



Daniella Mikanovsky

for Vice President (Education)
2020-2021



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Dear Members of the Assembly,

In today's increasingly tumultuous political climate, it is important to be an advocate for what you believe in. My time at McMaster has been one of enormous growth, and through it all I have realized my passion for standing up for equity and improvement. For these reasons, I am running for Vice President (Education).

Fawziyah Isah highlighted in her Vice-President (Education) platform earlier this year that there are inherent challenges with team of students that is completely replaced every year. The Board of Directors (BoD) and most MSU services and clubs experience an overhaul of staffing annually, which can inhibit the ability to sustain long-term projects and sustainable change. The continuity of the Vice-President (Education) is further challenged this year by this current re-staffing process. To maximize the impact of the VP Education, **I am committing to a platform rooted in continuity.** Rather than creating entire new priorities, I am reviewing the previous plans of Fawziyah Isah, Shemar Hackett, as well as the past and current projects of the MSU Presidents Josh Marando and Giancarlo Da-Ré. You will notice that the plans below are largely familiar, with some platform points reiterating plans and ideas brought forward by the people before me. In this uncertain time of a global pandemic and unprecedented transition to online learning, the Vice-President (Education) cannot afford to discard work completed by their predecessors and commit to entirely new projects.

As you will see, I also contribute some unique ideas given my own experiences. However, all my recommendations and priorities within this platform are rooted within the existing priorities of the MSU and VP Education. With this foundation of continuity, I am committed to supporting the MSU succeed in our goals.

Thank you for your consideration, I hope to work with all of you soon.



Daniella Mikanovsky
Arts and Science Level IV

Relevant Experience

McMaster University

Arts and Science fourth-year Thesis (2020-2021)

Investigating Snow Removal of Pedestrian Pathways in Hamilton, supervised by Dr. John Machlachan

CityLAB Semester in Residence (Fall 2019)

Established familiarity with City of Hamilton's municipal structure and function, as well as connected with members of municipal governance

Pursing Minors in Sustainability and Community Engagement

MSU Clubs & Services

Hillel McMaster

Education Chair (Apr 2020 - Present)

Executive Member (2019-2020)

General Member (2017-2019)

The Silhouette News Contributor (2018)

External

NCSY Canada

Part time position: NCSY Junior GO Program Coordinator (Apr 2020 - Present)

Full Time position: Torah High Recruitment Associate (May - Aug 2019)

Legislative Page for the Legislative Assembly of Ontario (2013)

University Priorities

Prioritizing Continuity

I am committed to supporting the President and previous Vice-President (Education) in their goals for:

- Advocating for Anti-Colonial syllabus and course material development
- Advocating to and educating Faculty offices regarding Open Education Resource funding
- Advocating for a deferred exam policy which allows students deferring exams to write their exam within the same exam period

Academic Accessibility

The goals of previous VP Education and MSU Presidents all prioritized academic accessibility. Advocacy for Echo360 recently saw a significant triumph during the COVID-19 transition to online learning. **I am committed to advocating for Echo360 usage beyond pandemic-times to ensure accessible content to all students.** Additionally, while AODA modules are available and are mandatory for all faculty, staff, student-staff, student leaders and volunteers, little information exists regarding compliance with AODA training and accountability to fulfil this requirement. **I will advocate for creating accountability for AODA training for all parties.** Finally, MSU's University Accessibility Policy is due to expire this year, and **I am committed to reviewing and revising this report.** Some updated recommendations include disabled student-led education for faculty to reduce stigma surround accessibility accommodations and improving the SAS Note-taking program to ensure a system of accountability and accuracy.

University Priorities

University Sustainability

Both the VP Education and MSU President have prioritized sustainability projects to work towards a sustainable future. **I will advocate for centralized sustainable policies** to connect the work between facilities, academic programs, and student groups by supporting the president in his goal to create a McMaster Sustainability Office. Furthermore, **I will advocate for reduced energy consumption in buildings which are not-in-use**, adopting an MSU policy recommendation which is especially applicable during COVID-19 and campus closure. As well, **I plan to recommend sustainable improvements to Parking Services**, specifically highlighting the opportunity to create “green” incentives in the form of discounted parking permits for electric vehicles and hybrid vehicles, and expanding the carpool program to include student who park in Lot M. Finally, **I will support the president in his plan to ban single-use plastic bottles** and encourage that this project invite input from disabled folks by engaging the McMaster Accessibility Council and MSU Maccess.

