



MEMO

From the office of the...

Vice President (Education)

TO: Student Representative Assembly
FROM: Spencer Nestico-Semianiw, Vice-President (Education)
SUBJECT: Vice-President (Education) Report
DATE: October 28, 2015

Dear Assembly,

It is with great excitement that I put forward my first update to the SRA on my progress in the role of MSU Vice-President (Education), in terms of both my platform and other projects that have arisen throughout the year. In order to do make this report as intuitive as possible, I have broken down each platform point that I campaigned on in April with progress reports, descriptions, and metrics to ensure it is clear what has been done to fulfill my platform. I then briefly list the other work that has consumed some of my time in the role as well. If you have any questions, concerns, or thoughts, please feel free to let me know.

PLATFORM

External Portfolio

Federal – Explore Federal Advocacy Options

Assessing CASA

1) **Request CASA Observer Status**

Progress Update: Completed

Description: In May 2015 I reached out to the Chair of CASA, Erik Queenan, to discuss the MSU's future in CASA and how the process of requesting Observer Status worked. He informed me that there was no formal process, and that if the MSU wanted to attend CASA events and partner with them over the year, this would definitely be possible. As a result, Ehima and I were able to attend CASA's Get Out the Vote campaign in August, where we made connections with a variety of CASA delegates and Home Office staff, shared our thoughts on CASA's work, and learned more about their Get Out the Vote campaign. After the conference we informed CASA the MSU would not be purchasing their Get Out the Vote materials, but would be interested in partnering still if relevant. Since then I have had several calls with both Erik and Matthew Rios, a CASA Home Office staff, to discuss our own respective

work and to maintain a positive relationship between each other. As it stands now, the MSU does not see significant benefit in attending CASA's Policy and Strategic conference, but will be receiving updates from them after it occurs in November.

Metrics: a. Get Out the Vote attended

b. Several calls with CASA's Chair and Home Office

2) Continue CASA's Structural Changes

Progress Update: Completed

Description: In my platform I discussed implementing structural changes to CASA to ensure the MSU and other Ontario schools would have a place in the organization and CASA itself would become a more productive and effective body. To do this, I have discussed improving CASA at OUSA's Steering Committee table, where I gauged interest from other Ontario schools in federal advocacy. I have also brought this up with members of CASA at their Get Out the Vote conference and through numerous phone calls with CASA staff and Chair Erik Queenan. I also called the Presidents of the University of Calgary and Alberta student unions to gauge their perspective as large schools in CASA. This being said, there has been no significant headway on CASA's behalf on structural changes. Since the MSU no longer has the power to shape CASA as a non-member, there is little to be done when CASA is uninterested in better catering to Ontario schools. As a result, I will be lessening my efforts on reforming CASA and focusing more on other federal advocacy venues, to be discussed below.

Metrics: a. Numerous phone calls with CASA members, staff, and executive

b. Discussion at OUSA Steering Committee

Strengthen CASA's Advocacy

Progress Update: Completed

Description: In my platform I discussed ensuring that four areas of federal advocacy regarding student issues were being lobbied on by CASA. I brought up these four areas of advocacy (Canada Student Grants, Tax policy, Indigenous students, International students) with CASA in conversations at their Get Out the Vote conference, and CASA has confirmed they will have standing policy and advocacy on each of these issues. To ensure these issues are still priorities for the MSU, we will be bringing them all up when we meet with our newly elected MP Filomena Tassi in the coming month, as well as other MPs who we will reach out to soon.

Metrics: a. Discussions at CASA's Get Out the Vote and confirmation of CASA's advocacy on them

b. Scheduled meetings with MPs to discuss

Federal Election

Progress Update: Completed

Description: Thanks to the help of the Advocacy Coordinator (Christine Yachouh), Advocacy Street Team, Education Team, SRA members, and a number of volunteers, the MSU ran an extremely effective and successful MacVotes campaign. This campaign included a number of events, including an election professor panel discussion, a 1280 election social, live airing of an electoral debate in Clubspace, the all-candidates debate in MUSC, and an Election Afterparty. The campaign also involved preparing the MacVotes website, as well as developing promotional videos, rave cards, Infographics, blogs, lawn signs, shirts, and lanyards. Lastly, we supported this work with consistent social media promotion, broken down party platforms, interviews in local media, and were even picked up nationally by the CBC. Overall, we are extremely happy with how the campaign went, as we feel we created a very strong and positive culture on campus around civic engagement, as well as strong voter turnout at our campus polling stations.

