

Transition Report

Vice-President (Education) of the MSU

Corporate Officer of MSU Inc.

*Ryan Tse*

2020–2021

(Submitted May 1, 2021)Vice-President (Education) Transition Report

Written by

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# Foreword

Dear \_\_\_\_\_\_\_,

Congratulations on being elected to the VP (Education) role! It’s a fantastic achievement to have made it to this point.

Ahead of you is a year that will feel both long at times and very short at others. It will not be an easy year but it will be an incredibly enriching experience and a unique opportunity like which you may never have another similar. There will be moments of frustration and confusion and despair, but there will also be moments of great accomplishment, fun, and exciting collaboration.

One piece of advice that has been passed down through the transition reports is to read everything, or at least, as much as you can. This is what the previous report said:

*“Read the Hamilton Spectator, the Academia Top Ten, Alex Usher’s blog, whatever CASA is posting [ Ryan’s note: we are now part of UCRU], every OUSA blog and University Affairs article, anything you see on the Daily News. You don’t have to know everything, but you have to know something about everything. Reading is the first step to that. You will soon come to realize how incredibly busy your day to day can get, so all of this may seem like too much reading. But when you’re on the bus into work, waiting in line to get a coffee or in-between meeting, skim through an article on an interesting topic related to PSE. Trust me, it will be helpful down the road! To add to that, go to random events. Strike up a conversation with random people. Listen to podcasts (let me know if you need some recommendations). They too will teach you things you can’t find in books or articles. You never know when your knowledge will come in handy and being well versed and up to date on a wide variety of topics will only serve to make you a more effective advocate.”*

I’m not sure it’s actually possible to read everything, but Shemar (the 2019-2020 VP) is right in saying that you should be open to reading and learning about anything and everything that might be related to your portfolio. It’s important to prioritize, but it’s also important to be open to learning at all times. Being open to new opportunities (even if you feel like you’re not ready) is a great way to learn and to grow. You have so many opportunities in this role, and you should take some of them.

Some of this document (as you’ve already seen) will contain pieces of guidance from previous transition reports. The role doesn’t change too much in some ways year to year, so it may be helpful to have that advice. It may also be helpful to see how previous VP Eds have approached certain topics. It might also be helpful to see parts of Shemar’s transition report from 2019-2020, since we were in-person that year. **I’ve marked any sections that are copied from previous reports with “ \*\* “ and I’ve italicized them (e.g. “\*\**Education Team: blah blah blah*”).** It might (intentionally) read like a conversation sometimes between me and Shemar, because of how different it was in-person versus completely online. I also disagreed with Shemar on some things or just didn’t get to do some of the things in the same way a VP Ed would have done in a “normal”, in-person year because I was in the role for a limited time (e.g. SRA meetings online vs in-person). Because of these factors that made my year a little different, and because my perspective might not necessarily be “correct” just because I was the mots recent person in the position, it might be helpful to see both my perspective and Shemar’s throughout this report. Nonetheless, not everything from last year’s report is included -- I’ve used my judgement on what to include from previous versions. If there’s anything you’re ever wondering about that isn’t here, it might be worth checking out previous reports (at least Shemar’s).

I’ve also highlighted things throughout the document that would be good to work on through the summer – tasks that you could knock off easily if you start early.

The world is a bit crazy right now, and so this role is as well. I spent my whole eight months in the role (Sep-Apr) online. That impacted my experience—for example, I didn’t get to travel to conferences or run in-person campaigns. However, I also didn’t get the chance to meet as many people at networking events or just by chance. As a result, I didn’t get to know or work closely with everyone that’s in this report. However, I’ve included descriptions of them (marked “ \*\* “ from previous reports in the case that you are able to work with them.

It’s been strange and difficult at times for me to navigate this role completely online. Because of the circumstances, I’ve often felt that I’ve had to define the role in my own way. But I think each person in this role really gets to define their own vision for the role (as long as it’s within the confines of the consitution and the bylaws, of course). In fact, that’s one of the great things about the role. As such, don’t be worried if you feel overwhelmed by the expectations laid out here or the precedent of former VP Educations. You’ll figure it out slowly, and you’ll find your own approach to this role. Be open to new ideas (and new ideas that might actually be old ideas) and be courageous in wrestling with how broad and ambiguous this position can be at times.

If I could offer you one piece of advice, it might be to remember why and for whom you are serving in this role. This idea guided, energized and focused me throughout the difficult times and the good times in the role. In my view, MSU advocacy is that it should be by students and for students. I serve in this role to inform students and lead them using my knowledge and discretion, but also to serve them and –very importantly—to listen to them. When I didn’t know how to approach something, I often found myself asking myself what my guiding purpose was. For me, it was to serve students. And from there, while also making sure to gather information and see what had been done before, I did what I thought would be effective and what would engage students and amplify their voices.

Find your own vision and your own approach to the role. It will help you to lead and to serve students.

Maybe one other piece of advice: ask questions. Nobody will know what you don’t know if you don’t speak up. There’s nothing embarrassing about not knowing everything, and it’s always better to ask than to pretend that you know. There’s so much to be responsible for in this role sometimes, so don’t be afraid to ask for information or ask for help.

You are now one of the four leaders of this organization as a member of the Board of Directors. Take care of it and own your decisions, but please remember to use the team around you – including your Board, John, the other Full-Time Staff, and the Education Team. You’re not in this alone; you don’t have to shoulder everything.

This document will take you through some of the projects I’ve worked on, as well as our predecessors. I’ll be around to help. Good luck!

Yours,

Ryan

# Yearplan

I’ve uploaded my yearplan to the “Transition – READ ME” folder on the VP Ed OneDrive. Please read through and use it as a template when you make your yearplan. It includes a month-to-month outline and a breakdown of all the projects I hoped to work on through the year. My year-end report from SRA 20Q is also there. Refer to that for a look back at everything I did month-by-month and broken down by portfolio.

# MSU – Internal

## Operating Policies and Bylaws

\*\* *While you have a lot of flexibility in your role in terms of the projects that you can complete throughout your term, there are also a lot of rules and by-laws you need to follow. Nobody will remind you to do so, which makes it even more important for you to stay up to date on what they are. Mark things in your calendar or add them to you monthly to do list in order to help you keep on track. I will outline most of the important dates in this report, but you should double check everything in the policies.*

*As a Board of Directors member, it is important you know all the policies and bylaws. But here I will advise the ones you should know intimately and make note of the specific tasks in them. You can find them on* [*https://www.msumcmaster.ca/governance/bylaws-policies*](https://www.msumcmaster.ca/governance/bylaws-policies)*. Sometimes the website not up to date, so make sure you ask Daniella or Victoria to verify if there are any more updates that need to be uploaded to the Governance page.*

* ***Constitution***
* ***Bylaw 1 – Definitions***
* ***Bylaw 3 – Student Representative Assembly***
* ***Bylaw 3/A – Assembly Procedures*** *(Read this, though you already have SRA experience, this will be beneficial)*
* ***Bylaw 3/B – Standing Committees of the SRA*** *(Especially important for you to properly support your AVPs, knowing what they need to do)*
* ***Bylaw 4 – Officers***
* ***Bylaw 6 – Executive Board***
* ***Bylaw 7/B – Academic Affairs Council***
* **Bylaw 8 – Policy Approval Process :** a new bylaw we approved this year, and a pretty important one – it talks about all the different sorts of policies/statements that the different committees and teams of the SRA and MSU (including the Education Team) can bring forward.
* ***Operating Policy – MSU Macademics*** *(VP Ed previously supervised this role – sarah and I had conversation about bringing this role back to the Ed team. Regardless of what you decide, good to know this OP as they ask for your support numerous times throughout the year)* Ryan here: our BoD changed the mandate of Macademics this year to place all the MSU awards underneath it. One thing you should look into is putting the OUSA Teaching Awards back in the Macademics portfolio so there is some sort of process in selecting the winner.
* ***Operating Policy – Education & Advocacy Department***
* ***Operating Policy – Delegate Selection***
* ***Operating Policy – Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance (OUSA)***
* ***Operating Policy – Canadian Alliance of Student Associations*** *(this has been rescinded, but still good to know. Once UCRU passes the Terms of Reference for formal membership, you will need to create and approve an operating policy for it. This will serve as a good template.)* Ryan’s note: we approved UCRU’s bylaws on Apr 25th, but we will need to formally join UCRU. Ask Victoria for a copy of this old OP to work off of in creating a new UCRU policy.
* ***Operating Policy – MSU Sustainability Education Committee***
* ***Operating Policy – Role of the MSU in Federal, Provincial, and Municipal Elections***
* ***Operating Policy – Valedictorian Selection***
* ***Operating Policy – Employment***
* ***Operating Policy – Employment Wages*** *(and* ***Appendix A****)*

Ryan here. Please read the bylaws and OPs!! You should know especially well the ones I’ve highlihgted.

## *\*\* The Role of VP Education*

*The VP Education role was established in 1999, with Basil Alexander being the first person in the role in 1999-2000. The role has shifted over the past ten years, with many changing responsibilities while many staying the same. When you go through old reports, you will notice that we are still focusing on a lot of the same issues – teaching evaluations, tuition, bursaries, challenges with the registration system, etc. It is good to note this and go back and look through old documents to have an understanding of the historical context and how to improve your advocacy. You will notice the role has become more externally facing, moving away from a focus on students’ academic concerns on campus. This is likely due to a number of factors including the growth of the university making it harder to have a pulse on issues, faculty societies and SRA members taking on more of the academic advocacy, and the president having a closer relationship with university stakeholders while also taking on more advocacy roles. As well, a number of academic aspects of the VP Education role have been moved into the service Macademics, which was subsequently moved from reporting to the VP Education to the VP Admin. It also depends on the priorities of the VP Education and arising issues. Thankfully, you were previously in the AVP University Affairs role so this is a year in which our university advocacy can be a bit stronger. Throughout my term, I was more focused on municipal and provincial advocacy over the university affairs portfolio. I highlight this to make sense of the title “VP Education” and also to remind you to not completely lose sight of the internal and more specific academic concerns of students. Certainly, with the AVP University Affairs and the President you never will fully but ensure that you are looped into these conversations even when you are busy running around City Hall, Queen’s Park, and Parliament Hill.*

## \*\* Board of Directors

*You will work closely with your Board of Directors (BoD or Board) throughout the year. Once a week, you will meet to have Board meetings, along with John McGowan (the General Manager) and the administrative assistant (Daniela). These meetings are a good opportunity to formally approve and discuss anything related to long-term objectives at the full-time staff level of the organization. We discussed a lot of the day-to-day operations at these meetings or any major issues we were facing. This is also a good place to make sure you and the Board are aware of any projects or changes you hope to present to Executive Board or to the SRA so that you are all on the same page. It was also useful to hear feedback from the Board and John before starting with projects or advocacy initiatives that I was working on. It also gave an opportunity for the board to state if they would like to be involved in the projects in some way. On the agenda there is time allocated to support circle – this is where any member of the board can highlight support that they may need that week, whether it be professional or personal. I hope you take advantage of this space as it will be really beneficial to how you navigate the work environment. Even if you want to rant about a frustrating meeting, use this time to do so as we are constantly hopping from meeting to meeting and rarely get asked if we need support in any way.*

It’s also nice to take some time to chat and catch up at the beginning of the meeting. You work closest with this group on many initiatives, and it’s good to check in with them and see how they’re doing.

I didn’t have the experience below of not feeling like Board members valued my work, but it is true that sometimes Board members may not really know what you’re up to because your role is externally facing in many aspects.

I’ve included this section anyway in case it’s helpfuL:

\*\* *Board meetings are important for you to keep others updated on your work and any work OUSA is doing. Your role is very externally facing and you do not collaborate as much with the board as the other three do. It can be lonely at times. Also, it can be frustrating when others do not recognize the hard work or value you, UCRU or OUSA is doing because they do not have the whole picture like you do. It is important that you take the time and explain things to them and take the time to answer questions that they have. This will help them best support you in your role and for them to be more connected to you work.*

*\*\* Also use board meetings as a space to raise any contentious issues that may be coming to EB or the SRA for approval. This will ensure that the board is on the same page prior to going to our governance bodies. It also gives you the opportunity to field questions and get a vibe on how EB/SRA is going to react to a change. For example, I had lots of conversations with my board about our OUSA membership and how people would feel if we were to leave prior to bringing it to the SRA. I found this to be helpful in shaping the narrative when I brought it to the SRA*.

I decided not to pursue leaving OUSA this year, but I agree anyway that the Board meeting can be a very valuable space to discuss ideas that might be controversial or might invite questions from EB/SRA.

Passing on the below section because apparently it’s been passed on for many years. However, while Board members didn’t know what I was up to, they were never frustrated with me or felt I wasn’t working hard. However, I didn’t get to go to any in-person conferences this year, unfortunately, so maybe this is more relevant in a “normal” year.

\*\*

*On that note, this has been passed down in every VP Education Transition Report for 12 years or so, so I feel the need to include it to outline the importance of talking to your Board about your job:*

***What you see:*** *“Oh man, I’m so excited! I have this conference in Ottawa to attend where we’ll be meeting with MPs and actually influencing change. How often do we get an opportunity to interact with the people that can take our policy and put it into action? This is going to be awesome.” [End of the week hits] “Man, that week was awesome. Got to meet with the Prime Minister’s Office, and the Finance Minister on issues related to the Canada Student Loans Program! It’s Sunday night, and I’m exhausted – I think I’ll take tomorrow off, maybe even two days just to recuperate from the long week I’ve had.”*

***What other people see:*** *“Oh man, Shemar [*or Ryan*] used to be so diligent, but now all he does is go on trips. He really is the VP Travel and Tourism. He’s never in the office, and whenever his conferences are over, he takes days off. What is this? I heard all he does is meet with some people and drink the rest of the time. How come he can’t be like the rest of the board? Why did we even elect him?”*

*While dramatized, this is the perception of the VP Ed at times, since even your own Board members can sometimes admit to you that they don’t particular have much of an understanding of what you did in a given week. It is important to explain it not only to your board, but even in casual conversations with staff or at full-time staff meetings so they understand what you are doing and that you are advocating for them. Full-time staff meetings especially! A change this year is having a few departments report at each FT staff meeting, similar to EB* [note that the 2020-2021 Board didn’t do this, but it actually seems like a pretty good idea].

 *The board rotates through these informal reports and it’s important to provide staff with an update on what is happening from an advocacy perspective. Many of them wont directly ask you questions, but anytime I initiated a conversation about advocacy staff had plenty of opinions (many of which were helpful). They may not feel comfortable speaking to you about advocacy as you are the board member that is least in office, so ty to do engagement when you can to get insight into their opinion on where our advocacy is currently at.*

*Our board was very good at meeting weekly, which I strongly encourage your board do as well. Only cancel if more than two of you can’t make it, and don’t let that be a common occurrence. Call in if you need to. Don’t schedule meetings over your Board meetings, and make sure the rest don’t either.*

^This is good advice: don’t cancel Board meetings. It’s a pretty important time to discuss any organizational priorities or anything that might be messy or controversial (HR matters, external statements, etc.) It’s also especially important to have them if you’re working remotely because you may not have much time otherwise to catch up with other Board members or even see what they’re doing, since you can’t just bump into them.

*\*\* Personally, I found two-hour Board Meetings excessive and often unproductive at the start of the year as we would often just talk and not know when to limit conversation (due to the fact that none of us knew who was truly leading the meeting). After we got into the swing of things, board meetings would typically only last an hour – the only time they would go longer than this is when there were numerous decision items on the agenda (which does happen somewhat frequently). In addition, I advise that you limit the amount of time you spend on certain parts of the agenda – for instance, updates. Our board had “Rose and Throne” on the agenda where we would say one good/bad thing that happened during the week. Keeping things concise helps prevent later items from receiving less attention or time.*

^Agree with this. It’s easy to stretch Board Meeting out and then have to rush through items at the end. Giancarlo was pretty good this year in trying to limit agenda items to important/high-level and/or time-sensitive matters. Try to limit smaller pieces or things that don’t need discussion/decisions to the info and questions section of the agenda. Our Board also instituted “action items” where Daniela would record them, remind Board members to do them when she circulated the minutes, and bring them up again at the next meeting for a quick update.

Speak up during Board meeting! You can sometimes feel detached from organizational or internal matters because you spend a lot of time on external issues/lobbying, but you are a corporate officer and one of only four members of the Board that are responsible for running the organization. Share your perspective and bring your own experiences and knowledge to the discussion. Make sure you know what’s going on as well – ask questions if you don’t.

There was a note about a succession policy for John in the previous transition report. You should look into this.

One last note on the Board is to carve out time to focus on Board priorities (e.g. the Hub, staffing matters, Compass, campus media). It’s easy for the Board to get lost in their day-to-day portfolio work and neglect the larger org stuff until it’s too late, but in reality the Board stuff is often more impactful and more important. Make sure to prioritize the Board/”corporate officer” stuff that needs to get done. Our Board was fairly good at creating additional meetings for the Board + John + Daniela outside of our regular work meetings to discuss these sort of high-level priorities. My week-to-week work would actually be maybe 30-40% Board/organizational priorities, with the rest being VP Ed – specific stuff. That seemed to make sense to me, but find a good balance for yourself.

## Executive Board

*\*\*The Executive Board consists of the Board and five elected SRA members, as well as John McGowan, Michael Wooder (Director, Communications & Marketing), the AVP Services, and Victoria Scott (Administrative Services Coordinator) (see operating policy for full details). In the summer, EB meets bi-weekly, and in the year it meets weekly*.

In this role, it is important to put on both your “corporate officer” and your VP Education hats. Bring in your knowledge and experience as the VP, but also make sure you’re bring your insight as a leader of the organization as a whole. \*\* *Make sure to read through all service reports and documentation before the meeting, and do your best to ask questions and think critically about the MSU services while you’re there.*

*While you do not always engage with services, make an effort to. I worked this year with Food Collective Centre and Macademics. Try to drop by services once in a while, ask PTMs how they are doing in the committee room, and offer to help them out if need any advice. It will help you ask more meaningful questions on Executive Board, but will also help you offer support to the employees of the organization and can often time enhance your advocacy as well.*

*As well, more and more of our services are starting to do advocacy, and EB is a great place to ask PTMs questions and ensure all our advocacy is aligning. Remember – even they have to follow our policy statements, PTMs can’t make up their own advocacy stances. It’s also important for you to know which stakeholders they might be meeting with so that you are not taken off guard. Our university and external stakeholders see the MSU as one entity, so make sure you’re up to date on everyone’s advocacy.*

*I would also caution our services from making too many statements. This will be challenging in the climate we are in and it will be difficult to say no if it is something you agree with. We have implanted the social media guidelines/policy, so hopefully that will mitigate too many issues from arising throughout the year. However, I worry that our spaces will become inaccessible to those who are apolitical or have different views. You have to find a balance between making statements about issues that impact students and ensuring we are representing the interests of all individuals.*

^^I’ll provide some of my perspective on this to add to Shemar’s.

Please spend some time considering whether/how/in what capacities should PTMs and Services make advocacy statements. My personal belief is that advocacy should mainly be done through the Education & Advocacy Department to ensure that our advocacy is effective strategically, united, and accountable to students (the VP Education is an elected position). MSU Services are officially affiliated with the MSU, and when they make a statement, students will probably see it as a statement from the MSU. I believe Services should primarily exist to provide services and not to do advocacy, but I understand those two things are intertwined, and advocating for students is part of the mandate in broad terms according to some of the Operating Policies. One possible solution is to have any advocacy that is done to have to go through consultation with the VP Education and the Education Team and be limited mainly to on-campus issues. However, spend some time talking about this with the Board and make sure whatever you decide is reflected in the Operating Policies and communicated to PTMs in their training. Consider also how advocacy statements benefit or harm a Service’s ability to serve students.

