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| MSU-logo-2001. | REPORT*From the office of the…***Associate Vice- President University Affairs**  |
| TO: | Members of the Student Representative Assembly |
| FROM: | Brittany Williams  |
| SUBJECT: | SRA 20N Report |
| DATE: | February 7, 2021  |

Hello Everyone,

I hope you are all doing well as we approach reading. The first few weeks of the semester seem to have just flown! On the University Affairs front, we have had quite a busy but productive start to the semester. I have outlined the progress on these projects and advocacy priorities below. Please feel free to reach out to me if you need to have anything clarified, have any questions or feedback.

**PROGRESS ON YEAR PLAN**

* **Health and Wellness & Mental Health**

*Mental health and Resilience Course Advocacy* - This year, we have been working on advocating the university to implement a mental health and resilience resource on Avenue. This "course" is a part of my broader goal of advocating for more proactive approaches to addressing some of the mental health challenges faced by McMaster Students. Over the past few months, we have been meeting with various stakeholders such as the Student Wellness Centre, Catharine Munn (Developer of Professor Hippo-on-Campus Mental Health Training Course) and Sean Van Koughnett, Associate Vice- President (Students and Learning) & Dean of students. The idea had received positive feedback thus far. Over the next few weeks, we will be focusing on bringing various stakeholders together to discuss the feasibility and logistics behind the implementation of this idea for the upcoming fall semester. I am currently working with Ryan Tse and Hargun Kaur, our University Affair's Research assistance, on this advocacy priority.

* **Advocate for improvements to Student Accessibility**

In one of my last reports, I highlighted that students raised concerns about their accessibility needs not adequately being met in our current remote learning situation. One key problem that we kept hearing from students was that many of their live lectures did not have captions. In our bi-weekly meetings with Kim Dej, the Associate vice-provost, Ryan and I have been advocating for the implementation of captions for live lectures. I am happy to relay that captions for Zoom lectures is now an available feature for professors to use in their online classes. We will continue advocating to the university on this issue to ensure that this is a feature that professors are aware of and are actively encouraged to utilize for their classes. We will continue our general advocacy on student accessibility concerns as there are still many concerns that have not yet been adequately addressed.

* **International Student Advocacy**

*International Student Task Force –* I have been working closely with Giancarlo to form the International Student Taskforce. The task force aims to highlight international students' current concerns and better our international student advocacy efforts. Additionally, it will serve as a medium for university stakeholders to gather information on how best to support international students, especially during this remote learning period. We are currently recruiting students to sit on the task force and have had quite an impressive number of students signing up to date. Thank you all for your help with promotions. Ana Pereira, Lead coordinator of International Students Services, and I will chair the task force. We aim to begin meetings at the end of February and hold about three to four meetings this semester.

*International Student Survey and Report –* The University Affairs committee and I are currently working on creating an international student survey to be launched at the end of February / beginning of March. We are currently collecting information from various university stakeholders on areas in which they would like international student feedback. We will also be garnering insight and input from the international student task force. We are also looking at the best mediums for distributing the survey to ensure that it reaches our international student population. The survey results and information from the task force will be compiled into a final report that will pinpoint the main areas of concern for international students and allow us to advocate for international students' needs more effectively.

* **University Climate Survey Collaboration**

The University Climate Survey has officially been launched! All McMaster Students received an email last week with information and a link to the survey. Ryan, Giancarlo and I have been working closely with Arig al Shaibah, the associate vice-president of equity and inclusion, on this project. It aims to assess students’ interactions with the various services across campus. The MSU will be aiding in the survey's promotion over the next few weeks to try to ensure that as many students as possible are taking part in this survey. This survey will be instrumental in assisting us in some of our ongoing advocacy efforts surrounding student safety and will help to highlight future advocacy priorities.

***Updated Projects***

**• Student Safety Research & Consultations**

In the fall semester, Ryan, Giancarlo, and I had planned to run a few student safety focus groups on security services during the winter semester. However, we subsequently decided that it would be more useful for us to focus our efforts on promoting the climate survey to ensure that we receive responses from as many students and communities as possible. Instead of focusing on highlighting students' concerns regarding the current security model (something that we will already be asking in the Climate Survey), we instead are looking at solutions. We will focus on research and consultations that explore other existing campus security models and best practices surrounding campus safety. This will better position us to advocate for the *specific* changes we would like to see to our current campus security model.

* **Tuition Letter Writing Campaign**

The tuition letter-writing campaign will now only be a Provincial and Federal Affairs committee project. The letter-writing campaign will now focus solely on external-facing Domestic tuition advocacy. Under University Affairs, we will continue our international student advocacy initiatives but will focus on consultations and meetings with the university.

**CURRENT CHALLENGES**

One of the current challenges I am facing this semester is grappling with how quickly time seems to be flying by. As the year winds down, I am focusing on ensuring that I am able to accomplish my main goals before the end of my term. There is a lot to do but I am quite motivated by the progress that is being made on the various projects and initiatives that I am working on.

**VOLUNTEERS**

I am very grateful to all my UA committee members. They are very excited to work on our various projects and initiatives this semester. I think I said this before but working with the UA committee is one of the most rewarding aspects of this job. Thank you all for your continued contributions!

**SUCCESSES**

I am excited to see that our International Student Task Force sign up form has gotten quite a lot of responses, and I am looking forward to beginning meetings shortly. Also, very happy that the Climate Survey is finally out and that the captions feature is now available for professors to use on all live Zoom lectures.

Best,

Brittany Williams

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