Metrics: 500+ students voted at Les Prince on election day, 1900+ during satellite polls, 5 MacVotes events, 5 student blogs, 2 promotional videos, hundreds of rave cards, 1 comparative Infographic, dozens of volunteers

Building the MSU's Federal Brand

Progress Update: Partially Completed

Description: Due to the federal election, I thought it would not be a good use of resources to schedule meetings with MPs who may be gone for the majority of my term. As a result, now that the election is over, the MSU will be reaching out to MPs to discuss student issues by the end of this semester and figure out next steps. As well, I also campaigned on best practice venues for federal advocacy through OUSA. This has culminated in one of the most exciting developments of my work, which is a potential U15 federal advocacy organization. The USC President Sophie Helpard has reached out to a number of U15 student unions, and we will be having a call next Friday to discuss areas for collaboration and next steps for better coordinating federal efforts. I am cautiously optimistic that we could be setting the stage for a future new, and stronger, federal advocacy organization.

Metrics: Phone Call Scheduled for Next Week (UofT, UBC, Dalhousie, Waterloo, MSU, Western, McGill interested, others being reached out to now)

OUSA Leadership

Progress Update: Completed

Description: To fulfill this goal, I ran and was elected President of OUSA in May of this year. Although the months since then have been challenging, I have unequivocally been made certain that this was the right decision for the MSU this year. Through the MSU's leadership as President this year, we have ensured tuition has been the number one priority for the organization, and we have had remarkable leverage in shaping the organization. OUSA is doing a number of innovative and exciting new things this year, such as planning a best practice sharing event for all student union executives, as well as better promoting its annual priorities in September. We also have made changes to our budget, financial practices, and

bylaws, and have written an excellent and Annual Plan and are in the process of writing a new Long-Term plan. Expansion this year has also been a priority, and we have expanded operations more in municipal advocacy too. We have also made student outreach and visibility a priority this year, and are reaching this goal by running an extensive tuition campaign at the beginning of January, as well as providing additional campus visits, and more campus updates and blogs.

Metrics: a. Elected OUSA President

b. Renewed collaboration between OUSA and COU

c. New events, campaigns, and outreach initiatives

d. MSU priorities of tuition/work-integrated learning/funding formula within OUSA's five annual priorities

e. MSU empowerment to chair SC meetings, make executive discussions on organization, and speak through OUSA to all stakeholders

OUSA Presence

Progress Update: Partially Completed

Description: There were three aspects I discussed in my platform around OUSA presence. The first was blogs. The MSU has been very successful with this so far, as we have the higher number of blogs on OUSA's schedule than any other school (by a high margin) and this has allowed many McMaster students to write pieces that are now circulated on a provincial platform. The second aspect was on-campus awareness. This has been completed through OUSA's campus visit to McMaster in September, as well as through multiple stories in The Silhouette around OUSA. Both the Advocacy Street Team and myself also make it a priority to discuss and showcase OUSA wherever possible in conversation, and the January tuition campus through OUSA will be another way to improve OUSA's visibility on campus. Lastly, OUSA Maroon papers have not been completed yet, but we will be able to provide links for OUSA's paper briefs on our website soon.

Metrics: a. Half a dozen OUSA blogs from the MSU contributed

b. OUSA McMaster campus visit

c. OUSA coverage in The Silhouette twice

d. OUSA tuition campaign planned for January

Municipal Affairs

ChangeCamp

Progress Update: To be Completed

Description: ChangeCamp will likely occur at the end of January this year, with our first planning meeting this upcoming Monday (right before this report is submitted so I will not have time to incorporate my thoughts here). The planning and implementation for this will be a large part of our Community Engagement Coordinator's portfolio this year, and she has been involved in preliminary work for this. However, I have worked with the Network for Community-Campus

Partnerships on initial discussions, and we are looking to partner more closely with Mohawk and the Mohawk Students Association on the event.

- Metrics:** a. Planning meetings scheduled
b. Thoughts on how the event will run this year done

Network for Community-Campus Partnerships

Progress Update: Ongoing

Description: This is a committee that I will have ongoing involvement with throughout the year. So far I have been attending all the meetings, and have introduced our Community Engagement Coordinator to them as well. Through these meetings we planned the Research and Education retreats, and I ensured there were students in attendance at both those events. Also, I met independently with the Chair and Coordinator of the Network to discuss MSU involvement and leadership that will result in several student showcase events throughout the year.