*\*\**

*In 2016-2017, Blake Oliver (VP Ed) used EB to create MSU Macademics, the service that encompassed Teaching Awards along with other education-related services that the MSU provides. In this process, she presented to EB on multiple occasions to gain feedback on the direction that she was taking. EB will be the place to transfer Macademics back to the Education & Advocacy Department if that is something you choose to pursue this year.*

I didn’t choose to transfer Macademics back to the Education Department. I think the VP Education is already stretched pretty thin with supervising the AVPs and the RAs to supervise. However, this year, our Board proposed some changes to the Macademics mandate that were ultimately approved by the SRA, including placing all the MSU awards underneath the service. Refer to SRA 20Q minutes and ask the VP Admin) for more info on this.

Feel free to use EB also as a sounding board for student leader feedback. Usually, the SRA members on EB are pretty active and engaged, so it’s good to maintain a good dialogue with them and bounce ideas off them if necessary. Also, provide information at EB meetings to keep people in the loop about advocacy campaigns, surveys, etc.

## Student Representative Assembly

*\*\*The SRA consists of the 4 BoD members, and 31 elected academic division representatives. The SRA is the highest governing body of the organization other than the MSU General Assembly, and so passes resolutions on a variety of topics including Services, Operating Policies, Bylaws, and General Policies.*

*Here is some advice for SRA:*

1. ***Don’t make a big deal about something that doesn’t need to be a big deal*** *– with 34 other SRA members that often all want to have their say on a specific topic, discussions quickly get circular. Try to avoid bringing new ideas to the Assembly without first discussing them at BoD and EB. Don’t use the SRA for long discussions – use it to make decisions, and bring evidence for your ideas if you have them*.

**Sometimes it’s helpful to have a discussion at SRA, e.g. I did this when we were working with the University in March 2021 to plan a return to campus and we needed student feedback on a short timeline. However, I agree it’s not usually the best place to have informal discussion.**

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1. ***Speak when you feel it’s most important -*** *As a BoD member, your voice has a lot of weight. Some members may be intimidated by you. Choose carefully when you want to engage in a debate. Present factual evidence or points that have not been raised yet. Use your argumentation skills to find loopholes in arguments and bring forth the strongest logic you can. You will be more persuasive with fewer words.*
2. ***Talk to your BoD before the meeting*** *if you feel really strongly about any of the agenda items. Personally, I think it looks strange if Board members are debating each other on the floor. You can have those conversations beforehand and reach an understanding. Also let them know how you will be voting so it is not a surprise to them. Note you don’t have to vote as a block – we would if we all agreed, which is often since we talk a lot to one another. However, I also voted differently on things, such as calling the question.*

It’s preferable to vote as a block but I agree you don’t have to always. No matter what, make sure your conscience is clear when you vote (as much as possible) and make sure that you can explain why you voted the way you did.

1. ***Make your reports extremely thorough, and start them a week ahead of time.*** *All BoD members report 4 times, but the VP Education only reports 3 times. Try to make them engaging by adding pictures, and put little shoutouts or easter eggs to see if people actually read them.*

^I kind of agree. I would say to make them thorough but concise. If it’s too long, people (SRA member or any student hypothetically) will just be less willing to read it. Make it so that people will be able to understand the report and take away the most important points easily. Write it clearly and accessibly.

1. ***At the meeting, don’t read out your report****. The standard is to read over the 4-5 most important points, then take questions. Set the expectation that your report should be read before the meeting. I did this for the first few meetings, but as most people don’t read my report, I didn’t feel like rewarding them for not doing their job by going into detail at the meeting when reporting. I started just saying “this is my report, I’m happy to answer any questions”. This would force people to read my report ahead of time as I wouldn’t be reading it on the sport (not many read it beforehand but saved me time during meetings by not fully reporting.*

^Again, I think this is up to you. I would briefly summarize my report, and try to strike a balance between expecting them to read it and realizing that it might be helpful for me to touch on a few things for anyone listening that hadn’t read it.

1. ***You need to report to the SRA every time you go to a conference.***This can be tedious, but the reports don’t have to be long (and probably shouldn’t be so that people read them). Just use reports from previous years as templates.
2. ***Don’t take it personally if someone gives you a hard time on Assembly*** *– always answer with professionalism and take the high road.*

Always be respectful of SRA members—however, make sure that other people are being respectful and use your influence if necessary to make sure that people don’t feel silenced or demeaned.

1. ***Don’t let “Board” vs. “SRA” become a thing*** *- be approachable, humble, and willing to take criticism from them in both informal and formal settings. Involve them in decisions you are making, ask them for feedback [...]The SRA sometimes sees the board not as SRA members, but as Board members sitting on the SRA (which in reality is the case).*

Very much agree with this point. Remember that Board members each only have one vote, just like any SRA member. The SRA represents the student voice, just like the Board, so listen to them. Just try to be approachable and get to know SRA members. Maybe check in with them outside of the meetings when you can to see if there’s anything on their minds and if they have any thoughts that would be helpful to your portfolio or to the organization more generally.

1. ***Ask others questions*** *– if SRA members are doing advocacy, see how you can support them and how meetings they have go. I would try my best to engage with SRA members when they said they wanted to work on OER’s or municipal advocacy and connect with them outside of meetings. Ask them how they are progressing on their year plan. If you want to restructure committees, it will also be good to have a dialogue at the SRA for their feedback.*

## Education and Advocacy Department

Made up of the following : 3 AVPs ( University Affairs, Municipal Affairs, Provincial and Federal Affairs), 3 Advocacy and Policy Research Assistants, 1 Project and Campaign Coordinator, and 1 Sustainability Education Committee Chair.

*The Education Department should ideally meet weekly for 1.5-2 hours – sometimes that will not be possible due their schedules and yours. You know how these meetings went, but all the (rough) minutes are in the Education Department folder. I’d start by asking everyone for updates on the projects they were doing. We would discuss our ongoing policies, as well as any other big projects. Often, a good chunk of the meeting would go to this. The Education Department is your biggest support and can be your closest friends in this job. You also supervise all of them. Balance your friendship with holding them accountable.*

*The Education Department structure was overhauled in 2016-2017 (Blake wrote a 35 page report on it, I strongly suggest you read it. There are copies in her folder on the server. If you decide to make changes, it’s important to know the context for previous changes so you don’t reinvent the wheel).*

I made the Board meetings one hour this year because of how exhausting it was for people to be online. 2 hours is just a long time to be in an online meeting (we even cut the Board meetings to 1.5 hours in second semester). Please read Blake’s report!!! ^^ It will be very helpful in understanding the different portfolios and the context of each role.

*One thing I tried to do more was involve the Education Department in decision making and make them feel a part of something larger. At our meetings I tried to mention OUSA projects and organizational issues currently occurring. I wanted to provide an avenue for the group to voice concerns they may have and provide feedback, not only on advocacy but on the MSU as a whole. Hold a training at the end of summer or beginning of the year.*

It’s a good idea to keep the Ed Department involved in what you’re doing. They can sometimes provide pretty valuable insight on something you’re working on. Also try to provide opportunities for them to work on things beyond their portfolio if they’re interested. For example, two RAs this past year ended up being policy authors for UCRU.

Try to organize socials and fun events when you can. Make it fun to be part of the team!

Here are some other notes on the Education Team that have come up through the year. Take them as suggestions from my experience and conversations with the Ed Team this year:

* Be approachable and ask how your team members are doing
* Be understanding – your team is made up of full-time students
* Make deadlines clear and encourage your team members to communicate as early as possible if they can’t make a certain deadline – over-communication is better than under-communication!
* Set up regular check-ins with your team members. You have to make time to connect with your team, especially online. I had weekly 45 min check-ins with AVPs, and bi-weekly 30-min combined check-ins with the RAs and the Project and Campaign Coordinators
* Consider regular check-ins (maybe bi-weekly) with just you and the three AVPs, because you will be working together the most closely
* Prepare for the weekly Education Team meeting – prepare agendas (see my OneDrive folders for examples), include any discussion items for the group, and take minutes
* Meeting minutes: I rotated minute-taking responsibilities between the Education Team members. I received feedback halfway through the year that it would be helpful for me to send out the minutes after the meeting. That’s a good idea!
* Consider providing opportunities/projects for the whole Ed Team to work on. This was something that a few members provided as feedback and something we didn’t really get to do this year, but it’s great when team members can work together and combine their skills and portfolios.
* This year, I tried holding mid-year check-ins and end-of-year check-in/reflections. These were 30-60 min 1-on-1 check-ins with all team members I booked the first week of January and the second/third week of April to see how they were doing, what I was doing well, what I could improve in, and how they felt they were doing well, how they could improve, and how we could work better as the Education Team. This feedback was invaluable, and it really helped me stop and pause to really mark out some dedicated time to check in with team members and see how they were doing.
* This year, I invited the sustainability committee chair to join the Education Team weekly meetings. It might be a bit tricky because they may not have as many responsibilities or as much commitment/accountability because they are volunteers and not paid (which is understandable). I just felt the work the committee was doing intersected well with the other portfolios so it would be helpful to have a representative from the committee to speak to the Education Team committee.
* Project and campaign coordinator: more on this position later. One idea I implemented that I thought really helped this position work with the team was having them create a monthly/weekly calendar of campaigns and social media posts and going over that schedule at each Education Team meeting to allow the team to see what everyone else was working on and coordinate campaigns.
* Invite feedback from your team periodically on what they like and don’t like about the meetings and be flexible with adjusting it to make it more effective! Online meetings can be tiring – do you best to make them enjoyable

### Associate Vice Presidents

#### Hiring

*\*\*You or any other board member can do this but since we have the most AVPs, it is important you make sure this process is going as smoothly as possible. Below I will outline the timeline of hiring AVPs in April, alongside your successor. If you would like to modify this process, feel free to choose dates that work best for you. To ease the stress of my successor I hired your AVPs in March, in which you can go back in the calendar to February/March to see when I opened, closed and conducted hiring. I found this to be very beneficial and suggest you do this again. Find a way to overhaul the process so that the new standard is hiring before incoming gets elected. Everybody has a different opinion on this point though, as some feel it is important to have the incoming VP on the hiring board. If you choose to hire in April like it normally occurs, here is the process:*

* *In early March, ask the Communications Officer to update the hiring graphic, or create a new one prior to this if you want. Ask Maddison (Operations Coordinator) to post the jobs. Set a calendar reminder for this now.*
* *Have the job posting open for 2-3 weeks, and closing the day of, or shortly after the VP election day.*
* *Submit the motion to have the SRA members appointed to AVP hiring boards (as per Bylaw 3/B) for the same meeting that the VPs are elected. If this does not happen it significantly delays everything, so make sure it happens at this meeting.*
* *Once your successor is elected and SRA members are appointed, review the applications with them, the outgoing AVP, and Wooder. Have Maddison send out interview offers for the following week. Remember the voting members are the SRA member, incoming VP, and outgoing AVP. While you won’t vote, make sure that you are supporting the incoming VP through this process. Provide perspective from the previous year but ultimately the incoming VP’s opinion is the most important to consider.*
* *In the meantime, review the interview assignment and questions – there are questions that are topical based on that year, so make sure you update those based on your successor’s priorities.*
* *When selecting AVPs, keep in mind the VPs strengths and weaknesses, and balancing those.*

I ended up interviewing AVP candidates the last week of the job, which was pretty stressful. This was partly because we were waiting to see if we had an incoming VP to sit on the hiring board (which we did not obviously) but it’s worth looking at Shemar’s suggestions for next year, especially if we do have a VP elected in early Apr 2022.

You’ll probably work the closest with your AVPs on a day-to-day basis. It’s really important to cultivate a good, open relationship with your AVPs. Care for them as people and students and make sure to support them. Be clear in how you want to communicate with them: do you want regular check-ins? How often do you want them to email you? When do you want them to email you vs Teams message you? What needs to be approved by you and what can they do on their own? All the expectations for these sorts of supervisor-supervisee relationship dynamics should be clearly laid out.

I cannot stress how important it is to delegate things to your AVPs. Again, please read Blake Oliver’s 35-page report from 2016 to get a wider context and some background on these roles – what I learned from her view (and of course it’s just one view) is that AVPs should be doing a lot of primary research because you won’t have the time to do that stuff. You should be able to rely on your AVPs to provide you with research and recommendations, but of course you are always responsible for setting the direction of projects and speaking out on behalf of MSU Advocacy as the elected leader of advocacy for the MSU. However, while I say that it’s important to delegate, it’s really important to have a good sense of the strengths and weaknesses of your AVPs so you know what to delegate and what to take on on your own. Delegate smartly—but make sure you do. Sometimes, you have to trust your AVPs, and in that process, you’ll see them grow more and you’ll learn more about them and what they can handle in the future. You’ll get a better understanding of them naturally as the year progresses, but take time to periodically reflect on how your AVPs are doing and whether you can/should delegate more or less, and how much oversight they need individually.

Shemar’s words:

\*\**Your AVPs will be your biggest support in all the aspects of your portfolio. Delegating was always a bit of a challenge for me but it is important to do so. It will take a lot of pressure off of you and you will see how your AVP flourish in their roles. Make sure you build strong relationships with them throughout the year.*

Try to empower your AVPs and provide them with opportunities. You might find it easier to do so as the year goes on – for me, in the second half of the year, I began to give AVPs more leadership opportunities now that I had a better understanding of their strengths and weaknesses (e.g. I allowed AVP: PFA to lead OUSA GA training for the Spring). Tell your AVPs to empower their committees in turn and provide opportunities for them.

\*\**Ensure they all make a year plan with both their personal projects and their committee projects. This will help make sure they have clarity in what projects they will be working on. AVPs are also required by Bylaw 3/B to submit a year plan.*

### Associate Vice-President (University Affairs)

The University Affairs portfolio can be very broad, and they will need support in focusing their yearplan on a manageable number of specific projects (the yearplan is especially important for this role for this reason). There’s a lot of different priorities and stakeholders to manage in this portfolio. It can be overwhelming for the AVP and they can be stretched thin if they take on too much. It’s also a complicated portfolio because you’ll often find that you, the AVP: UA, and the President will be involved in certain priorities, sometimes in different aspects and through different contacts. Work with the AVP:UA and the President to split up priorities and strategize how to work on the many different parts of this portfolio.

The UA Standing Committee is also usually the largest committee out of the three Advocacy ones. Support the AVP as needed to manage the group and delegate the projects.

### Associate Vice-President (Municipal Affairs)

Municipal advocacy is great because you get to work with University and external stakeholders, but without some of the gatekeeping and bureaucracy of provincial and federal advocacy.

Municipal advocacy is about research, relationships, and persistence. Make sure your AVP is doing the research and consultations to really understand the issues. However, I’ve also spent the past two years in the AVP and VP roles trying to really build and expand the MSU’s relationships with stakeholders. Maanvi (AVP: MA 2020-2021) also did a great job of this. Over the past two years, we’ve tried to build stronger connections with groups that can be allies for us, like Environment Hamilton, the Hamilton Transit Alliance, the Youth Steering Committee, the Ward 1 Office, and Mohawk Students Association and Redeemer Student Senate. My view is that municipal advocacy is much stronger when we work with partners, and often the things we push for are already being advocate for by local partners who have probably more knowledge and experience than the VP Ed and AVP: MA. Use the access we have in the city to stakeholders and partners to build coalitions in fighting for student priorities.

Municipal advocacy is also about persistence, and strategic persistence in terms of messaging. Keep advancing student concerns and working with local partners. It can be hard to see actual change (esp with the current City Council) in one year, but hopefully we can join others in advocating for some of the changes students and other Hamiltonians want to see.

Expand the portfolio but find a few key things to focus on, especially for the municipal budget submission.

### Associate Vice-President (Provincial & Federal Affairs)

This position can be difficult for the AVP to find their role because there may not be too much day-to-day work sometimes, because of the bureaucracy of PFA work and how you have to schedule meetings with stakeholders. Work with your PFA to see how the MSU can work with and beyond OUSA and UCRU for the year. PFA is a lot of government policy, and I would suggest tasking your AVP to know certain policies really well as various government announcements come up through the year. I envision the AVP PFA being your sort of right-hand man with understanding government policy announcements and different issues. Your AVP may want to run a lot of campaigns; that’s great, but I would just advise you to think strategically before running campaigns. It’s important to think about how effective a campaign will be and how it will fit in with how we advocate through OUSA and UCRU.

This year, the preparation for the June 2022 election and a potential federal election any time will probably take up a lot of time for this role. Refer to previous VP Ed emails and OneDrive documents to plan one/two MacVotes campaigns!

Empower your AVP: PFA. With you and the president both probably being involved in external lobbying, I feel it’s easy for the AVP to feel left out or that they’re not doing much. Where possible, see if they can join you for lobby meetings. Encourage them to be involved in OUSA and UCRU sub-committees and projects.

I would encourage you to sit down the president and the AVP: PFA early in the year to figure out how to divide the PFA advocacy duties. While the President is sometimes involved in UCRU and OUSA, I think it makes sense to involve the AVP: PFA a little more, especially with UCRU taking the first steps after formalization this year, and especially because the strength of the President’s portfolio is their connections with university administrators (in my opinion) –I sometimes feel it best suits their role for advocacy work to be focused on the university. However, it’s really up to you, the President, and the AVP PFA. The President inevitably should be involved in external affairs because they are the spokesperson for the MSU.

I’ll leave this next paragraph from Shemar because it talks about attending conferences in-person:

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*Try and find provincial and federal Professional Development opportunities for your AVP, since it’s the hardest for them to interact with their portfolio. This AVP doesn’t usually get to go to federal or provincial lobby week. As they are a student, taking a full week off from school isn’t ideal. [The AVP: PFA] went to UCRU’s lobby week in Ottawa. The benefit was the MSU had more people on the ground and we were better represented in Ottawa. Since UCRU was so small, it also made it possible for the whole group to schedule more meetings. However, as we grow and try to formalize, we may want to better define who comes to lobby weeks and sits in on calls. I’ll elaborate more in the UCRU section. I advise that [the AVP] doesn’t attend, beyond class conflicts there is also the financial cost that will add up to be a significant amount of money when bringing more people. OUSA’s lobby week only allows one additional delegate (aside from yourself), so that should be [the President].*

### Advocacy & Policy Research Assistants

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*The Advocacy & Policy Research Assistants (RAs) are meant to provide research support to yourself, the standing committee, and the policy team. All their JDs are the same, and the distribution of their work is equivalent. Each spearheads the development of one general policy per term and sits on one standing committee.*

*From my perspective, they have been underutilized for a number of years. First off, most of their time is eaten up by policy. They spend a lot of time editing and writing sections when authors drop off. I think that you will be able to decrease this amount of time by only doing three policies and requiring all the writing to be completed in one term. Hopefully this will free up the RAs times to do other projects that collect primary data or research reports.*

I didn’t really make the change that Shemar suggested here, mainly because I came in quite late in September. This year, most if not all of their time was taken up by policy. I also gave them both terms to write policies.

However, Shemar is write that this role is underutilized. I have a few suggestions:

1. The first is to combine these three part-time roles into one full-time Student Opportunity Position role. We actually used to have a full-time researcher. Go to the “Ed Team Research Assistant Proposal” folder in my OneDrive to see the job proposal I was working on and different resources that I used to make it The pro to this is that it will provide more full-time support for your position. I envision this role being a sort of right-hand person for the VP Ed. The VP Ed lacks full-time support, and to some extent lacks continuity year-to-year in the different projects. There’s little institutional knowledge that is passed down from year to year, and with the two-year options in the SOP positions, this could help with that. However, it would just generally offer more support to the VP Ed’s role in terms of communication and research. Wooder is great in terms of providing communication and GR support, but he’s stretched thin across different departments. Some other student unions (e.g. Western USC, WUSA) have full-time supports dedicated to advocacy. The other beneift to this proposal is that it would provide consistency in support. The quality and commitment of RAs varies across the three RAs we have in the role normally and between years. Some are better than others. If we have a full-time person dedicated to the role, it’s likely they would have better qualifications than our RAs and more likely that they would perform their job well. One other benefit to this proposal is offering more hours of support, i.e. from approx. 24 hours combined between the three RAs currently to one 35-hour full-time employee. This would be a huge help and would mean they could do more than just MSU Advocacy Policies. The downside to this proposed position is the increased cost, which isn’t insignificant. However, I think the increased productivity and support would be worth the upfront cost. If this position were to be implemented, there would also be considerations of office space as well, but you could work that out with the FT staff.

