their plate, I recommend you attend Senate, and David go to Board of Governors, but you take a look at the agenda package as a second set of eyes like I did this year since Board of Governors also discuss various items that you might have seen or heard about at OUSA. Just make sure to update him in Board Meetings if significant things have happened at Senate Meetings. If you are to become the individual attending senate meetings you will need to inform the University Secretariat so you will have permission to remain in the room for closed session items.

### InterResidence Council

IRC Proper takes place on Tuesday nights in Gilmour Hall, Council Chambers at about 1015pm. Though these aren't the most convenient times to attend meetings, I recommend you introduce yourselves and inform them that they can contact you so you can then what the academic or student life grievances are in the world of IRC or first year students in general, either that or meet with their exec separately. They have traditionally felt disconnected to the MSU and for good reason since we haven't made IRC a big organizational priority as stakeholders. In theory though I would say that the above is actually the job of the President who in turn can inform you and the board of his findings of IRC's concerns and if it is specifically within your mandate you can then address it.

### Teaching Awards

I'm sure Michael Wooder already gave you some direction on how to deal with Teaching Awards, he is the staff member that has been involved in this for years and can provide you with historical context but do your best to keep on top of this. As you spend a significant amount of time out of the office, supervising this PTM is incredibly important. Ensuring that they have confirmed a date and location to hold the event should be done as soon as possible. Furthermore, they also need to ensure attendance from all university administrators (President, Provost, AVP Academic, Dean of Students, etc.) as their schedules fill up quickly. Because the Teaching

Awards takes place in March be sure that it doesn't conflict with Student Recognition Night. I would recommend meeting with Jacob every couple weeks to make sure she's on track for the nomination periods, and overall planning and is utilizing every single available resource to promote nominations. While we hit over a 1000, I'm sure we can do much much better and the PTM will definitely need your support in outreaching to SRA members and Faculty societies in helping get the word out because the MSU official promo channels can only go so far.

Jacob seems to have a grasp of the role and is coming in with quite a few ideas on how to improve TAC, so I am certain that things will go quite smoothly. The one piece of advice I have here is never understate the importance of Teaching Awards. Many professors put these awards on their C.V. and it's likely one of the most important things we do at the MSU, but is highly underrated. Thinking of creative ways to enhance the process and bring more student attention to appreciation of teachers might help to further legitimize this ceremony as it's still in a tender stage of recovery. One interesting area of collaboration might be with the Centre for Leadership in Learning; Arts & Science this past year had a course focused on PSE and one of the student groups there focused on Teaching Awards and had a few interesting recommendations that I can forward to you. Another angle for you could also be to utilize the nomination qualitative data and work with CLL to create a set of best practices for teaching from a student perspective and creatively advertise it to professors as encouragement to take further seminars with CLL.

#### Advocacy Coordinator

The Advocacy Street team can potentially be a massive asset to your position and a huge event planning support, especially since you already have so much on your plate that it is extremely counterproductive for you to be running around campus putting up posters and creating facebook events. My year was sort of unpredictable since there was a bit of ambiguity associated with my ideas to run campaign on Forward with Integrity, OUSA which is usually a source of strong campaigns themselves had a weak year on that regard since they themselves had strong turnover and issues with timing campaigns. Everything should go back to normal in your year so expect Advocacy to be more active and productive. There is a huge debate associated with whether they are and should be a "service" or is it just a part time staffer role and whether they should have formalized exec structure, logo and operating policy or not. I've already sent you a detailed email and we've discussed my thoughts on it but this is a very tricky issue that you will have to work with the Coordinators, Wooder and Exec Board on.