- Metrics:** a. Strong MSU representation at the Network
b. Strong student representation at Network Research and Education Retreats
c. Several upcoming MSU-led community engagement events

LobbyCon (now dubbed Municipal Advocacy Week)

Progress Update: Nearly Completed

Description: In my platform I wanted to develop a municipal advocacy week that mirrored the provincial and federal weeks that OUSA and CASA operated respectively. So far the week is largely planned, with fourteen meetings scheduled with Hamilton stakeholders including the Mayor, MPPs, city managers and staff, Ward Councilors, and Chamber of Commerce representatives. The week is to occur at the end of November, and the MSU will be releasing a report on the discussions that occurred at each of the meetings.

- Metrics:** a. 14 meetings scheduled
b. Students assigned to each meeting
c. Agenda for meetings currently being developed

McMaster Innovation Park Entrepreneurship Conference

Progress Update: To be Completed

Description: There has been no headway made yet on this event. Our Community Engagement Coordinator will be involved in planning this event and their work will be nearly exclusively devoted to it after the completion of ChangeCamp. Thus, the event will likely occur some time around the end of March.

Metrics: To be declared

MSU and City of Hamilton Employment Initiative

Progress Update: Partially Completed

Description: So far, I have had preliminary discussions with both Sean Van Koughnett and the Chamber of Commerce around improved employment initiatives. The university has now adopted Magnet, which is a connective service for students around local and high profile undergraduate and graduate jobs. Over the rest of my term we will be assessing the success of this platform and how the MSU can move forward. In addition, I have also worked with the Student Success Centre to try to provide more Hamilton-based jobs.

Metrics: a. Meetings with Sean Van Koughnett, Magnet, Student Success Centre, and the Hamilton Chamber of Commerce

Internal Portfolio

Advocacy Restructuring

Progress Update: Partially Completed

Description: So far, this has become a Board project that each of us has been working on separately and cohesively. As I write this, tomorrow (Sunday) we will be having a meeting between the Board and the six Commissioners to discuss how to better support commissioners and whether or not any organizational restructuring is necessary within the MSU to better support our work. Depending on the outcome of this discussion, I am optimistic that we will be able to bring a proposal or thought experiment to the SRA to discuss how to ensure our committees, part-time, and full-time staff our best supported. I believe that within these proposals and discussions will be the solution the problems I discussed in my platform around EA and UA specifically.

Metrics: a. Several Board meetings on the topic
b. Upcoming Board + Commissioner meeting

Course Wiki

Progress Update: Partially Completed

Description: Much of the work for this initiative has been thanks for the University Affairs Commissioner Blake Oliver and the University Affairs Committee. So far around 5% of courses at McMaster have been completed on the Wiki, and we are aiming for a hard launch this December during course evaluations and then continued promotion throughout second semester. The UA committee also hosted a Course Wiki party in the MSU office to fill out courses and get MSU leaders excited about the initiative. We are excited for the launch to get all students at McMaster filling out and using the platform.

Metrics: a. Course wiki party held
b. 5% (150 or so) courses filled out
c. Promotional material being designed
d. Bugs with the platform that were present in May have been resolved

Peer Tutoring Network

Progress: To be completed

Description: This is an initiative that Ehima has primarily been working to implement. To my knowledge we are looking at designing that platform for this network and then once it is launched I will be able to evaluate the efficacy of the program and address any concerns.

Metrics: a. Decision to create the online platform for the network

Academic Affairs Council

Progress: Ongoing

Description: So far the AAC has been doing excellent work this year. We have had around four meetings so far and have shared each of our own best practices and have taken on several projects. These include developing specific student recommendations for course evaluations and career & co-op at McMaster, which I will be presenting to the university. Also, we will be working on a Course Evaluations campaign (to be discussed below), and will also be publishing reports on Reflection at McMaster, and Sustainability at McMaster in the second semester.

Metrics: a. Four meetings occurred

b. Course Evaluations student recommendations completed.

c. Career & Co-op student recommendations completed

d. Reflection and sustainability chosen as our report priorities for the year

Tuition On-Campus

Progress: Partially Completed

Description: I am very satisfied with the progress we have made on tuition so far this year. So far I have chaired three Tuition Task Force meetings, and I have done much follow-up work from those. Primarily, earlier this year I reported the eight tuition task force objectives that we approved at the summer meetings. We have made progress on all of them. First, Saad and I have completed a draft of the new tuition policy, which we will be bringing to the SRA by the end of November. Second, we have evaluated the MSU bursary and Dan will be exploring options to ensure the student financial assistance the MSU provides is best distributed to students. Third, I have worked with the SSC to add specific SFA for students with disabilities and indigenous students on the Mac Money Centre website, as well as added a new section on SFA on the MSU website. The MSU and SSC will also be jointly promoting SFA-related information to students throughout the year. Fourth, the MSU will be designing an informational and ideally letter-writing campaign around tuition for second semester, after OUSA's campaign. Fifth, Ehima and I presented at Board of Governors around tuition, which was extremely well received. We now have meetings scheduled with the CFO to discuss implementing an activity-based funding model, where we will also bring up transitioning merit-based scholarships to needs-based scholarships, removing interest on deferral tuition payments, and better collaborating between OUSA and the COU on advocating for a fully funded tuition freeze in the next tuition framework. Sixth, we have conducted research on needs-based scholarships at McMaster, and now have data on how much money the university could transition from merits-based scholarships. Seventh, our University