Obviously, it might be difficult to make this change this year. You’d have to work on moving it through Full Time Issues Committee as soon as you get in the role, and even then, they may start in the second half of the summer or in August/September. Maybe it’s better to not make the change and hire 3 RAs earlier rather than push the hiring back and make the change this year. It’s also worth considering that it takes away 3 part time jobs for students. It is nice to have a team of 7 students because you get to work with so many students, but at the same time, 7 students is a lot, and you have to spend time managing them. If this was a full-time position, you probably would have to spend less time managing them (sometimes tracking RAs down) since they would be working full-time, giving you more time to do other things.

1. If you decide not to combine the part-time roles, I would suggest following Shemar’s advice and trying to decrease the amount of time the RAs work on the advocacy policy. Maybe by hiring them earlier (around June) they could get started earlier with planning and consultations. Shemar’s idea to free them up to have more time to support other advocacy work is a good one.
2. You could also consider keeping the three RAs and changing the Education Department Operating Policy to not require the Ed Department to fully revise or develop new Advocacy Policies every year (the minimum is 2 right now and we usually do 3). I suggest this because technically, a lot of our Advo Policies are actually expired according to the OP since they are only valid for 3 years. However, we don’t stop advocating on them. Some of them may even not be that out of date, even if they’re older than 3 years, or maybe just parts of them are outdated. This is where new Bylaw 8 – Policy Approval Process comes in. Bylaw 8 outlines a process of *editing* APs instead of renewing them. Maybe one route to go is to edit the Operating Policy and instruct the RAs not to revise but just to edit sections of policies – or, where revision might be necessary, to work together on revising whole policies. This would decrease the Advo Policy workload of the RAs and free them up to support you and the AVPs more.

More of Shemar’s ideas on RAs below. Again, they didn’t really work with AVPs like this the past year, but it’s an option to ask them to play a bigger role in supporting the committees.

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*There are certain things the RAs need to be constantly researching and updating the committees and yourself on. For UA, they should be reading Senate, Board of Governors, Undergraduate Council (and other committees) agendas and minutes. They will also help coordinate the University Budget Submission with the AVP UA. They should also be reading the Daily News and staying up to date on all aspects of McMaster as it pertains to your priorities. For MA, the Municipal Budget Submission will be a big priority. This should also be the person staying up to date with City Council and the relevant subcommittee agendas and informing you when there is something on the agenda you should pay attention to. This is critical to ensuring you and your AVP are showing up at the right times and did not happen last year. For the RA on the PFA committee, the election will provide ample opportunities for research. The RA can (with the help of the committee) summarize party platforms and candidate bios and research the logistics for voter registration for you. I told them all to stay updated in these areas, but they primarily focused on their policies. Ensure that they are working with their AVP to stay updated in these areas.*

### Project and Campaign Coordinator

A bit of history and Shemar’s thoughts on this role:

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*There have been several changes to this role over the years. This position has always existed to support the campaigns of the Ed team, but in different capacities. It used to be called the OUSA Campus Coordinator, and had an OUSA street team. Given the name, it would specifically help with OUSA campaigns and provincial affairs on campus. When we would go through periods of joining and leaving CASA, its name would flip between Advocacy Coordinator and OUSA Campus Coordinator. When we left CASA in 2015, the position was kept as is. The historical Advocacy Coordinator was a Part Time Manager that would report to Executive Board through the VP Education. They would create a Year Plan, attend PTM training, supervise execs and volunteers (the Advocacy Street Team) and interact with the VP Admin a lot. This has always caused tension, since the Advocacy Coordinator has generally had less autonomy than other PTMs (they don’t manage a department and don’t have their own budget).*

*In 2016-2017, Blake redesigned the Education Department completely. One of the changes she made was to scrap the Advocacy Coordinator and create the Educational Initiatives Project Assistant. Ryan changed the name to Advocacy Project Assistant at the beginning of his term.*

*In evaluating the role at the end of his term, he found that the Advocacy Project Assistant was doing the work of PTMs – events, campaigns, promo – but without the same level of support. So, he created what is called the “Advocacy Ambassadors”. This includes two executives (Promotions Executive and Volunteer & Logistics Executive) supervised by the Advocacy Coordinator, and a volunteer base that can be hired as needed. These volunteers should be hired every year at the end of August or beginning of September to help with Ed Team campaigns.*

*This Advocacy Coordinator still does not report to EB, and they do not create a year plan. However, this person should attend PTM training so they get management training. Talk to your Board about this one, but it might be beneficial for them to attend SRA training as well, since they will interact with the SRA a lot for advocacy campaigns, and Policy Conference.*

This year, we changed the name of the role from Advocacy Coordinator to Project and Campaign coordinator. We kind of figured out the role as we went, but I felt we gained a better understanding of how it could/should work with the Ed Team and the comms department in second semester. Essentially, this person ran the social media for MSU Advocacy (Twitter, Facebook, Insta) which we revived this year (we made way more posts). They did this in the same way a Service has their own social media account – it’s helpful because the main account can’t promote every single survey, campaign etc. the Ed Team did. However, with this system, Tabitha could promote and then I would bring up anything particularly notable to the comms team to bump on our main socials. Tabitha also coordinated campaign and survey logistics for the AVPs and RAs. She would work with them to do a bit of planning and then excecute the campaigns, e.g contacting Underground, planning social media posts. I had all campaigns go through Tabitha, and I found this sort of streamlined approach to be helpful.

However, this wasn’t always a perfect system, especially on the social media. side It doesn’t make a lot of sense for an AVP to have to email the Project and Campaign Coordinator (PCC) every time they want to make a post. That made things unnecessarily difficult and slow so I would consider having the PCC work to plan the posts and the messaging but to give the AVPs/RAs access to the accounts.

What worked was having Tabitha create a weekly/monthly excel schedule to track everyone’s campaigns. We did this for second semester and it made campaign planning much more organized and smooth. At every Ed Team meeting, I would pull up the schedule to see what was happening the next week, and see if anybody had anything they wanted to add or run by Tabitha.

My last suggestion for this role is to have them work more on planning campaigns *with*  AVPs and to connect them with our partners like OUSA and UCRU to coordinate campaigns. Because we were figuring out the role as we went along, what happened in practice was that AVPs planned campaigns, and then pitched them to Tabitha and asked her to execute the logistics. What would be better is to have the PCC work with the AVPs earlier in the planning process (maybe even meet with them regularly in the summer) for any campaigns. It would be nice to give this person more opportunity to plan campaigns, not just execute them. You should also connect this person to contacts at OUSA, UCRU, and any other partners that run campaigns. I see a lot of potential for this role to work directly, for example, with OUSA’s Operations Coordinator to see how the MSU could amplify and work off of OUSA campaigns throughout the year.

Definitely sit down with Wooder and this person at the beginning of the year to understand exactly how their role could fit with the Ed Team and the comms team.

Tabitha created a transition report because there wasn’t one before for this role. It’s in my OneDrive – just search “Project and Campaign Coordinator Transition Report”!

### President

Technically, the President sits on the team based on the operating policy. However, I didn’t invite GC to Ed Team meetings and it isn’t the norm to do so. I found that a lot of GC’s priorities complemented and intersected with the AVP’s projects and my projects. That makes sense – they are the spokesperson and they often have a lot of ideas for the University side of things. The tricky thing is that their role is so undefined - I would sit down with the President early in the year to try to split up priorities and focuses. Otherwise, it can become inefficient with the President, you, and the AVP UA/PFA working on the same projects. It sometimes doesn’t make sense for all three of you to be in the same UA-priority meeting, for example.

## Full Time Staff

Michael Wooder, Director or Marketing and Communicatoins: Wooder is great. He usually helps with any sort of government relations or external communication. He can read over anything if you need. Typically, I would have the AVPs run through any sort of statement, delegation or survey through Wooder first before looking it over myself for final approval. Wooder is also always happy to chat about literally anything and has a lot of background knowledge about the MSU and the Ed Team that can be really useful. If you ever have any questions about your role, you can ask Wooder to see if he has any insight.

Communications Officer: Works very closely with Wooder. They are great for any projects that have a short turnaround and/or are high priority or have to do with a Board-specific project. For example, they usually help with the municipal budget submission. If you’re ever unsure if you should go to them or someone else (e.g Underground), just ask!

John McGowan, General Manager: The VP Ed role doesn’t typically overlap with John's role too much, since John works a lot on the internal operations of the MSU. However, John is a great resource if you have any questions about the history of the MSU, e.g. any old positions or old Services. He’s also just a really nice guy. However, he is very busy. I would recommend booking in bi-weekly meetings with him just to check in so you both know what each other is working on.

Daniela – Daniela’s primary responsibility is to provide administrative support to the Board, John, and the SRA.

In an in-person year, Shemar’s notes (below) will be helpful:

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*You can ask her to book a hotel, rent a car, or book flights. She can also schedule lobby meetings, but politicians might be more receptive if you are the one doing the initial outreach (especially if you don’t know them). Previously in the role was Emma Ferguson. What I tried to do throughout the year is ask Emma if she felt fulfilled with her role and what she would like to do. As this role’s main duty is supporting the board, projects vary a significant amount year after year and it can be difficult to find a nice groove when your supervisors change every May. I asked Emma early on what tasks she liked to do and I tried my best to delegate those to her and invited her to more meetings throughout the year to have deeper context into what we were speaking about during board meetings. It wasn’t within my portfolio to do so, but I feel she appreciated it. It was easy for me to do this as Emma and I were office neighbours, so if/when you go back into the office full-time try and do this with Daniella especially since she is new to the organization.*

*Daniellaa can also help you for other things, such as taking meeting minutes, paying an invoice, booking a room, or scheduling a meeting with a University partner. I would only ask Emma’s support for the latter if there were multiple parties involved with the meeting, or multiple Board members. I never asked Emma to take meeting minutes, but she took Ed team minutes in Blake’s year. Don’t hesitate to ask for support if you need it – especially for things like paying large invoices. It’s better for it to get done on time through Emma than delayed on your to-do list.*

I rarely asked Daniela to help with Education Team-specific things, but I did ask her a few times to help with coordinating meetings with a lot of people, or fielding meeting requests from university stakeholders when GC’s and my schedules were really busy.

Victoria Scott – Victoria’s role is meant to provide administrative support to Executive Board, the SRA, services, health & dental, and key cards. If you want to make changes to an OP or by-law, definitely consult Victoria and she can also find you the editable versions. She, alongside the AVP Internal Governance, can help you with the language and historical context for changes you want to make to the MSU through the Ops and Bylaws.

*\*\*Underground Staff – all of the designers at the Underground are very talented and also very busy. Have your Advocacy Coordinator or AVPs coordinate your design work and Wooder can also help with it. Make sure you open a standing order (JJ/Wooder can explain this to you) there via Educational Initiatives, that way your AVPs and Project Coordinator can use the same account, and Wooder can just give them the number if he’s doing it for you.*

This year, Jess made me the budget manager for the Ed Team so I approved all the purchases and submitted them to accounting. This worked for me! Work with JJ at the beginning of the year so you know how to manage the budget.

*\*\*Maddison Hampel, HR Generalist – For anything related to HR, I would go to Maddison. She is a great help with any employee conflict issues. Also, any time I needed a job posted (OUSA delegate, RA, Advocacy Coordinator), I would ask Maddison to do so. She has copies of all interview questions, so you can ask her for them (but I also have them saved in a hiring folder). If you make changes to interview questions, make sure you send them to her so that she keeps them on record (I don’t think I did so maybe send most of the ones you do this year). She can also help you in designing interview questions. For paid staff, I would have Maddison organize the hiring board with interview times, as well as send offers to candidates. She usually had me send rejections. It’s nice if candidates get a rejection from someone on the hiring board and then they can also ask for feedback. For volunteers, I would do it myself, but she would still collect the applications and send it to me.*

I kept Maddison’s section from Shemar’s report in, but unfortunately she’ll be leaving in May. However, I assume her replacement will take on many of the same duties.

Pauline Taggart, Director of Information Technology– Pauline will be able to help you with any issues with your computer, email, and the website. Also, if you have a question about literally anything, Pauline probably has the answer. She has the most historical knowledge in the office. She’s super friendly and likes to chat. I didn’t get a chance to work with her in the office, but please drop by and say hi every once in a while if everyone is back in the office!

## Macademics

We changed Macademics a lot this year. Refer to the SRA 20Q documents. Most notably, we put all the MSU awards under the mandate now. Also review the service review from this past year.

Every year, the MSU has to submit an instructor in March/April to win the OUSA Teaching Award. Right now, there’s no criteria for the award, so basically the VP Ed just gets to choose. I did it by getting the nominees for Teaching Awards from Macademics, and then reviewing them with a few members of the Ed Team. I would suggest putting this award back under Macademics so there’s some sort of formalized process of selecting a winner. Do this in the summer so there’s time to change the Macademics Policy as necessary and for Macademics to plan out the coordination of this award and advertise it/

## Communication with the SRA, Faculty Societies and the Student Body

Shemar’s thoughts:

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*My reports to the SRA were also very detailed. Past VP Eds have written blogs on the MSU website monthly. It’s a good idea to use the website more through blog posts but also to update on projects. Have Pauline and the comms officer help you with navigating the website and creating appealing pages.*

Not sure if a blog is feasible now that we’ve updated the website, but it’s something you could explore.

*\*\*I suggest you talk to Wooder, and your Board as a whole, with how you’d like to best communicate. There is a difference between you communicating as a student representative, and promoting what your department currently doing. Again:* ***always keep Wooder in the loop with your communication strategy.*** *This is one of the biggest pieces of advice I can reiterate to you.*

Definitely have an intentional strategy with your Board and Wooder with how you want to communicate to the SRA and to the student body

A few thoughts:

* Either this year or last year, we started having the ability to put out direct emails to MSU students once or twice a semester (or once a month – I can’t remember) through a partnership with the university. Ask Wooder about this. I think this is a great way to connect with students, and there’s lots of room to grow this communication strategy. For example, I had an idea of including polls in these emails to ask students about our current advocacy priorities to see whether they agreed with them (e.g. “Do you agree/neither agree nor disagree/disagree that the University is doing enough to support teachers in online learning?” )
* This year, our Board and comms team made an effort to have the Board feature more often on our Instagram through takeovers and periodic update videos. I thought this was a great initiative – I think students should hear from Board members and be able to put faces to the leadership. It humanizes the Board and makes the MSU more friendly.
* In second semester, I piloted a “weekly advocacy email” to the SRA, where I would send them a few advocacy items to promote through the week, e.g. OUSA GA, surveys, campaigns. I like the idea of sending one main email to the SRA every week because otherwise, you/AVPs end up sending emails all the time to the SRA and it’s a bit disorganized and overwhelming for the SRA to actually promote the MSU Advocacy stuff
* Make it as easy and quick as possible for SRA members to promote Advocacy items, e.g. have the Proj and Campaign Coordinator message new posts/stories to SRA caucus accounts so they can quickly share them, email links to actual FB/Insta posts directly to the SRA in the weekly email so they don’t have to use the graphic and make their own post.
* In Shemar’s year, the SRA rescinded the Academic Affairs Council, which was supposed to meet regularly through the year and consisted of VP Education and the VP Academics of all the Faculty Societies. It was rescinded because there wasn’t much engagement. I actually didn’t know this, and I tried to continue AAC meetings, but also struggled to connect with the VP Academics this year. However, I would encourage reaching out in the summer and seeing how/how often VP Academics might want to meet through the year to discuss academic concerns. I only met with all of them once, but I find Faculty Soceties to sometimes be more plugged in to student concerns than the SRA, and sometimes they bring different perspectives. You could also work with Denver and through the Presidents’ Council to see how you and Denver could also connect with the VP Academics.
* I worked with Wooder and Daniela to launch an anonymous feedback form for the MSU ([Feedback - MSU (msumcmaster.ca)](https://msumcmaster.ca/info/feedback/) ). I ripped the idea off of Laurier’s student union website. Make sure the Board always reply to these messages if students request a reply. See how we can advertise it more widelt.
* In general, I would strongly encourage seeing how the SRA caucuses can work more closely with their Faculty Societies. Work with Zoe in the summer to plan how to connect the two. Ideally, they would work together to advocate on student issues, especially faculty-specific ones.

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*Also, a small tip on getting something into the Academia Top Ten: ask Wooder to email them or submit it to their website. Don’t wait for them to find you: show them!*

*The website has pages for all the standing committees. To be more transparent about what our committees do, have the AVPs update it regularly with what projects they are working on and possibly meeting minutes.*

See if this is possible with the new website,^

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*Finally, remember that you are the steward of the MSU brand to external organizations. Make sure OUSA and UCRU are using our logo properly, use Gotham when writing external letters, etc. It might not seem like a big deal, but the proper use of our brand is part of what makes the MSU look so professional and put-together. Download the Gotham font pack – there’s about a dozen of them – onto your laptop so you can use it when you’re away. You can ask the Underground for a copy of the MSU brand guidelines document so you’re familiar with them. If ever in doubt, ask for help from Wooder or the Comms Officer.*

## Valedictorian

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*So, 100% VP Eds agree this is the worst part of the job. Thankfully, I’ve made some progress on making it not part of your job. I spoke to Rachel Huang in the Registrar about transferring responsibilities to another office. I connected with Karen from the McMaster Association of Part-Time students and she expressed interest in taking over the work for valedictorian. Every time VP Eds voice their concerns with the valedictorian process we aren’t taken seriously, so I emailed Rachel and Brad and explicitly told them that our role will no longer be organizing valedictorian and there needs to be a conversation about shifting the responsibilities otherwise there wont be anymore valedictorians in the future. They finally agreed and said we should start the onboarding process with MAPS. Follow up with Karen and begin the onboarding process!*

I had a similar experience. It wasn’t too frustrating, but it took up a lot of time to coordinate between all the faculties, and it’s basically all admin work so it’s not really something you should do in your portfolio. I emailed Rachel and connected with Karen Richmond from MAPS this year about transferring the responsibility. Connect with Karen and Rachel in the summer to figure this out.

If that doesn’t work out, see if it could be delegated to someone else in the MSU.