Mental Health Policy

I admire the outgoing VP Education’s work on investigating student experiences and interactions with health services on campus, and hope to continue her work to **conduct in-depth research regarding the experience of racialized and minority student groups with healthcare services on campus**. As a user of mental health services on campus, I strongly believe in **advocating towards proactive mental health care to lessen the need for crisis-response care**. Beyond these existing priorities, I will advocate for the **Student Wellness Center to hire another Indigenous Mental Health Councillor** or convert the current part-time Indigenous mental health councillor to a full-time position in order to meet the unique needs of indigenous students.

University Priorities

Sexual Violence Policy

Following the 2019/2020 review of the Sexual Violence Response Policy (SVRP) conducted by the Equity and Inclusion Office (EIO), the VP Education proposed working with EIO and Residence Life to ensure that staff and volunteers working with students commit to the recommendations of the SVRP. **I will continue working on this collaboration.** However, recent news regarding multiple instances sexual violence within the Department of Psychology, Neuroscience and Behavior suggest the **urgent need to expand implementation and advocacy of the SVRP within faculty organizations.** I propose the EIO partner with each faculty on campus to create an equity council, similar to the existing system of Workplace Health & Safety council with representatives in each faculty. Such a council would promote equity concerns regarding sexual violence prevention, as well as other equity concerns such as workplace accessibility and adopting anti-oppressive practices.

Security Services and Student Safety

As recent tragic events impacting the Black community ignited calls for a variety of anti-Racist policies around the world, we are reminded of the urgent need to address campus policing practices at McMaster. Currently, there is no clear reporting regarding experiences of BIPOC, LGBTQ+ and Disabled students and their interactions with Campus Security Services. I plan to support the outgoing VP Education's goal of **prioritizing student safety through an inquiry of student-security interactions.** Furthermore, I intend to **advocate with the President for the Re-Imagined Campus Safety Plan.**

University Priorities

Food Security

As the Sustain 3S03 Student Project highlighted in Fall 2019, food insecurity continues to be a serious concern for many students. I support the previous VP Education's plan to **prioritize an action plan on food insecurity and work with Sustain 3S03 students to pilot food security initiatives**. However, given the COVID-19 pandemic, there are new unique concerns with food insecurity. It is significant that the Food Collective Center (FCC) ceased food distribution programs and that no MSU activities will be taking place in person in the Fall. Compounded with financial insecurity due to COVID-19, students may be facing food insecurity without the usual supports available. In order to address these urgent concerns, I will **advocate the dissemination of McMaster's Emergency Financial Support Program to previous FCC users** and advertising it more widely as a method for students to deal with food insecurity during COVID-19.

Municipal Priorities

Anti-racism and anti-discrimination

As per the goals of the outgoing VP Education, **I am committed to working alongside the City of Hamilton and the Hamilton Center for Civic Inclusion to increasing anti-racism advocacy and work across the city.** This priority is essential given the fact that Hamilton has the highest hate crime rate in Canada. As well, I will work to **increase student involvement in the Hamilton Anti-Racism Resource Center.** This program is in the second year of its development, and students should play a role in ensuring a safe Hamilton for racialized members of our community.

Transit

COVID-19 and the shift to online learning lead to the MSU President's successful negotiation of a temporary suspension of the HSR Transit Pass. While this agreement may limit the MSU's negotiating powers with the HSR planning and budget given the decrease in investment, I will continue to **prioritize advocating for consistent transportation and increased service during peak times**, as well as advocate for **eliminating transit area-rating in Hamilton** to increase transit equity. During the current COVID-19 situation, I will **advocate for reduced fare options for students living in Hamilton**, especially considering that some Undergraduate Students continue to have required in-person courses and placements (for example, upper year nursing students with clinical placements across the city). Finally, last year the Ontario Government unfortunately cancelled the Light Rail Transit (LRT) project in Hamilton. Instead, the province promised \$1 billion to be put towards a transit project of the city's choice. **I will monitor the decision making process in this regard, to advocate for transit projects that benefit students in Hamilton.**

Municipal Priorities

Safety and Accessibility

I am very pleased that snow removal policies have been a consistent concern to the MSU. This issue is the topic of my fourth-year thesis with Dr. John Machlachan. Snow removal in the City of Hamilton is currently the responsibility of individual property owners and violations are poorly enforced, resulting in unsafe, icy conditions for students walking to campus. This safety concern also creates a significant accessibility barrier, as uncleared sidewalks can be impassable to users of mobility aids. **I am committed to advocating the city to adopt a city-wide snow removal service**, as well as **advocating for research initiatives investigating impact of current snow removal practices**. As well, I recognize the previous work of the AVP Municipal Affairs with the lighting walk-through project and will support this by **advocating the city to provide increased funding for lighting in Ward 1**.

