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TALK ABOUT IT.

There are more than 28,000 students at McMaster University. Approximately 20% of them are likely to experience some mental health concerns



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Mental health issues have been a rising concern at campuses across the country. Institutions and student unions are implementing various awareness campaigns and training programs designed to turn campuses into safe and stigma free environments. The MSU will be no exception.

While the office of Vice President (Education) historically hasn't been directly involved in the planning of Welcome Week, looking back at my three years of experience as a Rep, coupled with the recommendations from the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance (OUSA) Student Health paper, caused me to push for a direct involvement in the training all of upper year Welcome Week volunteers in regards to mental health awareness.

Welcome Week Reps are experienced student leaders who have exceptional levels of commitment to our campus. However, they do not receive any training in terms of mental health issues. With tremendous support from the Student Wellness Centre, we designed a training module that recognized the first year of university as a particularly vulnerable period of transition for all students. It also highlighted how serious and underestimated the mental health concerns are on campus.

The training conducted by mental health nurse Debra Earl highlighted how in a 2009 campus-wide survey, a majority

of the sampled students cited moderate to high levels of stress and hopelessness on campus, suicidal thoughts and stress accounting for the number one barrier to academic success at McMaster. Similarly, the OUSA paper identified the strength of social networks and mentor figures as the primary variable and indicator for depression amongst students on campus. Apart from this awareness the Reps were also informed about the services available at the Student Wellness Centre, as well as the various opportunities for students to get involved via MSU services and clubs.

While the training module was very well received, what made this project particularly exciting was the overwhelming success of the "pink elephant in the room" promotional campaign that I designed to accompany the training. You might already have seen over a thousand students on campus wearing these buttons and t-shirts during Welcome Week. The campaign came with a simple message titled "Talk about it", which encouraged students to feel comfortable talking about mental health, as well as a webpage with more information on mental health issues msumcmaster.ca/hope. The first batch of buttons and t-shirts were very quickly claimed by the Reps, with countless others emailing me and approaching me to request more.

With that success it seems that both the MSU and Student Wellness Centre will be adopting the "pink elephant in the room" branding scheme for the coming year. The Student Wellness Centre will be running a mental health stigma awareness week in early October. Over the next year, the MSU will continue to work with various partners and stakeholders to create a comprehensive campus-wide mental health strategy, similar to the one published by Queens

University this year. McMaster faces numerous unique challenges when it comes to addressing mental health issues. For example, with its diversity of academic programs, internationalization and burgeoning commuter population, a wide variety of considerations need to be made at the institutional level to accommodate these needs. Further

funding is still necessary to expand the hours and numbers of mental health practitioners on campus. Mental health consideration also needs to be integrated more strongly into academic and Student Code of Conduct policies, as well as increased support services for first year students both in residence and living off campus.



REMINDER OF MSU/MAPS TRANSFER AGREEMENT



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Under the Terms of Agreements signed in 1986 and 2007, the MSU and the McMaster Association of Part-Time Students (MAPS) defined membership jurisdiction based on the number of units in which a student is enrolled during an academic session. However, in a limited number of circumstances, membership transfer is permitted from one organization to the other. Students eligible to apply for membership transfer

have until September 30 to submit their application. Once processed, the transfer is normally permanent for the remainder of a student's undergraduate studies at McMaster University, regardless of the number of courses taken in an academic session.

A student may transfer from MAPS to the MSU if he/she is:

- Registered with the Centre for Student Development (CSD) and, based on written confirmation from CSD, is restricted to less than 18 units in each fall/winter academic session; or
- Registered in a fall/winter academic session in fewer than 18 units to complete his/her degree prior to the next convocation and was a member of the MSU in a previous fall/winter academic session.

These provisions respond to the

desire by students who complete most of their degree on a full-time basis to remain members of the MSU if they enrol in fewer than 18 units in their final academic session. In addition, a student whose disabilities preclude enrolling in 18 or more units in an academic session is eligible to transfer membership to the MSU.

A student may transfer from the MSU to MAPS if he/she is:

- In his/her graduating year, who:
 - (a) in a previous fall/winter academic session was a member of MAPS and
 - (b) will register in more than 17 units to complete his/her degree prior to the next Spring Convocation; or
- A degree student who: (a) in a previous fall/winter academic session was a member of MAPS and (b) is registered in 18-20 units in the fall/

winter academic session.

These provisions respond to the desire of students who have undertaken part of their degree on a part-time basis, to continue as members of MAPS.

A key principle of transferability is that students will pay all fees payable by members of the receiving student government. For a student transferring from MAPS to the MSU, this involves more than \$500 in fees above those paid as a member of MAPS. Students transferring from the MSU to MAPS receive a refund, net of fees payable as a member of MAPS.

Students enrolled in courses delivered by the Centre for Continuing Education are members of MAPS and are not eligible for membership transfer.

For more information, please visit msumcmaster.ca.



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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