If you do take it on, search the OneDrive for “Valedictorian” to see how all the VP Eds have documented this process in the past. That should be super useful! I’ll also leave Shemar’s guidance below:

*However, in the (likely) chance you can’t pass this frustrating baby onto someone else, I will walk you through what to do and pray that you have the least amount of headaches possible. First of all, READ THE OPERATING POLICY ON THIS. There are two ceremonies:*

*Fall Valedictorian – you will go to some meetings and read some portfolios. It is coordinated by the School of Graduate Studies. If you can, ask an SRA member or AVP to do this for you. I tried but no one wanted to. But try harder and earlier this year.*

*Spring Valedictorian – Now this is the fun part.*

*In December, start thinking about Valedictorian*

1. ***Decide on when everything is due for valedictorian nomination packages.*** *There are guidelines for this in the Operating Policy. I had them due the beginning of March. As per Stephanie’s advisement, this was earlier than in previous years. I suggest you continue this especially since even though I did it earlier, some faculties still were incredibly late in getting me the names of valedictorians.*
2. *Email these dates to each faculty’s Associate Dean Academic, remind them to set up their committees, and ask them if they would like the nomination packages to be dropped off in the same location this year. The locations are in the nomination package. I suggest also asking who applicants should contact if they have questions – I got a lot of questions about very random things (ex. “Can my professor who I was a TA for by my professional reference? Or is that an academic reference?” I answer yes but I’m not on the selection committee so what if the selection committee thinks differently? Am I going to email every faculty when I make minor decisions like this? [/endrant]) You will put this information in the nomination package. I modified the package to include some contact information but not every faculty got back to me which was frustrating and led to numerous people contacting me either to ask questions or letting me know that contact information wasn’t inside the booklet.*
	1. *Note: you need to email the MBA program for business and add in where MBA students can drop off their packages – they have a separate grad. I didn’t know that this year. Check my email for who I emailed.*
3. *Email Rachel to ask about convocation this year. It’d be good to set up a meeting and see if any changes have been made.*
4. *Update the information in the “Valedictorian Nomination Package” found on the server and in my folder with the new dates and locations if they are changed. Add the contact information of the faculties here to defer most questions from your inbox and answering machine.*
5. *Find an SRA member, a MAPS member, and a GSA member to sit on each faculty’s committee. Do this as soon as you know the dates (early December) and communicate their names and contact information to the Associate Dean Academic or whoever is coordinating it from their office. SRA is never engaged, so I usually appointed the caucus leader to sit on the committees if they didn’t respond back with a rep. MAPs doesn’t always engage because there isn’t always a large number of part-time students that apply. GSA…. continually don’t send reps. They also say that they will engage with the process if there are graduate students who apply for valedictorian, but it isn’t equitable to only invite them to the selection panel if a graduate student is in the running for valedictorian.*

Make sure to appoint the SRA reps ASAP. Give them a deadline to provide one person per caucus, and if they don’t meet it, just tell them you’ll appoint the caucus leader.

1. *Get the comms officer to start designing graphics. Email the Underground that you want an ad in the Sil for the amount of time listed in the by-law (I believe 2 weeks before and then every week while nominations are open).*

*I am assuming you will open applications in January, like I did. You could probably open it a bit earlier if you get everything listed above done in December. Your next steps are:*

1. *When nominations open Have Wooder or the Comms Officer put the package up online at msumcmaster.ca/valedictorian, and print out copies for the front of the MSU office.*
2. *Email the promotions materials to every faculty. Also advise them to inform all of their students that nominations are open. Have it promoted through the MSU social media every week. Maybe make a video. In Ryan’s year, they did UM coffee cup stickers – also consider doing that. Have the SRA promote it and recommend it to their friends. Tell the Academic Affairs Council and tell Josh to tell President’s Council. Also think of more ways to avoid further sassy remarks about lack of promotions.*

*Congrats! You are mid way there. February should just be answering emails. Then we get to March or late February depending on your timeline:*

1. *When nominations close, email faculties to let them know. Tell them they should be reviewing the packages and then conducting interviews in the next four weeks. Remind them of the deadline. Tell them if they can’t meet this deadline they need to tell you.*
2. *Email the faculties close to the deadline and make sure things are going well.*
3. *Follow up with faculties who don’t give you names by the deadline and ask when you can expect them.*
4. *Forward the names to the Rachel / the Registrar as they come in.*

*Congratulations! You are done! When you have the names of the valedictorians, ask Wooder to write an article for you on the MSU website OR have the McMaster Daily News do it, and send the information to Rachel Huang, Patrick Deane, Gord Arbeau, and the School of Graduate Studies. This must be sent to them by the date indicated in the Operating Policy.

I used a document called “Valedictorian Information and Details” to organize myself. Some of the FAQs I answered are there. Ryan made the decision to allow Graduate Students to be eligible for Valedictorian in his year. Most of the Faculties didn’t differentiate, and it made the most sense given that there is GSA representation on the committees. People should know this now but make sure to remind the GSA.*

If you do this, just make sure you’re organized and remind the faculty contacts of the deadlines periodically. Check my emails to see how I dealt with coordinating the whole process.

## Finances

This year, Jess made the VP Ed the budget manager for the Advocacy expenses. Basically, that means you will be tracking the expenses using a budget tracker and you will have the authority to approve purchases. Make sure that *anything* the Ed Team wants to buy is first approved by you. You then fill out the Purchase Order and send it to accounting. This process can be confusing – ask JJ if you have questions.

***VP Education Expenses (???? Not sure the line number) – $600*** *Basically, put meals, gifts, etc. here. It is a discretionary spending line for you, but don’t abuse it. Sometimes if I was late for am meeting and I Ubered to campus, I would use this line to reimburse myself. Since this role travelled the most, I bought a luggage and backpack to use throughout the year which came in handy. Most of the money I put through this line was food. Basically, any unplanned expenses that didn’t fit well into another line. Make sure you are keeping up to date on how much is in all your budget lines and aligning the actual amount with what you are tracking. You can ask Sean for updated amounts anytime.*

I didn’t really use this line probably because I was online the whole year. Ask JJ about it!

***OUSA Membership Fee (5905-0126) - $80,000***

*As you are aware, our annual OUSA fee is approximately $3.16 per student which equates out to roughly $75,000 a year. Under Student Choice Initiative, we modified the way in which we pay our membership. In the summer, you will be asked to pay for 50% of the OUSA fee and in January you will be asked to pay the subsequent amount (+ or – any discrepancies due to SCI). SCI isn’t in place currently but can easily come back up so for the immediate future I believe this is how OUSA will collect their fee. You are going to need the updated number of students that are currently enrolled. OUSA has an honour system, but they sometimes ask for proof for their audit process.**Email the Registrar or UTS (to ask them about how many people have paid the MSU fee, including part time students that have transferred and SAS students that are considered full time (it’s different than “Full Time Students”, so don’t ask for that). That will determine our fee for OUSA in first term. Under SCI, I got our number from Sean/Victoria as they would have updated numbers. It took a while to get it, but we had the most updated numbers. If SCI doesn’t exist by the time we need to pay, we can simply message the registrar.*

Once OUSA sends you the invoice, fill out an Electronic PO (that you can get from Kevin) and email it back to Kevin, CC’ing the VP finance. JJ will have to put her signature on the form and give her approval and once that is completed, Kevin will essentially pay it from there!

***OUSA GA Expenses (5906-0126) - $10,000***

*This line is pretty self-explanatory, anything related to OUSA GA will go though this line. If you rent a car, hotel costs as well as delegate fees will all be going through here. I budgeted roughly $5000 per GA for this line. Granted, I saved costs on rooms and we had cars for GA and didn’t need to rent for semester 1 – all of this to say, your costs may be a little more than what’s in this line. If that is the case, exhaust this line fully and any remaining fees can go into Ed Team Campaigns. Check-in with [JJ] though as she may have a preference on putting additional costs in a different line.*

There were zero expenses this year because it was completely online haha. But maybe next year, it will be in person, so I’ve kept Shemar’s guidance.

**Ed Team Campaigns (6305-0126) - $8500**

*Write this down and put it on a sticky on your desk – this is the code you’ll use for just about everything. You will share this with your AVPs, Advocacy Coordinator, and general your education team. All surveys, food for focus groups, ousa related campaigns can go into this line! I was very frugal this year (as you are aware) and I started at the beginning of the year planning out how much money I would like to spend for each portfolio. At the start of your term, have a rough budget of how much money you would like to spend and once the year plans are submitted, you can tie price points to various projects. Sean sends out monthly updates on the budget, so aside from tracking the budget on your own, cross reference with his list and that will be more updated then your own. There were times ed team members or other staff put things through the line without my knowledge, so keep a good eye on it!*

I didn’t end up using anywhere close to the full amount this year – around 5k. You’ll probably use more if you’re in person. I recommend sitting down with the Education Team at the beginning of the year and letting them know they can use a max of approximately $2000 per committee (including Sustain Ed Committee). That way, they can roughly plan out their campaign expenses as they go and not run out of money. Again, that wasn’t a problem at all this year but it could be in the future.

**Election Awareness (??) – $0**

Not sure if this still exists – check with JJ

**Ed Team Travel and Conference (6901-0126) - $5000**

*Use this line for provincial and federal lobby week. OUSA has a fee cap for all conferences, so you will be charged a couple hundred for WelCon, StratCon and Lobby week. Since many of these will be virtual, these costs won’t be high for your year but will be accurate for subsequent years. Essentially any conference you or [Denver] and you go to, you can put it through this line. All food for those conferences, accommodation and transportation costs can also go through here!*

Again, I used only $70 of this for a virtual conference, but if things are in person, you might use it more.

**Training (6804-0126) - $500**

*When you have training during the summer, if you wanted to order pizza you can put it through here! You may have to do your training virtually, meaning you wont get to buy everyone food. I suggest using this as a professional development line – if you wanted to invite a speaker to talk to the ed team, I believe it would be acceptable to offer an honorarium and put it through this line. If you are inviting a speaker to speak with the Ed Team, check in with John before you do so. We would probably have the speaker sign a contract as we are paying an individuals so we need to ensure all ducks are in a row!*

I didn’t really end up using this but it’s there for you to use if you’d like!

 *There are two types of purchase orders:*

1. *Internal. Use this for your standing order at Underground, when you fill up your Presto at Compass to go to Toronto, when you take your staff out to TwelvEighty for lunch, or anything else internally. You can also use it for McMaster departments if Accounting has a code to do an internal transfer to them. The white sheet (on top) gets filed in accounting. I kept my own folder of white sheets, and at the end of the year I gave it to accounting. The yellow sheet goes to accounting, and the pink sheet goes to whichever business unit is being paid. You also use this when you need the credit or debit card. Make sure you tell Kevin several days in advance when you will need the card, and how much you plan to spend on it so it doesn’t get maxed out. Don’t forget to keep all the receipts when you make purchases using the card. If I went out with the Board, the VP Finance usually held onto the card. Keep in mind that your Advocacy Coordinator and AVPs have PTM-level budgetary authority over 6604-0305.*
2. *External. This is a PDF online. I would use it if I ever needed to pay someone outside of McMaster. For example, I would fill out an External PO if Waterloo Feds billed me something for UCRU, or to pay our OUSA membership. When you fill out an External PO, send it to Kevin and Alex.*

Just ask JJ about all of this because it will be confusing at first ^

*We also have an Uber account. Ask Daniella to set this up on your phone. This will be necessary for Advocacy Weeks, OUSA GAs, travel to City Hall if you are short on time, etc.*

*Last in this section – reimbursements. Keep all of your receipts for any costs you incur in which you pay out of pocket (both an itemized receipt, and a debit/credit receipt). Then you can fill out a reimbursement form (blue, in the office), ask Scott to sign it for you, and accounting will cut you a cheque the following week. I did this as I went along – DON’T save it all for the end of the year. This is also the sheet you will use to reimburse yourself for mileage. Only the VP Finance can sign reimbursement forms.*

## Policies

*As you are aware, changes have been made to the policy structure this year to require you to write a minimum of 3 and a maximum of 6. This gives you a lot of room to change things up. I suggest you take the May to think about what policies you wuld like to write. I suggest you write policies first term and have a full draft by exams or the winter break. Second term use the time to do more consultation with stakeholders and identify gaps in the paper. Policy Con should be held in first term to gather feedback in the initial writing stages. But it could also be held second term and act as a traditional policy conference. For the past three years we have rewritten 6 papers, so essentially every paper on the website has been rewritten and papers expire every three years. We now have the opportunity to come up with new topic ideas, do an overhaul of polices, spend time updating – lots of freedom!*

See my suggestions above in the “Advocacy and Policy Research Assistants” section for more thoughts on this. I think Policy Con could be held in first semester and second semester, but I just did second semester.

## Policy Conference

Policy Conference only needs to occur when you are going to be passing policies with *the SRA. Since you are no longer required to pass policies each term, you may only need to hold it once a term. The purpose of Policy Conference is to “gather feedback and solicit general student opinion on policy drafts.” The OP mentions nothing else about the format, what the drafts need to look like, or when the Policy Conference needs to be held. With that in mind, take this opportunity to revision it. For instance, have Policy Conference when policies are in very initial stages so you can incorporate people’s feedback more easily and attendees do not need to read long documents to participate.*

I tried to re-envision Policy Conference this year by adding a virtual, asynchronous form of feedback through a survey/feedback from that listed all the PCRs. I thought this was effective and could be expanded in the future. We still held a synchronous policy conference but we did it virtually of course.

My only advice is to try to hold Policy Conference a little earlier in the year so that the policy teams have time to incorporate the feedback.

*\*\*There are two things that you should do right away:*

1. *Assign each of your RAs to head up the development of a specific policy. Over the summer, they can begin working on primary research and developing the research pack.*
2. *Decide the dates for the Policy Conference(s), book TwelvEighty, and communicate the dates to the entire SRA and your Education team. In bylaw 3, it is mandatory for SRA members to attend the Policy Conference. With this being said, there is also no consequence for SRA members not attending. I suggest changing the bylaw to ensure we are holding people accountable. Be sure to communicate this to SRA when you tell them the dates; it is essential that they book them off. If someone cannot attend for a legitimate reason, it is up to you to decide how they can make that up.*

### *Selecting Dates*

*I held policy con during the week which I found to be beneficial. I pushed it till March to give the RA’s more than enough time to do multiple rounds of consultation with students.*

### *Selecting Authors*

*Each RA will head policy development, but they themselves are not meant to be authors. You should ask each AVP on your team to send 1-2 authors from their committee, depending on the policy. I would highly encourage your AVPs to author a policy once each term. For committee members, authoring a policy is a great opportunity for them to grow their skills and understand advocacy, but it’s important that they have experienced authors like AVPs and VPs to look up to and ask questions of throughout the process. Do not allow your [Project and Campaign] Coordinator to author a policy, as they will be too busy with logistics on Policy Conference to really participate. As well, authors* ***must*** *attend Policy Conference.*

 I find RAs kind of always end up being authors, but that’s something you can look into and decide if you want to take a firm stance.

### *\*\*Deadlines*

*It’s a good idea to set deadlines earlier than they are actually needed, for obvious reasons. We would set three deadlines for each paper: PCRs due, body text due, and final draft due. Ideally, each author is writing 2-3 sets of PCRs, so the burden should not be too large. However, for first-time authors, it may be difficult to get the hang of the PCR and policy-writing process.*

*You can go over deadlines at the Think Tanks. Ideally, Think Tanks take place about two weeks before the first deadline. At Think Tanks, the RA will go over the research pack with the authors, and plan out the sections, as well as assign them to specific authors and answer any questions they may have. Make sure you allocate time in your calendar around all deadlines to go through the paper. As this will be many authors first time with the PCR format, as well as many of them are not used to academic writing as they are in 1st/2nd year, there were numerous rewrites to the paper which took a significant amount of time.*

### *Pre-Registration*

*From here onwards, the Advocacy Coordinator took the lead. Make sure you’ve talked to Rick from* ***TwelvEighty*** *about how many people you estimate will be coming (around 40), and* ***AvTEK*** *to ensure they can set up a screen, projector, and microphone. You also will need to* ***book a space to hold policy con.*** *I used 1280 event space and the MSU board room. Try to have everything in the same room for all three days as it keeps things simple.**You will need the codes for the projector, so make sure you have those in advance. Again, I’d assign this to your [Project and Campaign] Coordinator to coordinate, in advance of registration.*

I didn’t do this this year since everything was online.

### *Promotion*

*For promotion, start 4 weeks in advance as well. Do posters, screens, Facebook, Twitter, etc. Definitely encourage the SRA to promote the event, and try to get them to sign up a friend. One thing you might consider doing is a video – I didn’t, but they tend to be wide-reaching and might be an easier way to actually explain what the conference is and why it’s useful to go.* ***Talk to Wooder about promotions at least two weeks before you want to open registration****. I also think you should better engage clubs and faculty societies in Policy Con. Have Ed Team members go to their meetings and talk about the importance of advocacy and policy – I find when people learn what the topics are, they’re more interested (what do you want for the future of tuition? Come tell us! Do you hate your student housing? Why? We want to know!). Make sure you’re doing this for interest groups that are directly affected by the policies.*

I used basically social media strategies to promote our virtual synchronous conference and the asynchronous feedback form. Ask Wooder about this, and take a look at the RA transition report(s) for more detail!

*The website is msumcmaster.ca/policycon. The main page should just be updated each time with the date, a link to the survey to register, the new artwork, and new policy topics. The subpages aren’t important until later (see below). Make sure you archive my Policy Conference pages and put information relevant to your policies on the main Policy Con page.*

### *Conference Day*

*Ensure that you make yourself available on the day of to help set up and do any last minute editing of the papers. Ensure that each break out room as an RA leading the session and another person taking note of what students are saying during the breakout session. The layout Is the exact same to the OUSA breakout session as a reference.*

### *Post-Conference*

*After the conference, there will be a lot of paper editing. I know you’re familiar with this aspect, having previously been an author. From a VP Education perspective, there isn’t much to do at this point unless you’re an author.*

*When it comes time to email Victoria or [Daniella] with the agenda, VP Eds usually add three delegations to the agenda, so you can go over the changes to the papers with the Assembly – I didn’t do this last year. I simple put the motions on the table for the assembly to approve and fielded questions. I didn’t feel the need to do a full presentation, as in previous years that invited a plethora of questions that would’ve been answered and quelled during policy conference if SRA members bothered to show up. I sent an email well in advance of the SRA meeting of the link to the papers telling members to set up a meeting/call if they have any questions. From there, no one asked questions during the meeting and it passed unanimously!*

### *Assembly*

*At the SRA meeting, each set of authors should go over the policy with the Assembly, focusing on what they changed based on Policy Con feedback. During the debate, it’s nice to have someone on the laptop showing what changes are being proposed. Policies are long, so it’s hard for everyone to follow along. After debate, the policy will be passed! Congratulations! Policies! You’ll also need to rescind any old policies. This is important for you to know: the SRA is only passing the Principles and Recommendations in the paper – which take the form of the policy statement at the end. The concerns and body text can technically be edited afterwards, though this is not something that you should do.*

*We had a short presentation at SRA 20Q this year from each of the authorship teams to summarize the papers and answer any questions.*

### *Next steps*

*After this, just follow up with [Daniela] or Victoria to ensure that policies get on the site (otherwise they won’t go up), and continue to collect feedback on everyone’s experience for next time. Then jump into the next round. We stopped doing Maroons paper. You can resume it if you want, but it’s just more logical work nobody wants to do, and I don’t believe has the impacts we want.*

### Summary of Timeline

*This is the old timeline Ryan suggested to me. I’m just going to leave it here in case you choose to pass policies first and second term. I will create a new structure below based on if you only pass the policy papers in second term.*

*If writing policies over two terms and passing in second term, you have a few options for Policy Con.*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| By August 1 | * Communicate Policy Con date to SRA
* Assign RAs to papers
* RAs build research packs and do primary research
 |
| Early September | * Select authors
* Book TwelvEighty
* Book AvTEK
* Book rooms in KTH
* Talk to Wooder about promotions strategy
 |
| Mid to Late September  | * Hold Think Tanks
* Have authors start consulting relevant parties
* Start promoting Policy Conference
 |
| Friday, October 18 | * Registration closes – send dietary restrictions in to TwelvEighty
* Rough PCRs due
 |
| Friday, October 25 | * Final PCRs due
* Authors begin to work on body text
 |
| Saturday, November 1 | * Send draft policies and other information to delegates. This can be done by putting it on the website and linking to it via social media.
 |
| Sunday, November 3 | * Policy Conference
 |
| Friday, November 15 | * Rough draft of revised PCRs and Body Text due
 |
| Friday, November 22 | * Final draft of PCRs and Body Text due, completing Draft 1 of Policies
 |
| January 2020 | * Education Team and Committees review policies and identity any gaps in the paper
* Interested authors take on new section of the paper
* Identify parties that need to be consulted (university admin, students of a particular identity, MSU services, clubs)
 |
| February 2020 | * Conduct and complete all consultations
* Incorporate feedback and finish any new sections
* Final draft paper should be done at the end of February
 |
| March 2020 | * Send out policy paper to the SRA and Policy Con attendees asking for feedback (even before its on the agenda)
* Hold drop in sessions where individuals can come and provide feedback on the paper
* Have paper finalized the Tuesday before the 2nd last SRA meeting
* Present to SRA and pass your policies!
 |

## MacVotes

This section might be really useful because there might be a federal election, and there will be provincial election in June 2022, meaning you’ll have to run two MacVotes campaigns.