Student Housing & Landlord Accountability

Student safety in housing continues to be a concern to many students living in off-campus rental units. The AVP Municipal Affairs has been working with the McMaster Off-Campus Housing Site development to incorporate a Landlord Rating System, which will allow students to report experiences with landlords. This project is ongoing, and I am committed to **working alongside Housing and Conference Services to create the Landlord Rating System tool**. Furthermore, with first-year students expected to be moving into residence at the same time as students usually seek out rental units for the future year, I am committed to **engaging first year students in educational advocacy regarding the housing search process**, as well as tenant rights and landlord responsibilities.

Municipal Priorities

Environmental Sustainability

The City of Hamilton declared a Climate Change Emergency in 2019. Active transportation is an essential component of developing sustainable cities which mitigate the impacts of climate change. In June 2020, Hamilton's Social Bike Share SoBi was terminated by Uber. SoBi is temporarily being funded by the non-profit Hamilton Bike Share Inc, and the future of the program in Hamilton will be reassessed in February 2021. Accessible cycling infrastructure, such as in the form of a bike share, are important aspects of active transportation. As such, **I will advocate for the City of Hamilton to continue the SoBi program, as well as advocate SoBi membership to McMaster Students.** During COVID-19, social distancing is difficult to maintain on public transportation, highlighting the importance of travel alternatives such as cycling. Furthermore, I will **advocate for improved cycling infrastructure in the travel routes around campus to encourage cycling to and from the university.**

Provincial Priorities

Tuition and financial aid

The Provincial Government, elected in 2018, enacted several changes to tuition costs and financial aid. While reducing tuition by 10% and creating a tuition freeze for the 2020/21 school year help reduce some of the financial strain of increasing tuition rates, these policies were accompanied by a decrease in OSAP funding availability. I **will advocate for an extension of the tuition freeze**. As well, I will advocate that **OSAP widen eligibility criteria and prioritize the needs of students**. Finally, I will advocate for a **provincially mandated cap on International Student tuition fees**, which are expected to increase significantly in the upcoming years. Assisting International students should be a priority for the province, as this contributes to retention of skilled, educated graduates in Canada.

Student Choice Initiative

In early 2019, the Province of Ontario introduced the Student Choice Initiative (SCI), which forced college and university student unions to allow students to opt-out of certain fees which were identified as 'non-essential'. In December 2019, the SCI was determined to be unlawful by the Divisional Court of Ontario. The Province appealed this court ruling, and the applicability of the SCI is currently uncertain. I **am committed to advocating the Provincial Government to repeal the Student Choice Initiative**.

Provincial Priorities

Racial, Religious and Cultural Equity

IThe outgoing VP Education, as a member of the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance (OUSA), pitched a new Racial, Religious and Cultural Equity Policy, which would enable provincial-level research and advocacy regarding racial, religious and cultural equity concerns. The VP Education prioritized participating in the research and writing of this policy. While I lack the background in OUSA that the previous VP Education had, **I am committed to advocating for her policy and contributing to research and writing, where possible.**

Mental Health Support for Universities

The Province has a responsibility to allocate funding towards mental health support at the Universities. Many universities across the campus experience deficits in funding available for mental health care, resulting in long wait times and poor service. **I will advocate for the province to provide mental-health specific funding to Universities,** enabling the improvement of mental health care on campuses across the province.

Federal Priorities

Prioritizing Students during COVID-19:

Advocating for CESB Extension, where possible, or the creation of an alternative aid grant

Post-secondary affordability:

Advocating for increased support from the Federal Government to Post-Secondary affordability, including conversion of tuition tax credits to a federal study grant

Indigenous Student Support:

Indigenous student support: Advocate for improved and accessible funding for all Indigenous students.

International Student Support:

Advocate for improvements to work-study permits for International students.

MSU Advocacy

Communication

Streamline communication and connections between MSU Advocacy and Diversity Services, SHEC, WGEN, Maccess and PCC

Continuity

Prioritize continuity for long-term goals of MSU Advocacy by organizing research, data and reports for ease of access of the future MSU Advocacy team.

Solidifying Partnerships

Work with outgoing VP Education to establish needs for solidifying partnerships to improve McMaster's advocacy efforts beyond OUSA and UCRU.

Board Priorities

Sustainability

I intend to Support the Board of Directors in Sustainability and Divestment Action Plan for the MSU and McMaster to divest from fossil fuels.

Solidifying Partnerships

I plan to contribute to the Board of Director's goal of ensuring MSU internally achieves the goals and ideals it externally promotes by developing a long-term vision for MSU Advocacy, developing policy briefs for policy reports, and increasing accessibility and readability of MSU policy documents.





**THANK
YOU**