

Sakhshi Khanduja
for Vice President Administration
Platform 2020-2021

About Me

Dear SRA Members,

I would like to begin by introducing myself. My name is Sakhshi Khanduja, I am a recent graduate from the Honours Social Psychology Program.

Here are some facts about me:

- I like certain shades of pink.
- I like dance and the dramatic arts.
- I enjoy being a social butterfly.
- I love event planning and managing projects.
- My favourite part about my program was learning how social interactions and surroundings can impact us in so many different ways.
- I enjoy working with others to make positive impacts through progressive change.
- And lastly, I have a hard time thinking of cool facts about me.

Throughout my undergraduate career I made it my goal to be part of as many leadership roles as I was able to, in order to learn and grow as an individual alongside getting my education. I spent time attending MSU and society events, connecting with people both in my program and outside of it, and putting myself out there even when I felt nervous or awkward. In my third year of undergrad is when I really found myself applying for positions that would challenge me in positive ways. In my third year I became VP Academic of my program's society, becoming President the very next year. I also became a representative of the MSU Maroons team, and a Co-Chair for the Model United Nations ECOFIN Committee. Each of these unique experiences and my ability to put myself out there brought me to where I am and who I am today – and will help me flourish in the position of VP Administration for the McMaster Students Union.

My goal in this role is to help shape McMaster and the MSU into an equitable and comfortable space where every student is able to become the best versions of themselves using the vast amount of resources provided by the MSU.

I'd like to see each, and every student achieve their goals and be a part of providing the tools for them to be able to do so, together.

Yours truly,



Sakhshi Khanduja

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Qualifications

listed below are some of the positions I've held that make me the best fit for this position

Education

MCMASTER UNIVERSITY, HAMILTON ON

Honours Bachelor of Arts in Social Psychology

May 2017 – April 2020

- Final year capstone project in relation to identity management techniques amongst university students

Academic Memberships

WELCOME WEEK REPRESENTATIVE/ORIENTATION WEEK LEADER

STUDENT UNION REPRESENTATIVE TEAM DURING SCHOOL YEAR

May 2018 – April 2020

MSU Maroons

- Bridge between MSU and student body
- Assist in running MSU related events
- Helped set up and take down for events during welcome week and during the year
- Fostered a connection between student body (especially first years) and MSU/school events

EXECUTIVE MEMBER

President - Social Psychology Society

May 2019 – April 2020

- Plan and facilitate Social Psychology related events for Social Science students
- Oversee other members and roles of Social Psychology Executives to ensure tasks are being completed and done on time
- Assist Program Administrator with events

VP Academic - Social Psychology Society

April 2018 – April 2019

- Focus around planning academic related events for the society
- Communicating with students about the academics of the Honours Social Psychology program

Second Year Representative - Social Psychology Society

September 2017 – April 2018

- Contributed in planning social psychology events and promoting them to the second-year student body

VP EXTERNAL/COMMUNICATIONS

Bollywood at Mac

May 2019 – April 2020

- Reach out to sponsors
- Reach out to other clubs for collaborations
- Respond to emails
- Assist in smooth-running of the team

CO-CHAIR

August 2018 – February 2019

McMaster Model United Nations MACMUN 2019 Co-Chair (ECOFIN Committee)

- Helped write background guide
- Helped with country assignments
- Marked position papers
- Running committee sessions

DELEGATE

February 2018

MACMUN 2018 Delegate (Representative of United Arab Emirates)

- Received an Honourable Mention Award
- Debated and came up with resolutions for committee topics and crisis scenarios

DANCE TEAMS

Bollywood at Mac – McMaster University

February 2019 - Present

- Perform as part of core dance team
- Attend dance practices twice a week
- Perform for University and affiliated events

Work Experience

UNIVERSITY TEACHING ASSISTANT (TA)

September 2019 – April 2020

McMaster University Social Sciences Department

- First year Introduction to Social Psychology Course, September 2019 - Present
 - Assist in student learning through teaching tutorials
 - Mark student assignments
 - Hold office hours
- Third year Social Psychology Mental Health Course, January 2019 - Present
 - Mark student assignments, tests, and exams
 - Hold office hours by appointment