I didn’t run any, so I don’t have any experience with it, but I’ll leave Shemar’s notes, which are actually passed on from previous VP Eds.

\*\*

*There is a McMaster Election Plan, either in Stephanies files or Ryan’s. Give it a read and invited the group together. Also try and do a video about the elections.*

*This is mostly from Spencer’s report:*

*For the 2015 Federal Election, the MSU probably put forth its most comprehensive and successful MacVotes campaign [according to Spencer because my MacVotes campaigns rocked].*

*First, the MSU had a fantastic partnership with Elections Canada. We have this partnership again this year so we will have an advance satellite polling station on campus and students can vote in any riding in Canada. Wooder is in contact with the individual. He is looking for students to work the polling station so make sure you promote that.*

*This polling station probably will be located in Celebration Hall again and present for four days the week before the election. In 2015, this initiative was incredibly successful, and led to over 1900+ voters casting ballots during those days. Spencer did say it wasn’t an ideal location but I think there are logistical issues preventing it from being anywhere else. You could try asking through.*

*In 2015, the MSU worked with a club to host a professor panel discussion in Gilmour Hall to discuss election issues, had a 1280 election social, hosted a live airing of an electoral debate in Clubspace, and hosted an election after party in 1280 where students could watch the election results live. These are all events that were planned with the use of Avtek, room bookings, food purchases, and social media promotion. They were all also very successful and well-attended.*

*In addition, the MSU held its standard all-candidates debate in the MUSC atrium. The debate was attended by the Conservative, Liberal, and Green candidates (NDP dropped out last second), and consisted of students and the MSU asking questions to the candidates and live streaming the debate.*

*The MSU's promotions strategy was very successful, as it was extremely multi-faceted. The MSU had their MacVotes website, which contains information on candidates, the MacVotes campaign, and polling times and locations and what students need to bring. The MSU releases several promotional videos, hundreds of rave cards, Infographics, student blogs on why they were voting, hundreds of lawn signs, MacVotes t-shirts, and lanyards. All of this material was labeled with information on when, where, and how to vote, and helped solidify this information to students. In addition, thy supported all of this with consistent social media promotion, broken down platforms, interviews in local media, and were even picked up nationally by the CBC.*

*Finally, on voting day itself the MSU promoted the polling station that was located at Les Prince Hall. Again, it was unfortunate that the only polling station on-campus was located at one of the farther locations from where students usually are. We still have over 500 students vote at this location, as we positioned student volunteers to count the number of students. In addition, they also worked with the university to make it easier for students to change their address on MUGSI (now MOSAIC) so they could easily print of the necessary information they needed to vote.*

*I will touch about my two MacVotes campaigns this year* ***(This is From Stephanie’s Transition Report. This wont be relevant to you, Fawziyah, but will be relevant for a future VP Ed so I will leave this here for now.)***

### *Provincial*

*The Education Team ran a #MacVotes campaign and through OUSA, the #OUSAvotes campaign. Since the majority of students were not on campus, we placed most of our efforts into an online campaign, which included platform summaries on our website, videos encouraging students to get out to vote, and regular social media posts about the election. Leading up to the election, I was interviewed on the Hamilton radio station CHML and quoted in the Toronto Star, giving the MSU and OUSA campaigns a boost!*

*Additionally, we hosted a local candidates debate on campus that attracted approximately 150-200 people and had a number of people tune into the livestream. We invited the PC, Liberal, NDP, and Green candidates.*

*Ikram and I were also invited by the university to attend meetings with the candidates running in Hamilton and Burlington from the PC, Liberal, and NDP parties. With the university, we began to develop a relationship with the candidates, demonstrated how McMaster University was an asset to the community and province, as well as raised student priorities to the candidates.*

### *Municipal*

*The Education Team ran a strong MacVotes Campaign for the three weeks leading up to the election. We started with a social media posts during reading week about the MSU’s stances on transit and near campus neighbourhoods. Then, we tabled the week back, handing out buttons, stickers, and rave cards. We informed people about the election and answered any questions they had. I also invited Metrolinx to table separately to provide students with information about the LRT project. Finally, on October 22nd, we tabled from 10:30am to 4pm. We went around to inform students that voting was today, offered to walk students to polls, and provided them with the paperwork they would have to fill out at the polls, which Hamilton’s election department provided to me ahead of time to speed up the process of students voting. As well, I took over the Instagram story for the day, posting updates throughout the day. Unfortunately, I did not provide external training to volunteers due to time constraints – however, they did an excellent job throughout the month!*

*Outside of the MacVotes campaign, Ikram, you, and I collectively meet with all 13 of the Ward One candidates. We sat down with each of them to get to know their vision for Ward One and Hamilton and informed them about our priorities. While at times this felt tedious, I saw it to be of great value since it continues to establish the MSU as a major stakeholder in Ward One. As well, it helped us build relationships with those who might be our potential councilor.*

*The Ward One All-Candidates Debate occurred on October 16th. All 13 candidates participated, making us the only ones to have a truly all-candidates debate! (Only 11 showed up to the Cable 14 debate and no other community association held a debate). It was certainly challenging holding a debate with 13 people, though our new format worked incredibly well. Instead of asking general questions, we asked each candidate 2 targeted questions to their campaign, which were prepared by the municipal affairs committee. This allowed us to ask candidates more challenging yet insightful questions. As well, we had a section of the debate where candidates could ask each other questions, which provided some fun debate. We received great feedback from the attendees of the debate about the structure. Several local media sources covered the debate and many local residents attended, demonstrating that we run strong, well planned debates that the city is interested in. Congratulations to Shemar, who did the majority of the planning of the debate for running such a successful event!*

*The MSU also received a lot of media coverage during the election. We were featured on Cable 14 twice, interviewed for CBC Hamilton, the Spectator, and Raise the Hammer. The Silhouette also did great cover of the municipal election and our campaign!*

*The night of the election, I went to City Hall where citizens and media were watching the results come in together. I met many of the elected candidates, where I congratulated them and told them the MSU is looking forward to working with them. I received a number of comments from people who said we ran an excellent campaign and they noticed more students voting this election! We do not have the poll by poll data for Ward One to see if turnout was higher in Ainsle Wood and Westdale. However, voter turnout was up 2% in Ward One! So that is a promising sign. I will update you once this data is released.*

*For the VP Education the year before the election (your successor’s successor), you should lobby to the municipal government for a polling station. I feel like they already have it on their mind and Maureen will suggest it, but you need to talk to the Elections department to make sure it happens.*

**^Please look at this last point!! Lobby the government for a polling station and other ways to make voting at all levels easier for students**.

# University Advocacy

## President’s Advisory Council on Building Inclusive Community (PACBIC)

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*I believe through their membership agreement with the MSU it is the President who sits on it. This rule isn’t strict though, as every year we get asked who we would like to sit on PACBIC. Based on the topics discussed in this meeting, I strongly believe the individual who sits in on these meetings should be racialized. The meetings go for two hours and discuss the experiences of marginalized groups on campus and many conversations revolved around policies that impact racialized students.*

Because I came in late, GC was already sitting on this. I think I may have went to a few meetings, but it’s up to you and the President on who sits on this committee.

*As far as representation goes, the peer support services are all members of PACBIC. Specifically, Diversity Services (which will now 13 pilot race-based peer support), MACCESS, Pride and I believe WGEN sits on it but please double check that. Regarding the peer support membership, please ensure that these groups are represented at PACBIC. A way of holding them accountable to represent their respective communities is to ensure that attending PACBIC meetings are in their EB year plans. As far as my memory goes, I believe that their JD’s state that they should attend PACBIC; nonetheless, it wouldn’t be “extra” work and it would be great to clarify that, they should just include them in their hours as a “work week.” Connect with [Christina] to do so.*

*PACBIC has a number of subgroups, one of which is the December 6th planning group. This group meets to discuss an annual event held on campus to commemorate the missing and murdered indigenous women in Canada. I went to a few meetings once the term started and I suggest you also engage with this. There is also a subgroup, R3 (Race, Racism and Racialization). Great group, I wasn’t apart of it this year but really wanted to. I suggest you join!*

R3 was a great group: join and participate!

## University Administration

You’ll often find yourself meeting with, or needing to meet with, the University Administration. One tip: use the [Faculty and Staff Directory](https://telecom.mcmaster.ca/directory.cfm) to find people’s emails, extensions, official titles, etc.

Some of the more important or higher up people are listed below.

I found that because I was virtual, I didn’t get to meet as many university admin as my predecessors did because when you’re online, you can only meet people 1-on-1 intentionally (i.e. scheduling a meeting) or by joining a group that they are part of. You just don’t get a chance to network in the same way. However, I’ve included a few people that I didn’t meet in the case you still get to work with them.

Here’s who I worked with the most:

### David Farrar, President

You’ll probably find that you don’t work directly with David as much as the MSU President does. Denver will have regular meetings with David. You can join when you think it might be useful, but in general I don’t think it’s that useful to work super closely with David because he moreso sets the vision for administrators below him to do the actual work. It’s usually more effective to work with those administrators, e.g. Kim Dej, Sean Van Koughnett.

### Esme Davis, Advisor to the President

*Esme works in David’s office and advises him on many different files. She is really great to work with and I would definitely suggest forming a positive relationship with her at the beginning of your term.*

### Susan Tighe, Provost and VP Academic

Oversees Kim Dej, whom you’ll work with a little more closely. Susan has a wide portfolio and is usually the person who approves projects at the final stage, rather than someone you’d go to to brainstorm ideas or work out logistics.

### Mary Williams, VP University Advancement

*Mary is one of the kindest humans you will meet in this job and is such an incredible support. Mary’s job is to oversee University Advancement, which is a rather large portfolio that consists of Alumni, Government Relations (now called the Office of Communications and Public Affairs), and Development. Generally, Mary will invite you to go to events with her – I highly encourage you to go and build a network with people also attending. She often engages with political affairs through GR, so you might chat with her about community relations. If you are interested in a particular career path, she might be a good person to talk to – she knows a lot of McMaster grads in interesting careers across the province.*

I saw Mary a few times but didn’t get to work very closely with her or go to events with her.

### Alex Lawson, Executive Advisor on Public Affairs

*Alex essentially runs the Government Relations department of the University. She reports to Andrea Farquhar, who is the Assistant VP of Communications and Public Affairs (she reports directly to Mary). It’s a good idea to keep Alex in the loop if you know of anything happening on campus related to government. She may also invite you to events from time to time – I got to know the GR department well this year through these types of events. It’s worth it to understand what types of strategic items that GR may be working on at any given time. Maintaining a good relationship with McMaster GR inevitably lends itself to increased access to politicians and raising our own profile. In addition, we often share opportunities with GR. When Chris Glover came to campus, Wooder told GR and they met with him before our event. Continue doing things like this, and they do it back. You can also ask Alex for her opinion on your advocacy week priorities, or for tips on advocacy strategies. Let her know when you’ll be in Toronto and Ottawa.*

Unfortunately, I didn’t get to meet Alex.

### Roger Couldrey, VP Administration

I didn’t work very closely at all with Roger. However, Maanvi (AVP: MA) met with him to discuss student housing on-campus and off-campus, and he was a pretty good resource for that because he has a strong knowledge of the University’s capital plans. He might be someone that’s very helpful for the high-level considerations of the budget submission. He oversees Dee Henne (Chief Financial Officer) and Debbie Martin (Chief Facilities Officer and Assistant Vice President), and he attends Admin Con.

However – he is retiring as of July! You can try to meet with him beforehand is you have any questions because he’s been around for a long time and knows a lot about the finance/capital aspects of the university. Introduce yourself to his replacement when you can.

### Rob Baker, VP Research

I didn’t meet Rob, but I’ll leave Shemar’s description:

*\*\*The only times I met with Rob Baker was at university events and Indigenous-Administration Consultation Committee meetings. If you’re interested in pursuing more research opportunities for undergrads, he would be the person to go to.*

### Sean Van Koughnett, AVP Students & Learning and Dean of Students

You and Denver will probably work pretty closely with Sean (SVK). SVK is basically your go-to person for any sort of issues concerning students. You’ll see Sean at Student Services Advisory Committee (SSAC). In his role, he oversees SWC, SAS, Athletics and Recreation, and the SSC.

Sean is very quick with responses, and he’s fairly chill and easy to talk to. If you ever have an idea or an SRA has a proposal to help students, feel free to send him a quick email to gauge his thoughts. I met with him a few times through the year to discuss ideas around Ath & Rec and student mental health, but I would email him fairly often (usually cc’ing AVP: UA and President) on issues like international students, student support, exams, and academic policy.

He also led the new Archway program this past year, which connects first-year students with upper-year mentors and non-student coaches. This program is fairly new and could be an area you focus on to enhance first-year transition, especially with the return to campus. Sean is always open to chat about Archway.

A few additional thoughts from Shemar:

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*Sean oversees the Indigenous Student Services (ISS). Sean and I would chat quite a bit about Ombuds. Sean also sits on OSCA, which is the Dean of Students version of the COU. It is worth it to discuss with him what their priorities are and how OUSA may fit into that. As well, he deals with International Student Services. He also oversees Allison Drew-Hassling, who heads the Student Support and Case Management office. Also, he is working on the Access Strategy. This has now been passed off to Arig to spearhead, in which Josh sat on the steering committee for. I didn’t discuss this too much with him but if this is of interest to you, I am sure he is open to your opinion. Sean has also been such a big support when we were impacted by the Student Choice Initiative, helping to save multiple programs and ensure a lot of our services are considered essential. He is an awesome guy and really cares about the student experience.*

### Kim Dej, Acting Vice-Provost (Faculty)

\*\**You can think of Kim like the faculty’s version of Sean: she supports them in the same way that Sean supports us.*

Kim is probably the administrator you will see the most. I set up biweekly one-hour meetings with her. She is technically underneath Susan Tighe, but in fact I felt she was often the one that was more effective to work with, because she was the one implementing the ideas and working with all the Associate Deans. Kim is very nice, but has a lot of priorities. If you ask her to do something, make sure to follow up and email her and her assistant Carajane if necessary. Because she has so much going on, I made sure to set up the regular meetings with her. These meetings would be Kim with me, the AVP: UA, and the President. AVP: UA, the President, and I would try to prepare a little bit and bring a few agenda items forward. We had a lot of discussions this year around things like proctoring (and evaluations more generally), examinations, the Teaching & Learning Strategy, online learning, Return to McMaster.

Kim has a strong idea of what the university is working towards and can bring both a short-term and long-term perspective. Often, we would float ideas by her (e.g. proctoring town hall, change of policy to allow international students to reschedule exams if they were in the middle of the night) and she would tell us whether she thought the idea was feasible and how we could spin it/frame it in order to implement it in the short term.

She was our main point person with two huge priorities this year in the Return to Campus discussions and the discussions around Respondus. Basically, she is the person you should go to with any issues around teaching and learning. This year, she was the one that passed on messages to the SRA on Respondus.

Be civil and respectful, but don’t be afraid to disagree with Kim or push Kim on a few priorities – she is there to respond to your concerns and she is really good at listening to your prioities and maybe adding a few new perspectives you hadn’t thought of yet.

She’s also great for discusssing the long-term vision of pedagogy and learning a the University. She spearheaded the Teaching & Learning Strategy with launched in May 2021.

Sean Beaudette, Manger, Educational Initiatives & Assessments, Residence Life

Sean works with Residence Life as the Manager, Education Initiatives & Assessment. He is pretty involved with the Archway program and very willing to work with the MSU.

### Dave Heidebrecht, Director of the Office of Community Engagement

I didn’t work too much with Dave but he is really passionate and dedicated to community work. Feel free to reach out if you have ideas about the MSU and the community.

*\*\**

*Dave oversees the OCE. The projects we work on with the office change each year but they are great supports and really care about student feedback. You, your AVP MA, and Off-Campus Community Educator should meet with him early in the year to determine some shared projects. Have the Educator go to the OCE meetings and work with him and the office on any student facing events. All in all, he is really passionate about his work and does a phenomenal job at the OCE.*

### Karen McQuigge, Director of Alumni Advancement

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*You’ll see Karen at SSAC meetings and throughout the year, as Alumni is an important collaborator with us on many events. Other board members will work more closely with Karen than you, but I still had a great relationship with her.*

### Rosanne Kent, Director of the Student Wellness Centre

I sat on the Student Wellness Centre sub-committee this year and met with her a couple times this year. She is nice but I would advise coming up with a plan and a tangible discussion item before meeting with her or reaching out. She’s usually very brief via email, so if you want to discuss something with her, reach out to set up a meeting.

She also works very closely with Cathy Jager and Debbie Nifakis at the SWC, so you’ll often see them in a meeting with her.

I would agree with Shemar’s assessment:

\*\**Roseanne is very nice, and I appreciate all the work she does on-campus but she can be a bit defensive at times and doesn’t always take criticism well. Sometimes we would be discussing improvements and she would go on about the great things that are being done without acknowledging the areas of improvements.* *She frequently talks over other people in a meeting and will cut you off mid speech. Don’t be afraid to interrupt back and stand your ground, as she will find a way to run a meeting off its course!*

### Allison Drew-Hassling, Director of Student Support & Case Management

Allison is very busy, but so nice and passionate about her work. She is very supportive of students and would always listen to our ideas about mental health support. She was also great in giving feedback on OUSA papers. I had a really great relationship with her – I would encourage you to get to know her. She’s very knowledgeable about the struggles of students, the cases that come up, and Student Accessibility Services.

### Kevin Beatty, Director, Housing & Conference Services

For some reason, Maanvi and I had difficulties getting in contact with Kevin in first semester, but we finally ended up meeting with him in the last few months. Kevin is awesome! He is very supportive of students. He worked with us to quickly develop a roommate connector program (McMatch) and he pushed forward the rating system for the Mac Off-Campus Housing Website. Kevin gets things done – I was super surprised when I met him because he doesn’t talk around the issue or just try to bring up concerns and difficulties, like admin often do. He heard our concerns and basically just told the staff team to work on a project to fix it and laid out next steps (when some other staff were talking about difficulties with the property rating system, he interrupted and said, “It’s not a matter of whether we’re doing this, but when and how, so let’s work through the problems.”) I would really encourage you to reach out to him and meet with him if you have any projects relating to housing and residence.

## Enrolment Management Team

*\*\*EMT is a group that essentially deals with admissions, attraction, and retention. I went to a few of the meetings, but it’s not necessarily the biggest priority. They also send out weekly emails with information about enrollment – I would forward these to John because he was interested and I think the numbers would help predict the income of the MSU the next year. During the meetings, they also talked about international student support and averages coming into the program.*

For some reason, I never heard of or was reached out to by this team.

## Union Relations

I didn’t have much contact with the unions this year but I did participate in the MUFA teaching awards committee.