Your advocacy coordinator should be responsible for running promotional events and campaigns on all the advocacy/policy you're working on as well as being a liaison on campus for OUSA and CASA Communications persons. Many students don't have an understanding of the scope of MSU Advocacy efforts, why it's important and how they specifically can aid in the process. Improving outcomes on all of those points will translate to positive outcomes for both yourselves and your successors, therefore don't treat it as just another service you are forced to supervise as VP Ed but rather work closely with the Advocacy Coordinator to ensure you are helping shape the message and how you want the campaigns to take place,

especially since a lot of this stuff is inherently political and as the resident expert on that you have to ensure they are treading carefully. A majority of the planning process regarding events will be in the Advocacy Coordinator Transition report, which you have access to. Rebecca is coming into the role having been a volunteer for the team for a few years and as an effective TAC Coordinator from last year so she should be quite effective at enacting campaigns and being independent. Never criticize, but learn to problem solve and utilize your resources and influence as a board member to get them out of tricky situations or people giving them trouble over bookings for example; Be clear in your instructions and expectations since again while you might know the nitty gritty of different PSE issues the team members probably don't .

### Research and Policy Staff

Hire and then utilize your research and policy assistant as much as possible, the current bylaws and job descriptions allow you to automatically hire a part time staff member for 10 hours a week. They will make up part of the OUSA Campus Research Council (Preferably alongside the EA Commissioner), and could likely contribute to research in others areas as well. Set up expectations with this individual at the beginning of the year, and maybe even put together a contract that reflects the specific outcomes you expect of them. I've said this in detail so I don't need to regurgitate it but the effectiveness of the MSU Advocacy and VP Ed will skyrocket if we are able to hire a full time research director as I pushed all of last year but wasn't able to get done due to the HR Review. Some SRA and even Board members might question the need for the MSU to expend \$50-60,000+ on this new staff position when things are just fine as they are right now, but I would fight tooth and nail to explain that Advocacy isn't something that should be "measured" in dollar figures and that the intrinsic benefit to students caused by effective lobbying guided by stronger policy is immense. The MSU had a full time researcher for decades until 2006 where it was discontinued which shows that even as a much smaller organization it was pretty common for us to invest our limited funds into supporting Advocacy. MSU is also the only large student union in the country that doesn't have any direct research support, which is somewhat ridiculous. In contrast, University of Alberta has a research department with four full time staff members. It is an absolute miracle that the VP Eds have managed to float above the surface since the discontinuation of the researcher position.

### Relationship with Commissioners

This is an exceptionally important relationship, so be sure to nurture it. Involve your commissioners as much as possible. As soon as they are hired, set up a meeting with them to discuss expectations for the year, and how you see your relationship working together. As you will likely be more updated on issues, it might be beneficial to task them with certain projects, and give them opportunities to grow. These are the individuals who will be likely to run for your position in the near future as well, so give them as many opportunities to be involved as possible, remember that the MSU will continue to exist long after you are gone and part of your responsibility is succession planning not just for next year but for many years after. While it might be a weird position to have Commissioners working in things that you think fall directly

in your portfolio but at the same time you can't direct them since they are accountable to the SRA, in the bigger picture this supplementary work if properly empowered is very beneficial for the MSU. While the EA Commissioner gets to go to most conferences, try to include the UA Commissioner more by taking them to OUSA, HPSAG and perhaps a few more meetings you are having with administrators so that can help increase their insight and empower them and bring some parity.

Attend their committee meetings as often as you can to give them support and insight but remember that these meetings are their turf and you are simply there as a resource. Meet with them regularly (maybe biweekly) through "Advocacy Team Meetings" that included the EA & UA Commissioners, Advocacy Coordinator, Research and Policy Assistant & FYC Advocacy Director and you should consider continuing these.