Affairs Research Assistant will be publishing a 'Tuition at McMaster' report by the end of the year.

Metrics: a. Three Tuition Task Force Meetings

b. Eight official Tuition Task Force Objectives

c. Tuition Policy Draft Completed.

d. Board of Governors Presentation

e. Please see Description for all other tangible objective updates

Mental Health

Progress Update: Near Complete

Description: There are several notable updates in this area. First, I have created a student academic accommodations working group to mirror the university body that is overhauling the current university policy on academic accommodations. This student group has developed over three pages of student recommendations on academic accommodations, and these were extremely well received by the university working group. I will be working on the official university body over the next months to ensure these recommendations are adopted in the official new policy. Also, I have worked with the Student Wellness Centre to organize mental health first aid training for around 25 full- and part-time MSU staff, including the entire Board, peer support PTMs, and many service executives. This training allows our staff to better recognize mental health concerns in students and provide them with resources and support. As well, the Student Mental Health Network I discussed in my platform has been formed and I have chaired the first meeting. Allison (Student Wellness Centre) and I will be meeting this week to discuss the feedback and figure out what our priorities will be for the year around next steps for mental health. Lastly, Christine and Blake have begun the preliminary work on MacTalks, which will occur for two weeks in February around mental health on campus.

Metrics: a. Academic accommodations student recommendations created.

b. Attendance and extensive contribution at all academic accommodations meetings

c. Mental health first aid training organized for two dozen MSU staff

d. Student Mental Health Network formed and first meeting held

e. MacTalks planning underway

Quality of Teaching

1) OUSA Policy Paper

Progress Update: Nearly Completed

Description: Over the last several months I have been co-authoring the OUSA policy paper on Teaching & Assessment. I was in charge of the assessment section, which was an entirely new area of OUSA policy. The first draft of the paper has now been completed, where it will be debated and ideally passed at OUSA's upcoming General Assembly.

Metrics: a. First draft of policy completed. Will be finished by mid-November at GA.

2) TA Training

Progress Update: Partially Completed

Description: At the beginning of my term I had meetings with CUPE and MIETL separately around TA training. The meeting with MIETL went very well, and we discussed various ways to improve TA training. The meeting with CUPE went questionably, and I realized that CUPE is very strict in the way it would like to see TA training implemented. As a result, I have tasked our UA research assistant with doing best practice research on TA training, and depending on that research I will either approach the university during their collective bargaining process, or will work with Arshad from MIETL to provide non-mandatory but highly incentivized TA training programs.

Metrics: a. Meetings with MIETL and CUPE held
b. Research on TA Training best practices

3) Course Evaluations

Progress Update: Partially Completed

Description: So far, I have sat on the Teaching Evaluations Committee with the university to discuss better ways to measure teaching excellence and one aspect has been around course evaluations. As a result, I have worked with the Academic Affairs Council to develop student recommendations around course evaluations, and we will be running a campaign in November with the goal of demonstrating to students that course evaluations matter and can have a tangible impact on their education.

Metrics: a. Contributions on Teaching Evaluations Committee
b. Course evaluation student recommendations completed
c. Course evaluations campaign developed to run in late November

Career & Co-op

Progress Update: Partially Completed

Description: So far, I am in the process of developing career & co-op student recommendations with the Academic Affairs Council. I will then present these to Sean Van Koughnett and we will discuss how best to move forward with career & co-op structure at McMaster. In addition, I have had meetings with the SSC around the services they provide, and have worked with them on pilot projects to improve career & co-op at McMaster. One event was an online alumni forum hosted for Arts & Science, where students could chat with alum about their career paths and how they decided what career to choose. The event was a great success and as a result the SSC will be looking to expand the program into other faculties. Another event I have worked on is the upcoming Hack Your City event, which is a collaboration between Spectrum and the MSU to allow students to solve community problems through the use of Big Data. Finally, I am in the opening stages of having the MSU

sponsor the ACTION conference as a way to get students to attend and learn more about entrepreneurial skills, especially in the context of Hamilton business.