*\*\*There are two main unions on campus for instructors: CUPE 3906, which represents undergraduate and graduate TAs and contract/sessional faculty, and the McMaster University Faculty Associations (MUFA) which represents tenured and tenure-track teaching and research profs, as well as librarians. In Blake’s year, CUPE 3906 and the University re-did their collective bargaining agreement this year (in the fall). She had pushed for three hours of paid TA training to both the University and CUPE 3906, unfortunately it was not realized in the agreement. I met with CUPE numerous times throughout the year to discuss the upcoming agreement. They were able to get paid TA training which includes pedagogy and AOP training for all TA’s. they also got a number of other priorities included in their agreement which is great! May be useful to see how this gets implemented and take note of any issues TA’s may be raising with the new agreement. Keep in mind we don’t directly represent TA’s, but we do have undergrads who are also TA’s.*

*I mostly worked with MUFA on course evaluations but also had an initial meeting with them to discuss shared priorities. They may also be interesting in helping with the federal debate you are holding so ask them to advertise and if they have any questions. Ryan discussed OERs with them and the potential to include incentives for them in their Tenure & Promotion Policy – something they were open to. This would mean that if a prof uses OERs in the classroom, it would count positively toward their tenure application. UBC did something similar. He didn’t pursue this but it might be worth pursuing if MUFA supports it. When I spoke about it with the provost, he was also in favour of it.*

## Student-Administration Consultation Committee

Otherwise known as Admin Con, this is a very unique committee. Admin Con consists of all the senior administration of the University, as well as the GSA and MAPS. We sit down in our boardroom to update each other once every few months. If there is anything incredibly pressing that you’d like David to know, this is a good time to discuss it. This meeting will be co-chaired by Denver and David.

Basically, any high-level items would come to this committee (COVID-related stuff, enrolment, return to campus). Our Board kept it pretty casual rather than having an agenda, and we found that worked pretty well.

## Student Services Advisory Committee (SSAC)

This consists of the four board members and John as a resource member, as well as Sean Van Koughnett and representatives from Ath & Rec, SWC, and SSC. In Blake’s year, they worked on the CAF agreement, which you should familiarize yourself with. This CAF agreement will be caused three new subcommittees of the SSAC to exist: one for SWC, one for SSC, and one for Athletics and Recreation. Your board needs to figure out a system for appointing students to that committee. GC worked a little bit on reviewing the CAF agreement – check with Denver about this.

We also tried to review the subcommittee structure because it doesn’t really work: currently, we just have subcommittees that meet once or twice a semester, so there’s no chance to follow up or have any substantive discussion.

This committee also oversees WWAC. Basically, Welcome Week is ultimately accountable to SSAC. The VP Administration will mostly be involved with this.

In addition, SSAC has been active in reviewing the budgets of Student Affairs. It will be important to remain vigilant with the budgets of Student Affairs’ various departments.

Finally, this group oversees SLEF and USIF. This generally falls to the VP Finance and President to coordinate.

## University Library Advisory Council

*ULAC is a good place to go to hear about what the library is up to and provide a student perspective. It is chaired by Vivian Lewis, the University Librarian, and I felt this year had a lot more items related to undergrad students compared to Ryan’s experience.*

I wasn’t part of the committee this year.

## University Budget Submission

We’ve only done a university budget submission a few times, but this is something we should definitely do and something you should plan in the summer.

Brittany (AVP: UA) made a Uni Budget Submission Guide for her successor. It’s in her OneDrive; please take a look at this.

Essentially, Brittany, GC and I tried to do a Uni Budget Submission in the Fall but we quickly realized that the way we had done it in the past was ineffective. We were doing it too late and proposing infeasible asks. However, we met with Dee Henne (Chief Financial Officer), who gave us guidance on how we can actually put together an effective budget submission in the future. Her advice is integrated into Brittany’s guide.

Essentially, we need to first determine priorities in the summer. Then, we need to meet with university AVPs to lobby them to include funding on those priorities into their submitted budget proposals (for the following fiscal year) in the Fall. For example, we could meet with Sean Van Koughnett and SWC in the summer to recommend that they allocate more funding in their proposed budget to hiring more counsellors.

The submission will not be effective if we don’t go through the University AVPs and their departments. In this sense, the budget submission may not be as much a formal document as priorities we put forward to different departments and work with them to see how they can allocate more funding to those areas before they finalize their proposed budget.

I’m going to paste Dee Henne’s advice to us that she sent in October. Look up this email and read it – the subject line is University Budget Submission and Dee’s email is hennedl@mcmaster.ca .

Dee:

“The individual leads for each area will actually request the additional funding through a submission to our Budget Committee, it is key that you work with them on the plans that address your concerns and that you ideally provide them with a sense of support for their budget request. Your support of their proposals should be highlighted in their submission. I can assist also by ensuring that the Budget Committee is made directly aware of the requests that you support. Hence, I encourage you to continue to collaborate with them, understand their plans and their associated funding requests. I will ensure that the VPs and Budget Committee are made aware that these are your current priorities during this funding cycle. Ultimately, the budget committee will receive a number of new funding requests and these “asks” go onto an unfunded priorities list to be cumulated and voted on. The leads can provide you with updates on their requests once the process is completed for this cycle.”

Work in the summer to decide on a list of priorities. In the fall, we came up with the following priorities you could continue or change if you want: 1) additional funding to EIO, 2) additional funding to support online learning and the McMaster Digital Learning Strategy, 3) additional funding for mental health support. I would recommend also working with Olga Perkovic and Joanne Kehoe to include OERs in our budget submission priorities.

Last note on this: consider working with the rest of the Board on this, but especially the VP Finance, who will hopefully be able to help with proposing realistic asks and bringing a stronger financial background and understanding of the University budget to the proposals.

## Open Educational Resources Working Group

This committee is chaired by Olga Perkovic, a librarian. Joanne Kehoe from the MacPherson Institute is also a big part of this. Both are fantastic – super passionate about OERs. Join this group and see how we can improve OERs.

There are basically two things we need to do to advance OERs:

1. Secure long-term funding
2. Implement an OER policy at the University.

Simranjeet Singh (an SRA member and an AVP for 2021-2022) worked a lot on OERs and integrated notes from Olga and Joanne into edits for the Academic Success policy which were approved. Take a look at that policy and ask Simranjeet about this.

## MacPherson Institute

MacPherson was very involved with online learning and the Teaching & Learning Strategy. Reach out if you have any questions about anything academic or to do with pedagogy – including digital learning, course evaluations, and instructor & TA training.

## Joint Indigenous-Administration Consultation Committee

This is a committee that is chaired by the Provost. It includes the VP Research Rob Baker, Vanessa Watts (Director, Indigenous Studies Program), Chelsea Gabel (Chair, Indigenous Education Council), Rick Monture (Interim Director, McMaster Indigenous Research Institute), and Shylo Elmayan (Director, Indigenous Student Services). This committee mostly updates the provost on what is going on, discusses funding, hiring more Indigenous scholars, etc. Some of the things that have come out of it are: entrance scholarships for Indigenous students, a promise to hire more Indigenous faculty, and the creation of a graduate program in Indigenous Studies.

This year, they’ve been working on developing an Indigenous student and faculty strategy in collaboration with the Indigenous Education Council.

I didn’t have much to say at these meetings, but I highly recommend you attend to see how the MSU can better support Indigenous students in the future.

## Sustainability Committee

This committee is made up of the project and campaign coordinator, a BOD member (it doesn’t have to be you! GC sat on this in my year), the AVP UA or the RA, 2 SRA members, 2 MSU members, 1 rep from Outdoor Recreation, 1 from Office of Sustainability, and 1 from Facility Services. For the non-student roles, check past emails to see who attended and see if they would like to again.

I oversaw this committee this year and they ran a cool Sobi campaign in first semester but Giancarlo was more involved. I tried to meet with Moiz (the volunteer Chair) every once in a while to see what the committee was up to.

GC and the sustainability committee wrote up a report for SRA 21B. take a look at this and discuss with Denver how you want to run this committee this year.

I thought it was fairly successful but you can still consider Shemar’s recommendation to revamp it or rescind it (below). I honestly just wasn’t very involved this year so I don’t have any strong opinions about it. However, I don’t think the Project and Campaign Coordinator has to be a huge part of it necessarily. They can just help coordinate the campaigns and projects as they come up.

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*Stephanie changed it during her year so that the Advocacy Coordinator doesn’t have to be chair. However, they should still probably coordinate the meetings and ask the chair to set the agendas for the meeting. This group didn’t meet this year due to our lack of n Advocacy Coordinator. Also, the university just created their own sustainability committee, so it didn’t make sense to have two committees consisting of the same people. Based on the TOR of that committee, make a decision to either revamp our internal sustainability committee or rescind the operating policy.*

There are a few other projects/issues I want to briefly highlight. However, you’ll find more info on a number of different projects in my year-end report (SRA 20Q). I highly encourage you to read the year end report as you transition into the role.

**Return to McMaster** **(i.e. return to campus)**

In March, GC and I sat on a few committees as part of the Return to McMaster group Susan Tighe and Kim Dej led, including the Oversight Committee and the Teaching, Learning & Student Experience Working Group. These were temporary groups to guide the planning for Fall (there were others as well – check my reports if you want more info). The Oversight Committee submitted a report at the end of April.

To make sure GC and I were representing students properly, I put together the Return to McMaster Student Advisory Group (RTM SAG), a group of students from the SRA, Faculty Societies and FYC to meet regularly through March. You can find records and notes from this group in the OneDrive and my email.

I would strongly encourage you to continue this effort to meet with a group of student leaders throughout the summer. While the Oversight Committee has submitted a report with recommendations to guide the University, the University still has *a lot* of logistics to work out through the summer for implementing some sort of return to campus. There are so many considerations. Just to name a few: How will in-person classes work with virtual classes? Will there be options for students to study online and in-person? What will the vaccination campus policy and distancing/health guidelines on campus be? What non-academic spaces (e.g. library, gym) be open, and to what capacity? Have students already signed leases, or will a lot of students be scrambling to find houses in the Fall? What will assessments/evaluations look like if some students are in-person and some are online? Will teachers/TAs have to come to campus or how much of a choice will they have? I’ve uploaded notes from the RTM SAG and the RTM groups in my OneDrive so you should take a look.

I anticipate this being a huge focus for you and Denver through the summer and something you’ll have a lot of discussions with Kim Dej, Susan Tighe, Sean Van Koughnett, and the President about. Please make sure that students are part of the planning process and that there’s an ongoing dialogue to ensure that students’ concerns are heard. I would try to push for ongoing meetings and the maximum student representation possible if University committees and taskforces are set up in the summer. It might be hard to get general students to participate in these meetings if they’re set up; try focusing on groups like SRA, FYC, and Faculty Societies.

Communication of the University’s plan to students is also just as important as the plan itself. Push the University to communicate quickly, clearly, and often. One thing we discussed with Kim is setting up a town hall in the summer to hear student concerns about the return to campus. There should be a large announcement before June with a lot more details about the Return to Campus, informed by the RTM groups, but make sure there is communication through the summer from the University to students about the plans for the Fall. Students care about this a lot, and it’s frustrating to see how slow the University can be to communicate sometimes.

Connect with Robyn Obermeyer in the summer to discuss the University’s communication strategy for the return to campus. She is the communications lead for the Provost’s office, but she just started in February. She’s already met Wooder and Elisabetta, and she’s been great in keeping me and GC in the loop.

**International students**

This year, Brittany (AVP: UA) did a fantastic job in connecting with Ana Pereira, director of International Student Services (now on maternity leave), to set up an ongoing MSU International Student Task Force to listen to their concerns and strategize how to advocate for them. Read Brittany’s transition report and notes for more on this, but work with the new AVP: UA to make sure it keeps going! International students face a lot of barriers and often feel like the MSU doesn’t hear their concerns.

I**ndigenous students**

Similar to international students, Indigenous students are another group of students that the MSU can do a better job advocating for. I met with Shylo Elmayan and Jordan Carrier from Indigenous Student Services a few times in second semester to see how the MSU can better support Indigenous students in the long-term. See the notes in the “Meeting Consultations” under “UA” in my OneDrive to see my notes.

I’m intrigued by the possibility of integrating Indigenous students into the governance of the MSU maybe through something similar to the International Student Task Force. However, it’s *very important* to listen to the voice of Indigenous students before planning how to build in better supports for them. Otherwise, we may end up trying to fit them into governance structures that don’t work and, worst, tokenizing their involvement without any real change.

See if you can meet with Shylo and Jordan in the summer to discuss the relationship of Indigenous students to the MSU and how it can be strengthened in the future. Also look at the memo that the Indigenous Admin-Con Group put together and circulated on Jan 15 2021 (search for email subject line “2020/21 Joint Indigenous Admin Consultation Group (JIACG) meetings \*December 14th call for Agenda items\*”) . We should see how the MSU might be able to support these calls.

I connected the OUSA Indigenous Policy authorship team to contacts from Indigenous Student Services and McMaster CISSA. This seems like a really promising project and a great way through which you can look at how to improve support for Indgenous students at Mac. Continue to support this project and partnership between Mac and OUSA.

**Archway Program**

As I mentioned before, Sean Van Koughnett led the development of this program. Sean Beaudette is also pretty involved. We had some discussions late in the year with both Seans about incorporating more professional mental health support and proactive screening/connecting with students through Archway. This was an idea brought forward by Christy Au-Yeung, an SRA member. We originally thought a position might be able to be funded through SLEF, but we didn’t end up proposing something. One possibility that we discussed with Sean B was making another (pilot) position similar to Bridget Cowe’s position with Archway this past year. She is a social worker who works in case management who worked with Archway but is going back to the Student Support & Case Management office. However, SVK also said we could look at using funding to provide better training for mentors and coaches and/or integrate the Student Navigator program more fully into Archway. Feel free to pursue these ideas if it’s something you want to do.

**Mental health support and mental health/resiliency courses**

Brittany worked a lot on this this year and it should also be in the AVP: UA report. One idea Brittany and Hargun (an Advo and Policy Research Assistant) wanted to work on was the development of a mental health/resiliency module for students and the centralization of mental health resources in Avenue. We made some progress on this but continue to work with the AVP: UA on this.

If you’re interested in a module, look through our emails with Catherine Munn, a professor who created the Hippo-on-Campus modules for instructors, to get a better understanding of how we pitched this idea to her.

We also had an interesting meeting with Alison Drew-Hassling late in the year, where they informed us that they were building a “recovery college” at McMaster that would essentially provide a lot of mental health supports and resources for students. They were also going to hire a peer support specialist. If we want to see students have access to modules, more resources, etc. I would recommend connecting with Alison again to get a better understanding of this initiative.

I think another interesting idea you could pursue is the idea of more for-credit resiliency/mental wellness courses. For example, Catherine Munn taught a “Coping with COVID” course this past year that was well-received by students. I think these sorts of courses where students can earn credits might be more effective and wide-reaching than just free, open modules through Avenue. However, Kim had told us they were looking at some sort of mental wellness course through Intersession this summer and making the modules available for all students afterwards, though students would have to actually enrol in the course to get credit. Talk with Kim Dej (and also Catherine Munn) about this idea further.

**Digital learning strategy**

Ask Kim Dej about this. Essentially, it’s supposed to be a long-term strategy for how McMaster envisions the future of digital learning, including assessment and teaching. The project was delayed but hasn’t officially started yet. Ask Kim to see when it will start and how students can be involved.

**Proctoring & Respondus**

Kim told us that there was supposed to be a taskforce set up through the Undergraduate Council (a sub-branch of the University Senate) to look at the future of Respondus and more broadly assessments at McMaster. Please ask Kim about when this will be formed and ensure that there is strong student representation. The University’s contract with Respondus is up this Fall, so it’s really important to have conversations with students and with Kim about the considerations regarding Respondus and whether it needs to be used next year.

Obviously, I’m not a fan of Respondus – it’s invasive, and there are issues around privacy and security. However, I’ll highlight two counterpoints that have come up in our discussins with Kim and Trudi Wright (from the Privacy office): 1) issues of academic integrity: there were legitimate concerns around students cheating/collaborating this year—ask Kim for more detail, 2) the University has a contract with Respondus that isn’t public ad outlines certain terms surrounding privacy, so some of the concerns students brought forward based on public information about Respondus sometimes lacked all the information

Trudi Wright was a great resource for helping me, GC, and Brittany to understand the actual risks of Respondus. I would recommend reaching out to her if you have any questions about the technical/privacy stuff surrounding Respondus. She was also very open to meeting with students and SRA members about Respondus, which was super helpful.

**Associate Deans Group**

Sometimes we’d bring something up with Kim and she would suggest that Brittany and I bring it up at the next Associate Deans’ meeting. For example, we brought the issue of international students having tests in the middle of the night to this group. If you go, just prepare and be ready to hear different perspectives.

# Municipal Advocacy

Municipal advocacy is about research, relationships, and persistence. Make sure your AVP is doing the research and consultations to really understand the issues. However, I’ve also spent the past two years in the AVP and VP roles trying to really build and expand the MSU’s relationships with stakeholders. Maanvi (AVP: MA 2020-2021) also did a great job of this. Over the past two years, we’ve tried to build stronger connections with groups that can be allies for us, like Environment Hamilton, the Hamilton Transit Alliance, the Youth Steering Committee, the Ward 1 Office, and Mohawk Students Association and Redeemer Student Senate. My view is that municipal advocacy is much stronger when we work with partners, and often the things we push for are already being advocate for by local partners who have probably more knowledge and experience than the VP Ed and AVP: MA. Use the access we have in the city to stakeholders and partners to build coalitions in fighting for student priorities.

Look at the year-end report, Maanvi’s (AVP: MA) transition report, and my reports if necessary to see more detail on the specific projects we worked on, but I’ve highlighted some key issues and groups here.

## Mohawk-McMaster-Redeemer Student Advisory Group (formerly HPSAG)

In the Fall, I reached out to Garrett and Samuel, the presidents of Mohawk Students’ Association and Redeemer Student Senate, to see if they wanted to meet regularly to discuss shared concerns and priorities. We ended up naming our partnership the Mohawk-McMaster-Redeemer Student Advisory Group (MMRSAG) and we released a joint letter to all City Councillors announcing our group as an independent student group and outlining three priorities we wanted the City to address in the upcoming year. You can find that letter in my email or in my OneDrive.

The MMRSAG met fairly regularly (approx. biweekly) in second semester, and I would strongly encourage you to continue to build this partnership and expand our advocacy efforts through it.

We actually used to meet regularly with Mohawk and Redeemer but I think we stopped either in 2018-19 or 2019-2020 after Filmomena Tassi. See Shemar’s thoughts on it here:

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*The Hamilton Post Secondary Advisory Group was created by Ted McMeekin, former MPP for HWAD. It is comprised of student representatives from the MSU, MSA, and Redeemder Student Senate and was organized by his office; it met 3-4 times a year. Since he was not re-elected, we needed to find a new “home” for the group. At the moment, it looks like Minister Tassi’s office will be organizing it. However, due to her schedule and the upcoming federal election, this may not be sustainable.*

*My idea for HPSAG is that it becomes almost a mini lobby group. Meet as a group and determine your shared priorities in the summer. Transit, OSAP, and OHIP+ are probably big ones. Try to find something federal as well. Then, assign one person from the 3 organizations to set up meetings (I suggest Daniella). Have Emma reach out and set up meetings between the group and a politician including Fred Eisenberger, Sandy Shaw, Andrea Horwath, Donna Skelly, Filomena Tassi, and the councillors your schools are in (Councillor Wilson, John Paul Danko, and Lloyd Ferguson I believe).*

Basically, I took Shemar’s advice this year and pitched to Garett and Sam the idea of an ongoing independent student advocacy group representing the concerns of students across Hamilton. To do this, we also changed the name to dissociate the group from the old HPSAG name to kind of “reset” this group.

I see a lot of potential with this group. I think our municipal advocacy will be way stronger if we are able to work with Mohawk and Redeemer to meet councillors, run campaigns etc. This could also be a great group to meet with local MPs and MPPs. We already met with Filomena Tassi twice in second semester and let her know that we’ve kind of formalized this partnership.

Be bold with this group – seek out new ways we can work together. For example, maybe we can release statements and prepare a joint budget submission. Maybe we should plan for the upcoming municipal, provincial, and federal elections together. Don’t combine MSU advocacy and MMRSAG advocacy though. Similar to how we advocate through OUSA, advocate for shared priorities through MMRSAG, but still advocate outside of MMRSAG (representing the MSU only) if there are issues that Mohawk and/or Redeemer don’t support. For example, this past year, we advocated for re-allocating funding from Hamilton Police, but Mohawk and Redeemer didn’t want to advocate on that, so Maanvi and I just did that separately as the MSU, and we just picked different priorities that all three of our student associations shared for the joint letter we released.

