Volunteering is most definitely worth its weight in gold

The kind of engagement students displayed during Ignatieff’s visit is a good sign. Students are often portrayed as apathetic and disillusioned in the popular press. However, the quality of questions, as well as the number of students who attended prove that students are interested, and most importantly, that students on this campus are well informed.

Unfortunately, this engagement is called into question by low voter turn-out in general elections and a distrust of government. These unfortunate realities are similarly true at the student government level. MSU Presidential elections only brought 12.5% of the student body to the polls last year, meaning that your primary representatives to the University, the City and politicians at every level, was chosen by a mere one out of every eight students.

The MSU President that you elect on February 16th and 17th will be the person who shapes and articulates what the collective student voice will say to people like Mr. Ignatieff. Like it or not, the MSU is your face to the world. I personally refuse to believe that students don’t care about this, especially after the strong showing of interest and engagement at the Ignatieff event.

As a student, I observed daily how much we care about issues of both national and local importance. I just think that we just don’t always apply ourselves to the issues. The next chance you’ll have to do this at the MSU Presidential debates scheduled for January 26th at 12:00pm in MUSC and then again on February 2nd at 6:00pm in Commons.

I would like to extend a warm thank you to Dr. Alexandre Sévigny and Sarah Molto for organizing Michael Ignatieff’s visit to campus. It was educational in a myriad of ways.

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Last week, something incredible happened. Those who believe in student government and engagement would have never dreamed it possible — hundreds of students gathered in Convocation Hall to ask Michael Ignatieff, Leader of Her Majesty’s Loyal Opposition, questions about his future.

At first glance, this may seem perfectly reasonable. Mr. Ignatieff is a national political figure whose name is recognized coast to coast. It seems natural that students might be interested in seeing a famous face. However, I’m not sure that this is the case, as famous faces frequent McMaster all the time. Pop-culture icons like Ron Jeremy come through the Student Centre regularly.

These events do work, but a conversation about Canada’s future with Michael Ignatieff is a completely different attraction. For instance, there was no blatant entertainment value to the event. There was no flash and no show. No free swag was handed out, there was no free food and no incentives were used to bring students through the door. It was simply what it was: a political figure answering student’s questions.

In my mind, the only motivation that explains why hundreds of students showed up to hear what Ignatieff had to say was their sense of civic responsibility and engagement. Students lined up to have their questions about Canada’s future answered, and the crowd listened eagerly, critically evaluating Mr. Ignatieff’s answers. Students asked about everything, from higher education, to the environment, to Canada’s role in the war of Afghaniстан. Everyone who attended left with a better sense of Mr. Ignatieff’s priorities and characteristics and will likely be able to make a much more informed vote in the next federal election, regardless of selection on their ballot.

Volunteering is definitely the most collectively worthy weight in gold.

Why lending your time makes you an attractive candidate for both career and grad school recruiters

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The upside to volunteer work is that you have the option of being as ambitious as you want. You can choose to dedicate a few hours a month or a few hours a week. Volunteer work also has the habit of opening doors where none were before. For many ambitious volunteers, the contacts they have established set the ground work for snagging great jobs further down the line, especially after graduation.

Lots of people start off as volunteers, myself among them. When I started at Mac (and with the MSU I was volunteering), I was shocking (to me) that I wasn’t born VP Administration of the MSU. I volunteered for three years in various roles before I was offered a paid job. That paid job did not only get to great personal growth, but it also opened the doors necessary to get me where I am now. To this day, I look out for volunteer experience on the resumes of candidates I interview for paid positions.

Take what you will from my own experiences at Mac, but remember that volunteering goes a long way towards opening opportunities along your career path.

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2010 Graduate and Undergraduate Student Elections to the Board of Governors and Senate


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President’s Page

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