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THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT AND YOUR EDUCATION

Huzaifa examines the future of post-secondary education in Ontario



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Did you know the government of Ontario is a major stakeholder in your education at McMaster University? The provincial government pays for approximately 50% of the total costs of an education through the provision of operating grants and capital funding to universities. Through the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU) the government is also responsible for establishing goals for McMaster, as well as other post-secondary institutions in the province.

While most universities operate in relative autonomy, the government of Ontario has an influence through its funding methods derived from its understanding of the perceived needs of the labour market and provincial infrastructure. Led by Minister Glen Murray, MTCU released

a document proposing that Ontario's post-secondary education sector begin a series of conversations on how to promote efficiency and innovation. The document, entitled *Strengthening Ontario's Centres of Creativity, Innovation and Knowledge* can be found online at www.tcu.gov.on.ca/pepg/publications/. The MTCU discussion paper highlights strategies that could be utilized to achieve these goals, such as a wider range of technology-enabled learning, experiential education and quality of teaching.

The letter was well received by the MSU since it was the first such initiative in years to directly engage student opinion and representation into shaping what the future of post-secondary education will look like. Similarly, having participated in a series of consultations all summer, I've been pleased by the priorities and language of the discussion. The discourse has shifted from its initial focus on labour "productivity", toward recognizing the importance of deep learning, outside-the-classroom experiences and quality teaching versus employment outcomes for our graduates. The debate is also a finely nuanced series of complicated issues. It is important to acknowledge that there are

a wide variety of stakeholders involved, as well as potential and hidden impacts some of the proposals could have on the sector.

Through OUSA I have been actively engaged in these roundtable discussions. I attended sessions concerning quality teaching and learning outcomes at Humber College, as well roundtables at Fanshawe College and the University of Toronto. The latter explored various specific topics wherein I shared the table with student unions from across the province, as well as faculty members and administrators who each had unique additions and identified challenges to the process. I was also able to ascertain some fascinating best practices currently in use related to the topics of discussion. For example, Humber College has recently opened up an Innovation Incubator that supports project commercialization for student ideas. University of Waterloo has an entrepreneurial-themed residence called 'Velocity' where students with similar inclinations live and work together. Moreover, the University of Victoria has a specific course available for first time TAs designed to improve their teaching skills.

One of the most important ideas discussed was the need for Ontario

to rework its credit transfer system between universities and colleges. The goal is for colleges to provide more direct and experiential supplementary educational opportunities for university students (and vice-versa) all while maintaining educational quality. Other ideas included funding from MTCU to establish sector-wide quality metrics and stronger partnerships between educational institutions and public/private organizations for the expansion of co-op and internship opportunities.

The hope for OUSA & MSU is that through these consultations, the government will receive some clear direction on where we want education to go. We are also maintaining our principled position that any changes to the sector must not impede the accessibility and affordability for students.

You can access the paper on my profile page on the MSU website, located at www.msumcmaster.ca/governance/. I encourage you to keep your eyes peeled for a potential student town hall meeting hosted at McMaster, with attendance by Minister Murray who has been visiting schools across the province to gain feedback from students.

RENAISSANCE AWARDS

Up to \$25,000 is available to fund your experience



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the Award's preamble; "The goal of the award is to facilitate interdisciplinary exchange which may ultimately lead to societal benefit. Each applicant should propose a unique experience outside his/her usual field of study ... and explain why it will enhance the applicant's future career or societal contribution".

Providing students with these types of opportunities is truly important to enriching the overall experience of students. I believe that university is a place to grow academically and emotionally, whilst discovering a field that is best suited to your own interests. But I also believe that the most important aspect of the university experience is becoming the best person that you can be.

This award is particularly exciting because it encourages people to explore an opportunity in which they are interested, but challenges the beneficiary to think about how the experience sits in context of their wider community and the role that a person plays within it. I truly hope that more opportunities like these become available to students, as I feel that the establishment of this award is truly in line with the overall vision of **Forward with Integrity**, particularly within the areas of improving the undergraduate experience and community engagement. More information on how to get involved is available at <http://sfas.mcmaster.ca/renaissance.htm>. The application deadline is October 15, 2012, so be sure to apply.

The President's Page is sponsored by the McMaster Students Union. It is a space used to communicate with the student body about the projects, goals and agenda of the MSU Board of Directors.



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