Reach out in the summer to the presidents of the MSA and the RSS to discuss the future of this group, and how we could work together on advocacy this year.

Inevitably, we may have to carry some of the organizing and researching duties for this group, because the MSA and RSS have smaller advocacy teams. However, try to keep them in the loop and share resources/knowledge to help them grow their own advoacy.

## Light Rail Transit

LRT has been a longstanding issue in Hamilton for years. After a complicated series of events, where the provincial government took away the $1 Billion that was dedicated to the LRT and then seemingly reversed their decision later, it looks like a smaller version of the original LRT plan may be coming to Hamilton in the next few years. Do a little bit of research on this and check my OneDrive for notes. It’s unclear exactly how close the LRT is to being implemented right now, so it might be helpful to ask Maureen Wilson about this in one of your first meetings with her.

We’ve historically been very strong supporters of the LRT (see the #YesLRT campaign we ran a few years ago) because of its benefits in connecting students to the city, its economic benefits and its environmental benefits.

Shemar’s notes:

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*Councillors in favour who voted in favour of the Expansion(10):*

* *Maureen Wilson (Ward 1)*
* *Jason Farr (Ward 2)*
* *Nrider Nann (Ward 3)*
* *Sam Merulla (Ward 4)*
* *Fred Eisenberger (mayor)*
* *John Paul Danko (Ward 8)*

*Councillors that have supported it in the past but who I could see flipping to the no side:*

* *Chad Collins (Ward 5)*
* *Tom Jackson (Ward 6)*
* *Terry Whitehead (Ward 14)*
* *Arlene VanderBeek (Ward 13)*
* *Lyod Ferguson (Ward 12)*

*Councillors who are on the fence:*

* *Ester Pauls (Ward 7)*
* *Brad Clark (Ward 9)*

*Councillors who voted against the LRT:*

* *Maria Pearson (Ward 10)*
* *Brenda Johnson (Ward 11) – will never support LRT*
* *Judi Partridge (Ward 15) – will never support LRT*

## HSR

Year 5 of Hamilton’s 10-year HSR plan was paused last year. While it’s important for us to advocate on specific issues (e.g. 51 service on weekends), we’re not even back to pre-COVID levels of transit (e.g. the 51 isn’t even running at all!). We need to focus on pushing the city to continue investments in public transit as a part of COVID recovery (see our 2021 Municipal Budget Submission).

There may also be a need to re-examine the MSU-HSR bus pass contract for the Fall if a lot of students aren’t in Hamilton, like we did in Fall 2020 and Winter 2021. Work with John and JJ on this.

## Municipal Advocacy

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*We are always trying to find the best way to advocate to the municipal government. I’d suggest determine your top priorities in the summer.*

*You should also plan advocacy meetings when you know a key issue will be coming up at a future meeting. For instance, if the LRT is going to be brought up again, I will first cry for predicting it, but then you should schedule meetings with every single councillor and tell them to continue to support the LRT. If you cannot set up meetings (which will be very often because agendas are posted the week before) get on the phone with them, send a letter to the committee, and delegate.*

## Municipal Budget Submission

*This is required as per Bylaw 3/B, so make sure it gets done. (double check this though). In terms of topics, ask the SRA, Ed Team, BoD, or even the University if they want to see anything in particular in the budget submission. While you run the risk of being repetitive, we haven’t necessarily seen many wins from the Budget Submission. I would advise you to write it earlier and use a lot of the same information from last year if things haven’t changed (such as transit).* *You should come up with your asks in the summer.*

I would also recommend expanding our consultations before deciding on our priorities. For example, meet with groups like the Hamilton Transit Alliance, Maureen Wilson, Ian Borsuk from the HTA and Environment Hamilton, and Mohawk Students’ Association and Redeemer Student Senate to see what their priorities are and how you can partner with them on certain advocacy points. Sometimes our partners in Hamilton will bring up important points or point us to helpful resources to use in researching and writing our budget submission.

*Inform Maureen Wilson of these asks as soon as you have them so she can make recommendations on how to edit them and begin to suggest they be including in pre-budget consultation meetings. She should also be able to direct you to who in the city you should speak to about your asks. Then, complete your budget submission in September.*

I would suggest meeting with Councillors as early as possible in the Fall semester to lobby them on the recommendations.

I would also recommend working with Mohawk Students’ Association and the Redeemer Student Senate through the MMR SAG (more on this below) to see if there are any shared points you want to lobby councillors on. Lobbying with Mohawk and Redeemer student associations has the potential to make our advocacy much stronger. Some councillors don’t value McMaster students as much as Mohawk and Redeemer students because Mohawk and Redeemer students are more likely to live and vote in Hamilton.

*Make sure you ask Wooder to upload all your research and lobbying documents to the msu website, under msumcmaster.ca/reports! Try to branch out from Maureen to be a champion for your points where you can. Maureen is great, but doesn’t always agree with every point that we have.*

## Student Housing

Maanvi (AVP: MA) did an amazing job in looking into issues of student housing this year. Read the housing report that she completed with her committee this past year and uploaded onto the OneDrive. Also read the notes from the meetings Maanvi and I had this year with different people, including the meeting wtih Alan (from Knighstone Capital) and Roger Couldrey from Jan 25 (in my OneDrive). Maanvi met with a ton of people to look into the issues of affordable and available student housing. Consider the next step to build off this report. For example, maybe it’s worth putting together an MSU Student Housing Committee to address the issues raised by the report.

Overall, I think the MSU can and should be more involved in the student housing development process. We should be in contact with developers about off-campus housing projects to represent student concerns. Talk to Maureen about this as well – see how we can build off the progress we made this year.

## AWWCA & AWCA

*So we definitely didn’t ever formally purchased membership at the AWWCA or AWCA this year. I guess we should but we kind of just go to answer their questions so I feel like we are more of a resource than a contributing member. If you do, they only take cash so you can take out petty cash from Accounting to do it. It’s worth getting membership if a committee member is going to go on it. I think the Community Educator can go to these meetings in order to get a better sense of what campaigns they should run. From the MA committee, consider sending a committee member instead of the AVP. It’s not necessarily worth the time. Make sure you’re staying up to date on the discussions at PACCR through GC, or consider asking him if you should sit on it instead.*

Have the AVP: MA or a committee member go to these meetings if/when they come up. Make sure the AVP: MA is on the mailing list.

## Working with Maureen

Maureen is a great councillor for students and for Hamilton. She will be willing to work with you on a lot of projects, especially if they align with her overall priorities, and she is very good with listening to student concerns you bring up. However, keep in mind she does have to balance the interests of residents and does have expectations that students will be respectful neighbours.

Stephanie Hilson is the full-time staff member in her office and is also a great support. Don’t hesitate to reach out to her with any question (big or small) if you have questions about city council meetings or projects in Ward One.

Maanvi and I set up monthly hour-long meetings with Maureen and Stephanie and found these to be tremendously useful. I would recommend setting these up again. Prepare in advance to bring up projects you’re working on or questions you want to ask Maureen.

## Building Connections with the City

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*I attended as many City events (and other events) as I could, and as a result I built some meaningful connections within the City. If you’re ever invited to any events – or you see that the Chamber is hosting one – go. The general vibe that I’ve gotten in the past is that some of these events are “not worth it” if there isn’t a direct lobbying opportunity, but that simply isn’t true, and I wish I had never listened to that type of narrative. For instance, the Bay Area Economic Summit: definitely go, just for the networking and government relations opportunities. Any of the Mayor’s breakfast, City Manager’s breakfast, etcetera, be there as often as you can – consider asking GC if you can attend instead of him especially if he is not going to prioritize municipal advocacy (which isn’t a bad thing – he can only do so much). The President isn’t as integrated into our advocacy efforts as you are, so when organization is invited to these events to network I feel its best that your role attend. Network and make friends with people there, so they can update you when its relevant.*

Wasn’t really possible for me this year with everything online but would encourage you to follow Shemar’s advice, especially if you’re in person.

## Office of Community Engagement

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*The Office of Community Engagement has expanded greatly. This is great for the community engagement portfolio of the University, as it aligns with Patrick’s Forward with Integrity letter. It also means that in their attempt to be inclusive of students, your department is called upon very often for engagement. As the VP Education, you sit on the a lot of committees, but I think they are under review since most did not meet this year.*

I didn’t have a lot of interaction with this office this year, but they do do pretty cool work, so work with them if you have the chance.

## Property Rating System on Mac Off-Campus Housing

Look through my emails with Kevin Beatty, Kim Zarzuela and Laurie Ham in March for details on this. Kevin Beatty was super enthusiastic about this and basically said he’ll get it done. Maaniv and I sent the criteria we were hoping to see for the property rating system (e.g. cleanliness, landlord responsiveness). Connect with Kevin in the summer to follow up on this and see how/when it’s going to be implemented.

## Hamilton Transit Riders’ Union

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*This is a cool group of people from across the city working on advocacy to the HSR. I never went this year. Consider attending a meeting and then send a MA committee member. Also attend their AGM. I asked an SRA member to go last year – they said it went well and there was a good turn-out.*

I’m not sure if this ran this year with everything being online. If you or the AVP: MA have the chance to be involved with it next year, that’s great!

## Hamilton Transit Alliance

This is the group Maanvi and I attended more frequently, made up of other large organizations in Hamilton including the YWCA, IWC, HTRU, Chamber of Commerce, Environment Hamilton, SPRC, Mohawk Student Association, and others. This group has a lot of potential and has started lobbying on a few issues including creating a transit sub-committee of council so it will be easier for the public to attend and delegate on the issue and to allow for a more robust discussion. We should work to build a better brand of the organization and do more lobbying. I think eventually we can achieve most of our transit lobbying through this group.

It’s a great group that brings brings a lot of different orgs together. I would recommend setting up a meeting with Ian Borsuk (from Environment Hamilton) who chairs this committee to get more background on it.

## McMatch

McMatch is a roommate connector we worked with Housing and Conference Services to develop in April. Follow up with Kim Zarzuela and Kevin to see if there’s any way we can help further with this.

## Promoting Off-Campus Housing Resources

I had a few conversations with SVK, Sean Beaudette, Kevin Beatty, and our comms team about promoting off-campus housing resources to students this summer. I heard a lot of concerns from students about finding off-campus housing, and I think it’d be great if the MSU could promote some existing resources to help students (e.g. <https://offcampus.mcmaster.ca/support/#tab-content-support-for-renters> ). Connect again with SVK and talk to Wooder this summer if it’s something you want to explore the idea of the MSU promoting these sorts of resources.

Another way we could promote resources specifically to first-year students is through the Archway program, which has already started some initiatives through a Teams group and through hosting a few events. If you’re interestd in this, talk to Sean Beaudette about it.

## Student-First Rental Initiative

This is a program that HCS started in the summer of 2020 where they would offer landlords premium listings in exchange for student-friendly leases ([Student First Rental program recognizes student-friendly landlords during COVID-19 – Daily News (mcmaster.ca)](https://dailynews.mcmaster.ca/articles/student-first-rental-program-recognizes-student-friendly-landlords-during-covid-19/) ). We talked to Kevin Beatty about running it again this summer and he seemed very open to the idea. Follow up with him to see if we can help any further with the implementation of it.

# Provincial and Federal Advocacy

Again, I’ve highlighted some key issues and groups in this section, but take a look at my year-end report from SRA 20Q and my previous reports for more info on any specific project.

My tip for PFA advocacy is to read and research as much as you can, but also to ask for help. This portfolio can be overwhelming. There are so many issue (e.g. student financial aid, international students, mental health) that sometimes you just feel lost. But that’s ok – you can try to keep up with everything, but inevitably there will be areas you don’t know a lot. Try to keep up with regular research and read the news relating to PFA, but beyond that, use the people around you. You can task the AVP: PFA, for example, to be more involved with OUSA and UCRU, and maybe to do research on certain issues to provide a summary for you. I’ve also noticed that one of the reasons why the MSU isn’t as involved in PFA as some other associations is simply that they have more support – usually full-time staff that is dedicated to GR and/or research (e.g. WUSA, USC). This allows them to quickly craft statements and set up meetings with MPs and MPPs. However, we don’t have that yet – although Wooder provides a lot of support, he’s stretched thin and doesn’t focus exclusively on advocacy.

Because of that, I would recommend exploring where we can find more support for this portfolio with our current structure. One idea is to try to see if the OUSA RPAs can support our research a little more. Maybe you can set up more regular meetings outside of Steering Committees with them to discuss certain issues. I had the OUSA RPAs come to one of our Ed Team meetings to meet our team and see if anyone had any questions. I think there might be an opportunity to ask OUSA Home Office to support us a little more on the provincial advocacy side of things, especially if you want to do research on a specific issue but don’t really have the time.

Sometimes, you may also just feel like you have no idea what someone at OUSA or UCRU is talking about, whether it be a policy or a grant or another government/advocacy organization. If that is ever the case, please just ask! Don’t pretend to know. Someone else probably also doesn’t know, and everyone that comes into student advocacy has different backgrounds and areas of knowledge. I asked Eddy some pretty basic questions a few times just because I

didn’t have a lot of PFA background coming in.

Another word of advice: build our partnerships with OUSA and UCRU and advocate through them, but also try to build the MSU’s independent advocacy capacities and relationships with local MPs and MPPs. Our relationships with local politicians on our own as the MSU (not through OUSA/UCRU) is something I feel can be strengthened. I would sit down with the AVP: PFA and the President early this year to strategize how/who we can meet on the PFA portfolio, either on our own or as part of the MMRSAG. I feel that local politicians are usually pretty receptive to meeting with local student groups, and those relationships might be helpful down the road, so let’s continue to build and expand them.

# Provincial Advocacy

## OUSA – General

The access to staff members, government, related post-secondary organizations is beyond what we could ever achieve as the MSU as we currently exist. Beyond that, OUSA has developed a strong reputation with government and stakeholders. For instance, OUSA was invited to provincial budget lock-up but no individual Student Union was and I doubt CFS was. I understand OUSA has been critiqued for taking more moderate or cautious stances this past year. While Shemar considered having the MSU leave OUSA in part because of this, i still see a lot of value in the MSU being part of OUSA. It provides us with a lot of access to the government and connections to other institutions.

## OUSA – Home Office

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*Home Office is located at 26 Soho Street in Toronto (get off the Subway at Osgoode). It is an office building, and we’re on the third floor, all the way at the back on the right. It is a small but inviting office. You’ll come here for SC meetings, Think Tanks, and you can always drop in whenever you’re in Toronto!*

### Eddy Avila – Executive Director

Eddy is awesome. Super friendly, and you can ask him any questions about anything related to post-secondary.

He used to work in Queen’s Park as a political staffer for a Liberal MPP. In 2016-2017, he was the President of Western. Before being hired as ED he was one of the RPAs.

*The ED is meant to oversee the full time staff at the home office, meet with government officials, especially non-political staff, oversee the day-to-day operations of OUSA, maintain government relations, and help SC with lobbying. You can be as hands on or hands off with the ED as your SC wants. Don’t hesitate to raise if you want him to do something different. In Blake’s year, they asked Zak (former ED) to email them biweekly reports, and were particularly hands on with asking to come to meetings, see documents, etc. In our year, we were more hands-off, with Eddie giving reports every month and allowing most of the leg work to be done by the President and ED. Consider moving more towards what Blake’s year did, especially involving SC members more. Eddy and the rest of Home Office staff was really good about this with me, often inviting me to meetings, giving me opportunities to present at conference, or do interviews.*

I agree with Shemar in seeing if we can be more involved with OUSA. Blake’s idea to have OUSA send reports to the MSU would be really cool, since we don’t have as large an advocacy staff as some other OUSA associations, so this would help to keep us updated in provinical policy matters.

### Chisanga Mwamba – Operations & Communications Director

The Operations & Communications Director’s role does a lot and actually used to be two roles. Chisanga does all the logistics for OUSA – so she organizes PiHED, General Assemblies, every conference, and basically keeps the lights on.

In her communications portfolio, she coordinates OUSA’s campaigns, design work, blogs, media interactions, and press releases.

Make sure you stay on top of the things they ask for – pay bills on time, book things if there is a conference on campus, respond to their emails. Don’t be afraid to ask for reminders or update them on changes within the MSU’s communications portfolio if there ever are any. They interact with Wooder during campaign time.

### Britney De Costa– Research & Policy Analyst

Britney is one of two Research and Policy Analysts. She completed a joint Master of Social Work and law at the University of Windsor. She does not have student union experience but does have a passion for advocacy on topics including sexual violence on campus and poverty elimination.

Britney is simply the best—so kind, and always willing to help. If you ever find that you’re falling behind on a policy or not able to make a deadline, don’t be afraid to reach out to her. She’s usually very accommodating and very willing to support you.

She's also really great at her job. She can find research for you very quickly. If you ever want support on researching an issue (even if it’s MSU), just ask. Usually, she can do it and will find info really quick. And if she can’t do it, she’ll just tell you. She is always going above and beyond and there to support you when you are struggling in any aspect.

### Malika Dhanani – Research & Policy Analyst

Malika is the other of two Research and Policy Analysts. She was just hired to replace Ryan Tishcoff, the old RPA.

## Steering Committee

Steering Committee meetings take place about once a month in OUSA’s home office (or on Zoom if everything is online). They operate somewhat similar to board meetings, with updates being given and discussions around current issues, upcoming events, and the direction of the organization.

I really enjoyed being part of this group. We worked pretty well together and didn’t have a lot of disagreements. However, if you do, always be respectful and collegial and understand that people come from different ideologies and experiences.

Try to separate the personal and the professional as well if you disagree with someone. However, I found everyone on this committee to be kind and inviting both personally and professioanlly.

Lean on these people for support as well. This is a group of people that will understand your experience as a student union leader. We had a pretty active Facebook chat to discuss work and non-work stuff. Share ideas and feel free to ask another SC member about something you saw them doing at their association.

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*It is always important to argue for what you believe and represent the MSU stances, but also be open to other perspectives and changing your opinion if compelling arguments are presented back to you. That is what makes a strong Steering Committee and organization, representing a diverse set of student needs.*

*Of SC, three members make up the executive: President, VP Admin & HR, and VP Finance.*

I didn’t go to WelCon and StratCon since they were in the summer, but I’ll leave Shemar’s notes. Both of them will be held online this year.

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*You will be going to Wel Con with [the President] soon. Wel Con is where the executive will be elected. Then, you will see SC at Stratcon in June, where you’ll decide on priorities, pass the budget, pick dates for all of the events, and authors for policy papers. In terms of priorities.*

*A final note about StatCon: go in knowing what paper you want to author. We chose definite authors for first term and tentative authors for second term. As well, some students may ask you if they can author a paper. Don’t be afraid to say you’re your AVP PFA should take priority when it comes to be a supporting author on a paper. Unless there is an identity-based paper that is going to be written (i.e indigenous students) prioritize those with lived experiences! Understandably, the RPAs are hesitant to allow students to author papers unless they are accompanied by an SC member. Remember that authors must attend GA. I would only allow someone to author a paper if they had experience attending GA previously, and had authored an MSU paper. It is a big commitment to author an OUSA paper and ultimately if they fail, it falls back on you. If you do have someone in mind to author, definitely know that prior to attending StratCon, so you can try to include them as an author. It is much easier to have someone authoring the same paper as you, because they are considered your “support” author.*

*At the end of the day, this is entirely up to your SC. If your SC all want student authors, then that might happen! The last thing about authorship is the need to have representation from interest groups when writing a paper about them. This is difficult to achieve in all circumstances, but is essential in some: such as in the case of Indigenous Students because of the importance of self-determination. If they’re not doing that, they shouldn’t be authors.*

## Running for OUSA President

I didn’t run for OUSA president (and couldn’t because I came in in September) , but I’ll keep this in here in case you or a future VP Ed want to.

