It is estimated that one in five Canadians will experience mental illness in their lifetime, and youth aged 16 - 25 are more likely to manifest signs of mental health distress than any other age group. Conversations are a powerful tool for raising awareness surrounding these issues, as well as assisting individuals in addressing their own mental health concerns. It is for this reason that the McMaster Students Union (MSU) is working to start more conversations on the topic with the #MacTalks campaign.

In the past, the MSU has created a variety of campaigns, such as "Stomp the Stigma" and #TodayIFeel, which were designed to highlight the impact of conversations concerning mental health. These campaigns promoted the sharing of lived experiences, as well as the availability of resources on campus. However, despite these ongoing conversations, there is still plenty of work to be done. The University has recognized the need to better address student mental health concerns and as a result, over the past 13 months countless hours have gone into developing the "Student Mental Health and Well-Being Strategy". This strategy was developed with support from the MSU, and addresses priorities such as mental health training for McMaster staff and faculty, as well as increasing patient capacity at the Student Wellness Centre.

The strategy is set to launch on February 25, 2015 in the McMaster University Student Centre Atrium from 12:00 p.m. - 1:00 p.m., halfway through the MSU’s Mental Health and Wellness Awareness Week, otherwise known as #MacTalks. The #MacTalks campaign will run from February 23 - 27, and will feature a variety of events with the goal of fostering purposeful conversations surrounding mental health. The week will also highlight the many resources available to students with mental health concerns.

The MSU’s commitment to mental health can be seen every day through our various services, including: the Peer Support Line, the Student Health Education Centre, the Queer Student Community Centre, and the new Women and Gender Equity Network. You can learn more about what these services can do for you by participating in #MacTalks activities, or visiting msumcmaster.ca.

Progress and change start through meaningful conversations. Through #MacTalks we hope to further develop a culture of open dialogues concerning mental health and wellness at McMaster University. Check out the events, share your stories online, and start conversations that help build a supportive campus community.

The President’s Page is a space sponsored and used by the McMaster Students Union (MSU) Board of Directors (BoD) to communicate with the student body. It functions to highlight the Board’s projects, goals, and agenda for the year, as well as the general happenings of the MSU.