- Metrics:**
- a. Career & Co-op student recommendations nearly completed
 - b. Arts & Science online forum completed
 - c. Hack Your Community planning completed
 - d. Action conference partnership initiated

Accessibility Campaign

Progress Update: Completed

Description: In late September, the MSU hosted Maccess, a campaign designed to reduce the stigma around disabilities at McMaster as well as to provide positive next steps to accessibility at our school. Of all the work I've done this year, this project is one of my proudest moments in the job, as I truly feel that this was something I pushed to happen with the university and MSU, and it did to great success. Overall, the campaign was one of the busiest the MSU has ever seen, with 9 events occurring over the span on four days, including fairs, sessions, speakers, and group activities. The campaign was also coupled with extensive online promotion, student blogs, MUSC/Mills Plaza tabling, a video, and a banner for students to sign titled "What Does Accessibility Mean to You?" We received very positive feedback from students around the MSU finally doing a large accessibility-related campaign, especially in partnership with the university, and I hope to see more in the future.

- Metrics:**
- a. 150+ student attendance at events
 - b. One promotional video
 - c. Variety of social media promotion (cover photos, website, blogs, Facebook event)
 - d. Silhouette and McMaster Daily News coverage
 - e. 9 events (all found at msumcmaster.ca/maccess)

MIETL

Progress Update: To be completed

Description: This campaign point focused around getting students more involved with MIETL and ensuring the department is very student-centered and focused. I have had preliminary meetings with Arshad, but the success of this initiative will require further work over the next six months.

- Metrics:**
- a. Preliminary meeting with MIETL

On-Campus Indigenous Support

Progress Update: Partially Completed

Description: This part of the portfolio has had headway, but there is still much to do. So far, I have sat in on MISCA meetings, met a variety of active MISCA members, and have talked with Diversity Services on our plan to tackle these challenges this year. I have also had meetings with Diversity's Indigenous Coordinator, Esmonde, as well as two MISCA members, Donovan and Evan. From the meetings we are going to

be scheduling to student focus groups to get feedback from McMaster's indigenous student population on the biggest challenges they experience at McMaster. These will likely occur at the end of November. Then, with this student feedback the MSU, through UA, EA, MISCA, and myself will all begin rewriting the MSU policy paper on Indigenous student issues. We hope to see this pass at the SRA in mid-second semester. Once this has passed, I will then have two months to bring up the paper with the university, and start the ball rolling on the recommendations that are contained in that policy.

Metrics: a. Meetings with MISCA, Diversity Services, and UA/EA
b. Indigenous student strategy solidified for the year
c. Student focus group questions designed
d. Student focus group dates TBD very soon

Overall Summary

Number of Projects: 25

Number Completed: 6 (Request CASA Observer Status, Continue CASA's Structural Changes, Strengthen CASA's Advocacy, Federal Election, OUSA Leadership, Accessibility Campaign)

Additional Completed by End of November: 4 (Course Evaluations, Career & Co-op, OUSA Policy Paper, Municipal Advocacy Week)

Others Partially Completed: 11 (Building the MSU's Federal Brand, OUSA Presence, Network for Community-Campus Partnerships, MSU and City of Hamilton Employment Initiative, Advocacy Restructuring, Course Wiki, Academic Affairs Council, Tuition On-Campus, Mental Health, TA Training, On-Campus Indigenous Support)

To be Completed Second Term: 4 (ChangeCamp, McMaster Innovation Park Entrepreneurship Conference, Peer Tutoring Network, MIETL)

Other Non-Platform Projects

Hiring – Summer and October hiring for University Affairs Research Assistant, Federal and Provincial Research Assistant, Community Engagement Coordinator, and OUSA Fall General Assembly Delegates

Ombuds – Sean van Koughnett, the current Ombuds, and myself are evaluating the funding, structure, staffing, and service of the McMaster Ombuds office

Valedictorian – I have been involved in the planning and selection of Fall Valedictorian ceremonies and candidates

Conferences & Events – Attended OUSA Transition Conference, OUSA Strategic Planning Conference, CASA Get Out the Vote, OUSA Training Day, 8 OUSA Campus Visits as President, Bay Area Economic Summit, Toronto Mental Health Symposium, Waterloo Velocity Visit, SRA/MSU Retreats, and Ryerson Student Centre Visit

This summarizes the work that has been done so far this year. I welcome all questions requiring any clarification on any of these issues in the future.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Vice-President (Education)
Spencer Nestico-Semianiw