*\*\*While you do not want to run for OUSA president, I will give an overview of my experience so future VP Ed’s can look back on it if they choose to. There is a folder in Stephanies OUSA folder about running for president. It includes her platform and some she notes had made. It is important to consult all SC members, the Executive Director, and the past OUSA President. Your platform shouldn’t be focused on lobbying ideas since that is decided on by SC. Rather, it should be on how can the organization be more effective and a leader in PSE advocacy. Also, talk about why you are the best person to be the face of the organization and how you can balance representing the MSU and the interests of OUSA. Steph did almost win, tying the first round. She didn’t think her chances were that great with Danny attending basically 6 GAs, being from Western, and the past OUSA intern. But that just goes to show, even if you don’t think you are as qualified, you probably have a good shot!*

*I do think we should run for present in the future, while understanding this year is not the one. I can see OUSA becoming more progressive while still sticking to our relationship-building/lobbying tactics as a result of our Home Office staff being more progressive and likely SC members moving forward. Perhaps your successor will be the one!*

## General Assembly

These are a few GA tips. Some are obviously not applicable if things are online, but I’ve left them in in case things return back to normal.

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### *Hotel*

*As soon as the Operations person emails you, forward to email to Daniela and ask her to book four or five hotel rooms. Work with Daniela on this and be patient as it will be her first time helping with logistics for GA.*

### Promoting Applications

It’s always hard to get applicants for GA, because not a lot of students know what OUSA is or can commit to an entire Thurs – Sunday away. Make sure, like Policy Con, you talk to Wooder and the comms officer a couple weeks before you intend to open applications. The comms officer will have the template for application promo, ask her to update it or design a new one. Get creative with a strategy to promote, and make sure you’re targeting students who will be directly impacted by the policies or who have experience in the area.

### Opening and Closing Applications

At the beginning of the term, ask the Chisanga (OUSA Operations) what the last possible date is that they’ll needs the names of your delegates, and open registration at least three weeks prior to that. You’ll need 2 weeks to keep applications open, and at least a week to interview candidates and select the final few.

### Number of Delegates

Based on our size, the MSU gets 8 delegates. In first term, I took exactly 8 whereas in second term we had 2 observers. Observers now have speaking rights in breakout sessions, so taking observers should be fine moving forward. Run the speaking rights point by SC though as your group may have different opinions. I think it is a good opportunity to bring observers, especially if you have a strong pool and perhaps want to bring someone who may be newer to advocacy but you see potential for growth.

Now, who goes? You, Denver, and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ as the VP Education, President, and AVP PFA get guaranteed seats. As well, if someone is an author, they also get to go. I tried to balance experience and newcomers within the delegation, which is one of the benefits to the way we do delegate selection (rather than an election at council, like they do at the USC). In second term, you’ll also want to reserve a seat for the incoming President.

### Interviews

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*It might be a good idea to change up the OUSA interview questions. Perhaps use this as an opportunity to ask individuals how they will handle situations with delegates who have different opinions than them or what forms of arguments should not be used (for instance those that can be perceived an attack on personal character). For the past two years,we put a lot of emphasis on the applicant’s analysis of a policy statement. In our written application, we asked applicants to outline which of the three policies they were interested in. Based on their selection, we sent a sample group of PCRs in advance of the interview, and asked applicants to come ready to discuss the PCRs. I would either take real draft PCRs that were in the policies, and modified them in some way so that I no longer agreed with the recommendation, or that it didn’t make logical sense anymore. Or I would think of a topic related to the paper and come up with an set of PCRs that didn’t take into consideration a possible outcome or group that would be left out. In interviews, we looked for candidates who were able to point out the flaw with the PCR, or have a discussion about them. This was generally really positive. We also sent out all knowledge-based questions in advance to try to make it a fairer process for external candidates. However, second term we didn’t and applicants actually did really well. Consider modifying the knowledge based questions to be not as hard if you don’t want to send out questions.*

I didn’t change the questions too much, but I would look at them and see if you want to make any changes. I think I would prefer the questions and any assignment to probe the passion of hte students for policy rather than their knowledge. I see GA as an opportunity for students to learn about policy and advocacy. We see some students go to GA and then later apply for MSU Advocacy positions.

### Training

Typically, training consists of going over the schedule, what OUSA is, student politics and then going over the papers. Be sure to pick a date which everyone can attend.

Check the emails I sent for training and work off of those. I mainly used a modified version of the powerpoint from previous years.

Just take a look at the OUSA GA folders I have in my OneDrive and you should get a good sense of how to run recuirtment and training.

If you trust your AVP: PFA, consider allowing them to oversee GA training and coordination (e.g. daily debrief meetings, preparing amendments for plenary) throughout GA weekend in second semester. I did this for Hasnain, and I thought it went well.

A few notes from Shemar:

\*\**As well, as you know, the MSU uses our own private Google documents during the weekend to keep track of what other schools are saying during breakout sessions. Be sure to introduce delegates to this way of taking notes.*

*As we’ve talked about, modify training to talk more about respectful behaviour and arguments. Tell delegates not to shame others for their ideas. If they have a problem with delegates, tell them to tell you and you can address it with the Steering Committee members. Going to GA is not like going into battle. We are all on the same side and we all want to improve life for students. Address people who do not believe this. The adversarial relationships that our delegates have had in the past with others needs to end if we are going to be a productive organization.*

### *SRA*

*You have to ratify the delegates at SRA prior to attending. Make sure to add it to the agenda before you go.*

### *Travelling to GA*

*Depending on how many people you have, you’ll need 2-3 cars to get to GA. Definitely work out in advance who will be driving in case you end up needing to rent a vehicle. Make sure you calculate your travel time so everyone knows when they need to leave McMaster by.*

### GA as an SC member or author

*The role of an SC member at GA is slightly different than a delegate: you’re a leader, and you’re responsible for your delegates. I would suggest setting up a Facebook chat to keep track of everyone at all times. Each night, you’ll have an SC meeting while your delegates get to hang out. You will have to talk to your delegates beforehand to understand what happened in their breakout sessions, then relay your group’s perspective to SC. Especially if you’re an author, you might have no idea what was happening in other breakout sessions, so it’s really important to pay attention to what your delegates want out of paper edits.*

*At the SC meeting, you’ll go through the most contentious parts of each paper and SC will make a decision on how to edit them. When in doubt, give multiple options.*

*As an author, GA can be extremely exhausting as you’re up late editing all night instead of hanging out with your friends and catching up with peers from other schools. It is really rewarding though – just be sure to rest up, and think about booking off the following Monday from work.*

*On another note, try to make sure your delegation understands your role and what you expect from them. A number of issues might come up so tell your delegates how they can best support you while you try your best to support them.*

### General Assembly at McMaster

Obviously, this didn’t happen in my year, but it could in a future year.

Shemar’s notes:

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*I have a folder with all my information from General Assembly so that the VP Ed who has to plan it in the future can look back on it. I won’t go into detail here because there are a lot of specific logistics, which may not be relevant in 4 years. However, plan early and try to get a full-time staff in the MSU to help you plan.*

## Campus Visit

For in-person visits:

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*At some point, the Ops person will contact you to set up your campus visit. I suggest you download most of these tasks to your Advocacy Coordinator – booking a table, booking lunch, etcetera. We had a table in MUSC this past year, which was successful. Ryan had it in Mills, which was also popular. You will also need to set up some meetings for home office. Do this in advance as much as possible, otherwise you won’t get many meetings. This is something you can ask Daniela’s help with. Home office will be clear with you about who they’d like to meet with while they’re there. It’s also a good idea to promote that OUSA is on campus so individuals can take the time to go and speak to them if they have questions or concerns.*

If it’s online, you can ask your Project and Campaign Coordinator or Daniela to help coordinate Teams/Zoom meeting times if necessary. Reach out to Kim Dej, Sean Van Koughnett, Susan Tighe, and David Farrar to see if they would be available to meet with OUSA representatives during the campus visit week/day.

## OUSA Campaign

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*Your SC will be in charge of deciding the OUSA campaign(s) at StratCon. It’s a good idea to choose a campaign that relates to one of your priorities. Try to branch out from the traditional campaigns that we do each year. Instead of a full campaign, I wanted to have podcasts which still fell in line with our operating policies. We collected stories last year, but you could continue to after students have been impacted by the changes. Advocacy campaigns should have a direct outcome that we are trying to achieve and stakeholder to target, or we should at least gather media attention. Keep that in mind when deciding on this year’s campaign. You can get Deb to contact them directly.*

This year, I would recommend connecting the Project and Campaign coordinator with Chisanga in the summer to talk about how the MSU can work with OUSA to promote the campaigns. That will make good use of the PCC role and will alleviate some of the administrative burden off of you so you don’t have to be the point person for the MSU when OUSA is running campaigns.

## Mohawk-McMaster-Redeemer Student Advisory Group (MMRSAG)

I wrote more about this in the municipal advocacy section. I think it would be great to use this group to meet with local MPs and MPPs throughout the year. We’ve already met with Filomena Tassi twice. Reach out to her office again, and also reach out to other MPs/MPPs.

# Federal Advocacy

First, some history on the MSU’s involvement with federal advocacy:

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## *Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA)*

*The MSU left CASA in March 2015.*

*This is from Ryan’s report: In July 2017, Chukky, Urszula, and I attended CASA’s Policy and Strategy Conference in Banff, Alberta. Based on this conference, as well as my interactions with BUSU (who remains a member of CASA), I cannot in good faith suggest CASA as a viable organization with which to do federal advocacy. Unless they greatly change their structure, they will not be an option for us. I wrote a detailed review on CASA and submitted it to the SRA, so give that a read. I would not suggest attending any CASA conference this year. The only good thing that came from attending the conference for us was the networking with other SU. It would be a much better idea to attend a conference like SUDS for that purpose. At the CASA conferences, all you’ll find are SUs that love CASA and aren’t looking to leave.*

*That being said, keep up to date on what CASA is doing. Definitely read their budget submission and anything else they put out. CASA has a lot of good ideas, but unfortunately their organizational structure makes them unable to execute.*

## *Canadian Federation of Students (CFS)*

*I would not recommend joining the CFS, for a myriad of reasons. If you are interested, please see “Solidarity for Their Own Good” by Titus Gregory. I would also suggest not partnering with them – they are not well respected by most people in government and university administrators. If you partner with them, there is a strong possibility it will impact the MSU’s or OUSA reputation as well. While I understand the whole “we are in this together,” our battles look very different.*

Now, UCRU:

## Undergraduates of the Canadian Research-Intensive Universities (UCRU)

*With neither federal advocacy option looking appealing, in summer 2015, some of the SUs from the U15 institutions began what is now known as UCRU. The group is essentially a non-official group that lobbies the federal government once a year. In Blake’s year, she did some calls with the group with the upmost intentions of joining them in Ottawa, but ultimately decided against it because she didn’t like what they wanted to lobby on (indirect costs of research) as it was not something that was important to McMaster students. In Ryan’s year, they did attend and the priorities were diverse beyond research, focusing more on the student experience. This year was similar. I played a major role in determining the priorities so that might be why.*

GC was the one who was probably the most invovled with UCRU this year, but GC, Hasnain and I all went to Board meetings and were involved in different aspects.

UCRU is still a very young organization. This past year, the UCRU board worked on formalizing the organization. A huge part of this was creating bylaws. The SRA approved the bylaws on April 25th at SRA 21C. Feel free to read my memo from that meeting. Essentially, we approved the bylaws with the intention of joining as a full (“Class A” ) member. We had to wait because not all the member student unions had approved the bylaws yet. Once all the associations have approved it (probably by mid-May), you’ll have to bring forward a motion for the SRA to formally join UCRU as a Class A member. Email Victoria to workshop the motion. Once we join, you’ll also have to create an Operating Policy for our membership in UCRU. Again, work with Victoria to see if we can use our old CASA OP as a template.

There’s a lot of work to be done for UCRU once it’s formalized. We need to approve the UCRU strategic plan and start discussions about how a potential member fee. Please inform the SRA of these discussion. We want to make sure that any UCRU fee is reasonable for students and supported by the SRA.

The 2020-2021 UCRU executive team made a 2020-2021 executive report that summarizes our formalization and advocacy efforts this past year. Please read through this so you have a good understanding of the next steps to take: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/15w0GlZwRGmuqvtTB4TDkIkrlRdLwFLs9gkd3cY0zXUM/edit?usp=sharing> (if the link doesn’t work, it’s also in the OneDrive).

I think there’s an opportunity for the AVP: PFA to be more involved in UCRU compared to OUSA, because it’s a little bigger and more unstructured. Encourage them to be involved in the various committees and projects, and encourage them to speak up and connect with other executives.

### Lobby Week

Won’t be a super helpful section, unless you’re the one organizing the logistics for Lobby Week. Otherwise, it should be organized by the 2021-2022 executive team.

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*The following is taken for my transition report from Stephanie, as she had a heavier hand in planning the logistics for lobby week. If a future VP Ed plans to run for chair/vice-chair this information will be helpful:*

*To schedule meetings, we had a list of every MP in Canada. We split up the MPs by area and asked different members to email all of them. McGill programmed something to send all the emails at once in a personalized way. I don’t know how to be honest but try to see if you can do that again. Find out what riding every member who is going to the Lobby Week is in. That will be helpful when politicians ask if our groups include any of their constituents. Make sure they go to those meeting. Nick Soave did all the personal schedules for the week and stayed at the hotel with the UMSU staff member to handle any last minute changes. Hopefully they do that again. Emma could possibly do this as well so if they can’t ask her.*

*As to who goes to lobby weeks, make sure you talk about it with the group about who is coming and who is lobbying. Make sure staff members aren’t lobbying. You think that would be intuitive but it wasn’t. Have a form go around to track who is coming, where they are staying. Considering booking a block in a hotel so you can all be near each other. Do that very early – Ottawa books up fast.*

*For MSU connections, you should reach out to Chukky Ibe (in Minister Tassi’s office) and Matthew Dillion-Leitch (in Carolyn Bennet’s office). Obviously, that will change if there is a change in government.*

# General Advice

That’s everything!

Now, I’ll just include any other thoughts that didn’t fit elsewhere or are more general pieces of advice for the role.

From Shemar:

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*When deciding to go to events that interacts with any level, never turn an opportunity down because you do not believe there is an opportunity to lobby. At these events, you will make connections with politicians, staff, and community members all of who will help you in the future. Politicians are more likely to book meetings with you if they’ve met you before. Staff are often smarter than the politicians and have a lot of control, so they can answer any questions or direct you to the right people to lobby towards. Community members will be your allies on a lot of projects.*

*Fill up your Presto with enough money for a semester. It’s $24 a trip, which includes two GO trips and two subway rides (make sure you double check just in case there are increases). I filled up every time I went to Toronto and I often forgot, so I would just say fill up your card with between 4-6 trips a semester (including Spring/Summer) to prevent you forgetting and the amount of time you have to spend filling out Pos and confusing the Compass Staff.*

I really really hope your term is in person so the Presto advice is useful :)

Last pieces of advice from me:

* Set communication expectations with your teams (especially the Education team) in terms of how you want them to reach you, i.e. when should they Teams message you vs email you? What hours should they expect a response? What needs your approval
* Use your calendar: book time off as “away from office” so people don’t contact you during those times
* Take notes from as many meetings as possible
* Try to stay organized and prioritize: I tried to have a weekly to-do list for all the different portfolios (uni, municipal, prov & fed, SRA, Board/org priorities, comms, etc.)
* Prepare for SRA meetings – make sure you know what you’re speaking on
* A few tips for conflict management because conflicts will come up, and you’ll sometimes be frustrated with people in the org and outside the org
	+ Relationships are really important: don’t burn bridges. Always consider whether it’s worth fighting for something if it’s going to seriously harm your ability work with someone. I found there were a lot of things I disagreed with but weren’t worth fighting about because they were small matters in the grand scheme of things, and I wanted to keep my relationship with that strong in the future so we could work on big issues together well
	+ Don’t attack people personally
	+ Sometimes you’ll disagree with the SRA. While you will have influence and more knowledge as a Board member, I encourage you not to feel like you have to shoulder every decision that’s made by the SRA. That’s why the SRA is there – to be an assembly. They technically oversee the Board, and they are also responsible for the decision. No matter how frustrated you are with any Assembly vote, remember that we have an assembly for a reason, and it’s important that decisions are made democratically. At the end of the day, you and of the Board members have one vote each, same as any SRA member.
	+ It’s easy to be frustrated with students sometimes, because they’re sometimes misinformed or just angry at you without justification. That just comes with your position as a leader of the organization. Don’t take complaints about the MSU or University personally. In fact, I always had the view that any students coming to me with any concern, no matter how justified, was a good thing – it meant that students were engaged. I always took the opportunity to thank students for reaching out and voicing their concerns.
	+ Sometimes, you’ll feel like it’s the end of the world because some frustrating thing happened. It almost certainly isn’t. I remember talking to John about something frustrating that happened with the SRA, and he basically just told me that he’s seen a lot of things in 20 years, and things usually aren’t as catastrophic as they see – we’ll continue to move forward and just deal with things as they come. The MSU hasn’t dissolved (yet) – just try to take things in stride and always deal with the present reality and next steps. You can’t change what has happened. Don’t take things too personally and just keep moving forward
* Keep confidential things confidential. As a Board member, you have power and influence. Even if you think you’re having a private conversation “outside of work hours”, be careful what you say.
* Even if you’re at another event in another capacity/role, consider that people may still view you and your actions through the lens of your MSU position.
* I’ve heard some people say not to go on Reddit and Mac student Facebook accounts (e.g. Spotted at Mac, Mac Confessions) because it can be difficult to see people complaining about the MSU, but I found it to be helpful to see where students were at. If you don’t find it affecting you too much to see complaints, I would recommend keeping up with r/mcmaster , Spotted at Mac, etc.
* Take time off: just do it. Things will go on without you, and you’re responsible for taking care of yourself
* Delegate delegate delegate: don’t do everything yourself. Trust other people
* Listen to students. Take the time to respond to any student that reaches out. I would often offer to meet with them 1-on-1.
* Transition report: start it early!! Don’t be like me.
* Own your decisions: whether you like it or not, you are now a leader and someone with power in the organization. You are probably also one of the most visible and influential people in the MSU now. That comes with responsibility. You are responsible for the organization and for anything you say or do. If you’re wrong, admit it – but don’t shirk your responsibility. Be accountable to yourself and the student body. The same thing goes for the Board: make sure you can articulate why you have made the decision you did (especialyl if some students are unahppy), and own your decisions – the good ones and the ones that turn out not that good.

# Conclusion

Good luck with everything. Remember to take a breath every now and then.

Take care of your body: exercise, make time to eat, sleep well. Things will be overwhelming at times, but as long as you have people you can lean on and as long as you see this role as an opportunity to grow, you’ll be ok. More than that, you’ll look back at the end of the year and see how you grew personally and professionally as a role.

Again, it’s not an easy job, but you’re not alone. Ask for help when you need it.

You may never get another chance to be one of the top decision-makers of such a large organization. Treasure that opportunity and responsibility and use your influence to help others. Take the many opportunities that you have through this position. Stretch yourself and push yourself.

Lastly, remember that this is an organization that exists for students. Do what you think is right—that is, what will serve MSU students best. Empower students to speak up for themselves and give your staff opportunities to grow as leaders and advocates.

I trust that you will find this experience to be one of the most unique and valuable ones of your life so far. Don’t worry about doing a “good job” or living up to expectations. Try new things – break the mold. Don’t be afraid to change the role and improve it according to your own vision. If you don’t know what to do in a situation, ask around and take your best guess.

All the previous VP Eds and I are here to support you, and you can always reach out to me.

Sincerely,

Ryan Tse