### Building Caucus Leaders

Since the loss of the House Leader positions 3-4 years ago SRA caucuses have slowly become irrelevant and ineffective in many cases due to a lack of direction, accountability, training and expectations on what they are supposed to do. Many of them are elected through their student body but don't always feel that they owe something specifically to their faculty constituents, instead their personal achievement metrics can often become their performance in the standing committees and work on other projects that affect the student body at a more macro level. However, there is a lot of potential in caucus meetings and engaging them to conduct better outreach with their faculty societies, welcome week rep community and constituents in general because while as VP Ed you might operate on these high level meetings and conferences, quite a bit of issues and concerns students face can be faculty based and they can be a good source of incoming and outgoing information. For the latter their personal networks can be more effective than just you using MSU Official Social Media. These meetings should be an avenue for them to share ideas, and collaborate with one another on shared priorities.

As an alternative to all of the above you can also start inviting Caucus leaders to Academic Affairs council but perhaps a more smaller venue with just them could be more effective.

### Academic Affairs Council

Just like several VP Eds before me I tried to get this initiative off the ground again this year, to moderate success with 6-7 regular members attending our meetings (Timing being a huge issue sometimes but with other members simply ignoring every email or message you sent). I attempted to make it more than just an aimless body that simply updated each other and was a platform for the VP Ed to gain feedback on their projects into a body that took direct policy stances and collaborated on campus wide campaigns. It worked and didn't work, I didn't get much response about issues like Ancillary fees but they did seem more receptive to the idea of a second Academic Welcome week and more Faculty Society involvement during Week 1. You can make a facebook group, and treat it like a community, but as I found despite providing extensive details (maybe too much) the group members

simply didn't seem interested in participating even online more actively nor did I hear any direct issues or concerns from their end. On that note I talked about how perhaps could be that culturally our faculty societies are strongly inclined to be skewed towards programming and events and even the VP Academic then inherits this focus towards such events and as such it's unfair for you to expect them to immediately latch onto acronyms and other technical items that you might throw onto them as volunteers. Hold meetings every 2 weeks, and include the VP Academics of the Faculty Societies, Senators and students on university committees. It also gives the VP Academics an opportunity to build relationships and engage in some idea sharing amongst each other. Post minutes from your meetings on the MSU website, give updates at the SRA and your board.

### Valedictorian Selection

You will have to go through this process twice - once in the fall just to promote nominations (refer to email exchanges between myself and Peter Self from last fall, things apparently changed and now they prefer or exclusively only want Graduate Students to get Valedictorian in the fall) and again in the Spring. Valedictorian Selection at the beginning of September, maybe even before. Stay on top of this as best you can. For the fall convocation, graduate students make up the majority of graduates, and as such, many of them will also apply for valedictorian. Ensure the MSU has proper representation and that the right people are coming together for the Selection Committees. There are only two ceremonies in the fall, but all of this information can be accessed via the Valedictorian package on the server. Begin the Spring process of Valedictorian as early as February because there are many selection committees that need time to meet after the nomination period has been exhausted. Once all valedictorians have been selected, safekeep them for University PR to access them and then post them on the MSU website and send them congratulatory letters (I didn't get a chance to do the last two suggestions this year). Remember to make this a priority as annoying and random as this seems and get everything out as early as possible and let the Faculty Associate Deans offices (Can be accessed via AVP Faculties office) know in advance when nomination packages are going to come out and close. Also be very vigilant and ask for faculties to send the names and positions of their committees to ensure they are following the policy (this applies in other general areas for the policy too) and strongly insist that they pick the undergrad reps as the SRA members you recommended rather than a random student of their choosing. And again since this award can have a huge personal impact on people please ensure that you are using all possible channels to promote. The biggest request you can make to associate deans (perhaps by attending at a physical meeting) could be that their staff respect and strictly adhere to the outline valedictorian policy since I had several instances of Faculties wanting to bend or break the rules intentionally or unintentionally. We had a much more smoother experience this past year, but in previous years we've had quite a few annoyed faculty offices caused by the MSU not following through or conducting this prestigious process early enough.

