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REACHING HIGHER: STUDENT-LED LOBBYING GETS RESULTS

Chris discusses the relationship
between the MSU
and our lobbying partners



One of the most common debates I have with people both inside and outside of this organization is in regards to the value of our provincial and federal lobby groups. The McMaster Students Union is a member of both the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance (OUSA), as well as the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA). We pay \$27,732.00 to be a part of OUSA, and \$23,973.00 to be a part of CASA. Yeah, you're reading that right and I agree, that is a lot of money. But what does that money do for you?

One of the MSU's core purposes is to represent you. You hear this mantra around student-politician election time every year, but what does it actually mean? To me, it means that you have someone speaking on your behalf

to the powers that affect your well-being as a student. You have someone who will pay attention to important developments and speak out on your behalf. That's my entire job; to represent you on a day-to-day basis to the university, as well as the provincial and federal governments. I'm elected to make sure we're doing the best job of lobbying we possibly can. In my opinion, I have the coolest job ever.

However, I'm only one person. There's more than enough going on at the university level to keep one person occupied year-round, never mind the ever-evolving political landscape where many of our lobbying efforts take place. Now, do you want your student representatives simply watching developments and making comments as they happen? Or do you want them analyzing, criticizing and developing new solutions to the problems facing us in the education system? I personally think the latter is preferable.

What about experience

and professionalism? Since it's your tuition, tax and OSAP dollars on the line, you probably want the people representing you to be thoroughly prepared and professional in their approach to lobbying. Well, I'm glad to tell you that you have all of this. You have engaged, experienced, professional representation that works for you year-round, to not only keep track of important developments and speak out, but to also propose educated solutions to the underlying issues surrounding our education system. Most importantly, we have a well-respected voice at both the provincial and federal tables. As a result, student voices shape the provincial and federal agenda every year. We are able to do this because of our OUSA and CASA memberships.

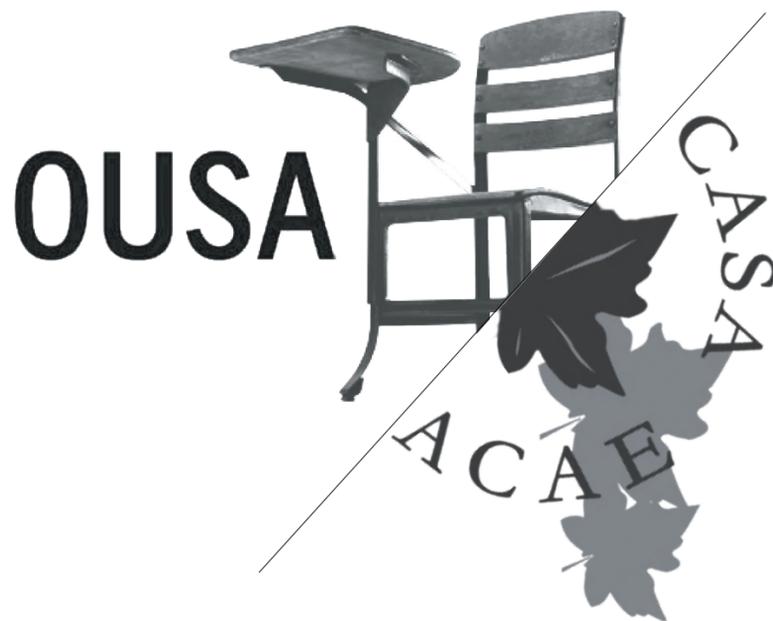
You see, one, two or even three people is simply not enough to keep track of three different governments and remain leaders in three different sectors. I wish it were possible for one person

to be able to cover all the duties listed above, but it's simply not. So for less than a couple of bucks per student, the MSU partners with schools from across Ontario and Canada to combine and coordinate our lobbying efforts, as well as hire experts to help us. We call these partnerships OUSA and CASA.

I prefer to call OUSA and CASA partnerships, rather than organizations. In the end, they are vehicles for student governments to accomplish our core mission; representing students effectively on a day-to-day basis.

Please feel free to contact me if you would like to know more about the MSU's relationship with either OUSA or CASA. And definitely get in touch if you have an item or issue that needs to be addressed at any level of governance.

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Do the right thing

Vishal wants to know what you're into



What do you like doing? The question seems simple enough, right? When a friend posed this question to me, I responded with my typical answer – "I like doing art on the side." This time however, as soon as those words came out of my mouth, I immediately felt guilt. I felt as if I was lying, and in some ways I was because I couldn't remember the last time I did something that I claimed I liked. After admitting to my friend that I hadn't really produced any art in a while, he asked me "Why?" It was my answer to this question that really made me feel worse – "I've just been busy, and haven't really found time for it." What an excuse.

It was getting late, so we finished our last pint and he left soon after. I closed the door, dropped back on the couch, turned on the TV and started staring at the screen blankly while flipping the channels. I couldn't stop thinking about my response. Truth is, I used that excuse ever since I got to university without ever really recognizing that I did. I know that I wasn't the only person that used this excuse on occasion either. I've seen friends that excelled in athletics, art, music, a specific hobby, and yet ever since getting to university, what they were once good at became almost non-existent in their lives. Why

do we do that? Are we so consumed by the thought of what will happen to us after we leave this institution? Are we in a constant state of insecurity where we push "luxuries" off because of what really needs to be accomplished?

Whatever it is that holds us back from doing something we enjoy, it isn't healthy for us. My friend used an interesting comparison with the idea of bottling up one's emotions. It isn't natural, and there is usually a breaking point associated with that type of behaviour. There will always be school and work. Your sole responsibility in university shouldn't be to attain a degree. It should also be the time where you explore your interests and start working on the type of person you ultimately want to become.

Take your schoolwork seriously, but please, do not let it consume you. Play an intramural sport, join one of the 275 student clubs (or start a new one), volunteer for something you care about, just take some time for you and whatever it is you enjoy doing. Life, especially university life, requires balance. We are here to be educated certainly, but never lose sight of the fact that we have a relatively short time at this wonderful place called university. Seize the day. Now go do something fun!

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STRIKE WATCH 2008

CUPE Local 3906 and University continue negotiations

The University and CUPE Local 3906 continue negotiations on a renewed collective agreement. CUPE Local 3906 Unit 1, which represents Teaching Assistants and some Research Assistants, has requested the province issue a No Board report. The provincial conciliation officer could issue his report this week, and the union would be in a legal strike position 17 days after the report is issued. Talks are scheduled to continue Oct. 14 to 16.