CAMP DIRECTOR

May 2019 – July 2019

Gill Summer Camp (Brampton)

- Spent May and June planning and July executing events, activities, and field trips for kids
- Organized camp lists, completed administrative duties, and helped ensure safety of the kids
- In the month of July helped run camp days smoothly
- Used problem solving and quick-thinking skills throughout each day of camp when needed

CAMP SPECIALIST

July 2018 – August 2018

City of Brampton Employee - Earnscliffe Recreation Centre

- Program planned for each of the camps running
- Provided front line customer service; dealing with program feedback and day-to-day interactions
- Completed administrative duties
- In charge of weekly scheduling

CAMP COUNSELLOR

March 2016 – July 2018

City of Brampton Employee - Earnscliffe Recreation Centre

- During Summer Break, Spring Break, and Winter Break
- Developed and oversaw a variety of activities with kids ages 3-13
- Gained communication, teamwork, and customer service skills through collaborating with parents and coworkers

PROGRAM LEADER

November 2015 – June 2016

City of Brampton Employee - Earnscliffe Recreation Centre After School Program

- Facilitated activities with the kids such as swimming, skill building activities, homework, and skating

Hiring Practices

Achieving Equitable and Standardized Hiring Practices

Currently there is not a standard procedure for hiring amongst all MSU services. Many decisions have been left to the discretion of the Part Time Managers of the services themselves. Although this in some lights may be seen as a good thing, given that a PTM is in charge of the service and know what they may be looking for, this can also create many subconscious and conscious biases not suitable for the hiring environment. Through establishing a more standardized process for candidate hiring, not only will we make this process fairer, but also hopefully cause a ripple effect and see positive changes in diversifying the MSU image and people who generally get such opportunities.

Two ways in which I would approach this subject are starting to restructure hiring teams as a whole as well as create in-depth resources for students that discuss the MSU hiring practices in detail and give students a chance to see practice questions and well-structured ways to answer questions without necessarily needing an “in” to the MSU; I would like to work with the team to create such a document. This however would be a temporary solution, the real way to fix the harm that has been done is to restructure hiring all together. This is something I have chatted with Anika about and I know she has started working on. I hope to carry this forward and create a plan for the years to come which my successor can carry on with to ensure that these equitable hiring processes are achieved.

I understand work has begun on creating a new hiring system, both by Anika and Sarah and I hope to carry forward those plans to ensure positive changes are occurring and more students feel confident and comfortable in applying for positions. The current hiring practices have larger scale implications that we must take a look at. The best way for change is to create a defined hiring position. Have a specific team dedicated to all hiring within the MSU.

Student Involvement

In recent years we have seen a significant decline in student involvement, whether this be filling SRA positions, voter turnout, or overall volunteer/club applications. Becoming involved in leadership positions throughout my undergraduate career is what helped shape my university experience into something truly positive, I'd like to contribute back in order to ensure that all students have an opportunity for the same and are driven to do so.

I think the most efficient way in gaining traction for higher student involvement is to understand why there has become a disconnect to begin with. This means tackling issues with our hiring practices, types of promotions and looking at who they are centered around, seeing overall what the representations within the MSU look like, and having access to more peer support space. For example, a space for BIPOC students, which I will discuss further in the next point. In order to understand the decline and start to raise involvement again it is crucial to understand why people do not feel comfortable in engaging with the MSU.

I want to work on tackling the string of unpopular representation that the MSU is under and start to restructure the MSU in a way that it becomes representative of all students. I want to clean up and address the issues and concerns that are arising and face them head on, which is something I'd like this platform to highlight. I'd also like to work with PTMs to create a monthly basis newsletter in which each club PTM is able to highlight what the club has been up to, events they've had, upcoming events they're having etc. This will first allow for more communication between clubs/services and the general student population, as well as give students a reminder about events that are coming up that they should keep an eye out for. This is even more important now that we are in the times of this pandemic where uncertainty lies ahead.

A very important way to also get more students involved is having complete transparency, clarity, and accessibility of all documents of the MSU and its governing bodies available online.