Being a Corporate Officer

The VP Education position is a weird one. It is entirely possible to spend all of your time wrapped up in external and internal issues of education – and have NO clue what is happening within our services or businesses; which was very frustrating for me since having been an SRA and Exec Board member for a few years I had quite a few opinions on their operations and this was quite frustrating because of travel I was almost never able to follow up with department. When you have Board meetings, remember that you always have an opinion and you are just as much a member as anyone else. I found personally, I wanted to be involved in everything at the beginning of the year, and as the year progressed, I realized that there were certain areas that I should leave to others but I still k. In spite of that, you should always have an opinion, even when the issue doesn't relate to your position. Let your board members be experts in their portfolio, but make sure to actively engage and ask questions where appropriate. Keep on top of your emails. It's easy to let them pile up, but spending a couple hours every week responding to emails will make sure you keep on top of your work.

Let me give you a typical week in the life of a VP Ed as described by an old VP Education. What you see. "Oh man, I'm so excited! I have this conference in Ottawa to attend where we'll be meeting with MPs and actually influencing change. How often do we get an opportunity to interact with the people that can take our policy and put it into action. This is going to be awesome." [End of the Week hits] "Man, that week was awesome. Got to meet with the Prime Minister's Office, and the Finance Minister on issues related to the Canada Student Loans Program! It's Sunday night, and I'm exhausted – I think I'll take tomorrow off, maybe even two days just to recuperate from the long week I've had." What other people see. "Oh man, Spencer used to be so diligent, but now all he does is go on trips. He really is the VP Travel and Tourism. He's never in the office, and whenever his conferences are over, he takes days off. What is this? I heard all he does is meet with some people, and drink the rest of the time. How come he can't be like the rest of the board? Why did we even elect him?" While dramatized, this is the perception of the VP Ed at times, since even your own Board Members can sometimes admit to you that they don't particular have much of an understanding of what you did last week, perhaps explaining in more details at Board Meetings during calendar updates could be a way to educate them on what you do on a day to day basis.

Relationship with Full Time Staff When I first walked into this role, I was told that I would interact with the full time staff the very least. Now, while this is true due to the nature of your position and the projects you will be involved with, this makes your relationship with them even more important. Stopping by an office to say hello, sending out updates to let them know what you've been involved with – these are all ways of engaging with our staff. They keep the MSU running and have all committed themselves to enhancing student life. The institutional knowledge they have is unparalleled and can be a huge resource to you throughout the year. Interact with them, be grateful for them and appreciate them for all that they do. I would even recommend trying to engage them in some of your platform points if there is potential for overlap. Asking their opinions, especially since they've seen many student executives throughout their tenure is helpful in understanding why past ideas may or may not have been successful. Taking a trip to the Underground,

TwelveEighty, or CFMU are all ways to stay engaged with what's happening within the MSU.

### Student Representative Assembly (SRA)

Having been on the SRA for a year you are somewhat familiar with the concept. Do understand however that you are a member of the Board now, and while some may criticize the idea of "Board Think" looking at the organization from a macro perspective is important and will help move things forward. Board solidarity is very crucial, as you will learn throughout the year. They are your team, and while you may not always agree, it is important that you support one another.

While they can sometimes create tricky situations for you in terms of their questions and critique of what you are doing at all times, Do your best to engage members in your projects and provide them mentorship when they need guidance. Remember that it doesn't matter you yourselves and the Board are quite productive and efficient, if the SRA members are floundering around the table and have resolved themselves to distance and apathy from their roles then that is a colossal failure for the MSU since the SRA is also a window for many students to connect to more constituents.

This group of individuals has a lot of potential, and ignoring them merely enhances the stereotype that the SRA does nothing. Individually, members of the SRA are powerhouses. Learn to perceive what their interests are and then tailor your message to them if you are interacting with them individually, if on your side and effectively doing their job they can be huge assets into providing supplementary projects to the MSU as well as supporting and cheer leading your initiatives. If not, you will face the pitfalls I face where I banked on the SRA to go out to their constituents thinking my pitch to them on Ancillary Fee violations is going to be enough to immediately rile them up and convince them to get out there..