Safe(r) Spaces

Comfortable and Welcoming Environments for All Students

It is crucial in any community for its members to feel safe and comfortable. Some ways in which I would like to achieve this goal is through the following. First, working with EIO to help create a better and more structured process/policy for informal complaints. I know Anika has been working on defining a policy outlining steps to take when the MSU receives an informal complaint and what that looks like for EIO. I would like to continue this work and also work with EIO to discuss what it looks like for EIO to receive in informal complaint about someone in a student union or SRA position. This will require creating policies that outline the specific steps to take in order to most effectively handle a situation like this.

I'd also like to strengthen the relationship between the EIO and the MSU and having them be a McMaster University service that the students feel they can trust. The hope is for this to be a byproduct of the policies we will be creating together to ensure McMaster be a safe place for all students. Alongside this, I would like to build a relationship in which EIO can further assist with the MSU achieving our goals of having a more equitable and inclusive space, along with more equitable hiring practices as previously discussed.

I would like to assist in creating a centered peer support space on campus for BIPOC students. This will be done by working with diversity services with their undergoing on rebranding to become such a space. I would also like to discuss possibilities of having cultural clubs on campus partner with diversity services to offer a space for students who are looking for a way to feel more at home/comfortable at MAC, this is especially the case for international students.

Going along with efforts on creating a safe(r) space for all students, I would also like to advocate for the university to restart a relationship with SACHA, or starting a relationship with SACHA through the MSU. This will allow for additional support in areas surrounding sexual violence protocol and how to help students that need it.

Supporting PTMs

Supporting Part-Time Managers

Anika spoke a lot in her platform about the relationship to be built between the position of VP Admin and the PTMs. We have seen in past years where this relationship has maybe not been given the full attention it needs, there has been a sense of mistrust created, it is important to better that role. I would like to build an open and honest relationship with each of the PTMs through being available when needed but also having one-on-one meetings (as Anika has already begun). Keeping transparency in this relationship in such a way that students in supervisory positions of PTMs feel supported and prepared to take on the role they are in. Having smoother transition periods and having more time to transition is another way to achieve this goal.

Given the current situation of the COVID 19 pandemic, supporting PTMs with their transition to offering services online is crucial now more than ever. Through assisting with this we will allow students (both incoming and continuing) to feel that even online, McMaster provides a community that is welcoming and allows for loads of student engagement and support even online. To achieve this, PTMs will need information on the best practices and parameters for online peer support which Anika has been dedicating time to researching. Again, I would like to carry forward that sentiment and continue with the work that she has already been doing.

Each of these supports and strengthening the executive teams of these services on individual fronts will create a ripple effect, which will start to create positive change in other aspects as well such as student engagement and creating safe(r) spaces for all students.

Welcome Week

Welcome week as a rep was a huge part of my university career. I love welcome week and I think it is such an important time for incoming students in order to feel welcome. I will do whatever I can to assist Anika in all the work she has put into the ongoing reviews of welcome week and figuring out the best practices for the MSU VP Admin in assisting with all things welcome week related. This includes working alongside the VP Finance to push for a financial review of welcome week and figuring out how money could be utilized in the best way.

MSU and Faculty Relationships

Building Stronger Relationships Between the MSU and Faculties

Through personal experience I have seen the disconnect that lies between MSU and faculties, I would like to work alongside the MSU President to better those ties. Whether this be through the above-mentioned steps of equitable hiring to make sure the MSU has enough representations of not only the BIPOC students but students from all programs and faculties, and/or presidents meeting and newsletters that allow for more effective, transparent relationships between faculties and the MSU and to make sure that trickles down to the society exec, as well as to the student level. Bettering this relationship could also mean for the MSU to help hire faculty planners and then as a result be able to compensate them for the work that they are doing to help McMaster continue to be a welcoming environment.

Thank you(s) and Acknowledgements

I'd like to thank everyone who encouraged me to run for this role and each and every person who provided me with invaluable insight to develop this platform. Lastly I'd like to thank you for taking time to read it over and considering me for the role of VP Administration for the McMaster Student Union.