### Executive Board

Typically, the VP Ed has little involvement on this front as you may end up missing many meetings due to other commitments, so don't worry too much about not having prior experience on this and perhaps work closer with other members of the board to seek clarification on what issues are being discussed, but everything there is quite straightforward. In 2011/2012 the VP Ed had an idea for this exercise with members of the executive board/SRA are trained and asked to to be strategic in how we approach our advocacy priorities. I wouldn't recommend having the entire EB handle a project like this, but maybe doing something on the side where an EB member takes the lead - sort of an ad hoc committee on advocacy strategies and understanding the second pillar of the organization un---related to services/businesses.

### Presidents Page

The Silhouette only has a couple summer editions, but once the year starts you and your board will have to start producing articles on a weekly basis. You will take on

the bulk of the articles as you often have the most 'feel---good' and meat and bones stories, but give other board members an opportunity to write about things happening within their portfolio if they desire. GET THESE IN ON TIME. If possible, you should try and send them to Michael Wooder by Tuesday afternoon so he has time to edit, it was also thrown around that perhaps you can request the PR Assistant to start ghost writing them for you to save up quite a bit of valuable work time.

### Associate Deans Group

The associate deans are your gateway into the faculties. While I wasn't invited this year, you can attend associate deans meetings that are held monthly (contact AVP Faculties office to find out when, or to be put on their agenda) or meet with them individually. They will give you the micro of the story if you're looking to implement a program across campus, or need buy---in. They do enrolment management and can be critical, but are necessary when it comes to actual implementation from the ground up

### Miscellaneous and Conclusion

There are a lot of random committees that you will be asked to sit on throughout the year, Many University Award Committees often require a student rep, the NSSE Survey working group often has the VP Ed involved (they are mostly responsible for helping promote the survey), other projects will have a need for a student rep and the MSU might send you there. Also again try to seek more of these opportunities up since they are amazing to advance the MSU's agenda forward, it's not common for many important stakeholders to be on the same table together. Make sure you keep an eye out for any future hiring committees related to your portfolio and either yourselves or someone else you trust from the SRA etc is nominated. I myself wasn't included in the VP Faculty or Librarian hiring and made it very clear to the Provost that I was very upset about this issues, the provost being relevant since they are the one who chairs the nominations for these committees.

Transit has randomly come back as a hot button issue in the province and you might need to figure out how you can take a more active approach. Something myself, Advocacy and Mary Koziol from the President's office wanted to run was the Your32 campaign, unfortunately we weren't able to arrange due to timing issues and we weren't able to get much interest to run due to Faculty lunch breaks. Any followup you can do on this project would be amazing. The elephant in the room also is that there could be a provincial election campaign at which point I'll send you a spiel based on my experiences as EA Commissioner when we had the 2011 campaign on campus. The Ontario Tuition Grant is something that you will have to continue work on, keep lobbying locally to expand eligibility, but also to work with MTCU/OSAP on improvements in communication that will allow all qualified students into knowing and understanding how to apply for the grant. As I've discussed before I would also encourage you to continue operating the Mental Health, Student Housing and other portals and to redo the Mental Health Branding campaign as I've already order 200 Tshirts and 1500 buttons as a last thing before I left. I similarly ordered the same amount of swag for the Hamilton: Discover your city campaign which can also be

ready for you to distribute. Students absolutely love a well designed campaign and this is a relatively new territory to create branding around certain issues.

As a random side note, don't forget about selecting delegates for OUSA General Assembly and preparing them in advance. Giving your External Affairs Commissioner the task of leading prep meetings is a good idea and incites discussion amongst the group instead of you as a Steering Committee Member trying to legitimize every PCR. Anything else you need to know is on the server. I am a constant resource for you throughout the year, so never hesitate to give me a call or send me an email, I can usually respond on an issue within a day or two or even on the fly if you urgently need to talk to me.